

A Survey of
Kerala History

A SREEDHARA MENON



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A Survey of Kerala History



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To

Prof. ELAMKULAM P.N.KUNJAN PILLAI
For the guidance and inspiration I have received
from him in the study of Kerala History.

PREFACE

TO THE FIRST EDITION

My aim in writing this book is to make available to the general reader and the university student a brief general survey of the history of Kerala through the ages. The scope and contents of the various chapters of the book have been so planned as to make each chapter self-contained even at the risk of some repetition. A Malayalam version of this book is also being brought out simultaneously. In this connection, I would like to make it clear that this book does not represent an attempt on my part to write a comprehensive history of Kerala. On the other hand, it only provides the general framework within which I hope to write such a history, on my own initiative, at a future date.

I have given equal attention in this book to all the three periods of Kerala History- Ancient, Medieval, and Modern. In writing the chapters on the ancient and early medieval periods in which an attempt is made to present a continuous history of Kerala from the Sangam Age to the Portuguese period, the works of Prof. Elamkulam P. N. Kunjan Pillai, published in Malayalam during the last ten years, have been of invaluable help. The works of scholars like Sardar K. M. Panikkar and Dr. T. I. Poonen provided useful material for the history of the Portuguese and Dutch periods. A large number of works written by other eminent authors in the field have also been consulted. The select Bibliography given at the end of this book would give an idea of the scope and extent of my enquiries and studies.

I may avail myself of this opportunity to acknowledge with thanks the very valuable help I received from Sri Tirunellur Karunakaran, Malayalam Department, University College, Trivandrum, in writing the relevant sections dealing with the various branches of modern Malayalam literature in Chapter XXX on "Literature and Arts".

I would be untrue to my conscience if I do not place on record the invaluable assistance I received from my wife, Mrs. Sarojini Menon, M.A., in the various stages of the works connected with the writing and publication of the book. She took considerable pains in writing down the manuscript copy and preparing the matter for the press. My strain in considerably lessened by the ungrudging help rendered by her at every stage.

In conclusion, I may state the in view of the limitations imposed on me by the scope of this book and the obvious difficulties inherent in a complex work of this kind which involves large scale disentanglement of fact from fiction, I do not claim any perfection or infallibility in the presentation of the subject matter. I believe in the dictum that an ideal, complete, perfect book that is never written is the enemy of a good book that would have been written. It is in this spirit that I have given final shape to the manuscript of this volume.

I would be happy if this book comes to be accepted in due course as a tolerably good one by lovers of Kerala History.

Sree Saroj
Sankar Road, Sasthamangalam,
Trivandrum,
10th, June 1967.

A. Sreedhara Menon

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CHAPTER I

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Kerala has been through the ages an integral part of the Indian sub-continent. Its history is part of the general history of India and its culture is one of the major streams that have enriched the composite culture of the country. At the same time Kerala has had the distinction of being an independent geographical and political entity from very early days. Its unique geographical position and peculiar physical features have invested Kerala with a distinct individuality. The land of Kerala comprises the narrow coastal strip bounded by the Western Ghats on the east and the Arabian Sea on the west in the southern part of the Indian Peninsula. Paradoxical as it might seem, this geographical position has helped to ensure, to some extent, its political and cultural isolation from the rest of the country and also facilitated its extensive and active contacts with the countries of the outside world. A study of the geographical factor in relation to Kerala history assumes special significance in this context.

Natural Divisions

Kerala State lies between 8° 18' and 12° 48' North latitude and between 74° 52' and 77° 24' East longitude. It has a total area of 15,002 sq. miles (38,855 sq.km.) and a coast line which is nearly 360 miles long. The territory of the state may be broadly divided into three natural divisions, viz., the highland, the midland and the lowland.¹ The Western Ghats which range along the eastern border constitute the highland. It is covered by thick forests in its upper ranges while in the lower ranges the forests are interspersed with plantations. The lowland stretches along the coastal plain on the western side of the State. The soil in this region is sandy. The coconut tree (*Kalpavriksha*) grows luxuriantly in this area and dominates the landscape. Paddy is also extensively cultivated here. Sand-watched between the lowland and the highland is the midland. In this region, where the soil is laterite may be seen the valleys broken intermittently by isolated hills and also the plains leading to the forest-clad uplands. The region is rich in agricultural produce, paddy, tapioca, spices and cashew being the most important crops. On the higher elevations are extensive tea and cardamon plantations while pepper, rubber, ginger and turmeric flourish in the lower elevations.

1. The people of Ancient Kerala also divided the land on the basis of soil formations and regions. The forest regions were called *Kurinji* and *Mullai*, the uncultivable barren and rocky regions *Pala* or *Palm*, the cultivated area *Marutham* and the coastal tract *Neytal* lands.

Geographical Position

The geographical position of Kerala has its own uniqueness and its landscape its own beauty. In the poetic language of Mahakavi Vallathol, Mother Kerala "sleeps with her head on the lap of the Sahyadri clad in green" and "her feet pillowed on the crystal ocean sand, Kumari at one end and the Lord of Gokarna on the other." This geographical position of Kerala as the narrow strip of land hemmed in between the Western Ghats on the one side and the Arabian Sea on the other has considerably influenced the course of its history. The State has from the dawn of history enjoyed a kind of insularity which has given it welcome immunity from the political convulsions which shook Northern India. Kerala seldom felt the impact of the many foreign invasions that "took place in the northern part of India from across the border. It took longer time for Brahmanism, Buddhism and Jainism from the north to penetrate into Kerala than into the other parts of Peninsular India. Kerala was also able to evolve its own way of life and social institutions unhampered by excessive interference from outside. This factor has helped the growth of peculiar social institutions like the *Marumakkathayam* or the matrilineal system of inheritance, polyandry etc., in Kerala. Even Brahmins and Muslims who as a rule follow everywhere the *Makkathayam* or patrilineal system of inheritance have *Marumakkathayis* among them in Kerala, viz., the Namboothiris of Payyannur *Gramam* and the Mappilas of North Malabar. Kerala could also evolve its own distinctive styles of art and architecture which are in many respects different from those in other parts of India. Such arts as *Kathakali*, *Chakiar Kuthu*, *Ottam Tullal* and *Mohini Attam* developed in Kerala in an atmosphere of splendid isolation.

The isolation of Kerala from the rest of the country has, however, had its limitations. The geographical barrier did not stand in the way of the great Advaita philosopher Sankaracharya (788-820 A.D.) undertaking his triumphant itinerary in North India for the propagation of the Vedanta philosophy even in such a remote age as the 9th century A.D. The great pilgrim centres situated on either side of the Ghats have been visited by devotees in their thousands even from time immemorial, unmindful of the hazards of geography. Kerala has also always come within the scheme of conquests of the various powers that held sway in the neighbouring Tamil and Kannada areas. The Chalukyas, the Rashtrakutas, the Pandyas and the Cholas invaded Kerala several times in the ancient period while in the later period the rulers of Vijayanagar and Mysore carried out aggressive raids into its territory. Ravi Varma Kulasekhara (1299-1314), the Venad king, carried his victorious arms up to Kanchipuram and crowned himself as the Emperor of South India. The Bednore or Ikkeri Nayaks of South Canara exercised their sway over the Hosdurg-Kasaragod area of North Kerala for some time in the 17th and 18th centuries. The historic forts at Hosdurg, Bekal, Kalnad and Kumbala stand even today as memorials to their rule.

The evolution of the language and culture of Kerala has also been influenced by contacts with the Tamil and Kannada regions. The southern

dialect of Malayalam shows traces of Tamil influence while the northern dialect bears evidence of Kannada influence. The customs and manners of the people in the extreme south, and north of the State show traces of influence from the adjoining Tamil and Kannada districts respectively. The influence of the Pallava, Chalukya and Vijayanagar styles may be seen in the temple architecture and sculpture of Kerala. The Tamil influence is perceptible in the High Ranges and some of the adjoining areas in Idukki district. Several temples dedicated to Madurai Minakshi may be seen here. The Minachil taluk has itself derived its name from Goddess Minakshi, popularly called Minachi in Tamil Nadu. In fact, Kerala history embraces within its scope a study of the relations of Kerala with such inter-State border districts as Kanyakumari, Tirunelveli, Madurai, Coimbatore, Coorg, Mysore and South Canara in their proper historical perspective.

Mountains and Hills

The mountains and hills of Kerala have played their part in its history. The Western Ghats have formed almost an unbroken wall guarding the eastern frontier and helped the people of Kerala to lead a sheltered life of their own through the centuries. The Ghats range from 3,000 ft to more than 8,000 ft. above the sea level. The Anamudi peak in the High Ranges of Idukki district rises to a height of 8,841 ft and represents the highest point in India south of the Himalayas. The Agastyakutam, the southernmost peak in the Ghats, is 6,132 ft. above sea level and figures in the popular tradition connected with Agastyamuni. Apart from the many hills and peaks which form part of the regular Ghats there are several hills which lay dotted here and there over the plain country. Some of the hills of Kerala are important from the political and cultural points of view. Ezhimala or Mount Eli, the conspicuous isolated hill jutting into the sea on the Cannanore coast in North Kerala, was in the early centuries of the Christian era the seat of a flourishing kingdom. It has served as a well-known landmark for mariners from very early times. The Puralimala in Tellicherry taluk played a crucial role in the Pazhassi revolt of the British period and it has a place of importance in Kerala history almost akin to that of the Aravali hills in the annals of Rajasthan.

Some of the most important pilgrim centres of Kerala are located either on the top of the hills or in their valleys. The famous Tirunelli temple in North Wynad taluk lies in the valley of the Brahmagiri peak (5,276 ft). The celebrated Sastha shrine situated on the top of the Sabarimala (3,790 ft) in Peermede taluk is perhaps the most important centre of Hindu pilgrimage in Kerala. The Catholic church (St. Thomas Church) located on the top of the Malayattur hill (1,500 ft.) in the Alwaye taluk is one of the major centres of Christian pilgrimage in the State. The hills and mountains have thus come to have a religious halo in popular imagination. They have also been of great value in safeguarding the territorial integrity and political freedom of the land. The Western Ghats have prevented large-scale incursions into Kerala by aggressive powers from beyond and have thus acted as a natural wall of

protection. The Portuguese who landed on the Kerala coast were cut off by this mountain barrier from all contact with the interior of Peninsular India and prevented from building up a permanent Indian empire. It may be, noted that the English who landed on the eastern coast fared better in comparison with the Portuguese.

Mention may also be made in this connection of some of the important gaps or passes in the Western Ghats which have facilitated inter-State contacts. The major gap is the Palghat gap which is about 20 miles broad. "Here, by whatever great natural agency the break occurred, the mountains appear thrown back and heaped up, as if some overwhelming deluge had burst through, sweeping them to left and right. On either hand tower the giant Nilgiris and Anamalas, over-topping the chain of ghats by several, thousand feet, while through the gap the south-west winds bring pleasant moist air and grateful showers to the thirsty plains of Coimbatore, and roads, and railway link the Carnatic to Kerala. Through this the thousand streams of the higher mountains find their way to the sea and the produce of the eastern and western provinces is exchanged. The unique character—as a point of physical geography—of this gap in an otherwise unbroken wall of high mountains, six hundred miles long, is only equalled by its great economic value to the countries lying on either hand of it."¹

The Palghat gap has moulded the climate of the States of Kerala and Tamil Nadu. It is because of this gap that the plains of Kerala get the benefit of the south-west monsoon and Central Kerala that of the north-east monsoon. The agricultural prosperity of Palghat as the rice-bowl of Kerala is in large measure due to the abundance of rainfall during the latter monsoon. In ancient days the Palghat gap must have served as a highway of commerce. This is testified to by the discovery of Roman coins from places in its vicinity and in the neighbouring Coimbatore region. It was because of the Palghat gap that Chola power could expand into Kerala and Chera power into the Kongu country at an early period of Kerala history. In the eighteenth century the Mysore rulers, Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan, carried out their raids into Kerala through the Palghat gap. The gap has facilitated the immigration of diverse social groups into Kerala from beyond her borders. Apart from a small colony of Jains, there are groups of Tamil Brahmins, Chettis and Ravuthans who are engaged in trade and commerce in the Palghat area. They have influenced the life and culture of the Palghat district considerably. The customs and manners of the people of Palghat represent a fusion of Tamil and Kerala elements. The festivals and folk arts of Palghat like *Rathotsavam*, *Pavakuthu*, *Kummatti* and *Kongan padai* owe their origin to the influx of non-Kerala communities into the area.

In addition to the Palghat gap, there are also others like the Perambadi Ghat which gives access to Coorg and the Periya and Tamarasseri Ghats which provide access from Wynad to Mysore. These gaps have promoted contacts

1. William Logan, *Malabar Manual*, p. 3.

between Kerala and Mysore and have also served as routes of invasions. In the Travancore area the most important of the passes are the Bodinayakannur pass which connects Bodinayakunnur in Madurai district with the High Ranges in Idukki district, the Kambam pass through which was transacted much of the trade to and from Thodupuzha in ancient days and the Aryankavu pass which gives easy access by road to the adjoining district of Tirunelveli. Another important pass in the Ghats is the Aramboli (Aruvaimozhi) pass through which passes the trunk road from Tirunelveli to Trivandrum. It was through this pass that the Tamil powers often invaded South Travancore in the early period. The Aramboli pass, though now situated outside Kerala, has thus played a crucial role in the military history of South Kerala.

Sea

The sea has been a permanent and decisive factor in the history of Kerala. It has invested the State with a maritime tradition of its own. The Kerala coast has attracted foreign traders from Europe and Asia from very early days. In view of its extensive sea-coast Kerala has been served by a number of sea ports the relative importance of which has fluctuated from age to age. The most important sea ports of ancient Kerala through which commercial and cultural contacts were kept up with foreign countries were Muziris, Tyndis, Barace and Nelcynda. Such ports as Quilon (Kollam), Calicut (Kozhikode) and Cochin (Kochi) came into prominence in later periods of Kerala history. It was the extensive sea-coast washed by the waters of the Arabian Sea that exposed Kerala to the onslaughts of the maritime powers of Europe like the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French and the English ever since the landing of Vasco da Gama at Calicut in 1498. The remnants of the European forts which may be seen at such places as Anjengo (Anchutengu), Tankasseri, Pallipuram, Tellicherry (Talasseri) and Cannanore (Kannur) on the Kerala coast proclaim even to-day the story of these foreign invasions. Nevertheless, in the ancient and early medieval periods, the contacts by sea between Kerala and the outside world had been mainly commercial and cultural in character. It is significant that such religions as Judaism, Christianity and Islam came to Kerala by sea. Thus the isolation to which Kerala was subjected by the Western Ghats lying on its eastern borders was more than compensated by the extensive foreign contacts facilitated by its long sea-coast on the west.

Rivers

Kerala is rich in water potential. There are 41 west-flowing rivers in the State in addition to three east-flowing ones which are the tributaries of the Kaveri. Only four of the rivers exceed 100 miles in length. They are the Bharatapuzha (156 miles), the Periyar (142 miles), the Pamba (110 miles) and the Beypore or Chaliyar (105 miles). All other rivers are relatively small, the average length being about 40 miles. The rivers of Kerala have considerably influenced its historical and cultural development. They figure in one way or other in the history and cultural life of the people of Kerala. Several places of historical and cultural importance are located on the banks of the rivers. Tirunavai, the

place where the famous pan-Kerala assembly called *Mamankam* was held under the presidency of the Zamorins of Calicut till the latter half of the 18th century, is situated on the banks of the Bharatapuzha. It was here that the mortal remains of national leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Lal Bahadur Sastri were immersed in recent times. Kaladi, the birth place of Sankaracharya, stands on the banks of the river Periyar. The Periyar looms large in the traditions and legends that have grown around the name of the great Advaita philosopher. Alwaye (Aluva) where the famous Sivaratri festival is held every year in the month of Kumbham (February-March), is another place of cultural importance on the banks of this river. On the river Pamba are located such places of religious importance as Aranmula, Chengannur, Maramon and Edathwa.

The rivers have also played their part in the political and military history of the State. The floods in the river Periyar in 1341 choked the mouth of the Cranganore (Kodungallur) harbour and rendered it useless for purposes of trade. Cochin rose into prominence simultaneously as a rival to Cranganore and before long it developed into the major harbour on the Kerala coast. The floods of 1341 are also believed to have brought into existence the island of Vaipin from the sea and according to one school of thought the *Puduvaiyu* era commencing in 1341 commemorates this event. Further, it was the floods in the same river that prevented Tipu Sultan in 1789 from continuing his aggressive advance south of Alwaye and attacking Travancore. In modern times the rivers of Kerala have been successfully harnessed in the service of man. Several important irrigation projects like the Malampuzha, Peechi and Periyar Valley have been executed in recent years and these project sites have almost become the centres of modern pilgrimage. The topography of the Western Ghats and the high intensity of rainfall also make Kerala's rivers rich in hydroelectric potential. Hydro-electric projects like the Pallivasal, Sengulam, Peringalkuthu, Idukki and Sabarigiri deserve special mention in this connection and they have contributed not a little in quickening the pace of the industrialisation of modern Kerala. It is worth mentioning that the most important industrial centres of the State like Punalur, Elur, Kallai and Baliapatam have risen on the banks of its rivers. The contribution of the river system to the development of Kerala is thus unique in every sense.

Backwaters

In addition to the rivers, Kerala has a continuous chain of lagoons and backwaters that run parallel to the sea-coast and receive water from the numerous streams and rivers of the land. They facilitate almost through communication between the northern and southern parts of Kerala. The most important lakes in North Kerala are Kumbala, Kalnad, Bekal, Kavvai etc. The place of pride among the Kerala backwaters goes to the ever blue Vembanad lake which stretches from Alleppey to Cochin and is 52 miles long. It covers an area of 79 sq. miles. The famous pilgrim centre of Vaikam is situated on the banks of this lake. The Vembanad lake has taken its name

from the ancient kingdom of Vempolinad which split itself into the principalities of Vadakkumkur and Tekkumkur sometime about 1200 A.D. The chief lakes in South Kerala are the Kayamkulam lake (19 miles) and the Ashtamudi lake (10 miles) each of which covers an area of 20 sq.miles. The Sasthamcotta lake in the Quilon district is the one and only major fresh-water lake in Kerala. It is surrounded by high hills on three sides and a one-mile long earthen bund on the fourth. The area of the lake is 1.44 sq. miles. On its banks is situated a famous Sastha temple fabled to have been founded by Sri Rama. There are also a few important places called *Azhis* on the Kerala coast where the backwaters establish permanent communication with the sea. The chief *Azhis* in the state are those of Azhikkal (Valapattanam), Chettuvai, Cranganore, Cochin, Nindakara etc.

Climate

The climate of Kerala has also exercised its influence on history. The diversity of the physical features of the State has resulted in ,a corresponding diversity of climate. The High Ranges have a cool and bracing climate throughout the year, while the plains are hot and humid. Though the mean temperature is only 90° F., it is oppressively hot in the plains in summer. The average level of annual rainfall in the State is quite high, being in the neighborhood of about 96". It is significant that the State gets rainfall both from the south-west and the north-east monsoons. The former starts towards the end of May or the beginning of June and fades out by about September while the latter commences in October, dry weather setting in by the end of December. The highest rainfall in the State occurs in the High Ranges of Idukki district where it amounts to over 200". It may be noted in this connection that it was the epoch-making discovery of the south-west monsoon by Hippalus, the Egyptian pilot, in 45 A.D. that facilitated direct sea-voyage from the Persian Gulf to Muziris. All military operations in Kerala have throughout been conditioned by climatic factors. The outbreak of the monsoon was often the signal for the cessation of hostilities and its end for their active renewal. The monsoon has also often caused floods in the rivers impeding the progress of military operations. Reference has already been made to the retreat of Tipu from Kerala following the floods in the river Periyar caused by the onset of the monsoon.

Fauna, Flora etc.

The variations in climate and seasons have had their impact on vegetation and the development of agriculture. Kerala is also rich in fauna, flora and mineral resources. Its forests abound in a variety of animals and birds. Among the exports from ancient Kerala to foreign countries the elephant, the peacock and the monkey seem to have had the place of honour. Ivory was also a valuable item of export. The aromatic plants and spices of Kerala attracted the attention of foreigners even from time immemorial. Such spices as pepper, cardamom, cinnamon and ginger were exported from ancient Kerala to the countries of Asia and Europe and they continue to earn valuable foreign

exchange even now. It was the demand for the pepper ('black gold') of Kerala that brought European powers like the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French and the English 'to the Kerala coast in modern times and led to the establishment of European domination over the country.

The forests of Kerala abound in some of the rarest species of timber and they have been very much in demand in the foreign markets. The teak-wood from Kerala found its way to foreign countries even centuries before the dawn of the Christian era as is evidenced by the discovery of teak in the ruins of Ur. The magnificent teak of the Kerala forests appears to have been used for the manufacture of the ships that fought in the battle of Trafalgar and brought victory to Nelson. Kerala is also famous for its rich mineral resources. Kautilya's *Arthashastra* (4th century B.C.) refers to the river Churni (Periyar) as one of the places in India where pearls could be found. The ancient Romans carried from Kerala such luxuries as pearls and diamonds in exchange for their gold. The Kerala coast is today known for its rich deposits of ilmenite and this has considerably added to the strategic importance of the State on the world map.

Parasurama Traditon

A critical examination of the Parasurama legend relating to the origin of Kerala would also help us to understand some of the basic facts relating to the geography of ancient Kerala. According to this legend the land of Kerala was a gift of the Arabian Sea to Parasurama, one of the ten *Avatars* or incarnations of Lord Vishnu. Legend has it that Parasurama threw his *parasu* or axe across the sea from Gokarnam to Kanyakumari (or from Kanyakumari to Gokarnam according to another version) and water receded up to the spot where it fell. The tract of territory so thrown up is said to have constituted the land of Kerala, otherwise called *Bhargavakshetram* or *Parasuramakshetram*. It should be stated that there is very little historical or factual basis for the Parasurama tradition, Parasurama himself being considered a mythological hero. The legend seems to have been concocted at a certain stage by interested parties with a view to popularising the theory of Brahmin predominance. There are references to the legend of Parasuram's creation of Kerala from the sea in Kalidasa's *Raghuvamsa* (Chapter IV Verse 53) and in the Tiruvalangadu plates of the reign of Rajendra Chola (1012-1044). It was handed down from generation to generation and finally enshrined in the *Keralolpathi*, the Malayalam work of doubtful historical value compiled some time in the 18th or 19th century.

Whatever be its historical authenticity, the Parasurama legend embodies some geographical and geological facts pertaining to ancient Kerala. Though geography is, as K.M. Panikkar has observed, "the most permanent and invariable factor of history", it is an accepted fact that the geographical features of a country do not themselves remain stationary in all ages. The consensus of opinion among scholars is that a substantial portion of Kerala must have been under water in ancient days, the Arabian Sea itself having extended right up to the foot of the Western Ghats. The coastal belt of the Alleppey district is believed to have been submerged under water in the ancient past or

at least it might have constituted an extensive swamp interspersed with sand banks and mud banks here and there. The existence of marine fossils including coral reefs at Vazhapalli near Changanacherry is cited as positive evidence in support of the contention that the tract in question might have been at one time under the sea. The land might have been thrown up from the sea as a result of the operation of volcanic or seismological factors. Geologists point out that the numerous rivers which take their source from the Western Ghats might have also brought down in their course large quantities of silt and mud while ocean currents might have deposited immense quantities of sand on the shore. A vast stretch of land area might have thus come into existence by the steady accumulation of silt and sand. Perhaps, the Parasurama legend regarding the creation of Kerala from out of the sea highlights this geographical truth.

Origin of the Names ‘Kerala’ and ‘Malabar’

An examination of some of the theories regarding the origin of the names ‘Kerala’ and ‘Malabar’ is also relevant to our study of the geographical factor in relation to Kerala history. The coastal belt lying between the Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea in Peninsular India was designated ‘Kerala’ in Sanskrit literature even from very ancient times. The words *Kerala* and *Chera* have been used almost as synonyms by all early writers on Kerala. An attempt is made by some scholars to derive the name *Kerala* from the word *Kera* (coconut) which is one of the characteristic products of the West Coast. But this view is not shared by all writers. Dr. Gundert, the author of the monumental Malayalam Dictionary, observes that the word ‘Keram’ is ‘the Canarese pronunciation’ of the word ‘Cheram’ and he describes ‘Keralam’ as ‘Cheram’- the country between Gokarnam and Cumari. The word *Charal* in Tamil means the declivity of a hill or a mountain slope and according to some writers the word must have got itself corrupted in course of time into *Cheral*, giving its name to the Kerala or Chera country. This theory emphasises the mountainous character of Kerala as the basis of the origin of its name. However, the derivation of the name ‘Chera’ or ‘Kerala’ from *Charal* is a little far-fetched. In ancient works the land is invariably referred to as the Chera country and the ruler of the land as the *Chera* or *Cheral*. There is no mention at all of the word *Charal*. There is also a view that the word *Keralam* (*Cheralam*) is made of the two words *cher* (sand) and *alam* (region) and that it literally means the slushy land.¹ Though *Cheralam* is a compound of the words *cher* and *alam*, it may be pointed out that the name is capable of a different interpretation. *Cher* or *Chernta* means ‘added’ and hence *Cheralam* means the land which was added on (to the already existing mountainous or hilly country). The word *Cheralam* might have, in course of time, got itself Sanskritised as *Keralam*. The above derivation would make the land of Kerala a reclamation or addition to the land from the sea, lending support to the geological interpretation given to the Parasurama tradition.

1. Komattil Achutha Menon, *Ancient Kerala*, p. 7.

The land of Kerala is also alternatively known as 'Malabar'. Even from the time of Cosmas Indicopleustus (6th century A.D.) the Kerala coast is referred to as *Male* by Arab navigators. Albiruni (973-1048 AD.) is perhaps the first Arab writer to call the country Malabar. The names Malibar, Manibar, Mulibar and Munibar are, however, indiscriminately used by Arab writers to describe the land. The name is reminiscent of the word "Malanadu" which literally means "the hill country". According to Logan the name Malabar is of semi-foreign origin. It is suggested that Malabar is a compound of two syllables, viz., *mala* and *bar*, the former a Dravidian word meaning hill or mountain and the latter either the Persian word *bar* which means country or the Arabic word *barr* which means continent. But it may be pointed out that the term 'Malabar' need not necessarily be of semi-foreign origin. As the country was known as 'Malanadu' in medieval Tamil and early Malayalam, the name Malabar could well be a corruption of the alternative word 'Malavaram' which also means 'the hilly country'. Whether the origin of the word is semi-foreign or fully indigenous, there is no doubt whatsoever that Malabar has taken its name from the hilly or mountainous character of the country.

CHAPTER II

A PEEP INTO THE SOURCES

Historiography

A very brief sketch of the development of Kerala historiography is attempted here as a prelude to the detailed analysis of the sources of Kerala history. 'Ancient India', it is said, "produced no Herodotus or Thucydides, no Livy or Tacitus". This oft quoted statement is generally true of ancient Kerala as well. Though historiography in the modern sense of the term is of relatively recent origin in Kerala, it cannot be said that there was the complete absence of the historiographic tradition in early or medieval Kerala.

The *Mushakavamsa*, a *Mahakavya* in Sanskrit, composed about 1100 AD. by Atula, the court poet of the Mushaka king Srikantha, bears evidence of the historiographic tradition which prevailed in an embryonic form in the early period of Kerala history. It may be noted that this work is anterior to the *Rajatarangini* of Kalhana believed to have been composed in 1149 A.D. In so far as it deals with the history of the Mushaka kingdom of Kolathunad, it provides the first independent dynastic history available in the whole range of Sanskrit literature. The historiographic tradition as evidenced by the *Mushakavamsa* remained dormant during the succeeding centuries. It registered a significant revival in the sixteenth century with the composition of the *Tuhafat-ul-Mujahiddin* by Shaik Zainuddin, the noted Arabic scholar who lived at Ponnani. Though this work deals mainly with the political history of the Portuguese period from 1498 to 1583, it also throws light on the social customs of medieval Malabar. The accounts of the Portuguese, Dutch and English writers kept the historiographic tradition alive and provided much useful information on the political and social history of Kerala for the period after the advent of the European powers. The names of Duarte Barbosa, Canter Visscher, Dr. Hermann Gundert and Samuel Mateer deserve mention in this context. The compilation of the *Malabar Manual* (1887) by Logan on the basis of the historical material available at the time was a landmark in Kerala historiography. It inspired the compilation of the State Manuals of Travancore and Cochin by native scholars in later years.

The native scholars of the age who wrote works on the early history of Kerala were preoccupied with political history. The emphasis on social or cultural history was missing in their works. The contents of the *Tiruvitamkoor Charitram* (1868) by Pachu Muthatu and the *History of Travancore* (1878) by P. Shungoonny Menon bear evidence to this lacuna. The first native historian

who grasped the importance of the social aspects of Kerala history was K.P. Padmanabha Menon (1857-1919). His *Kochi Rajya Charitram* (Malayalam) published in 1912 and *History of Kerala* (English Vols I-IV) published posthumously between 1924 and 1937 give considerable attention to social history. This represented a new and welcome trend in Kerala historiography. But Padmanabha Menon wrote at a time when the implications of the Tamil Sangam works for the study of early Kerala history had not been grasped by scholars. Nor had archaeological or epigraphical studies made much progress. His work, therefore, suffered from obvious limitations. K.M. Panikkar, another Kerala historian of repute, who dealt with the history of the Portuguese and Dutch periods and Mysore-Kerala relations, had also his main focus on political history in his works. The eminent anthropologists, L.K. Ananthakrishna Iyer and his son L.A. Krishna Iyer, undertook detailed studies on the castes and tribes of Kerala. Though these studies were a distinct contribution to the social history of Kerala, their method of analysis was more anthropological than historical. A later work of L.A. Krishna Iyer entitled *Social History of Kerala* published in two volumes in 1968 and 1972 respectively also contains more of anthropology than history. All these works have their intrinsic limitations as works of history.

It was left to Prof. Elamkulam P.N. Kunjan Pillai (1904-1973) to provide new horizons to Kerala historiography. What was conceived of and written till then as Kerala history of the ancient and early medieval periods was nothing but a string of legends, superstitions and fictions and had not had much of basis in fact. Prof. Elamkulam undertook a systematic study of early inscriptions and Tamil and Malayalam literary works and reconstructed the early history of Kerala, thereby enabling us to get a continuous and connected history from the Sangam age to the Portuguese period. He provided a definite chronological framework to the political history of Kerala during the pre-Portuguese period by bringing to light the history of the Ay kingdom of South Kerala, the Ezhimala kingdom of North Kerala and the Second Chera Empire (800-1102 AD). The study of social history also got a boost as a result of his labours, for he dealt in detail with such topics of sociological interest as *Marumakkathayam*, *Janmi* system, caste, landlord—tenant relationship, Devadasi system etc. Prof. M.G.S.Narayanan lent further dimensions to the historiography of Kerala pertaining to the same period. He too focused his attention on the study of inscriptions and worked out his own genealogy and chronology of the rulers of the Second Chera Empire. His study of the history of Kerala during the 9th to the 12th centuries also throws light on several aspects of social and cultural history and supplements that of Prof. Elamkulam, in spite of some of the differences in their perceptions and conclusions,

The study of such subjects as art and literature was also pursued simultaneously by other groups of scholars, thereby widening the horizons of the cultural history of Kerala. Western scholars like Dr. Cousins and Stella Kramrisch studied, in collaboration with R.V. Poduval, Superintendent of

Archaeology in erstwhile Travancore, such aspects of Kerala history and culture as arts, architecture, sculpture and painting. The works on the temples of Kerala published in more recent times by K.V. Soundararajan and H. Sarkar of the Archaeological Survey of India also deserve mention in this context. The murals of Kerala have come in for special study at the hands of M.G. Sasibhooshan. The work of compiling detailed, histories of Malayalam language and literature was undertaken by scholars like P. Govinda Pillai, R. Narayana Panikkar and Ullur S. Parameswara Iyer and of Sanskrit language and literature in Kerala by Vadakkumkur Raja Raja Varma and Dr. K.K. Raja.

In recent times the various aspects of Kerala studies — political, social, economic and cultural — have attracted the attention of western scholars and quite a few works have come out as products of their labours. George Woodcock's *Kerala-A Portrait of the Malabar Coast*, R.C. Bristow's *Cochin Saga*, Robin Jeoffrey's *The Decline of Nayar Dominance*, Rolland E. Miller's *Mappila Muslims of Malabar* etc. deserve mention in this context. Dr. Nossiter of the London School of Economics has come out with his studies on the political and constitutional developments in modern Kerala.

What is given above is only a very brief sketch of the development of Kerala historiography. More details on this subject can be had from the following sections of this chapter and the section on *Historical Works* in Chapter XXX.

Traditional Sources

Historians of the orthodox school in Kerala and elsewhere relied till recently on the different versions of the Malayalam work *Keralolpathi* and the Sanskrit work *Keralamahatmyam* in reconstructing early Kerala history, but both these works are of doubtful or no historical value. Though they deal with events and personages supposed to belong to early periods of Kerala history, they are not contemporary works transmitting information of genuine historical validity. They abound in historical inaccuracies, improbabilities and anachronisms and serve only to confuse the student of history. Even Logan, the author of the *Malabar Manual*, who has given a detailed account of the traditional early history of Kerala on the basis of the information contained in the *Keralolpathi*, rejects the work as a “farrago of legendary nonsense having for its definite aim the securing for the Brahmin caste of unbounded power and influence in the country”. According to K.P. Padmanabha Menon it is “an ill-digested and uncollated collection of different versions huddled together in inextricable confusion”. It has to be remembered that the *Keralolpathi* and the *Keralamahatmyam* were composed only as recently as the 18th or the 19th century and hence they have not any real value as sources of early Kerala history¹. In view of the paucity of real historical sources and

1. The *Keralolpathi* which gives, imaginary names of various Perumals of old also refers to the invasion of Kerala by Krishnadeva Raya (1509-1530) and to such foreign powers as the Portuguese, the Dutch and the English. This is positive proof of the fact that the work was composed only sometime in the British period.

the futility of the traditional sources mentioned above, students of history have to depend on diverse materials for the reconstruction of the history of Kerala, particularly of the ancient and medieval periods. These sources may be classified under two major heads, *viz.*, Literature and Archaeology.

LITERATURE

The literary sources may themselves be classified into two heads, *viz.*, indigenous and foreign. The former may be found mainly in Sanskrit, Tamil and Malayalam.

Sanskrit Works

The earliest Sanskrit work which contains reference to Kerala is perhaps the *Aitareya Aranyaka*. It refers to the *Cherapadah* as one of the three peoples who violated some of the ancient injunctions. The great epics of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* also contain references to Kerala. It is stated in the former that Kerala was one of the countries to which Sugriva sent emissaries in search of Sita. The *Mahabharata* refers to the Chera king as having supplied provisions and large contingents of fighting men for the belligerent armies in the battle of Kurukshetra. Katyayana (4th century B.C.) and Patanjali (2nd century B.C.) also show acquaintance with the geography of Kerala, though Panini (7th century B.C. if not earlier) does not make any mention of the land. The reference in Kautilya's *Arthashastra* (4th century B.C.) to the river Churni (Periyar) as one of the rivers of the land where pearls could be found has already been mentioned. The *Puranas* like *Vayu*, *Matsya*, *Padma*, *Skanda* and *Markandeya* also make mention of Kerala. The *Raghuvamsa* of Kalidasa which contains a beautiful description of Kerala bears evidence of the fact that the land had become familiar to writers in the north by the 4th century A.D.

Sanskrit works composed in Kerala have helped in the elucidation of some of the complex problems in Kerala history.¹ The *Tapatisamvarana* and *Subhadradhananjaya*, two dramas written by the royal dramatist Kulasekhara (probably Kulasekhara Alwar himself), are among the earliest works of historical value in Sanskrit. These works make it clear that their author was an emperor of Kerala who had his capital at Mahodayapuram. A Sanskrit manuscript available in the *Tekke Madham*, Trichur, which gives details of the career of Padmapada, the disciple of Sankaracharya (788-820 A.D.), mentions a Kulasekhara as the contemporary ruler of Mahodayapuram while the *Sivanandalahari* of Sankaracharya mentions a king by name Rajasekhara. On the evidence of both these works it is possible to infer that Sankaracharya was a contemporary of both Kulasekhara Alwar (800-820) and Rajasekhara Varman (820-844). The *Sankaranarayaniyam* written in 869 A.D. by Sankaranarayana, the astronomer who lived in the court of Sthanu Ravi (844-855), is of great value in determining the chronology of this Chera

1. In arranging the Sanskrit sources *The Contribution of Kerala to Sanskrit Literature* by Dr. K.K. Raja has been mainly used.

emperor. It is made clear in this work that it was written in the 25th regnal year of Sthanu Ravi. On the basis of this evidence the date of accession of Sthanu Ravi to the Chera throne has been fixed at 844 A.D.¹ The *Yamaka Kavyas* of Vasudeva Bhattatiri who was patronised by a Kulasekhara are also of some historical value.

The *Mushakavamsa* (11th century), to which reference was made earlier, is the most important historical *Mahakavya* in Sanskrit. Only the first 15 cantos of this poem are available. While the earlier cantos contain mainly legendary material relating to the origin and early history of the Mushaka kings of Kolathunad, the later ones furnish reliable historical information. The poem contains references to the expedition of Kulottunga Chola (1070-1122 AD.) to Kerala and to the patronage of the Buddhist *Vihara* at Sri Mulavasam by the Mushaka king. It refers to the change of succession from the patrilineal to the matrilineal system and also throws light on the state of religious harmony prevailing in the land. The *Syanandurapurana Samuchaya* written in 1168 A.D. is of much value in so far as it makes clear that the Venad kings were still following the patrilineal (*Makkathayam*) system.

The *Pradyumnabhyudayam* of Ravi Varma Kulasekhara (1299-1314), one of the celebrated dramas in Sanskrit literature written for the specific purpose of being enacted in the Sri Padmanabhaswami temple in connection with the annual festival, gives us interesting glimpses of the intellectual attainments of its royal author. Samudrabandha, a court poet of this ruler, has written a valuable commentary on the *Alankarasarvaswa* and it contains a long description of Quilon besides giving details about Ravi Varma himself. The *Sukasandesa* of Lakshmidasa compiled in the first half of the 14th century is also of some importance. It describes the story of a message sent through a parrot by a lover from Rameswaram to Trikanamatilakam. Such places as Trivandrum, Quilon, Tiruvalla, Kaduthuruthi, Tripunithura, Trikariyur, Mahodayapuram and Trikanamatilakam are described in the work. The poem also contains a description of the river Periyar and the pastimes of the ladies of Mahodayapuram. The *Vitanidrabhana* and *Sivavilasam* compiled towards the end of the 14th century also mention some of the rulers of Perumpadappu Swarupam. The former contains reference to a prince by name Rama Varma who ruled over this kingdom before the shifting of its capital from Mahodayapuram to Cochin. The *Sivavilasam* is a *Mahakavya* written by the famous poet Damodara under the patronage of Kerala Varma, a ruler of Odanad, which had at this time its capital at Kandiyyur (Mavelikara taluk) and its theme is the choice of Yuvaraja Rama Varma of Perumpadappu Swarupam as her husband by Unniati, the daughter of the Odanad Raja.

The *Lilatilakam*, the great work on grammar and rhetoric written in Sanskrit, is also of historical value. On the basis of its internal evidence the work has been assigned to the period 1385-1400 A.D.² It contains references

1. See *Some Problems in Kerala History*, Prof. Elamkulam P.N. Kunjan Pillai, p.2.

2. Prof. Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, *Lilatilakam Manipravallalakshanam*, pp. 17-22.

to Chera Udaya Marthanda Varma (1383-1444 A.D.), the ruler of Venad and Ravi Varma who was its *Yuvaraja* at the time and also to the defeat of Vikrama Pandya at the hands of the latter.

The *Kokilasandesa* of Uddanda Sastrikal who was patronized by Manavikrama the Great (1466—1471), the Zamorin of Calicut, contains references to some of the most important pilgrim centres of North Kerala such as Tirunelli, Taliparamba, Trichambaram, Triprangode and Tirunavai. It also describes the ships lying in the Calicut harbour and testifies to the flourishing commerce of the Zamorin's kingdom. The *Mamamkam* festival held at Tirunavai on the banks of the Bharatapuzha is also mentioned. The *Mayuraduta* of Udaya and *Subhagasandesa* of Narayana are two other works which give some historical and topographical information about the 15th and 16th centuries. The *Kamasandesa* of Matrudatta refers to the abolition of tolls in Cochin in the 16th century. The *Vyavaharamala* is also a work of this period and it embodies the code of civil and criminal laws.

The *Ramavarma Vilasam* and *Ratnaketudaya*, two Sanskrit dramas by Balakavi, are of some use in reconstructing the medieval history of Cochin. The former describes in five Acts the story of Kesava Rama Varma (1565-1601), the most celebrated king of Cochin in the Portuguese period. The works of Melpattur Narayana Bhattatiri (1547-1640) also transmit valuable historical information. In the introductory portion of his grammatical work *Prakriyasarvaswa* he describes the great qualities of his royal patron Devanarayana of Ambalapuzha. The various *Prasastis* written by Narayana Bhattatiri are also useful. The *Devanarayana Prasasti* and *Manavikrama Prasasti* were written by him in praise of Devanarayana of Ambalapuzha and Manavikrama, the Zamorin of Calicut, respectively. The *Gosrinagara Varnana* and the *Vira Kerala Prasasti* contain descriptions of the town of Cochin and Vira Kerala (1601-1615 A.D.), the Cochin ruler.

The *Bhramarasandesa* compiled early in the 17th century by Vasudeva is another Sanskrit *Kavya* which furnishes useful historical and geographical information. The theme of the poem is the message sent through a bee by a lover from Trivandrum to his sweet heart at Swetadurga (Kottakkal) in Malabar. Such places as Trivandrum, Quilon, Tiruvalla, Kumaranellur, Ambalapuzha, Vaikam, Tripunithura, Tiruvanchikulam, Irinjalakuda, Trichur, Guruvayur and Tirunavai are mentioned as places enroute. The famous *Mamamkam* festival is also described in this work. The *Balamarthandavijaya* of Devaraja is a historical drama in five Acts which deals with Marthanda Varma's (1729-1758) dedication of his kingdom to Sri Padmanabha and many other historical events of the reign. The *Sri Padmanabhacharita* of Krishna Sarma, a court poet of Marthanda Varma, also contains many references to Marthanda Varma and his achievements.

The *Balaramabharata* of the Dharma Raja (1758-1798) contains a beautiful description of Trivandrum. The *Ramavarmayasobhushana* written by Sadasiva Dikshitar is a poem composed in praise of the Dharma Raja. The *Vanchimaharajastava* of Aswati Tirunal is also a panegyric on the Dharma

Raja by his nephew. The *Alankarabhushana*, a work on poetics by Kalyana Subramanya, contains verses in praise of the Dharma Raja and his family deity Sri Padmanabha. The *Vasulakshmikalyana* of Venkatasubramanya is a Sanskrit drama dealing with the marriage of king Rama Varma of Travancore with Vasulakshmi, princess of Sindhu and perhaps it alludes to an episode in the life of the Dharma Raja. The *Padmanabhavijaya* by Subramania, another court poet of the Dharma Raja, contains a description of the exploits of the king and the greatness of Trivandrum and Padmanabhapuram. Another important Sanskrit work which is of historical value is the *Chatakasandesha* written by an anonymous Brahmin scholar who came from North Kerala to the court of the Dharma Raja in search of patronage. It contains several verses in praise of the king and also refers to such important towns as Tirunavai, Trichur, Cranganore, Chennamangalam, Tripunithura, Vaikam, Ambalapuzha, Haripad, Kayamkulam, Trivandrum and Padmanabhapuram. The *Chatakasandesha* is also helpful in assigning the date of the shifting of the capital of Travancore from Padmanabhapuram to Trivandrum to the closing years of the reign of the Dharma Raja, for the Brahmin scholar met the Raja at Padmanabhapuram after 1790 only.

Tamil Literature

The early Tamil works form one of the most important sources of information for the history of ancient Kerala. Ancient Tamil literature is replete with references to the land of Kerala, its rulers and its people. It unfolds the picture of a settled society and well developed civilization. The Tamil works which are of particular value in this connection are those of the Sangam age which covers roughly the first five centuries of the Christian era and many of them were in fact composed in Kerala itself. Among Tamil works the most important are the *Patittupattu*, the *Agananuru*, the *Purananuru* and the *Silappadikaram*. The *Patittupattu* (Ten Decads) is an anthology of 100 poems divided into 10 equal sections each of which was composed by a particular poet in praise of a Chera king. It deals exclusively with the Cheras and as such is the most valuable Tamil work for the reconstruction of the political history of ancient Kerala. The *Agananuru* is a collection of 400 love poems of 13 to 31 lines each while the *Purananuru* is a collection of 400 poems dealing with external matters like war, government, etc., each poem running into 4 to 40 lines. These works also give us interesting glimpses of early Chera history. Among the poets who composed poems for Sangam works the names of Parinar, Kapilar and Auvvaiyar deserve special mention as several of their songs deal with Kerala life and culture. The *Kuruntokai* and the *Nattinai*, both collections of love poems, the former 401 and the latter 400 in number, also yield some useful information on early Kerala history. The *Silappadikaram* of Ilango Adikal (heir-apparent), who is alleged to be the younger brother of Senkuttuvan, die Chera king, who figures in the epic, is a post-Sangam Tamil work which throws some light on the history and geography of ancient Kerala.

Some of the other Tamil works composed in the post-Sangam period also supply information on Chera history. The *Muthollayiram* composed about

800 A.D. makes references to the Cheras and their capital Vanchi. The hymns of the Saiva Nayanars and the Vaishnava Alvars contain references to some of the holy shrines of Kerala. The *Perumal Tirumozhi* by Kulasekhara Alwar (early 9th century A.D.), the great Vaishnava saint and founder of the Second Chera Empire, provides some historical information. The Vaishnava saint Nammalvar (Sathakopa) who flourished towards the close of the 9th century A.D. has sung songs in praise of the famous Vaishnava shrines of Kerala including that of Sri Padmanabha at Trivandrum. His *Tiruvaimozhi* may be particularly mentioned in this context. The *Periyapuranam* of Sekkilar (12th century A.D.) narrates the story of Cheraman Perumal Nayanar who was himself one of the Chera rulers. The work refers to the Chera capital of Tiruvanchikulam and the joint pilgrimages of Cheraman Perumal Nayanar and Sundaramurthi Nayanar. Ottakuthan, a Tamil poet of the 12th century, refers in his *Takkayagapparani* to the transfer of the capital of the Cheras from Vanchi to Makotai and the reference provides a valuable clue to the identification of Vanchimutur, the original capital of the first Chera Empire in Kerala rather than in Tamil Nadu.

Malayalam Works

Malayalam emerged as a language distinct from Tamil in the 9th century A.D., but literary works of historical value in this language are available only from the 12th or 13th century. Many of these works were composed under the patronage of the rulers of local dynasties exercising sway in the different parts of Kerala and hence they have to be used with considerable caution. Their direct contribution to historical knowledge is very little but their indirect value to the historian is considerable. The *Unniachicharitam* and *Unnichirutevicharitam* composed in the latter half of the 13th century A.D. are among the earliest Malayalam works of value to the historian. They are devoted to detailed accounts of the *Devadasis* who had attained fame in those days, but they also throw light on certain aspects of the political and social life of North Kerala in the 13th century A.D. The *Anantapuravarnana* written in the first half of the 14th century contains a good description of Trivandrum of the time. Another important Malayalam source is the celebrated *Unnunilandesam*, written in the latter half of the 14th century by an anonymous author. The date of its composition has been assigned to 1350-1365 A.D.¹ The *Unnunilandesam*, throws light on the achievements of the Venad rulers Iravi Iravi Varman (1350-1376) and Aditya Varma Sarvanganatha (1376-1383) in the realms of war and peace. It narrates the story of a message sent by a lover from Trivandrum to his lady love at Kaduthuruthi, the messenger himself being Aditya Varma Sarvanganatha, the brother of Iravi Iravi Varman. The work contains valuable information regarding the political geography of the region from Trivandrum to Kaduthuruthi. Its references to the local kingdoms of Venad, Odanad, Tekkumkur and Vadakkumkur enrich our historical knowledge.

1. *Unnunilandesam Charitradrishtiyilude*, Prof. Elamkulam P.N. Kunjan Pillai, p. 77.

The *Unniaticharitam* composed by the end of the 14th century throws light on the early history of the Perumpadappu Swarupam and its relations with the kingdom of Odanad. The *Kokasandesam* composed about 1400 A.D. also furnishes useful historical material. Its reference to the swan passing through Kunaka (Trikana matilakam) and Vanchi before it reaches Tiruvanchikulam (Tiruanchikalam) provides a valuable piece of evidence in identifying Vanchimutur, the original capital of the first Chera Empire. The *Chandrolsavam*, a Malayalam poem of exquisite charm composed by a Namboothiri scholar in the first half of the 16th century, has for its scene of action Chittilappalli in Trichur district and it throws light on the social and cultural life of age. Some of the Malayalam *Champus* like *Rajaratnavaliyam* (16th century) throw light on certain aspects of the history of Cochin. The *Rajaratnavaliyam* was written by Narayana, the most famous of the Mahisha mangalam poets, in praise of Kesava Rama Varma (1565-1601).

The *Kandiyur-Mattam Patapattu* written by Nilakanta of Cheppad towards the close of the 16th century contains references to *Manigramam*, *Onathailu*, the Chiravai family, the Venad ruler, etc. The *Patapattu* (war song) written by an anonymous author during the Dutch period describes the political developments in the Perumpadappu Swarupam from 1646 to 1670 A.D. The *Mamamkam Kilipattu* written by Katancherri Namboothiri, a courtier of Bharani Tirunal Manavikrama (1684-1705), the great Zamorin, is one of the most important sources of the later history of Calicut. It describes some of the Zamorins of the 17th century and gives detailed descriptions of the *Thai Puyam* celebration of 1693 and the two *Mamamkams* of 1694 and 1695 A.D. In addition, there are several *Chaver* poems like *Kandar Menon Pattu* (1683), *Ramacha Panikkar Pattu* (17th century) etc., dealing with the exploits of heroes who died in the periodical *Mamamkam* fights. The *Kuchelavrittham* and *Bhashashtapadi* of Ramapurathu Warriar and *Marthanda mahatmyam* by an anonymous author written in the first half of the 18th century are useful for the reconstruction of the history of the reign of Marthanda Varma (1729-1758). The *Tullal* works of Kunjan Nambiar allude to several customs prevalent in Kerala in the 18th century.

In addition to the literary works mentioned above, there are also some miscellaneous works in Malayalam which are of indirect historical value. The *Sthalapuranas*, local ballads or *Pattukal* and *Grandhavaris* belong to this category. The *Sthalapuranas* are temple chronicles or records dealing mainly with the origin and early history of the temples. They contain several exaggerations and distortions and have therefore to be used with considerable caution. Apart from the *Sthalapuranas*, the temples have also preserved some records of historical value. For example, the Guruvayur temple has in its possession records which prove that Haidros Kutti Muppan who was in charge of the place made under orders from Tipu Sultan an annual grant to the temple for the conduct of daily *pujas*. The records in the Kumaranellur temple show that the *Uralar* had even the power to inflict capital punishment (*Kollum Kolayum*) on the tenants.

The local ballads which suffer from the same defect as the *Sthalapuranas* are also not unimpeachable sources of history. Nevertheless, they also yield some useful historical information.

One of the important historical ballads is the *Iravikutti Pillai Pattu* which describes the exploits of Iravikutti Pillai who fought valiantly against the forces of Tirumala Nayak and met with heroic death in the battle of Kaniyakulam (1634 A.D.). The *Putuvatapattu* about Kottayam Kerala Varma, the *Valia Tampi Kunchu Tampi Kathai* about the conflict between Marthanda Varma and his cousins and the *Diwanvetti* about Raja Kesavadas are some other ballads of historical value. The *Vadakkan Pattukal* or Northern Ballads are, the most valuable of the local ballads. Composed mainly in the 17th or 18th century they deal with the exploits of medieval heroes or heroines. The *Tacholi Ballads* describe the fortunes of Tacholi Meppayil Kunji Otenan, the celebrated Nair hero of the 16th century. The group of songs known as the *Puthuram Pattukal* relate to the family of Aromal Chevakar, the famous Tiyya hero assigned to the 17th century A.D. There are also ballads which describe the exploits of the Kunjali Marakkars, the rebellion of Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja and the events connected with Tipu's invasions. The *Northern Ballads* give us interesting glimpses of the social customs and institutions of North Kerala during the period prior to the establishment of British supremacy. The *Margam Kalipattu*, *Kalyana Pattukal*, *Pallipattukal*, etc., of the Syrian Christians and the *Mappila Pattukal* of the Malabar Muslims will also yield much historical material, if studied properly.

Then there are the *Grandhavaris* which are mainly cadjan leaf documents or chronicles preserved in the archives of the various palaces. Many of them deal with dynastic history and the political events of the states over which the dynasties exercised sway. The *Matilakam Grandhavari* (Records) at Trivandrum and the *Grandhavari* of the Zamorins of Calicut deserve special mention in this context. The *Matilakam* Records originally belonged to the temple of Sri Padmanabha, the tutelary deity of the royal house of Travancore, but they now form part of the collection of cadjan (palm leaf) manuscripts (*churunas*) in the possession of the Central Archives of the State Government at Trivandrum. Comprised originally of 3500 *churunas*, each *churuna* consisting of 1000 cadjan leaves on an average, the *Matilakam Grandhavari* constitutes perhaps the largest hoard of cadjan records in the whole of India. As the *Grandhavaris* were invariably compiled by panegyrists or *Prasasti* writers employed in the service of the rulers they contain several exaggerated statements and have therefore to be utilised with great care.

The records preserved by some private families are also valuable as source material. The manuscripts preserved by the Periavittu Mudaliar (Mudaliar Manuscripts) are among the earliest records to prove the invasion of South Travancore by Tirumala Nayak (1634). The records of the Paliyam family at Chennamangalam have also supplied similar records of historical value. They are preserved in the Regional Archives, Ernakulam.

Classical Accounts

The accounts of foreign travelers supplement the indigenous sources in the reconstruction of Kerala history. The accounts of the classical writers of Greece and Rome contain references to ancient Kerala. The Greek Ambassador Megasthenes (4th century B.C.) refers to the Chera kingdom in his account of ancient India. Pliny (1st century AD.), the anonymous author of the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* (1st century A.D.), and Ptolemy (2nd century A.D.) are the most celebrated of the classical geographers whose accounts have been of great help in recapturing the outlines of early Kerala history. Pliny refers to the ruler of Kerala as Calobotras. The *Periplus* refers to the ruler as Keprobotras and the land he ruled over as Limurike. Ptolemy mentions Karoura as the capital of Limurike where Kerobotras lived. All these writers give detailed information about the thriving trade between the Kerala coast and the Roman Empire through the ports of Muzirs, Tyndis, Barace, etc. The *Peutingerian Tables*, a set of maps said to have been copied from the fresco paintings in Rome about 226 AD., are cited as evidence of the alleged existence of a temple of Augustus near Muziris and of a regular Roman army being stationed in the town for the protection of Roman commerce, but the authenticity of this evidence is denied by several writers. The most important classical writer after Ptolemy is the Byzantine monk, Cosmas Indilcopleustus (6th century A.D.). His *Topographia Indika Christiana* contains perhaps one of the earliest references to the town of Quilon (Male ?) and the first indisputable evidence of Christian activity in Kerala.

Chinese Accounts

Chinese accounts also yield historical information about ancient Kerala. Some scholars have expressed the view that the Chinese pilgrim Yuan Chwang (Hiuen Tsang) who visited India in the 7th century A.D., visited Kerala also, but this view is untenable. It is now generally agreed that the Chinese pilgrim came only up to Kanchipuram and that he returned to the north without visiting Kerala. A Chinese merchant by name Wang Ta Yuan visited a number of foreign countries between the years 1330 and 1349 and wrote a book entitled *Tao-i-Chilio* (Description of the Barbarians of the Isles). It contains eye witness accounts of such places as Kayamkulam, Mount Eli and Calicut on the Kerala coast. Ma Huan, a Chinese Muslim writer of the 15th century, has also written about the Kerala coast. His notices of Cochin and Calicut are particularly valuable. Ma Huan gives an interesting description of the port and town of Calicut which was at the time of his visit a great emporium of trade frequented by merchants from all quarters. Also the first foreign traveler to give an account of Cochin, he describes the sea port as well as the ruler and the people of Cochin.

Arab Sources

The accounts of Arab travelers and geographers form an important source for the history of Kerala from the 9th century A.D. onwards. One of the earliest Arab writers on Kerala was the Arab merchant Sulaiman. He is believed to

have visited the coast in 851 A.D., though there is also a view that Sulaiman did not actually visit Kerala and that he wrote his account only on the basis of second-hand information. He has observed that Quilon was “the most considerable port in South India at the time” and that it was the only port in India touched by the huge Chinese ships on their homeward voyage from Persia. Ibn Khurdadbeh (844-848 A.D.), another Muslim writer, refers to the Malabar coast and the export of rice to Sarandwip (Ceylon) from Bahattan (Baliapatam). Ibnul Faquih (902), Ibn Rusta (903), Abu Zaid (915) and Masudi (945-955) are the other Arab writers who have made references to Kerala in the 10th century, but of these Masudi alone actually visited Kerala. Most of these writers only repeat the statements of Sulaiman and do not furnish any fresh information.

Albiruni (973-1048) was another illustrious Muslim traveler of the middle ages, but he has very little information to give about Kerala. Idrisi (1154 A.D.) and Yaqut (1189-1229 A.D.) give information on the coastal towns and customs of Kerala. Rashiduddin (1247-1281) is another Arab traveler whose account is particularly valuable for the information it gives on the conditions in Kolathunad in North Malabar. Al Kazwini (1236-1275 AD.), an Arab geographer, who compiled his account of India from the works of others, gives information about Quilon. Dimishqi (1325 AD.) and Abdul Fida (1273-1331 AD.), are two other Muslim writers on Malabar whose accounts are useful as source material for the 13th and 14th centuries. Of all the places mentioned by them Mount Eli (Ezhi Mala) deserves special notice, for their impressions are confirmed by the accounts of Ibn Batuta (1342-1347 AD.), the African globe-trotter who followed them. Ibn Batuta visited Calicut no less than six times and has left us an interesting account of the port of Calicut, its king and people. He also visited Quilon which he describes as “one of the finest cities in Malabar with magnificent markets and wealthy merchants.” He refers particularly to the pepper trade and the huge Chinese junks he found at the port. Of all the Arab writers Ibn Batuta is the most objective and his account of Kerala is therefore more reliable and accurate than those of the writers who preceded him. It may be mentioned here that most of the Arab writers refer to several incredible customs of Kerala from hearsay and their accounts have therefore to be used with great care.

European Travellers

The works of European travellers who came to India after the period of Cosmas Indicopleustus (6th century AD.) constitute a mine of information for the medieval history of Kerala. Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela, a Jewish traveller from Spain, who travelled extensively in the east between 1159 and 1173 AD., gives us an interesting account of Quilon and its people. His account is perhaps based on secondhand information, for it is a matter of doubt whether he actually visited India. Marco Polo, the celebrated Venetian traveller, visited Quilon and other places in Kerala towards the end of the 13th century and he gives us picturesque details of the country, its people and its natural resources.

His description of Mount Eli is particularly interesting. John of Monte Corvino, the first Roman Catholic missionary to China and the first Archbishop of Peking, touched Quilon on his way to China towards the end of the 13th century. He has recorded that at the time of his visit the Chinese, Christian and Jewish traders of Quilon were being gradually ousted from the position of commercial prominence by the Muslims who had begun to settle there in large numbers. Friar Odoric of Pordenone touched Quilon in 1322 on his way to China. He refers to the flourishing trade of Quilon, the existence of a Jewish community at the place and the reverence of the Hindus for the cow. Friar Jordanus of Severic came to Quilon in 1324 for doing missionary work among the St. Thomas Christians. He was later appointed by the Pope as the Bishop of Caulam (Quilon) latinised as Colombum. His *Mirabilia Descriptia* gives a useful account of the land and its people. Jordanus alludes to the extensive spice trade at the Quilon port and the prosperous Christian community of the place. He pays a tribute to the rulers of Malabar for their spirit of religious toleration and also speaks highly of the astrologers and physicians of the land. Incidentally, he is also the first foreign writer who gives an account of the *Marumakkathayam* or matrilineal system of inheritance and this lends support to the view that the patrilineal system might have been in vogue in Kerala in the earlier period.

Another distinguished writer of the middle ages was John De Marignolli of Florence, the Papal Legate. He touched Quilon in 1347 A.D. on his way from Europe to China and lived there for more than a year preaching at the St. George Church. Nicolo Conti (1440-'41), the Italian traveller, visited Quilon and Cochin. He was impressed by the flourishing trade in ginger, pepper and cinnamon which was carried on at the port of Quilon. He also gives a fine description of the jack and mango trees on the coast. His account of Cochin is one of the earliest foreign notices of that port. A notable non-European foreign writer who gives information about Kerala in the 15th century is Abdur Razzak, the Persian Ambassador, who visited the Zamorin at Calicut in 1442. He testifies to the predominance of Malabar trade with the Arab countries and the dominant role played by the Arab community in it. Athanasius Nikitin (1468-1474), the Russian traveller, gives us a description of the Calicut port and the big bazaar there. Hieronimo Di Santa Stefano, a Genoese traveller, visited Calicut towards the close of the 15th century. Though he writes very little about the city, its government and trade, he gives an account of the peculiar customs and manners of the people. Another European traveller who visited Calicut in the 15th century was Pero De Covilham, a Portuguese diplomat, linguist and scholar. He came to Calicut in an Arab ship in the guise of a Muslim about a decade before the landing of Vasco da Gama at the place. He was particularly impressed by the prosperous trade in pepper carried on through the Calicut port.

As we come to the Portuguese period, the sources of historical information become more copious. Among the major sources are the writings of Ludovico De Varthema and Duarte Barbosa. The former, an Italian writer, travelled in

India during the years 1502-1508 and has left valuable record of his impressions. His account of Calicut, its government and people is particularly interesting. Duarte Barbosa was a Portuguese subject who served his government in Malabar from 1500 to 1516. He was well versed in the Malayalam language and as such he got opportunities of studying the life of the people intimately. The account he has written of Kerala is a treasure house of information. Ceaser Frederick, a merchant of Venice, who undertook a voyage to the East Indies during the period 1563-1581 also visited Malabar. His account of Cochin conveys a good impression of the commercial importance of that port and the special privileges enjoyed by the Portuguese there. Master Ralph Fitch, the first Englishman to visit Cochin (1583), gives a description of the port and the people of Cochin. Having lived at Cochin for several months, he had ample opportunities to study the life of the people at close quarters. Passing through Quilon he also refers to the pepper trade of the place. Another writer of the Portuguese period was Pyrard de Laval, a Frenchman who visited Calicut early in the 17th century (1607). He was impressed by the religious freedom enjoyed by all classes of people in the city as well as by the brisk trade at the port. He is all praise for the efficiency of the system of judicial administration prevailing in Calicut Pietro Delle Velle, a distinguished Roman, visited Calicut and Mangalore in a Portuguese ship in 1623. His letters throw light on the life of the people of Calicut and also on the state of affairs in the kingdom of the Ikkeri Nayaks who were to exercise sway over the Kasaragod-Hosdurg area of North Kerala in the latter half of the 17th and the first half of the 18th century.

Apart from the accounts of foreign travellers mentioned above, there are also other sources of information for the history of the Portuguese period. The letters written by the Jesuit missionaries who laboured in Kerala contain valuable references to political events and personages of the period. They throw light particularly on the affairs in the Purakkad kingdom and the principalities (Muthedath and Iledath) of the Karappuram Kaimals which now form part of the Alleppey district. A notable work of the period which furnishes some historical information is the *Historia Do Malavar (History of Malabar)* written by Diogo Gonsalves of the Society of Jesus, who worked as a missionary in the Kerala coast and was at Arathunkal in 1610. In this work written in 1615 A.D. the author throws light on the political and social conditions of the age.¹ The full text of the Synod of Diamper (1599) is also available as a source of information for one of the momentous epochs in the history of the Kerala church. A well written Latin copy of the same bound with the coat of arms of Pope Clement VIII is still kept in the Roman archives of the Jesuits.² The accounts of Linschoten (1583-1589 A.D.) who came to India as Secretary to the Archbishop of Goa are also useful. Sir Thomas

1. A brief summary of the work is given in the *Kerala Society Papers Series VI*, pp. 307-8.

2. The English translation of the proceedings of the Synod can be had from *The History of Christianity*, Vol. II, by Hough (pp. 1-132 and 510-690).

Herbert who came to Cochin on the eve of its capture by the Dutch (1663) also gives interesting glimpses of the place.

The Dutch period is rich in source material. Several distinguished Dutch administrators who served in Kerala have left memoirs of their sojourn on the coast. The memoirs of the Dutch Commandeurs Gollennesse, Moens and Van Rheede deserve special mention in this connection. The accounts of Philippus Baldaeus, a clergyman who accompanied Van Goens as his field chaplain during his expedition to Malabar, contains accounts of the Dutch conquest of the region. Dr. John Fryer who visited Cochin and Calicut in the course of his voyage to India (1672-1681) gives some information about these places. The accounts of the capture of Quilon and the treaties with Malabar princes by John Nieuhoff are also of inestimable value. The letters of Canter Visscher who was the Dutch Chaplain at Cochin (1717-1723) contain copious information about the political and social life of Kerala during the Dutch period. It may be mentioned that these letters formed the basis of the monumental *History of Kerala* compiled by K.P. Padmanabha Menon in four volumes. Foster's *English Factories* and Tavernier's *Travels* also throw light on the history of Kerala in the Dutch period. Hamilton, a British interloper who was in the coast early in the 18th century, gives some interesting information. The *Hortus Malabaricus*, the famous work which deals in detail with the medicinal properties of Indian plants, though not a historical treatise, gives us useful information on the flora of the Kerala coast. The accounts left by Mr. Forbes and the French author Acquitail Du Perron as well as by Bartolomeo give us glimpses of Cochin under the Dutch. Mr. Forbes also gives us some information about Calicut which he visited in 1722 while Bartolomeo gives information about Travancore.

The sources of information for the history of the rise of the British power are numerous. The *Tellicherry Consultations* throw light on the transactions of the Zamorin of Calicut with the English East India Company from 1725 to 1751. They also describe internal events, the Zamorin's relations with the Dutch and the Mysorean invasions of Kerala before 1756. The *Report of the Joint Commissioners* (1783) gives an account of the events in Malabar in the first year of the English occupation and some of the events preceding it. Dr. Francis Buchanan who journeyed through Malabar (1800-01) under the orders of Lord Wellesley, the Governor-General of India, has given us comprehensive accounts of the early history of the Malabar kingdoms and the political, social and economic conditions prevailing in Malabar during the period of his visit. The *Land of the Perumals* by Francis Day and the *Land of Charity* and *Native Life in Travancore* by Samuel Mateer give information about Cochin and Travancore in the 19th century. The innumerable treaties and correspondence relating to Malabar arranged and published by Logan in his valuable *Treaties, Engagements, etc., relating to British Affairs in Malabar* enrich the source material for the British period.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOURCES

Archaeology which is called “the handmaid of history” is often a reliable guide to the historian. The archaeological sources of Kerala history may be broadly classified into three sections, viz., (i) Monuments; (ii) Coins; and (iii) Inscriptions.

Monuments

In the first category may be included material remains like the megaliths, stone images, temples, churches, mosques, synagogues, palaces, forts and historical sites. The megalithic monuments such as dolmens, menhirs, porthole cists, *kudakallus* or umbrella stones, *topikallus* or hat stones and rock-cut caves discovered from places like the Anjanad Valley, Trichur, Porkalam, Eyyal, Cheramanangad, Kattakampal, Taliparamba, Edakkal, etc., help to throw light on the pre-historic culture of Kerala. The earliest of the temples of Kerala are the rock-cut temples seen at Vizhinjam, Madavurpara, Kottukal, Trikkakudi, Kallil, Trikkur, Irunilamcode and Tiruvegapura. Some writers ascribe a Buddhist or Jaina origin to these temples. They have been assigned to the period from the 8th to the 10th century A.D. The stone sculptures in the Trikkakudi temples near Kaviyur are reckoned among ‘the earliest Chera carvings’ and they represent a local branch of the Pallava school. The figure of a bearded *Rishi* carved out in stone at Trikkakudi resembles the *Rishi* in the ‘Descent of the Ganges’ at Mamallapuram. The rock-cut reliefs at Vizhinjam show traces of the influence of the later Pallava style. The rock-cut temple at Kottukal contains a sculptural representation the like of which is not seen anywhere else in India. The Nandi-Monkey episode of the *Puranas* is represented here. A monkey with a trident or *Trishul* is carved on the niche on the outer wall of the left cell of the *Garbhagriha* and just in front of it is a monolithic Nandi suggesting the recollection by Ravana at the time of the Lanka *Dahana* of the curse that was imposed upon him earlier at Kailas by Nandikeswara that his kingdom would be destroyed by a monkey. The rock-cut cave at Kallil near Perumbavoor which contains images of Parswanath, Mahavira and Padmavathi Devi is one of the few Jain monuments met with in Kerala and it throws light on the early period of Kerala history when Jainism prospered in the land. There are also two old Jain *bastis* at Bangra Manjeswar in the northernmost part of the State. The stone images of the Buddha discovered from such places as Karumadi, Mavelikkara, Bharanikavu, Maruturkulangara and Pallikkal are considered to be fine examples of the sculpture of the 7th, 8th and 9th centuries and they remind us of the ‘Buddhist Period’ in Kerala history. They also bear resemblance to the Buddhist images discovered from Cylon (Sri Lanka) during the period.¹

The origin of the structural temples in Kerala may be traced to the beginning of the 9th century A.D. A study of the stylistic evidences revealed by them helps to throw considerable light on the evolution of Kerala art, architecture and sculpture. The vast majority of the Kerala temples have been

1. Ayyappan and Srinivasan, *Story of Buddhism*, p. 72.

built in the Kerala style with its characteristic *Sri Kovil* and predominance of wood architecture, but there are also a few which represent the Dravidian style. The Bhagavathi temple at Vizhinjam is the earliest specimen of the Dravidian style of temple architecture. It is built in the style of the early Chola temples and has been assigned to the 9th century A.D. The Sri Padmanabhaswami temple, Trivandrum, is also a major specimen of the Dravidian style, but it shows traces of the indigenous style as well. The Parasurama shrine at Tiruvallam near Trivandrum is another notable example of the Dravidian style. Among the most important temples built in Kerala style those of Tiruvan vandur, Trikkodithanam, Trikkakara, Irinjalakuda, Trichur (Vadakkunnathan), Tiruvanchikulam, Triprayar, Tripunithura, etc., deserve mention. The temples of Kerala are also famous for their wood carvings and mural paintings. Wood carvings of exquisite charm representing Puranic themes and personages may be seen at Chathankulangara, Vettikulangara, Tirukoratti, Turavur, Pazhur, Onakkur, Guruvayur, Tiruvangad and Madiyankulam. Mural paintings have been found in the temples of Aranmula, Panayanarkavu, Pazhur, Udayanapuram, Vaikam, Ettumanur, Trichur, Tiruvanchikulam, Guruvayur, Chemmanthatta, Todikalam and Tirumittacode. There are also certain unique structures of archaeological interest in the Kerala temples such as the *Kuthambalam* in the Haripad temple and the *Garudamandapam* at Sri Vallabha temple, Tiruvalla.

Some of the churches and mosques of Kerala are also of historical and archaeological interest. According to tradition prevalent in Kerala the churches at Palayur, Pallipuram, Kottakkavu etc., are among the seven ancient churches founded by St. Thomas. The Kerala churches bear evidences of the influence of the indigenous as well as foreign architectural styles. The Orthodox Syrian church at Mulanthuruthi built about 1225 A.D. contains mural paintings depicting Biblical scenes. The Syrian Catholic church at Udayamperur was the venue of the historic Synod of Diamper (1599). The Syrian Catholic church at Kanjur is associated in history with Saktan Tampuran (1790-1805). An attractive oil lamp in bronze donated by the Tampuran is one of its cherished possessions. It also contains a unique mural painting on its outer walls depicting the scene of the battle fought between the forces of Tipu Sultan on the one side and the combined forces of the English and the local rulers on the other. The Orthodox Syrian church at Cheppad contains some old mural paintings which depict the Great Apostles and the scenes from the life of Jesus Christ. The Orthodox Syrian church at Kothamangalam built in the Basilican model has a Sassanian conical arch employed by Persian or West Asian architects. The Latin Catholic churches on the Kerala coast show traces of the influence of the Portuguese style. The St. Francis church in Fort Cochin where the Portuguese statesman, Vasco da Gama, was buried with all pomp and pageantry evokes even today memories of the historic past. There are also several ancient mosques in Kerala which are of great historical interest, e.g., the mosques at Cranganore, Madayi, Srikantapuram, Kasaragod, etc. Among the synagogues of which there are eight in Kerala, three in

Mattancherri, two in Ernakulam and one each in Chennamangalam, Mala and Parur, the White Jews synagogue in Mattancherri built in or about 1567 is the most important.

A study of the location of some of the temples, churches and mosques is of special interest to the historian of Kerala. There are several places where temples, churches and mosques are located in close proximity to one another, e.g., the Cantonment (Palayam) at Trivandrum, Thazhathangadi (Kottayam), Purakkad and Changanacherry. At Kottai Kovilakam in Chennamangalam (Parur taluk) may be seen the unique phenomenon of a temple, a church, a mosque and a synagogue situated almost adjacent to one another within the same compound. At Erumeli in Kottayam district may be seen the famous Vavar mosque in the neighborhood of the local Sastha temple and the former is visited by thousands of Hindu pilgrims who visit the Sastha shrine at Sabarimala year after year. Instances like those mentioned above serve to highlight the communal harmony and concord that prevailed among the people in early days and the policy of enlightened religious toleration followed by the rulers of Kerala.

Palaces

The most important of the palaces is the one at Padmanabhapuram which is now in the Kanyakumari district, but is still under the control of the Government of Kerala. The palace embodies the indigenous architectural features of Kerala in its gabled roofs and carved wooden pillars. One of the rooms in the palace contains some of the best preserved mural paintings in the country. The 'Dutch Palace' at Mattancherri built by the Portuguese about 1555 A.D. and presented to the then ruler of Cochin, Vira Kerala Varma, is one of the oldest buildings built by the Europeans in India in the predominantly Kerala style. It contains about 45 mural paintings representing the story of the Hindu epic *Ramayana* and according to some critics of art they show traces of the influence of "the Buddhist painting that links the art of Kerala with that of Ajanta and Bagh". These murals have been attributed to the 17th century. Another important palace is the Krishnapuram palace, near Kayamkulam. It was built by Marthanda Varma (1729-1758) after the conquest of the Kayamkulam kingdom and is a typical example of the Kerala style of architecture. The largest of the mural paintings so far discovered in Kerala is in this palace. It occupies a wall space of 154 sq. feet and depicts the puranic story of *Gajendramoksha*.

Forts

The most important of the forts are situated in Anjengo, Pallipuram (Vaipin island), Kottapuram, Palghat, Tellicherry, Cannanore, Bekal, Kalnad, Hosdurg and Kumbala. The Anjengo fort, a square structure, built by the English in 1695 may be seen in a fairly good state even today. The Pallipuram fort which is hexagonal in shape and is known also as *Ayakotta* or *Azhikotta* is perhaps the oldest European structure extant in India. Built by the Portuguese in 1503, it is preserved as a protected monument by the Archaeology Department

of the State. The Kottapuram fort was built by the Portuguese in 1523 when they thought of making Cranganore the seat of their chief power in Malabar. It is now in ruins, but the remnants of a portion of the old wall and a few barracks are still seen there and they are preserved by the Archaeology Department. The Palghat fort built in 1766 by Haider Ali is square in shape with thick walls and strong bastions at the four corners and in the centre and it is still in good state of preservation. The Tellicherry fort built by the English in the 18th century is also a square structure built of laterite and is distinguished by its massive and lofty loop-holed walls and strong flanking bastions. The fort St. Angelo in Cannanore town built by the Portuguese early in the 16th century is a massive triangular structure built of laterite. It is now practically deserted, half of its buildings having tumbled down. The Bekal fort believed to have been built by Sivappa Nayaka of Bednore in the 17th century is the largest and best preserved in the whole State. The forts at Hosdurg, Kumbla and Chandragiri (Kalnad) were also built by the Bednore Nayaks, though large portions of these are now in ruins. The ruins of several minor forts and redoubts belonging to various epochs of Kerala history may be seen scattered all over the State. The ruins of the *Nedumcotta* or the 'Travancore Lines' built by the Dharma Raja (1758-1798) to ward off Tipu's attacks may be seen at Kottamuri, about a mile to the interior to the east of the Chalakudi-Anjal Road. Ruins of old forts may be seen at Chettuvali, Trichur, Chaliyam, Badagara, Kottakkal, Mullurkara, Enamakal, Kuthuparamba and Karikode. The ruins of the famous Vaipicotta Seminary and Jesuit College at Pallipuram may also be seen even today.

There are also a few historical sites which are of interest to students of Kerala history. The most important of these is the *Cheraman Parambu* situated near the ancient temple of Tiruvanchikulam in Cranganore. It is supposed to have been the place from where the Chera Emperors ruled over Kerala. In the trial excavations conducted at the place by the Cochin State Archaeology Department in 1945-'46 more than thousand relics were discovered. Trikanamatilakam and Karurpadanna, situated only a few miles from Tiruvanchikulam, are also places of historical importance. There are practically no relics in these places today to proclaim their ancient historical greatness, but the former was in ancient days a great centre of learning and culture and the latter might have been Karur, the celebrated capital of the first Chera Empire. Karikode (near Thodupuzha), the capital of the former principality of Kizhumalainad, is an interesting historical site. In addition to the ruins of forts, there is the Annamalai temple here which shows traces of the influence of Tamilian architecture. It contains a collection of stone and bronze images and *puja* utensils like lamps and bells which have been assigned to the period between the 14th and 16th centuries. The locality known as Kottaparambu lying to the south-east of the old Collectorate in Calicut was the ancient seat of the Zamorins, the *Mutalakulam* being his kitchen tank and Mananchira his bathing tank. The memorial pillar with the inscription "Vasco da Gama landed here Kappakadavu in the year 1498" on the Kappad

beach off Calicut proclaims the historical importance of the place from where started the story of European expansion in India.

Coins

A study of the coins is of some value in the reconstruction of the history of Kerala. The coins contain dates, symbols and legends which furnish valuable clues to the historian. A large number of coins, foreign and indigenous, have been in circulation in Kerala from very early days. The earliest of the foreign coins discovered are the Roman coins, sometimes referred to in Chera and Chola inscriptions as 'Pazhankasu'. In 1851 a find of Roman coins was made at Cannanore and not less than 5 headloads were unearthed on that occasion. Roman coins have been discovered from Eyyal in the Trichur district and from some other parts of the State. The Eyyal collection contained 13 gold coins and 71 Roman *dinarius* covering a period of 240 years of Roman history from 117 B.C to 123 A.D. The Vazhapalli inscription of Rajasekhara (820-844) makes specific mention of the *dinarius*. Roman coins have been discovered also from such places as Valluvalli (near Parur), Punjar, Edamaruku and Niranam. On the basis of available evidence it may be safely assumed that Roman coins were in wide circulation in Kerala in the ancient period. Arabic and Ceylonese coins have also been current here at various periods. Four gold coins which formed part of a find in the Kothamangalam village came into the hands of the State Archaeology Department in 1960-'61 and they have been identified as the coins issued by the Ommayad Caliph rulers (661-750 A.D.). Another foreign coin in circulation in Kerala in the early period was a Ceylonese coin called *Ezhakasu*. In the days of the Portuguese and the Dutch the Venetian *sequins*, the Moorish *ducats* and Spanish *reals* were in vogue.

A large number of coins, non-Kerala but Indian, have also been discovered from different parts of the State, the earliest among them being the punch-marked coins which were current even in the time of the Buddha. Two hoards of such coins numbering in all 218 were discovered in 1946 from Elikulangara (Kottayam district) and Eyyal (Trichur district.)¹ Three coins discovered from Parur with the symbols, among others, of the elephant and the bow and arrow, have been identified in the *Travancore Archaeological Series* as Chera coins of the 9th or 10th century,² but from the appearance and serial order of the other symbols in the coins they seem, to be punch-marked coins. It is possible that the symbols of the elephant and bow and arrow, typical of the Chera kings, were stamped on them at the time of their circulation in Kerala. The coins of the Chola, Pandya and other South Indian powers were also in circulation in Kerala in the early period. The *Anaiachu*, a Chola gold coin, was introduced about 1200 A.D. while the *Tulukkakasu* of the Madurai Sultans came into circulation in the second half of the 14th

1. 1. A study of these two hoards has been attempted in the *Early coins from Kerala* by Dr. P.L. Gupta published by the State Archaeology Department.

2. *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol. V, pp.162—164.

century. The *Unniaticharitam* composed in the 14th century refers to the latter coin.

The coins minted by the local rulers have been in circulation in Kerala from very early days. Rasi, the gold coin alleged to have been introduced by Parasurama, is said to be the oldest indigenous coin current in Kerala. The coin next in age was the *Kaliyugarajan* or *Kaliyugarayan Panam*. W. Elliot has expressed the view that it was at one time current all over Kerala. Such coins as *Pon*, *Achu*, *Panam*, *Kasu*, *Azhakachu*, *Tiramam*, etc. were current in Kerala during the period from the 9th to the 13th century. A collection of 31 silver coins bearing the name of a Kerala king called Vira Kerala was discovered from Vaigaikulam village in the Sankarankoil taluk of Tirunelveli in 1944. It contains the symbol of an elephant-goad on one side and a legend 'Sri Gandiramkussaya' (Elephant-goad to the heroes) on the other. The identification of Vira Kerala of these coins has not been done conclusively, but a writer in the *Journal of the Numismatic Society of India* identifies him with the Venad king Vira Kerala of the Cholapuram Inscription (1127 AD).¹

The Kolathiri Raja and the Zamorin of Calicut issued their own *Panams*. The latter called the coin *Vira Rayon Putiya Panam* to distinguish it from the old or *Pazhaya Panam* issued by the Kolathiris. The rulers of Travancore and Cochin also issued coins independently at various periods. The latter obtained the right from the Portuguese and continued to enjoy it under the Dutch, though under the strict supervision of their officers. The *Anantarayan Panam* and *Ananta Varahan* were two gold coins issued by the Travancore rulers. Silver *Chuckrams* were also issued by them. Among the coins issued by the Cochin rulers the most familiar one was the *Puthan*, The Ali Raja of Cannanore also struck coins and according to Marsden they were issued only between 1731 and 1788. His coins, however, contain only abbreviated figures of dates in the *Hijra* era (e.g., 35, 126, 161, etc.,) and some are even 'blundered dates'. Hoards of silver and copper coins of Tipu Sultan dated in the modified *Hijra* era known as the Mauludi era (1215, 1217, 1218, etc.,) and issued during his sojourn in Calicut were discovered from the locality in 1960.

Dutch copper coins, several species of *Varahans* (e.g., *Parangi Varahan*, *Ikkeri Varahan*, etc.), the *Ikkeri Honnu*, the Elephant Cash (Mysore coins of the pre-Muslim era), the Sultan Cash (Tipu's. coins), the Mahe *Panam*, the English Surat Rupee, the Company Rupee, etc., were among the other coins which were in circulation in different parts of the State in the modern period. Of these the Mahe *Panam* was one of the most interesting coins in circulation in the Malabar Coast. It was a thin silver coin issued for the French Settlement at Mahe. Silver coins issued by the English East India Company from its mint at Tellicherry in 1799 and 1805 were the commonest coins in circulation

in the coast in the early part of the 19th century. They bore the letter 'T' to indicate the initial letter of the mint. The coins issued in 1799 also bore the figures '99'.¹ It may be noted that at the time of the achievement of Indian Independence only the State of Travancore had its own independent coinage. The Travancore coins ceased to be legal tender from April 1950. In Cochin, British Indian coins had been issued as the sole currency on 1st Mithunam 1075 (14th June 1900).

Inscriptions

Inscriptions form an authentic source of information for the early history of Kerala. They furnish valuable material for the reconstruction of the dynastic history of the various kingdoms and also throw light on the political, social and cultural life of the people in different periods. They give us an insight into the working of the local assemblies, the arrangements made for the management of temples, the nature of the relationship between landlords and tenants, the functioning of educational institutions like *Salais*, etc., in early days. The dates, symbols and astronomical details such as the position of Jupiter and other constellations obtained from them have been helpful in solving many a vexed problem in Kerala history and chronology. The records are dated in indigenous eras such as the *Kali* era, the *Kollam* era, the *Puduvaiipu* era etc. The vast majority of the inscriptions discovered from Kerala have Malayalam as the language while the character is *Vattezhuthu*. There are also some inscriptions in Sanskrit and a few which are bilingual. We may refer to some of the important inscriptions and their contents in order to illustrate their historical value.

The history of the Second Chera Empire (800-1102) has been reconstructed from the inscriptions of the age. The Vazhapalli inscription of Rajasekhara Varman (820-844) is the earliest epigraphical record of a Chera king to be discovered from Kerala. An inscription dated the 11th regnal year of Sthanu Ravi (844-885 A.D.) obtained from Kudalmanikkam temple, Irijalakuda, records an agreement regarding temple affairs which sought to reduce the powers of the *Uralar*. The inscriptions of king Goda Ravi Varma (917-947) discovered from such temples as at Avittathur, Tripunithura, Udayamperur, Nedumpuramtali, Chokkur, Triprangode etc., help us to determine the period of the reign of this ruler and the extent of his empire. His Chokkur inscription (923 A.D.) contains the earliest reference to the *Devadasis* in Kerala while the Avittathur epigraph mentions the Kadamkattu *Kacham* under which the *Uralar* came to be strictly controlled as in the case of the historic Muzhikkulam *Kacham* mentioned in many records of the age. eg. The Tirumittakode inscription of 1028-29 A.D.²

1. The abbreviated figures used in coins and other documents should not lead the historian to hasty and wrong conclusions in using them as a source of historical information. Evidently the figures 99 in the East India Company's coins issued in 1799 do not mean that those coins were issued in the 1st century A.D. In the same way the coins of the All Raja bearing dates such as *Hijra* 35, 126, etc., cannot be ascribed to the 7th or 8th century A.D.

2. Dr. M.G.S. Narayanan, *Reinterpretations in South Indian History*, page 41.

Several records bearing the name of Bhaskara Ravi Varman have been discovered from such different parts of Kerala as Tirunelli, Trikkakara, Trikkodithanam and Perunna. The scattered distribution of these records shows the extent of the empire while the astronomical evidence furnished by them also helps to prove that there were three different rulers who bore the name of Bhaskara Ravi Varman. The Trikkodithanam record also establishes the triple synchronism between Bhaskara Ravi Varman I, Sri Vallabhan Kotha and Govardhana Marthanda. One of the most epoch-making records is the copper plate issued to the Jews in 1000 A.D. by Bhaskara Ravi Varman I (962-1019) from the capital city of Mahodayapuram. It records the royal gift to the Jewish Chief, Joseph Rabban, of the rights of the *Anchuvannam* along with 72 proprietary rights including the collection of tolls and other revenue and the perpetual right to use a palanquin for himself and his successors. The Jewish deed bears evidence of the tolerant outlook of the rulers of Kerala in their relations with such a foreign minority community as the Jews in that remote period of Kerala history.

A stone inscription of 1020 AD. found in the Chalapuram temple, Eramam village, in the erstwhile Chirakkal taluk of North Kerala bears evidence of a victory by Rajendra Chola over the Cheras. It also throws light on the antiquity of the Kolathiri Rajas of Chirakkal by establishing the synchronism between Rajendra Chola, Bhaskara Ravi the Chera ruler and Kandan Kari Varman, the Mushaka chief (the ancestor of the Kolathiri Raja). The record also contains a reference to the trade guild called 'Nanadesikal'.¹ The Tazhakad church near Irinjalakuda contains an inscription of the Chera emperor Rajasimha (1028-1043 A.D.) which records the grant of certain rights and privileges to two Christian merchants, Chathan Vadukan and Iravi Chathan, who were members of the *Manigramam*. The Rameswarathukoil inscription of Quilon dated Kollam era 278 (1102 AD.) shows one Ramar Tiruvati as staying at Panamkavil palace during the year. The identification of Ramar Tiruvati with Rama Varma Kulasekhara (1090-1102), the last of the Chera emperors, has been helpful in recapturing the history of the last days of the Kulasekhara Empire. On the evidence of this inscription it is inferred that Rama Varma Kulasekhara shifted his capital from Mahodayapuram to Quilon, the headquarters of the old Venad rulers, during the period of the epic fight against the Chola army.

The later Ay Kings of South Kerala who were contemporaries of the Kulasekharas of Mahodayapuram (800—1012 AD.) have a few important inscriptions to their credit. The earliest inscription in South India which is found dated in the Kali era specifying the number of days is the Huzur Office Plate of the Ay King Karunandadakkan (875-885 AD.). The number of days given here is 1,449,087 which works out to 7th July 866 AD. The record throws light on the working of the ancient *Salais* or Vedic colleges. The Paliyam Copper Plate of Vikramaditya Varaguna (885—925 AD.) records the grant of

1. Dr. M.G.S. Narayanan, *Kerala Ckaritrathile Adisthanasilakal*, pages 79-92.

an extensive landed property in the south to the celebrated Buddhist temple of Srimulavasam (Tirumulapadam) and also alludes to the aggression of Parantaka Chola against Kerala territory. The document bears testimony to the tolerant outlook of this Ay ruler in his relations with the Buddhists.

The inscriptions of the Venad rulers are of great historical value. The Terisapalli Copper Plate of Ayyan Atikal Tiruvatikal dated 849 AD. (The 5th regnal year of Emperor Sthanu Ravi) is the first important Kerala inscription the date of which has been determined with any degree of accuracy. The purport of the inscription is the gift of a plot of land to the Terisapalli (Teresa church) at Kurakkeni Kollam along with several rights and privileges. The grant was made in the presence of important officers of the state including the *Koyiladhikarikal* and the representatives of trade corporations or merchant guilds like *Anchuvannam* and *Manigramam*. The record helps to prove beyond doubt the subordinate status of Venad as a part of the Kulasekhara Empire and also the commerical importance of Quilon. The local assembly of the *Arunuttuvar* (Six Hundred) is mentioned in, this record. It also throws light on the system of taxation that prevailed in early Venad, as several taxes like profession tax, sales tax, vehicle tax etc., are mentioned in it. The Terisapalli Copper Plate also testifies to the enlightened policy of religious toleration followed by the rulers of ancient Kerala.

The Mampalli Plate of Sri Vallabhan Kotha of Venad (974 A.D.) is the first available record dated in the Kollam era (149). It is also the earliest record in which the Panamkavil palace of the Venad kings is specifically referred to. It also helps in determining the dates of Indukotha (944-962), Bhaskara Ravi I (962-1019), etc., the rulers of Mahodayapuram. The Cholakapuram and Suchindram inscriptions of Kotha Kerala Varma (1125-1155 AD.), the Kilimanur records of Aditya Varma (1165-1175 AD.) and other kings of the 12th century, the Vellayani inscription of Vira Ravi Varma (1195-1205 AD.), the Manalikara inscription of Ravi Kerala Varma (1215-1240 AD.) etc., are some of the other inscriptions of the early Venad rulers which help in the reconstruction of Venad history. The Kandiur inscription of 1218 is important in so far as it mentions Ravi Kerala Varma (1215-1240 AD.) and his wife Unniachi and the renovation of the Kandiur temple by the Odanad king Kotha Varma at the instance of the Venad king. An inscription of Ravi Varma Kulasekhara (1299-1314 AD.) is found in the Siva temple at Salaigramam in Trivandrum. It enumerates the *birudas* of Ravi Varma. It is written in *Grandha* characters and all the *birudas* are in Sanskrit language but the last six lines are in Tamil. The inscriptions of Ravi Varma discovered from Kancipuram, Tiruvati, Srirangam and Poonamallee in Tamil Nadu also throw light on his conquests and achievements. An important Sanskrit inscription of Aditya Varma Sarvanganatha (1376-1383 A.D.) of Venad found in the Krishnaswami shrine of the Sri Padmanabhaswami temple at Trivandrum is in *Grandha* characters and it records the repair of the shrine by this illustrious king. The Trikkanamkudi Bell inscription of Aditya Varma (1469-1484 A.D.) is an important record. Several records of Bhutala Vira

Udaya Marthanda Varma (1516-1535 A.D.) discovered from Kanyakumari and Tirunelveli districts show his solicitude for other religionists like the Jains and the Christians. The inscriptions of Marthanda Varma (1729-1758 A.D.) found in the Sri Padmanabha swami temple are in Sanskrit and they record the story of the reconstruction of the temple by Marthanda Varma in the first half of the 18th century.

The rulers of the Perumpadappu Swarupam are not associated with many epigraphical records of historical value. However, one of the most important documents in the annals of Kerala epigraphy is the Syrian Christian Coper Plate of 1225 A.D. issued by Vira Raghava Chakravarti, a ruler of Perumpadappu Swarupam, from his headquarters at Mahodayapuram. It confers on the Christians of Mahodayapuram privileges and rights similar to those conferred on the Jews by Bhaskara Ravi Varman I in 1000 A.D. This document is also proof of the policy of religious toleration followed by the rulers of Kerala. An important epigraphical record dated 14th Meenam in the year 322 of the *Puduvaiyu* has been obtained from the Paliyam house in Chennamangalam in erstwhile Cochin State. It records an agreement between the Raja of Cochin and the Dutch East India Company. The inscription is of special interest as only very few documents dated in this era are available. A Malayalam inscription dated 976 Kollam era (1801) obtained from the Tiruvanchikulam Siva temple records the renovation of the temple by Saktan Tampuran (1790-1805) after its destruction by heretic *Sastrabahya* who has been identified with Tipu Sultan.

There are a few temple records of general interest to the student of Kerala epigraphy. Among them the Tiruvalla Copper Plates, the Vadakkunnathan temple records and the Pattazhi Copper Scroll deserves notice. The Tiruvalla Copper Plates form a voluminous document and they have been assigned to the 12th century A.D. The record mentions several institutions, customs etc., of Kerala which are of sociological interest. Three inscriptions are found in the Vadakkunnathan temple at Trichur and they have been roughly assigned to the 12th century A.D. Their historical value lies in the fact that they mention the Kottuvayiraveli *Kacham* which testifies to the ascendancy of the Namboothiri Brahmins who framed regulations in regard to the rights of the tenants, menials etc. who were subordinate to the Vadakkunnathan temple. This is the only *Kacham* which contains provisions for controlling the rights of the tenants in Kerala. The Pattazhi Copper Scroll dated Kollam era 971 (1796 A.D.) received from the Bhagavathi temple at Pattazhi in the Kottarakkara taluk relates to the *Prayaschitta* or expiation in the form of a monetary fine of hundred *Rasis* which the *Karakkar* connected with the Bhagavathi temple were forced to pay at the instance of the Namboothiripad of Akavur for having defied the authority of the Kampithan who was in sole charge of the administration of the temple properties. The inscription throws light on the relations between the *Uralar* and the *Karalar* in regard to matters of temple administration in the 18th century.

The churches, mosques and synagogues of Kerala have also been found to

contain inscriptions of historical value. One of the most interesting inscriptions is the Pahlavi Cross inscription discovered from the Orthodox Syrian church at Kadamattam. It is engraved on a tablet measuring 13" x 20" and resembles the St. Thomas Mount Cross. The Valiapally in Thazhathangadi, Kottayam, belonging to the Knanaya Orthodox Syrians which was set up 1550 in the days of the Thekkumkur Rajas is also famous for its Persian Cross and the Pahlavi inscription on it. Several churches such as those of Udayamperur, Kandanad, Kothamangalam, Ankamali, Parur, Varapuzha etc., contain epigraphs of historical value.

Among the epigraphical records obtained from mosques, special mention may be made of the Arabic inscription in the Madayi or Pazhayangadi mosque which commemorates its erection in Hijra 580 (1124 A.D.). A stone inscription of unique importance found in the Muchunti mosque at Kuttichira in Kozhikode deserves special mention in this context. It is a bilingual record of the 13th century. Both Malayalam and Arabic words occur in this record which is partly in Vattezhuthu script. The historical importance of the inscription lies in the fact that it registers a permanent grant of property by the Zamorin of Calicut to a mosque in his capital. It takes its rank in Kerala epigraphy along with the Teresapalli Copper Plate (849 A.D.) and the Jewish Copper Plate (1000 A.D.) and thus "adds one more link to the golden chain of grants expressing the ideal of religious tolerance".¹

The White Jew's Synagogue at Mattancherri has preserved even today the famous Jewish. Copper Plate grant of Bhaskara Ravi Varman dated 1000 A.D., referred to earlier. The Synagogue at Chennamangalam has a Hebrew record dated 1269 A.D. A Hebrew inscription has been found in the Synagogue at Parur. It records the year 5376 Anno Mundi (1615 A.D.) as the date of the erection of the Synagogue.

In addition to the inscriptions, enumerated above, which have been discovered from within Kerala, there are also a number of epigraphical records of non-Kerala powers obtained from inside and outside the State which also throw light on the early history of Kerala. The earliest epigraphical record in which reference is made to Kerala belongs to the reign of Asoka (274-237 B.C.). The 2nd and 13th Edicts of Asoka refer to the ruler of Kerala as 'Keralaputra' and his country as one of the lands bordering his empire. An important Brahmi Tamil inscription of the Sangam age discovered from Aranattaramaalai near Pugalur in Karur Taluk in 1965 mentions three Chera rulers, viz., Atan Cheral Irumporai, his son Perumkadumko and his son Ilamkadumko.² It provides valuable epigraphic evidence in support of Chera genealogy as gleaned from Sangam works. The inscriptions of the Chalukyan kings of the 6th, 7th and 8th centuries refer to the defeat of several Kerala rulers by the Chalukyas and the subjugation of the Kerala kingdom. A Sanskrit inscription in Kannada script which has been ascribed by scholars to the

1. Dr. M.G.S. Narayanan, *Cultural Symbiosis in Kerala*, page 42.

2. Article on "Chera Inscription of the Sangam age", I. Mahadevan, *The Hindu* (7-3-1965).

Western Chalukya king Kirtivarman II (745-755 A.D.) has been obtained from an ancient Siva temple at Adur in Kasargod taluk and this testifies to the Chalukya hegemony over the area. The inscriptions of the Pandya and Chola rulers discovered from various parts of Tamil Nadu throw much light on the history of the Pandyan and Chola aggression in Kerala. The Chola inscriptions discovered from the temples at Cholapuram, Cape Comorin, Darsanamcopu, Timnandikara, Suchindram, Mannarkoil etc., bear witness to the Chola conquests in South Kerala. The undated Tillai-sthanam record shows the friendly relations between Aditya Chola and Sthanu Ravi. The Tiruvalangadu plate of Rajendra Chola (1012-1044 A.D.) which mentions the Chola conquest of Vizhinjam and the Cholapuram record of Kulottunga Chola (1070-1122) which refers to his retreat to Kottar are also important Chola records. Thus a study of the inscriptions would show that they are of inestimable value in reconstructing the history of Kerala, particularly of the pre-Portuguese Period.

CHAPTER III

PREHISTORY

Prehistory comprises the various Stone Ages when man was a nomadic hunter. The prehistory of Kerala is shrouded in obscurity. H.D. Sankalia, the eminent archaeologist, excludes Kerala from the Palaeolithic (Old Stone Age) map of India because quartzite out of which the vast majority of the palaeolithic antiquities were made was scarce in this area. The Palaeolithic man could not have lived here also because there were thick forests which he could hardly have explored with his crude primitive stone implements. As an explanation for the absence of palaeoliths in Kerala, H.D. Sankalia suggests that the State has “so far not yielded any palaeoliths, probably because no search has been made”. He adds further, “But it is likely that here there are ancient sea beaches, as there are further up near Bombay, which on examination might be found to be implementiferous. Or it may be that the coastal belt is of recent growth. Thus the reasons for the absence of palaeoliths might be truly geographical.”¹ Though palaeoliths are believed to be absent in Kerala, the plentiful availability in the coast of traprock which determined the settlements of Neolithic (New Stone Age) man is said to suggest that the State might have become the abode of man in the Neolithic age. It may also be mentioned here that Microliths regarded by some scholars as belonging to a Mesolithic state of culture, between the Palaeolithic and Neolithic ages, were collected by K.R.H. Todd at Calicut.

Megalithic Culture

Megalithic monuments may be seen all over the State. The term ‘Megalith’ (mega = great and litho = stone) means monuments erected out of large blocks of stones, as funerary edifices, either sepulchral or commemorative. The megaliths of Kerala belong to the megalithic complex common to South India and are associated with the cult of the dead. It had been the custom in ancient days either to burn or to expose dead bodies to the elements and intern specific bones such as the skull and long bones collected there from. This custom known to archaeologists as ‘fractional burial’ was generally in vogue in South India and it was widely prevalent in Kerala also. The internment was done in several ways—in urns or jars, in pits or cists or in rock-cut caves, along with the most precious possessions of the dead such as weapons and tools, shell ornaments, beads, pots of various sizes and sometimes coins. Apart from fractional burial the system of ‘primary burial’ was also sometimes resorted to. This is also known as extended or stretched burial. According to

1. H.D.Sankalia, *Prehistory and Protohistory of India and Pakistan*, p.39.

this the complete skeleton or body was buried in full articulation, either under house floors in the habitation site, in shallow pits or in a regular cemetery in specific pit graves. The megalithic types found in Kerala are dolmens, both multiple and isolated, port-hole cists, menhirs, *Kudakallus* or umbrella stones, *Topikallus* or cap stones and rock-cut caves.¹ In different parts of Kerala they are known by different local names such, as *Natukallu*, *Patakallu*, *Pulachikallu* (*Masatikallu*), *Pandukuzhi*, *Panchapandavamadhangal*, *Nannangadi*, *Muthumakkathazhi*, etc.

Dolmens, Cists etc.

A number of megalithic burial sites have been discovered all over Kerala in recent decades thanks to the labours of archaeologists and anthropologists. When the Varkala tunnel was bored several years ago, rude natural and artificial hollows containing old pots, human skeletons etc., came to light. Absence of any implements ordinarily associated with such burial places was considered to be an indication of their great antiquity. In the village of Pulimathu, 25 miles north of Trivandrum, a number of underground cellars or cists were discovered from a long stretch of land some years back. Each of them contained a small pot with a little bronze bell and an iron spear head inside. In addition to the cists, several underground jars of baked earth (*terracotta*) were also discovered from the place. The high ranges of Idukki district abound in megalithic sites. At Marayur village in the Anjanad valley of Devikulam taluk may be seen an extensive site consisting of dolmens and cists. At Kallar pattom colony in Udumbanchola taluk have been discovered a few important megalithic burial sites of the cist and menhir type. An excavation at Vandiperiyar a few decades back similarly resulted in the discovery of large dolmens and menhirs. Dolmens have also been found in the lower elevations of the Malayattur and Ranni Reserves, though they are relatively small in size. An extensive megalithic site was discovered at Pootamkara in Kunnathur taluk in 1960. The megalithic monuments seen here were cist-circles. The internal diameter of the circle of these megaliths ranged from 25' to 18'6". Some relics of megalithic culture were discovered from Kodanad in Kunnathunad taluk in 1963. They include a good number of terracotta figurines, those of the males having beard and some of the other sex in the worshipping posture. The discovery of the figurines was a novel feature in these parts. Besides, tusks of elephants and pot sherds with engravings available in megalithic pottery were also unearthed at the site. Some old burial jars, with large granite slabs over them, were unearthed at Kodukulanji in Chengannur taluk in 1965. On examination they were found to contain broken pieces of jars of 'the black and red' variety.

The Trichur area of erstwhile Cochin State contains megalithic sites. Multiple dolmens (*ie.*, several within a single stone circle) are found in some of the mountainous tracts. They occur mostly on the gneissic uplands and are built on bare rock within 3 or 4 feet of each other. Isolated dolmens, some with a port-hole opening, have also been found in some places. Port-hole cists are found at Porkalam which is one of the most important megalithic sites of Kerala. The port-hole cist here is allied to another one discovered at Thiruvilvamala which has yielded the red ware, decorated with yellow wavy lines. Menhirs which are conspicuous by their rarity in the hilly areas are found scattered far and wide in the laterite region in this area. There is a menhir at Anappara which is locally known as *Patakallu* or *Pulachikallu*. A group of menhirs of different sizes may be seen at Komalaparathala. The largest of these is 12'9" high, 7'6" foot and 1' thick at the top. *Topikallu* (cap stone) and *Kudakallu* (umbrella stone) are sculchral monuments peculiar to the laterite regions of Trichur. They comprise outwardly hemispheric blocks of laterite under which there is either a regular rock-out cave monument or burial urn in a pit. Twenty-five such monuments were seen at Eyyal. At Ariyannur, 12 miles to the west of Trichur, 7 *Topikallus* were discovered. The megalithic site of Cheramanangad consists of several *Topikallus* and *Kudakallus* which look like a group of giant mushrooms from a distance. The site is locally known as *Kudakalluparambu*, *Topikallus* and *Kudakallus* are also found at Porkalam. In 1966 several burial jars of the megalithic type, globular in shape and of the black and red variety, with beaded ornaments on the neck, were discovered from the heart of Trichur town. Each of these jars was capable of holding 70 to 80 *paras* of water. It is believed that these jars must have been used for the burial of grown-up people in ancient days. The Trichur jars are supposed to be the largest burial jars so far discovered in Kerala. Dolmens, burial stone circles, menhirs and *Topikallus*, have come to light in different parts of the Malabar area also. Among the most important of the places may be mentioned Kulukollur, Kodakkal, Iringallur, Chokkur, Manjeri, Nilambur, Sultan's Battery, Muppainad, Puthadi, Taliparamba etc.

Rock-cut Caves

Kerala has its innumerable rock-cut caves of the megalithic order. Some of the most impressive are found at such places as Chovannur, Kandanasseri, Kakkad, Porkalam, Eyyal and Kattakambal in Trichur district. These caves are characterised by certain general features. Rectangular pits of varying depths are sunk into the rock by scooping out the solid mass of laterite. A small rectangular entrance is then cut into the vertical face and through this narrow opening the hard laterite is hollowed out and the cave fashioned. Access to the floor of the outer court is provided by means of steps cut out of the rock. The floor of the interior of a cave is generally 1 ft. to 2 ft. lower than the floor of its outer court.

There are in certain cases rock-out benches, varying in height from 6" to 2' on the sides of the cave. Some have only single benches while others have

none. The caves have circular or oblong floor and dome-shaped vault. In some cases a rock-cut pillar, square, rectangular or round, rises to the centre of the vault from the middle of the floor and in others it is absent, while in some there is a circular opening in the centre of the domed ceiling.

In the caves at Porkalam and one of the twin caves of Eyyal a rock-cut pillar stands in the middle of the floor rising to the centre of the vault. But the control pillar is absent in the Chovannur cave. The caves at Kandanasseri and Kakkad have circular openings in the centre of the domed vaults. The cave at Kattakambal is a multi-chambered one. Its distinctive characteristic is that the same outer court leads to different caves in the front and on the sides. At Eyyal the common court leads to the main chamber and on the right-hand side to a smaller chamber. Pottery and iron implements have been recovered from these underground caves testifying to their sepulchral character.

The erstwhile Malabar area has also a number of interesting rock-cut caves. In Chevayur (Kozhikode taluk) exists a sepulchral rock-cut cave with an erect pillar in the middle of the main chamber. Several pots and parts of a sword were found in it. In Padinhattumuri amsam, 6 miles north of Calicut, a number of very interesting rock-cut caves containing pottery were excavated by Logan. The articles found in these caves are preserved in the Madras Museum. One of the most interesting of the prehistoric sites in the Malabar area is Chattamparamba near Feroke. A laterite hill at the place contains numerous tombs excavated out of rock. Interesting beads were collected from some of them. Some of the beads were of agate with designs on them. The pottery which was found in abundance in these tombs was of a very varied character.

The Edakkalmala near Sultan's Battery (South Wynad) has on its western slope a cave which contains some interesting carvings and inscriptions and a few figures and symbols. The carvings depict human and animal figures and objects of human use and symbols. The most striking feature of the sculptures is the human figure with a peculiar head-dress. The figures of animals are indistinct. The symbols in the engravings include the *Swastika* in various forms and specimens of the familiar circular 'sun-symbols'. There are also some magic squares. Fawcett who has made a detailed study of the rock carvings in the Edakkal cave has expressed the view that they might have been the handiwork of Kurumbars of a bygone day. Megaliths numbering about 200 have been discovered from an extensive area of 1,500 acres in the vicinity of the Edakkal hill. The internal diameter of the circles ranges from 27' 3" to 18'. Some of the cap stones measure 6' 2" x 4' 01". Their proximity to the Edakkal cave invests these sites with a special significance.

Antiquity of the Megalithic Culture

The antiquity of the megalithic culture of Kerala and its relation with cultures elsewhere are questions which have engaged the attention of archaeologists. It may be stated at the outset that it had no direct connection with the highly

urban Indus Valley civilization or what Indian archaeologists call the “Harappa Culture” the approximate age of which in its maturity has been assigned to the period 2500 B.C. -1500 B.C.¹ in the Indus Valley proper. However, urn burials are common to the two cultures and the “black and redware” found in the ruins is found contemporary with late Harappan and post-Harappan industries. The South Indian megaliths including those of Kerala are not so old as they are generally supposed to be. H.D. Sankalia has expressed the view that they represent “a fairly well-established and prosperous social organisation” as is evidenced by the pits prepared for burials, the large slabs of stones enclosing them and the circle of stones surrounding the whole structure. The megalith-builders who chose rocky ground for burials also dug irrigation tanks in the alluvial plains, indicating that they were not only a settled people but also practical agriculturists. The megalithic monuments of Kerala bear close similarity to the megalithic structures in other parts of the Deccan and Peninsular India. On the evidence furnished by the finds discovered from all over the area the culture is believed by some scholars to have been introduced by an iron using people from the south between 300 B.C. and the middle of the 1st century A.D. Sir Mortimer Wheeler who studied the South Indian megaliths is one of those who subscribe, to this view. Gordon suggests for them a time bracket between 700 and 400 B.C. while K. A. Nilakanta Sastri would push the date of the commencement of the culture further back. Similarly on the internal evidence furnished by Tamil works the later time limit prescribed for this culture can also be pulled further down by several centuries after the commencement of the Christian era.

Mention may also be made in this connection of the alleged kinship of the South Indian megaliths to megaliths in other parts of the world, e.g., the lands bordering on the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, in the Caucasus and in Iran. Christoph Von Purer Haimendorf, the cultural anthropologist, has propounded the interesting theory that the megalith-builders were a people of Mediterranean stock who came to the West Coast by sea, entered South India by 600 B.C. and spread northward, subduing the earlier neolithic and microlithic peoples who were still in the semi-nomadic stage of culture. This theory is based on the doubtful evidence of a certain group of megaliths known as dolmenoid cists with port-hole found among European megaliths and is not readily accepted by Indian archaeologists. It is pointed out that the West European megaliths are not later than 2000 B.C. and do not contain iron objects. “Thus chronologically and in one of the important cultural aspects,” says H.D. Sankalia, “these European megaliths are found removed, geographically and in time, from the South Indian megaliths.”²

Racial Elements

Who were the earliest inhabitants of Kerala ? This basic question calls for an answer at the very outset of our study. Kerala is a microcosm of India in the

1. *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. XXX, pp. 409-421.

2. H.D. Sankalia, *Indian Archaeology Today*, p. 104.

sense that it is 'an ethnological museum'. The racial composition of the population of the State through the ages has been studied by cultural anthropologists and several theories, speculative though interesting, have been propounded. The Negrito element is pointed out as the earliest racial strain in the population of Kerala as of South India in general. Such hill tribes as the Kadar, the Kanikkar, the Malapandarams, the Mutuvans, the Ullatans, the Uralis, the Paniyas etc., who live in the forests of Kerala State even today are said to be representative of the Negrito type. Most of these tribes have curly hair, black skin, round head and broad nose and wear the comb in common with similar types in other parts of the world. The Negritos seem to have been replaced by the Proto-Australoids with their long head, flat nose and dark skin. This element is represented by such tribes as the Irulans, Kurichiyas, Karimpalans, Mala Aryans, Mala Vetans, etc. The Proto-Australoids were superseded by the Mediterraneans who are believed to constitute the main element in the Dravidian population of South India. They are alleged to have left their original home in the Mediterranean in the face of mounting aggression from the Greeks and come to India in three distinct waves, one of which settled down in South India, another in Western India and a third in North India, *viz.*, in the Indus Valley. It is believed that these Mediterranean people really built up the Dravidian civilization of the south. Their kinsmen who settled down in the Indus Valley are credited with having built up simultaneously the Indus Valley or Harappa culture.

With the beginning of the Aryan invasions of North India the Dravidians of the Indus Valley are said to have migrated and joined their kinsmen in the south. Such communities as the Nairs, the Vellalas, the Kammalas, the Ezhavas, etc., today represent the Dravidian element in the population of Kerala. The Scheduled Castes like the Pulayas, Parayas, Kuravas, etc., may also be included in this group. The Aryans who began to enter Kerala two or three centuries before the Christian era completed the present racial composition of the population of the State. The Namboothiri Brahmins represent the later elements among the Brahmin immigrants. In language, physical features, social organisation and religious faith the new-comers were much different from the native Dravidians. Though the Aryans were numerically small, they possessed intellectual ability and organising skill of a high order. The increasing contacts between the Aryans and non-Aryans gave rise to a multitude of social and cultural problems of a complex nature. The main challenge which both the peoples had to face was how to retain their respective racial and cultural identities without provoking a suicidal conflict and in the process getting themselves totally overpowered by a rival civilization and way of life. In their own enlightened self-interest both of them chose the path of mutual accommodation and adjustment. There was a conscious effort to achieve a racial, ethnological and cultural synthesis of Aryan and non-Aryan elements. The story of the success achieved in this regard forms a colourful and fascinating chapter in the social and cultural history of Kerala.

While dealing with the story of racial synthesis in Kerala some of the later instances of intermingling or mixture of races deserve mention. One of the earliest of such cases is the hypergamy of the Nairs with the Namboothri Brahmins. According to social anthropologists the Nairs benefited substantially from the intermingling. "They have been benefited physically by getting taller and light-skinned, culturally by imbibing a considerable portion of the Brahmanical lore and economically by becoming the henchmen of the richest community in the country."¹ To cite another instance, the liberal policy of the Zamorins of Calicut led to the free intermingling between the Arab traders and the seafaring Mukkuvas of the coast, resulting in the growth of a half-breed Muslim population. In the coastal areas of Kerala the Portuguese and other European nationals contracted matrimonial alliances with native women, belonging particularly to the Ezhava and Mukkuva communities. Tankasseri, Anjengo and Cochin are some of the places which witnessed such intermingling of races. The off-spring of such intermarriages became converts to Christianity and subscribed, by and large, to the Western code of social conduct. Nevertheless, there have also been cases of the off-spring of such intermarriages who did not break away from the original moorings or change their faith. The English-Ezhava half-breeds, locally called 'White Tiyyas', found mainly in the Tellicherry-Cannanore area of the Cannanore District in north Kerala come under the category.

A study of the racial history of Kerala thus brings out two salient facts : (1) The earliest inhabitants of the land were those who are now represented by the hill tribes living a sheltered existence in the jungles of the state as well as by some of Scheduled Castes living in the plains. (2) Over the centuries several races and peoples have made their contribution to the building up of the composite and pluralistic culture of Kerala noted for its vitality even today.

1. Samanta Bhadra in his article on "Recent Race Mixtures in Kerala, Some Aspects" in *Anthropology on the March* (p.124), edited by L.K. Balaratnam

CHAPTER IV

EARLY FOREIGN CONTACTS

Kerala had contacts with the countries of the outside world even from time immemorial. The Arabs, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Phoenicians, the Israelites, the Greeks, the Romans and the Chinese were among the foreign peoples who had contacts with the Kerala coast in the ancient period. These early foreign contacts were mainly commercial but they led, at a very early period of history, to the introduction of such religions as Christianity, Judaism and Islam into the land and helped to mould the culture of Kerala into a composite and cosmopolitan one. The countries of Europe were also benefited by these contacts. In the words of Logan, “It is certain that Indian ideas and practices contributed largely to the form which orthodox Christianity in the West finally adopted. Monasteries and nunneries, tonsures, rosaries, confession and celibacy all seem to have found their way to Europe from Indian sources. And in return, the West seems to have given to the East arts and sciences, architecture, the art of coining money and in particular, the high ideal of religion contained in Christianity”.¹ In order to understand the story of this interaction of cultures in its true historical perspective, it is necessary to trace in brief the history of the early foreign contacts of Kerala and the channels through which such contacts were established and kept up.

Beginnings of the Spice Trade

Ancient Kerala had been famous for her spices and it was her fame as the land of spices that brought foreign peoples and cultures to her shores even from the 3rd millennium B.C., if not earlier. The Assyrians and the Babylonians whose civilizations flourished in the 3rd and 2nd millennia B.C. in the land of ancient Sumer (Mesopotamia or Iraq) carried on an extensive trade in cardamom and cinnamon that came from the Kerala coast. The ancient Egyptians also used spices from Kerala to make ‘perfumes, and holy oils and to preserve the dead bodies of their kings and other highly placed persons by a system of mummification. In 1500 B.C the Egyptian Queen Hatshepsut sent an expedition of five ships down the Red Sea to obtain spices from the East. The great Egyptian city of Alexandria was for long the leading emporium of trade in oriental spices. The women of ancient Egypt are said to have burnt ginger, cinnamon and other spices on a small charcoal set in a hole on the floor to produce scented fumes to bathe their bodies.

The *Old Testament* too contains plentiful references to cinnamon and cardamom, spices indigenous to Kerala. Cinnamon is referred to in the Bible

1. Logan, *Malabar Manual*, p.254.

as one of the ingredients of the holy anointing oils and perfumes used in the ritual of the Tabernacle erected by Moses, the great Jewish law-giver, in the wilderness of Sinai. The date of the building of the Tabernacle is given as 1490 B.C. and it is clear from this that cinnamon was well known to the Hebrews of the day. Another reference in the *Holy Testament* to the use of spices is in connection with the visit of Queen Sheba to King Solomon of Isreal (1015-966 B.C.). It is said that Queen Sheba came to Jerusalem “with a very great train with camels that bear spices,” and that “there came no more such abundance of spices as those that the Queen Sheba gave to King Solomon”. The *Holy Testament* also refers to the enticing role played by perfumes made of spices in the field of love making.

Arabs and Phoenicians

Among the early pioneers of the spice trade were the Arabs and the Phoenicians. Most probably, the first long voyage to the Kerala coast and other regions of the East might have been undertaken by the Arabs of the Oman and Persian Gulf area and the first cinnamon from Kerala might have found its way to the Middle East through the Arabs. It is suggested that there were close commercial contacts between South India and North India even as early as the age of the Indus Valley civilization (3rd millennium B.C.) and that several items found their way from the south to the Indus Valley. Some writers have spoken of an old caravan route connecting the Indus Valley in North India with the countries of the Middle East. If this was so, it may not be wrong in assuming that there was a direct overland route from Kerala in the southernmost part of India to the Middle East via the Indus Valley and that spices from the Kerala coast might have gone out along this land route as well. In this connection it would be pertinent to recall the observations of J.W. Parry, an American writer on the subject. A route from Northern India would lead from the Indus through the ancient province of Godrosia to Hormozia and would continue from there through the ancient provinces of Persia and Susiana to Eassorah. As a matter of fact, routes from China and India, which may have followed these courses are said to have existed from ‘time immemorial,’ but whether this means they were in existence over 1,500 years before the Christian era, is something we do not know. If they were, and if we allow a route from Southern to Northern India, it is not impossible that the first cassia and cinnamon came this way to the Middle East.”¹

Apart from the Arabs, the Phoenicians who were noted for their skill in navigation were also prominent in the spice trade. About 1000 B.C. King Solomon of Isreal equipped a fleet of ships manned by the Phoenicians which sailed to the East and came to Ophir and fetched from thence gold. Ophir, has been identified by some scholars with Puvur in Trivandrum district and by others with Beypore in Kozhikode district, though there is also a view that the place was not located anywhere in Kerala. In addition to gold such items as ivory, apes and peacocks were also carried by Solomon’s ships and all

1. J.W. Parry, *The Story of Spices*, p.62.

these were indigenous to Kerala. Herodotus (484-413 B.C.), the Greek historian, has recorded that the trade in cinnamon and cassia was in his days the monopoly of the Egyptians and the Phoenicians.

Greek and Roman Trade

In the closing centuries of the era before Christ, Kerala's trade in spices like ginger, turmeric and pepper assumed great prominence. The Greeks and the Romans of those days carried on extensive trade with Kerala. Cardamom, cinnamon, ginger, turmeric and pepper are among the spices mentioned by Dioscorides (40-90 A.D.), the Greek physician and contemporary of Pliny, in his *Materia Medica*, as possessing medicinal virtues. Philological evidence has been adduced to prove Greek commercial contacts with Kerala. Dr. Burnell considers the Greek word *Zingiber* as having been derived from the Malayalam word *Inchi*. Similarly, there is also a view that the Greek word *Oryzi* (rice) is derived from the Tamil word *Arisi*. With the Roman conquest of Egypt in the middle of the 1st century B.C. the Romans actively entered the field of spice trade, and the Arab monopoly broke up.

During the first three centuries of the Christian era the trade between the Roman Empire and the East became quite extensive both by land and water. In 45 A.D. the discovery by Hippalus of the existing monsoon winds regularly blowing across the Indian Ocean gave an impetus to trade between Kerala and the West, for voyage along the coast line thereafter gave place to oceanic voyage direct to Muziris after a trip of 40 days from Ocelis near Aden. Pliny laments the drain of Roman gold into India in return for unproductive luxuries. In fact, Roman gold and silver were steadily drained into South India in exchange not only for spices, but also muslin, silk and other costly luxuries. The discovery of Roman coins in many parts of Kerala testifies to the wide dispersion of Roman trade contacts. Pliny estimated that the Roman Empire paid out annually a hundred million sesterces (about £ 1,087,500) to India, China and Arabia for the purchase of luxuries. The demand for oriental spices, particularly pepper, steadily increased among the Romans.

Pepper formed the bulk of the west bound cargo from Kerala. It was valued by the Romans as highly as gold and silver and hence the name *Yavana Priya* (dear to the Romans) was given to it by Sanskrit writers.¹ At the Roman Customs House in Alexandria imported spices were scrutinised and taxed. The direct trade between Kerala and Rome declined with effect from the 3rd century A.D. when military anarchy reigned in Rome, but spices continued to have a good market. When Constantinople became the capital of the Roman Empire in 330 A.D. that city developed into a centre of trade in oriental spices. Early in the 5th century A.D. when Rome was besieged by Alaric, King of the Goths, a part of the ransom demanded for sparing the imperial city from destruction was 3,000 pounds of black pepper.

1. The term Yavana embraced all foreigners like Greeks, Romans, Fenians, Arabs etc., in Tamil and Sanskrit Literature.

Chinese Trade

In addition to the Arabs, the Phoenicians, the Romans, etc., the Chinese also entered the field of pepper trade in the early centuries of the Christian era, if not earlier, but their trade contacts continued for a much longer period than those of the Romans. Some scholars have suggested that Chinese trade relations with Kerala began long before Greek and Roman ships called at Chera ports and that a Chinese colony had been established here. On the basis of the evidence furnished by a Chinese coin of the 1st century B.C. discovered from Chandravalli it is suggested that Chinese trade contacts with South India should have commenced before the Christian era itself. Quilon was an important centre of Chinese trade in the 9th century A.D. The trial excavations conducted at Cheraman Parambu near Tiruvanchikulam brought to light a large number of Chinese sherds mixed with pottery. On examination they were found to belong to the 12th and 13th centuries.

Marco Polo, the celebrated traveller of the 13th century, speaks of the flourishing trade in pepper and spices between Kerala and the countries of West Asia and China. Among the spices of the Malabar coast noted by him during his voyage are pepper, ginger and cinnamon. In the magnificent city of Hangchow he was informed by the Customs officer of Kublai Khan, the Chinese Emperor, that the daily amount of pepper brought was 43 loads, each load being 243 pounds or a total of 10,449 pounds. Referring to the city of Zaitun, Marco Polo says that the quantity of pepper imported there was so considerable that what was carried to Alexandria to meet the demands of the western parts of the world was not more than even a hundredth part. Kublai Khan received a handsome revenue from this enormous pepper trade and the spice merchants made huge profits which amounted to 50 per cent of the value of the pepper cargo. Marco Polo also gives an interesting account of the pepper ships trading with China. The number of crew differed with the size of the ships from 150 to 300 men and the cargo capacity was from 5,000 to 6,000 baskets or mats of pepper.

Indigenous Maritime Tradition

In the preceding sections only the trade contacts of the foreign powers with the Kerala coast on their own initiative have been dealt with. The early Sangam works also contain references to the voyages of the people of Kerala to foreign countries. In the 6th decade of *Patittupattu* the poetess Kakkai Patiniyar refers to the Chera ships plying the ocean to procure wealth from foreign countries. Kerala was, in fact, in the forefront of the oceanic commerce of South India. Parananar, the great poet of the Sangam Age, refers to the huge ships of a chieftain by name Veliyan going abroad to fetch gold (*Agam* 152). Another poet alludes to the unchallenged supremacy of the ships of the Chera in the western seas when he states that the ships of other powers could not even think of peeping into those waters (*Puram* 126). Pliny refers to Indian sailors who were cast ashore by storm on the German coast. In the later period, i.e., from the 9th to the 13th centuries there were trade organisations like *Achuvannam*,

Nanadesikal, and *Manigramam* which engaged themselves in foreign trade. Thus though the foreign nationalities played the predominant role in the commerce of Kerala, the part played by the natives is by no means negligible.

Ancient Sea-ports

Classical writers like Pliny, the anonymous author of the *Periplus* and Ptolemy give detailed accounts of the sea-ports through which Kerala kept up her commercial and cultural contacts with foreign countries in the early centuries of the Christian era. The most important of these ports were Muziris, Tyndis, Barace and Nelcynda. While Muziris has been identified by all scholars with modern Cranganore, there has been no unanimity in the matter of the identification of the other places. Among the ports of ancient Kerala mentioned above, Muziris had undoubtedly the place of pride. It is referred to as Murachipattanam in the *Valmiki Ramayana*, as Muchiri in Tamil works and as Muyirikode in the Jewish Copper Plate of Bhaskara Ravi Varman (1000 A.D.). During the period of the Second Chera Empire (800-1102 A.D) and after it was known as Makotai, Mahodayapuram and Mahodaya pattanam.

Muziris was the gate of ancient India and apart from serving as an emporium of trade for the Phoenicians, the Egyptians, the Greeks and the Romans in turn, it also gave shelter for the first time to the Christian, Jewish and Muslim communities who have enriched the cultural heritage of Kerala. As already noted, it was with the epoch-making discovery of the monsoon winds by Hippalus that Muziris acquired importance as the emporium of Roman trade.

The works of classical geographers and Tamil poets refer in unequivocal terms, to the phenomenal prosperity of Muziris in the days of Roman trade. Pliny refers to Muziris as the most important port of India (*Primum Emporium Indiae*). He also says that foreign ships anchored at a distance from the port and that the cargo was taken into it from the shore in *Vallams*. Perhaps, this is a reference to the fact that the mouth of the harbour was not deep enough for ships to anchor. The author of the *Periplus* and Ptolemy also speak of Muziris as a great emporium. The harbour was crowded with ships of all kinds, with large warehouses and extensive bazars adjoining it and royal mansions and places of worship in the interior. "Fish is bartered here for paddy which is brought in baskets to the houses", says a Tamil poet. A verse in the *Agananuru* (149) refers to "the thriving town of Muchiri where the beautiful large ships of the Yavanas bringing gold come, splashing the white foam in the waters of the Periyar which belongs to the Chera and return laden with pepper". Paranan in (*Puram* 343) also refers to the brisk trade in pepper at the port of Muziris "Sacks of pepper are brought from the houses to the market ; the gold received from ships in exchange for articles sold is brought on shore in barges at Muchiri, where the music of the surging sea never ceases and where Kuttuvan (the Chera king) presents to visitors the rare products of the seas and mountains."

On the evidence of the *Peutingirian Tables* it has been stated that there was even a temple of Augustus near Muziris and that a force of 1,200 Roman soldiers was stationed in the town for the protection of Roman commerce. Even if no regular Roman army had been stationed at Muziris, it may not be wrong in assuming that Roman traders had stationed soldiers at strategic points in the town to protect their trade from the inroads of pirates. The imports into Muziris are given “as a great quantity of coin; topaz, thin clothing, not much; figured linens, antimony, coral, crude glass, copper, tin, lead, wine not much but as much as Barigaza¹; realgar and orpiment; and wheat only for the sailors, for this is not dealt in by the merchants there”. The exports from the place are the “pepper coming from Kottanora (Kuttanad in the interior) “great quantities of fine pearls”, ivory, silk cloth, spikenard from the Ganges, malabathrum from the interior, transparent stones of all kinds, diamonds and sapphires and tortoise-shell”. Though Roman trade declined from the fifth century A.D. Muziris continued to enjoy its old commercial prosperity as it attracted the attention of other nationalities, particularly the Chinese. Till the great floods in the Periyar river in 1341 which choked the mouth of the harbour of Muziris and brought the Cochin’ port into prominence as a rival, Muziris continued to be the foremost port of foreign trade on the Kerala coast.

Next in importance to Muziris was Tyndis. The author of the *Periplus* refers to it as “a large village close to the shore” situated 500 stadia (about 60 miles) north of Muziris. The place figures in Tamil literature as Tondi and it has been praised in several Tamil works of the Sangam age. “It was bounded”, says, a Tamil poet (*Puram* 17), “by groves of coconut trees bearing heavy bunches of fruits, a wide expanse of rice fields, verdant hills, bright sandy tracts and a salt river whose glassy waters are covered with flowers of brilliant colours”. It has been identified by scholars alternatively with Kadalundi, Ponnani and Pantalayani Kollam. At the time when the author of the *Periplus* wrote Tyndis was an important coastal village. In course of time it rose into prominence as a sea-port town. A branch of the Chera royal house is also said to have established itself at Tyndis.

Barace (Bacare) was a principal centre of trade situated to the south of Muziris. Pliny gives several details of the place. It was a port on the mouth of the river Bans which has been identified by scholars with the Pampa river. During Pliny’s time Barace was a more convenient port for foreign ships to call as, unlike Muziris, it was free from pirates. The author of the *Periplus* refers to the fact that large quantities of pepper were brought down to Barace from the interior which is called Kottanora. Several writers are inclined to identify Barace with Purakkad, south of Alleppey and Kottanora (Kuttanad) with the fertile and extensive valley of the Pampa celebrated for its fine pepper. Purakkad is also believed by some to be phonetically allied to Barace, the place having been referred to as ‘Porca’ and ‘Porcai’ by the Portuguese and

1. *Brugukaccha* of Sanskrit literature or modern Broach

Dutch writers. By all accounts Purakkad seems to have been a port of considerable importance and till the rise of Alleppey (Alapuzha) in the late 18th century it was the principal sea-port between Cochin and Quilon.

Another port to the south of Muziris mentioned by the early classical writers is Nelcynda. It is said to have been 500 stadia (about 60 miles) south of Muziris. While some identify the place with Nindakara, others identify it with Niranam. In view of the fact that far-reaching geographical changes have taken place on the Kerala coast since the days when Pliny and Ptolemy wrote their accounts, it is difficult to say anything conclusive on the identification of Nelcynda.

Apart from the ports mentioned above, there were also several other ports of commercial and maritime importance in ancient Kerala which now remain in the realm of relative oblivion. Balita, mentioned by the *Periplus* as “the harbour and village on the shore” situated between Barace and Kumari (Cape Comorin) is sometimes identified with Varkala. It has also been identified by some scholars with Vizhinjam which was the capital of the later Ay Kings. An important sea-port, Vizhinjam was one of the major scenes of battle during the Chola-Chera war of the 11th century A.D. Rajendra Chola (1012-1044 A.D.) captured the place and named it Rajendrachola Pattanam. Another port referred to in classical works is Naura which was situated north of Muziris. It has sometimes been identified with Cannanore (Kannur). Yet another ancient sea port which has since been forgotten and which figures prominently in ancient Tamil works is Mantai. Next to Vanchi and Tondi, it was the most important town of ancient Kerala till the 8th century A.D. The Tamil works contain beautiful descriptions of the place. It has not been possible to identify the place correctly. Two other sea ports on the Malabar coast were Vakai and Pantar. From the reference to the former as Vakai Perumturai in several works it is clear that the place must have been a big harbour in ancient days. The town of Pantar was also an equally thriving sea port town famed for its pearl, as is evidenced by the *Patittupattu*. The identification of Pantar has also been difficult, though some writers are inclined to identify it with Pantalayani Kollam. Most of these ports of the ancient period are no longer important, but they serve to evoke in our minds memories of Kerala’s glorious maritime past.

Later Ports

It would be relevant to the scope of this chapter to refer to some of the other ports of Kerala which came into prominence in later periods. The most, important of these are Quilon, Calicut and Cochin. It is not clear as to when exactly the port of Quilon first came into the lime-light. According to some writers the Male referred to by Cosmas (6th century A.D.) and the Mahlai of the Chinese records of the Tang Dynasty (618-907 A.D.) may be identified with Quilon. At the time of Sulaiman’s visit (851 A.D.) Quilon was the chief centre of Chinese trade. The Chinese ships paid a heavy toll of 1,000 dinars each at Quilon. The Chinese trade had declined considerably as a result of

keen competition from the Arabs at the time of Marco Polo's visit towards the close of the 13th century, but Chinese vessels continued to call at the port. Ibn Batuta, the famous Muslim traveller of the 14th century, has recalled that the Chinese had still Quilon as their chief resort.

Calicut became an important port only from the 13th or 14th century onwards. Marco Polo who visited the coast towards the end of the 13th century does not mention Calicut. With the decline of Cranganore (Muziris) following the floods in the Periyar river in 1341 the importance of Calicut increased considerably. Its peculiar geographical position coupled with its status as the headquarters of the Zamorins invested it with added importance. The tolerant policy of the Zamorins and the concessions granted by them to foreign traders made the Chinese and the Arabs gradually prefer Calicut to all other ports on the West Coast. Calicut had developed into one of the major ports of Kerala by the time of Vasco Da Gama's landing at the place in 1498. Cochin was the last of the three ports to come into commercial prominence. The classical geographers like Pliny and Ptolemy or medieval travellers like Ibn Batuta and Marco Polo do not mention the place. It is believed, that Cochin port was formed only as late as 1341 when as a result of the heavy floods in the Periyar the mouth of the Cranganore harbour got silted up and the Muziris of old lost its commercial importance. Cochin before long became a serious rival to Cranganore. At the time of Ma Huan's visit in 1409 and Nicolo Conti's in 1440 Cochin was already a flourishing centre of trade in pepper and spices. The Chinese and the Arabs carried on brisk trade at the port. With the coming of the Portuguese towards the end of 15th century Cochin came into greater commercial and political prominence and the later history of the conflict between the European powers in Kerala came to be centred around this port.

CHAPTER V

KERALA IN THE SANGAM AGE

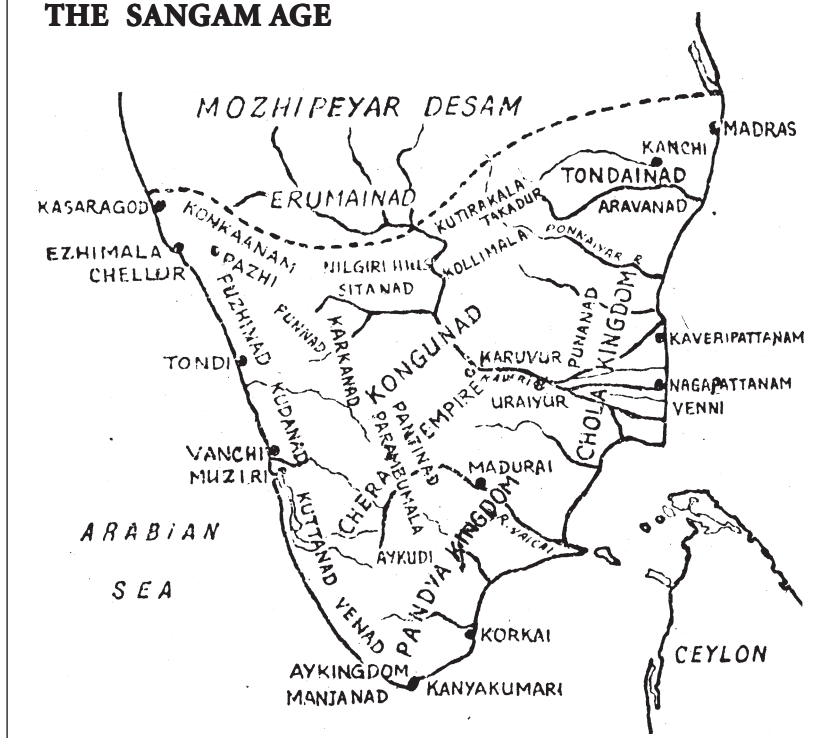
The Sangam age which comprised the first five centuries of the Christian Era was the formative epoch of Kerala History. Kerala during this period formed part of the larger unit of Tamilakam. The land was divided into five divisions on the basis of topography, *viz.*, Venad, Kuttanad, Kudanad, Puzhinad and Karkanad. The exact boundaries of these divisions are not known but some broad indications are available from contemporary Tamil works. The present Trivandrum district and portions of the Quilon and Pathanamthitta districts constituted Venad or 'the land of the Vels' (Chieftains). The region lying to its north comprised Kuttanad or the "land of lakes". The whole of the present Ernakulam, Alleppey, Idukki and Kottayam districts and a portion of the Quilon district were included in this division. Kudanad or the 'Western land' (*ie.*, the land lying to the west of Kongunad) comprised the region to the north of Kuttanad. It included the Trichur, Malappuram and Palghat districts and a part of the Kozhikode district. The northern most division, *viz.*, Puzhinad or the 'marshy tract' covered the coastal area of the present Cannanore and Kasargod districts and a part of the Kozhikode district. The mountainous region of Wynad, Guddalore, etc., lying to the east of Puzhinad was called Karkanad or 'the impregnable area'. It may, however, be noted that the terms Venad and Karkanad came into vogue only in the post-Sangam period.

Politically, the land of Kerala was ruled in the early Sangam age mainly by three powers, *viz.*, the Ays in the south, the rulers of Ezhimala (Mount Eli) in the north and the Cheras in the region lying in between.

Ays

The Ays ruled over an extensive area stretching from Nagercoil in the south to Tiruvalla in the north including the Sahyadri ranges. Ptolemy (2nd century A.D.) refers to the region from the Baris (Pamba) to Cape Comorin as Aioi, where the chieftains of the Ay clan ruled. They had their capital at Aykudi in the Podiyil mountain. The Ays had come into prominence even before the Cheras established themselves as the dominant, political power in Kerala. The Sangam works refer to three important Ay kings, *viz.*, Ay Antiran, Titiyan and Atiyan. The Ay kingdom acted in due course as a buffer state between the Pandya and Chera kingdoms. A detailed history of the Ays will be given in a separate chapter. The brief reference to the Ays is made here only to complete the political picture of Kerala in the Sangam age.

TAMILAKAM IN THE SANGAM AGE



Ezhimala Kingdom

The coastal tract between Badagara and Mangalore and the mountainous region lying to the east were under the sway of an illustrious line of kings who ruled with their capital at Ezhimala or Mount Eli¹. The region lying to the north of Cannanore including the mountainous tract lying to its east was also known as Konkaanam.² The Kannada speaking area which the Tamils of the day referred to as *Mozhipeyar desam*, i.e., the area where language other than Tamil was spoken lay to the north of the Ezhimala kingdom.

The kingdom of Ezhimala reached the zenith of its glory and power under the great king Nannan who is celebrated in several Tamil poems. Nannan

1. Ezhimala is referred to in Sangam works as *Ezhilmalai* meaning 'elevated hill'. The I from 'Ezhil' dropped off is the process of the natural evolution of the language. When the Namboothiris came in the post-Sangam age they mistook Ezhimala for *Eli Mala* or *Mushaka Saila* (Rat Mountain) and *Ezhu Mala* or *Sapta Saila* (Seven Mountains). The Muslim travellers who came in the medieval period spoke of it as Eli, Hili, etc. In European accounts the place is referred to as Mount D'El, or Mount Eli.

2. Konkanam is to be distinguished from Konkan in Maharashtra. While the former, a synonym for the Ezhimala kingdom, lay to the south of Tulunad, the latter lay to its north.

was a great warrior king who ruled his kingdom with an iron hand. He extended his sway over such regions as Wynad and Guddalore and also over the northern portions of Coimbatore. His attempts to expand his kingdom brought him into deadly conflict with the Cheras of Vanchi. The victories of Nannan over the Cheras and other neighbouring chieftains are alluded to in the *Agananuru*, *Nattinai* and other works. The most resounding of his triumphs was the one he scored over the Chera commander Ay Eynan in the battle of Pazhi. Nannan's general Mijjili defeated and killed the Chera captain in this battle. The immediate provocation for the fight between Nannan and the Cheras was the attack by the former on the prosperous area of Punnad in western Coorg. Paranaar, the court poet of Nannan, has sung poems in praise of the victory of Nannan in the battle of Pazhi. Pazhi which was also the seat of Nannan was famous for its rich treasures as well. The victorious career of Nannan ended in defeat and disaster. The Chera army under Narmudi Cheral defeated and killed this valiant king in the battle of Vakaiperumturai and brought Puzhinad under Chera imperial control.

Not much is known about the history of the Ezhimala kingdom after Nannan's death. The Nannan Utiyan referred to in the *Agananuru* (258) was perhaps the son of Nannan. Apart from its political importance, Ezhimala attained fame in the Sangam age also as the home of some of the poets like Paranaar and Azhissi. All the Tamil poets of the age actually depended on Nannan for patronage (*Puram* 155). It may be made clear in this connection that Nannan was a ruler of North Malabar and not of the Tulu country.

CHERAS

The Cheras established themselves as an important power in Kerala in the early centuries of the Christian era. Some scholars have expressed the view that there were three independent branches of the Chera imperial line with headquarters at Vanchi, Tondi and Karur respectively, but this view is not correct. In the course of their imperial expansion the members of the Chera royal family set up residence at several places in their far-flung and extensive empire. They followed the collateral system of succession (*Kuttuvazhcha*) according to which the eldest member of the family, wherever he lived, whether at Vanchi, Karur or Tondi, ascended the throne.

A brief outline of the history of the first Chera Empire on the basis of the genealogy of the Chera princes as furnished in the *Patittupattu* (Ten Decade) is given below. It may be made clear in this context that not all the princes mentioned in the *Patittupattu* ascended the throne. Most of them helped the reigning sovereign as heir-apparents or junior princes. In fact, the Chera princes who figure in the *Patittupattu* belong to three or four generations only. No attempt is made here to work out a definite chronology for the early Cheras as it can at best only be speculative in the absence of positive evidence.

Utiyan Cheralatan

Utiyan Cheralatan, also known as Perumchettutiyar Cheralatan, was the first of the great Chera monarchs. He might be the hero of the first decade of

the *Patittupattu* which has been lost. He had his capital at a place called Kuzhumur in Kuttanad (*Agam* 168). It was during his reign that the Cheras started on their career of northward and eastward expansion starting from their original home in Kuttanad (*Agam* 65). Utiyan Cheral assumed the title *Vanavaramban* which either means “one whose kingdom is bounded by the sky” or “the Beloved of the Gods”. He was a contemporary of Karikala Chola. In the battle of Venni the former was wounded on the back by his Chola adversary (*Puram* 65 and 66). Unable to bear the disgrace of his discomfiture the Chera committed suicide by starvation and many others followed his example (*Agam* 55).

Utiyan Cheral is often described as the Chera ruler of the ‘Big Feed’. Mamulanar credits him with having conducted a feast in honour of his deceased ancestors (*Agam* 233). A poet called Muranjiyur Mudinagarayar refers to Utiyan Cheral as the Chera ruler who gave a sumptuous feast to both parties in the battle of Kurukshetra (*Puram* 2). The poem, however, seems to be at interpolation.

Nedum Cheralatan

Utiyan Cheral was succeeded by his son Nedum Cheralatan, also called ‘Imayavaramban’ (Beloved of the Gods or one who had the Himalayas for his boundary) and ‘Kudakko’ (King of Kudanad). The latter title furnishes proof of the fact that the Cheras had by this time brought Kudanad under their sway. Nedum Cheral is the hero of the second decade of *Patittupattu* composed by Kannanar. He is said to have won victories over seven crowned, kings and thus achieved the superior status of an *Adhiraja*. During the reign of Nedum Cheralatan five junior princes helped the king in his conquests. They were Antuvan Cheral, Palyanai Sel Kelu Kuttuvan, Selva Kadumko Valiatan, Narmudi Cheral and Vel Kelu Kuttuvan. With characteristic exaggeration the poet praises the king as having subdued the kings from Kumari to the Himalayas. The greatest of his enemies were, the Kadambas of Banavasi. The Chera ruler won a decisive victory over them. As the Kadambas had their origin some ‘time in the 4th century AD., Nedum Cheral may well be assigned after this age. Nedum Cheralatan also won another victory over the “Yavanas” on the coast. The chief of the Yavanas was captured and paraded in public with his hands pinioned to his back and head poured over with ghee. Mamulanar refers to the sea coast town of Mantai and the heap of ornaments and diamonds captured from the enemy by Nedum Cheralatan exhibited there (*Agam* 127).

This Chera ruler was also famous for his hospitality. He is said to have gifted a part of Umbarkkat (Anamala) itself to the poet Kannanar. The guests in the royal palace were served with liquor and meat on a lavish scale. In the words of the poet, “Rains may fail but never the munificence of Cheralatan”. He is said to have had a long and glorious reign of 58 years. It may be mentioned here that like all the South Indian rulers Nedum Cheralatan also reckoned his regnal year from the date of his accession as *Yuvaraja*.

Nedum Cheralatan died in battle with a Chola ruler (*Puram* 62 and 63). The latter is also said to have died by the spear thrown at him by the Chera.

Palyanai Sel Kelu Kuttuvan

Palyanai Sel Kelu Kuttuvan, the son of Utiyan Cheral and the brother of Nedum Cheral, is the hero of the third decade of the *Patittupattu* composed by Palai Gautamanar. He never ascended the throne, but spent 25 years as heir-apparent. Palyanai helped Nedum Cheral in his conquests in North Kerala. At least a part of North Malabar, viz, Puzhinad came under Chera sway during this period as is evidenced by his assumption of the title 'Puzhiyarkon' (King of Puzhinad). He led the Chera army which conquered the Kongu country (Salem-Coimbatore region). It may be mentioned that the invasion of Kongunad by Ay Antiran (*Puram* 130) took place earlier to Palyanai's conquest of the territory. The capital of this ruler is mentioned in poems as Vanchi situated on the banks of the broad Periyar. In the later years of his life Palyanai retired from the field of battle and devoted himself to the pursuit of the arts of peace. He gave handsome gifts to poets and men of letters and also helped the Brahmins to perform *Yoga* in accordance with Vedic rites. The Brahmin poet Gautamanar himself performed ten such *Yogas* under the king's patronage.

Narmudi Cheral

Kalangaikkanni Narmudi Cheral, the son of Nedum Cheralatan, is the hero of the, 4th decade of the *Patittupattu* composed by Kappiyattu Kappiyanar. The crown he wore at his coronation as *Yuvaraja* is said to have been made of palmyra fibre and the festoon on it contained a small black berry called *Kalangay*. Hence this ruler came to be known as "the Chera with the Kalangay festoon and the fibre crown". A lofty imperialist like Palyanai, he too did not ascend the throne, but was *Yuvaraja* for 25 years and died before the death of his father. Narmudi Cheral won a series of victories over his enemies, but he was always generous to the fallen foe.

The most powerful adversary whom Narmudi Cheral had to face was Nannan of Ezhimala. The attack by Nannan on Punnad in Coorg adjoining Wynad provoked Narmudi Cheral to take prompt action. The Chera army marched against Nannan. In the battle of Pazhi Nannan inflicted a crushing defeat on the Cheras but Narmudi before long avenged the defeat by defeating and killing Nannan in the battle of Vakaiperumturai. Puzhinad now came under the sway of the Cheras.

Narmudi Cheral evinced lively interest in the all-round welfare of his people. He was famous for his patronage of scholars and poets. His court poet Kappiyattu Kappiyanar was rewarded with 40 lakhs of gold coins as a token of recognition of his poetic genius. He is said to have even given away elephants as presents to men of letters.

Vel Kelu Kuttuvan

Kadalpirakottiya Vel Kelu Kuttuvan, another son of Nedum Cheralatan and the hero of the 5th decade of *Patittupattu* composed by Parananar, ascended the

Chera throne on the death of his father. He is sometimes identified with Senkuttuvan Chera, the mythical hero of the *Silappadikaram*, who is said to have led a successful expedition to the Gangetic valley to fetch the stone for the consecration of Kannaki at Muziris (the later Kurumba Bhagavathi temple, Cranganore) and performed the ceremony in the presence of a distinguished gathering of contemporary rulers and princes. It may be remembered that *Silappadikaram* is a later work as is evidenced by the references it contains to the Alupas of the Tulu region and the Palas of Bengal.

Vel Kelu Kuttuvan is credited with several great achievements by poet Paranaar. He is said to have defeated the fierce warrior Mogur Mannan and also the Kongar. From the title 'Kadalpirakottiya' assumed by him it is assumed that he might have won a great maritime victory. Paranaar attributes to him the miraculous feat of having driven back the sea with his magnificent spear. This may be taken either as a reference to some simple sea festival performed by him or some important geographical change like the reclamation of land caused by the recession of the sea which the court poet in his unbounded enthusiasm for the king attributed to his prowess. If the identification of Vel Kelu Kuttuvan with Senkuttuvan is correct, this ruler must also have been a generous patron of scholars and artists and his reign must have witnessed a great expansion of overseas trade and commerce. It may be noted that during the reign of Vel Kelu Kuttuvan such junior princes as Perum Cheral Irumporai, Ilam Cheral and Adu Kottu Pattu Cheralatan functioned as *Yuvarajas* and helped the Chera king in his conquests.

Adu Kottu Pattu Cheralatan

Adu Kottu Pattu Cheralatan, the hero of the 6th decade of the *Patittupattu*, was also the son of Nedum Cheralatan. He was Yuvaraja for 38 years and did not ascend the throne. His hospitality and martial prowess have come in for special praise in the poem. According to one version he was called Adu Kottu Pattu Cheralatan because he used to dance with sword in hand on the battlefield to celebrate his victories. There is also a view that the title signifies his achievement in recovering a herd of cattle lifted by some hostile chief. The prince is also said to have gifted an entire village in Kuttanad to the Brahmins. He was also a patron of letters and arts, trade and commerce.

Selvakadumko Valiatan

This Chera is the hero of the 7th decade of *Patittupattu* composed by Kapilar, the most celebrated of the Sangam poets. He had his residence at Tondi and is said to have reigned for 25 years. Selvakadumko was the son of Antuvan Cheral and he married, the younger sister of the wife of Nedum Cheralatan. He is said to have won a victory over the combined forces of the Cholas and the Pandyas. He set up villages in several parts of the empire and also performed *Yogas*. His generosity as a patron of letters knew no bounds and he is credited with having rewarded Kapilar with one lakh of gold coins and all the land that he could see from the top of a hill. It may be mentioned here that

this king may be identified with the Atan Cheral Irumporai mentioned in the Aranattarmalai inscription discovered near Pugalur.

Perum Cheral Irumporai

Perum Cheral Irumporai, the hero of the 8th decade of the *Patittupattu* composed by Arisil Kizhar, was the son of Selvakadumko. He too was only heir-apparent. He is referred to in the poem as *Takadur Erinta Perum Cheral*. It is clear from this title that he destroyed the famous city of Takadur which belonged to the Adigaman chief, Ezhni. The chief of Takadur was defeated along with the Chola and Pandya rulers. Perumcheral is depicted in poems not only as the lord of Puzhinad and Kollimala (Salem district) but also as the lord of Puhar. It is argued from this that he might have even taken possession of the Chola capital Puhar during the reign of Vel Kelu Kuttuvan. He is also said to have subdued a refractory shepherd chief named Kaluvul. The munificence and bounty of this ruler have come in for generous praise at the hands of Arisil Kizhar. The king is also said to have performed several *Yagas*.

Illam Cheral Irumporai

Illam Cheral Irumporai, the son of Perumcheral, is the hero of the 9th decade of the *Patittupattu* composed by Perumkunrur Kizhar. Perhaps, he succeeded Vel Kelu Kuttuvan on the Chera throne for a few years. He is said to have defeated the Pandyas and the Cholas and brought to his capital Vanchi all the treasures he amassed during the campaign and distributed them among the Panas and others. He rewarded the poet by donating 9 lakhs *Kanams* in cash and by erecting for him a palace to stay in.

Chera Genealogy

The brief accounts of the nine Chera princes given above are based on the *Patittupattu*. As made clear at the outset, only a few of them ascended the throne, the others being *Yuvarajas* or junior princes only. The first six songs of the *Patittupattu* deal with the achievements of Utiyan Cheral and of his sons and grandsons. The remaining three poems relate to Selvakadumko, his son and grandson. A Chera prince by name Antuvan Cheral who figures in Sangam literature was the father of Selvakadumko. He had his seat at Karuvur on the banks of the Amaravati. The Cheras could have reached Karuvur only after conquering Kongunad. It was Palyanai Sel Kelu Kuttuvan who conquered Kongunad during the reign of Nedum Cheralatan. Subsequent to this the prince referred to as Karuvureriya Olvalko Perum Cheral Irumporai might have captured Karuvur. Perhaps, he is Antuvan Cheral himself as is evidenced by the song by Mudamoisyar in the *Purananuru* which refers to Antuvan Cheral as residing at Karuvur. Antuvan Cheral and three others of his line should be regarded as contemporaries of Nedum Cheral and his sons. Thus Utiyan Cheral, his sons and grandsons belong to one branch of the Chera family which may be called the Vanavaramban line and Antuvan Cheral, his sons and grandsons to another which may be called the Irumporai line. The genealogy of the early Cheras is as follows :

I		II
Vanavaramban Line		Irumporai Line
	Utayan Cheral	Antuvan Cheral
Nedum Cheralatan	Palyanai Sel Kelu Kuttuvan	Selvakadumko
Narmudi Cheral	Vel Kelu Kuttuvan	Perum Cheral
	Adu Kottu Pattu	Ilam Cheral

Of the Chera princes mentioned above only Utayan Cheral, Nedum Cheral and Vel Kelu Kuttuvan ascended the throne and ruled for long periods. Perhaps, Selvakadumko and Ilam Cheral respectively were also on the throne as ruling chiefs for two or three years before and after Vel Kelu Kuttuvan. All the other Chera princes were only heir-apparents or junior princes helping the reigning sovereigns in the discharge of their duties. The relationship between Utayan and Antuvan is not clearly known. Perhaps, they were brothers. It is significant that Nedum Cheralatan and Selvakadumko married sisters.

Other Chera Rulers

There are some other Chera rulers whose names have also come down to us from the Tamil works of the Sangam age. One of the most important of them was Yanaikatchai Mantaran Cheral Irumporai (the Chera of the Elephant Look). Perhaps, he might have been the son and successor of Ilam Cheral and the hero of the missing 10th decade of *Patittupattu*. The territorial integrity of the Chera empire was preserved by him. His rule extended to Kollimala in the east and Tondi and Mantai in the west as in the days of Vel Kelu Kuttuvan. His reign was one of prosperity for the Chera kingdom. He is said to have won victory in a battle fought against his enemies at Vilamkil. Nedumchezhian, the Pandyan ruler of Talaiyalankanam fame, is said to have captured Mantaran Cheral as prisoner, but the latter managed to escape and regain the lost freedom. Nevertheless, by the time of Yanaikatchai the decline of the Chera empire had set in. Another Chera ruler Kanaikkal Irumporai is said to have defeated a chief by name Muvan, pulled out his teeth and planted them at the gates of Tondi, but he was captured prisoner by the Chola ruler Sengannan and he later committed suicide by starvation. Palai Patiya Perumkadumko was another Chera ruler of Vanchi. He was a talented poet. After him insignificant rulers like Kothai Marpan of Tondi figure in Sangam literature, but they do not deserve any detailed mention.

Identification of Vanchimutur

The central point of interest in early Chera history is the controversy regarding the identification of Vanchimutur, the original capital of the first Chera empire. The terms Vanchi and Karur (Karuvur) are used as synonyms in Tamil works while describing the Chera capital. The similarity in place names

has influenced several writers to locate the Chera capital of Vanchi in places bearing the name Karur both in Tamil Nadu and Kerala States. Tamil scholars of repute like V.R. Ramachandra Dikshitar and K.A. Nilakanta Sastri have located Vanchi at Karur on the banks of the Amaravati in Tiruchirapalli district. They have some inscriptional evidence in support of this stand. In some of the ancient inscriptions Karuvur in the Kongu area is referred to as Vanchi. The Sinnamannur plates of the 10th century refer to Vanchi as a town situated on the banks of the river Ponni. The river Ponni is identified by these scholars with Amaravati and the Vanchi situated on its banks with Karur.

As against the above view which located Vanchi in Tamil Nadu there is another school of thought which locates it in Kerala itself. The view of V. Kanakasabhai that Vanchi must have been Trikariyur near Kothamangalam has, however, not been taken seriously. A more popular theory is that of scholars like Dr. S. Krishnaswami Ayyangar, K.G. Sessa Ayyar and others who locate Vanchi at Tiruvanchikulam near modern Cranganore. A third school of thought locates Vanchi at Karurpadanna near Cranganore. Prof. R. Sathianathier and Elamkulam P.N. Kunjan Pillai are among those who suggest this possibility. An examination of available evidence shows that the view locating Vanchi in Karur in Tiruchirapalli district is untenable and that there is much to be said in favour of identifying it in an inland town like Karurpadanna situated near the ancient port of Muziris.

It has to be borne in mind that the Cheras started their imperial expansion from Kuttanad and that Kongunad and Karur came under them only subsequently. This historical evidence rules out the possibility of Karur in Tiruchirapalli district being the original capital of the Cheras. The geographical evidence furnished by the works of classical writers like Pliny and Ptolemy also militates against the location of Vanchi in the Kongu country. Pliny speaks of Muziris as the capital of the Chera country while the author of the *Periplus* locates the seat of the government of the kingdom under Keprobotras “two miles distant from the mouth of the river on which it is situated”. Ptolemy who speaks of Karoura as the capital of Keprobotras gives the latitude and longitude of the town as different from those of Muziris but the geographical data given by him clearly suggest that it was an inland town situated very close to the sea-port of Muziris. Karoura and Muziris were indeed situated in such close proximity to each other that the classical geographers often made no distinction between the two places and referred to both as the capital of the Chera kingdom. The literary evidence furnished by the post-Sangam works in Tamil is also in favour of locating the Chera capital of Vanchi near the flourishing port of Muziris. Scholars have expressed the view that the route of the journey undertaken by Kannaki from Madurai to Vanchi .has to be sought for in the region on the western side of the Ghats and along the shores of the Western Sea. The commentator of *Silappadikaram* uses the words Karur and Vanchi as if they were interchangeable. Thus there is evidence in support of the view that Vanchi should have been near Muziris in Kerala and not a place anywhere in the interior of Tamil Nadu State.

The evidence furnished by some of the literary works like *Kokasandesam* in Malayalam and *Takkayagapparani* in Tamil suggests the possibility that Karurpadanna situated between Cranganore and Irinjalakuda might have been the early Chera capital of Vanchi. The former work composed about 1400 A.D. refers to the swan as crossing Kunaka (Tirkanamatilakam) and Vanchi (Karurpadanna) before it reaches Tiruvanchakalam (Tiruvanchikulam). The Vanchi referred to above, it may be noted, was distinct from Tiruvanchikulam which was then known as Tiruvanchakalam (Tiruvanchaikalam in Tamil) and was situated a few miles to the north of it. Vanchimutur might have lost its earlier importance with the decline in the power of the Cheras after the Sangam age. When the Cheras re-established themselves as an imperial power in the 9th century A.D., they might have shifted their capital from Karur (Karurpadanna) in the interior to Makotai or Mahodaya puram which was nearer to the coast. The reference by Ottakuthan, the Tamil poet of the 12th century, in the *Takkayagapparani* to the transfer of the Chera capital from Vanchi to Makotai may be taken as a specific reference to the shifting of the Chera capital from Karurpadanna to Mahodayapuram, though the poet does not clarify whether the Vanchi he refers to is Karurpadanna near Cranganore or Karur in Tiruchirapalli. Mahodayapuram also came to be called 'Vanchi' by the Chera kings of the later period in conformity with the earlier practice of designating the Chera capital as such. It is significant that Quilon came to be called 'Ten Vanchi' (Southern Vanchi) when Rama Varma Kulasekhara (1090-1102 A.D.) left Mahodayapuram and set up residence at Quilon early in the 12th century. Quilon could hardly have been called the 'Vanchi of the South', if there had not been a Vanchi in the North. Thus there is overwhelming evidence in favour of the location of Vachimutur near the ancient town of Muziris in Kerala rather than in Karur in Tiruchirapalli district, even though the latter place was also called Vanchi.

Life and Culture of the Sangam Age

The Sangam works give us a faithful picture of government and society in Kerala in the early centuries of the Christian era. Monarchy was the most important political institution in the land, the succession to the throne being regulated by the patrilineal (*Makkathayam*) system of inheritance as in the Chola and Pandya royal families. Though the matrilineal system (*Marumakkathayam*) did not exist in the Sangam age, there is still evidence of a strong matrilineal culture. The Chera kings used the names of the father as well as the mother along with their names as was the practice among the Ikshwakus or Andhra Bhritiyas.

The person of the king was associated with much pomp and pageantry. He wore a crown made of gold and set with precious stones. The king was usually called 'Ko or Kon or Kadumko' (Great King). He was seldom referred to by his personal name. The names by which the Chera kings were generally called were indicative of some specific achievement or quality of the ruler, e.g.,

Takadur Erinta Perum Cheral (the Perum Cheral who destroyed Takadur) and Vanavaramban (Beloved of the Gods).

The queen had a privileged status and she took her seat by the side of the king in all religious ceremonies. She was respectfully called *Perumtevi* (Chief Queen). Polygamy was common among the kings, though there is no evidence of polyandry. The widowed queens sometimes committed *Sati*. Thus when Ay Antiran of South Kerala died, his wives committed *Sati*. The *Masatikallu* or *Pulachikallu* found here and there was erected over such burial grounds.

The Chera king was an autocrat, but his autocracy was limited by custom as well as by the counsel of his ministers and other learned men. The king was in a sense a benevolent autocrat who guaranteed equal protection and justice to all his subjects and consequently, he was held in very high esteem by all classes of the population. The people looked up to him for effective leadership in all matters affecting their welfare and security. The poets therefore usually referred to them as *Chandor Mey Marali* (Armour to Good Men) or *Puzhiyar Mey Marai* (Protector of Puzhinad). The king always adhered to the highest principles of morality in his personal conduct as he was expected to serve as a model to his subjects. The daily *darbar* in which he received complaints in person from the public and redressed their grievances on the spot was a feature of life in the royal court. The ideal of *Dig Vijaya* was popular with the rulers of the age and those who successfully accomplished it had a halo around them. The *Kural* of Tiruvalluvar provides a succinct exposition of the duties of an ideal king.

The king had several sources of revenue such as land and trade. His precise share of the gross produce from land is unknown. In addition to excise duties levied on articles of internal trade, the customs duties levied at the ports on articles of export also brought enormous revenue to the State. The booty captured from the enemy during military operations also enriched the royal exchequer.

Elaborate arrangements had been made by the Chera rulers for the preservation of internal peace in their domain. Roads were patrolled at night by watchmen bearing torches. Smuggling was effectively put down. Imprisonment was a common form of punishment. The protection of the people against internal aggression was one of the duties of the king. Almost all kings of the Sangam age were valiant fighters. The king maintained a well-equipped army which consisted of the usual *Chaturanga* (four arms), viz., infantry, cavalry, chariots and elephants. The Sangam works throw light on the important place of cavalry in the scheme of warfare. For example, Ay Eynan who fought against Nannan of Ezhimala in the battle of Pazhi had an excellent cavalry. The Cheras also owned seagoing vessels. The exploits of Nedum Cheralatan and Vel Kelu Kuttuvan testify to the fact that they must have had a good navy. The unique position occupied by the Chera navy is indicated in the simile of a poet which compares the unchallenged supremacy of Kapilar in the world of poets to that of the Chera fleet on the high seas (*Puram* 126).

The soldiers were armed with such offensive weapons as bows and arrows and spears and swords while they had shields for purposes of defence. The Chera infantry had several wings such as *Velpadai*, *Valpadai*, *Vilpadai* etc. There were also strong forts and moats and they were surrounded by forests (*Kavar Kadu*). The drum and the conch were used for signalling in times of fighting. At the commencement of each fight sacrifices were offered to the War Goddess Kottavai.

Martial spirit of a very high order prevailed not only among men but also among the women of the age. The latter played a decisive role in preserving the morale of the fighting forces in times of war. Women even went to the battlefield in order to encourage the men who were fighting against the enemy. Death on the battle field was considered a great honour for a soldier while normal death in bed was looked upon as a matter of shame. The memory of the soldiers who fell in battle was commemorated by the erection of hero stones (*ViraKals*) on which their names and achievements were inscribed. In spite of the blood-shed and violence associated with war there were also occasions when clemency was shown to the fallen foe. The king invariably led the armies in person on the battle field, seated on an elephant and his death, if it took place, was the signal for the end of hostilities. The bodyguards and other close lieutenants sometimes committed self-immolation following the death of the king (*Agam* 55). The conquered country was often laid waste by the conquering enemy forces. It was the practice to burn down the captured cities to strike terror into the hearts of the enemy. This is referred to in the *Tolkapiyam*.

There are many peculiar customs and institutions associated with war in the Sangam age. The kings considered it an honour to defeat others of their own rank and status. A king who defeated seven other kings was called an *Adhiraja*. He used to wear a pendant made of diamonds taken from the crowns of all the seven monarchs. It was customary to employ elephants to raze to the ground the fort gates (*Kottavatil*) of the enemy. It was a matter for disgrace to be wounded in the back by the enemy. Utiyan Cheralatan who was wounded in the back by Karikala Chola in the battle of Venni committed self-immolation by going on fast with a sword in hand and his face turned to the north (*Vatakkirikkal*). If a king or commander-in-chief died in the battle, the fighting was at once stopped and a war dance called *Kuravaikuthu* was performed (*Puram* 22 and 396). *Tunangaikuthu* and *Amala* were certain other forms of war dance performed on the battlefield. Women dancers (*Viralis*) took part in *Kuravaikuthu* and *Tunangaikuthu* but not in *Amala*. The defeated king had to put up with all kinds of humiliation. The triumphant king used to wear anklets made of the crown of the vanquished monarch. The tusks of elephants captured from the vanquished foe were used to make cots for the victorious ruler. Each of the kings used to rear a tree as the symbol of his authority. It was customary to fell down this tree in the event of the king being beaten on the battlefield. The teeth of the vanquished foe were sometimes pulled out and exhibited prominently at the gates of the forts of

the triumphant monarch. The poets, musicians, drummers and dancers could roam about the battlefield without any fear of being harassed or killed. They encouraged their patrons and disheartened their enemy (*Puram* 65,66).

A significant feature of life in the Sangam age was the honoured place given to poets and scholars in the courts of kings and in the life of the community at large. The king extended to them his full patronage. The Sangam works are replete with references to the lavish hospitality bestowed by kings on their court poets. There were several occasions when costly gifts like elephants and large quantities of gold coins were given to poets by their royal patrons. The kings never missed an opportunity to treat poets and artists to sumptuous feasts in the royal palace. The poets and scholars had free access to the courts of kings at any time. There was no gulf or barrier separating the royalty from the common people.

The ordinary kings (*Kurunilamannar*) had their capitals on the top of hills. Their principalities comprised of a few hills and a large number of villages situated in their valley. The rulers were referred to as exercising their sway over such and such hills, e.g., the rulers of Kollimalai, Pazhimalai, Parambumalai, etc. The celebrated poet Kapilar is associated with the defence of Parambumalai (Trichur district ?) belonging to Pari. The poet tried to inspire the defenders and discourage the invaders when the hill was subjected to attack by the *Muvarasar*, viz., the Chola, Chera and Pandya rulers (*Puram* 109, 111).

An important institution of the Sangam age was the *Manram*. Each village had its *Manram*. Its meetings were held by the elders under the banyan tree or so in order to help in the settlement of disputes. It is not clear whether it had a higher political role. It was at best a folk gathering where the people indicated their wishes. The *Manram* was also the venue for festivals. It may be noted that such places are even now called in Kerala by the term *Mannam*.

Social Life

The basic elements necessary for the flowering of a composite culture were present in Kerala society even in the early Sangam age. The sharp division of population into castes and communities was conspicuous by its absence. The rigours of caste and social exclusiveness were unknown. The people enjoyed a large measure of social freedom and equality. Dignity of labour was recognised everywhere and no person was looked upon as inferior in social status on account of his occupation. Such communities as the Panas, the Kuravas, the Parayas, the Vetas and others were held in high esteem by kings and nobles. They enjoyed the right to full education. The Panas were even superior to the Brahmins of the day in their intellectual and cultural accomplishments. It is said that the great poets of the Sangam age like Kapilar and Paranar originally belonged to the Pana community.¹ Whether this view is correct or not, it is clear that they were not Brahmins who came from north India and studied Tamil. The Panas and others were welcomed in the courts

1. Prof. Elamkulam P.N. Kunjan Pillai, *Keralam Anchum Arum Nuttandukalil*, p. 204.

of kings and princes with extreme cordiality and generous hospitality. The protection of the Panas was even considered to be one of the duties of the Chera king. The evils of untouchability and unapproachability were unknown in Kerala society in the early Sangam age. In other words, the four canonical castes, viz., the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Vaisyas and the Sudras had not taken clear shape. The position, however, changed in the later Sangam age when the division of society into castes on the basis of occupation came into vogue.

A striking feature of social life in the early Sangam age was the high status accorded to women. The *Purdah* system was unknown. Women enjoyed complete freedom of movement as well as the right to full education. They took part freely in all the amusements of social life. In view of the high level of female literacy the Sangam age produced many a gifted poetess. Auvvaiyar who lived about 500 A.D. was the most outstanding poetess of the age. Child marriage was unknown in the early Sangam age and adult marriage was the normal rule. Widow marriage was also permitted. The *Gandharva* system of marriage which allowed the voluntary union of man and woman in secrecy was very popular. Elopement by girls who did not approve of the choice of their husbands by parents is alluded to in many works. A curious custom referred to in the Sangam works is that of the frustrated lover proclaiming his love in the public streets and committing suicide by resorting to a fast unto death. The custom is referred to in Sangam works as *Mataleral* because the fast was undertaken by the lover sitting on an improvised horse made of the petiole of the palmyra tree (*Panamatal*).

Some peculiar marriage customs are also alluded to in Sangam literature. A custom known as *Chilampu Kazhi Nonbu* preceded the marriage. The bride would remove the anklet she had been wearing till then and wear the one given by the bridegroom. *Taliketttu* (tying the *Tali* or marriage badge) was unknown in the Sangam age. The institution of “bride price” was prevalent. The bridegroom paid some cash or gave some present to the parents of the bride. It may be mentioned that the custom of paying the bride price is still prevalent in Kerala among certain hill tribes. Polygamy and concubinage were not unknown in those days, but female morality was generally high.

Women also enjoyed the freedom to follow the occupation of their choice. While many of them took to weaving several others engaged themselves in the sale of fish, salt, etc. They were employed as shopkeepers, domestic servants, field labourers and gardeners. Women were fond of jewels such as necklaces, bangles, anklets, etc. Such ornaments as *Tali*, *Pulipaltali*, *Aympadatali*, *Nul Polkalam*, *Polkasu*, *Todi*, *Nettipattam*, *Muthuram*, *Chutti*, *Vala*, *Kuzhal*, etc., are mentioned in Sangam works. Women wore cotton fabrics as well as silk and woollen clothes. On festive occasions they used to get themselves attired in the best of clothes and ornaments but widows would not participate in festivals. The leaf skirt was quite popular in the Sangam age, even the princesses wearing it. It is significant that this custom is prevalent even now among some of the hill tribes like the Koragas of North Malabar.

Rice was the staple food of the people in the Sangam age, but fish and meat were also used. *Biriyani (Un choru) Ney Ven choru*, etc., were quite popular. The “white paddy” harvested in Tondi and the *ayirameen* (a species of fish) captured from the sea off its coast are referred to by the Tamil poets. There is a reference to the *Ney Ven choru* being served along with meat of the best quality to the guests assembled for marriage (*Agam* 136). The Sangam works contain references to such domestic utensils as *Kalam*, *Kudam*, *Karumkalam*, *Vellaikalam*, *Kallukudam*, *Pana*, *Talam*, *Mitavu*, etc. Silver vessels were used by the rich for taking food.

Liquor, both indigenous and foreign, was widely used. Cool and fragrant wines brought by foreign ships were the favourite drink of kings while the common people had a partiality for plamwine or toddy. One of the poems in the *Purananuru* refers to “the cool sweet smelling wines brought by the Yavanas in beautiful vessels and drunk daily from gold cups held by damsels who wore bright bracelets. This is evidently a reference to the professional courtesan class which had achieved considerable influence in society during the age. A special kind of intoxicant called *Munnir* was popular among the womenfolk. It was prepared from the juice of the tender palmyra nut, the tender coconut and sugar-cane. An intoxicating drink fermented out of paddy was also popular. It may be noted that this drink is even now prepared in certain parts of North Malabar, particularly in Parassinikadavu and suburbs. Even Brahmins ate meat and drank liquor in the Sangam age without any fear of social ostracism.

Music, poetry and dancing provided entertainment to the upper classes and they were systematically cultivated. There were professional poets and poetesses who composed poems in praise of their patrons and were generously rewarded by the latter. While some of them like Parinar of North Malabar stayed with their patrons in their houses, others were wandering minstrels who moved from place to place in search of patronage. They were supplied with food and robes and also honoured with gifts.

Dancing was a common pastime of the people of the Sangam age and it was indulged in on all occasions of rejoicing. Mixed dances in which both men and women participated were not rare.

Musical instruments like flute, drum, pipe, etc., were known: Hunting, wrestling and boxing were popular pastimes. Dice play was a popular pastime of old men. *Vattu*, a kind of ball, was a favourite game of the children. Cock-fight was a common amusement. Festivals were common. *Kamavel*, a festival in honour of Kama, the God of Love, was celebrated in summer. Houses built of brick and mortar were common among the upper classes while the poorer classes lived in simple huts. The residences of kings had beautifully laid out gardens.

Belief in omens and astrology was general. There was the widespread superstition that soldiers wounded in the battlefield would be haunted by the spirits of the dead and that if this happened death was a certainty. The wife of the wounded soldier was expected to keep a vigilant watch by his side in the

battlefield in order to ward off the evil spirits. This custom is referred to in the *Tolkappiyam* as *Todakkanchi*. Even after the wounded soldier was taken home the wife continued her eternal vigil in his room where incense was burnt. The leaves of medicinal plants like the Neem tree were kept here and there in the house and music was played to the accompaniment of such instruments as *Vina*, *Kuzhal*, etc., in order to keep away the evil spirits (*Puram* 281). Further, the crowing of the crow announced the arrival of a guest while a woman with dishevelled hair was considered to be a bad omen. Fishermen used to go to the sea for fishing only at the auspicious hour.

Religion

The vast majority of people in the Sangam age had no special religion till about 500 A.D. Dravidian practices which were not based on any particular religion were followed. Ancestor worship was popular. The war Goddess Kottavai was the most favourite deity and she was propitiated with elaborate offerings of meat and toddy not only by kings but also by commoners like the Vetas, Maravas, etc. Though Dravidian practices were thus followed by the bulk of the population, Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism also existed side by side and each of these religions had its own followers among the people of the land. The worship of Muruga, Indra and Varuna is alluded to in several poems. From the 5th century onwards Aryan culture began to spread over large parts of Kerala and exercise a dominant influence in society. The full impact of this Aryan immigration on society and religion will be analysed in the next chapter.

Economic Condition

The Sangam works show that Kerala enjoyed a high degree of economic prosperity in the early centuries of the Christian era. The chief occupation of the people was agriculture. The land was fertile and there was plentiful supply of grain. The Chera country was famous for its jack fruit, pepper and turmeric. Agricultural operations like harvesting, threshing and drying of grains are vividly described in Sangam works. Private property was in existence in the Sangam age and this gave an impetus to agriculture, but there were also places of public resort, common grazing grounds, common cattle sheds, etc., in each village. Agricultural implements made of iron were in common use. The *Arival*, *Kalappa*, *Nukam*, *Kotali*, etc., are some of the implements mentioned in Sangam works.

Though agriculture was the main occupation of the people, they followed several other occupations like fishing, hunting, spinning, weaving, carpentry, leather work etc. Salt was manufactured in salt pans and carried in carts for sale. The price of salt and paddy was the same. There was brisk internal trade with merchants carrying their merchandise for sale from place to place. Barter system was prevalent in all internal transactions, even though coins like *dinar*, *kanam* etc., were also current. In Muziris fish is said to have been exchanged for paddy.

In the Sangam age Kerala also carried on extensive trade in pepper and spices with foreign countries. Not only these agricultural products but such articles as ivory, precious stones and pearls were also exported from the Kerala coast on a large scale. Perhaps, merchant guilds in their rudimentary form existed during the age. There is reference to the practice of merchants counting votes cast for elections to the executive committee of their association (*Agam* 77). A detailed account of the foreign trade of Kerala during this period has already been given in the earlier chapter and it is therefore not necessary to repeat the same here. Thus a survey of the political, social and economic conditions of the Sangam age shows that even in that remote age the people of Kerala had a fairly well-developed civilization, culture and way of life.

Post-Sangam Age

The Sangam age was followed by 'a long historical night'. The history of Kerala in the 6th, 7th and 8th centuries is lost in obscurity. The only information we have of the period is from the records of the South Indian powers like the Chalukyas, the Pallavas, the Pandyas and the Rashtrakutas in which they claim to have over-run Kerala. Kerala seems to have been affected by the Kalabhra upheaval of the 5th and 6th centuries which is referred to in literary and epigraphical records of later periods. Though we have no authentic information about the Kalabhras, it is inferred from Buddhist works that Achuta Vikkanta of Kalabhra Kula, a Buddhist, established his sway over a large portion of South India. According to tradition he kept the Chera, Chola and Pandya rulers in confinement. The Kalabhras were eventually defeated by the Chalukyas, the Pallavas and the Pandyas. The rise of these new powers in Pennisular India affected the fortunes of Kerala as well.

The Chalukyas of Badami (543-755) must have effected temporary conquests in north Kerala, if the claim made in their inscriptions is to be believed. An inscription of Pulakesin I (544-566) claims that he conquered the Kerala king. The Mahakuta inscription of Mangalesa (598-610) mentions his brother Kirtivarman I (567-598) as having won victories over the kings of Kerala and Mushaka (Kolathunad). Pulakesin II (610-642) is also said to have crossed the Kaveri after his conquest of Kanchipuram and subdued the rulers of the Pandya, Chola and Chera countries. The vanquished powers soon joined together against the victor, but Pulakesin's son Vikramaditya I (655-681) marched against them and inflicted a crushing defeat on the confederate forces. Vikramaditya's son Vinayaditya (681-696) repeated his father's feat and subjugated, among others, the king of Kerala in the south and made him pay tribute to the Chalukyas. Vinayaditya's grandson, Vikramaditya II (734-745), also claims victory over Kerala. An inscription of his son Kirtivarman II (745-755) has been obtained from an ancient Siva temple at Adur (Kasaragod taluk), perhaps testifying to Chalukya overlordship over the region.

The Pallavas also claim to have overrun Kerala. Simhavishnu (560-580) and Mahendra Varman (580-630) are the earliest of the Pallava rulers to

claim sovereignty over Kerala. Narasimhavarman (630-668) is said to have won victory over the Cheras as well as the Pandyan king Sendan (654-670). Nandivarman II (731-796) joined the rulers of Kerala in the fight against the Pandya contemporary Varaguna I. Among the Pandya rulers of the period Sendan (654-670) claims victory over Kerala. The Rashtrakutas who overthrew the Chalukyas also claim hegemony over Kerala. Dantidurga (752-756) and Govinda III (792-814) are two of the Rashtrakuta rulers who are said to have won easy victories over the Kerala kings. Thus the post-Sangam age is a 'Dark Period' in the history of Kerala when the land was invaded by successive non-Kerala powers, but the claim of most of these powers except the Pandyas to have established supremacy over Kerala is not supported by tangible evidence. The history of the Pandyan aggression against Kerala will be sketched in the chapter on the Ay kingdom.

CHAPTER VI

THE CONFLUENCE OF RELIGIONS

The story of the confluence of religions in Kerala is an exhilarating subject for study. Even in the ancient period Kerala became the meeting ground of all the Indian religions and philosophical systems as well as the most important world religions. In addition to the native religions like Jainism, Buddhism and Hinduism, foreign religions like Christianity, Judaism and Islam also found here a congenial soil. In this chapter we shall trace briefly the history of the progress of these religions in Kerala.

Dravidian Religion

The people of ancient Kerala followed Dravidian practices which were not based on any particular religious philosophy. Their way of life was an incongruous mixture of primitive rites and practices. The people worshipped totem gods and innumerable spirits inhabiting rivers, trees, hills, etc. They had also many local deities guarding the borders of their villages and demons that caused diseases. The Dravidians worshipped these Gods and Goddesses by the offering of food to the accompaniment of music and dancing. It has already been stated that in the Sangam age both the Chera kings and their subjects offered elaborate sacrifices to the War Goddess *Kottavai* (Dravidian Durga) in order to propitiate her and win favours. Kings like Palyanai Sel Kulu Kuttuvan are said to have offered meat and toddy to propitiate this Goddess. The early Dravidians also believed in ancestor-worship as is evidenced by their reverence for departed heroes for whom they erected memorial stones and offered worship. Tree worship was also common among them. The banyan tree was looked upon as the abode of the Gods and it was worshipped with great devotion. There is no evidence of Naga worship in Kerala in the Sangam age. Till the 7th century A.D. there is no evidence of Ganapati worship either.

While the people were thus following Dravidian practices of worship, the religions from the north, *viz.*, Jainism, Buddhism and Brahmanism entered Kerala in the centuries prior to the beginning of the Christian era. These religions gradually got recruits from among the people, but we have the evidence of the Sangam works that the vast majority of the population still continued to observe Dravidian practices in the early centuries of the Christian era. The people were, however, so catholic in their outlook that they had no

objection to worshipping in Jain or Buddhist shrines and performing Vedic sacrifices at the same time. In course of time all these three religions made steady progress within the framework of a free and open society and left their indelible impress on Kerala culture.

Jainism

The Jain religion might have come to Kerala in the 3rd century B.C. It is believed that Chandragupta Maurya (321-297 B.C.) the great Mauryan Emperor, abdicated his throne in the 25th year of his reign and came down to Sravanabelgola in Mysore accompanied by the Digambara Jain Saint Bhadrabahu. The Jains believe that it was Chandragupta Maurya and Bhadrabahu who introduced the Jain religion in South India during their sojourn there. Though Chandragupta Maurya came only up to Sravanabelgola, his followers visited different parts of South India. Their main object was not to obtain converts but to find a haven of peace where they could meditate in tranquility and quiet. Jainism must have got itself introduced also in Kerala under these circumstances. It had considerable hold on the people in the early centuries of the Christian era and had its own royal patrons as well. Ilango Adikal, the author of the Tamil Epic, *Silappadikaram*, was a Jain prince who lived at Trikana Matilakam (the Kunavayikottam of Tamil literature) and in those days Matilakam was a famous centre of Jain religion and learning.

There were several Jain shrines and temples in ancient Kerala and a few of them continue to exist even today as Hindu shrines after undergoing a process of transformation. In Matilakam was a famous Jain temple to which several other temples in the vicinity were subordinate but it later became a Hindu shrine. According to the Malayalam work *Kokasandesam* Brahmins never used to enter the temple of Matilakam even as late as 1400 AD., the reason for which was perhaps that it was once a Jain temple. According to some scholars the Kudalmanikkam temple at Irinjalakuda, dedicated to Bharata, the brother of Sri Rama, was once a Jain shrine and it was converted into a Hindu temple, during the period of the decline of Jainism. It is argued that the deity originally installed in the Kudalmanikkam temple is a Jain *Digambara*, in all probability Bharateswara, the same Saint whose statue exists at Sravanabelgola in Mysore. In the days of the decline of Jainism the genius of the people of Kerala for synthesis might have made them convert the Jain shrine dedicated to Bharateswara into a Hindu shrine and dedicate it to *Bharata*, the brother of Sri Rama, so as not to offend the sentiments of the orthodox Jains and at the same time please the Hindus.

Moreover, Kallil near Perurabavur, has an old Jain shrine even today in a natural rock-cut cave and the place must have been a centre of Jainism in the past. In the shrine are set up images of Parswanatha, Mahavira Tirthankara and Padmavathi Devi (Pattini). The temple is today worshipped by Hindus as a Bhagavathi temple and the *Pujas* are conducted by Namboothiri Brahmins. But Jains do visit the shrine even today assuming that they are worshipping Jain Gods and not Hindu ones. Ganapati Vattam or Sultan's Battery, Manantoddy and other places in the Wynad area were also important centres

of Jainism in ancient Kerala. In the Edakkal cave near Sultan's Battery may be seen Jain inscriptions of the Kadambas and Hoysalas. The Bhagavathi temple located on the top of the Edakkal hill might have been a Jain centre in the past. An old Jain temple in complete ruins, with images in granite of Mahavira and Parswanatha, was discovered in Kavassery *Amsam*, Alathur taluk in 1959. At Bangra Manjeswar in Kasaragod taluk are two old Jain *bastis* even now catering to the spiritual needs of a few Jain families of the locality.

Apart from such Jain shrines located within Kerala, there is a famous Bhagavathi temple at Tiruchanattumala in the village of Chitalar (Kanyakumari district, Tamil Nadu) where there are figures of Parswanatha, Mahavira and other Tirthankaras and of Padmavathi Devi. The place was sufficiently famous in early times as a centre of Jainism so as to attract Jain pilgrims from very distant places. Vikramaditya Varaguna (885-925), the Ay king, made several gifts to this temple. By the 14th century this Jain temple became transformed into a Bhagavati temple. The Nagaraja temple at Nagercoil was till the 16th century a Jain temple. Bhutalavira Udaya Marthanda (1516-1535), the Venad King, donated lands to this temple early in the 16th century. At that time the Jain scholars Gunavira Pandita and Kamalavahana Pandita were in charge of its administration. By 1589 it had become the Nagaraja temple. Perhaps, Parswanatha himself changed into Ananta. After its conversion into a Hindu temple, Potti Brahmins from the Tulu country came here as priests.

The existence of these Jain relics in Kerala furnishes convincing proof of the hold that Jainism had on the people in the ancient past. The decline of Jainism in Kerala started in the 8th century A.D. when the Saivite and Vishnavite movements made their impact, but it seems to have lingered till the 16th century A.D., and then almost disappeared. Jainism has not left much of a lasting impress on Kerala culture. It is said to have influenced the architecture of the temples and mosques of Malabar. Logan has drawn pointed attention to the fact that Hindu temples and even Muslim mosques of Malabar have been built in the style peculiar to the Jains.¹ There is a view that Naga or Snake worship which is popular in Kerala is the result of the impact of Jainism. Bhagavati as a Hindu deity is also alleged to have been assimilated from the Jain pantheon. There are some old Jain families in the Wynad and Kasaragod areas of north Kerala even today and a few families of Gujarathi businessmen professing the Jain faith live in such commercial centres as Alleppey and Mattancherri.

Buddhism

Like Jainism, Buddhism also held sway in Kerala in the ancient period. According to one of the Asokan inscriptions the rulers of the Chola, Chera and Pandya countries made arrangements within their own countries for the treatment of men and animals suffering from diseases. Some Buddhist missionaries are also said to have come to South India and propagated

1. Logan, *Malabar Manual*, pp. 185-186.

Buddhist teachings. It may be assumed that Buddhism came to Kerala during the reign of Asoka in the 3rd century B.C. itself. The Tamil works of the Sangam age contain several references to the efforts of Buddhist missionaries to spread the message of the Buddha. The *Manimekhalai* is pre-eminently a Buddhist work and it contains a detailed discussion of the tenets of Buddhism. There was a Buddhist *Chaitya* at Vanchi which was famous all over South India. The *Manimekhalai* speaks of its “turrets reaching the skies”. Tradition speaks of a Palli Bana Perumal who embraced Buddhism and abdicated his throne. The Hindu temples of Kilirur (Kottayam taluk) and Nilamperur (Kuttanad taluk) are closely associated with this tradition. The Perumal after abdication is said to have reached Kilirur from his capital and proceeded to Nilamperur where he spent his last days. There are many relics in both these places associated with this Perumal to remind us of this tradition.

Many prominent Hindu temples of the present day like the Kurumba Bhagavathi temple, Cranganore, are believed to have been at one time Buddhist shrines. In the Durga temple at Paruvasseri, 21 miles east of Trichur, has been discovered an image of the Buddha sitting in meditation. The large number of Buddha images found in the Kunnathur and Karunagappally taluks of Quilon district and Mavelikara and Ambalapuzha taluks of Alleppey district clearly indicate the prevalence of the Buddhist faith in this area. The most notable of these Buddhist images is the famous Karumadi Kuttan near Ambalapuzha. The Buddhist faith was firmly established in this area in a place called Sri Mulavasam which is now under the sea. Sri Mulavasam was at one time the most famous centre of Buddhist pilgrimage in South India. The famous Paliyam Copper Plate of the Ay king, Vikramaditya Varaguna (885- 925 A.D.), bears evidence of the patronage extended by the ruler to the temple of Sri Mulavasam. The inscription records the grant of an extensive landed property in South Kerala by the king to this temple. That Buddhism was held in the highest respect and veneration by this ruler is clear from the invocation to the Buddha, the *Dharma* and the *Sangha* which the Paliyam Copper Plate contains. There are also references to Sri Mulavasam in the Sanskrit work *Mushakavamsa*. Vikramarama, a Mushaka king, is said to have saved this famous Buddhist temple from the encroachment of the sea by throwing large blocks of stone and strengthening the shore. Valabha, another Mushaka king, is said to have marched to the south to join the army of the ruler of Kerala which was being attacked by the Cholas and on his way visited the Buddha temple at Sri Mulavasam. Some scholars have located the place in North Kerala on the evidence of the *Mushakavamsa*. Historically it seems to be more correct to locate Sri Mulavasam somewhere in the region between Ambalapuzha and Trikunnappuzha which was the cradle of the Buddhist faith in ancient days as is testified to by the large number of Buddhist images discovered from the area. The discovery of an image of Lokeshwara by M. Foucher in Gandhara with the short inscription ‘*Dakshinapathe Mulavasa Lokanatha*’ proves that Sri Mulavasam was a famous Buddhist pilgrim centre in ancient days. The centre perished after the 10th century A.D. by which

time another famous temple of the Buddha, viz., Chudamanivarma Vihara came into existence on the opposite coast at Nagapatam in almost the same latitude as Sri Mulavasam.

The Hindu rulers of ancient Kerala followed a policy of enlightened religious toleration and they patronised Buddhist temples without reservation. The Buddhist religion began to decline from the 8th century A.D. when it came to be subjected to the vigorous propaganda onslaughts of Hindu reformers like Sankaracharya. Nevertheless, it lingered on for some time more and finally disappeared in the 12th century A.D. Though Buddhism disappeared from Kerala, it left its lasting impact on Kerala society. In reality Buddhism was only absorbed in Hinduism along with some of its impressive ceremonies and forms of worship. The images, processions, *utsavams*, etc., associated with popular worship in Hindu temples in Kerala are said to be a legacy of Buddhism. Special mention may be made of the impressive festivity called *Kettukazhcha* or *Kutirakettu* associated with temple *utsavams* or festivals in Quilon and Alleppey districts. A feature of the *Kettukazhcha* festival is that people from different *karas* (territorial divisions) adjoining the temples bring *huge rathams* or cars varying from 25 to 150 feet in height. The *Kettukazhcha* festival is supposed to bear traces of Buddhist influence, for there is very close resemblance between it and the Buddhist festival which Fahien, the Chinese traveller of the 5th century A.D., witnessed in the city of Pataliputra.

Some scholars believe that the famous deity Sastha or Ayyappan is the Hinduised version of the Buddha and that the pilgrimage to the Sastha shrine at Sabarimala contains traces of Buddhist influence. The Sabarimala pilgrims observe strict vows of non-violence, vegetarianism and abstinence from worldly pleasures for about two months prior to their pilgrimage and this is considered to be a practice reminiscent of the Buddhist doctrine of *Ahimsa*. Further, the pilgrims do not observe caste distinctions during the period of their Vow and this also accords well with the Buddhist emphasis on castelessness and cosmopolitanism. The sing-song repetition of *Saranam Ayyappa* by the lakhs of Hindu pilgrims who go to the shrine of the Dharma Sastha at Sabarimala also reminds one of the triple *Saranam* formula of the Buddha, the *Dharma* and the *Sangha* of the Buddhists. The location of the famous Sastha temples of Kerala like those of Sabarimala, Achencoil and Aryankavu in the interior of the forests is cited as additional support to the Buddhist theory because it is believed that the Buddhists preferred to live in far away secluded places. Some scholars also point out that there is a striking resemblance between the figures of the Sastha and the Buddha in posture as well as in form. Though the above arguments advanced in support of the Buddhist theory of the Sastha are not accepted by all scholars, it cannot be denied that Buddhism had exercised its own influence on the development of the Sastha cult in Kerala. There is also a view that Naga worship which is prevalent in Kerala might also have been a relic of Buddhist influence. It is pointed out in support of this contention that Buddhists in several parts of the world such as Burma and Malaysia were believers in Naga worship.

The impact of the Buddhist faith may be seen in other fields as well. The extensive popularity of the Ayurvedic system of treatment in Kerala is believed to be a gift of Buddhism. Many of the Buddhist monasteries had dispensaries where free medical aid was given. The practice which now prevails in some of the Hindu temples such as the Siva temple, Tiruvizha and the Sastha temple, Takazhi of giving medicinal preparations or oils to the mentally and physically sick devotees who visit them is believed to be a survival of the influence which Buddhism, with its concern for the sick and the suffering, had in this area in the ancient past. The immense popularity in Kerala of *Ashtangahridaya* written by Vagbhata, a Buddhist scholar, is also significant in this context.

The contribution of Buddhism to the spread of learning and literacy in Kerala was undoubtedly great. The Buddhist monks were pioneers in the field of education. The Buddhist *Viharas* contained schools or colleges for offering instruction and hence they served as centres for the dissemination of learning as well. The *Ezhuthupalli*, the Malayalam term for the elementary school, seems to be a legacy of the Buddhist period, for the Buddhists used to call their *Viharas* by the term *Pallis*. In later days the people of Kerala copied the Buddhist example of running educational institutions along side their temples. Buddhism also influenced the development of the arts and literature of Kerala. The Kerala temples bear some traces of Buddhist influence in their artistic and architectural styles. Amarasimha the author of the *Amarakosa* which is popular in Kerala was a Buddhist. The large number of Pali words which we find in Malayalam show traces of the contact which the people had with Pali speaking Buddhists in ancient days. Buddhism has supplied themes to the poets and writers of Kerala even in modern times. The great poet, Kumaran Asan, was considerably influenced by Buddhism. His works *Karuna*, *Chandala Bhikshuki* and *Sri Buddha Charitam* may be specially mentioned in this connection. Thus the impact of Buddhism on Kerala life and culture has indeed been deep and profound.

Aryanisation

The Aryanisation of Kerala was a slow but steady process which was effected in a subtle manner “not by the force of arms, but by the arts of peace.” It ended in the final submission of the local Dravidian races to “the superior intelligence and administrative skill of the Brahmins from the North”. The question of the date of the Aryan immigration into Kerala and its impact on social life is a much discussed one. Logan has expressed the view that the Vedic Brahmins proper must have come to Malabar only in the early years of the 8th century A.D. and that they must have come by way of the coast from the Tulu country. According to him they had not migrated to the south in 605 A.D. Though during the period suggested by Logan there was a large influx of Brahmin immigrants into Kerala through the South Canara region, it is not correct to say that Brahmins had not migrated into Kerala during the period prior to the 8th century A.D. The consensus of opinion among scholars is that the process of the Aryanisation of the Deccan and South India began about 1000 B.C. and it reached a decisive stage by the time of Katyayana (4th century

B.C.), the grammarian, who mentions the kingdoms of the south. We have the evidence of the Sangam works that Aryan influences were at work in Kerala society even in the early centuries of the Christian era. Some of the celebrated Sangam poets were local Brahmins and they were generously patronised by Chera kings. The *Patittupattu* speaks of the Brahmins as well versed in the four *Vedas*. Vedic sacrifices were conducted by Brahmin priests under the patronage of the Chera rulers. The Chera ruler, Perumcheral Irumporai, took keen interest in listening to the exposition of the Vedas by learned Brahmins and in acting according to the injunctions contained in Vedio texts. Thus the Sangam works testify to the intrusion of Aryan ideas and practices into Kerala in the early centuries of the Christian era.

It seems that the first batch of Brahmin immigrants came to Kerala in the 3rd century B.C. itself immediately following the advent of the Jains and the Buddhists. It may be recalled that the period coincided with the Mauryan age in the history of North India when a conscious policy of acculturation or dissemination of “the superior material culture of the Gangetic basin” was pursued by the Mauryan State—a policy which had the fullest backing of Kautilya, the author of the *Arthasastra* who had spelt out its details. According to K.M. Panikkar “the geographical distribution, the organisation of the community and their special customs show clear-sighted planning which could not have been the result of unregulated migration”. During the Sangam age which partially synchronised with the Gupta age of North Indian history immigration of the Brahmins into Kerala continued uninterruptedly on a small scale. Mayura Sarman, the Kadamba king (345-379 A.D.) and his son named Chandrangathan are said to have invited large colonies of Brahmins and settled them in the Kerala and Tuluva countries. Many more such batches of Brahmin immigrants might have come to Kerala in the post-Sangam age. The domination of Kerala by other South Indian powers like the Chalukyas, the Pallavas and the Rashtrakutas in the 6th, 7th and 8th centuries must have given an impetus to the process of Aryanisation. The Western Chalukyas who were Vaishnavites seem to have despatched several Brahmin colonists and encouraged them to settle in Kerala. Vedic Brahmins came in batches during the period of ascendancy of the Rashtrakutas who were chiefly Saivites. According to one view the Panniyur and Chovaram factions among the Namboothiris derived their inspiration from the Vaishnavite Chalukyas and the Saivite Rashtrakutas respectively. There are also evidences of close cultural contact between Kerala and the Pallava kingdom. The *Mathavilasaprahasana* of Mahendravarma I (580-630) was one of the favourite themes of the Chakiars of Kerala. The *Avantisundari Kathasara* of Dandin of Kanchi shows intimate knowledge of Kerala and mentions two learned Brahmins from the coast.

In the 8th century A.D. the Aryanisation of Kerala reached its climax with a major batch of Brahmin immigrants coming here and strengthening the already existing forces of Brahmanism. According to tradition six eminent Brahmins scholars also came along with the immigrants, met the Buddhists

in argument, completely defeated them and established the supremacy of the Vedic faith. They founded a school for the propagation of Vedic studies in the land and enlisted a number of disciples of whom the most illustrious was Prabhakara, the great *Mimamsaka*. Prabhakara is said to have eventually become the head of the school founded by the Bhattas. He came to be called *Guru* and his system of philosophy *Gurumata*. The Aryan influence increased considerably in the 9th century as is evidenced by the work of Sankaracharya (788-820 A.D.) and other Hindu reformers. During the age of the Kulasekharas of Mahodayapuram (800-1102 A.D.) Hinduism registered spectacular progress. The *Bhakti* cult which found its great exponents in Kulasekhara Alwar, Cheraman Perumal Nayanar and Viralminda Nayanar in the 9th century ensured the further consolidation of the gains already made by Hinduism during the earlier period. A more detailed account of the *Bhakti* movement will be given elsewhere.

It would be relevant in this context to study the impact of Aryanisation on early Kerala society and culture. With the predominance of the Brahmin,, element in public life far-reaching changes took place in all spheres of human activity even from the later Sangam age. Bishop Caldwell has made the following comment on the tactics employed by the Aryan immigrants in spreading their ideas among the people. "The Aryan immigrants to the south appear to have been generally Brahminical priests and instructors, rather than Kshatriya soldiers, and the kings of the Pandyas, Cholas, Kalingas and other Dravidians appear to have been simply Dravidian chieftains, whom their Brahmanical preceptors and spiritual directors dignified with Aryan titles, and taught to imitate and emulate the grandeur and the cultivated tastes of the Solar, Lunar and Agni-kula races of kings."¹ The caste system was foisted on a casteless society by the Aryan immigrants who worked with extraordinary missionary zeal in spreading the Aryan ideology based on the primacy of *Chaturvarnya*.

The scholars and men of letters among the immigrant Brahmins who could impress the local rulers by their superior intelligence and scholarship succeeded in persuading the latter to conduct *Yagas* or sacrifices after the Vedic fashion for the sake of their own long life and prosperity. Having thus got the moral support and allegiance of the rulers, they won over the rich merchants to their side by throwing open to them the trade routes and commercial centres of North India. The princely and merchant classes who were thus brought within the sphere of Aryan influence were made to believe that they constituted two superior castes, the former the ruling caste (Kshatriyas) and the latter the trading caste (Vaiśyas). Eventually these castes began to look upon their kinsmen who followed other occupations as inferior to them in the social scale. The Brahmins also succeeded in creating in the minds of these two castes a feeling that the former were superior to the latter and as such deserved the allegiance of all classes of people. Even in the later

1. Quoted in K.P. Padmanabha Menon's *History of Kerala* Vol. I, pp. 56-57.

Sangam age the protection of the Brahmins is seen to have been held up as a great virtue of the rulers. At the same time the toiling classes like the Panas, the Vetas, the Kuravas, etc., who had occupied a high status in society in the early Sangam age came to be looked upon as low castes. This was particularly so in the case of the Panas who had once enjoyed the special esteem of kings and chieftains. Nevertheless, those among the Panas who distinguished themselves by their intellectual abilities were absorbed within the Brahmin fold, but the bulk of the Pana community came to be regarded as constituting the lowest caste called the *Kizhor* (the Harijans of later days).

The advent of the Aryan immigrants brought about other significant social changes as well. There was a change in the dietary habits of the people. The use of beef and liquor which was common even among the Brahmins in the early Sangam age now came to be looked upon as taboo. Those who used beef had now some social stigma attached to their class. The continued use of beef by the Panas was perhaps one of the factors which brought about the decline in their social status. The introduction of the caste system also brought about a decline in the level of general literacy. The members of the fourth caste, *viz.*, the Sudras were denied the right to education and subjected to other social disabilities as well. The social status of a person came to be determined on the basis of the occupation which he followed. Dignity of labour no longer commanded recognition. Those who were engaged in occupations involving physical exertion were relegated to the lowest strata of society and came to be looked upon as low castes. Side by side with the social degradation of the Panas, the Parayas and other respectable classes of earlier days, the status of women also underwent a change for the worse. Female education was neglected. Child marriage took the place of adult marriage and women were compelled to take to family life and neglect intellectual and artistic pursuits at a very early age. Women no longer enjoyed the social freedom and equality of earlier days. The life of the widows was a hard one. Thus the immediate impact of the Aryan immigration was a decline in the status of the toiling classes and women both of whom had enjoyed a superior social status in the early Sangam age.

The increased influx of the Aryans in the 8th century A.D. had its impact in the religious and cultural fields as well. The new Aryan missionaries devoted all their attention to propaganda against Buddhism and Jainism whose hold on the people was the main stumbling block to the success of their 'ideology and before long these religions lost their following among the people. It is also possible that the Aryan missionaries resorted to a deliberate policy of destroying Buddhist *Viharas* and images. The broken and damaged Buddhist images obtained from such places as Karumadi and Pallikkal, perhaps, bear testimony to this. It may be noted that the Buddha images from the Alleppey and Quilon districts have been assigned to the period from the 7th to the 9th century A.D.

Simultaneously, the Brahmin immigrants also established Hindu temples on a large scale with a view to popularising the Hindu religion. Several temple

arts and festivals were also instituted with the same motive. The worship of Hindu Gods and Goddesses like Vishnu, Siva, etc., was made popular by the savants of the *Bhakti* cult. Non-Aryan dieties and practices were also accommodated within the Hindu fold. The Dravidian Goddess Kottavai was accepted in the form of Durga, Kali and Bhagavathi and absorbed into the Hindu pantheon. The popular non-Aryan diety Sastha came to be looked upon as *Hari Hara Putra*, -i.e., the son of Vishnu (Hari) and Siva (Hara) in order to make him acceptable not only to the Saivite and Vaishnavite sections of the Hindu population but also to the converts to Hinduism from within the Buddhist fold. The Hindu religion in Kerala was before long moulded by a synthesis of Aryan ideas from the north and Dravidian ideas from the south. Thus the absorption of the Dravidians within the fold of Hinduism was effected by the incoming Aryans by a gradual process of social assimilation and cultural synthesis rather than by military conquest. This victory of the Aryans was in the ultimate analysis an ideological one.

Christianity

Christianity was introduced in Kerala in the first century A.D., i.e., three centuries before it gained official recognition in Europe or became the established religion in Rome. Legend has it that Apostle St. Thomas landed at Maliankara, a place adjoining Muziris, in 52 A.D., converted several Brahmins and others and founded seven churches on the Malabar coast, i.e., at Maliankara itself, Palayur, Kottakkavu, Kokkamangalam, Quilon, Niranam and Nilakkal. The belief in the St. Thomas tradition is firm and widespread among the Christians of Kerala, though many modern historians have rejected the evidence on which it rests. In the background of the extensive trade relations that existed between Kerala and the Mediterranean countries before the Christian era, it must be stated that there is nothing intrinsically improbable in the St. Thomas tradition. The traditional accounts preserved by the Jews who came to Cranganore in 68 A.D. contain a reference to the existence of a Christian community at the place. The statement of Pantaenus, the head of the Alexandrian school who visited Kerala in the 2nd century A.D., that he found a flourishing Christian community here is also cited as evidence in favour of the Apostolic origin of the Kerala Church.

Since its introduction in Kerala the Christian faith, though alien in its origin, came to be accepted as an indigenous faith and it made steady progress. The Eucumenical Council held at Nicea in 325 A.D. at the instance of Emperor Constantine was attended, among others, by Johannes who is described as the “Metropolitan of Persia and Great India”. The number of Christians on the Kerala coast was reinforced in 345 A.D. by an influx of Syrian immigrants consisting of 400 Christians from 72 families belonging to seven tribes in Baghdad, Nineveh and Jerusalem under the leadership of the merchant Kanayi Thoma (Thomas of Cana). Cosmas Indicopleustus, the Byzantine monk who came to the coast early in the 6th century A.D., testifies to the existence of a Christian community here. The Christians became

gradually prominent in the field of trade and commerce and before long they received several privileges and favours at the hands of the ruling monarchs. During the age of the Second Chera Empire (800-1101 A.D.) they were a prominent business community in the land. The Terisapalli Copper Plate executed in 849 A.D. by Ayyan Atikal Tiruvatikal of Venad during the reign of Emperor Sthanu Ravi (844-885 A.D.) confers several important rights and privileges on the Christians of Quilon. The Tazhakad church inscription of Rajasimha (1028-1043) refers to two Christian merchants, Chathan Vadukan and Iravi Chathan, who were members of the *Manigramam*, being conferred certain privileges. The Copper Plate Grant (1225 A.D.) issued by Vira Raghava Chakravarti, the ruler of Mahodayapuram to Iravi Kortanan, a Christian merchant of Mahodayapuram, confers on the latter, the office of *Manigramam*, i.e., the headship of the merchants of the place, in addition to several other rights and privileges. The Christians were treated all along on a footing of equality with the Hindus and assigned a very important place in the economic and social life of the land.

In the course of centuries Christianity made rapid progress in Kerala and the Christian Church became one of the well established institutions in the country. Its liturgy and organisation were, however, subjected to the impact of diverse cultural influences. From very early days the Syriac liturgy was prevalent among the Christians of Kerala. The early Christians (St. Thomas Christians) were, in fact, called Syrian Christians because they followed the Syriac liturgy. Syriac, it may be mentioned, was a dialect of Aramaic, the language of Jesus Christ and it became the language of the Mother Church of Persia with which the Church in Kerala had ecclesiastical communion from the 6th to the 16th centuries A.D. It was therefore only natural that Syriac became the sacred language of the Kerala Church as well. The Latin Christian Missionaries who visited Quilon in the medieval period introduced the Latin rite for the first time in Kerala. With the arrival of the Portuguese (1498) and the establishment of their political influence the Latin rite emerged as an important and permanent factor and a large community of Latin Christians also sprang up and grew in Kerala, particularly in the coastal areas. The work of St. Francis Xavier and the Synod of Diamper (1599) played an important part in the Latinisation of the Church. A section of the Christians thus came under the jurisdiction of the Papacy. Towards the middle of the 17th century the Portuguese power declined in Kerala and was replaced by the Dutch power. A part of the Christian Church which was under the Pope of Rome now freed itself from Roman influence and became independent under local Bishops. Episcopal succession came to be received through the Jacobite Patriarch in Antioch.

In the beginning of the 19th century when British power established itself in Kerala the Church Mission Society of London began work in the Syrian Church. For some time there was close co-operation between the Syrian priests and the C.M.S. Missionaries. But in later years the Missionaries broke off their connection with Syrian Bishops and Church and began to work on

their own. It was on their initiative that the Anglican Church came into existence. Some of the priests of the Syrian Church who had come under the influence of the C.M.S. Missionaries advocated reforms which included the replacement of Syriac by Malayalam as the language of worship in the Syrian Church. The proposals were looked upon with disfavour by the Bishops and Clergy of the Syrian Church. The reformers thereupon formed a new Church known as the Marthoma Syrian Church as distinct from the Jacobite Syrian Church, the Anglican Church and the Roman Catholic Church in Malabar. Thus in the course of 19 centuries following the arrival of St. Thomas the Kerala Church came under the influence of foreign churches and eventually it split itself mainly into five branches, viz., (1) the Nestorian Church confined mainly to Trichur and Ernakulam, but with a congregation in Trivandrum also (2) the Roman Catholic Church embracing the whole of Kerala and following three different languages for their rites, viz., Syriac, Latin and Malayalam (3) the Jacobite Syrian Church also known as the Orthodox Syrian Church (4) the Anglican Church which is now part of the Church of South India and (5) the Marthoma Syrian Church. In addition, there are also a number of minor missions and churches deriving inspiration from some foreign church or other. The history of the rise and growth of Christianity in Kerala thus illustrates how different cultural influences have been at work in moulding the organisation and liturgy of the various churches. Nevertheless, the Christians have completely assimilated themselves into the community in which they live by adopting the language, dress and habits of their Hindu brethren. "Hindu in culture, Christian in religion and *Indian* in liturgy", they are Keralites in all other respects. The movement for Indianisation of the Church in Kerala has made significant headway in recent times.

Jews

Apart from the Christians, the Jews also have formed part of the community in Kerala from very early days. According to tradition they came to the Kerala coast in 68 A.D. in order to escape from religious persecution at home. Some 10,000 Jews and Jewesses are said to have come to Kerala and settled at Cranganore, Palayur, Mala and Pullut. However, there is no direct evidence in support of this tradition and hence its authenticity is denied by some writers, but in the light of the fact that the fleet of Solomon used to visit Kerala for purposes of trade, it is clear that this country was known to the ancient Jews even as early 1000 B.C. Hence it is not improbable that the Jews must have come to Kerala in search of an asylum when they had to face religious persecution in their homeland. They might have come and established their first settlement at Muziris or Cranganore in the first century of the Christian era itself. New batches of immigrants might have come in subsequent centuries when, with the spread of Christianity, the Jews had to face severe persecution at home. Apart from the Jewish centres mentioned earlier, such places as Quilon, Madayi, Pantalayani Kollam and Chowghat are also referred to in foreign accounts or local traditions as some of the other places where

the Jews settled down after their migration into Kerala. There are no traces of Jewish colonies in these places today except that there is a 'Jew's Hill' at Chowghat and a 'Jew's Tank' at Madayi.

The Jewish settlers, like the Christians who preceded them, achieved a large measure of economic prosperity and secured several valuable privileges from the native rulers. The famous Jewish Copper Plate Grant of Emperor Bhaskara Ravi Varman dated 1000 A.D. records the royal gift to the Jewish Chief, Joseph Rabban, of several rights and privileges in perpetuity. The Jews continued to enjoy a high standing in society till the arrival of the Portuguese who persecuted them and compelled them to leave Cranganore for Cochin in 1565. The White Jews Synagogue, Mattancherri, was built in or about 1567 in the wake of this migration. For centuries thereafter the Jews formed an important commercial community in Central Kerala. Under the Dutch and the British they enjoyed full freedom to carry on their commercial and religious activities.

The birth of the Jewish State of Israel in May 1948 thrilled the Jews of Kerala and the bulk of them have since migrated to Israel. According to the Census of 1991 there are only about a hundred and twenty Jews in Kerala and they form a picturesque community confined to the towns of Mattancherri, Parur and Emakulam.

Islam

Islam also found its way into Kerala at an early period of its history. As noted earlier, there had been considerable trade between Arabia and Kerala even before the time of Mohammed the Prophet. Like the Christians and the Jews, the Arabs also settled down in Cranganore and established a separate colony of their own in a part of the town. The religion of the Prophet might have been introduced here by these Arab traders in the 7th or 8th century A.D. itself. But the progress of this religion, unlike that of Christianity, was relatively slow. At the time of Sulaiman's visit (851 A.D.) there were not many Muslims on the Kerala coast, for the Arab traveller says, "I know not that there is anyone of either nation (Chinese or Indian) that has embraced Muhammadanism or speaks Arabic".

Mention may be made in this connection of a doubtful tradition prevalent in Kerala that the last of the Chera Emperors (Cheraman Perumal) became a convert to Islam and went on a pilgrimage to Mecca and that it was in the wake of this conversion and pilgrimage that Islam as a religion made headway in Kerala. The story is also told of the mission to the Kerala coast of Malik Ibn Dinar and family with the object of spreading the religion of the Prophet. They are said to have landed first at Cranganore where they were hospitably received by the local ruler. The first mosque in Kerala, like the first church, was established at Cranganore itself. In the wake of their success at Cranganore Malik Ibn Danir and family are said to have visited other parts of Kerala and established more mosques. Among the mosques which figure in this connection are those of Quilon, Madayi or Pazhayangadi, Kasaragod, Srikantapuram, Dharmapattanam, Pantalayani and Chaliyam.

In the course of centuries Islam made progress as a religion and today the Muslims are, next to the Hindus, numerically the most important community in the State. The progress of the faith was, in many respects, due to the tolerant policy pursued by the rulers of Kerala and this was particularly so in North Kerala where the Zamorins of Calicut patronised Islam in all ways. The Muslims were a major power to be reckoned with in Calicut in the days when the Zamorins were in power. They commanded the confidence of the rulers and had great influence in their court. The Muslims were given special and favoured treatment by the Zamorins for reasons of enlightened self-interest. The Zamorin's navy was manned by Muslims. The heroic exploits of the Kunjali Marakkars, the Admirals of the Zamorins, in their fight against Portuguese expansionism form an important chapter in the history of Kerala. The Muslims of Malabar, otherwise called the Mappilas, were so intensely pro-Zamorin that the Zamorins had even issued an order that in order to get sufficient number of Mappilas to man their navy one or more male members of the families of Hindu fishermen should be brought up as Muslims. This, perhaps accounts for the relatively high proportion of Muslims in the population of the Kozhikode and Malappuram districts of Kerala.

CHAPTER VII

THE AY KINGDOM

A brief reference to the Ays of South Kerala has already been made in Chapter V. In this Chapter we shall trace briefly the history of the rise and fall of the Ay kingdom from the early Sangam age down to the 10th century A.D. The Ays were the earliest ruling dynasty in South Kerala. They had established an extensive kingdom of their own long before the Venad kings set themselves up as a political power in and around Quilon. In fact, up to the beginning of the 10th century A.D. the Ays were the dominant power in South Kerala and Venad was only a small principality comprised of the territories lying between Trivandrum and Quilon with its capital at the latter place. At its height the Ay kingdom extended from Tiruvalla in the north to Nagercoil in the south including the Western Ghats which comprised its most important portion. It is significant that Ptolemy calls the region from Baris (Pamba) to Cape Comorin Aioi (Ay) where the chieftains of the Ay clan ruled. The erstwhile South Travancore known as Nanjanad was included in the early Ay kingdom. The *Purananuru* locates the Ay capital on the Podiya Mountain. Scholars are inclined to identify this place with Aykudi near Shencottah.

The origin of the Ays is shrouded in obscurity. The Paliyam Copper Plates (925 A.D.) of Vikramaditya Varaguna ascribe their origin to the family of the Yadavas or the *Vrishnikula* “which originated from the moon who became free from his dark spots by giving birth to this illustrious family”. In the commentary written in the 14th century A.D. by Nacchinarkiniyar on the *Tolkappiyam* the Ays are described as having come to the south from Dwaraka along with sage Agastya. Not much reliance need be placed on these claims which are *prima facie* exaggerations. The Sangam works bear evidence of the fact that like the Cholas, the Cheras and the Pandyas, the Ay kings were also Dravidians and as such natives of the soil. Among the Ay kings of the Sangam age, Ay Antiran, Titiyan and Atiyan are the most outstanding.

Antiran

Ay Antiran figures prominently in many a verse in the *Purananuru*. He is called the Lord of the Podiyil (Malaya) mountain, the southernmost section of the Western Ghats. Antiran was mainly interested in the pursuit of the arts of peace. A patron of arts and letters famous for his bounty, he is said to have given horses, chariots and villages as gifts to poets and bards. But as his country was fertile and teemed with elephants, he specialised himself particularly in elephant gifts (*Puram* 130, 131). Elephant was also the royal emblem of the Ay kings. The poets of the age like Muda Mosiyar and Kuttavan Kiranar

praise Antiran's benevolence and hospitality in several of their poems. Antiran was a valiant fighter and had a trained army under his command. He is credited with having won a victory over the kings of the Kongu country and pursued them to the western sea (*Puram* 130). As for his religion, Antiran was a Saivite by faith and he worshipped Siva "seated underneath the banian tree". He practised polygamy and all his wives committed *Sati* (*Puram* 240). On his death, says the poet, he was welcomed in the abode of the Gods and the drum in Indra's palace reverberated to proclaim his arrival (*Puram* 241). It may be noted that Antiran was an elder contemporary of Antuvan Cheral, though both are praised by the poet Muda Mosiyar in the *Purananuru*, The Cheras became a prominent power in Kerala only after the period of Antiran and hence the latter was probably even more powerful than the Cheras.

Titayan

Titayan described in the *Agananuru*. as 'Podiyil Selvan' was the next important Ay king, though it is difficult to say whether he was the immediate successor of Antiran. The great poets Kapilar and Parinar and the poet king Bhutapandyan of the Pandya kingdom were his contemporaries. We have no reliable evidence of any conflict between the Pandyas and the Ay rulers during this period, but an understanding seems to have been reached between the two kings, fixing Bhutapandya as the western limit of the Pandyan kingdom.

Atiyan and his Successors

Atiyan is the next important Ay ruler about whom information is available. Under him the Ay kingdom began to disintegrate. The Pandyan warrior-king Pasumpun Pandyan (Azhakia Pandyan) is said to have invaded the Ay kingdom and subjugated Atiyan. Parinar has described this fight in the *Agananuru*. The successors of Atiyan fought heroically against the Pandyas to regain their lost freedom and supremacy. The Ay king took part in the battle of Talaiyalankanam, in which the Pandyan king Nedumchezhiyan defeated seven contemporary South Indian kings. Nakkirar has described this fight in the *Agananuru*. The Ay kings were able in due course to recover from the Pandyas those regions in central and southern Travancore which they had lost earlier, but they never regained the old position of prominence.

Post-Sangam Age

The immediate post-Sangam age is a dark period in the history of the Ays as well, but from the 7th century onwards we get information about the Ays from the Pandyan inscriptions. The Pandyas had by this time developed themselves into a great power on the eastern borders of the Ay kingdom. The Chera Empire lay on its northern boundary, but Vizhinjam, Trivandrum and several other places in the south formed part of the Ay dominion. The Ay kingdom functioned for long as an effective buffer State between the Pandya and Chera dominions, but with its decline the Chera Empire was exposed to the direct attacks of the Pandyas and later on of the Cholas from across the erstwhile Ay territories.

The Pandyan kings were ever anxious to annex the Ay territories to their kingdom and they carried on successive raids in the Nanjanad area. The Pandyan king Jayantavarman (645-670) is credited with some successes over his contemporary king in Kerala. His successor Arikesari Maravarman (670-700 AD.) is also said to have won a great battle at Sennilam and defeated the Kerala king and captured him alive with his near relatives and his forces.¹ These Pandya victories might have been won over the Ay kings because the Chera power had not extended to South Travancore during his period. Nakkirar, the commentator of the *Irainar Akaporul*, also mentions the attack on Kottar by Arikesari Maravarman. Kocchadayan Ranadhira (700-730 A.D.), the son of Arikesari Maravarman, also inflicted a severe defeat on the Ay king in the battle of Maruthur and forced him to acknowledge Pandya supremacy. This was followed by a period of temporary truce between the two powers, but the Ays persevered in their efforts to achieve independence from Pandyan control and this led to the renewal of hostilities.

Sadayan and Karunadan

In the latter half of the 8th century A.D. the Ay kingdom was ruled over by Sadayan and his son Karunandan. During this period the Pandyan ruler Maranjadayan or Jatilavarman Parantaka (765-815) invaded South Kerala several times and won victories. The Kazhugumalai inscription records that Maranjadayan led a successful expedition in the 23rd year of his reign against the king of Malainadu and destroyed Ariviyur Kottai. The king of Malainadu mentioned in this inscription may be identified with Karunandan. The Madras Museum Plates show that Maranjadayan also took Vizhinjam which was then the capital of the Ay kingdom. But the Ay chief does not seem to have submitted meekly to the Pandya challenge, for the Trivandrum Stone Inscription bears evidence that the king was still fighting in the neighbourhood of Vizhinjam more than ten years after his first invasion. Sri Mara Sri Vallabha (815-862) is also stated to have won a victory at Vizhinjam. Prof. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri observes, "The operations at Vizhinjam may perhaps be accepted as proof that the conquered lands are not settled on a permanent basis and may assert their independence at the earliest opportunity"². Evidently, the Ays were in no mood to acknowledge the Pandyan supremacy but were ready to fight on for their freedom. Most probably, they had by this time come into close contacts with the Cheras of Mahodayapuram and the latter might have helped them in their fight against the Pandyas. The immediate successor of Karunandan seems to have been Karunandaruman, but we have not much information about this king.

Karunandadakkan

The next important king, of the Ay dynasty was Karunandadakkan (857-885 A.D.) The kingdom now extended approximately from Trippappur in the north to Nagercoil in the south and continued to have its capital at Vizhinjam.

1. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *Cholas*, Vol. 1, p.27.

2. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Pandyan Kingdom*, p.76.

Karunandadakkan built the Vishnu temple at Parthiva-sekharapuram (Parthiva puram). On the evidence of the Huzur Office Plates it is inferred that he also bore the name Sri Vallabha. The document bears ample testimony to the keen interest evinced by Karunandadakkan in the promotion of religion and learning. It is recorded that he purchased from the *Sabha* of Munchira the plot of land locally known as Uzhakudivilai, fixed its boundaries, erected a temple on it, set up the image of Vishnu in the temple and named the village round it Parthivasekharapuram. He also established here a *Salai* (Vedic College) in which arrangements were made to give free boarding, lodging and tuition to 95 *sattars*, all of them being Namboothiris. Perhaps, Karunandadakkan himself was the founder of the famous Kandalur Salai as well.

Vikramaditya Varaguna

Vikramaditya Varaguna (885-925) was the immediate successor of Karunandadakkan. His reign marked a critical phase of the struggle for political supremacy between the Pandyas and the Cholas in South India. Parantaka Chola (907-955) defeated the Pandyan king Maravarman Rajasimha II (905-920) and annexed the Pandyan kingdom to the Chola Empire. Nanjanad also came under Chola rule. Rajasimha fled to Ceylon and after staying there for some years, he sought asylum in Kerala, the home of his mother. Vikramaditya Varaguna seems to have helped the Pandyas in their fight against the Cholas. The Paliyam Copper Plate Inscription testifies to the policy of religious toleration followed by Vikramaditya Varaguna. Varaguna granted an extensive landed property in the south to the celebrated Buddhist temple of Tirumulapadam (Sri Mulavasam) which was situated in the Chera Empire. The land was placed under the protection of one Virakota who has been identified with Indukotha Varma who was the heir apparent and as such the *Koyiladhikarikal* of the Chera Empire during the reign of Goda Ravi Varma (917-944 AD.). Varaguna's gift to the Buddhist temple at Tirumulapadam might not have been an isolated act of charity but part of a general policy of giving donations of land to temples for religious and charitable purposes in the wake of the many defeats and disappointments sustained by him in the fight against his enemies. In the document the king exhorts future generations of rulers to safeguard the gift most jealously. He says, "This land, like a wife, should be kept at heart and personally safeguarded by you time after time from the possibility of enjoyment by another. Oh ! men, hasten your minds to deeds of merit. The God of Death, terrible with mouth wide open, is roaming near awaiting (his) time ; and as if to show him favour, his father, the lord of day, with quick marches, hurriedly leads away the remainder of your lives". The words 'God of Death' and "his father, the Lord of Day" occurring in the above exhortation are interpreted as references to Parantaka Chola and his father Aditya Chola, for by 925 A.D. the Cholas had defeated the Pandyas and become a threat to the Ay kingdom.

A table of synchronism between the Ay kings and their Chola, Pandya and Chera contemporaries is given elsewhere.

GENEALOGICAL TABLE

AYS	A.D.	CHERAS	A.D.	CHOLAS	A.D.	PANDYAS	A.D.
Sadayan till about	788	Kulasekhara Alwar	800-820	-	-	Maranjadayan or Jatilavarman Parantaka	765-815
Karunandan Karunandaruman	788-857	Rajasekhara Varman	820-844	-	-	Sri Mara Sri Vallabha	815-862
Karunandadakkan	857-885	Sthanu Ravi Varman	844-885	Vijayalaya	850-871	Varaguna Varman II	862-885
Vikramaditya Varaguna	885-925	Rama Varma	885-917	Aditya I	871-907	Parantaka Viranarayana	860-905
-	-	Goda Ravi Varma	917-944	Parantaka I	907-955	Maravarman Rajasimha II	905-920
-	-	Indu Kotha Varma	944-962	-	-	-	-

End of the Ay Dynasty

After the death of Vikramaditya Varaguna the Ays lost the status of a separate dynasty and its northern territories became part of the Venad region of the Chera Empire. The Cholas are referred to in the inscriptions of the 10th century as having sacked the Chera strongholds of Kandalur and Vizhinjam. There are no references to the Ays as a separate power in the inscriptions of the age. It seems that a branch of the Ay family which had set up residence at Trippappur, 10 miles to the north of Trivandrum and had been controlling the temple of Sri Padmanabha at Trivandrum, the tutelary deity of the Ays, merged with the Kizhperur royal house which had been ruling over Venad.

Life and Culture in the Ay kingdom

The Ay inscriptions throw light on the political, social and religious conditions in the Ay kingdom. Hereditary monarchy was the prevailing form of Government. The Ay kings also followed the patrilineal system of succession or *Makkathayam*. The kingdom was split up into a number of *Nadus* each of which was under an officer called *Kizhavan*, who carried on the administration under the orders of the king. The Nadu was sub-divided into a number of *Desams*.

The Ay kings took special steps to strengthen the defences of the kingdom. Vizhinjam and Kandalur were military centres where academies for imparting training in the use of arms had been set up. The Tirupparappu inscription mentions one Aviyalanradakkan of Vizhinjam who bore the title of Sri Vallabha Perumbanaigan and was the manufacturer of arms to king Karunandadakkan. Imposition of fines was the most common punishment for any crime. The fines collected in the form of gold of prescribed quantity were paid either to temples or to the state treasury. *The Sabha* of the temple was an important institution. It carried on all transactions including acceptance of donations and payments on behalf of the temple.

The Ay kings were generous patrons of education and learning. The educational institution called *Salai* played an important part in the cultural life of the people. There was a *Salai* attached to every important temple. The premier *Salais* of the kingdom were Kandalur *Salai* and Parthivasekharapuram *Salai*. The *Salai* was a boarding school in which the Brahmin youth got free boarding and lodging and underwent a course of studies in the *Vedas* and other branches of Sanskrit learning. The Huzur Office Plate makes it clear that admission to Parthivasekharapuram *Salai* was restricted to Brahmins, the 95 *Kalams* (seats) in the institution being distributed among the pupils of the *Pavizhiya Charanam*, *Tayittiriya Charanam*, and *Talavakara Charanam*. Discipline was strictly enforced in the *Salai*. These rules as given in the Huzur Office Plate were intended to build up the moral character of the pupils. The use of vulgar language within the premises of the *Salai* was prohibited. Brawls and physical assaults were severely punished. No inmate was permitted to carry offensive weapons with him. Gambling of every kind was banned and those pupils who violated this

rule were denied the day's meal. Maid servants were strictly prohibited from entry into the hostels. The scrupulous enforcement of such rules of discipline made Kandalur, Parthivasekharapuram and other *Salais* of the Ay kingdom ideal educational institutions. Kandalur *Salai* has even been referred to as the "Nalanda of the South", as "it was looked upon as a model by the people of that time".

The State took special care of the religious shrines in the land. As already stated, the Paliyam Copper Plates record the gift of land to the Buddhist temple of Tirumalapadam by Vikramaditya Varaguna, while the Huzur Office Plates record the construction of a Vishnu shrine and establishment of a *Salai* or boarding school at Parthivasekharapuram by Karunandadakkan. The common people also seem to have taken interest in making charitable endowments to temple. Whereas the Chitalar Inscription of the 28th year of the reign of Vikramaditya Varaguna records the gift of some gold ornaments to the Jain temple of Tiruchanattumala by a private donor, the Tiruvitaikkodu Inscription of the reign of Karunandadakkan records a similar private donation of 25 cows for maintaining a perpetual lamp in the local Siva temple.

The period of the later Ay rule saw the decline of Buddhism and Jainism and the progress of Hinduism. The Ay kings espoused the cause of Hindu religion and culture in South Kerala in the same way as their contemporaries, the Kulasekharas of Mahodayapuram, did in the north. They founded new temples and patronised existing ones. Thus king Karunandadakkan constructed the Vishnu temple at Parthivasekharapuram. The Padmanabhaswami temple at Trivandrum received the special patronage of the Ay kings. Though devoted Hindus, the Ays made liberal gifts and donations to Buddhist and Jain temples. Thus there was complete religious toleration in the land under Ay rule.

CHAPTER VIII

THE KOLLAM ERA

Until the 1st century B.C., says A. L. Basham, “there is no good evidence that India had any regular system of recording the year of an event by dating in a definite era like the A.U.C. of Rome or the Christian era of medieval and modern Europe. Early inscriptions are dated if at all in the regnal year of the ruling king. The idea of dating over a long period of time from a fixed year was almost certainly introduced into India by the invaders of the North-West, who have left the earliest inscriptions thus dated in India. Unfortunately, the Indians did not adopt a uniform era and a number of systems of dating were in use from that time onwards”.¹ The Kollam era of Kerala (825 A.D.) was one of the many local eras which thus came into vogue in the country, some of the earlier ones being the Saptarshi era (76 B.C.), the Vikrama era (56 B.C.), the Saka era (78 A.D.), the Kalachuri era (248 A.D.), the Gupta era (320 A.D.) and the Harsha era (606 A.D.).

Origin of the Kollam Era

The introduction of the Kollam era marked a milestone in Kerala chronology and history. The early inscriptions and records of Kerala were dated in the Kali era or Saka era till the Kollam era became popular. The earliest available epigraphical record dated in the Kollam era is the Mampalli Plate (149) of Sri Vallabhan Kotha of Venad. A peculiarity of that era is that in South Kerala, Madurai, Tirunelveli and Ceylon it commences on Chingam 1, the Zodiacal month of Leo (August-September) and in North Kerala on Kanni 1, the month of September, in which the Sun enters the Zodiacal sign of Virgo. How did the Kollam era originate? To the historian of Kerala this question has all along been “a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma”. Several scholars have participated in the great debate on this question allowing free play to their imagination, but the origin of the Kollam era remains to this day one of the unresolved mysteries of Kerala history. Some of the more important of the theories propounded in this connection are examined below.

Udaya Marthanda Story

The traditional view as stated by P Shungoonny Menon is that in the Kali year 3926 (825 A.D.) king Udaya Marthanda Varma of Venad convened at Kollam (Quilon) a grand assembly of all the learned men of Kerala with the object of introducing a new era and after making detailed researches and calculations it was resolved to adopt the new era from the first Chingam of

1. A. L. Basham, *The Wonder That Was India*, p. 493.

the year.¹ This system of reckoning the era is said to have been adopted in due course throughout Kerala and in places in the neighbourhood like Tirunelveli, Madurai etc. Shungoonny Menon had quoted in support of his theory the evidence of some records in the Trivandrum temple which he assigns to Chingam 5 of the first year of the Kollam era. The Udaya Marthanda story was for long accepted by writers as the correct explanation of the origin of the Kollam era, but on closer examination it has been found to be unacceptable for the following reasons. The record in the Padmanabhaswami temple quoted by Shungoonny Menon actually belongs to Chingam 5, of Kollam era 801 (1625 A.D.) and not to Chingam 5 of the first year of the Kollam era. In fact, there is no record in this temple which can be assigned to the period prior to 550 Kollam era (1375 A.D.).

Moreover, during the period in question there was no ruler among the Venad kings who bore the name Udaya Marthanda Varma. Even if a ruler named Udaya Marthanda Varma had ruled over Venad at this time, he could have been only a vassal of the Chera Emperor of Mahodayapuram and an era promulgated by him could not have commanded universal acceptance in Kerala. Historically speaking the Kollam era began during the reign of Rajasekhara Varman Kulasekhara (820-844 A.D.) and if at all a new era was started by a royal decree, it should have been done by this Emperor of Mahodayapuram. But the name of Rajasekhara Varman is nowhere mentioned in connection with the inauguration of a new era. Sankaranarayana, the author of the astronomical work *Sankaranarayaniyam* compiled in 869 A.D. also does not mention the introduction of any new era and he uses only the Kali and Saka eras in his work. Moreover, if a new era had been inaugurated with all fan-fare by a royal decree in 825 A.D., it would certainly have found its way into records and inscriptions immediately thereafter. But the Kollam era is used regularly only from the 12th century A.D. onwards. While no record dated in this era has been obtained in the 9th century A.D., only one record each has been discovered so far which can be assigned to the 10th or 11th century. In the light of the facts set forth above the Udaya Marthanda story cannot be readily accepted as a convincing explanation of the origin of the Kollam era.

Logan's View

Logan gives his own theory of the origin of the Kollam era with an explanation for the varying dates on which it commenced in the northern and southern parts of Kerala. He suggests that the Kollam era began on the 1st of Chingam in the south and on the 1st of Kanni in the north in commemoration of the achievement of independence from Perumal rule by Venad and Kolathunad

1. P. Shungoonny Menon and other early writers have stated that the 1st day of Chingam, in the first year of the Kollam era corresponds to August 15, 825. This does not take into consideration the Act passed by the British Parliament in 1752 dropping 11 days while accepting the Gregorian Calendar. The first day of Chingam of the first year of the Kollam era actually corresponds to July 25, 825 A.D.

respectively on these days. In the light of, later historical research it is difficult to accept this view. The period from the 9th to the 12th centuries was the age of the Kulasekharas of Mahodayapuram and Venad and Kolathunad had not yet attained the status of independent kingdoms. The imperial supremacy of the Kulasekharas over the *Naduvazhis* of different *Nadus* or administrative divisions of the empire is proclaimed in many an inscription. Venad, Kolathunad, etc., achieved independence only after the breakup of the Kulasekhara Empire early in the 12th century A.D. and it is, therefore, not historically correct to say that the Kollam era began in 825 A.D. in commemoration of the achievement of independence by the rulers of these two kingdoms.

Theory associated with Sankaracharya

The *Keralolpathi* narrative has provided the material for the formulation of yet another theory. One of the versions of the *Keralolpathi* has suggested that the Kollam era was started by Sankaracharya in commemoration of the introduction by him of the *Anacharams* or special customs of the Namboothiris. It has to be pointed out that the author of the *Keralolpathi* has proceeded on the wrong assumption that the *Sankarasmrithi* which lays down the *Anacharams* was written by Sankaracharya himself. In fact, the *Sankarasmrithi* is a later work in which there are references to the Namboothiris as influential *Janmis*. The ascendancy of the Namboothiri *Janmis* in Kerala has to be assigned to the period commencing from the 12th century A.D. when the *Janmi* system came into vogue. On this one piece of internal evidence alone it is clear that the *Sankarasmrithi* could have been written only after the 12th century A.D. when the Namboothiri Brahmins became a powerful factor in the public life of Kerala. Hence the view based on the evidence of the *Sankarasmrithi* that the Kollam era was begun in commemoration of the introduction of the *Anacharams* by Sankaracharya cannot be accepted. Moreover, the chronological factor also militates against the validity of this theory. Sankaracharya lived during the period 788-820 A.D. and evidently he could not have introduced the *Anacharams* in 825 A.D.

‘Kollam Tonri’

Another theory ascribes the origin of the Kollam era in the south and in the north to the date of the founding of the towns of Kurakkeni Kollam and Pantalayani Kollam respectively. The words *Kollam Tonri* occurring in inscriptions are interpreted to mean that “Kollam town came into existence”. The presumption is, therefore, that the establishment of the town of Kollam gave its name to the era which commenced in 825 A.D. It is pointed out that the Kollam era is called *Kolamba Varsha* in Sanskrit and that Quilon was known as Kolambam in the language. This theory too has its drawbacks. The words *Kollam Tonri* need not be interpreted to mean that the town of Kollam came into existence. On the other hand, it may just mean that the “Era of Kollam came into existence”.

The place name 'Kollam' seems to have had its origin in the 8th century A.D. before the commencement of the Kollam era. The Brahmins who came to Kerala from the north in the 8th century A.D. named several places in Kerala after those in their original homes. Kollam itself seems to have been named by the Brahmins after Kollapuri (Paithan) or Kolhapur. Moreover, both Kurakkeni Kollam and Pantalayini Kollam existed even before the commencement of the Kollam era. It is, therefore, difficult to believe that the Kollam era began in 825 A.D. in commemoration of the founding of the town of Quilon.

It may be pointed out in this connection that the *A.U.C.* or *Anno Urbis Condite* (i.e., from, in the year of the founding of the city, viz., Rome) of Rome furnishes the instance of an era associated with the founding of a city, but then Rome was the imperial city or capital and not a town of secondary importance. The fact is that Mahodayapuram and not Quilon was the imperial city or premier, town in Kerala during the period of the origin of the Kollam era. Quilon had only the status of the headquarters of a feudatory of the Chera emperor and it is inconceivable how an all Kerala era could have been started by a vassal in commemoration of the founding of Quilon and have it foisted upon people in other parts of Kerala where his writ did not run and even in places outside such as Madurai, Tirunelveli and Ceylon.

A theory connecting the origin of an era called *Kollam Azhinta Andu* with the destruction of Quilon in 1096 A.D. has recently been cited as evidence in support of the view that the Kollam era must have been started in 825 A.D. in commemoration of the founding of Quilon town. There is a statement in a Kannada chronicle *Bellala Rayana Yudha* which ascribes the capture of Madurai and the establishment of a Muslim garrison there by Nemi Khan to "Saka 1246 corresponding to *Kollam Azhinta Anto*". On the evidence of this record Prof. Venkataramanayya made the tentative suggestion that "a new era appears to have been started" in 1096 A.D. by Kulottunga Chola to commemorate the 'important event' of the destruction of the city of Kollam in that year by his commander Naralokavira.¹ The view has been endorsed by S. Sanku Ayyar and K. V. Krishna Iyer.² "Though a solitary reference," says the latter, "this is of the greatest importance as ending all controversies on the subject. He adds further, "If *Kollam Azhinta Andu* dates from the *Azhivu* or destruction of Kollam, the *Kollam Tonri* or *Tudangi Andu* should date from the beginning of Kollam". He then proceeds to suggest a novel theory that the Kollam era was started in 825 AD. by the Ayting of the south who, having

1. The full text of the reference from the Kannada chronicle which perhaps was first made by Prof. V. Venkataramanayya is given below : "Afterwards, in the Salivahana Sakabdam one thousand two hundred and forty-six corresponding with the year of era reckoned from destruction, of Kollam (Quilon) two hundred and twenty-seven, agreeing with Ani month of Rudhrottakari, when one named Paracrama Pandian was reigning, Athi Sulthan Mulk and one called Nemi came from Delhi in the north, and taking Paracrama Dever captive sent him to Delhi and conquered the country". (*Early Muslim Expansion in South India*, p. 70)

2. S. Sanku Ayyar, *Kerala Charithrathile Chila Ajnatabhagangal*, p. 133 and K.V. Krishna Ayyar, Article on 'New Light on Old Problems'. *History on the March*, p.25.

been successively defeated by the Pandya king Sri Mara Sri Vallabha (815-862), fled from his capital Vizhinjam and founded the town of Kollam far away from his enemy.

The above view is more fanciful than convincing. The alleged migration of the Ay king from Vizhinjam to Quilon is not only not supported by historical evidence but disproved by it. The records of the Ay kingdom show that the Ays had their capital at Vizhinjam even in the first quarter of the 10th century A.D. As for the suggestion that the document which mentions the *Kollam Azhinta Andu* should be accepted as ending all controversies on the subject, it may be pointed out that the alleged solitarines of this reference taken from the *Bellala Rayana Yudha*, a Kannada chronicle of doubtful historical value like the Malayalam work *Keralolpathi*, itself stands in the way of its acceptance even as a possible explanation of the origin of the Kollam era, let alone as “the last word on the subject”. Moreover, even conceding that an era was founded to commemorate the destruction of Quilon, it does not necessarily and logically follow that another era should have been started earlier to commemorate its founding.

Other Theories

Another view in regard to the origin of the Kollam era is that it was started in 825 A.D. in commemoration of the partition of the Chera Empire, the conversion of the Cheraman Perumal to Islam and his departure for Mecca. The Cheraman legend itself has now been proved to be a fiction and consequently any theory based on this fiction can straightaway be rejected as unconvincing. Apart from this, there is also an element of self-contradiction in the suggestion that a common era acceptable to the people all over Kerala came to be adopted not when the country was a homogeneous political unit but at a time when it is said to have been partitioned and its political unity irretrievably lost.

The origin of the Kollam era is also ascribed to the establishment of a Christian community at Quilon in 825 A.D. It is argued that the Christian traders who came to Quilon started reckoning their year from the date of their settlement in the town and thus inaugurated a new era. This era is said to have been adopted later by the people all over Kerala as their own either under the orders of the respective rulers or on their own initiative in view of its utility. As an explanation for the difference in the dates on which the era commenced in the north and south of Kerala, it is pointed out that it came into vogue first among the people of southern Kollam and neighbouring regions and it took about a month for the news to reach the north and command general acceptance. It may be pointed out as an argument against this theory that the settlement of a colony of Christian traders in Quilon was too insignificant an event to enthuse the non-Christian masses of people in other parts of Kerala so much as to make them adopt a new era to commemorate the event. At best the Christian traders of Quilon and others who were benefited by the services of that community in nearby areas alone

would have counted their years from the date of the event out of a feeling of gratitude. But it is inconceivable that the people in the other parts of Kerala would have also done so *ipso facto*.

The origin of the Kollam era is also associated with Onam, the national festival of the people of Kerala. But this theory too, like the earlier ones, has its flaws. Onam was celebrated as a national festival in Kerala and other parts of South India even in the Sangam age and it is therefore difficult to believe that the Kollam era was started as late as 825 A.D. in commemoration of this ancient festival.

Dr. Gundert ascribes the origin of the Kollam era to the erection of a Siva temple at Quilon. He suggests that the era was not adopted for long by people in other parts of Kerala in view of its purely local and religious origin. However, as the commercial and political importance of Quilon increased the new era was carried to other parts of Kerala by the merchants who had trade connections all over the coast. This view is also not accepted on the ground that one “should expect a grander event of greater national importance in justification of the starting of an era than the building of a nameless temple”.

Modification of the Saptarshi Era

Prof. Sundaram Pillai has suggested that the Kollam era might be a modification of the *Saptarshi* era or *Sastra Samvatsara*, “the scientific year *par excellence*”. The era is mentioned by Albiruni (973-1048), Kalhana (1150 A.D) and the *Puranas* and it was prevalent in Kashmir, Multan, Saurashtra and other places in Northern and Central India. The peculiarity of this era which is also known as *Laukika* era is that it is recorded in cycles of one hundred years, the first cycle commencing 76 years before the dawn of the Christian era (i.e., 76 B.C.). The *Saptarshi* era might have been brought to Kerala from the north by the Aryan immigrants. It is possible that after the coming of the Namboothiri Brahmins to Quilon the *Saptarshi* era ended its 9th cycle and began the 10th cycle in the first Chaitra 825 A.D. and eventually it came to be known as the Kollam era after the name of that town. In later years the practice of beginning the era afresh after every hundred years might have been given up and the *Saptarshi* era got itself adjusted for local purposes. To quote Prof.Sundaram Pillai, “It is by no means extravagant to suppose that the people who lived in the Kollam year 99 went on to name the next year 100 and not the cypher year, in spite of whatever astronomical reminiscences which survived in the minds of the almanac makers of that age. In fact, nothing could have been more natural; and once the enumeration was permitted, the issue of an independent era exactly of the kind we have was inevitable”.¹ K. P. Padmanabha Menon thinks that there “is indeed much to recommend in Prof.Sundaram Pillai’s theory”. Prof. Elamkulam P. N. Kunjan Pillai also considers the view of Prof.Sundaram Pillai as more acceptable than those of others.

1. K. P. Padmanabha Menon, *History of Kerala* (Vol. II, pp. 291-294).

The fact that the Kollam era came to be used regularly in records and inscriptions only from the 12th century A.D. lends support to the view that it might have been a continuation of the 10th cycle of the *Saptarshi* era which began in 825 A.D. Naturally, it would have taken some time for the people to reconcile themselves to the change that had taken place. But the chief merit of the theory suggesting the Kollam era to be a modification of the *Saptarshi* era by the Namboothiri immigrants of Quilon (Kollam) to suit local needs is that it is based on mathematical calculation and as such has a scientific basis and at the same time, it also accommodates the popular tradition that the era derived its name from the town of Quilon or Kollam. Until fresh light is thrown on this question and the mystery is finally resolved, the above theory may be provisionally accepted. But with all its merits this theory too does not explain how the Kollam era commenced on the 1st of Chingam in the south and on the 1st of Kanni in the north or why the traditional system of calculation was given up and a new system adopted. As for the former, it may not be wrong in making a conjecture that the difference in the dates of the commencement of the era in the north and south is the concrete expression or institutionalisation of an honest difference of opinion among the astronomers and almanac-makers of the two areas in regard to the propriety of beginning the new cycle of the *Saptarshi* era on Chingam 1 or Kanni 1. Having agreed to disagree on this issue, the southerners might have reckoned their year from Chingam 1 and the northerners from Kanni 1. It may be noted that differences of opinion on such astronomical issues continue to exercise the minds of astrologers and almanac-makers even in modern times and it is therefore not surprising or unnatural if such an issue cropped up in the early days also.

CHAPTER IX

KULASEKHARAS OF MAHODAYAPURAM (800-1102 A.D.)

The long 'historical night' which followed the Sangam age came to an end about 800 A.D. with the revival of Chera power under Kulasekhara Varman. An illustrious line of kings known as the Kulasekharas ruled over Kerala from 800 to 1102 A.D. with their capital at Tiruvanchikulam or Mahodayapuram. The history of the Kulasekhara Empire, otherwise called the Second Chera Empire, was brought to light in recent times as a result of the, scientific study of the inscriptions of the age by Prof. Elamkulam. The reconstruction of the history of the Kulasekharas has turned out to be an important contribution which has helped to fill in a major gap in our knowledge of the early history of Kerala. It has also helped to correct the wrong impression entertained by scholars that Kerala during this period was "cut up into a number of petty principalities which with their endless feuds and alliances more or less formed a world apart"¹. The history of the Second Chera Empire clearly demonstrates that Kerala was a homogeneous political unit at least for three centuries from 800 to 1102 A.D. when the Kulasekharas exercised their sway over the land with their capital at Mahodayapuram. A brief outline of the history of the Kulasekharas, thirteen in number, is given below.

Kulasekhara Alwar

Kulasekhara Varman (800-820 AD.), the founder of the Second Chera Empire, is none other than Kulasekhara Alwar, the famous Hindu saint who figures in the history of the Vaishnavite movement in South India. He is the well-known author of the *Perumal Tirumozhi*, one of the celebrated devotional works in Tamil. In this work he calls himself ruler of Killi² the master of Kudal,³ the ruler of Kozhi⁴ and the overlord of Kongu.⁵ The *Mukundamala*, a beautiful devotional lyric in Sanskrit, is also assigned to Kulasekhara Alwar. Some scholars have expressed the view that the Kulasekhara who patronised the Yamaka poet Vasudeva Bhattatiri must be Kulasekhara Alwar himself, though this view is not shared by all. The royal 'dramatist Kulasekhara who

1. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Pandyan Kingdom*, p. 52.

2. A mountain in Namakkal and Attur taluks in Salem district.

3. Madurai.

4. Uraiyur near Tiruchirapalli.

5. Salem-Coimbatore region.

styles himself in his works as the 'Lord of Mahodayapuram' and the 'Crest Jewel' of the Kerala dynasty is also sometimes identified with Kulasekhara Alwar. If this identification is correct, Kulasekhara Alwar must be regarded as the author of the three famous Sanskrit dramas, *Tapatisamvaranam*, *Subhadra dhananjaya* and *Vichchinnabhisheka* and also of the prose work *Ascharya manjari*. The identification of Kulasekhara Alwar with the royal dramatist Kulasekhara is, however, disputed by some scholars on the ground that there is considerable difference in the literary styles of the dramatist and the Vaishnava saint.

Rajasekhara Varman

Rajasekhara Varman (820-844 A.D.), the second ruler of this dynasty, is identified with the Rajasekhara who figures in Madhavacharya's *Sankaravijaya* as well as Sankaracharya's *Sivanandalahari*. The Vazhapalli inscription of Rajasekhara is the first epigraphical record of a Chera king to be discovered from Kerala. Dated in the 12th regnal year of Rajasekhara Varman it begins with the words '*Nama Sivaya*' and not '*Swasti Sri*' as in other records and it also describes the ruler as 'Parameswara Bhattarakā'. This is taken as clear proof of the fact that Rajasekhara Varman was a devout Saivite. Rajasekhara has been identified with the famous Saivite Saint Cheraman Perumal Nayanar. Sekkilar in his *Periyapuranam* narrates the story of Cheraman Perumal Nayanar and his joint pilgrimage to the major Saivite shrines of South India in the company of his life long friend and companion Sundaramurthi Nayanar. The two saints are also believed to have breathed their last at Tiruvanchikulam where their images may still be seen in the famous Siva temple. It is significant to note that it was during he reign of Rajasekhara Varman Kulasekhara that the Kollam era commencing in 825 A.D. came into vogue in Kerala.

Sthanu Ravi Varman

Sthanu Ravi Varman (844-885 AD.), the next Chera emperor, was one of the most outstanding rulers of this dynasty. The Terisapalli Copper Plate of 849 A.D. was issued in the 5th regnal year of this ruler by Ayyan Atikal Tiruvatikal, the Governor of Venad.

There is another inscription of Sthanu Ravi in the Kudalmanikkam temple at Irinjalakuda. Sthanu Ravi was a contemporary of the Chola emperor, Aditya Chola (871-907 A.D.). The relations between the Cheras and the Cholas were very friendly during his reign. No Chola invasion of any part of the Chera Empire is recorded to have taken place during this period. The Tillaisthanam inscription testifies to the cordiality in the relations between the two rulers. The kings jointly conferred a title on Vikki Annan, a chief of Tanjore. Sthanu Ravi also helped the Chola king with an army to fight against the Pallavas. Vijayaragadeva who figures in the Terisapalli Plate was the son-in-law of Sthanu Ravi. Like his predecessor, Sthanu Ravi Varman was also a devout Saivite.

His court was adorned by the famous astronomer Sankaranarayana who wrote the *Sankaranarayaniyam*, a commentary on Bhaskara's famous astronomical work *Laghubhaskariya*. An authority on Astronomy, Sthanu Ravi extended his liberal patronage to the science. There was a well-equipped observatory at Mahodayapuram under the charge of Sankaranarayana. The reign of Sthanu Ravi was also one of economic prosperity. The Arab merchant, Sulaiman (851 A.D.), visited Kerala during his reign and he has testified to the prevalence of brisk trade between Kerala and China during this period.

Rama Varma

Rama Varma Kulasekhara (885-917 A.D.), the successor of Sthanu Ravi, was a liberal patron of literature and arts. He has been identified by some scholars with the Kulasekhara who patronised the Yamaka poet Vasudeva Bhattatiri, the author of such works as *Yudhishtira Vijaya*, *Tripuradahana*, *Saurikathodaya*, etc. Most probably, the friendship between the Cheras and the Cholas was cemented during his reign by a marriage between his daughter and Parantaka, the son of Aditya Chola. The foreign traveller Masudi seems to have visited Kerala and written an account of the country and its people during the reign of Rama Varma Kulasekhara.

Goda Ravi Varma

The next Chera ruler was Goda Ravi Varma (917-944 A.D.). The inscriptions of Goda Ravi discovered from Nedumpuram Tali, Avittathur, Chokkur, Tripunithura and Udayamperur have helped the historian in working out the chronology of his reign and fixing up the limits of the Chera Empire during this period. It may be seen that the Kulasekhara Empire under Goda Ravi comprised practically the whole of Kerala and that the Cheras had also become an important military power in the south. The cordial relations which had all along subsisted between the Cholas and the Cheras were put to severe strain during this period by Chola aggression in South Kerala. The absorption of the Ay kingdom into the Chera Empire created a tense situation in the south and it seemed as though the confrontation between the two powers was only a matter of time. Goda Ravi took effective steps to strengthen the defences on the southern borders of his empire. Vizhinjam, Kandalur and other centres in South Kerala which had been seats of learning were now transformed into military strongholds. The Cheras also provoked the Chola ruler by granting asylum to the Pandyan ruler Maravarman Rajasimha (905-920 A.D.) who had been defeated by the Cholas, but Parantaka Chola followed a cautious policy of 'wait and see' and did not risk an immediate invasion of the Chera territories. Goda Ravi Varma has been identified in the *Cochin State Manual* with the Goda Varma Raja of the palm leaf ultimatum read on the occasion of the *Konganpada* at Chittur. The incident associated with the *Konganpada* seems to have taken place only several centuries later and hence the identification seems to be incorrect.

Indu Kotha Varma

Goda Ravi Varma was succeeded by his son Indu Kotha Varma (944-962 A.D.). Inscriptions which record the regnal years of this ruler have been discovered from such places as Trikkakara and Tiruvandur. During his reign Parantaka Chola invaded and conquered the north-western part of Kongunadu which was ruled by the Kongu Cheras who were the relatives of the Cheras of Mahodayapuram. Parantaka's aggressive action provoked prompt measures of retaliation on the part of Indu Kotha Varma. The Chera army was sent to help the Pandyas in their fight against the Cholas to recover the lost territories in the Nanjanad-Tirunelveli region and Chola-Chera relations now reached the breaking point. Meanwhile, Parantaka Chola died in 955 A.D. and was succeeded by weak rulers. The Cholas gave no trouble to the Chera rulers of Mahodayapuram for a period of 30 years from 955 A.D.

Bhaskara Ravi Varman I and II

The immediate successors of Indu Kotha Varma were Bhaskara Ravi Varman I (962-1019 A.D.) and Bhaskara Ravi Varman II (1019-1021 A.D.). It was at one time assumed that there was only one Bhaskara Ravi Varman on the Chera throne as the immediate successor of Indu Kotha Varma and that he had a long reign of 58 years. More than 20 inscriptions bearing the name of Bhaskara Ravi Varman have been discovered from different parts of Kerala such as Trikkodithanam, Trikkakara, Tirunelli, etc. A study of the variations in the position of Jupiter in these records has led to the conclusion that there were two kings of the name of Bhaskara Ravi Varman who ruled the Chera Empire as the immediate successors of Indu Kotha Varma and also that there was a third king of the same name who ruled from 1043 to 1082 as the successor of Rajasimha (1028-1043 A.D.).¹ The regnal years of Bhaskara Ravi Varman I as determined from the inscriptions are from 962 to 1019 A.D. and those of Bhaskara Ravi Varman II from 979-1021 A.D. The apparent overlapping of their reigns is due to the fact that among the South Indian dynasties the heir-apparents often used the regnal years in their inscriptions with effect from the date of their accession as *Yuvaraja*.

Bhaskara Ravi Varman I has immortalised himself in the Jewish Copper Plate grant issued by him in 1000 A.D. (175 K.E.) from the capital city of Mahodayapuram conferring on the Jewish Chief, Joseph Rabban, the rights of the *Anchuvannam* and 72 other proprietary rights. The importance of this record as proof of the Chera policy of religious toleration has already been alluded to in an earlier chapter. Apart from this, the timing of the grant of the charter is also significant in 1000 A.D. the Chera Empire was being menaced

1. In three separate inscriptions which belong to the 13th regnal year of the king by name *Bhaskara Ravi Varman*, Jupiter is recorded in *Tulam* (Libra) *Makaram* (Capricorn) and *Edavam* (Taurus) with a difference of more than 90° from one another. This clear astronomical evidence is cited by Prof. Elamkulam in favour of the theory that there were three Bhaskara Ravis.

by the armies of Raja Raja Chola and by granting a charter of rights to the Jews Bhaskara Ravi Varman I was making a bold diplomatic move to win the support and allegiance of a commercially important community in the state.

The reign of Bhaskara Ravi Varman I is of the greatest importance in the history of the Chola-Chera relations. The prolonged Chola-Chera war, which is referred to as the 'Hundred Years War' in early Kerala history, began during this period. Raja Raja, the Great (985-1016 A.D.), who was now in power in the Chola Empire, followed an aggressive policy towards Kerala. Evidently, it was aimed at bringing back under the Chola control a territory which at one time formed part of Tamizhakam, but had broken off and asserted its independence at a later stage. In his 4th regnal year Raja Raja launched an attack on Kandalur Salai and returned to his country. The expedition which was in the nature of a probe was the prelude to the momentous conflict which was yet to begin. In 999 A.D., the 15th year of his reign, Raja Raja won a great victory over the Cheras and struck a blow at Chera prestige. The year is referred to by Raja Raja in his inscriptions as "worthy of being worshipped by all other years as the year in the whole of Eternity". The Chola inscriptions discovered from the temples at Cholapuram, Cape Comorin, Tirunandikara, Suchindram, etc., testify to the Chola conquests in erstwhile South Travancore. Kanyakumari and Kottar came under Chola imperial sway. The former was renamed Rajarajeswaram and the latter as Mammudicholanallur. Raja Raja constituted his conquests in the south into a separate administrative division called *Raja Raja Pandinadu*. A Chola garrison was permanently stationed at Kottar to safeguard Chola imperial interests in the south. Thus by the end of the reign of Raja Raja Chola the whole of South Travancore south of Kuzhithura came under Chola domination.

Raja Raja also seems to have advanced up to Vizhinjam and Kandalur Salai. The Tiruvalangadu Plates refer to the conquest of Vizhinjam in the following words. "The commandant (*Dandanatha*) of this ornament of the solar race then conquered Viliinja, which had the sea for its moat, whose extensive ramparts were shining aloft, which was impregnable to other warriors and which was the permanent abode of the Goddess of Victory." Raja Raja is spoken of in many of his inscriptions as *Kandalur Salai Kalam Arutha Raja Raja Tevar*.¹ Raja Raja is also said to have sent an expedition against the

1. The Tiruvalangadu plates and other Chola records of the period contain the words *Kandalur Salai Kalam Aruthu Aruli*. There has been a great deal of controversy in regard to the identification of the place *Kandalur Salai* and the interpretation of the words *Kalam Aruthu Aruli*. According to one school of thought *Kandalur Salai* is a place near Vizhinjam. The fact that Vizhinjam and Kandalur are often coupled together in the inscriptions of the Cholas and that there is a place called Kandalur near Vizhinjam even today lends some support to this view. The consensus of opinion among scholars is, however, that Kandalur Salai is identical with Trivandrum, a suburb of which is even today known as *Valiachalai*. The words *Kalam Aruthu Aruli* are interpreted by some scholars to mean that the king destroyed the ships at the roadstead of Kandalur. According to another view the king discontinued the *Kalam* (plate) in Kandalur Salai. Most probably, the words refer to the destruction of the military institutions at Kandalur Salai where the Brahmin youth of the land were given training in the use of arms.

city of Quilon and sacked it. It may also be mentioned that the northern part of the Chera Empire including the capital of Mahodayapuram was also attacked and ravaged from the north by the army of Raja Raja. The Chola inscriptions refer to the storming and capture of the strong fortress of Udagai sometime before the year 1008 A.D. The *Kalingattupparani* mentions only the conquest of Udagai and the foundation of the *Chatayam* festival in the Chera country among the achievements of Raja Raja. Ottakuthan records that Raja Raja's great achievement was the crossing of the 18 forests for setting fire to Udagai. The Udagai referred to above might be Makotai or Mahodayapuram. In spite of Raja Raja's victories the power of the Cheras could not be crushed. The Chola inscriptions which refer to the incessant attacks on Chera military strongholds like Vizhinjam and Kandalur only show that the Chera resistance continued unabated and that Chola hegemony was confined only to the regions in the extreme south.

Raja Raja's son and successor Rajendra Chola (1012-1044 A.D.) continued his father's imperialist policy towards Kerala. By the time of his accession the Cheras had conquered South Travancore and sent an army to Ceylon to help the rulers of that island kingdom against the Cholas. Rajendra's first target was therefore Ceylon itself. After his conquest of that island Rajendra turned his attention to Kerala. In 1019 he sacked Vizhinjam and Kandalur Salai. The former was renamed Rajendra cholapattanam. The Chola forces also advanced into north Kerala through Palghat and other mountain passes. They were ably assisted by the Chola navy which had been stationed in the Arabian sea. In a decisive battle that took place for the Chera capital of Mahodayapuram, several generals and chieftains of Kerala were killed. Emperor Bhaskara Ravi Varman I himself seems to have been slain in this battle. In spite of the dazzling victories won by Rajendra only the regions to the south of Trivandrum continued to be under Chola yoke. Rajendra failed in his efforts to bring the whole of Kerala under his hegemony. Significantly enough, no Chola inscription has been discovered in Kerala to the north of Trivandrum.

On the death of Bhaskara Ravi Varman I, Bhaskara Ravi Varman II ascended the throne (1019). He had a short reign. On the evidence of the inscriptions of this ruler discovered from Triakkara, Tirunelli, etc., it has been gathered that the reign of Bhaskara Ravi Varman II ended in 1021 *i.e.*, two or three years after the end of the reign of Bhaskara Ravi Varman I.

Vira Kerala

Vira Kerala (1021-1028 A.D.) was the successor of Bhaskara Ravi II. The war with the Cholas continued under him. During the period of Rajendra Chola's campaigns in North India and South-East Asia the Cheras made a determined effort to throw off the Chola yoke. On the return of the Chola army to the south Rajendra Chola sent his son Rajadhi Raja to suppress the Kerala rebellion (1028 A.D.). The Cholas won several victories over the Cheras in

the campaigns that ensued. The Manimangalam inscription dated 1046 A.D. (29th year of Rajadhi Raja) refers to Vira Kerala having been seized and caused to be trampled to death under an elephant. Rajadhi Raja also killed the king of Venad and sacked Kandalur Salai. Kandan Kari Varman, the Mushaka chief of Iramakutam (near Mt.Eli), who was a relative of Vira Kerala, was also killed in battle by Rajadhi Raja. The Chera power suffered eclipse for more than half a century following the death of Vira Kerala. The prolonged war with the Cholas weakened Chera power and paved the way for the rapid disintegration of the Kulasekhara Empire. Some of the *Naduvazhis* took advantage of the opportunity and asserted their independence.

Rajasimha

The reign of Rajasimha (1028-1043 A.D.) saw the establishment of Chola supremacy over vast portions of Kerala at least for a short period. The Mannarkoil inscription of Rajasimha shows that he acknowledged the supremacy of the Cholas. The Tazhakad inscription, referred to elsewhere, was issued by this ruler conferring certain benefits and privileges on two Christian merchants of *Manigramam* by name Chathan Vadukan and Iravi Chathan.

The immediate successors of Rajasimha were Bhaskara Ravi III (1043-1082 A.D.) and Ravi Rama Varma (1082-1090 A.D.). We do not possess detailed information about these rulers. Under them the Cheras seem to have made sustained efforts to regain their lost freedom and re-establish their power in Kerala. The successors of Rajadhi Raja were now preoccupied with their wars against the Chalukyas. This gave a chance to the Cheras to reorganise the defences of the empire and start a war of liberation. Kerala became completely free of Chola control by the time of the accession of Kulottunga Chola (1070 A.D.). Even the Pandyas now recovered their lost dominions in Nanjanad and Tirunelveli with Chera help. Consequently, on his accession to the throne Kulottunga had to embark on a fresh campaign to bring the Pandyas and the Cheras again under Chola suzerainty. He defeated the Pandyas in a series of battles and sacked the military stronghold of Kottar in Nanjanad. He also attacked the Chera military strongholds such as Kandalur and Vizhinjam.

Rama Varma Kulasekhara

Rama Varma Kulasekhara (1090-1102 A.D.), the last of the Kulasekharas of Mahodayapuram, came to the throne at this period of crisis in the history of Kerala. Emboldened by his earlier successes in Nanjanad and South Kerala Kulottunga I had by this time proceeded further north and destroyed the city of Quilon, the capital of the Venad kings (1096). The services of the Chola general Naralokavira were of invaluable help to Kulottunga in these campaigns. Faced with an unprecedented crisis Rama Varma Kulasekhara

took the firm resolve to beat back the Chola aggressors and regain the freedom of his country. He rallied all patriotic forces under his banner in a war of liberation against Chola imperialism. A large body of the Chera army transformed itself before long into suicide squads (*Chavers*). During the long war the Chera capital of Mahodayapuram and neighbouring places were completely burnt down by the Cholas. It seems that Rama Varma Kulasekhara had not even a palace of his own in the capital city to live in. The Perunna inscription shows one Kulasekhara Koyiladhikarikal as staying at Nediatali in Cranganore for some time after the capital Mahodayapuram had become a city in ruins. An inscription of 278 K.E. (1102 A.D.) in the Rameswarathu koil, Quilon, shows one Ramar Tiruvati as staying in the local Panamkavil palace during the year. The Kulasekhara Koyiladhikarikal of the Perunna inscription and the Ramar Tiruvati of the Quilon inscription have been identified with Rama Varma Kulasekhara.

Rama Varma Kulasekhara seems to have moved his headquarters from Mahodayapuram to Quilon during the last phase of the war in a heroic attempt to stem the rising tide of Chola aggression in the south. Having saved Quilon and set up his headquarters there he marched against the Cholas at the head of a large army. Kulottunga was defeated and forced to withdraw towards Kottar. The Cholaapuram record (1100 A.D.) which furnishes a long historical introduction enumerating the achievements of Kulottunga Chola refers to his retreat to Kottar. This was rendered inevitable by the heavy losses sustained by the Chola army at the hands of the newly formed *Chaver* army of the Cheras. The incident marked the virtual end of Chola domination over Kerala. The Cholas could not again conquer the regions north of Nanjanad. Before long they withdrew from Nanjanad also leaving the old Pandyas in full control of the area.

Rama Varma Kulasekhara, the last of the Kulasekharas of Mahodayapuram, was undoubtedly a great ruler. The credit for having given the first fatal blow to Chola imperialism and turned the tide of the war in favour of the Cheras goes to him. With the migration of Rama Varma Kulasekhara from Mahodayapuram to Quilon also began a new chapter in Kerala history. The Kulasekhara Empire came to an end and Venad attained the status of an independent kingdom. Quilon came to be called *Ten Vanchi* (Vanchi of the South) and its ruler '*Ten Vanchian*'. It was from the days of Rama Varma Kulasekhara that the Venad kings attained an independent status. He is therefore regarded as the true founder of the Venad kingdom.

A table of synchronism between the Kulasekharas of Mahodayapuram from Bhaskara Ravi Varman I and their Chola contemporaries is given below.

GENEALOGICAL TABLE

CHERAS	A.D.	CHOLAS	A.D.
Bhaskara Ravi Varman I	962-1019	Raja Raja the Great	985-1016
Bhaskara Ravi Varman II	979-1021	Rajendra I	1012-1044
ViraKerala	1021-1028	Rajadhiraja	1018-1054
Rajasimha	1028-1043	Rajendra Deva II	1052-1063
Bhaskara Ravi Varman III	1043-1082	Vira Rajendra	1063-1069
Ravi Rama Varma	1082-1090	Adhi Rajendra	1067-1070
Rama Varma Kulasekhara	1090-1102	Kulottunga I	1070-1122

The 'Foreign Perumals'

In the background of the history of the Kulasekhara Empire sketched above, we may examine the traditional story of the rule of Kerala by foreign Perumals embodied in the *Keralolpathi* and repeated by writers of the orthodox school over and over again. The story goes that Parasurama who founded Kerala divided the land into 64 Brahmin *gramams* and prescribed for the land an oligarchical form of government in which all these *gramams* were represented. The system worked satisfactorily for some time but before long the *gramakkar* failed to work in unison as ordained by the *Rishi*. Under such circumstances representative authority was conferred on four select villages, *viz.*, Payyannur, Peruchellur, Parappur and Chengannur, to act on behalf of the community as a whole. During this period of Brahmin ascendancy there broke out many disputes which disturbed the peace of the land and caused untold miseries to the people. Consequently, *Raksha-purushas* or Protectors were appointed to hold office for periods of three years and four *Kazhakams* or Advisory Boards, each under an officer called the *Taliatiri*, were also set up to assist the former in the work of administration. This system too failed in its objective and thereupon, the Brahmins assembled themselves at *Tirunavai* and resolved to bring alien kings (Perumals) to rule over the country. Each Perumal ruled for a period of 12 years and on the termination of his term he retired from public life. The *Keralolpathi* gives an imposing list of 24 such foreign Perumals

who are alleged to have ruled over the country and the last of them was Cheraman Perumal who is said to have embraced Islam, partitioned his country among his friends and relatives and left on a pilgrimage to Mecca. The period of Perumal rule is assigned in the *Keralolpathi* to the period from the 3rd to the 5th century A.D. and that of Cheraman Perumal's pilgrimage to Mecca to 345 A.D.

The story of the imported Perumals was for long accepted by scholars without question and it got itself interwoven into the main fabric of Kerala history. This has misled even learned scholars both inside and outside Kerala and made them give distorted versions of early Kerala history. It is thus suggested in *A History of South India* that Kulasekhara Alwar was possibly one of the Perumals imported into Kerala from neighbouring countries.¹ Significantly enough, historians who have accepted the *Keralolpathi* story of the foreign Perumals as authentic have not till this day cited any positive evidence obtained either from Kerala or outside to prove that persons were selected from the Tamil or Tulu or Telugu country every twelve years to rule over Kerala. The discovery of any such evidence might have helped to clinch the issue. As it is, the theory of the importation of the Perumals from outside would be found to be a fiction on a careful appraisal of its details. Apart from the unreliability of the *Keralolpathi* itself as a source of history, it may be pointed out that even the very suggestion that rulers were brought from outside Kerala 25 times to rule over the land and that each of them ruled for a fixed period of 12 years lacks credibility.

The myth of the rule of Kerala by Perumals imported from outside has been definitely exploded by the progress of historical research which brought to light the glorious history of the Kulasekharas. It may be made clear that the Kulasekharas of Mahodayapuram were themselves the Cheraman Perumals of early history. The fact is that none of them was a non-Kerala ruler imported from outside to rule over the land. All the Kulasekharas from Kulasekhara Alwar to Rama Varma Kulasekhara belonged to the Chera royal house of Mahodayapuram and they ruled over the land claiming the allegiance of all classes of people. The evidence of language and literature also makes it abundantly clear that there could have been no foreign Perumals in Kerala from the 3rd to the 5th century A.D. Such terms as *Perumal* and *Taliatiri* became current in Kerala only after the 8th century A.D. Further, the organisation of Kerala into Brahmin villages was also a development of the 11th century when Chera central authority became weak following Rajendra Chola's second invasion of 1028 A.D. In the light of the facts set forth above the *Keralolpathi* story of the foreign Perumals has to be rejected in toto.

Cheraman Legend

The legend relating to the conversion of the last Chera emperor (Cheraman Perumal) to Islam after partitioning the country comes as a dramatic climax to the fanciful story of the foreign Perumals. The Perumal who left Kerala is said to have landed at port on the Arabian coast and met Muhammad, the

1. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *A History of South India*, p. 145

Prophet, at a place called Jeddah. After having been duly canonised by the Prophet, so goes the story, he married the sister of the king of Arabia, lived there in comfort for five years and then undertook a journey to Kerala for the spread of Islam in this country, but before he could accomplish his mission he died and was buried at a place on the Arabian coast. The different versions of the *Keralolpathi* give the above story with differences in the details which embellish them.

The Cheraman legend is not corroborated by any contemporary record or evidence. None of the early or medieval travellers who visited Kerala has referred to it in their records. Thus Sulaiman, Al Biruni, Benjamin of Tudela, Al Kazwini, Marco Polo, Friar Odoric, Friar Jordanus, Ibn Batuta, Abdur Razzak, Nicolo Conti — none of these travellers speaks of the story of the Cheraman Perumal's alleged conversion to Islam. Nevertheless, the legend crept its way into the accounts of the foreign travellers who came to Kerala after the arrival of the Portuguese. Duarte Barbosa and Canter Visscher have alluded to the Cheraman legend. Shaik Zainuddin, the author of the *Tuhafat-ul Mujahidin* writing in the 16th century, has spoken of the Cheraman legend as "the common and earliest tradition regarding the propagation of Muhammadan religion in Malabar", but the learned historian was not inclined to believe in its historical authenticity. In short, the legend rested solely on oral tradition handed down from generation to generation and it was reproduced by later writers without any critical examination of its details.

On careful consideration of all aspects of the question, it would be seen that the Cheraman legend was only the figment of the imagination of some early writers. It is exceedingly doubtful if any Chera emperor ever became a convert to Islam. In fact, there never was a ruler of Kerala by name Cheraman Perumal. As Dr. Gundert has observed, "Surely there has never been a Cheraman Perumal. Cheraman is the name of the dynasty of Chera or Kerala rulers for the two names are the same". Logan accepted the story of the Perumal's conversion to Islam as authentic, but he changed the date of the conversion from 345 to 825 A.D. and linked it with the rumoured existence of a tomb stone at Zaffar on the Arabian coast said to be that of the convert Perumal. But this view has been proved to be equally untenable. The Perumal could not have met Muhammad, the Prophet, at Jeddah either in 825 A.D., *i.e.*, two centuries after the death of Muhammad of in 345 A.D. *i.e.*, more than two centuries before his birth. The Cheraman legend is thus beyond doubt an anachronism. Further, the truth about the existence and contents of the Arabian epitaph referred to by Logan has also since been disproved for want of reliable testimony. While the story of the Perumal's conversion to Islam is thus liable to rejection in the absence of unimpeachable historical evidence, there is one school of thought which believes that the religion to which the last of the Perumals became a convert might have been either Buddhism or Jainism. There is still another version according to which the last of the Perumals became a convert to Christianity and then went on a pilgrimage to Mylapore where he died some years later and was buried by the side of the tomb of St. Thomas, the Apostle.

In the light, of the history of the Kulasekharas of Mahodayapuram sketched in this chapter, there is valid reason to reject the whole story of the Perumal's renunciation of Hinduism and partitioning of the kingdom as unhistorical. It has now been proved that the 9th, 10th and 11th centuries comprised the age of the Second Chera Empire when the Kulasekharas exercised their authority over the whole of Kerala from their capital at Mahodayapuram. It is inconceivable how this would have been possible had the kingdom been partitioned, as alleged. Again, the last Cheraman Perumal was Rama Varma Kulasekhara (1090-1102) and there is no evidence to affirm that he renounced Hinduism and embraced some other non-Hindu faith, be it Islam, Buddhism, Jainism or Christianity. It would seem that the Cheraman legend had its origin in the wrong identification or mixing up of a local ruler of a later date, perhaps a Zamorin of Calicut, who became a convert to Islam, with an early Chera emperor.

New Light on Chera Genealogy

The genealogical table given on page 121 at the end of Chapter VII and the one given on page 141 in this chapter in continuation, give the chronological list of the Chera rulers of Mahodayapuram as worked out by Prof. Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai. Prof. M. G. S. Narayanan has subsequently worked out a new genealogy and chronology for these rulers on the basis of his independent study of the inscriptions of the period. He does not agree with the assumption of Prof. Elamkulam that there were three Bhaskara Ravis. According to Prof. M.G.S. Narayanan there was only one Bhaskara Ravi and he is the same Chera ruler who assumed the *Abhishekanama* (coronation title) *Manukuladitya*. The other differences (e.g. in names, regnal years etc.) between the two historians in regard to the genealogy and chronology of the rulers of Mahodayapuram can be had from a comparative study of the two tables. The genealogy and chronology as worked out by Prof. M.G.S. Narayanan are given below.

GENEALOGY OF THE CHERA RULERS OF MAHODAYAPURAM

(According to Prof. M.G.S. Narayanan)

1. Rama Rajasekhara	800-844 A.D.
2. Sthanu Ravi Kulasekhara	844-883 A.D.
3. Kota Ravi Vijayaraga	883-913 A.D.
4. Kota Kota Kerala Kesari	913-943 A.D.
5. Indu Kota	943-962 A.D.
6. Bhaskara Ravi Manukuladitya	962-1021 A.D.
7. Ravi Kota Rajasimha	1021-1036 A.D.
8. Raja Raja	1036-1089 A.D.
9. Ravi Rama Rajaditya	„
10. Aditya Kota Ranaditya	„
11. Rama Kulasekhara	1089-1122 A.D.

CHAPTER X

GOVERNMENT AND SOCIETY IN THE KULASEKHARA AGE

The 9th and 10th centuries of early Kulasekhara rule constitute a 'Golden Age' in Kerala history. Under the benevolent and enlightened rule of the Kulasekharas Kerala enjoyed the benefits of settled administration and all-round progress. The age witnessed a cultural efflorescence of impressive dimensions. Literature, learning religion, arts and trade registered spectacular progress. In spite of the magnificent record of achievements in all important spheres of activity in the 9th and 10th centuries, the 11th century which corresponded to the age of the later Kulasekharas saw the breakdown of central authority, cultural stagnation and economic decay in the wake of the prolonged Chola-Chera war. Economic and social changes of a far-reaching character took place during this period. A survey of the administrative and cultural progress in the early Kulasekhara age and the momentous social and economic changes that took place in the later period of transition is given below.

Political Divisions

The Kulasekhara Empire at its zenith comprised practically the whole of modern Kerala, Guddalore and some other portions of Nilgiri district and parts of the Salem-Coimbatore region. It was divided for administrative purposes into a number of *nadus* or provinces. The southernmost province of the empire was Venad. It included within itself the areas now comprised in the Quilon, Kottarakara and Chirayinkil taluks and parts of Trivandrum and Nedumangad taluks and had its capital at Quilon. To the north of Venad lay Odanad which included the Karunagapally taluk of Quilon district and the Mavelikkara and Karthikapally taluks of Alleppey district. It had its capital first at Kandiyur Mattam near Mavelikkara and later at Eruva in Kayamkulam. The *nadus* of Nanthuzhinad (Tiruvalla-Changanacherry region) and Munjunad (Kottayam area) lay to the north-east of Odanad. To the north of Munjunad lay Vempolinad (Vaikam-Minachil area) and to the east of the latter Kizhumalainad. Kizhumalainad comprised the Thodupuzha-Muvattupuzha area and its capital was located at Karikode near Thodupuzha. To its north lay Kalkarainad which included Trikkakara and neighbouring regions in the Ernakulam and Trichur districts. Further north lay Nedumpurayurnad (Talappalli - Palghat- Chittur area), Valluvanad (Ponnani -Perinthalmanna-Tirur area), Eralnad (Ernad area), Polanad (Calicut area), Kurumpurainad or Krumbrananad (Quilandy-South Wynad area), Kolathunad

(Cannanore -Kasargod area) and Puraikizhanad (North Wynad-Guddalore area).

Administration

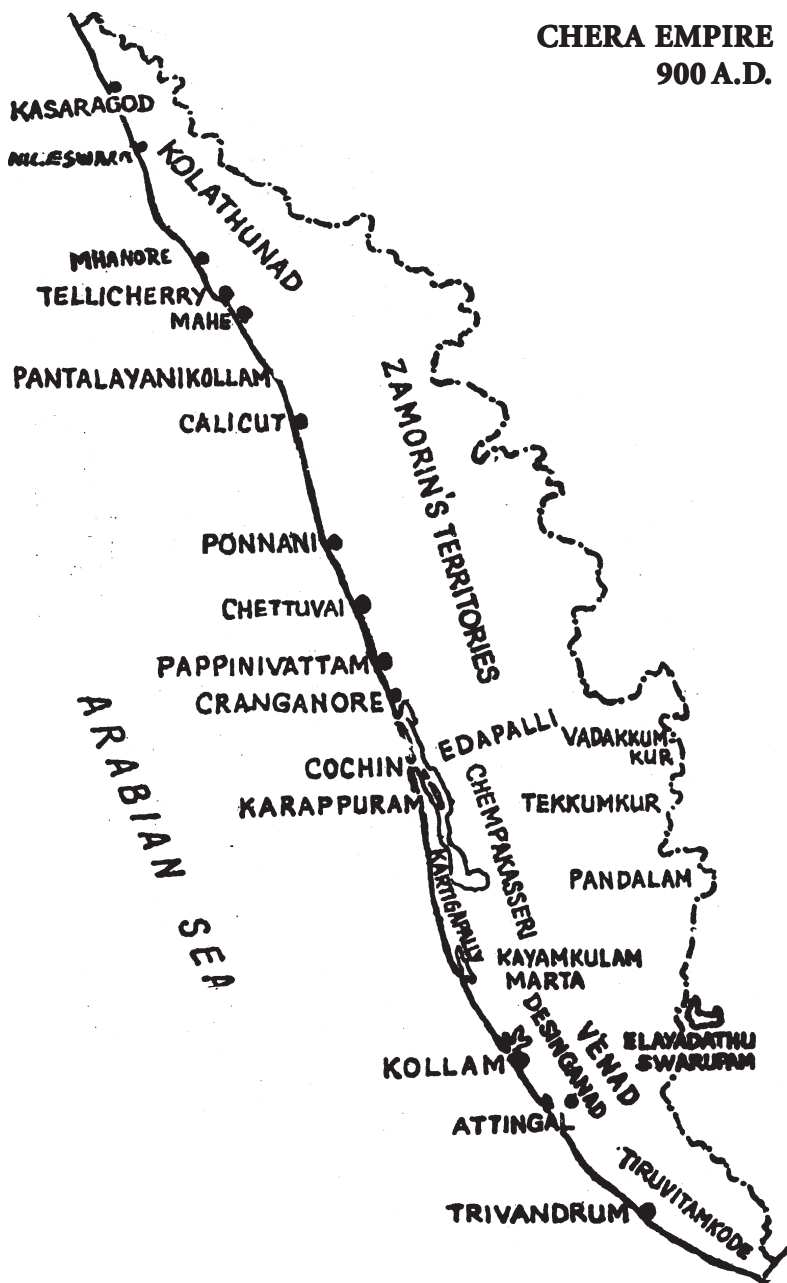
The emperor was called *Perumal* (*Kulasekhara Perumal* or *Cheraman Perumal*). He was at the top of the administrative hierarchy. He came to the throne by the patrilineal system of inheritance. As in the Sangam age, the emperor was the fountain of honour and justice in the Kulasekhara age as well. He was the leader of the people both in war and in peace. The administration of the *nadus* or provinces was carried on by feudatory chieftains appointed by the emperor or by hereditary *Naduvazhis*. None of them had an independent status as is evidenced by the use of the regnal years of the emperors in their records. A royal representative by name *Koyiladhikarikal* exercised control over the feudatory governors. He was appointed from among the princes of the blood royal and was the heir-apparent. The governors were also controlled in their own domains by local assemblies called *Munnuttuvar*, *Arunuttuvar* etc. We learn from the inscriptions of the age that Venad, Odanad and Nanthuzhainad had their *Munnuttuvar* (three hundred), and Kalkarinad and Kizhumalainad their *Arunuttuvar* (six hundred). These local assemblies had a decisive voice in the administration of the respective *nadus*.

Each *nadu* of the Kulasekhara Empire was divided into a number of *desams*, each of which was under a *Desavazhi* (*Vazhkai Vazhi*). The *Desavazhis* were completely controlled by the local *Kuttams* which were representative bodies. Big towns like Mahodayapuram, Quilon (Kollam) etc., had their special *Kuttams*. The lowest territorial unit of the empire was the *Kara* and its administration was carried through *Panchayats*.

The inscriptions of the age give us details of the arrangements made for the administration of the empire. The names of several officials are mentioned in the records. Among the names so mentioned are those of the *Adhikari* (Executive Officer), *Patanayakan* (Commander-in-Chief), *Kizhpatanayakan* (Second-in-Command), *Bhandaramkappan* (Treasury Officer), *Matilnayakan* (Fort Officer), *Tiyamazhvan* (Police Officer), *Tiruvaikepan* (the officer who took down the oral orders of the king) etc. Elaborate arrangements had been made for the maintenance of law and order. There was a regular penal code which prescribed specific punishments to the guilty. Imposition of fines and imprisonment were the most common forms of punishment, but death penalty was also sometimes inflicted. Those who mismanaged temple properties or funds were summarily removed from office.

The epigraphic records of the age also give us an idea of the tax structure of the empire. The land tax was called *Patavaram*, That portion (*Varam*) which was allotted to the king was called *Kopatavaram* and that which was allotted to the *Desavazhi* was called *Patipatavaram*. Each of these taxes was one-tenth of the gross produce, each tenant thus paying one-fifth of the gross produce as total land tax. There were also several other taxes such as *Talaikanam* (a kind of profession tax imposed on those engaged in toddy trade or a poll

**CHERA EMPIRE
900 A.D.**



tax), *Enikanam* (tax imposed on the ladders used for climbing trees), *Menippon* (tax levied for exercising the privilege of wearing gold ornaments), *Polippon* (a kind of sales-tax) etc. Taxes were also levied on people who wanted to enjoy the privilege of matching the roofs of houses. *Kudanazhi* was a tax which entitled the authorities to take a *nazhi* from each pot-full of liquor produced by toddy-tappers. The *Mulaivila* was a kind of tax levied from women labourers. There are also references to such taxes or tolls as *Pakutam*, *Ulku*, *Tulakuli* etc., in the inscriptions of the age. Slave trade was common in those days and the *naduvazhi* had the power to sell criminals as slaves and appropriate for himself the revenue derived therefrom. Those who wanted to enjoy the privilege of keeping slaves had to pay to the Government a tax called *Alkasu*. The state also derived much income from customs duties levied at ports.

The Kulasekharas also maintained a well-equipped army and navy. There were military institutions or academies wherein the youth of the land were given training in the art of warfare. The navy gave its utmost co-operation to the army in times of military operations. It is significant to note that the people of Kerala had knowledge of the principles of navigation from very early days and the reputation in this field was maintained unsullied in the age of the Kulasekharas as well. The Chola inscriptions bear testimony to the effective role played by the Chera navy in the Chola-Chera war.

Capital City

The capital city of the Kulasekharas was Mahodayapuram, otherwise called Makotai or Mahodayapattanam. The literary works of the period give us much interesting information about the splendour and magnificence of the city. It enjoyed all the amenities of civilized life and was protected by high fortresses on all sides. *Senamugham*, *Kottakkakam*, *Gotramalleswaram*, *Kodungallur*, *Balakrideswaram*, etc., were some of the names by which the different localities of the city were known. Mahodayapuram and suburbs had extensive path-ways and imposing palaces. The *Sankaranarayaniyam* informs us that the palace of the Perumals or Kulasekharas was located at Gotramalleswaram.

Mahodayapuram was famous all over the south in the 9th and 10th centuries as a great centre of learning and culture. A well-equipped Observatory, perhaps the first institution of its kind in South India, was functioning here under the patronage of the Kulasekharas. It was under the charge of Sankaranarayana, the court-astronomer. Sthanu Ravi equipped a section of the Observatory with some special types of *Yantras* and hence it came to be called *Ravi Varma Yantra Valayam*. The *Sankaranarayaniyam* refers to such special *yantras* as *Rasi Chakra*, *Jalesa Sutra*, *Golayantra* etc., which were set up in the *Ravi Varma Yantra Valayam*. The Observatory functioned in accordance with the rules of astronomy laid down by Aryabhata. It is seen that arrangements had been made in the capital city for recording correct time and announcing it to the public from different centres by the tolling of bells at regular intervals of a *Ghatika* (25 minutes). We have the evidence of the *Kokasandesam*

(1400 A.D.) that this practice was prevalent in Kerala even in the beginning of the 15th century. It was called *Nazhikakottu*.

Progress of Trade

The empire of the Kulasekharas had extensive trade relations with the countries of the outside world. Among the most important ports of the land were Kandalur, Quilon, Vizhinjam and Cranganore. Sulaiman and Masudi, the Arab travellers who visited the coast during the period, have testified to the high morals of the people as well as to the high degree of economic prosperity achieved by the empire from its extensive foreign trade. The former makes specific mention of the brisk trade with China. China purchased from Kerala such articles as pepper, cinnamon, teakwood, ivory, pearls, cotton fabrics, etc., and sold here fishing nets, porcelain goods, silk etc. It may be mentioned in this context that there are many articles in Kerala even today which have the prefix *China* added to their names, e.g., *China Otam* (a kind of boat), *China Vala* (a kind of fishing net), *China Vetu* (a kind of fire works), *China Chatti* (a kind of pot) etc. Most probably these were trade articles originally introduced into Kerala by the Chinese traders.

A remarkable feature of the Kulasekhara age was the pivotal position occupied by merchant guilds and trade corporations in the economic and social life of the country. *Manigramam*, *Anchuvannam*, *Nanadesikal* and *Valanjiar* were the most important of such merchant guilds. What exactly were the specific functions performed by each of these bodies is not known. According to one view the *Manigramam* was an association of merchants who transacted in diamonds. Perhaps, the term only means 'the great guild' and it traded in many commodities. The *Anchuvannam*, it is said, was a body of merchants who traded in five different commodities and the *Valanjiar* and *Nanadesikal* organisations which carried on trade transactions mainly with foreign countries. These views are at best only conjectures as it is difficult to make any dogmatic assertions on the basis of the evidence available at present.

All the trade corporations or organisations of merchants functioned very actively and contributed to the economic prosperity of Kerala. The inscriptions of the age throw light on the vital part played by them in the public life of the country. The Terisapalli Copper Plate makes specific mention of the role of the *Anchuvannam* and *Manigramam* in the life of Quilon. The customs duties collected at Quilon were to be taken care of everyday by the members of the *Anchuvannam*. The responsibility for the defence and security of Quilon was shared between these bodies and the town assembly of the *Arunuttuvar*. The Terisapalli Copper Plate also records that the members of the *Anchuvannam* and *Manigramam* together with the *Arunuttuvar* (six hundred) were to protect the properties granted by the ruler to the church. The Chera emperor and the *naduvazhis* always tried to secure the help and co-operation of the merchant guilds and with this objective they conferred on them valuable rights and privileges. The Christian and Jewish communities seem to have enjoyed a position of unrivalled prominence in the field of commerce as is evidenced by the Syrian Christian and Jewish Copper Plates of the period.

Language and Literature

The age of the Kulasekharas was the formative epoch of Malayalam language and literature. In the beginning of the 9th century Malayalam began to take shape as an independent language and in course of time it freed itself from all Tamil influence. A new language, literature and script gradually came into existence. However, no literary works of outstanding merit seem to have been produced in Malayalam during the age of the Kulasekharas as the language was still in an undeveloped stage. But there was rich literary output in Tamil and Sanskrit as education was imparted only in these languages.

The Kulasekharas were themselves great scholars and patrons of learning. Kulasekhara Alwar wrote the *Perumal Tirumozhi* in Tamil and the *Mukundamala* in Sanskrit. The royal dramatist, Kulasekhara, wrote the famous dramas, *Tapatisamvaranam*, *Subhadradhananjaya* and *Vichchinnabhisheka* and the prose work *Ascharya Manjari*. The great Yamaka poet Vasudeva Bhattatiri was also patronised by a Kulasekhara. The *Yudhishtiravijaya* written by this poet describes the story of the *Mahabharata* in eight cantos and is one of most famous *Yamaka Kavyas* of Sanskrit literature. Vasudeva is also believed to have written two alliterative poems, viz., *Tripuradahana* and *Saurikaihodaya*. The *Nalodaya* was also perhaps written by him. Sankaranarayana, the great astronomer and author of the *Sankaranarayaniyam*, was one of the shining lights of the age. Sankaracharya, the great Advaita philosopher, wrote his commentaries on the *Brahmasutras*, the *Bhagavat Gita* and the principal *Upanishds* and composed philosophical poems like *Vivekachudamani*, *Upadesasahasri*, *Atmabodha* and *Mohamudgara* and several *Stotra* works like *Sivanandalahari* and *Saundaryalahari*.

The great poet Tolan who according to tradition was a Namboothiri Brahmin from the village of Iranikulam (Mukundapuram taluk) was another distinguished luminary of the age. He is believed to have written some *Attaprakarams*, the guide books on histrionics, which give vivid descriptions of the technique of acting dramatic pieces. *Kramadipika* is another work of Tolan which is a sort of supplement to the *Attaprakarams* and it contains an elaborate code of instructions for the guidance of actors. The *Attaprakarams* and *Kramadipika* of Tolan are among the earliest specimens of Malayalam literature. Saktibhadra, the celebrated author of the *Ascharyachudamani*, also lived in the age of the Kulasekharas and made his inestimable contributions to Sanskrit literature.

It may be mentioned here that according to some scholars the Tamil classic *Silappadikaram* was also written about 800 A.D. by a Kerala prince who is known as Ilango Adikal.

Progress of Hindu Religion

The age of the Kulasekharas saw the decline of Jainism and Buddhism and the establishment of Hinduism as the predominant religion of Kerala. It has been the practice among scholars to refer to the Hindu religious stir of this

period in South India as a 'reviva' or 'renaissance', but it is a misnomer to call it so. Revival or renaissance implies a rebirth after a period of stagnation or eclipse. As a matter of fact, Hinduism did not enjoy a position of primacy among the religions of Kerala prior to the Kulasekhara age. It was only one of the religions which held a minor position in the land. Hence what happened in the age of the Kulasekharas was not the revival of the Hindu religion but its spectacular establishment as the predominant religion of the land at the expense of the rival faiths like Jainism and Buddhism and the Dravidian forms of worship. The triumph of Hinduism was the natural corollary of the progress of Aryanisation which reached its climax in the 8th century A.D. with the influx of a fresh and influential batch of Brahmin immigrants into Kerala from outside. Reference has already been made to the work of the Bhattas and Prabhakara, the *Mimamsaka*, in the cause of the popularisation of the Hindu religion.

Sankaracharya

Hindu religious activity in the age received a great impetus under Sankaracharya (788-820 A.D.), the great Advaita philosopher. He was a younger contemporary of Kulasekhara Alwar and an elder contemporary of Rajasekhara Varman (Cheraman Peruman Nayanar). The full details of Sankara's life are not known, but a few landmarks are available. He was a Namboothiri Brahmin born at Kaladi on the banks of the river Periyar. Sankara left Kerala early in his youth and undertook a pilgrimage to all the important centres of Hinduism in the country. In the course of this, itinerary he came into contact with Govinda Yogi, a disciple of Gaudapada and accepted him as his *Guru*. Sankara then propagated his philosophy of *Advaita Vedanta* which had its roots in Upanishadic teachings. The cardinal point of this philosophy was that there is nothing real in this world except *Brahman*, the all pervading cosmic force. Sankara looked upon the human soul as part of this *Brahman* and all material objects as mere illusions (*Maya*). He entered into intellectual and philosophical combats with the *Mimamsakas* as well as with Buddhist scholars.

Sankara borrowed some of the popular features of the Buddhist faith and reformed Hindu religion on new and attractive lines. He accepted the Buddhist ideal of monasticism and laid the foundations of a strong Brahmanical papal organisation by setting up four great Hindu *Mutts* in four corners of India, viz., Badrinath in the north (*Jyotir Mutt*), Puri in the east (*Govardhari*), Dwaraka in the west (*Sardda Mutt*) and Sringeri in the south. In Kerala too he founded four *Mutts* at Trichur, viz., Vadakke Madharm, Natuvil Madham, Edayil Madham and Tekke Madham. The first presidents of these *Madhams* were his principal disciples Trotaka, Sureswara, Hastamalaka and Padmapada, respectively. Sankara also organised a regular body of missionaries or *Sanyasins* in order to propagate his teachings. He was so critical of the *Mimamsakas* and his organisational activities were so reminiscent of the Buddhist way of life that the charge was levelled against Sankara that he was a *Praschanna Buddha* or disguised Buddhist.

Sankara occupies a high position in the history of Hindu religion and culture. His teachings provided an intellectual basis to Hinduism while the monasteries and *Mutts* which he founded provided it with an effective organisational framework. The genius of Kerala for cultural synthesis may also be said to have found its expression in the philosophy of Sankara. His was an attempt to bring about a reconciliation of conflicting faiths by combining in his philosophy the best elements of Hinduism and Buddhism. It has been rightly said that Sankara “laid the foundation of the attempts at synthesis which constitute the religious history of India during the middle ages”.¹ Nevertheless, the view of some scholars that Sankara’s philosophy bears traces of the direct influence of Islam is questionable. It is evident that his *Advaita Vedanta* had its roots in the teachings of the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavat Gita*, but at the same time it is possible that having lived in Kerala towards the end of the 8th century and the beginning of the 9th century A.D. Sankara might have been aware of the rise of Islam as a new creed on the coast and the challenge it posed in the long run to Hinduism and this might have given a conscious and purposeful direction to the Hindu reform movement of which he was the moving spirit.

The Bhakti Movement

The work of Prabhakara and Sankara in the cause of Hindu reformation had its shortcomings. Their exposition of the teachings of Hinduism was done in Sanskrit and hence it was beyond the comprehension of the common man. At best they could influence only the highly literate sections of the community, but the masses were left untouched. The task of bringing the latter within the Hindu fold was successfully accomplished by the saints who belonged to the school of *Bhakti*. The Hindu reformers of the day became convinced that the continued hold of Jainism and Buddhism among the common people stood in the way of the onward march of the Hindu religion in Kerala. In these circumstances the more inspired and scholarly among the Hindu devotees sought to exterminate the rival sects by evolving and popularising a new cult of *Bhakti*, an intense emotional surrender to a personal God in the form of Vishnu or Siva.

The group of poet-devotees who expounded the new cult freely roamed about the countryside singing devotional songs (*Bhajans*) which they had themselves composed out of their own innate religious experience. The simple Tamil in which these verses were composed touched the innermost recesses of the heart of the common man. The popular deities of Siva and Vishnu assumed a colourful personality of their own in these hymns and awakened popular interest in Hindu religion. The Hindu saints of the day also challenged the spokesmen of the rival creeds to public debates and discussions on the superiority of their tenets and brought about the discomfiture of many. A wave of religious enthusiasm thus swept through the length and breadth of the country and before long it led to the decline of

1. Prof. Humayun Kabir, *Indian Heritage*, p. 72.

Buddhism and Jainism and the firm establishment of Hinduism as the moving religious force in the lives of the vast masses of people.

Kulasekhara Alwar

The Vaishnavite and the Saivite wings of the *Bhakti* movement in South India were led by the Alvars and the Nayanars respectively. One of the twelve Alvars and two of the sixty-three Nayanars hailed from Kerala. The Alwar who belonged to Kerala was none other than Kulasekhara Alwar, the founder of the Second Chera Empire. He is one of the greatest religious leaders in the history of South India. A profound scholar in Sanskrit and Tamil, he sang several devotional songs praising Vishnu in the form Rama and Krishna. The *Bhakti* cult found its sublime literary expression in Kulasekhara Alwar's *Mukundamala* in Sanskrit and *Perumal Tirumozhi* in Tamil. The latter work consists of 105 verses which form part of the Vaishnavite *Divyaprabandham*. The verses on Rama in this collection are particularly fascinating and Kulasekhara Alwar is therefore said to have anticipated Kambar, the author of the *Tamil Ramayana*. He revered the servants or devotees of Vishnu as themselves Gods, service to Vishnu being his supreme obsession. "Upon my brow I will bear with pride", says Kulasekhara Alwar in his *Perumal Tirumozhi*, "the mud that stains their holy feet". His teachings and poems constituted a major influence in the development of Vaishnavism in Kerala.

Cheraman Perumal Nayanar

Cheraman Perumal Nayanar, one of the Nayanars from Kerala, has been identified with Rajasekhara Varman (820-844 A.D.), the second in the long line of kings who ruled over the Kulasekhara Empire. The story of Cheraman Perumal Nayanar is narrated by Sekkilar in his *Periyapuranam*. He is described as having spent his boyhood at Tiruvanchikulam and assumed sovereignty when his father renounced the throne and became an ascetic. He is believed to have proceeded to Tiruvarur to meet his friend and companion Sundaramurthi Nayanar, the great Saiva saint, who along with Appar and Sambandar has sung the Saivite devotional songs known as *Tevaram*. Cheraman Perumal Nayanar and Sundaramurthi Nayanar together visited all important Saivite shrines in South India. After their joint pilgrimage both the saints came to Tiruvanchikulam. Sundaramurthi is said to have visited Tiruvarur once again and returned to Tiruvanchikulam where he breathed his last. The death of his companion was a severe blow to Cheraman Perumal Nayanar and the latter also met with his death soon after. The *Periyapuranam* narrates the interesting but fictitious anecdote of the two saints having made even their last journey together to the abode of Siva in Mount Kailas, Sundaramurthi on a white elephant and Cheraman Perumal on a horse. Among the literary compositions of Cheraman Perumal Nayanar the *Ponvannattandadi* is noted for its musical charm and fine workmanship.

Virminda Nayanar

Virminda Nayanar, the other great Saiva saint who belonged to Kerala, was a native of Chengannur. A remarkable fact about his life is that he was a

Vellala and as such a Sudra by caste. A contemporary of Cheraman Perumal Nayanar and Sundaramurthi Nayanar, he played an important part in the propagation of the Saivite cult in Kerala. He held the devotees of Siva as being more worthy of his regard than Siva himself. An anecdote connected with Viralminda's visit to Tiruvarur throws light on his greatness. The story goes that during his sojourn in Tiruvarur, he saw Sundaramurthi Nayanar rushing into the inner sanctum of the temple unmindful of the vast assembly of devotees in the *mantapa* in front of Viralminda was so indignant at this wilful neglect that he shouted in a loud voice that the guilty person was a *bhrashta* or an outcast and that even the God who favoured such a sinner was an outcast. Sundaramurthi was humbled by this outburst and he sang the *Tiruttondattokai* in praise of the *Bhaktas*, winning Viralminda's appreciation. After this incident the Kerala saint won wide acclaim as one of the chief devotees of Lord Siva.

Rise of the Temples

The progress of Hinduism had its impact on the social life of the people. Its immediate effect was seen in the rise of the temple to a place of importance in religious and cultural life. The work of the Nayanars and Alvars led to the establishment of a number of Saiva and Vaishnava shrines all over Kerala. According to inscriptional evidence the Siva temple at Kandiur was established in 823 A.D. when Rajasekhara was the emperor of Kerala. The Tiruvanchikulam temple dedicated to Siva figures prominently in the early Kulasekhara age as a centre of the Saivite cult. The most important of the Vaishnavite shrines of Kerala such as those of Trivandrum, Tiruvannandur, Tiruvaranmala, Tiruvalla, Trikkodithanam, Trikkakara etc., were set up and grew in importance during this period. Most of these shrines which figure among the 13 *Divyadesams* of Malainadu (Kerala) were visited by saints and devotees from the east coast. Nammalvar (*Sathakopa*) and Tirumangai Alvar, the Vaishnavite saints who lived in the 9th century A.D., have sung hymns in praise of the contemporary Vaishnavite shrines of Kerala.

The construction of structural temples which began in the 8th century A.D. received a fillip during the age of the Kulasekharas as part of the activity connected with the popularisation of Hinduism. The rulers as well as the people vied with one another in making liberal endowments for the construction as well as maintenance of temples. The inflow of wealth into the country arising from Kerala's prosperous overseas trade had brought into existence an affluent mercantile community during this period and the richer elements in this community made handsome donations for the construction of temples and shrines. The vast majority of the ancient temples that we find in Kerala today had their origin during this period. The protection of the temples was considered to be one of the basic functions of the State and the community.

The inscriptions of the age give us information about the arrangements that had been made for the management of the temples. A committee called the *Sabha* was constituted for a fixed period to look after the affairs of each temple and its members, mostly Brahmins, were respectfully called *Aryar* or

Sabha Aryar. The day-to-day affairs of the temple were, however, managed by the *Potuval* or Secretary appointed by the committee. In certain cases the temples were managed by executive committees of two members. The *naduvazhi*, the *desavazhi* and the *kuttam* had also some rights over the temples. The *sabhas* were answerable to the local *kuttams* for their actions. The overall authority in regard to the management of temples was vested in the hands of the *Koyiladikarikal* appointed by the emperor. It was customary to appoint the heir-apparent to this important post, though in the time of Sthanu Ravi it was held by his son-in-law Vijayaragadeva.

Mention may also be made in this connection of the Muzhikulam *kacham* which laid down strict rules and regulations for the conduct of temple affairs and the administration of temple properties. In the 9th century A.D. the *naduvazhis* and representatives of temple committees met at Muzhikulam and framed these rules and regulations on the basis of general consensus after elaborate discussions. The full particulars of the code of conduct adopted at Muzhikulam are not known but we have inscriptional evidence that it provided effective guarantee against misappropriation of temple properties and funds by the *Uralar* (trustees) as well as neglect of duties by the *Karalar* (tenants). If the *Uralar* misappropriated temple properties or funds and proved themselves to be guilty of conscious dereliction of duties such as performance of prayers, temple rites, etc., they were given due punishments. Similarly punishments were awarded also to the *Karalar* or tenants who defaulted in the payment of temple dues. The Muzhikulam *Kacham* is referred to in the inscriptions of the age discovered all over Kerala from Tirunelli to Tirunandikara (Kanyakumari district). Reference may be made in this connection to some of the other *Kachams* of the period, e.g., Kadamkattu *Kacham*, Kottuvayiraveli *Kacham*, Tavanur *Kacham* and Sankaramangalam *Kacham* which also laid down rules governing landlord-tenant relations in regard to temple properties.

Rise of Temple Arts

Side by side with the rise of the temples we also find a general development of culture in all its aspects. The temple was the nerve centre of all cultural activities. New festivals were instituted with a view to making the Hindu religion more attractive to the common people. Special mention may be made of the Onam festival which was celebrated at Trikkakara on a fabulous scale under the Kulasekharas. The inscriptions discovered from the temple at Trikkakara refer to the arrangements made for the celebration of this festival which lasted for 28 days. The celebration was attended in person by all the *naduvazhis* of Kerala and it provided an opportunity for the Chera emperor to get into personal touch with the local chieftains and ensure their continued loyalty and allegiance to his person. The religious aspect of the festival helped to stir feelings of deep spirituality among the Vaishnavites. Similar festivals were instituted in other temples as well and they provided an opportunity to the people for the expression of their deepest spiritual cravings. It was also

customary to hold fairs in connection with the festival and these gave an impetus to the trade and business activity in the realm.

New art forms like *Kuthu* and *Kudiyattam* also came to be evolved in Kerala temples with effect from the 9th century. The name of the famous poet Tolan is associated with the former art. As already mentioned, his *Attaprakarams* and *Kramadipika* contained detailed instructions to actors. The institution of the *Kuthambalam* for holding the *kuthu* performance also had its origin in the 9th century. The institution of the *Devadasis* (dancing girls attached to temples) in Kerala temples may also be ascribed to the Kulasekhara age. The *Devadasi* had a high status in society as is evidenced by the action of Kulasekhara Alwar himself in presenting his daughter as a *Devadasi* before the Lord of Srirangam.

The development of the temple arts was accompanied by the progress of sculpture and painting. The temples were provided with prolific stone and wooden sculptures representing Puranic themes and deities. Not only local artists and sculptors worked on these sculptures but expert artisans were brought down from the neighbouring Tamil country and Ceylon. This accounts for the diverse influences such as those of the Chalukya, Pallava, Pandya and Chola styles on the temple sculptures of Kerala.

Mural painting also seems to have had its origin in the Kulasekhara age. The murals in the temple of Tiruvanchikulam have been assigned to this period.

Education and Learning

The age of the Kulasekharas also saw remarkable progress in the fields of education and learning. Vedic schools and colleges attached to temples sprang up in different parts of Kerala. These institutions called *Salais* were richly endowed by the rulers as well as by private philanthropists. Reference has already been made to Kandalur *Salai* and Parthivasekharapuram *Salai* which were established in South Kerala by Ay kings. These continued to flourish under the Chera rule as well. Among the *Salais* which assumed considerable prominence under the Kulasekharas the Tiruvalla *Salai* and Muzhikulam *Salai* deserve special mention. Hundreds of young men were given free food, free clothing and free tuition in these institutions. The *Salais* offered specialised courses of studies in the higher branches of learning such as philosophy, grammar, theology, law etc. In fact, each temple accommodated within itself a centre of learning in the traditional *Gurukula* style.

Apart from regular educational institutions attached to temples, social education was also fostered by endowments specially made for the recitation and exposition of *Puranic* stories in the temple premises. A typical institution was the *Mahabharatha Pattathanam*. A Brahmin scholar in Sanskrit was specially engaged for the exposition of *Mahabharatha* in Tamil in all important temples. The *Chakiar Kuihu* which was a sort of mono-drama in which the Chakiar himself acted the part of all the characters impressing his audience with suitable gestures was also an important instrument of popular

instruction and enlightenment. The singing of devotional songs in temples by groups of devotees was also another instrument of adult education. There were also libraries attached to the temples with good collections of books on a wide variety of subjects. Further, Vedic recital and proficiency tests in religious scriptures were conducted in temples in order to give a fillip to the study of the Hindu religion.

The three proficiency tests in the *Rig Veda* conducted in public in the Katavallur temple (about 5 miles north of Kunnamkulam) deserve special mention in this connection. Namboothiri students from all parts of Kerala trained by the Trichur and Tirunavai *Sabha Mutts* came to this temple to participate in these tests and win honours. The most important of the tests was for *Katannirikkal* (cross and sit). Success in this was considered to be the highest honour to which one could aspire and the privileged few who won it could 'cross and sit' in the place of honour. The cleverest Vedic students were content with *Mumbilirikkal* (sitting in the front) and the average students with *Random Varamirikkal* (sitting in the second row). The Katavallur tests were known as Katavallur *Anyonyam*.

Apart from promoting literary and educational activities, the temples also maintained hospitals and dispensaries (*aturasalas*) attached to them.

Religious Harmony

In spite of the predominance of Hindu religion and culture Kerala under the Kulasekharas was free from inter-religious conflicts of a sectarian nature. The Chera emperors followed a liberal policy of religious toleration as is evidenced by their grants to the Christians, the Jews etc. Though Buddhism and Jainism were fast declining owing to lack of patronage they still retained their hold on sections of the community. The religious outlook of the people was so eclectic that no religion was considered by any section of the community as inferior to the other. The Hindus who constituted the majority of the population gave donations to the temples of other religionists as well. The religious institutions of all non-Hindu faiths, Buddhist, Jain, Christian and Muslim were referred to as *Pallis* with great respect. Thus the picture of religious life in the Kulasekhara age is one of understanding and harmony in the relations between the followers of different religious faiths.

Economic and Social Changes in the 11th century

The picture of social and cultural life given above is that of Kerala in the 9th and 10th centuries when the Kulasekharas from Kulasekhara Varman to Bhaskara Ravi Varman II were on the throne of Mahodayapuram. The period was one of peace and tranquility with no major social upheavals or foreign invasions to divert the attention of the rulers or the people from the pursuit of the arts of peace. However, by 999 A.D. the Cholas had started on their career of aggression against Kerala and the whole of the 11th century witnessed the great conflict between the two imperial powers. The Chola-Chera war led to far reaching economic and social changes and the way of life which emerged in Kerala at the end of the war was radically different from what it was before.

The most important of the economic and social changes brought about by the war are summarised below.

The Chola-Chera war led to a total mobilisation of the resources of the State under the leadership of the Kulasekharas. The Namboothiri Brahmins who were at the apex of the social hierarchy helped the rulers in mobilising the resources of the community in the fight against Chola aggression. Several of them gave up their traditional priestly occupation and scholarly pursuits and took to arms. The ancient educational institutions called *Salais* wherein the Namboothiri youth of the land were given instruction in Vedic studies were converted during the period into military academies. The temples also suffered from neglect during the period of the war. The temple arts which had registered considerable progress in the preceding two centuries languished for want of encouragement and patronage. Temple building and temple endowments also did not receive the earlier attention. The disappearance of the centres of learning and the neglect of temples, led to a tragic stagnation in the field of culture.

During the period of the Chola-Chera war compulsory military training was introduced in Kerala. This was a radical innovation which tended to bring about significant changes in the character and outlook of the people. Several classes of people had to give up their time-honoured occupations and take to the sword. The establishment of *Kalaris* (Gymnasias or military academies) all over the country was an important feature of the age. The common people who were enlisted for military service were given training in the use of arms in these *Kalaris*. Along with the establishment of *Kalaris* a new institution called *Chavers* (suicide squads) also sprang up. The suicide squads were comprised of the more valiant members of the armed forces who had banished all fear of death from their hearts and accepted 'Do or Die' as their motto. It was the *Chaver* army which ultimately turned the tide of the war against the Cholas.

The Chola-Chera war led to an enormous increase in the influence of the Namboothiri Brahmins in the economic and social life of the country. In the exigencies of the war landlordism or *Janmi* system took shape in Kerala. In the 9th and 10th centuries several philanthropists and merchants had donated extensive landed properties as endowments to temples and educational institutions attached to them. During the period of the Chola-Chera war the Namboothiri Brahmins who were the trustees or *Uralar* of these temples mismanaged temple properties and endowments and enjoyed all the revenues therefrom. Moreover, during a critical phase of the war several ordinary tenants who owned lands and properties transferred their possessions *in toto* to the Namboothiri Brahmins and the temples because lands and endowments thus made over came to be looked upon as *Brahmaswams* and *Devaswams* and enjoyed freedom from devastation by enemy forces as well as exemption from the payment of tax to the State. It was under such circumstances that the *Janmi* system originated in Kerala and some Namboothiris acquired the status of wealthy and influential *Janmis*. The newly acquired economic status

as *Janmis* coupled with their social status as the highest caste in the social hierarchy made the Namboothiris really powerful.

Another important result of the Chola-Chera war was the disintegration of the patrilineal or *Makkathayam* system of inheritance and its eventual replacement by the *Marumakkathayam* or matrilineal system. It may be mentioned in this connection that the conventional view that the *Marumakkathayam* system in Kerala is of hoary antiquity and that the patrilineal system was unknown in ancient Kerala is not accepted by all, for none of the early travellers or geographers who visited Kerala has mentioned the existence of the *Marumakkathayam* system till the 13th century. Friar Jordanus (1324) is the first foreign visitor who refers to the prevalence of this custom. The observations of Jordanus are as follows : "In this India never do even the legitimate sons of great kings or princes or barons inherit the goods of their parents but only the sons of their sisters, for they say they have no surety that those are their sons, but it is not so with the sister, for whatever man may be the father, they are certain that the offspring is of their sister and is consequently truly of their blood." Following Jordanus several other foreign travellers who came here in later years have also alluded to it in their accounts. It is surmised from this negative and positive evidence furnished by the accounts of foreign travellers that the matrilineal or *Marumakkathayam* system was an innovation introduced into Kerala at a later stage replacing the earlier patrilineal system.

It is assumed that it was the abnormal circumstances or conditions created by the Chola-Chera war of the 11th century A.D. that led to the decline of the patrilineal system and the adoption of the matrilineal system in course of time. The political and religious ascendancy of the Namboothiri Brahmins : during the Chola-Chera war, their rise to economic ascendancy as the *Janmis* of Kerala, the introduction of compulsory military training and the formation of the *Chaver* army to meet the threat of Chola invasion were some of the compelling circumstances which brought about the adoption of the *Marumakkathayam* system by the people of Kerala in the 11th century A.D. It may be relevant in this context to quote the views of Dr. A. L. Basham on this issue. "In the early days of the Chera kingdom of Kerala," says Dr. Basham, "inheritance was through the male line but about the 12th century a matrilinear system became regular according to which the heir to the throne was son not of the king, but of his eldest sister. This system called *Marumakkathayam*, continued in Cochin and Travancore until very recent times, both for royal succession and the inheritance of estates. Perhaps, it existed in Kerala at an early period, but was dropped by the upper classes for a while under Brahmanical influence, to be revived in the course of centuries".¹ It may be noted that Dr. Basham would consider the transition to the matrilineal system in the post-Chera period as the revival of an earlier system rather than as an innovation in itself, thereby conceding the antiquity of the system.

1. Basham A.L, *The Wonder that was India*, p 94.

The Chola-Chera war also led to a decline in the foreign contacts of Kerala with the result that there was less of income from foreign trade. It may be noted that many of those who had been previously engaged in foreign trade and commerce enlisted themselves in the defence of the country. Consequently the high degree of economic prosperity which characterised the early Kulasekhara age became a thing of the past. Kerala society also became much more complex than before in the wake of the prolonged Chola-Chera conflict. Jainism and Buddhism had practically disappeared from Kerala and Hindu society came to be organised on the basis of castes and sub-castes. Thus some of the bonds of internal cohesion and solidarity which had kept the country together in the early period were broken and factors of discord and , disruption took their place.

Apart from the socio-economic changes referred to above, the 11th century A.D. saw the break-up of the political unity of Kerala and the emergence of feudal polity. In the preceding two centuries Kerala was a homogeneous political unit under the centralised administration of the Kulasekharas and the Viceroys or *Naduvazhis* of the different *nodus* carried on the administration under the effective control exercised by the central government. However, the exceptional conditions created by the war in the 12th century weakened the authority of the centre and let loose fissiparous tendencies which encouraged the *naduvazhis* to assert their independence. The later Kulasekhara age therefore saw the rise of several petty principalities and chiefdoms all over Kerala. The age of the *Naduvazhis* began. Thus the age of the later Kulasekharas saw far-reaching economic, political and social changes which were to affect the course of Kerala history most profoundly in the centuries to come.

CHAPTER XI

VENAD TILL 1314

Venad rose to political prominence in the 12th century A.D. with the disappearance of the Kulasekharas as the imperial power in Kerala. However, we have stray references to Venad in the Pandyan records from the 8th century onwards. Neither the Sangam nor post-Sangam works make any mention of Venad. In his *History of Travancore*, P. Shungoonny Menon mentions the names of some of the rulers who are alleged to have ruled over Venad from the 4th to the 8th centuries and suggests that during this long period the royal family resided at different places and was commonly known by five different denominations, viz., Venad, Tiruvitamkode, Trippappur, Chiravai and Desinganad Swarupams. This view has, however, been proved to be untenable in the light of the progress of historical research in later years.

Till the beginning of the 9th century A.D. Trivandrum and the regions lying to its south formed part of the Ay kingdom. There was neither a king nor a royal family at Tiruvitamkode till the 14th century. In the 9th century Venad was only a small principality lying between Quilon and Trivandrum with its capital at the former place. It was only the southernmost *Nadu* or province of the Kulasekhara Empire and its governors were subordinate to the Perumals of Mahodayapuram. The Venad kingdom obtained an independent status only in the beginning of the 12th century A.D. At that time the royal house belonged to the Kizhperur family. Towards the latter half of the century a branch of the Ay family which had set up residence at Trippappur and another (Chiravai) which had its headquarters at Atanturuthi merged in the Venad family. With this merger the ruler of Venad came to be designated Chiravai Muppan and the heir-apparent Trippappur Muppan. The former as the reigning sovereign lived in the Panamkavil Palace at Quilon and carried on the administration of the kingdom. The Trippappur Muppan functioned as the *Koyiladhikarikal* with his residence at Trippappur, 9 miles north of Trivandrum, exercising his authority over the Sri Padmanabhaswami temple and other temples of Venad. The subsequent history of the division of the Venad family into different branches will be dealt with in the chapter on 'Minor Principalities'.

Early History

The first Venad ruler about whose reign we have any authentic information is Ayyan Atikal Tiruvatikal. He has immortalised himself in the famous Terisapalli Copper Plate Grant issued by him in 849 A.D. (the 5th regnal year of Sthanu Ravi Varma Kulasekhara) in the presence of important officers of

the State and the representatives of the *Anchuvannam* and *Manigramam*. The inscription records that one Maruvan Sapir Iso had built a church named Terisapalli and a *Nakaram* (trading centre) at Kurakkeni Kollam and that the Venad chief made the gift of a plot of land to the church and the *Nakaram* along with the several families of labourers and proprietary rights.

The next Venad ruler of whom we have inscriptional evidence is Sri Vallabhan Kotha. He is associated with the Mampalli Plate of 974 A.D. (149 K.E.) which records the donation of certain landed properties to the temple of Chengannur by a private party in the assembly of the great men of the locality, the king Sri Vallabhan Kotha also being present on the occasion. There are references to this ruler in some lithic records also.

Govardhana Marthanda succeeded Sri Vallabhan Kotha and he ruled in the last quarter of the 10th century A.D. and early part of the 11th century. One of the Trikkodithanam temple inscriptions refers to the grant of certain lands by this ruler to the temple. Govardhana Marthanda had administrative control over the neighbouring province of Nantuzhainad as well. He is the Venad chief who figures as one of the attestors of the Jewish Copper Plate of Bhaskara Ravi Varman (1000 A.D.). Govardhana Marthanda rendered great help to Bhaskara Ravi Varman I in the fight against Chola aggression and perhaps he fell in the battle fighting against the Chola hordes.

Rise of Independent Venad

The names of the rulers of Venad in the 11th century A.D. are not known to us. During this period of the Chola-Chera war Venad suffered havoc at the hands of the Chola invaders. In 1096 A.D. the city of Quilon itself was destroyed by Kulottunga's army. Meanwhile, the Chera capital of Mahodayapuram was burnt and Rama Varma Kulasekhara moved to the south at the head of a large army in a determined effort to beat back the advancing Chola forces. The Perumal set up his headquarters at Quilon and directed the military operations against the Cholas. As already noted, the Chola army was defeated and forced to withdraw from Nanjanad leaving the Pandyas in control of the region. Rama Varma Kulasekhara continued to stay at Quilon and managed the affairs of the kingdom for some time more. The Rameswarathukoil inscription of Quilon (1102 A.D.) shows that he granted certain lands to this temple under pressure from the *Uralar* as an act of atonement (*Prayaschitta*) for the sin of offending them. This is the first instance of a Kerala king being compelled by the Namboothiri *Janmis* to act according to their directions. The episode is of great importance as it demonstrates the predominant influence which the Brahmin community had come to exercise in the affairs of the State.

We have no information about the later career of Rama Varma Kulasekhara. He seems to have abdicated the throne in favour of his son and retired from public life. There is a local tradition in Eraniel that the founder of the Venad royal house by name Kulasekhara passed away at the local palace. Perhaps, the prince who figures in this tradition is Rama Varma Kulasekhara.

As the history of Venad as an independent kingdom begins with Rama Varma Kulasekhara, he may be regarded as the founder of the Venad royal house. It may also be noted here that the title *Kulasekhara* or *Kulasekhara Perumal* assumed by the ruler of Mahodayapuram was taken over by the rulers of Venad since the days of Rama Varma Kulasekhara, the last ruler to use the same being Sri Chitra Tirunal Balarama Varma, the Maharaja of Travancore (1931-1949).

The immediate successor of Rama Varma Kulasekhara on the throne of Venad was Kotha Varma (1102-1125 A.D.) most probably his son. Kotha Varma was perhaps the Venad ruler who conquered Kottar and the neighbouring portions of Nanjanad from the Pandyas and incorporated them into Venad. He had four sons, viz., Kotha Kerala Varma, Vira Ravi Varma, Aditya Varma and Udaya Marthanda Varma. All these sons ascended the throne of Venad¹ one after the other.

Kotha Kerala Varma (1125—1155 A.D.) also called Vira Kerala Varma, was an outstanding ruler. He rebuilt the temple of Sri Padmanabha at Trivandrum. He also made gifts of land to the temple at Suchindram, hereafter described as 'Vira Kerala Chaturvedimangalam'. The lands so gifted lay in different villages of Nanjanad such as Karkadu (Nripasekharanallur), Tenvalanallur and Tekkanputhur. This is clear proof of the fact that Venad supremacy was established over the erstwhile South Travancore area at least by the middle of the 12th century A.D. It may also be mentioned here that the collection of 31 silver coins bearing the name of Vira Kerala discovered from Vaigaikulam in Tirunelveli district may be ascribed to this ruler.²

Vira Ravi Varma (1155-1165 A.D.), the next ruler, was a powerful sovereign of Venad. Under him the kingdom had an efficient system of government. The village assemblies functioned vigorously during this period, the king having assigned to them an important place in the scheme of administration. Nanjanad continued to be under the sway of the Venad king during the reign of this ruler.

Aditya Varma who succeeded Vira Ravi Varma figures in the Kilimanur records. He ruled from 1165-1175.

Udaya Marthanda Varma (1175-1195), the successor of Aditya Varma, was an illustrious ruler. His Kollur Madham plates throw light on the arrangements made for the management of temples and the functions assigned to the various officers. The Gosala or Tiruvambadi inscription of 359 KE. (1183 A.D.) mentions the gift of a silver drum by Aditya Raman, an attendant of the king, to the Tiruvambadi shrine within the premises of the Sri Padmanabhaswami temple. The record also makes it clear that the Sri

1. Kotha Varma does not figure as a ruler in earlier works on history of Travancore including the *Trivandrum District Gazetteer*. Moreover, Vira Kerala Varma and Kotha Kerala Varma are mentioned as two separate rulers. On the evidence of *Syanandurapurana Samuchaya* brought to light recently the two rulers may be reckoned as one.

2. See Chapter II.

Padmanabhaswami temple had during this period a *Sabha* or council of *Uralar* with a *Samanjita* of its own and that it used to meet periodically to take decisions on important matters relating to temple administration. In this *Sabha* may be seen the progenitor of the later *Ettarayogam*. The institution of the *Swamiyar* who presided over the meetings of the *Sabha* had also its origin about this time. The reign of Udaya Marthanda was also noted for the close relationship between Venad and the Pandyan kingdom. His daughter, Tribhuvana Devi, was married to the Pandyan king Sri Vallabha. It is believed that during his reign the Pantalam and Punjar ruling families whose ancestors had migrated earlier from the Pandya country acquired territories in Kerala.

The successor of Udaya Marthanda was Vira Rama Varma (1195-1205) of the Vellayani inscription, otherwise known as Manikanta Rama Varma. The Vellayani inscription (1196) throws light on the social and political organisation of Venad during this period in so far as it refers to the working of the *Arunuttuvar* (Six Hundred) of Venad.

Vira Rama Kerala Varma (1205-1215), otherwise called Devadaram Kerala Varma, was the next Venad ruler. His reign saw the construction of temples and the formulation of special rules for their management. The temples at Viralam (Vira Keralapuram) and Katinamkulam were constructed during his reign.

Vira Rama Kerala Varma was succeeded by Ravi Kerala Varma (1215-1240), who figures in the Kandiur inscription (1218 A.D.) and also the Manalikara inscription (1236 A.D.). The former record mentions the reconstruction of the Kandiur temple by Rama Kotha Varman, the ruler of Odanad, at the instance of Ravi Kerala Varma. It is clear that at this time Odanad had acknowledged the authority of the Venad ruler. The Manalikara inscription shows the great interest evinced by the ruler in the welfare of the common people. The purport of the record is to fix the rates of taxes payable by the tenants and also to make generous remission of taxes in case of failure of crops. Ravi Kerala Varma bestowed special attention on the Suchindram and Padmanabhaswami temples. The Subramaniaswami koil, the first of the shrines to be erected outside the main Suchindram temple, was constructed by Queen Unniachi. Since the days of Ravi Kerala Varma the Namboothiris were appointed to perform *pujas* in the temples of Nanjanad.

The next Venad ruler was Padmanabha Marthanda Varma (1240-1253 A.D.). He was the contemporary of Jatavarman Sundara Pandya (1251-1268), the famous Pandyan warrior king. Perhaps, he is the king who is alleged to have been killed by Vikrama Pandya who died in 1264 A.D.

The history of Venad from 1253 to 1299 is lost in confusion. The records of Jatavarman Sundara Pandya and his successor Maravarman Kulasekhara (1268-1310) testify to the establishment of Pandyan hegemony over the region. The Pandyas seem to have led an expedition to Venad and captured Quilon as is evidenced by the records obtained from Tirunelveli district describing Maravarman Kulasekhara as *Cheranai Venra* and *Kollam Konda*.

The most celebrated ruler of Venad during this confused period of its history was Jayasimha. Quilon and the surrounding regions came to be called Jayasirahanad or Desinganad after Jayasimha. The death of Jayasimha gave the signal for the outbreak of a civil war between his sons and nephews. Ravi Varma Kulasekhara, the son of Jayasimha by his Queen Uma Devi, came out successful in this war. It is worth mentioning that Ravi Varma Kulasekhara was the last of the Venad kings who came to the throne according to the patrilineal system of succession.

Ravi Varma Kulasekhara (1299-1314)

Ravi Varma Kulasekhara ascended the throne of Venad in 1299. Till the death of Maravarman Kulasekhara in 1310 he was a feudatory of the Pandyan ruler, as is evidenced by the Trivandrum inscription in which he uses the Pandya title *Maravarma* along with his name, but thereafter he claimed overlordship over the Pandyan kingdom. It may be noted here that Ravi Varma Kulasekhara had married a daughter of Maravarman Kulasekhara and this was the basis of his claim to the Pandyan throne. Having thrown off the Pandyan yoke, Ravi Varma began to count his regnal years afresh from 1310. Thus the Tiruvati inscription of the Kali year 4414 (December 29, 1313 A.D.) may be seen to coincide with the fourth regnal year of Ravi Varma Kulasekhara.

Ravi Varma Kulasekhara was one of the most outstanding figures in the long line of the kings of Venad. He was a distinguished conqueror and he assumed the title *Sangramadhira* (firm in battle). Ravi Varma conquered parts of South India and raised Venad to the position of a powerful military state. The distracted political conditions prevailing in the Pandyan kingdom gave him an admirable opportunity to conquer territories outside Kerala. The civil war between Sundara Pandya and Vira Pandya, the legitimate and illegitimate sons respectively of Maravarman Kulasekhara and the confusion created by Malik Kafur's invasion of 1311 helped Ravi Varma Kulasekhara in his ambitious designs. He invaded the Pandyan kingdom already afflicted by internal disorder and inflicted a crushing defeat on the forces of Vira Pandya. Ravi Varma succeeded before long in establishing his imperial hegemony over all those territories which were under Pandyan rule. He crowned himself as Emperor of South India in 1312 in his 46th year of age. The conventional view that this coronation took place at Kanchipuram has to be modified in the light of later findings. Ravi Varma seems to have performed his first coronation at Madurai in the Pandya country and then continued his triumphant march, reaching Tiruvati in December 1313 and Kanchipuram in the Chola country early in 1314, *i.e.*, in his 48th year of age. He performed a second coronation at Kanchipuram to reassert his imperial status.

The conquests of Ravi Varma Kulasekhara are of immense importance because in effecting these conquests he played the role of the defender of Hinduism against Islam. He had a clear vision of the danger to Hinduism arising from the Islamic advance and consequently he made a heroic effort to check the same, by bringing the whole of South India under his suzerainty.

In his historic role Ravi Varma Kulasekhara was the forerunner of the Hoysala Bellalas and the Rayas of Vijayanagar. 'The role of champion of Hindu rule in the south,' says Dr.S. Krishnaswami Ayyangar, "fell to the lot of the last great Bellala, Vira Bellala II because of the disappearance of Ravi Varma Kulasekhara who struggled hard throughout the last decade of his reign and fell in the efforts in his turn. Notwithstanding his failure the work that he attempted was carried to a successful conclusion by those who succeeded him and ended in the establishment of the Hindu empire of the South which became known in history as the empire of Vijayanagar".

In his role as a conqueror Ravi Varma Kulasekhara shoots across the political horizon of South India like a flashing meteor leaving behind him only the faint memory of his ephemeral conquests but his services in the field of religion, arts and trade entitle him to a lasting place among the most illustrious rulers of Kerala history. As a devout Hindu he took a keen interest in the maintenance and renovation of temples and the progress of the Hindu religion. He presented a large vessel of pure gold to the temple of Sri Padmanabha at Trivandrum. The Srirangam inscription represents him as the master as well as the protector of the three *Vedas*. His court attracted scholars and men of letters from far and near and Ravi Varma extended his munificent patronage to them all. Among the shining lights of his court were Samudrabandha and Kavibhushana. Ravi Varma was himself a talented scholar and he wrote the Sanskrit drama *Pradyumnabhyudayam*. The Trivandrum inscription of Ravi Varma describes him as the "Master of 64 arts and the Bhoja of the south". Proficiency in music seems to have been one of his many cultural attainments.

Under Ravi Varma Kulasekhara Venad attained a high degree of economic prosperity and social progress. Quilon retained its position of commercial prominence and developed into the premier port on the west coast- There was brisk trade at the port between Kerala and the countries of the outside world, particularly China. Quilon was one of the busiest centres of internal trade as well. The town possessed all the amenities of civilised life. Ravi Varma Kulasekhara bestowed particular attention on the improvement of Quilon town and he is called *Kolamba Nagara Parishkaraka* in the literary works of the age. The town had several imposing buildings and it was connected with the hinterland by a network of broad roads. The records of the age refer particularly to the main road or the *Narayaperuvazhi*. The economic prosperity of Venad was in no small measure due to the facilities provided by its ruler for traders and businessmen at Quilon. In short, the achievements of Ravi Varma Kulasekhara in war and peace are tangible and they entitle him to a high rank among the rulers of Kerala.

Conditions in the Venad Kingdom

The inscriptions of the period and the accounts of foreign travellers throw light on the political, social and economic conditions in early Venad. The Venad king came to the throne according to the patrilineal system of

succession. He exercised vast and varied powers, but his authority was limited by popular assemblies called *Kuttams* which, functioned vigorously at all levels. In the 10th century Venad had its assembly called the *Munnuttuvar* (Three Hundred) and in the 12th century the *Arunuttuvar* (Six Hundred). The administration of the kingdom was carried on in accordance with the wishes of the assembly. The kingdom was divided into *desams* for administrative convenience. The State had several sources of income such as land tax, customs, duties, sales tax, profession tax etc. In the early stages merchant guilds like *Anchuvannam* and *Manigramam* played an important part in the life of commercial towns like Quilon but after the 12th century they seem to have declined in importance and gradually disappeared.

The rulers of Venad were generous patrons of Hinduism. They took special interest in the maintenance and repair of temples. It is seen that the kings as well as the common people of the age made endowments for the repair of temples or for the performance of *pujas* etc. The endowments made for repair are particularly significant because most of the temples had been built in the 9th century A.D. and maintenance and repair works had by this time become a necessity. Further, Vedic schools or colleges were also attached to all important temples in the kingdom. In spite of the predominance of Hinduism other religions like Christianity, Judaism and Islam also flourished in the land. Jainism was also lingering in certain areas. The foreign travellers like Marco Polo who visited Quilon during this period have referred particularly to the existence of Christian and Jewish communities at the place. Yet another striking feature of the social life of the age was the dominant influence exercised by the upper castes and the Namboothiri *Janmis*.

Quilon, the capital of Venad, was a fabulous city provided with all amenities of civilized life. The brisk trade carried on through the port is testified to in the works of foreign travellers who visited the coast and in Malayalam poems like *Unniachi Charitam* and *Unnunilisandesam*. During Sulaiman's visit (851) Quilon was the most considerable port in South India at the time and it was the only port in India touched by huge Chinese junks on their homeward voyage from Persia. Benjamin of Tudela (12th century) is all praise for the integrity of the king's officers who supervised the commercial transactions at Quilon port. He says "The nation is trustworthy in matters of trade and whenever foreign merchants enter their port, three Secretaries of the king immediately repair on board their vessels, write down their names and report them to him. The king thereupon grants them security for their property which they may even leave in the open fields without any guard". He also refers to the practice of the streets and the markets being lighted up the whole night and the inhabitants carrying on their business in order to escape from the oppressive heat of the day time. Pepper, cinnamon and ginger were the most important spices transacted at Quilon.

Al Kazwini (1263-1275) refers to Kulam (Quilon) as 'a large city in India,' but he also refers to such incredible customs as the pillars of the buildings in

Quilon being covered with shells from the backs of fishes. Evidently, such statements are the result of poor observation of men and affairs by a credulous foreign traveller. Marco Polo who visited Quilon towards the end of the 13th century throws light on the prosperous pepper trade of Quilon, particularly with China. He says, "The merchants from Manzi (China) and from the Levant come thither with their ships and their merchandise and make great profits both by what they import and by what they export". The Venetian traveller was impressed by the high degree of economic prosperity that prevailed in the kingdom. He says that the people had 'in great plenty and cheapness' all the necessities of life. Thus the early Venad kingdom enjoyed the benefits of liberal administration, social progress and material prosperity under its enlightened rulers.

CHAPTER XII

RISE OF KOLATHUNAD AND COCHIN

During the period following the break-up of the Kulasekhara Empire (1102 A.D.) Kerala lost its political unity. A number of independent *Swarupams* (States) rose in different parts of the country. Of these, in addition to Venad in south Kerala, the most important were the kingdoms of Kolathunad, Cochin and Calicut. The history of central and north Kerala during the pre-Portuguese period and after is centred primarily around the kingdom of Calicut but before tracing the history of the rise and growth of this kingdom under the illustrious Zamorins, it would be appropriate to sketch the origin and early history of Kolathunad and Cochin in order to have a clear understanding of the political events of the period.

The Mushaka Dynasty

The origin of the Kolathunad kingdom (North Malabar) is obscure. In the Sangam age the area was under the rule of a dynasty of kings who ruled with their capital at Mount Eli or Ezhi Mala. The achievements of Nannan of Ezhi Mala have been described in Chapter V. In the age of the Second Chera Empire (800-1102) the Wynad-Tellicherry area of North Malabar was under the imperial sway of the Kulasekharas as is testified to by the evidence of the Tirunelli inscriptions of Bhaskara Ravi Varman. However, a separate line of rulers known as the Mushaka kings held sway over the Chirakkal-Kasargod areas with their capital near Mount Eli. Perhaps, the Mushaka kings were the descendants of the ancient family of Nannan. Some scholars have expressed the view that the Mushaka kings ruled as an independent dynasty on their own right because the ruler of the Mushaka or Kolathunad kingdom does not figure along with the rulers of Eralnad and Valluvanad as a signatory in the Terisapalli and Jewish Copper Plates.

The *Mushakavamsa*, a historical *Mahakavya* in Sanskrit composed by Atula, the court poet of the Mushaka king Srikanta who ruled towards the end of the 11th century A.D., narrates the history of the Mushaka kingdom till that period.

The earlier cantos of the poem which deal with the origin of the Mushaka family and the achievements of some of the early rulers of this dynasty contain mainly legendary material, but the later ones furnish authentic information on the history of the Mushaka kingdom. The poem makes it abundantly clear that up to the 11th century the *Mushaka* kings followed the patrilineal system of succession and that thereafter they gradually switched over to the matrilineal system.

Among the historical personages who figure in the later cantos of the poem Vikrama Rama, Jayamani, Valabha II and Srikantha deserve special mention. Vikrama Rama is said to have saved the famous shrine of Sri Mulavasam from the havoc of sea erosion. Valabha II is credited with having repaired the Vishnu temple at Trichambaram even when he was a *Yuvaraja*. He is the Mushaka prince who was despatched to the south by the reigning Mushaka king Jayamani to assist the Chera forces during the invasions of Kulottunga Chola. However, before he could join the Kerala forces prince Valabha heard of the demise of his father Jayamani and he returned to the Mushaka country to prevent the usurpation of the throne by his enemies. On the way he worshipped at the Buddhist *Vihara* of Sri Mulavasa. On reaching the kingdom, Valabha overpowered his rivals and ascended the throne. He founded the port of Marahi at the mouth of the Killa river and gave an impetus to overseas trade. It may be mentioned that in later days Marahi came to be known as Madayi. Valabha also built the port of Valabhapattana and protected it with lofty towers and high walls. In course of time Valabhapattana got corrupted into Valayapattana and then into Valarpattana, *i.e.*, the modern Baliapatam. Valabha is also said to have annexed several islands of the Arabian Sea to his kingdom. These islands may be identified with the modern Laccadive, Minicoy and Amindivi Islands. King Valabha was also a generous patron of learning. His younger brother Srikantha, also called Rajadharma, succeeded him on the throne. The poet Atula who composed the *Mushakavamsa* lived in his court. The place called Srikantapuram must have been named after this ruler. For about two centuries after the reign of Srikantha the history of the Mushaka kingdom is a blank.

The Kolathiris

In the 14th century the old Mushaka country had come to be known as Kolathunad and a new line of rulers called the Kolathiris (Colastri of European accounts) was ruling over the kingdom. The traditional accounts preserved in the *Kerala Mahatmyam* and the *Keralolpathi* which connect the Kolathiris with the inevitable Parasurama or the Cheraman Perumal are evidently wrong. The fact is that the Kolathiris were the descendants of the old Mushaka kings.

The earliest authentic reference to the kingdom of the Kolathiris is to be found in the *Travels* of Marco Polo who visited Kerala towards the end of the 13th century. Though the Venetian traveller does not refer to the Kolathiris by name, all evidence points to the fact that the kingdom of Eli to which Marco Polo devotes a short chapter in his account is the kingdom of the Kolathiris. Marco Polo says, "Eli is a kingdom towards the west about 3,000 miles from Kumari. The people are idolaters and have a king and are tributary to nobody and have a peculiar language. There is no proper harbour in the country but there are many great rivers with good estuaries wide and deep. Pepper and ginger grow here and other spices in quantities. The king is rich in treasures but not very strong in forces. The approach to his kingdom is so strong by nature that no one can attack him, so he is afraid of nobody". Marco Polo

refers particularly to the custom of seizure of goods from foreign ships that entered the estuaries in the kingdom of Eli and observes that “the ships of Manzi and other countries that come hither in summer lay in their cargoes in six or eight days and depart as fast as possible because there is no harbour other man the river mouth, a mere roadstead and sand bank, so that it is perilous to tarry there”.

The Kolathunad kingdom at its zenith extended from the Netravati river in the north to the Korapuzha in the south and from Kudakumala in the east to the Arabian Sea in the west. The principalities of Kumbbla, Nileswaram, Kottayam and Kadathanad formed part of the kingdom of Kolathunad. The ruler who was called Kolathiri was the eldest male member of the family. The four other male members who were immediately junior to him were designated *Tekkelamkur*, *Vadakkelamkur*, *Nalamkur* and *Anchamkur*. The *Tekkelamkur* was the heir apparent and also the viceroy of the southern province of Kolathunad. The *Vadakkelamkur* who was the third in succession administered the affairs of the northern province. The *Nalamkur* was the manager of the Kolathiri's household and the *Anchamkur* his personal attendant or A.D.C.

The history of the Kolathiri kingdom is not available to us in the regular chronological order of the line of its rulers. However, the names of a few outstanding rulers who were either patrons of learning or themselves scholars of merit have come down to us from literary works. Raghava was a famous king of Kolathunad who ruled early in the 14th century. He was the patron of Raghavananda, the author of the *Krishnapadi* commentary on the *Bhagavatapurana* and perhaps also of Divakara, the author of *Amogharaghava Champu* written in 1299. Kerala Varma who ruled from 1423 to 1446 was a liberal patron of letters and learning and his court was adorned by poets and scholars of outstanding merit. Raghava who wrote the *Padartha Chintana* commentary on the *Yudhishtira Vijaya* and Sankara who wrote the exquisite Sanskrit poem *Krishna Vijaya* were patronised by him. Both the poets belonged to the Warrior community and lived at Pallikunnu. Rama Varma, a prince of Kolathunad who died in 1443, wrote the *Bharatasamgraha* and the Sanskrit drama *Chandrikakalapida*. Udaya Varmaan Kolathiri who ruled from 1446 to 1475 was the patron of the author of the famous Malayalam work *Krishnagatha*. Ravi Varman, the author of the *Udayavarma Charita* which deals with the life of the Udaya Varman Kolathiri, was another Kolathiri ruler who has been assigned to the 16th century.

At the time of the arrival of the Portuguese in Kerala the Kolathiri had already come within the sphere of influence of the Zamorins of Calicut. The details of the relations between the two powers will be dealt with in the next chapter.

Perumpadappu Swarupam

The Perumpadappu Swarupam or Cochin royal house came into political prominence only in the beginning of the 16th century after the arrival of the Portuguese, but it had its origin as an independent principality immediately

after the fall of the Kulasekhara Empire. The origin of the Perumpadappu family is shrouded in mystery. The traditional view is that the Perumpadappu chief or Cochin ruler was the descendant of the Kulasekharas of Mahodayapuram in the maternal line. It seems that a Namboothiri of Perumpadappu (Ponnani taluk) married a sister of Rama Varma Kulasekhara, the last of the Kulasekharas of Mahodayapuram. With the fall of the Kulasekhara Empire the son of Rama Varma Kulasekhara inherited the political power of the Kulasekharas and his nephew (*i.e.*, the son of his sister by the Perumpadappu Namboothiri) their religious authority. The Venad ruling family was descended from the former and the Cochin royal family from the latter. It is significant that the Venad rulers used the title *Kulasekhara Perumal* and the Cochin rulers *Gangadhara Koviladhikarikal*.

The Perumpadappu Swarupam had its seat at Chitrakutam in the Perumpadappu village in Vanneri till the end of the 13th century but its chief had a palace of his own at Mahodayapuram also. When the Zamorin of Calicut invaded Valluvanad in the latter half of the 13th century the Perumpadappu Swarupam abandoned the Vanneri palace and migrated to Mahodayapuram on a permanent basis. It continued to have its capital at Mahodayapuram till about 1405, when it was transferred to Cochin. It may be noted that by the end of the 14th century the Zamorin of Calicut had taken possession of Tirikanamatilakam and threatened Tiruvanchikulam. Most probably, the aggressive advance of the Zamorin influenced the decision of the Perumpadappu chief to shift his capital to Cochin which was outside the immediate orbit of the Zamorin's conquests. Moreover, as a result of the heavy floods in the Periyar in 1341 A.D., Cranganore had lost its commercial importance and the Cochin port had risen into prominence as a rival to it. This factor also seems to have entered into the calculations of the Perumpadappu chief in deciding on the change of capital from Tiruvanchikulam to Cochin.

The history of the Perumpadappu Swarupam during the pre-Portuguese period is lost in obscurity. Inscriptions and literary works give us the names of some of the rulers of the period. Vira Raghava Chakravarti who issued the grant to Iravi Kortanan from Perumkovilakam in Makotair Pattanam (Mahodayapuram) seems to have been a Perumpadappu ruler. In this grant Iravi Kortanan, a Christian merchant of Mahodayapuram, is given the office of the *Manigramam* and the high-sounding title of the 'Chera King's Great Merchant Supreme in the Whole World'. He was also conferred several commercial privileges and rights including the monopoly of foreign trade. The grant which was issued in 1225 A.D. shows the important position occupied by the Christian community in the commercial life of the kingdom and the tolerant policy pursued by the rulers of Perumpadappu Swarupam.

Literary works such as *Sukasandesam*, *Unniati Charitam*, *Sivavilasam* and *Vitanidrabbhanam* composed in the 14th century give us interesting glimpses into the early history of the Swarupam. The *Sivavilasam* describes the story of the *Swayamvara* of Yuvaraja Rama Varma of Perumpadappu by Unniati, the

daughter of Kerala Varma of Odanad. The prince is said to have come for the *Swayamvaram* in the company of his uncle and reigning king Rama Varma. The poem praises the great qualities of the two Rama Varmas. The literary works also give us an idea of the unique position occupied by the Perumpadappu king among the *Naduvazhis* of Kerala. The chief of the *Swarupam* is even referred to as *Kerala Chakravarti* in the *Sivavilasam* and some other works. This title is, however, indicative only of the moral prestige and spiritual authority and not of the political power exercised by the Perumpadappu king. The fact that the Perumpadappu ruler was a Kshatriya by birth and that he was the descendant of the Kulasekharas of Mahodayapuram in the maternal line won for him a superior status among the *Naduvazhis* of Kerala, for the caste system and the *Marumakkathayam* system of inheritance had become well-established institutions by this time. Further, the Perumpadappu chief as *Koviladhikarikal* exercised jurisdiction over a large number of temples in Kerala, irrespective of all consideration of political boundaries. This moral and religious authority exercised by him more than compensated for his lack of political power and stature. In fact, Cochin was in the beginning only a very small kingdom and its ruler was a king only in name with his authority confined to Cochin and adjoining areas and Tiruvanchikulam.

In the 15th century began the prolonged conflict between the Zamorin and the Raja of Cochin for the political supremacy of Central Kerala. The internal dissensions in the Perumpadappu Swarupam helped the Zamorin in his aggressive designs. The Perumpadappu family had by this time split itself into five *tavazhis* or branches, viz., *Mutha*, *Elaya*, Palluruthi, Madathungal or Muringur and Chazhur. Each of these branches had a separate family seat and its own properties and militia. The eldest male member of all the five families taken together ascended the Cochin throne. A strange custom which prevailed in the Cochin royal family forced the reigning Raja to abdicate the throne in favour of the Elaya Raja and to go into religious seclusion in his old age. This made the internal strife in the Swarupam all the more acute as there were invariably two factions in the kingdom, one taking orders from the abdicated ruler (*i.e.*, Perumpadappu *Muppil*) and the other from the reigning Raja. Thus at the time of the arrival of the Portuguese in Kerala the Perumpadappu Swarupam presented the picture of a house divided against itself. It was also engaged in a serious conflict with the powerful Zamorin of Calicut. The Portuguese and the Cochin ruler felt attracted towards each other as allies because of their common hostility towards Calicut. The subsequent history of Cochin is unfolded in some of the remaining chapters of this volume.

CHAPTER XIII

CALICUT UNDER THE EARLY ZAMORINS

Calicut or Kozhikode was the major power in northern and central Kerala in the medieval period. Its rulers known to history as the Zamorins were among the most cultured and accomplished sovereigns of Kerala. The Zamorins were descended from the Ernad *Utaiyavar* who appears as a signatory in the Jewish and Syrian Christian Copper plates. The traditional version regarding the rise of Calicut under the Zamorins is given in the *Keralolpathi*. The Cheraman Perumal who is alleged to have partitioned his kingdom among friends and relatives and left for Mecca is said to have given a small bit of land with his broken sword (*Odinja val*) and his broken conch (*Odanja Sankhu*) to the two Eradi brothers of Nediyiruppu, Manikkan and Vikkiran, with the injunction to 'die, kill and seize' and to rule as the Emperor of the whole of Malainadu. The story has, however, no historical basis.

Rise of Calicut

Calicut as an important port and capital of a powerful kingdom does not seem to have come into existence till about the 13th century. During the period immediately following the fall of the Kulasekhara Empire Calicut and suburbs formed part of the kingdom of Polanad ruled by the Porlatiri. The Eradis of Nediyiruppu in Ernad who were 'land-locked' in their domain formulated schemes for the conquest of Polanad as they wanted to get an outlet to the sea and obtain their own share of the profits of overseas trade. The Eradis marched with their Nairs towards Panniankara and besieged the Porlatiri in his headquarters. The war lasted in a desultory manner for about half a century. The former was supported by the Chief of Kottayam and the latter by the Kolathiri. The war eventually ended in the victory of the Eradis, the Porlatiri having fled to Kolathunad for political asylum. The Chief Minister of the Porlatiri who sided with the Eradis in the final stages of the fight was rewarded with the title of Ernad Menon and the headship of the Vadakkumpuram Nairs. In the wake of the conquest of Polanad the Eradis shifted their headquarters from Nediyiruppu to Calicut. A fortified palace was built by him at a place called Velapuram to safeguard his interests in the newly acquired tract. Perhaps, Calicut derived its name from the fortified palace (*Koyil Kotta*).

The kingdom of Calicut also came to be known as Nediyiruppu Swarupam after the original house of the Eradis at Nediyiruppu. Its ruler was popularly known as the Samuri, the term 'Zamorin' being its Europeanised form. The earliest reference to the Zamorin is to be found in the accounts of Ibn Batuta

(1342-1347). It is significant that Marco Polo who visited Kerala towards the end of the 13th century mentions the kingdom of Eli but not Calicut or its ruler. This provides a clue to the date of the rise of Calicut as an important power on the Kerala coast. It seems that only by the beginning of the 14th century Calicut under the Zamorins had become a force to be reckoned with in the politics of Kerala. The Zamorin whose authority and prestige grew over the years assumed such high sounding titles as *Kunnala konatiri* and *Sailabdhiswaran* both of which mean the “King of the country between the hills and the waves”. He was also called *Punturakon* after his overlordship of the harbour city of Calicut. The Zamorin was also sometimes called the *Erlatiri* (Chief of Ernad) and *Nediyiruppu Muppan* (Chief of the Nediyiruppu Swarupam).

Under the patronage of the Zamorins, Calicut developed before long into a major sea port on the Kerala coast. ‘The rise of Calicut’, says K.V. Krishna Iyer, “is at once a cause and a consequence of the Zamorin’s ascendancy in Kerala. Its trade filled his coffers and enabled him to extend his authority. And the expansion of his Empire in turn increased its commerce. Originally a barren strip covered all over with thorny jungle, the genius of the Manavikramans converted it into a mighty sea-port, where the Arabs and the Chinese met to exchange the products of the west with those of the east”¹. Kerala’s exports of pepper, cardamom and textiles were shipped from here in bulk to foreign countries. The Zamorins declared Calicut a free port where even foreign ships not bound for it could call at any time and enjoy the facilities provided for taking fresh water or reinforcing depleted provisions. This helpful attitude of the Zamorin towards all foreign traders coupled with his reputation as a tolerant and fair-minded monarch attracted foreign traders to Calicut in large numbers and made it the chief emporium of Malabar trade. The Chinese and the Arabs were among the most important of the foreign nationals who traded with Calicut. The former even established a small colony of their own in a part of the city and it came to be called *Chinakotta* or Chinese fort. In the commercial rivalry between the two foreign nations the Zamorin’s sympathy lay with the Arabs. He gave the Arab merchants special concessions which helped them to secure the monopoly of the export and import trade of Calicut. It was the brisk trade carried on through the port of Calicut that filled the coffers of the Zamorin and fired him with the political ambition to conquer neighbouring kingdoms and expand his empire. Impelled by considerations of enlightened self-interest the Arabs also helped the Zamorin with ships, horses and soldiers in his wars with the neighbouring chieftains.

Zamorin’s Early Conquests

With Calicut as the base the Zamorin embarked on a series of campaigns to bring the neighbouring principalities under his suzerainty. The Rajas of Beypore, Parappanad and Vettat were among the earliest to acknowledge his

1. K.V.Krishna Iyer, *The Zamorins of Calicut*, p. 80.

suzerainty. Their example was soon followed by the Raja of Kurumbranad, the Payyoremala Nairs and other local chieftains in the suburbs of Calicut.

The most powerful adversary whom the Zamorin had to contend against in the early phase of his conquests was the Valluvakontiri or ruler of Valluvanad in South Malabar. The immediate aim of the Zamorin was the conquest of Tirunavai situated on the banks of the Bharatapuzha in the territory of the Valluvanad ruler. Tirunavai was a place of great political importance as it was here that the famous pan-Kerala assembly or festival known as *Mamamkam* (*Magha Makam*) was held once in every 12 years (*ie.* a *Vyazhavattam*) under the presidency of the Valluvanad ruler. According to tradition the *Mamamkam* was originally presided over by the Chera emperors and hence the honour now being enjoyed by the Valluvakonatiri of presiding over the festival was the envy of other Kerala rulers, particularly the Zamorin. In embarking on his campaigns against Valluvanad the Zamorin's aim was to secure for himself not only the territory of Tirunavai but also the time-honoured privilege of presiding over the *Mamamkam*.

An internal feud between the two Namboothiri factions of Panniyur and Chowaram had introduced an additional element of conflict in the relations between the Kerala powers of this period. The feud which is known as the *Kurmalsaram* had originally begun as a local conflict between two villages, but before long it embraced various aspects of socio-religious life 'like rituals, forms of sacrifice, manner' of speech, mode of dress etc. and ultimately degenerated into a power struggle in which all the ruling powers of Kerala were forced to take sides. The Zamorin championed the cause of the less orthodox Panniyur faction while the Valluvakonatiri and Perumpadappu chief that of the Chovvaram faction. The *Kurmalsaram* took an unexpectedly violent turn and both the parties appealed for help to their respective patrons. The domain of the Tirumanasseri Namboothiri who, was one of the leaders of the Panniyur faction was attacked by the Valluvakonatiri and the Perumpadappu ruler and thus a crisis was precipitated. The Namboothiri appealed to the Zamorin and the chief of Vettat for assistance against this aggression. He also promised to cede Ponnani to the Zamorin as a reward for the help rendered to him in this hour of need. The Zamorin did not miss this opportunity to get himself actively involved in the *Kurmalsaram*. The Arab merchants offered all encouragement and help in his projected campaigns. The Calicut army led in person by the Zamorin and the Eralpad (heir-apparent) soon went into action. The main army led by the Zamorin approached from the north and encamped at Triprangode while the Eralpad proceeded by the sea and after occupying Ponnani and Tirumanasseri crossed the Bharatapuzha and took up position on the opposite bank against Tirunavai. The war dragged on to the embarrassment of the Valluvakonatiri and eventually he was forced to evacuate Tirunavai. The Zamorin now entered Tirunavai in triumph and assumed the unique position of the *Rakshapursha* or Protector of *Mamamkam*.

The conquest of Tirunavai ushered in an era of bitter rivalry between the Zamorin and the Valluvakonatiri. The loss of Tirunavai dealt a mortal blow to the power and prestige of the Valluvakonatiri and his forces were relentlessly pursued by the Zamorin's army. It is learnt from the *Unnichirutevicharitam* written towards the close of the 13th century that the war between the Zamorin and the Valluvakonatiri was still going on. This furnishes evidence of the fact that the conquests of the Zamorin described above must have been effected in the course of the 12th and 13th centuries. Elated by his success at Tirunavai the Zamorin continued his conquests. Before long he brought Nilambur, Manjeri, Malappuram and Venkatakkotta (Kottakkal) within his sphere of influence. Nedunganad, a petty principality lying between the dominions of the Valluvakonatiri and Palghat Raja (Tarur Swarupam), was also annexed by him. The Eralpad was appointed Governor of the newly acquired tract with his headquarters at Karimpuzha.

Conquest of Talappilli

The Zamorin next turned his attention to the territories of the Talappilli Rajas who held sway over the region comprised of the whole of the present Talappilli taluk and the coastal region from Ponnani to Chettuvai. Faced with the mounting aggression of the Zamorin the Rajas of Talappilli submitted without resistance. The Punnathur chief, the most important of the Talappilli Rajas, was taken into the inner counsels of the Zamorin and conferred the privilege of taking part in his *Ariyittuvazhcha* (coronation). The Zamorin then conquered the whole of Ponnani taluk which formed part of Valluvanad and forced the Perumpadappu Swarupam to abandon its headquarters at Chitrakutam in Vanneri and move into Tiruvanchikulam. In the meantime the help rendered to the Zamorin by the Muslims in his campaigns in Valluvanad had roused the bitter enmity of the Namboothiris against Calicut and made them seek the patronage of the Perumpadappu chief as the head of the Chowaram faction. In the course of the 14th century the Zamorin further extended his conquests and acquired a sort of suzerainty over central Kerala. The *Kokasandesam* composed about 1400 A.D. bears evidence to the fact that by the end of the 14th century Trikanamatilakam near Tiruvanchikulam had already come into the possession of the Zamorin and that the Eralpad was in residence here at this time. As already noted, the Perumpadappu Swarupam moved its headquarters from Tiruvanchikulam to Cochin sometime about 1405 A.D. in order to escape from the immediate threat posed by the Zamorin's forces.

Beginnings of the Conflict with Cochin

The grand conflict between Cochin and Calicut was to begin in the 15th century. It was the internal dissensions in the Perumpadappu Swarupam that provided the opportunity to the Zamorin to interfere in the politics of Cochin. The *Mutha tavazhi* sought his help against the *Elaya Tavazhi* to which branch the ruling sovereign of Cochin then belonged. The Zamorin decided to oblige the former and marched his army into the territories of the

Cochin Raja. The ruling Raja was defeated and his palace at Trichur was occupied. The *Mutha Tavazhi* prince was installed on the throne of Cochin. He acknowledged the Zamorin's overlordship and agreed to pay him an annual tribute. He also undertook to supply regular contingents to the Calicut army and to sell all his pepper and merchandise only through the Calicut port. The triumph of the Zamorin over the Cochin Raja was facilitated by the help he received from the chiefs of Edappalli and Cranganore and the steady supply of men and arms made to him by the Muslim merchants in his dominion. After his successful campaign in the Trichur area the Zamorin turned against the Palghat Raja and conquered Naduvattam. The Kutiravattathu Nair who successfully accomplished this task was made the Governor of the newly conquered tract. Kollangode belonging to the Venganad Nambitis also came under Zamorin's imperial sway. Thus when the Portuguese landed in the Kerala coast in 1498 the Zamorin was a powerful sovereign who had under him almost all the chieftains of North Kerala including the Raja of Cochin as his vassals.

Relations with the Kolathiri

The Zamorin was also able to bring the powerful Kolathiri Raja of North Kerala under his control. The two rulers were bitter rivals in the commercial and political fields. Though we have no details regarding the relations between the two, a story which is told in this connection is of considerable significance. A prince of Kolathunad who had been stationed as Viceroy at Pantalayani Kollam in the southern part of the Kolathiri's dominion fell in love with a princess of the Zamorin's family during one of his visits to Calicut. The princess eloped to Pantalayani along with her lover. The Zamorin was furious on receipt of this news and he accused the Kolathiri of having deliberately intrigued with a view to bringing dishonour to his family. The Zamorin set his army in motion and occupied all the territory up to Pantalayani Kollam. The princess and her descendants were denied the right to a share in the Zamorin's ancestral properties. However, at the instance of the Zamorin, the Kolathiri created a separate estate for the princess at Nileswaram in the northern part of his dominion with 3,000 Nairs under her. The Nileswaram royal family is said to have originated from this princess. The Kolathiri also conferred on the Zamorin certain *Melkoyma* rights over the famous Taliparamba temple and also gave back whatever territory he had conquered from him by force. Thus the Zamorin had succeeded in bringing Kolathunad also in his sphere of influence on the eve of the Portuguese arrival in Kerala.

Administration under the Zamorins

The administration of Calicut under the Zamorins was based on liberal principles. The king was no doubt an autocrat but his powers were not unlimited. He was obliged to obey the customary law of the land and listen to the counsel of his ministers. The Zamorin was assisted in the discharge of his duties by four chief ministers called *Sarvadhikaryakar* and a series of minor ministers called *Karyakar*. The Mangat Achan was the seniormost of the

chief ministers and he held a unique position in the government of the kingdom. Next in importance was the Dharmoth Panikkar, the hereditary instructor-in-arms to the Zamorin and the officer-in-charge of the royal *Kalari* (Gymnasium). The other two chief ministers were Tinayancheri Elayath and Varakkal Paranambi, both of whom had a status equivalent to that of Brahmins and as such enjoyed certain special privileges and immunities.

The Zamorin's kingdom was divided into *Nadus* or districts each of which was under a hereditary Governor or *Naduvazhi*. The *Naduvazhi* paid *Purushantaram* or succession fee to the Zamorin and also sent him presents on such occasions as *Onam*, *Vishu*, *Mamamkam*, *Ariyittuvazhcha* (Zamorin's coronation) etc. He also helped the Zamorin with regular contingents of trained troops in times of war.

There was an elaborate civil service to attend to the day-to-day work of administration. The taxes due to the State were collected by the *Karyakars* and their accounts submitted to the king by the *Menokkis* or Accountants of the palace. The Zamorin maintained his records and accounts in the Kollam, Era. Duarte Barbosa who wrote early in the 16th century has observed that the Zamorin "keeps many clerks in his palace. They are all in one room, separate and far from the king, sitting on benches and there they write all the affairs of the king's revenue and his alms and the pay which is given to all and the complaints which are presented to the king, and at the same time the accounts of the collection of taxes. There are seven or eight who always stand before the king with pens. These clerks always have several leaves subscribed by the king in blank and when he commands them to despatch any business, they write it on these leaves". The capital city of Calicut had a Governor and customs office of its own.

The Zamorin maintained an efficient military machine. Each *Desam* had its *Kalari* or Gymnasium in which the Nair youths were given training in the use of arms such as sword and shield, bow and arrow and the lance. After completing the course of training in the *Kalari* every young man formally appeared before the *Naduvazhi* to pay the customary *Nuzzar* and receive the sword as a token of his formal admission into the local militia. He was liable to be enlisted for active service whenever desired by the chief. Cities like Calicut had standing armies under the command of officers called *Talachennors*. The Zamorin had also a cavalry force under the Kutiravattathu Nair and an Ordnance Department under Tinayancheri Elayath who was also known as *Vetikurukkal*. The navy of the Zamorin was manned mainly by Mappilas and the Kunjali Marakkars were its admirals.

The king was the fountain of justice but he was assisted in the performance of his judicial duties by his officers and on special occasions by learned Brahmins well-versed in the *Sastras*. Justice was administered free to all, no fee being levied from the suitors. Disputes regarding property were settled by *ad hoc* committees called *Panchayats*. The debtors were not shown any clemency and it was obligatory on their part to settle the debts promptly.

Criminal justice was, however, administered in a primitive manner. Caste tribunals tried cases involving offences against morality and religion. Thus the Namboothiri women accused of adultery were tried before a caste tribunal, the whole procedure being called *Smartavicharam*. Those who were found guilty were subjected to excommunication. Death penalty was inflicted in cases of serious crimes Such as murder, dacoity, robbery, treason etc. Whipping, flogging and mutilation were common punishments even for the most ordinary crimes. It may be noted that Brahmins enjoyed exemption from all such punishments.

Cultural Progress

Under the early Zamorins Calicut made significant contributions to the cultural heritage of Kerala. Their services to learning and culture overshadowed their achievements in all other fields. The city of Calicut became a *rendezvous* of scholars and men of letters as the Zamorins patronised learning and literature most lavishly. Manavikrama the Great (1466-1471) was the most celebrated of the early Zamorins who distinguished himself in the field of letters. Himself a scholar of conspicuous merit, he wrote the *Vikramiya*, a commentary on *Murari's Anargharaghava*. His court was adorned by 18 celebrated royal poets called *Patinettarakavikal* of whom the most distinguished were Uddanda Sastrikal, the two Payyur Bhattatiris (Maharshi and his son Parameswara), Damodara Bhattatiri of Kakkasseri, Narayanan Namboothiri of Chennas and Punam Namboothiri. Uddanda, a scholar from Latapuram in Tondaimandalam (Chingleput district) wrote the Sanskrit works *Kokilasandesha* and *Mallikamaruta*. The Payyur Bhattatiris were well-known authorities on *Mimamsa*. Kakkasseri Bhattatiri wrote the *Vasumati Manavikrama*, a Sanskrit drama which describes the story of Manavikrama's marriage with Vasumati, the daughter of Mangat Achan. Chennas Narayanan Namboothiri wrote the famous *Tantrasamuchaya* which deals with Tantric rituals and temple architecture. Unlike the scholars mentioned above, Punam Namboothiri was a distinguished scholar in Malayalam. Uddanda was so much impressed by Punam's erudition that he presented, to him his upper garment as a token of generous admiration.

Calicut under the early Zamorins attained fame as the venue of the famous seven day literary assembly known as the *Revati Pattathanam*. It was so called because it commenced its deliberations on the day of Revati asterism in the month of Tulam (October-November). The assembly was held every year under, the Zamorin's patronage in the Tali temple at Calicut and was attended by scholars and poets from all parts of Kerala and outside. The scholars who emerged from the deliberations of the assembly as the most distinguished of the lot were conferred the title of *Bhatta*. Scholars like Uddanda Sastrikal and Kakkasseri Bhattatiri were associated with the *Pattathanam*. The former came to Kerala particularly to take part in this annual literary assembly. The defeat of Uddanda by Kakkasseri Bhattatiri is one of the famous episodes in the history of the *Pattathanam*. It was a difficult task for any scholar to win the

title of *Bhatta* at the *Pattathanam*. The celebrated Sanskrit scholar Narayana Bhattatiri who lived in the Portuguese period was himself admitted to the honour only after it was denied to him six times. The *Pattathanam* was attended by the representatives of all the *Sabha Mutts* of Kerala and head of the Payyur family acted as the chief judge. Discussions on such projects as *Mimamsa*, *Vyakarana*, *Vedanta* etc, were held at the assembly. At the end of the deliberations the Zamorin presented the title of *Bhatta* and a cash award to the winners whose names were read out by his Chief Minister Mangat Achan from the list supplied by the judges. The institution of the *Pattathanam* helped to win for the Zamorin a high place in the field of culture in the same way as the *Mamankam* helped to win for him a unique -status in the political field.

Calicut in Foreign Accounts

The accounts of foreign travellers who visited the coast in the medieval period give us interesting glimpses of the Zamorin and the conditions prevailing in his kingdom. The earliest notice we have of Calicut is from the pen of Ibn Batuta (1342-1347) who visited the place at least six times. He describes Calicut as “one of the great ports of the district of Malabar” where “merchants from all parts of the globe are found”. “The King of this place,” says Ibn Batuta, “is an infidel who shaves his chin just as the Haidari Fakeers of Rome do. When we approached the place, the people came out to meet us and with a large concourse brought us into the port. The greater part of the Muhammadan merchants of this place are so wealthy that one of them can purchase the whole freightage of such vessels put in here and fit out others like them”. The African traveller refers to the large fleet of Chinese merchant vessels that lay anchored at the Calicut port during his visit.

Ma Huan, a Chinese Muslim was the next important foreigner to visit Calicut. He was impressed by the large scale cultivation of pepper and coconut in the Zamorin’s kingdom. There was a considerable Muslim element in the population of Calicut with 20 to 30 mosques to cater to their religious needs. The traveller is all praise for the king’s officers who valued the cargo at the port and especially for the accuracy of the calculations they made with their toes and fingers. The peculiar system of succession by which the reigning Zamorin was succeeded not by his son but by his sister’s son came in for his special notice.

At the time of Abdur Razzak’s visit in 1443 there was a preponderance of trade with Arab countries at the port of Calicut, Chinese trade having declined in volume. He says, “Calicut is a perfectly secured harbour, which, like that of Ormuz, brings together merchants from every city and from every country. In it are to be found abundance of precious articles brought hither from maritime countries and especially from Abyssinia, Zirbad and Zanzibar. From time to time ships arrive there from the shore of the House of God and other parts of the Hedjas and abide at will, for a greater or longer space, in this harbour. The town is inhabited by infidels and situated in a hostile shore. It contains a considerable number of Mussalmans, who are constant residents

here, and have built two mosques, in which they meet every Friday to offer up prayer. They have one Kady, a priest, and for the most part they belong to the sect Schafie. Security and justice are also firmly established in the city, that the most wealthy merchants bring thither from maritime countries considerable cargoes, which they unload and unhesitatingly send into the markets and bazaars, without thinking in the meantime of any necessity of checking the account or of keeping watch over the goods. The officers of the Customs-House take upon themselves the charge of looking after the merchandise, over which they keep watch day and night. When a sale is effected they levy a duty on the goods of one-fortieth part; if they are not sold, they make no charges on them. In other parts, a strange practice is adopted. When a vessel sets sail for a certain point, and suddenly is driven by a decree of Divine Providence into another roadstead, the inhabitants, under the pretext that the wind has driven it there, plunder the ship. But at Calicut every ship, when it puts into this port, is treated like other vessels, and has no trouble of any kind to put up with”.

Nicolo Conti (1444) and Athanasius Nikitin (1468-1474) who came later have alluded to the rich trade in pepper, ginger, cinnamon and other spices at Calicut. The latter was particularly impressed by the ‘big bazaar’ of Calicut city. Thus the accounts of the foreign travellers give us a fairly good picture of the commercial glory and the attendant economic prosperity of the Zamorin’s kingdom during the period prior to the arrival of Portuguese.

CHAPTER XIV

MINOR PRINCIPALITIES

In the preceding three chapters, we have sketched the broad outlines of the early history of the four important kingdoms, viz., Venad, Kolathunad, Cochin and Calicut which rose to power in Kerala on the ruins of the Kulasekhara Empire. In this chapter we shall attempt a general survey of the minor kingdoms or principalities that played an equally significant role in the politics of Kerala during the period of the conflict between the Portuguese, the Dutch and other European powers for the political and commercial supremacy of this coast. Before we deal with these kingdoms one after the other, it is necessary to have an idea of the general features of Kerala polity on the eve of the arrival of the Portuguese.

Kerala Polity on the eve of the Arrival of the Portuguese

With no strong central power in the country to guide the destinies of the people and with a series of small principalities at loggerheads with one another, Kerala on the eve of the arrival of the Portuguese (1498), presented the tragic picture of a feudal polity with its attendant evils and weaknesses. Calicut and Venad were the really major powers at the time, for their rulers alone possessed sovereign political rights. The Kolathiri and the Cochin Rajas had already come within the sphere of influence of the Zamorin. The rulers of the minor kingdoms who did not possess sovereign authority acknowledged the supremacy of the major powers like the Zamorin. Apart from the *Naduvazhis* or rulers of the various kingdoms, there were a number of Nair chieftains or *Madampis* and few Namboothiri chieftains too who exercised effective authority in their respective domains. They corresponded to the feudal barons of medieval Europe in so far as they provided the sovereigns or *Naduvazhis* with fighting forces in times of war and internal commotion. It is also worth mentioning that each of the principalities had also its own *Chaver* squads, most of whom were mercenaries. Their activities created everywhere conditions bordering on anarchy and lawlessness.

The peculiar religious polity of Kerala supplied yet another element of discord in a situation already complicated by a weak feudal set-up. The Devaswams or temples of the Hindus occupied a special position in those days. Each important temple had within its jurisdiction a well-defined territory called *Sanketam* managed by the *Uralar*. The *Sanketam* was almost a 'State within the State' with its own organs of government and the ruling sovereigns had no effective control over them. They also provided the rulers with a safe place or sanctuary for asylum during times of war and internal disorder, for their precincts were inviolable. In view of the importance of

temples the rulers of the age sought to acquire *Melkoyma* rights over temples situated in territories over which they had no political jurisdiction. Thus the rulers of Cochin, Palghat, Calicut and Kakkad acquired well-defined powers over the Tiruvilvamala *Davaswam* in Talappalli taluk, the Raja of Cochin over the temples of Haripad and Tiruvalla in Alleppey district, the chiefs of Vadakkumkur and Parur over the Vadakkunnathan and Perumanam temples in Trichur taluk and the Raja of Venad over the Vaikom temple. The Rajas often resorted to intrigues and counter-intrigues in their attempts to obtain *Melkoyma* rights over such temples situated outside their political domains.

Another feature of the religious polity of the age was the dominant status of the Namboothiris. They owed no territorial loyalties and were under the jurisdiction of the Namboothiri chief, Azhuvancheri Tamprakkal, who alone could give them any punishment. The Namboothiri *Janmis* who were trustees of temples also enjoyed the power to award capital punishment to their tenants (*Kollum Kolayum*). Thus, at the time of the arrival of the Portuguese, Kerala was in a distracted political condition with a number of petty chieftains engaged in endless feuds and a curious religious polity. With this picture of the political and religious conditions in the background, we may proceed to consider the most important of the minor principalities that lay dotted on the political map of Kerala from Elayadathu Swarupam in the south to Kumbala in the north.

Elayadathu Swarupam

The Elayadathu Swarupam originated as an offshoot of the Venad family. In the 14th century the Venad kingdom came to be divided equally between the original Venad family and a new branch to which it gave rise, *viz*, the Kunnummel branch or Elayadathu Swarupam. While the coastal areas from Kannetti to Trivandrum and the territories to the south of the latter constituted the old Venad or Quilon kingdom, all territories to the north of Trivandrum excluding the coastal areas referred to above were included in the Elayadathu Swarupam. Nedumangad, Kottarakkara and portions of Pathanapuram and Shencotta were also included in it. The Elayadathu Swarupam had its headquarters at first at Kunnummel near Kilimanur, but it was later shifted to Kottarakkara. By the 16th century a branch of the Elayadathu Swarupam set up residence at Nedumangad in the southernmost part of the kingdom and it came to be called Peraka *tavazhi* (the Peritaly of the Dutch). The Elayadathu Swarupam played an important part in the politics of Kerala in the Dutch period. It was annexed to Travancore in 1742 during the reign of Marthanda Varma (1729-'58).

Desinganad and Trippappur

Quilon was the original seat of the Venad rulers. In the first half of the 15th century the Venad kingdom again split itself up into two or more branches. The Trippappur Muppan or heir-apparent built a palace at Tiruvitamkode and moved his residence to that place from Trippappur. He continued to stay at Tiruvitamkode till the construction of the Darpakulangara palace at

Kalkulam (Padmanabhapuram) in the latter half of the 16th century. Eventually this branch came to be associated with Trippappur Swarupam (later Travancore) while the Quilon branch came to be associated with Desinganad (Signatti). It is with the rulers of the latter branch that the Portuguese and the Dutch who came to Quilon had their dealings. The Raja of Quilon developed close relations with the ruler of Kayamkulam in 1731 by the adoption of certain members from the Kayamkulam family in defiance of the wishes of Marthanda Varma. This led to serious complications. Marthanda Varma invaded Quilon and took the Raja prisoner. The latter however, soon escaped from prison and joined his ally. The Kayamkulam Raja brought the Quilon territories under his sway on the death of the Quilon Raja. With the annexation of Kayamkulam in 1746 the territories of the erstwhile Quilon kingdom came completely under the rule of Marthanda Varma.

Attingal

The Attingal estate comprised of about 15,000 acres of land covering seven villages in the Chirayinkil taluk of Trivandrum district. They were Edakkodu, Ilamba, Mudakkal, Alamkode, Avanavanchery, Attingal and Kizhattingal. The estate had its origin in the 14th century during the reign of Udaya Marthanda Varma (1314-44) when two princesses from the family of the Kolathiri Raja of north Malabar were adopted into the Venad royal family. A palace was constructed at Attingal for the residence of the senior Rani and another at Kunnummel for the Junior Rani. The country around Attingal was assigned to the Ranis and they were also given the right to the exclusive enjoyment of the revenues derived therefrom. The Attingal Ranis did not exercise sovereign powers but in view of their close relations with the Venad royal family they enjoyed a special status. It may be noted that it was the male offspring of the Attingal Tampurattis who inherited the throne of Venad (Desinganad and Trippappur). Though Attingal was not an independent queendom, the Tampurattis sometimes entered into independent transactions with foreign powers and created complications for the rulers of Venad. Hence during the reign of Marthanda Varma the Attingal estate was formally absorbed by him into Travancore in the exercise of the sovereign powers vested in him as the head of the Trippappur Swarupam.

Karunagapally

The principality of Karunagapally called Marta or Carnapoli in European accounts had its capital at Maruturkulangara. It included portions of the Karunagapally, Mavelikara, and Karthikapally taluks. The ruler of this kingdom possessed some parts in common with the Kayamkulam Raja. Marta was absorbed in the kingdom of Kayamkulam sometime before the latter was annexed by Marthanda Varma (1746).

Karthikapally

The Karthikapally kingdom, referred to as Bettimeni or Karimbali in Dutch records, was a petty principality lying between the northern portions of

Kayamkulam and the southern portions of Purakkad. The ruler of the kingdom had his residence at Vattamana (Bettimeni) palace in Karthikapally. Like Marta this kingdom was also incorporated into the dominion of the Kayamkulam Raja before the annexation of the latter by Marthanda Varma.

Kayamkulam

This kingdom was originally called Odanad. It comprised of portions of Chengannur, Mavelikara, Karunagapally and Karthikapally taluks. Its original capital was at Kandiyur Mattam near Mavelikara. The inscriptions in the Kandiyur and Haripad temples refer to some of the Odanad chiefs of the 13th and 14th centuries such as Raman Kotha Varman, Raman Adicha Varman, Ravi Kerala Varman etc. The ruler of Odanad figures as a signatory in the Kottayam Copper Plates of Vira Raghava Chakravarti (1225). The *Unnulisandesam* (1350-'65) refers to a ruler of Odanad by name Iravi Varma. Unniati, the heroine of the *Unniaticharitam* (1400), was the daughter of Kerala Varma, the nephew of Iravi Varma. The *Unniaticharitam* and *Sivavilasam* (1400) contain beautiful descriptions of Kerala Varma and his capital at Kandiyur Mattam. In the 15th century the capital of Odanad was shifted to Eruva in Kayamkulam. Thereafter, the kingdom was known as Kayamkulam (Kulli Quilon). It was an extensive principality with a long sea coast. The Portuguese and the Dutch had close commercial relations with it. Kayamkulam attained added importance after the absorption of the territories of Marta and Bettimeni (Vattamana). Its ruler played a leading role in the confederacy of the northern States which opposed the advance of Travancore. It was annexed to Travancore in 1746 by Marthanda Varma.

Purakkad

The Purakkad or Chempakasseri kingdom (Porca of European accounts) lay to the north of Kayamkulam. It comprised of the present Ambalapuzha and Kuttanad taluks. It was ruled over by a line of Brahmin rulers known as the 'Devanarayanans' who were famous for their patronage of learning and letters. Such literary stalwarts as Melpattur Narayana Bhattatiri and Kunjan Nambiar enjoyed the patronage of the Chempakasseri Raja. The Devanarayanans were also very tolerant of their Christian subjects and permitted them to build many churches in their domain. The ancestral home of the Chempakasseri Rajas was Kudamalur in Kottayam taluk. The Portuguese had close relations with the kingdom. The Raja sided at times with the Portuguese and at other times with other local powers against the latter. It is worth mentioning that the kingdom had a fine fleet which was under the command of the Purakkad Arayan and it participated in several military operations of the period. The Purakkad kingdom played an important part in the commerce of the Dutch East India Company on the Malabar coast. In 1746 the kingdom was annexed to Travancore by Marthanda Varma on the pretext that its ruler had helped the Kayamkulam Raja against Travancore.

Pantalam

Pantalam was a very small principality comprised of a few villages in the present Chengannur taluk. The Pantalam Rajas trace their descent from the Pandyan kings of Madurai who had territories on either side of the Western Ghats. The Pantalam chiefs were held in high esteem because of their intimate association with the Sastha temple at Sabarimala. Marthanda Varma did not annex Pantalam as its ruler helped him in the campaigns against Kayamkulam. During the invasion of Tipu Sultan the Pantalam chief was called upon to contribute towards the expenses of the Travancore Government in conducting the war. Having been in a difficult financial position, the chief borrowed two lakhs and twenty thousand rupees charging the debt on the tracts owned by him. In 996 K.E. (1819-'20) the Travancore Government took over all the Pantalam possessions as the Pantalam Raja failed to redeem his debts to the Travancore Durbar.

Tekkumkur

The Tekkumkur principality comprised the present taluks of Changanacherry, Kanjirapally, Tiruvalla and Kottayam, a portion of the Minachil taluk and the whole of the High Ranges which formerly formed the southern part of the kingdom of Vempolinad (Bimbalidesa in Sanskrit). It was some time about 1100 A.D. that Vempolinad split itself up into two kingdoms, viz., Vadakkumkur and Tekkumkur. The Tekkumkur kingdom was bounded on the south by Kayamkulam and on the north by Vadakkumkur and Kizhumalainad. The rulers of both the dynasties are indiscriminately referred to in Sanskrit works as 'Bimbalisas' and 'Manikantans'. The Tekkumkur Rajas had originally their residence at Vennimala and Manikantapuram and sometime later it was shifted to Nettaseri in the outskirts of Kottayam. Its rulers who were subordinate to Cochin co-operated with Kayamkulam and other northern States in the wars against Travancore. Hence in 1749 the kingdom was annexed to Travancore by Marthanda Varma.

Vadakkumkur

As already stated, the principality of Vadakkumkur was carved out of the erstwhile Vempolinad kingdom sometime about 1100 A.D. It was the northern portion of the Vempolinad kingdom that came to be known as Vadakkumkur. It comprised the Ettumanur and Vaikam areas and a portion of the Minachil taluk and had its capital first at Kaduthuruthi and later at Vaikam. Kizhumalainad which comprised the Muvattupuzha and Thodupuzha taluks of the present day and had its capital at Karikode near Thodupuzha merged in Vadakkumkur about 1600 A.D. Thereafter the Vadakkumkur Rajas had their residence at Karikode as well. The Vadakkumkur kingdom at its height was bounded on the west by the Vembanad lake, on the east by the Pandya country, on the south by Tekkumkur and on the north by Kothamangalam. The kingdom was for long subordinate to the Perumpadappu Swarupam. It was known to the Portuguese as 'Piementa' or the pepper kingdom as pepper of good quality grew here in abundance. The Dutch had a factory at Vechur in

the Vadakkumkur territory. The Vadakkumkur Raja helped Kayamkulam in its war against Travancore and consequently it was annexed by Marthanda Varma in 1750 after the annexation of Tekkumkur. The Raja took refuge in the Zamorin's kingdom, but later he was invited to come back and given a pension.

Punjar

Punjar, like Pantalam, was a small principality under a family which traces descent from the Pandyan kings of Madurai. In memory of their migration the family still worships Lord Sundareswara and Goddess Minakshi, the chief deities of the Madurai temple. According to tradition the ancestors of the Punjar family were, on their arrival in Kerala, received with hospitality by some of the local Rajas and Namboothiri chieftains including the Edappalli chief who had married a woman of their family. Their chief Manavikrama Kulasekhara Perumal acquired the tract of Punjar in the present Minachil taluk and also the whole of the High Ranges from the Tekkumkur Raja and exercised sovereign powers over the area. The Punjar family became subject to Travancore with the conquest and annexation of Tekkumkur and Vadakkumkur by Marthanda Varma in 1749-'50. It may be noted that the High Ranges of Idukki district which now abound in rich tea estates (540.5 sq.kms) were leased out by the Punjar Rajas to European planters in the 19th century. In fact, the beginnings of the famous Kannan Devan Hills Concession lie in the agreement between an English planter by name John Daniel Munro and Kerala Varma Valia Raja of Punjar dated July 11, 1877.

Karappuram

Karappuram, also called Moutan (Muttam), was comprised of the present Shertallai taluk. It extended from Purakkad in the south to Palluruthi in the north. Madathinkara, the seat of one of the branches of the Cochin royal family (Madathinkal), was situated in this kingdom. Karappuram was ruled by 72 Nair nobles or *Madampis* of whom the most important were the Muthedath and Iledath Kaimals. Arathinkal, an important centre of Jesuit activity in Kerala, was situated in the territory of the Muthedath Kaimal. The Karappuram Kaimals were closely allied with the Rajas of Cochin. Karappuram was for long a bone of contention between Travancore and Cochin as the latter was in possession of the tract for sometime by virtue of the right of adoption. The territory was finally ceded to Travancore by Cochin under the terms of the treaty of 1762.

Anchi Kaimals

Ernakulam and suburbs were in the possession of five powerful Nair nobles known as Anchi Kaimals of whom the most important was Cheranellur (Cherally) Kartha. These nobles frequently changed their allegiance from the Zamorin to the Cochin Raja and *vice versa*. Besides the Anchi Kaimals, there were several other powerful Nair chieftains to the north of Ernakulam. Of these the most important were the Muriyanattu Nambiar, the Paliath Achan,

Naikaruveettil Achan, Kotasseri Kaimal, Koratti Kaimal, Chanagaram Kotha Kaimal and the Panambukattu Kaimal. These Nair nobles exercised immense powers within their domains, though they nominally owned allegiance to the Raja of Cochin.

Edappalli

Edappalli or Elangallur Swarupam (Rapolim of European accounts) was a small kingdom situated in the vicinity of Cochin. It was founded by the powerful Namboothiri Brahmin who performed priestly duties in the temple of Trikkakara lying in the territory of Kalkarainad. With the fall of the Kulasekhara Empire in 1102 and the disappearance of Kalkarainad the Namboothiri priest set up an independent principality with headquarters at Edappalli. The islands of Vaipin and Cochin originally belonged to the Edappalli kingdom. Sometime about 1400 A.D. one of the Edappalli chiefs gifted these islands to a ruler of Cochin who happened to be his son. His successors could never reconcile themselves to this cession of territory to the ruler of Cochin and made repeated attempts in vain to regain it. The Zamorin attacked Cochin several times to regain the territory for the Edappalli chief who rendered him active help in his wars against Cochin. The Elangallur Nambiatiri (Edappalli chief) also commanded the Zamorin's forces in some of the wars. The kingdom was often invaded by the Portuguese in the 16th century, the attacks by Pacheco (1504) and D'Souza (1536) being the fiercest. In 1740 the Edappalli chief entered into a treaty with the Dutch East India Company. Marthanda Varma spared Edappalli from annexation out of respect for the person of the chief who was a Namboothiri of the highest class. It may be noted that the Edappalli chief had under him territories in other taluks also, viz., Vazhapalli in Kunnathunad taluk, Trikunnappu (Tercunapalli or Pagodingo) in Karthikapalli taluk and Kalluppara in Tiruvalla taluk. Edappalli continued to enjoy an independent status till the first quarter of the 18th century. In 1820 it was placed by the English under the protection of the Cochin Raja, but as the chief protested against this action it was retransferred to Travancore in 1825 A.D.

Parur

Parur was a small principality ruled over by a Namboothiri chief. It was also known as Pindinivattathu Swarupam. It included within itself the territories comprised in the present Parur taluk in the Ernakulam district lying on the northern side of the Periyar river. The Raja owed allegiance to the Cochin ruler and enjoyed certain special privileges. In 1764 he surrendered himself to Travancore and the State was annexed, by the Dharma Raja.

Alangad

Alangad (Mangat) was a small principality ruled by a Samanta chief. Originally it belonged to the Mangat Kaimal and hence the kingdom came to be called Mangat. The ruler was known as Muteripad. The Alangad principality comprised such villages as Alangad, Airur, Chengamanad,

Kotakulangara, Manjapra etc., and extended over the forest regions skirting the river Periyar on the east up to Malayattur. Along with Purakkad, Parur and Vadakkumkur the principality of Alangad was one of the four pillars of the Cochin kingdom in its wars with other chiefs. Alangad acknowledged the supremacy of Travancore and it was formally annexed to that State in 1764.

Cranganore

The principality of Cranganore (Kodungallur), otherwise called Padinjattedathu Swarupam, exercised sway over the present Cranganore taluk. The origin of the Cranganore family is obscure. The Cranganore chief claims descent from one of the Kshatriya chieftains of the Chera emperors of old. It is suggested that the Kshatriya captain concerned was one of those who accompanied Rajendra Chola when the latter captured Tiruvanchikulam early in the 11th century A.D. The Cranganore chiefs did not enjoy independent status as they owed allegiance throughout either to the Zamorin or to the Raja of Cochin. It had been customary for the male members of the Cranganore family to marry princesses from the Zamorin's family. The principality was occupied by the Portuguese and the Dutch in the days of their predominance. In 1790 it was occupied by Tipu Sultan. In 1791 Cranganore came under the English East India Company but later it was restored to the Raja of Cranganore. The Raja preferred to be subordinate to the Cochin ruler and Cranganore came to be administered thereafter as one of the taluks of Cochin State. The Cranganore royal family has rendered meritorious services to the cause of learning and literature.

Airur

Airur known as Pappinivattam or Papanietty in European accounts was a small principality lying between Cranganore in the south and Chettuvai in the north. A branch of the Cranganore royal family ruled over this principality subject to the control of the Zamorin. In 1717 it was captured by the Dutch from the Zamorin. In the vicinity of Cranganore and Airur were a number of local chieftains such as the Vellose Nambiar (Lord of Mapranam), Changaramkanda Kaimal, Chittur Namboothiri and Pazhancheri Nair.

Talappilli

The Talappilli (Siroviharam in Sanskrit) kingdom comprised the whole of the present Talappilli taluk and the coastal region from Ponnani to Chettuvai. It included such places as Guruvayur, Kunnamkulam and Wadakkancherri. The Talappilli family consisted of four branches or *Tavazhis*, viz., Ainikkur, Punnathur, Manakkulam and Kakkad and the chiefs of the four branches were collectively known as Talappilli Rajas. The Kakkad branch became extinct in the 18th century and its properties came to be divided among the members of the other three branches. Since then the eldest male member of all the branches taken together was called Kakkad Karanavappad. He was the Commander-in-chief of the Cochin Raja's forces in the northern part of that State. The Punnathur branch separated itself from the collateral branches

even as early as the 15th century and joined the side of the Zamorin against the Cochin ruler. The major portions of the present Chowghat taluk and adjoining places like Kunnamkulam, Kakkad and Chittilappalli formed part of the Punnathur chieftdom. Kottappadi near Guruvayur has been the seat of the Punnathur family. During the period of the establishment of British supremacy in Malabar the Punnathur chief represented before the Company his claim to independent status, but he failed to impress the Company. The Ainikkur and Manakkulam branches were generally on the side of Cochin. Manakkulam was the smallest of the Talappilli chieftdoms. The chief of the Manakkulam family was called 'Kandan Kotha' and 'Srikanta'. The Chittanjur branch was an offshoot of the Manakkulam family. The Cherlayam house had its origin from the Ainikkur branch. Mullurkkara, a freehold estate belonging to the Paliath Achan, formed part of the Talappilli kingdom.

Valluvanad

The Valluvanad (Vallabhakshoni in Sanskrit) kingdom has an ancient history which goes back to the days of the Second Chera Empire. The Valluvanad family was founded by one Rajasekhara who lived in the 10th century A.D. His son Vallabha was a close friend of the Chola king Rajaditya who was defeated and killed by the Rashtrakuta king Krishna III in the battle of Takkolam (949). Vallabha renounced the world and became the head of the Tiruvottiyur Mutt with the name of Chaturanana Pandita as he was not able to fight by the side of his friend and die along with him in the above battle. This story is alluded to in the Sanskrit inscription of Tiruvottiyur dated 960 A.D. Another son of Rajasekhara by name Rairan Chathan figures as one of the signatories in the Jewish Copper plate of Bhaskara Ravi Varman I dated 1000 A.D.

The kingdom of Valluvanad was known as Arangottur Swarupam and its Raja as Valluvakonatiri or Vellattiri or Arangottu Udayavar or Vallabha. The original capital of the kingdom was Valluvanagaram (modern Angadipuram). At one time the Valluvakonatiri exercised sovereign powers over a considerable portion of South Malabar. Valluvanad comprised practically the whole of the present Perintalmanna and Ottappalam taluks and parts of the Ponnani, Tirur and Ernad taluks. The Valluvakonatiri presided over the *Mamamkam* festival at Tirunavai before the place was conquered by the Zamorin in the latter half of the 13th century. Ever since then the Valluvanad ruler used to send in vain his *Chaver* soldiers to kill the adversary at every *Mamamkam* and regain the lost right. A Jesuit letter of the year 1597 refers to the tragic end of 30 such *Chavers*. At the time of the Mysore invasion, the Valluvanad Raja had under his control only the Attappadi valley and a part of the present Ottappalam taluk. The Raja sought asylum in Travancore during the invasion of Tipu. On the cession of Malabar to the British by Tipu Sultan he entered into an agreement with the English East India Company and became a pensioner.

Palghat

The Palghat Rajas called the Sekhari Varmans held sway at one time over the whole of the modern Palghat, Alathur and Chittur taluks. The kingdom was also known as Tarur Swarupam. There is no tradition connecting the Palghat Rajas with the legendary Cheraman Perumal. The original seat of the Palghat Rajas was Athavanad amsam (Poinnani taluk) and they are believed to have exchanged their lands there for later dominions in the Palghat-Chittur area with Azhuvancheri Tamprakkal. The Palghat Raja figures in the tradition connected with the *Kongan Pada* festival in Chittur. The story goes that a Kongu army from Tamil Nadu consisting mainly of cavalry invaded the forces of a Cochin ruler by name Goda Varma. The territories known as Naludesam and Kodakaranad constituting the present Chittur taluk were made over to Cochin by the Palghat Raja as a token of his gratitude for the decisive help rendered by the ruler of that kingdom. The exact date of origin of the *Kongan Pada* is not known. The Palghat Rajas were always under constant military and political pressure from the Zamorin and it was on their request that Haider Ali invaded South Malabar in 1756. The Raja became a pensioner of the English East India Company after the establishment of British supremacy.

Kollangode

The Kollangode kingdom lay to the south of Palghat. Its rulers were called Venganad Nambitis. They claim descent from an ancient Kshatriya chief named Vira Ravi and hence the chiefs of Kollangode have the name Ravi Varma affixed to their names. The Kollangode principality comprised of eight villages in and near Kollangode and it was absorbed by the Zamorin during his conquests in South Malabar. The Raja of Kollangode lived as a pensioner under the English East India Company.

Kavalappara

Kavalappara was a small estate in the Ottappalam taluk, its chief being called Kavalappara Muppil Nair. The family of the Kavalappara chief claims to have got its inheritance from the inevitable Cheraman Perumal. The Kavalappara Nair has estates in the Palghat and Chittur taluks as well. Along with other chiefs in South Malabar the Nair also became subject to the Zamorin and he took part in the latter's campaigns against Cochin. The English East India Company settled with the Kavalappara chief by paying him *Malikhana* in return for his allegiance.

Vettatnad

Vettatnad (Vettam) or Tanur Swarupam comprised of parts of Ponnani and Tirur Taluks. It included within itself such places as Tanur, Trikkantiyur, Chaliyam, Triprangode, etc. The Vettatnad chief was a Kshatriya. The kingdom was called in literary works *Prakasabhu* (Land of Light) and its ruler *Prakasabhupalan*. The Vettatnad rulers were famous patrons of learning and arts. A Vettatnad Raja is said to have introduced innovations in *Kathakali* which have come to be known as the *Vettat Sambradayam* (system). He

appointed professional singers for reciting songs from the background and thus enabled the actors to concentrate on their *Abhinaya* (acting). The Vettat system also included the use of gorgeous headgears, garments, etc., the painting of the faces of the actors with different colours and the playing of the drums.

The Vettam principality accepted the suzerainty of the Zamorin during the latter's conquests in South Malabar. In the Portuguese period the Raja often held the balance of power in Malabar politics by playing the Portuguese and the Zamorin against each other. The site of the fortress of Chaliyam was sold to the Portuguese by this ruler in 1531. The family of the Vettat Raja became extinct towards the end of the 18th century.

Parappanad

Parappanad (Pappucovil of the European accounts) was a kingdom ruled by a Kshatriya family. It lay to the north of Vettatnad and consisted of two parts, southern and northern. The former comprised of parts of Tirur taluk. The northern Parappanad or Beypore consisted of Panniyankara, Beypore and Cheruvannur in the Calicut taluk. The Parappanad Rajas acknowledged the suzerainty of the Zamorin. They were roughly handled by Tipu Sultan during his invasion of Malabar in the latter half of the 18th century and several members of the family migrated to Travancore. The Lakshmipuram palace, Changanacherry, which gave birth to the great poet and scholar Kerala Varma Valia Koi Tampuran, was set up by some such immigrant princes. That branch of the family to which the poet belonged moved from Changanacherry to Karthikappally in 1865 and set up residence in the Anantapuram palace constructed in 1871. The ancestral home of the Parappanad Rajas still continues to exist at Parappanangadi.

Kurumpuranad

Beyond Calicut lay the principality of Kurumpuranad (Kurumbranad) which literally means the hilly country of the shepherds. It comprised of parts of the modern taluks of Quilandy and Calicut. The principality was ruled by the Kurumbranad family connected with that of Kottayam. The family was of Kshatriya descent and acknowledged the suzerainty of the Zamorin. The Kurumbranad Raja connived with the British in suppressing the Pazhassi revolts and in bringing the local chieftains under British supremacy. Like other Malabar Rajas, the Kurumbranad Raja was also pensioned off by the British.

Kadathanad

The Kadathanad (Khadolkachakshiti in Sanskrit) principality was comprised mainly of the modern taluk of Badagara. It extended from the Kotta river to Mahe and had its capital at Kuttipuram. At one time it was part of the Kolathiri Raja's dominion. The original seat of the family was Varakkal near Calicut. The Kadathanad family traces its descent from a union between a Kolathiri prince and a female descendant of the royal house of the Porlatiri who was driven out of Calicut by the Zamorin following his conquest of Polanad. It is believed that the kingdom came to be called Kadathanad as its territories had

to be 'crossed' during the journeys from the Zamorin's kingdom to that of the Kolathiri and *vice versa*. The chief is referred to in European accounts as Boyanore or Bavanore of Badagara, the title being a corruption of the Malayalam word *Vazhunnavaar* which means Governor. Till the end of the 17th century the Kadathanad chief was nominally subject to the Kolathiri, but in 1750 he formally assumed the title 'Raja' with the latter's consent. The Kadathanad kingdom played its part in the complicated politics of North Malabar during the period following the arrival of the European powers like the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French and the English. The Raja was pensioned off by the British along with other Malabar chieftains. The family is now divided into two branches, *viz.*, Ayancheri and Edavalat *Kovilakams*.

Kottayam

The origin of the Kottayam royal family is obscure. There is no tradition connecting it with the legendary Cheraman Perumal. It also differs from other Kerala dynasties in not recognising the eldest female as the head of the family. According to the traditional version one Harischandara Perumal who built a fort at Puralimala and resided there was the founder of the Kottayam family. The Rajas of Kottayam were therefore called '*Puralisas*'. They were also known as Puranad or Puranattu Rajas either because their original family came from outside Kerala or because they ruled over '*Purainad*' which means the land of mountains. Perhaps, the Kottayam Rajas are the descendants of the Kongu Cheras who ruled with their capital at Takadur.

From the 10th to the 14th century A.D. the regions comprised of the former taluks of Wynad, Kottayam and Guddalore were called Puraikizhanad and its *Naduvazhi* the *Puraikizhar*. He was perhaps related to the Kongu Cheras. The Puranad or Kottayam Rajas were the descendants of the Puraikizhar family. Both Kurumpurainad and Puraikizhanad are referred to in the Tirunelveli Plate of Bhaskara Ravi Varman. At times part of Kolathunad, the Kottayam principality gradually acquired independent control over the territories lying in the interior of the Tellicherry taluk and also extended its jurisdiction up to the borders of Coorg. The family came to have three branches, *viz.*, Eastern, Southern and Western. The first two had their seat at Kottayam and the last at Pazhassi.

Towards the end of the 17th century the Kottayam Rajas shared the area of the present Tellicherry taluk with the Iruvazhinad Nambiars and were in possession of Wynad including Guddalore and also of the small *nad* of Tamarasseri comprised of a few *amsams* in the erstwhile Calicut and Kurumbranad taluks. In the same century the Kottayam family produced two distinguished scholars, *viz.*, Kerala Varma Tampuran, the author of the *Valmiki Ramayanam Kilipattu* and Vidwan Tampuran, the great patron of *Kathakali* and composer of *Attakathas*. The famous Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja who fought against the British belonged to the western branch of the Kottayam family. It may be mentioned here that the Kottayam Rajas worshipped Sri Porkali Bhagavathi as their family diety.

Kurangoth

This was a small *nad* or chieftdom under the Kurangoth Nair. It lay between Tellicherry and Mahe and consisted of only two villages. The site for the Tellicherry factory acquired by the English East India Company from the *Vadakkelamkur* of the Kolathiri family was situated in the Kurangoth Nair's territory. The Nair played his part in the politics of North Malabar by setting off the English and the French against each other. In 1787 the Kurangoth Nair was caught and hanged by Tipu and his *nad* was annexed. Though *the nad* was reinstated to the family, it was absorbed as part of British Malabar in 1803-1806.

Randathara

Randathara or Poyanad, as it is sometimes called, was comprised of portions of the present Cannanore taluk. Such places as Edakkad, Anjarakandi, Mavilai, etc., were included in it. The area was ruled by four Nair families known as the Achanmar and it originally formed part of Kolathunad. The Randathara Achanmar were taken into the special protection of the English East India Company in 1741 after the formation of the Tellicherry factory.

Ali Raja of Cannanore

Cannanore city was under the control of a Muslim family known as Arakkal. The only Muslim royal family of Kerala, Arakkal house has followed the *Marumakkathayam* system of inheritance. The seniormost member of the family, whether male or female, is its head. The male chief is called the Ali Raja and the female chief the Arakkal Bibi.

The origin of the Arakkal house is shrouded in mystery. The legendary *Keralolpathi* traces it to the Cheraman Perumal. However, none of the medieval Arab travellers or Shaik Zainuddin, the author of the *Tuhafat-ul-Mujahidin* (1583), refers to the alleged association of the Arakkal family with the Chera emperors of old or alludes to its royal status. The consensus of opinion among scholars is that the Arakkal house was founded by a Nair by name Arayankulangara Nair, one of the ministers of the Kolathiri, who became a convert to Islam sometime in the 12th or 13th century. A princess of the Kolathiri house is said to have fallen in love with this Muslim youth. The Kolathiri gave his consent to the marriage between the couple and constituted a separate family or *illam* for them with all royal paraphernalia.

The Ali Raja eventually became the Lord of the Cannanore Bazaar and enjoyed, the virtual monopoly of power to procure and sell pepper, cardamom, and other spices in North Malabar. He achieved over the years a high degree of economic prosperity and political influence. The Ali Raja had also a good fleet and according to one view his very title was a variation of the words *Azhi Raja*, i.e., 'Lord of the Sea'. The Kolathiri conferred on him the Laccadive (Lakshadwip) Islands. The Portuguese, the Dutch and the English tried to maintain friendly relations with the Ali Raja because of his high standing in the field of commerce. It was at his request that Haider Ali invaded North Kerala in 1766. The acquisition of Fort Angelo (Cannanore) from the

Dutch by the Ali Raja in 1772 added to his political stature. Buchanan who visited the Arakkal palace on January 12, 1801, specifically refers to the fact that till the acquisition of Fort St. Angelo the Ali Raja had only the status of a subordinate chieftain under the Chirakkal Raja. During the period of the Mysorean occupation the political power of the Ali Raja increased further as he was given a special status and appointed for sometime as the Governor of the territories conquered by the Mysore rulers in North Malabar. In 1790 the Cannanore fort was stormed by General Abercromby and the Bibi eventually surrendered to the British. It was in accordance with an agreement with the Bibi in 1796 that the Laccadive, Minicoy and Amindivi Islands came to be administered by the British Government. The English East India Company pensioned off the Arakkal chief in the same way as they did with the other local chieftains. Buchanan who was entertained by the Bibi at a grand dinner in her house (January 12, 1801) was very much impressed by her palace which he described as “by far more comfortable and in fact by much the best native house I have seen”.

Nileswaram

The origin of the Nileswaram family may be traced to the matrimonial alliance between a princess of the Zamorin's family and a prince of Kolathunad, to which reference has been made in the previous chapter. The kingdom comprised the present Hosdurg taluk. The Nayaks of Bednore (Ikkeri Nayaks) who established themselves as an independent power in South Canara under Venkatappa Nayaka (1582-1629) carried their arms south of the Chandragiri river and invaded Nileswaram in the 17th and 18th centuries. Thus Nileswaram came under Bednore control. The Nileswaram Raja paid tribute to Sivappa Nayaka (1645-1660) but it was Somasekhara Nayaka (1714-1739) who formally annexed the kingdom of Nileswaram (1737). Somasekhara built the Hosdurg fort (1731) and also erected a *Vijayasthambha* at Nileswaram to commemorate his victory. It may be noted that the Bednore forces continued their southward march and came up to Dharmapattanam, but the combined forces of the Kolathiri and the English pushed them back. Nileswaram came formally under the British after their occupation of South Canara.

Kumbla

Kumbla was the northernmost principality of Kerala. The seat of the family is the *Mayyadi Kovilakam*. According to one view the Kumbla Raja was descended from a Kshatriya family that migrated from Northern India. The Kumbla Rajas, however, claim descent from the legendary Cheraman Perumal, like several other Kerala chieftains. They followed the *Marumakkathayam* system of succession. Buchanan (1801) says “The manners of his (Kumbla Raja's) family are the same with those of the Rajas of Malayala. All the males keep Nair girls ; but their children who are called Tambans have no right to the succession. The eldest daughter in the female line cohabits with a Tuluva Brahmin ; her eldest daughter continues the line of the family.” The dominions of the Kumbla Raja extended from the

Chandragiri river in the south to Kumbbla in the north and comprised of the bulk of the present Kasargod taluk. The area was under Vijayanagar rule in the days of Vijayanagar supremacy in South India, as is evidenced by the statement of Barbosa (1515). The Nayaks of Bednore who overran the Kasaragod area kept the Kumbbla Raja also under their sway. Like other chieftains of the coast the Kumbbla Raja was also pensioned off by the British after the annexation of South Canara.

In the preceding sections only brief sketches of the history, of the minor principalities have been given. The details regarding the political fortunes of the more important of these kingdoms can be had from the remaining chapters.

CHAPTER XV

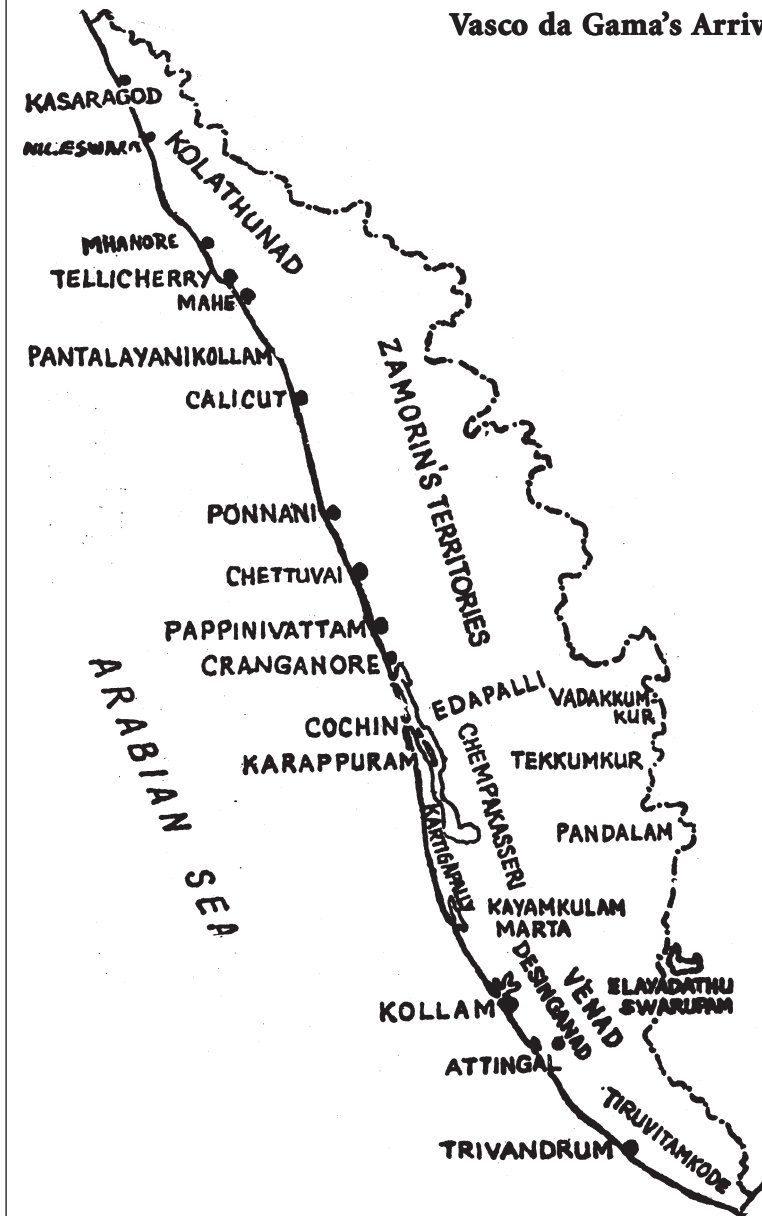
THE PORTUGUESE PERIOD

The landing of Vasco da Gama at Calicut in May 1498 marked the beginning of a new epoch in the history of Kerala. The Portuguese navigator was sent to the East by Domo Manuel, the king of Portugal, with the object of discovering a new trade route to India and expanding trade with the Orient. Though the immediate object of the Portuguese was the expansion of trade, they entertained in course of time grand visions of building up an empire in India by bringing the local powers under subjection. The bitter rivalry between the Zamorin on the one side and the Raja of Cochin, the Kolathiri and other minor powers on the other created conditions favourable for the partial realisation of the Portuguese dream at least for a short period. The Raja of Cochin who was smarting under the yoke of the Zamorin saw in the arrival of the Portuguese on the coast a golden opportunity to get foreign assistance against his traditional enemy and build up his political strength. The cold reception meted out to the Portuguese at Calicut and the frustrating experiences of the Portuguese Captains with the Zamorin helped to bring the Cochin Raja and the Portuguese closer together in a defensive and offensive alliance. In the protracted fight that followed the Zamorin played the role of the defender of the freedom of Kerala against Portuguese aggression and the Cochin Raja that of an accomplice of Portugal. The Kolathiri too rendered much help to the Portuguese in view of his traditional enmity towards the Zamorin, but there were occasions when he took a firm stand against them. The Rajas of Quilon and Purakkad were allies of the Portuguese. It was the willing help rendered to them by the local powers that helped the Portuguese to establish their commercial supremacy on the Kerala coast for more than a century and a half. The main events in the history of the rise and fall of the Portuguese power in Kerala may now be summarised.

Vasco da Gama's Expedition (1498)

On his arrival at Calicut in May 1498 Vasco da Gama was received by the Zamorin and his subjects with traditional hospitality. The Portuguese navigator met the Raja at his residence situated a few miles outside Calicut city. The interview between the two leaders failed to produce any concrete results. The request of Vasco da Gama for permission to leave a factor behind him in charge of the merchandise which he could not sell was turned down by the Zamorin. The ruler of Calicut insisted on payment of customs duty by the Portuguese in accordance with the law of the land. Vasco da Gama left Calicut in August and broke journey at Cannanore at the invitation of the

KERALA 1498 A.D.
At the time of
Vasco da Gama's Arrival



Kolathiri Raja who offered to the Portuguese facilities for trade at Cannanore. The Kolathiri entered into an informal agreement with Vasco da Gama in regard to the loading of Portuguese vessels. The Portuguese Captain set sail from Cannanore in November 1498 and reached Lisbon in 1499. Vasco da Gama was given a hero's welcome on return to his country, for his mission to the East was an unqualified success, the cargo he took with him alone being worth 60 times the cost of the expedition.

Cabral

The next expedition was equipped and sent by the Portuguese king under the leadership of Pedro Alvarez Cabral. It consisted of 33 ships and 1,500 men. After a perilous voyage Cabral reached India with only six ships. Though a tactless and self-opinionated officer, Cabral's mission was not a failure. His agent Aires Correa arrived at a settlement with the Zamorin under which the Portuguese got the right to erect a factory at Calicut. But the keen competition between the local Arabs and the Portuguese in the Indian waters created a crisis in the relations between the Portuguese and Calicut. The Portuguese captured several Arab vessels lying in the Calicut port and massacred their crew. Such premeditated acts of Portuguese barbarism infuriated the people of Calicut. The indignant mob destroyed the Portuguese factory and killed more than half of the Portuguese on land. Cabral now left Calicut in panic and sailed for Cochin.

On reaching Cochin on Christmas eve in December 1500 the Portuguese Captain was warmly received by the Cochin Raja. The Portuguese were given all facilities for trade at Cochin. The Raja also entered into an informal treaty with the Portuguese granting them permission to build a factory at Cochin. During Cabral's sojourn at Cochin he got cordial invitations from the rulers of Quilon and Cannanore promising him all help at these places to load his ships on favourable terms. Though Cabral could not proceed to Quilon, he called at Cannanore on his way and was helped by the Kolathiri Raja to load some more cargo in his ships. On his journey from Cochin to Cannanore Cabral's party was intercepted by a strong fleet of the Zamorin, but he managed to escape without any serious loss. On the whole Cabral's expedition was a triumph for the Portuguese in so far as it won for them an ally in the Cochin Raja and a fine harbour from where they could safeguard their commercial and political interests on the Kerala coast. Even before the expedition of Cabral returned home the third expedition under Joao de Nova had left for India. As the Portuguese Captain had advance information about the hostile attitude of the Zamorin, he avoided touching Calicut and landed only at Cochin and Cannanore where the rulers offered him all help to load his ships.

Vasco da Gama's Second Mission

The reports of the hostility of the Zamorin towards the Portuguese and of the poor performance of Cabral in the encounter with the Calicut fleet had upset Dom Manuel so much that he equipped in the meantime another expedition

of 15 ships and 800 men under Vasco da Gama and despatched it to India in February 1502. Vasco da Gama's fleet landed at Anjadiva and started capturing all the Arab vessels that the Portuguese came across in the Indian waters. He later visited Cannanore and was cordially received by the Kolathiri who agreed to sell pepper and other spices to the Portuguese at Cannanore at the prices prevailing at Cochin. Vasco da Gama then proceeded from Cannanore to Calicut. He called upon the Zamorin to expel all the Muslims from the city, but the demand was naturally turned down. The Portuguese thereupon bombarded the city. The rice vessels lying in the Calicut port were captured and the crew barbarously treated, their hands, ears and noses being cut off.

After his sojourn at Calicut Vasco da Gama sailed for Cochin. The Raja was placated with extravagant gifts including a gold crown and cajoled into, signing a humiliating treaty under which he was forced to sell to the Portuguese pepper, cardamom and other spices grown in his kingdom at prices to be fixed by the Captain and the Raja. The Portuguese were also given the exclusive right to build factories and station garrisons at select places in the Cochin kingdom.

During Vasco da Gama's stay at Cochin the invitation from Quilon was renewed. The Captain accepted the invitation with the approval of the Cochin Raja. Two Portuguese ships called at Quilon and returned to Cochin loaded with pepper. In the meantime, the stage was being set for a major clash of arms between Cochin and Calicut. Vasco da Gama left Cochin in a hurry out of concern for the safety of the rich cargo which he had acquired. Not all the entreaties of the Cochin Raja for help against the Zamorin could persuade him to change his mind. On, his return voyage Vasco da Gama had to encounter the Zamorin's fleet but he managed to sail away without any serious loss.

War between Calicut and Cochin

The Zamorin of Calicut had now emerged as the leader of the fight against the forces of Portuguese expansionism in Kerala. He was alarmed at the growing friendship between the Portuguese and the Cochin Raja, his vassal. A message was sent by the Zamorin to the Cochin Raja calling upon the latter to declare categorically whether he preferred the friendship of a foreign power to that of Calicut. He was also called upon to expel all the Portuguese nationals from his kingdom. The Raja who had been dreaming of a glorious future for his kingdom under Portuguese patronage refused to oblige the Zamorin. The Calicut army now marched against Cochin (March 1, 1503). The Cochin forces assisted by the Portuguese under Lorenzo Moreno heroically defended their fort at Edappalli, but they were forced to withdraw under heavy pressure from the Zamorin's army which attacked them both from the land and the sea. The Cochin army suffered heavy losses in men and material, three princes of the royal family themselves losing their lives in the fight. The Cochin Raja took refuge in the *Sanketam* of the Elangunnappuzha temple. Meanwhile the monsoon broke out and the Zamorin departed for Calicut with plans to

renew military operations after the Onam festival in August. A strong garrison was, however, left behind in the town in Cochin.

In September 1503, a Portuguese naval squadron under Francisco d'Albuquerque arrived at Cochin and it was joined at Vaipin by another vessel under Duarte Pacheco. The beleaguered Cochin garrison at Vaipin welcomed the arrival of reinforcements. The Calicut army stationed at Cochin soon withdrew from there in panic. The Cochin Raja was brought back to Cochin in triumph by the Portuguese and reinstated on the throne. In the wake of their victory the Portuguese forces ravaged the territory of the Raja of Edappalli and burnt down many villages massacring the unarmed civilian population in large numbers. The grateful Raja of Cochin granted permission to the Portuguese to erect a fort at Cochin to safeguard the interests of their factory. This fort the foundation stone for which was laid on September 27, 1503, was the earliest European fort to be built in India and it was christened Fort Manuel in honour of the king of Portugal. At the instance of the Portuguese the Cochin Raja also concluded a treaty with the Anchi Kaimals under which the latter repudiated allegiance to the Zamorin and acknowledged the supremacy of Cochin.

The Zamorin of Calicut was now making feverish preparations for another fight with the Cochin Raja and his Portuguese allies. Duarte Pacheco with 150 Portuguese soldiers and 300 native soldiers was in charge of the defence of Cochin. The Zamorin tried to strangle Cochin into submission by enforcing an embargo on all trade in rice with that port with the help of the Muslim merchants. But this move failed and the Zamorin therefore decided to start large scale military operations (1504). The Zamorin had now under his control a navy of 280 vessels manned by a crew of 4,000 men and an infantry of 60,000 men under the command of the Erulpad and the Raja of Edappalli. His attempt to attack Cochin by crossing the water ferry from Kumbalam to Palluruthi was foiled by the timely action of Pacheco. The Calicut army suffered heavy casualties with 19,000 soldiers losing their lives in the fight and 13,000 in cholera. The Zamorin was forced to withdraw after a protracted campaign which lasted for five months. The debacle at Cochin was soon followed by another at Cranganore. In 1504 the Portuguese captured Cranganore town from the Zamorin and fortified it. The Raja of Cranganore shook off his allegiance to Calicut and accepted Portuguese protection. With the capture of Cranganore the Portuguese won the first round of their fight in Kerala. The commercial interests were now firmly established in Quilon, Cochin and Cannanore.

Almeida

The Portuguese king decided at this stage to appoint a full fledged Viceroy to safeguard the interests of Portugal in the East. Francisco d'Almeida was accordingly appointed in 1505 as the first Viceroy of the Portuguese possessions in the East.

His main work was to erect or strengthen the Portuguese forts at Anjadiva, Cannanore, Malacca and Cochin. The Cannanore fort was named Fort Angelo.

The strengthening of the Portuguese positions on the Kerala coast alarmed the Zamorin. The latter put a fleet of 200 vessels manned by Turks and Arabs into action against the Portuguese. Almeida's son Laurence intercepted the Zamorin's fleet off Cannanore and inflicted heavy loss (March 10, 1506). The Zamorin succeeded at this stage in convincing the Kolathiri of the real motives of Portuguese policy in Kerala. The Kolathiri was already annoyed with the Portuguese for their violation of the safe conduct guaranteed to the ships of the Muslim merchants of Cannanore. He responded to the Zamorin's overtures and decided to put up a common fight against the Portuguese. Fort St. Angelo was besieged by the Kolathiri's troops. The siege lasted for four months and the Portuguese garrison had to undergo incalculable sufferings. The siege was raised when a Portuguese fleet of 11 ships and 300 men under Da Cunha arrived on the scene from Europe. The Kolathiri sued for peace and accepted terms favourable to the Portuguese. The Portuguese then turned their attention to the Zamorin's fleet and crippled it in action on the high seas. In the meantime, an Egyptian fleet under Mir Hussain arrived in Indian waters (1503) at the request of the Muslim merchants of Calicut and defeated the Portuguese in the battle of Chaul. The Portuguese lost the command of the sea for the time being. However, in 1509 they took revenge. The combined fleet of the Egyptians and the Zamorin was attacked and the Egyptians withdrew from the field leaving the Portuguese again in command of the Indian waters. Almeida left India in 1509 and was succeeded by Affonso de Albuquerque.

Albuquerque

Albuquerque's aim was to found a land empire for the Portuguese in India by territorial conquests and annexations and not merely to secure Portuguese trade by command of the sea as his predecessor did. One of his earliest acts was to attack Calicut city. The task was entrusted to a new fleet that had just arrived in India from Portugal under Marshal Cutinho with specific instructions to destroy the power of Calicut. The Zamorin's palace in Calicut was attacked and captured and the city was set on fire. But the Calicut forces soon rallied and drove the Portuguese back to their ships. Albuquerque was wounded in the fight and Marshal Cutinho himself was killed. Having failed to subdue the Zamorin by force Albuquerque took the momentous decision to safeguard Portuguese interests in Kerala by patching up his quarrel with the Calicut ruler even at the risk of offending the rulers of Cannanore and Cochin. In December 1513 a formal treaty was concluded between the Portuguese and the Zamorin of Calicut. Under the provisions of this treaty the Portuguese were permitted to erect a fort at Calicut on a site of their own choice, to carry on trade as they pleased and to purchase pepper from the kingdom on barter basis. The price of pepper was fixed at the same rate as at Cochin. The Zamorin also undertook to pay a portion of his customs revenue as tribute to the king of Portugal and to compensate the Portuguese for the loss sustained by the destruction of their factory at Calicut. The Portuguese on their turn promised to help the Zamorin in his wars against Cochin and Cannanore. The treaty of 1513 was a great triumph for Portuguese diplomacy.

The Cochin Raja protested in vain against this treaty in a communication to the king of Portugal. The decision of Albuquerque in the meantime to shift the headquarters of the Portuguese government in India from Cochin to Goa made the ruler of Cochin all the more aggrieved.

Albuquerque introduced a number of important administrative reforms. He enlisted Indians in his army and trained them after European methods. In doing so he anticipated the policies of Giv'e and Dupleix. He also established schools for education, introduced a fresh coinage and prohibited Sati. The administration of justice was made strict. Private trade by corrupt Portuguese officials was suppressed. The Viceroy also persuaded Portuguese officers to marry native women and he settled them within the fortress walls with all kinds of privileges. This policy of founding what are called 'mixed colonies' was motivated by the desire to create a new class of people who could be trusted to defend Portuguese interests with fidelity, but it failed to achieve the desired objective and proved to be one of the main causes of Portuguese downfall. In spite of this failure Albuquerque has claims to be regarded as the greatest of the Portuguese statesmen who came to the East. He was superseded by Lopo Soarez in 1515 and before he could set sail from India, he passed away at Goa in December 1515.

Successors of Albuquerque

The successors of Albuquerque did not make any mark as they were weak and corrupt men. Under Lopo Soarez (1515-1518) an unsuccessful attempt was made on the Zamorin's life and this led to the renewal of hostilities between the two powers. He entered into a treaty with the Queen of Quilon (September 1516) by which the Portuguese got pepper and other spices at Quilon port at the same price as at Cochin. The Portuguese were not to pay any dues at Quilon port. The local Christians were given special immunities and privileges. Under De Sequiera (1518-1522) the Cochin Raja made an unsuccessful attempt to invade Calicut with Portuguese help. During the tenure of office of Duarte de Menezes (1522-1524) there were open clashes between the Portuguese and the Muslim subjects of the Zamorin. The Mappilas captured 10 Portuguese vessels and raided Cochin port itself. They also attacked Cranganore under their able leader Kutti Ali. The Portuguese fleet at Calicut was also subjected to heavy attack.

Duarte de Menezes was found unequal to the task that faced him and therefore in 1524 Vasco da Gama was again sent to India as Viceroy. Immediately on his arrival at Goa he despatched a fleet under D'Souza and defeated Kutti Ali at Calicut. The Raja of Cannanore was forced to surrender to the Portuguese one of his distinguished naval captains, Balia Hassan and Vasco da Gama had him thrown into the dungeon in Cannanore fort. Vasco da Gama's Viceroyalty, however, lasted only for three months. He passed away at Cochin on December 24, 1524, and was buried in the present St. Francis Church in that town.

Vasco da Gama was succeeded by Henrique de Menezes (1524-1526). One of his first acts was to order the execution of Balia Hassan and this

strained the relations of the Portuguese with the Kolathiri. During his term of office there was a grim struggle between the Portuguese and the Zamorin for the command of the sea. The Kunjali Marakkars, the Admirals of the Zamorin's fleet, came into the limelight during this fight.

Kunjali Marakkars

The origin of the Kunjali Marakkars is not clear. According to tradition they were originally marine merchants of Cochin who left for Ponnani in the Zamorin's dominion when the Portuguese came to Cochin and got favours from the Raja. The Zamorin took them into his service and eventually they became the Admirals of the Calicut fleet. The Kunjalis chose the very best men to man the navy. Kutti Ali was the bravest of the persons so chosen. In 1524 the Calicut fleet under his command inflicted heavy damage on Portuguese vessels. Kutti Ali used light and fast moving armed boats to attack the heavy Portuguese vessels and developed his own technique of guerilla warfare on the sea. His 'hit and run' tactics caused considerable havoc to Portuguese shipping and trade. Henrique de Menezes organised a powerful expedition against Kutti Ali and destroyed several of his ships in the port of Ponnani. In 1525 he attacked Pantalayani Kollam which was a stronghold of the Kunjalis. The Arayan of Purakkad who was present at this attack as an ally of the Portuguese was shot at and wounded by the Portuguese Governor who suspected him of disloyalty. The chief of Purakkad, thereafter, turned against the Portuguese and helped their enemies in several ways in the future wars.

Portuguese Acquisition of Chaliyam

In the mean time the Portuguese who were being hard pressed by the Zamorin's army on land demolished their fort at Calicut and left the place. Kutti Ali's fleet continued to harass the Portuguese vessels on the sea. Lopo Vaz de Sampayo (1526-1529) who succeeded Menezes as Governor took vigorous measures to put an end to Kutti Ali's menace. The Portuguese fleet again went into action (1528) and Kutti Ali was captured prisoner off Barkur. The Zamorin reorganised his fleet under Pachachi Marakkar, a relation of Kutti Ali, Ali Abraham, a merchant of Cairo and Kunjali II, the young son of Kutti Ali. The Kunjali Marakkars now took the bold step of attacking the Portuguese possessions in Ceylon and on the East Coast. In view of the activities of the Marakkars Portuguese trade in Indian waters almost came to a standstill. Governor Sampayo was sacked by the home government and Nuno da Cunha came in his place in October 1529. The new Viceroy re-established Portuguese supremacy in Indian waters by erecting a fort at Chaliyam and garrisoning it with Portuguese troops. It may be noted that Chaliyam fell in the territory of the Raja of Vettat (Tanur) and it was with his consent that the Portuguese built the new fort (1513). The possession of Chaliyam gave the Portuguese ample opportunities to harass the Zamorin's fleet whenever they wanted. It also provided them with a base from where they could advance into the heart of the Zamorin's territory in the event of war. The Chaliyam fort was 'like a pistol held at the Zamorin's throat'.

Treaty between the Zamorin and the Portuguese (1540)

The Portuguese acquisition of Chaliyam did not, however, dishearten the Kunjali Marakkars. Kutti Ali Marakkar, the leading Captain of the Zamorin's fleet, was killed in 1531 and his place was taken by Kunjali II. It was almost a pastime with Kunjali II to capture Portuguese vessels and massacre the entire crew. The two fleets confronted each other on the high seas on many occasions. During the siege of Edappalli by Martin D'Souza (1536) Kunjali appeared before Cochin and compelled the Portuguese forces to withdraw from Edappalli. In the meantime the Zamorin made an attempt to obtain help from the Turks who had become masters of Egypt but he was not successful in his efforts. The Egyptian fleet, however, appeared off the coast of Gujarat and returned home after a show of strength without actually engaging the Portuguese in battle. The Zamorin had by this time become weary of fighting and his treasury became bankrupt owing to the loss of revenue from the declining trade of Calicut. He entered into a formal treaty with the Portuguese in January 1540. Under this treaty the Zamorin undertook to sell pepper from his territories to the Portuguese at Calicut at the rates prevailing in Cochin and also to accept Portuguese passports for the navigation of Arab vessels. The treaty also provided for Portuguese neutrality in the wars between the Zamorin and other local powers. The treaty of 1540 proved advantageous to both the parties, the Portuguese getting the monopoly of trade at Calicut port and the Zamorin unrestricted freedom of action against local powers in view of the Portuguese assurance of non-intervention in their wars. It also paved the way for similar treaties between the Portuguese and the Rajas of Purakkad and Quilon. The Raja of Purakkad was even given the title 'Brother-in-Arms to the King of Portugal'.

Capture of Chaliyam (1571)

The treaty of 1540 between the Zamorin and the Portuguese proved itself to be only an uneasy truce. In 1550 war again broke out following interference by the Portuguese in a dispute between the Rajas of Cochin and Vadakkumkur. The Vadakkumkur Raja was slain in the battle of Vaduthala. The Zamorin invaded Cochin to avenge his friend's death. The Portuguese who were on the side of Cochin bombarded several of the coastal towns in the Zamorin's kingdom, particularly Pantalayani Kollam. In 1555 hostilities were ended on condition that Portuguese ship passes would be taken out by Arab traders. In 1564 the Kolathiri's men assisted by the Zamorin besieged Fort Angelo at Cannanore and destroyed Portuguese ships in the harbour. The defeat of the ruler of Vijayanagar, the ally of the Portuguese, in the battle of Talikota in 1565 emboldened the Zamorin to start large scale military operations against the Portuguese. In 1570 the Calicut ruler entered into an alliance with Adil Khan of Bijapur and Nizam Shah of Ahmadnagar against the Portuguese. In 1571 the Zamorin's army laid siege to the Portuguese fort at Chaliyam and forced the Portuguese to abandon it. The fort was completely demolished 'leaving not one stone upon another'. The Zamorin gave Chaliyam to the

Parappanad Raja as a reward for the assistance rendered by him on the occasion.

The fall of Chaliyam marked the beginning of the end of Portuguese power in Kerala. In spite of their discomfiture, the Portuguese continued to bombard the coastal areas and harass the Zamorin's subjects. In 1578 they formally approached the Zamorin with the request for permission to build a fort at Ponnani but the latter was not in a mood to oblige them. The Portuguese persevered in their efforts and in 1584 they obtained permission from the Zamorin to open a factory at Ponnani. In 1588 they settled again at Calicut with the Zamorin's permission. In 1591 the Zamorin donated to the Portuguese land and building materials to erect a church at Calicut and himself laid the foundation stone. The growing friendship between the Zamorin and the Portuguese was brought about by the gradual estrangement between the Zamorin and Kunjali Marakkars.

Zamorin's Quarrel with the Kunjalis

The Kunjalis had become extremely powerful after the expulsion of the Portuguese from Chaliyam. Kunjali III who was now the head of the Marakkar family built a fortress (Marakkar Kotta) at Kottakkal (Putupattanam) with the Zamorin's permission. He enjoyed all the powers and privileges of a Nair chief of the Zamorin. The Zamorin's action in allowing the Portuguese to build a factory at Ponnani was deeply resented by the Kunjalis. In two important naval engagements (1586 and 1589) the Kunjalis inflicted crushing defeats on the Portuguese. In 1591 the Portuguese patched up their quarrels with the Kunjali Marakkars through the mediation of a Catholic priest.

In 1595 Kunjali IV became the chief of the Kunjali Marakkars. He strengthened the fortress at Kottakkal and openly challenged his master, the Zamorin, by assuming the titles 'King of the Moors' and 'Lord of the Indian Seas'. He cut off the tail of one of the Zamorin's elephants and ill-treated a Nair noble who had been sent to get his explanation. The overbearing attitude of his vassal exasperated the Zamorin and he entered into an agreement with the Portuguese to crush the power of the Kunjalis. In 1593 a joint expedition of the Portuguese and the Zamorin against Marakkar Kotta ended in dismal failure. The allies suffered heavy losses. The lack of co-ordination between the army and the navy was the main cause of this failure. It was since agreed to by the Zamorin and the Portuguese that the former would mobilise the land forces required for the attack and the latter the fleet.

Fall of the Kunjalis

In 1600 the Zamorin besieged the fortress of Kunjali with an army of 6,000 men and he was ably supported by the Portuguese fleet under Andre Furtado. Having found his position hopeless Kunjali surrendered to his erstwhile master, the Zamorin on a solemn promise of pardon but the Zamorin broke his word and handed over his old Admiral to the Portuguese. Kunjali IV and his men were taken to Goa and executed. Kunjali's body was cut to pieces and

exhibited at the beach at Bardes and Panjim. His head was salted and sent to Cannanore and it was displayed there on a standard as a warning to the local Muslims.

The end of the Kunjali Marakkars is one of the tragic episodes in Kerala history and it is all the more so in view of the ignoble treachery of the Zamorin who was once his lord and master. It was indeed an irony of history that the Kunjali Marakkars who had all along been the main props of the Zamorin's power and strength in his fight against Portuguese tyranny had to be crushed by an unholy and opportunistic alliance between the Zamorin and his traditional enemy. The former did not crown himself with glory by his unpatriotic conduct. The treatment meted out to Kunjali by the Zamorin in his hour of victory has always remained a blot on his family escutcheon. The patriotic exploits of the Kunjali Marakkars continue to evoke heroic memories among the people of Malabar even today. "There can be no doubt that the lives of these chiefs reflect glory and honour on all Malabar, for their achievements against the naval, tyranny of the Portuguese form indeed a great chapter in the history of Malabar".¹

Decline of the Portuguese

The fall of the Kunjalis did not help to retrieve the situation for the Portuguese, for in the meantime the Dutch had appeared on the scene as a serious rival. The Dutch conquered the Portuguese strongholds in Ceylon and expelled them from that island in 1658. This was followed by the Dutch conquest of the Portuguese strongholds of Quilon, Cranganore, Purakkad, Cochin and Cannanore. By 1663 the Portuguese flag ceased to fly in Kerala. The events leading to the fall of the Portuguese power will be described in the chapter on the rise and fall of the Dutch.

The failure of the Portuguese to establish an enduring dominion in India with Kerala as the base was inevitable. Their early successes on the Kerala coast were facilitated by the naval supremacy they enjoyed in the Indian waters. The Portuguese could retain their hold on the local powers only so long as other European powers like the Dutch and the English were absent from the scene. Their naval supremacy was proved to be an illusion in the wars with the Dutch and before long they had to give way.

The Portuguese failed to establish an efficient system of government in the territories which came under their sway. Though some of the earlier Portuguese administrators who came to Kerala were men of ability and character, there was decline in the calibre of the officers who came in the later periods. Most of them were greedy, corrupt and unequal to the task of administration. The Portuguese government in Kerala lacked inherent military strength. Their fortresses were ill-equipped and ill-garrisoned. The Portuguese soldiers, though brave and fearless, were an indisciplined lot and had hardly any military experience. The Portuguese government did not pay cash salaries to their civil or military officers. Consequently corruption was

1. K. M. Panikkar, *A History of Kerala*, p. 130.

perfected into a regular fine art under official auspices. Interested only in private gain the Portuguese officers resorted to private trade and other questionable practices to enrich themselves. Each office brought to its holder enormous private income from dubious sources. Strangely enough, the Portuguese government conceded to every officer, civil or military, the right to indulge in private trade and amass wealth. This led every Portuguese officer to give priority to his personal interest over the interest of the king of Portugal in his scheme of things. The Portuguese government even introduced a system under which public appointments in India were sold in Portugal itself in public auction to the highest bidder. Unmarried orphan girls were sent to India with orders of Indian appointments as dowries to whomsoever undertook to marry them. Nepotism was also rampant among Portuguese officials. Every Governor brought with him his sons, nephews and other relatives and appointed them to positions of trust and responsibility, unmindful of all consideration of merit. The result of such policies was complete demoralisation in the ranks of the administrative services.

The religious policy of the Portuguese was not based on liberal and enlightened principles. They were extremely fanatical and narrow-minded in their dealings with all religious communities including St. Thomas Christians. Each Portuguese fort was an exclusive colony of Portuguese citizens and natives who became converts to Christianity. Non-Christians who refused to embrace Christianity or to give their womenfolk in marriage to Portuguese soldiers were expelled from within the fort areas. The Portuguese ecclesiastical authorities in Kerala even decreed that Christians should not allow themselves to be treated by non-Christian doctors or shaved by non-Christian barbers. The administration of justice under the Portuguese was not impartial. The native Christians were treated as a privileged class. The Portuguese Governor negotiated treaties with the local Rajas under which special privileges and immunities were granted to Christian subjects in their territories. In other words, the Christian population was taken under Portuguese protection. It was laid down that Christians who committed crimes were to be handed over to the Portuguese authorities for punishment. The law of the land applied only to non-Christians. The code of punishments prescribed by the Portuguese was also extremely inhuman and barbarous.

The Portuguese at no time enjoyed the confidence and support of the native population. Their mixed colonies based on the scheme of inter-marriage between Portuguese officers and native women only tended to produce a class of people held in contempt both by the Portuguese and the Indians. Their contribution to the moral bankruptcy of the age was considerable. The Portuguese administrators resorted to deliberate acts of vandalism and cruelty in the course of their century and a half long sojourn in Kerala. They massacred the native population without any qualms of conscience. They were also notorious for their treachery and untrustworthiness. Some of the later Portuguese Viceroys resorted to the plunder and destruction of temples and mosques and alienated vast masses

of people. Shaik Zainuddin who lived during the period of the rise of the Portuguese power in Kerala makes a scathing indictment of the Portuguese policy of plunder and destruction of mosques in his *Tuhafat-ul-Mujahidin*. The Arabic historian refers to several of the atrocious and wicked acts of the Portuguese and remarks that their enumeration itself would require volumes.

Apart from the unwholesome and unscrupulous acts which made the Portuguese administration odious in the eyes of the people, the Portuguese government in India presented the picture of a house divided against itself. The Portuguese officers resorted to intrigues and counter-intrigues among themselves in order to foster their selfish personal interests. Every subordinate official enjoyed the right of direct correspondence with the king and high officials in Portugal and this privilege was fully availed of by everyone to spread scandals against his rivals in the service. The Portuguese officers in Kerala were not actuated by patriotic motives or lofty ideals either. Many of them had secret contacts with local chiefs and they unhesitatingly deserted the service of the king of Portugal for better prospects in the service of the native rulers.

There was also acute rivalry between the religious orders and the Portuguese administrators. The Jesuit missionaries who worked on the coast refused to obey the orders of the Portuguese Viceroys and carried on their activities independently, though they continued to get heavy subsidies from the Portuguese Exchequer. To make matters worse, the Portuguese administration suffered from acute financial insolvency. The Governors were always in need of funds and they could hardly carry out their policies confidently and effectively in the absence of financial resources.

Above all, with the absorption of Portugal by Spain under Philip II (1580), the personal interest which the king of Portugal had taken in the progress of the Portuguese possessions in India vanished. The Portuguese administration in India lost almost all contacts with the home government and had to grope in the dark for instructions and guidance in their work. Under such circumstances the failure of the Portuguese in Kerala was a foregone conclusion.

Effects of Portuguese Contact

The Portuguese contact led to some results in the political, economic and social fields. The most important political result was that the political disunity of Kerala was confirmed by the century and a half of Portuguese contact. On the eve of Portuguese arrival the Zamorin of Calicut was making a bold bid for the political unification of Kerala under his hegemony. The arrival of the Portuguese reversed this process and accelerated the pace of the 'Balkanisation' of the country. While checking the expanding power of the Zamorin and reducing the Cochin ruler to the position of a helpless vassal of the Portuguese king, the Portuguese Governors followed a deliberate policy of placating the minor princes and chiefs by money gifts with a view to safeguarding their own- commercial interests. It was the basic aim of Portuguese policy in Kerala to bolster up the power and prestige of the minor chiefs at the expense

of the major Rajas. Among the minor powers which became powerful under Portuguese patronage were Purakkad, Parur and Vettat. The political disunion of Kerala thus sedulously fostered by the Portuguese helped to sustain the political vacuum in the country and paved the way for its conquest by the Mysore rulers and the English in the later period.

The Portuguese contact led to some changes in the economic field. The Portuguese put an end to the age long trade connection between Kerala on the one hand and Arabia and Egypt on the other. At the same time, the trade with Europe grew in dimensions and led to the flow of wealth into the country from new sources. Increasing trade contacts with Europe also led to the introduction of European fashions and luxuries. The ornamental architecture and the buildings of the bungalow type were introduced by the Portuguese on the Malabar coast. The ecclesiastical architecture of Kerala also came to be influenced by Portuguese ideas and styles. The local powers copied from the Portuguese the European technique and weapons of warfare. The artillery assumed special importance in the wars of the period. Several new towns came into existence and old towns decayed during the period of Portuguese trade contact. Thus Calicut, Cochin and Chaliyam grew in importance while Quilon and Cranganore languished for want of patronage. It is said of Portuguese Cochin that it "might well compare with some of the best cities in Europe".

The Portuguese introduced into India a number of new agricultural products such as the cashewnut, tobacco, the custard apple, guava, the pineapple and pappaya. They popularised the Kerala spices like pepper, cardamom, cinnamon and ginger in European markets by arranging their direct transportation. The Portuguese promoted the scientific cultivation of pepper and ginger on an extensive scale and even the masses of people took to the cultivation of these spices. The credit for having introduced salutary changes in coconut cultivation also goes to the Portuguese. Under their patronage coconut came to be cultivated for commercial purpose rather than for mere household use. An improved variety of coconut seed was popularised by them. Coir became a chief item of export since the days of the Portuguese.

The effects of Portuguese impact on traditional Kerala society were indeed far-reaching, especially since it had to face a social and religious system which was radically different. Every section of Kerala society was affected in some way or other. The introduction of gun powder by the Portuguese revolutionised the technique of warfare by making the artillery the most important wing of the army. The Nairs, the traditional fighting class, who had been trained to fight with sword and shield found themselves facing an entirely hopeless situation. Unable to cope with it, they had to face the threat of unemployment on a large scale. At the same time, the Christians and the Muslims found new avenues of employment in the artillery and also in the cavalry which had come into increasing prominence by this time as a wing of the army. The traditional caste structure was also subjected to heavy strains

under Portuguese impact. The untouchables among the Hindus were attracted towards Christianity and the Portuguese authorities who were interested in conversions gave them all encouragement. Those who thus changed their religion naturally got some economic advantages and extra privileges which they did not enjoy as Hindus. The Muslims who had been reaping enormous profit from trade, both external and internal, were prevented by the Portuguese from trading in those items in which the latter had a vital interest. Their Volume of foreign trade was curtailed as a result of some of the steps deliberately taken by the Portuguese authorities. The result of all this was that the Muslims were ousted from their old position of preeminence in the field of trade and commerce and reduced to the position of petty retail traders dealing with some relatively minor items only.

The Portuguese contact led to some results in the educational and cultural fields as well. The Portuguese founded theological seminaries and colleges at Cochin, Cranganore, Ankamali and Vaipicotta for the purpose of training Christian priests. These institutions helped to spread the knowledge of Latin and Portuguese among the local people. Even some of the native rulers like the Cochin Raja are said to have mastered the Portuguese language. The Portuguese period also marks the beginning of Indological studies and research by European scholars. Garcia da Orta's work on the medicinal plants of India is one of the earliest studies on the subject. St. Francis Xavier translated the Catechism into Malayalam. The accounts of the Kerala coast left by such shrewd observers as Duarte Barbosa, Gasper Correa and others also deserve mention among the beneficial results of Portuguese contact with Kerala. Joannese Gonsalvez, a Spanish Jesuit, cut out types in the local language for printed books. The Portuguese set up printing presses at Cochin and Vaipicotta. The *Chavittunatakam*, the Christian counterpart of the Hindu *Kathakali*, originated and grew into a popular form of entertainment under the patronage of the Portuguese missionaries. Apart from some of these influences, "the relations between Portugal and India were barren of cultural and political results and there is In that history nothing which any civilized nation can be proud of".¹

Religious History of the Portuguese period

The religious history of Kerala in the Portuguese period is of particular interest. Reference has already been made to the spirit of narrow religious intolerance and bigotry which characterised the Portuguese administration in Kerala. The Portuguese were fanatical followers of the Catholic faith and they considered it their mission to spread Catholicism and establish the supremacy of the Pope of Rome in all the countries which came within their sphere of influence. The Bull of Pope Nicholas V, dated 8th January 1454, by which the Portuguese king Affonso V was given the exclusive right to all the countries that might be discovered by them in Africa and India gave the Portuguese what in the 16th century was tantamount to an unquestioned legal and moral

1. K. M. Panikkar, *A History of Kerala*, p. 381.

right to undertake the work of conversion.¹ In Goa they established the Inquisition and indulged in forcible conversion and religious persecution on an unprecedented scale.

It was under such circumstances that the Gowda Saraswaths or Konkkanis immigrated to Kerala from Goa in the 16th century and eventually established themselves in small colonies in such towns as Cranganore, Chennamangalam, Cochin, Ernakulam, Shertallai, Alleppey, Kayamkulam etc. The Jews also came in for ruthless persecution at the hands of the Portuguese in Kerala and hence they left their ancient settlement at Cranganore in 1565 and established themselves in such places as Parur, Chennamangalam, Mala, Ernakulam and Cochin. In Cochin the Jews received the patronage of the Raja in spite of Portuguese hostility, but the Portuguese tried to harass them in all possible ways. The White Jews Synagogue built in Mattancheri about 1567 was partially destroyed by the Portuguese. The Muslims were the inveterate enemies of the Portuguese even in their home and therefore, the latter followed a ruthless policy of religious persecution in their relations with native Muslims. The *Tuhafat-ul-Mujahidin* is replete with references to the large scale conversion of Muslims to Christianity and the destruction of mosques by the Portuguese.

As for the Hindus, the Portuguese respected the religious sentiments of the native Hindu Rajas and chiefs in their own interest because they wanted to please them and win favours. The Portuguese even entertained hopes of conversion of the local rulers like the Rajas of Cochin, Purakkad and Vettat to Christianity, though they did not succeed in their efforts in this direction. But some of the later Portuguese Governors resorted to plunder and destruction of Hindu temples without any scruple. The temples of Tevalakkara (Quilon district) and Palluruthi in the suburbs of Cochin were among the temples so destroyed by them. Thus the religious policy of the Portuguese was calculated to harass those who did not profess the Catholic faith and secure as many converts as possible to that creed. The converts to Christianity from among non-Hindus were given the special privileges and favours enjoyed by Portuguese citizens.

Latinisation of Kerala Church

It should not be imagined that the Portuguese followed a policy of generous toleration towards the Christian Church in Kerala and its followers. On the other hand, they were actuated by a narrow spirit of bigotry even in their dealings with the native Christians. The St. Thomas Christians of Kerala followed the Syriac liturgy which was anathema to the Portuguese. The Portuguese considered it their duty to substitute the supremacy of the Pope of Rome over the Kerala Church for that of the Patriarch of Babylon and to replace the "Syriac liturgy by the Latin liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church.

1. The Bull of Nicholas V was confirmed on March 13, 1456, by Pope Calixtus III and again by Pope Alexander VI on May 5, 1493. The latter also fixed a line of demarcation between the discoveries of the States, Spain and Portugal. The sub-continent of India clearly fell within the sphere of jurisdiction of Portugal.

They started a vigorous campaign of Latinisation. Missions were preached and baptism and other sacraments administered according to Latin rite. Churches, monasteries and seminaries were founded. In the Seminary of Cranganore founded in 1541 Syrian youth were trained as Latin Priests. A Jesuit College was founded at Cochin which developed before long into a reputed Latin centre. At Vaipicotta near Chennamangalam was set up a famous seminary for the instruction of the Christian youth in Syriac. This was done as a concession to the sentiments of the local Christian community. In 1557 the diocese of Cochin was founded for the Latin Christians who originally belonged to the Syrian Church as well as for the converts from Hinduism. In the mean time St. Francis Xavier, the great Jesuit missionary, was carrying on his work of evangelisation in South Kerala and several other Jesuit missionaries were doing similar work in the coastal areas of Kerala like Shertallai. Those who were newly converted to the Latin rite as a result of the labours of these missionaries also came under the jurisdiction of the Cochin Diocese.

Synod of Diamper (1599)

The most important event in the History of the Kerala Church in the Portuguese period was the Synod of Diamper (Udayamperur) convened in June 1599 with a view to extirpating what was called 'Nestorian heresy' and bringing the Christian community of the land under the supremacy of the Roman church. Alexis De Menezes, the Archbishop of Goa, presided over this Synod which was attended in all by 813 delegates of whom 133 were *Kattanars* or priests, 20 deacons and 660 laymen chosen by members of each parish. The Syrian books were scrutinised and offending passages expunged by the Synod. Heretical books were burnt. The Mass of the Syriac liturgy was altered in conformity with the Latin Mass. The Synod severed the age long connection of the Kerala Church with the Patriarchate of Babylon and established the supremacy of the Roman Pontiff over the Kerala Church. Those who followed the Latin rite comprised the Cochin Diocese and those who still clung to the Syriac rite continued in the old Syrian Diocese of Ankamali. After the Synod of Diamper Archbishop Menezes accompanied by five Jesuits visited all the important churches as far as Quilon and he left for Goa in November 1599.

Revolt at the Coonan Cross (1653)

The success of the Synod of Diamper was only shortlived. There arose before long a violent quarrel between the Syrian Christians and the Portuguese authorities. The appointment of European Latin Bishops to the Syrian Diocese of Ankamali by the king of Portugal in exercise of the powers vested in him in this regard by the Pope (*Padroado*) was resented by the Syrians, though they acquiesced in it under pressure at the Synod of Diamper. The Syrians badly felt the need for a Bishop of their own rite. In 1653 the Jacobite Patriarch of Babylon sent to Kerala, in response to a request by the Syrians, a Bishop named Ahatalla. The Portuguese detained him at Mylapore on his way. The

news of the detention of Ahatalla created indignation in Syrian quarters and large numbers of Syrian Christians stormed the gates of Portuguese Cochin. A rumour also spread that Ahatalla was drowned by the Portuguese authorities. The excited Syrians assembled in thousands in front of an ancient Cross in Mattancherri, tied a lengthy rope on it and holding on to it swore that they would never more obey the Latin Archbishop or the Jesuits. This is known in history as the 'Oath of the Coonan Cross'. The Syrians then proceeded to Alangad and consecrated their leader Archdeacon Thomas as their Metropolitan. This event marked a turning point in the history of the Kerala Church as it led to the emergence of two distinct sections among the Christians, viz., the Romo-Syrians who continued to owe allegiance to the Church of Rome and the Jacobite Syrians who denounced the authority of the Pope. The former came to be popularly called *Pazhayakuru* and the latter *Puthankuru*. The Revolt of the Coonan Cross had its impact on the loyalties of the Syrian Christians all over Kerala. Out of about 2 lakhs Syrian Christians only 400 continued to owe allegiance to the Latin Archbishop. The Archdeacon was widely regarded by the Syrians as their only Archbishop and they continued to conduct their worship under him according to the Syrian rite. Thus the Portuguese attempt to Latinise the Kerala Church was only partially successful.

Revival of the Bhakti Cult

The Portuguese period saw the revival of the *Bhakti* movement in Kerala. The peculiar political, social and economic conditions of the age created a mental and religious stir among the Hindus and led to the widespread popularity of the doctrine of *Bhakti*. The Portuguese period was one of political violence, social decadence and economic depression. The local chiefs were engaged in interminable quarrels among themselves and intrigued with foreign powers to ruin their own brethren. The Portuguese were indulging in atrocities such as large scale massacres of civilian population and destruction of temples and mosques and this created a feeling of revulsion in the minds of the common people. There was utter demoralisation in the ranks of all classes following the Portuguese attempt to buy off the native rulers and their officers by presents and gifts. 'Robbery', says St. Francis Xavier, "is so public and common that it hurts no one's character and is hardly counted as fault". The period also saw the *Janmi* and- *Devadasi* systems at their worst and this made the moral degradation of the people complete. The introduction of artillery and other new weapons of warfare puzzled the common man and made him crave for mental and spiritual solace. Moreover, India's direct trade with foreign countries was ruined in the wake of the establishment of trade monopoly by foreign races and this had the effect of draining the wealth of the country to Europe. The price of pepper underwent a steep fall and there was severe economic depression which hit large sections of the population. The literary works of the age contain references to the acute poverty of the lowest castes. Under the circumstances the common people developed a feeling of

utter disgust for the *status quo* and craved for a new message of hope and good cheer.

New leaders now emerged on the scene with emphasis on the doctrine of *Bhakti* (i.e., absolute devotion to a personal God) as the supreme means of attaining salvation. A number of literary works were produced with *Bhakti* as the all-embracing theme. Vishnu in the form of Krishna and Rama came to be glorified in the works, of the writers of the age. The most outstanding exponent of the *Bhakti* cult was Tunchat Ezhuthachan, the 'Father of Malayalam language'. He wrote such devotional works as *Adhyatma Ramayanam*, *Mahabharatam*, *Harinamakirtanam*, etc., in which he preached to the common people the doctrine of selfless devotion and surrender to God in the form of Vishnu. Ezhuthachan's *Ramayanam* became the most popular poem in the Malayalam language and it won for him the same place in Malayalam as is held by Kambar in Tamil and Tulasidas in Hindi.

In addition to Ezhuthachan, the 16th century produced two other great scholars who made their invaluable contributions to the growth of the *Bhakti* cult. They were Melpattur Narayana Bhattatiri (1560-1646) and Puntanam Namboothiri (1547-1640). Melpattur wrote the famous *Narayaniyam* in Sanskrit while he was spending his days in prayer in the famous Krishna temple at Guruvayur to get himself cured of his chronic rheumatism. According to tradition the work was finished in 100 days. The *Narayaniyam* is a devotional work of 1,036 verses dealing with the major incidents in the *Bhagavata Puranam*. Written in the form of an address to Lord Krishna, the presiding deity of Guruvayur, it embodies the quintessence of the message of *Bhakti* and has been extremely popular with devotees of Krishna.

Puntanam Namboothiri was also a great devotee of Lord Krishna of Guruvayur. The *Bhakti* cult found its supreme literary expression in the Malayalam works of Puntanam, viz. *Njanappana*, *Srikrishnakarnamritam* and *Santanagopalam*. His place in Malayalam literature is comparable to that of Surdas in Hindi. While Melpattur was a profound Sanskrit scholar Puntanam was an inspired Malayalam poet. The story of Melpattur's insult to Puntanam by refusing to listen to the latter's recitation of his *Santanagoplam* and the appearance of Krishna before Melpattur in dream declaring that he preferred the *Bhakti* of Puntanam to the *Vibhakti* of Melpattur is narrated even today by the votaries of Guruvayur. Thus the increasing prominence of the Guruvayur temple - as the centre of the Krishna cult was a salient feature of the Portuguese period.

Reference may also be made in this connection to the role of some of the local Rajas in the promotion of the *Bhakti* movement. The most prominent of these was Manaveda (1655-1658), the Zamorin of Calicut. A fervent devotee of Vishnu he spent a large part of his life in the temple of Guruvayur in the company of Melpattur. His *Krishna Giti* in Sanskrit describes in 8 cantos the story of Krishna written after the model of Jayadeva's *Gita Govinda*. It contains devotional verses of great musical charm. Puratam Tirunal Devanarayana, the ruler of Chempakasseri, was another ruler associated with the *Bhakti*

movement. He was born in 1566 and died in 1622. He consecrated the idol of Krishna in the Ambalapuzha temple and the place developed in due course as the 'Guruvayur of South Kerala'. Both these rulers were patrons of Melpattur Narayana Bhattatiri.

The famous Vilwamangalam Swamiyar who figures in the traditions connected with such temples as Guruvayur and Ambalapuzha also lived during the age and enjoyed the patronage of these two rulers. Vilwamangalam was a pious devotee of Vishnu who claimed that he could always visualise the Deity in his mystic trance. He is said to have helped both Manaveda and Devanarayana to see God Vishnu in person. The vision, it is said, inspired the former to write the *Krishna Giti* and the latter to consecrate the temple of Sri Krishna at Ambalapuzha. It may be noted in this connection that this Vilwamangalam Swamiyar is different from Lilasuka or Vilwamangalam I, the author of the *Krishnakarnamrita*, who lived two or three centuries earlier. Thus the Portuguese period marks an important epoch in the history of the *Bhakti* movement in Kerala.

CHAPTER XVI

VENAD (1314 -1720)

The early history of Venad up to the end of the reign of Ravi Varma Kulasekhara (1299-1314) has been sketched in Chapter XI. In this chapter we shall trace the history of the Venad kingdom up to the accession of Marthanda Varma (1729). As already seen, the reign of Ravi Varma Kulasekhara marked an important epoch in the history of Venad, but it ended rather abruptly in 1314. Most probably, he lived a year or two more in the Tamil country before his death.

Vira Udaya Marthanda Varma

Vira Udaya Marthanda Varma (1314-1344), the successor of Ravi Varma Kulasekhara, was the first Venad king to ascend the throne according to the matrilineal system of succession. He seems to have been the Venad ruler who was defeated along with Vira Pandya by the Katatiya ruler in 1317 but he still continued to exercise authority over certain parts of the Tirunelveli district. Udaya Marthanda assumed the title 'Vira Pandya' in order to show who his overlord was. Perhaps, it was during the reign of this ruler that two princesses from the Kolathunad royal family were adopted into Venad royal house and installed at Attingal.

The next ruler of Venad was Kunnummel Vira Kerala Varma Tiruvati. He might have ruled from 1344 to 1350. It is on record that he donated 157 *paras* of paddy lands to the temple of Sri Padmahabha and also paid 3,000 *fanams* as atonement for the sin of causing death to certain Potti Brahmins. It was a feature of the age that there were frequent clashes between the temple trustees and king's officers resulting occasionally in casualties among the former.

Iravi Iravi Varman

The period from 525 to 588 Kollam Era (1350-1383 A.D.) was a bright period in the annals of the Venad kingdom. It was the glorious partnership of the two illustrious brothers, Iravi Iravi Varman and Iravi Aditya Varman, who figure in the celebrated Malayalam poem *Unnunilisandesam*. The Muslim raiders from the Tamil country frequently harassed the Tovala region in the early part of the reign of Iravi Iravi Varman (1350-1376). New palaces were built by him at Kottar and Amaravati and either of the two princes used to stay in the south in an earnest endeavour to strengthen the frontier defences and check Muslim raids. Iravi Iravi Varman was a liberal patron of learning and letters. The *Unnunilisandesam* seems to have been composed by an anonymous author under his patronage.

Aditya Varma Sarvanganatha

Aditya Varma Sarvanganatha (1376-1383) who succeeded Iravi Iravi Varman was a highly accomplished and cultured ruler. He was a poet, scholar and musician of considerable merit. He was equally famous as a fighter. The *Unnunilandesam* describes him as *Samgramadhira* (firm in battle) and *Sarvanganatha* (versatile scholar). An inscription in the Krishnankoil temple at Vatasserri furnishes us an impressive catalogue of Sarvanganatha's intellectual attainments such as his proficiency in grammar, music, *Smrithis*, *Arthasastra*, *Puranas*, *Atmasastra* and *Tarka*. The king is also described as an adept in the use of the 36 arms. As Trippappur Muppan, Aditya Varma showed his martial prowess by defeating the Muslim raiders of the south and checking the tide of Islamic advance. Aji inscription of this ruler in the Krishnaswami shrine in the Sri Padmanabhaswami temple at Trivandrum records that he constructed the shrine of Krishna, the *Gosala*, *Mandapa* and a *Dipikagriham* in 1296 Saka Era (1374-1375 A.D.). Aditya Varma was a staunch Vaishnavite and he composed devotional hymns in praise of the deities of Trivandrum and Tiruvattar. His reign was on the whole a significant landmark in the history of Venad.

Chera Udaya Marthanda Varma

Aditya Varma Sarvanganatha was succeeded by Chera Udaya Marthanda Varma (1383-1444). This is the longest reign recorded in Venad history. He ruled over territories on either side of the Western Ghats. Cheramahadevi was the favourite residence of this ruler. From the time of Chera Marthanda, Venad gradually extended its sway into the interior of the Tirunelveli region. During this reign the Zamindar of Rettiapuram invaded Valliyur, but he was beaten back by prince Ravi Varma (Trippappur Muppan). The Karuvelamkulam *Puja* which is still performed in the Sri Padmanabhaswami temple commemorates Ravi Varma's victory at Karuvelamkulam. Chera Udaya Marthanda was the patron of the Suchindram temple and he built its *Sabha Mantapa*. The *Lilatilakam*, the great work on grammar and rhetoric written in Sanskrit, is ascribed to his reign. It may be mentioned that Chera Marthanda is praised profusely in this work.

The immediate successors of Chera Marthanda were Ravi Varma (1444-1458), Sri Vira Rama Marthanda Varma Kulasekhara (1458-1469) and Kotha Aditya Varma (1469-1484). The last mentioned of the rulers resided most of the time at Kallidakurichi in the Tirunelveli district. The Trikkanamkudi Bell Inscription of 644 K.E. (1469 A.D.) describes him as an ornament of the family of Jayasimha, as Chiravai Muppan and the king of 'Ten Vanchi' (Quilon).

Ravi Ravi Varma

Ravi Ravi Varma (1484-1512), the next Venad ruler, established a sound system of administration. He checked the powers of the *Yogakkar* (trustees) of the Sri Padmanabhaswami temple and their partisans. During his reign the Empire of Vijayanagar had risen to power in South India and it embarked

on its aggressive activities on the borders of the Venad kingdom. We have the testimony of Albuquerque, the Portuguese Viceroy, that the Venad ruler defeated the Vijayanagar king (Narasinga) in battle. The relations between the Portuguese and Venad commenced during the reign of Ravi Ravi Varma, the Portuguese having been given facilities for trade in pepper at the port of Quilon.

Ravi Ravi Varma was succeeded by Ravi Kerala Varma who died in 1514 and then by Jayasimha Kerala Varma who ruled till 1516. The latter ruler has been identified with the prince who figures in the Parasurama Perumteruvu Pillar Inscription of Kottar which records the grant of several rights and privileges to the depressed classes.

Bhutralavira Sri Vira Udaya Marthanda Varma

Bhutralavira Sri Vira Udaya Marthanda Varma (1516-1535) was the next Venad ruler. A brilliant warrior, he extended his conquests further into Tirunelveli and conquered the major part of that district from the Pandyas. He assumed the title Ventuman Konda Bhutralavira in commemoration of his victory. A new palace was built by him at Viramarthanda Chaturvedimangalam in Kalakkad and it became the headquarters of Udaya Marthanda. This Venad ruler married a Chola prince and called himself Puli Marthanda after the family emblem of his wife. He also built a dam named Virappuli dam. Bhutala Vira Udaya Marthanda made handsome donations to temples in the Nanjanad-Tirunelveli region, e.g., the temples at Ambasamudram, Mannarkovil, Kalakkad and Suchindram. A highly tolerant monarch, he also gifted lands to the Jain temple at Nagercoil and exempted the harassed Christian Paravas of Kanyakumari from the payment of certain irksome taxes which were being extracted from them by the local village community. During the reign of Udaya Marthanda Varma the Venad kingdom extended from Kannetti in the north to Kanyakumari in the south and it included within itself the southern portion of the Pandyan kingdom.

War with Vijayanagar

The reign of Bhutralavira Udaya Marthanda Varma witnessed a major clash between Venad and Vijayanagar. The Venad king had granted political asylum to Vira Narasimha (Chellappa), a rebel feudatory of the Vijayanagar king. Achutha Raya, the king of Vijayanagar, deputed his Chief Minister and brother-in-law, Salaka Timma, to punish the Venad ruler and bring back Chellappa. An epic battle took place between the forces of Venad and Vijayanagar on the banks of the Tamraparni. The Venad king was defeated and forced to acknowledge the supremacy of Vijayanagar. He handed over Chellappa to Salaka Timma together with presents of elephants and horses. Udaya Marthanda was also deprived of the territories he had conquered earlier from the Pandyas and they were restored to the Pandyan king Sri Vallabha. The *Achutharayabhyudayam* written by Rajanatha Dindima, the court poet of Achutha Raya, gives us the above information regarding the outcome of the

fight between Venad and Vijayanagar. In spite of his defeat Udaya Marthanda still continued to exercise sway over large portions of territory in the Tirunelveli region.

Udaya Marthanda Varma was succeeded in 1535 by Bhutalavira Ravi Varma. He retained the possessions of Venad beyond the Ghats. The exact period of his reign is not known. During the reigns of his successors Rama Kerala Varma and Aditya Varma there were frequent clashes between the king's officers and the tenants of the temple lands.

On Aditya Varma's death in 1544 Sri Vira Kerala Varma (1544-45) succeeded to the throne. The famous Jesuit missionary, St. Francis Xavier, was carrying on missionary activities in Nanjanad during this period. The Venad king is said to have given him all facilities to carry out his evangelising mission. A notable clash of arms took place between Venad and Vijayanagar during this period. The real motive behind the Vijayanagar expedition into Nanjanad was to prevent the large scale conversion of the Paravas on the fishery coast to Christianity. The Vijayanagar ruler did not approve of the tolerant policies of the Venad ruler which facilitated such conversions. The immediate causes of the conflict were, however, the failure of the Venad king to make regular payments of tribute to Vijayanagar as well as his continued raids into Pandyan territory. The Vijayanagar army under Ramaraya Vithala won a victory. He is said to have proceeded to Suchindram and begun the construction of the famous *Gopuram* of the temple. It may be mentioned in this context that St. Francis Xavier is believed to have played an important part in arranging the settlement of the conflict between Vijayanagar and Venad.

The immediate successors of Bhutalavira Sri Kerala Varma were Rama Varma (1545—1556) and Unni Kerala Varma. It was Rama Varma who concluded the peace with Vijayanagar, referred to above. It is not clear how long the latter ruler was on the throne. Temple records show that he was ruling in 1568. During his reign the Vijayanagar army under Vithala again invaded Venad (1558), but this time Vithala was defeated and his army fell back panic-stricken.¹ Perhaps, he was himself killed in the battle or in the confusion that followed it. With this victory, Venad threw off the Vijayanagar yoke.

Sri Vira Udaya Marthanda Varma was the successor of Unni Kerala Varma. On his death in 1595 A.D. Sri Vira Ravi Varma ascended the throne. The new ruler was of an extremely pious disposition and he was mainly concerned with the renovation of temples and performance of religious ceremonies. His immediate successors were Aditya Varma and Rama Varma who had short reigns in 1609-10. Another Rama Varma also seems to have been on the throne from 1610 to 1611 and on his death Ravi Varma ascended the throne.

1. Dr. K. K. Pillai, *Suchindram Temple*, p. 44.

Invasions of Tirumala Nayak

The most important episode of the reign of Ravi Varma (1611-1663) was the invasion of Nanjanad by Tirumala Nayak of Madurai. It may be mentioned in this context that some time after 1542, the year of Achutha Raya's death, the Nayaks of Madurai established their independence. In 1553 Viswantha Nayak, the founder of the dynasty, subdued the Pandya ruler and reached the borders of Nanjanad. The right to collect tribute from Nanjanad which the Nayaks claimed for themselves as the heirs of the Vijayanagar Empire provided the pretext for the Nayak incursions into Nanjanad. The object of Tirumala Nayak's expedition was, in fact, twofold, *viz.*, to compel the subordination of the Venad chief to Madurai and to get possession of the fabulous wealth of Nanjanad.

The earliest mention of Tirumala Nayak's invasion is found in a *Nittu* (edict) issued by the Venad king in Kumbham 837 K.E. (1662 A.D.) regarding remission of taxes to the Nanjanad ryots who could not cultivate their lands as a result of the invasion. The record makes it clear that the first invasion took place in 1634 A.D. The ballad *Ramappayyan Ammanai* records that the Madurai forces led by Ramappayyan defeated the Venad army commanded by Iravikutti Pillai in the battle of Kaniyakulam. The local ballad *Iravi Kutti Pillai Pattu* describes the heroic death of Iravi Kutti Pillai who fought gallantly against the invaders and fell in the field of battle. The inscriptions obtained from Nanjanad during this period show that the forces of Tirumala Nayak invaded and ravaged Nanjanad several times and that the whole region was in a state of anarchy for about half a century.

Another development of the reign of Ravi Varma was the establishment of the English factory at Vizhinjam (1644).

Conflict with Temple Authorities

Ravi Varma (1663-1672) and Aditya Varma (1672-1677) were the immediate successors of Ravi Varma. Both these rulers were adoptees from Cochin and were notorious for their weakness. The reign of the latter was characterised by acute differences of opinion between the king and the *Yogakkar* of the Sri Padmanabhaswami temple on issues relating to the management of the temple. It may be mentioned in this connection that the management of the Sri Padmanabhaswami temple was vested in the *Ettarayogam*, a committee of eight *Uralar* (trustees) under the direct control of the king. The presence of the king at its meetings was indispensable. If he was absent from Trivandrum, the members of the *Yogam* took the trouble to proceed to the place of his residence. No business of importance relating to the temple was transacted without the previous consent of the *yogam* and the final sanction of the king. During this period the *Yogakkar* divided the temple lands into eight districts and placed each under the charge of a Nair nobleman who was to collect and administer the revenues. These noblemen came to be known as the *Ettuvittil*

Pillamar (Lords of Eight Houses).¹ While all religious authority continued to be exercised by the *Yogakkar*, political power was concentrated in the hands of the *Pillamar*. The combination of the *Yogakkar* and the *Pillamar* posed a serious menace to the authority of the king. There were frequent clashes between the royal forces on the one side and the temple servants and the tenants of *Devaswam* lands on the other.

During the reign of Aditya Varma the *Yogakkar* quarrelled among themselves and this led to the virtual closure of the temple. Though the Senior Rani of Attingal and Aditya Varma himself interfered and settled the differences, the quarrels among the *Yogakkar* led to the suspension of some of the temple ceremonies during this period. Aditya Varma passed away in 1677. The traditional story of the burning of his palace at Trivandrum and his death due to poisoning at the hands of the *Yogakkar* has since been proved to be false. Aditya Varma died a natural death at the Darpakulangara palace at Kalkulam.

Umayamma Rani's Regency

Umayamma Rani now assumed the regency as Ravi Varma, the heir-apparent, was only a minor prince. The period of her regency which lasted from 1677 to 1684 was one of major political developments. The story of the cold-blooded murder of five of the six sons of Umayamma Rani by her enemies by drowning them in the Kalippankulam tank at Manacaud in Trivandrum was for long accepted as true, but it has since come to light that Umayamma Rani had no children at all. This piece of evidence coupled with the fact that the capital of Venad at this time was Kalkulam and not Trivandrum has served to expose the myth of the so-called Kalippankulam tragedy.

Umayamma Rani was a woman of courage and ability. She kept the *Yogakkar* under strict control by insisting on the regular submission of the accounts of income and expenditure of the temple. During her regency the question of the adoption of a member to the Venad family cropped up. Umayamma Rani adopted her own nominee, Kochu Raman Unni Pandarathil. Her action was resented by Kerala Varma of the Peraka *Tavazhi* (Nedumangad). This prince at first wanted his brother to be adopted but later he himself claimed sovereignty as the eldest member of all the branches of the reigning family (Vanchi) taken together. Provoked by Umayamma Rani's action Kerala Varma enlisted the support of the Kottarakkara branch and invaded Trivandrum. Umayamma Rani withdrew to Varkala for reasons of safety and collected an army there. Kerala Varma and his army proceeded to Neyyattinkara. At this juncture the Senior Rani of Attingal (Umayamma Rani's sister) died and Umayamma Rani made three adoptions from Kolathunad. Kerala Varma was enraged at this action and he moved towards the capital Kalkulam at the head of his army. Umayamma Rani's forces now

1. Ettuvittil Pillamar are said to belong to eight houses situated in different villages, viz., Kulathur, Kazhakkuttam, Chempazhanti, Kudaman, Pallichal, Vengannur, Ramanamadham and Marthandamadham.

promptly proceeded to the south and met Kerala Varma's army in battles at Kalkulam and Edakkod. The battles were indecisive. In the meantime, a truce was arranged in which Kerala Varma was offered the status of a junior prince (*Yapyakur*) and he withdrew his forces to Nedumangad.

Yet another episode of Umayamma Rani's regency was the invasion of the southern portions of Venad by a Muslim adventurer referred to as the Mughal Sirdar. He overran Nanjanad and reached the suburbs of Trivandrum. The Muslim adventurer encamped at Manacaud in Trivandrum and extended his sway up to Edava. The incident is called the *Mukilan Pada*. Umayamma Rani sought refuge at Nedumangad. She was, however, fortunate at this juncture in getting the services of Kerala Varma, a valiant prince of the Kottayam royal family in North Malabar. The story goes that the prince was on a pilgrimage to Trivandrum and was persuaded by the Rani to stay on and help her in the task of administration.

Kerala Varma was formally adopted into the Venad royal family and conferred the title of 'Prince of Hiranyasimhanallur' (Eraniel). The prince applied himself first to the task of clearing the country of the Muslim hordes. He pursued the Muslim invader and met him in battle at Tiruvattar. The invader was killed along with many of his followers. Umayamma Rani was brought back to Trivandrum from Nedumangad in triumph. Kerala Varma thereafter helped the Rani in managing the affairs of the kingdom. His policies, however, caused deep resentment among the local nobles and a conspiracy was hatched against him. In 871 Kollam Era (1696 A.D.) he was assassinated by the conspirators within the precincts of his own palace. Kottayam Kerala Varma has immortalised himself as a bold social reformer by issuing the famous proclamation of 871 K.E. (1696 A.D.) stopping the old custom of *Pulappedi* and *Mannappedi* in Venad and giving relief to large sections of people from the fear of molestation by Pulayas and Mannans. This proclamation has been engraved on a stone inscription of the same year set up in the name of Vira Kerala Varma at Tiruvitamkodu in Kanyakumari district. Kerala Varma is also remembered as a great poet, for he translated the whole of Valmiki's *Ramayana* standing at the feet of Sri Padmanabha.

Umayamma Rani's regency also saw the establishment of the English factory at Anjengo (1684) on a site granted to the English East India Company by the Rani of Attingal.

Ravi Varma (1684-1718)

On attaining majority Ravi Varma assumed the reins of government in his own hands in 1684. During his reign the English got further concessions at Anjengo. In 1690 they obtained permission to build a fort at Anjengo and it was duly completed in 1695.

The forces of Madurai Nayaks frequently raided and ravaged Nanjanad during the early part of his reign. The most disastrous of the raids took place during the regency of Mangammal at Madurai (1689-1706). Almost every year she sent an expedition to Nanjanad to enforce payment of tribute by the

Venad ruler. The Nayak forces of the Vadukas (Telugus), *Vadukapada* as they were called, devastated the countryside, plundered wealth and property and returned with enormous booty every time. In 1697 the Nayak army under Dalava Narasappayya won a decisive victory over the Venad forces and compelled the Venad ruler to accept the terms dictated to by him.

A significant development of this period was the revolt of the people of Nanjanad against the tyranny of the tax-collecting officials and the oppression of the Pillamar. In 1702 they held a series of meetings at different places and passed resolutions protesting against the indifference of the Government and proclaiming their determination to migrate to a place on the borders of Travancore or outside it, unless their grievances were promptly redressed by the king. "It was perhaps in these meetings of the early Nanjanadians", remarks one writer, "that the political weapon of non-co-operation was forged for the first time in the annals of our country".

The reign of Ravi Varma saw the division of the kingdom into a number of territorial units and the appointment of royal officers to collect taxes regularly. However, there was also considerable laxity and weakness in administration during his reign.

Aditya Varma

Ravi Vanna was succeeded by Aditya Varma (1718-1721). His reign was marked by clashes between the royal officials and tenants of the temple lands. The tenants failed to get redress at the hands of the king to whom they presented their case at the Kalkulam palace. Hence they mustered strong, proceeded to Trivandrum in a defiant mood and presented their grievances before the *Yogakkar* after hoisting a red flag before the western *Gopuram*. Insecurity and confusion prevailed everywhere in the kingdom during the reign of Aditya Varma. During the reign of this ruler also took place the incident in which 140 Englishmen belonging to the Anjengo factory were attacked and massacred on their way to meet the queen and present her with gifts at Attingal (April 15, 1721). The English factory at Anjengo was also besieged by the rebels following the incident.

Rama Varma

Rama Varma (1721-1729) succeeded Aditya Varma on the throne of Venad. His reign saw the breakdown of royal authority and the outbreak of several skirmishes between the royal officers and the tenants of temple lands in Nanjanad. It was under him that the first formal treaty between the English East India Company and the Venad ruler was signed (April 1723). The junior prince (heir apparent) Martanda Varma signed the treaty on behalf of Venad, styling himself the 'Prince of Neyyattinkara'. According to the terms of the treaty the Venad Raja undertook to build a fort at Colachel for the British. In securing the help of the British the Venad ruler was motivated by the desire to strengthen his position in his fight against the *Yogakkar*, *Pillamar* and other hostile elements in the kingdom. It may be noted that Rama Varma also sought the help of the Nayaks of Madurai in his efforts to crush the power of

the local nobles. The king entered into a treaty with the Madurai Nayaks (1726).¹ According to the provisions of the treaty Rama Varma acknowledged the suzerainty of the Madurai Nayaks and agreed to pay a sum of Rs. 3,000 annually as tribute. The Nayaks in their turn offered to supply a contingent of troops to help the Venad Raja in his fight against the Pillamar and other rebels. On Rama Varma's death in 1729 Marthanda Varma ascended the throne of Venad.

1. The statement in some works like *A History of Kerala* (p 233) by K.M. Panikkar that Rama Vanna entered into a treaty with the Nawab of the Carnatic is not correct. It is the confusion of Rama Varma (1721-1729) with Rama Varma *alias* Dharma Raja (1758-1798) and of the treaty concluded by the former with the Nayaks of Madurai with the treaty concluded by the latter with the Nawab of the Carnatic that gave rise to this wrong statement.

CHAPTER XVII

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE DUTCH

The Dutch were the first Protestant nation of Europe to establish trade contacts with Kerala by challenging Portuguese trade monopoly. The Dutch period of Kerala history actually begins with the capture of Cochin from the Portuguese in 1663, but even prior to this event individual Dutchmen had visited the Kerala coast and explored possibilities of trade.

Early Relations with the Zamorin

The Dutch East India Company formed in 1592 played an important role in organising these early missions. In 1603 it sent to India an expedition led by the Dutch Admiral Steven Van Der Hagen. The Admiral reached Calicut and concluded a treaty with the Zamorin on November 11, 1604. This was the first political agreement entered into between the Dutch and an Indian power. It provided for a mutual alliance between the Dutch and the Zamorin for the purpose of expelling the Portuguese from the Indian soil. The Dutch were given facilities for trade at Calicut as well as the right to station merchants there. It was also agreed to by both the parties that neither would enter into an agreement with the Portuguese without prior consultation with the other party.

In 1608 Admiral Verhoff visited Calicut and concluded a fresh treaty repeating the provisions of the treaty of 1604. The Zamorin now gave assurances to the Dutch of freedom of trade in his dominion and also placed a spacious storehouse at Calicut at their disposal for storing goods. In 1610 three Dutch ships came to Calicut and this time also a treaty was concluded between the two powers. Under this treaty the Dutch undertook to pay 2 % toll on imports and exports at Calicut and both the parties undertook to resist the Portuguese. Van Den Broecke who visited the Zamorin at Calicut in 1616 seriously explored the possibility of an alliance with the Kerala princes to oust the Portuguese from the coast, but his efforts did not bear fruit immediately.

In 1619 the English and the Dutch entered into an agreement to take joint action against the Portuguese in Indian waters and a combined fleet was accordingly sent in 1621 to blockade Portuguese possessions on the Malabar coast. In December 1625 Van Speult who figured in the 'Amboyna Massacre' visited the Zamorin at Chettuvai and obtained from him permission to build a factory in his dominion and a promise to have 3,000 candies of pepper delivered annually to the Dutch. Thus in the early decades of the 17th century when the Portuguese position in Malabar was steadily deteriorating

the Dutch had already emerged as a serious threat to the Portuguese commercial interests on the coast.

Relations with Purakkad and Kayamkulam

The Dutch eventually turned their attention from North Kerala and entered into agreements with the minor powers in Central Kerala. In May 1642 they negotiated a treaty with the Raja of Chempakasseri (Purakkad) for the delivery of pepper and ginger. The Dutch were also given permission to build a factory at Purakkad. In 1643 fresh treaties were concluded between the Dutch on the one side and the Rajas of Purakkad and Kayamkulam on the other. The latter agreed to supply the Dutch all the pepper in their dominions in return for such articles as cotton, iron, tin, opium, sandalwood, etc. Both the powers also undertook not to have any transactions with other European powers. Following these treaties Dutch vessels called at Purakkad and Kayamkulam in later years and loaded cargo. In 1650 the Dutch Government sent a present to the Kayamkulam Raja in his palace and obtained permission to build a warehouse at Kayamkulam. It may be noted that the basic policy of the Dutch was to have the closest relations with the smaller powers and the treaties with Purakkad and Kayamkulam were entered into in pursuance of this policy.

Conquest of Quilon (1658)

With the Portuguese steadily losing ground, the Dutch entertained dreams of substituting them as the major European power and filling in the political vacuum in Kerala. In 1658-59 the Dutch Admiral Van Goens conquered Colombo and other Portuguese possessions in Ceylon and embarked on an expedition to oust the Portuguese from their possessions in Kerala. Their first target was Quilon. Admiral Van .Coens captured the Portuguese fortress of Quilon on December 29, 1658. A treaty was entered into with the Queen of Quilon on January 7, 1659, under which the town of "Quilon and the Portuguese gardens and grounds were surrendered to the Dutch. There was also a defensive alliance between the two powers. The treaty also secured for the Dutch the exclusive monopoly of trade in spices at Quilon. The departure of Van Goens weakened the Dutch position in Quilon and the Dutch garrison left behind had to withdraw (April 1659) under heavy Portuguese pressure. In December 1661 Quilon was recaptured by another expedition under van Goens. The Dutch now entered into separate treaties with Quilon (Signatti) and Travancore. The treaty with the former concluded in March 1662 repeated the provisions of the treaty of 1659. It also prescribed the arrangements for the administration of law and order in Quilon town. The treaty with Travancore (March 1662) provided for the expulsion of the Portuguese from the country and grant of the exclusive monopoly of pepper trade to the Dutch.

Dutch Capture of Cochin (1663)

The most important event connected with the establishment of the Dutch power in Kerala was the capture of Cochin in 1663. The internal dissensions in the Cochin royal family provided an excuse for Dutch intervention. A prince of the *Elaya Tavazhi* had, with the help of the Portuguese, usurped the

throne from the *Mutha Tavazhi*. The prince of the latter branch visited Colombo on the advice of the Paliath Achan and sought Dutch help to regain his lost power. The Dutch now decided to interfere actively in the politics of Cochin. The friendly attitude of the Zamorin, the Paliath Achan and the ruling chiefs of Vadakkumkur and Tekkumkur emboldened them to interfere in the dispute in favour of the *Mutha Tavazhi* prince. In 1661 the Dutch fleet under Admiral Vander Meyden captured Pallipuram fort (Ayakotta) in the Vaipin island from the Portuguese and handed it over to the Zamorin. In 1662 the Dutch dislodged the Portuguese from Cranganore and made over the place to the Cranganore Raja. The Dutch forces then landed in Vaipin island and bombarded Cochin. The Zamorin now came to Elangunnappuzha with his forces to assist the Dutch in their campaigns. The Dutch forces under Van Goens before long laid siege to the Mattancherry palace of the Cochin Raja. A fierce battle was fought in front of the palace in which several Dutch soldiers were killed, but the Cochin forces withdrew with heavy casualties. The Raja, two princes and most of the ministers of Cochin were killed in the fight Rani Gangadhara Lakshmi who was watching the fight from the palace was captured prisoner by Henrick Van Rheede, then an ordinary soldier on the Dutch side. Van Goens extracted a pledge from her to recognise the *Mutha Tavazhi* prince as the ruler of Cochin.

With the success of the *Mutha Tavazhi* prince the Portuguese cause suffered a rude blow. The Dutch marched on Portuguese Cochin from three directions. The siege of the Cochin fort lasted for nearly two months. With the arrival of reinforcements for the Portuguese from Purakkad the Dutch had to withdraw from the scene (March 1662), but in December 1662 a Dutch fleet appeared again before Cochin with the determination to take the fort by storm. The Portuguese with the assistance of the Raja of Purakkad and their friends in the Cochin royal family tried to put up a stiff resistance, but in the meantime the Dutch captured their strongholds in Ernakulam town with the help of the Anchi Kaimals and cut off supplies to the beleaguered Portuguese garrison at Cochin. Before long they launched an assault on the Cochin fort with the help of the *Mutha Tavazhi* prince, Vira Kerala Varma and Paliath Achan. The attack lasted for eight days and nights. On the 9th day, January 6, 1663, Cochin fell to the Dutch. The Dutch installed Vira Kerala Varma, the Chazhur adoptee into the *Mutha Tavazhi*, as ruler of Cochin and concluded a formal treaty with him (March 20, 1663). The Cochin Raja accepted Dutch suzerainty and undertook to deliver to the Dutch all the cinnamon and pepper produced in his country. All the Christians living in Cochin and the coastal areas in his kingdom were placed under Dutch protection in accordance with the terms of the treaty. Further, the Jesuits and other Catholic priests were to be expelled from the kingdom. The treaty made the Cochin Raja a puppet in Dutch hands and inaugurated the new era of Dutch supremacy on the Kerala coast.

Treaties with Cannanore and other Powers

The Dutch success in Cochin raised their prestige and led to the acceptance of Dutch protection by several of the local powers. The rulers of Purakkad,

Vadakkumkur, Parur, Alangad and Edappalli entered into treaties with the Dutch in 1663, accepting Dutch supremacy and providing all facilities to them for trade in their dominions. The Dutch captured the Cannanore fort from the Portuguese in February 1663. A treaty was concluded between the Kolathiri and the Dutch (March 20, 1663) which, among other things, provided for the transfer of the town of Cannanore to the Dutch Company and expulsion of Portuguese priests from the area. In July 1664 a fresh treaty was concluded which secured for the Dutch the monopoly of the pepper trade of Cannanore. In 1664 the Dutch entered into two separate treaties with the Ali Raja of Cannanore under which the quantities of pepper and cardamom to be exported by that chief were limited. Captain Nieuhoff visited the various chiefs in south and central Kerala in 1664 and strengthened the Dutch position in the area. The rulers of Kayamkulam, Purakkad, Marta and Quilon concluded treaties with him in 1664; giving the Dutch monopoly of pepper trade in their dominions and other trade privileges.

Dutch Policy towards Cochin

The arrival of Henrick Van Rheede as Commandeur of Cochin in 1673 marked a turning point in the growth of the Dutch power. He evolved a definite policy of bringing the local powers under the effective political control of the Dutch. The treaty concluded between the Dutch on the one side and some of the senior princes of the Cochin royal family and the Paliath Achan on the other (February 1673) limited succession to the Cochin throne to the members of the two *Tavazhis*, *Mutha* and *Chazhur* and brought the Cochin kingdom under the effective control of the Dutch Company. A treaty concluded in September 1674 provided that the Cochin Raja should have his accounts written by clerks appointed for that purpose. The Raja and the first four senior princes were to receive maintenance allowance from the Dutch at prescribed rates. In December 1674 the Dutch entered into a treaty with the local Nair magnates ensuring their complete subordination to the Dutch.

The settlement of 1674 led to serious unrest in the royal family and several princes rose in revolt. The Raja left the palace and retired to the interior for safety. The Dutch Commandeur Marten Huysman interfered in the dispute and entered into a fresh agreement with the Cochin Raja in May 1678. The treaty proclaimed the authority of the Cochin Raja in his kingdom and deprived the princes of the family of all voice in its affairs. The Paliath Achan, a protege of the Dutch, was to look after the affairs of the kingdom on behalf of the king. The treaty was a victory for the Dutch in so far as it reduced the Cochin Raja to the position of a cypher and handed over the Prime Ministership and thereby the *de facto* power in the State of Cochin to a nominee of the Dutch who was to act under the orders of the Dutch Company. Under the Dutch patronage the Paliath Achan obtained before long a pre-eminent position in the affairs of the Cochin kingdom. Yet another treaty concluded between the Dutch and Cochin Raja in May 1681 provided for the appointment of a Dutch official as the Raja's minister and one of the Konkani Brahmins in Dutch service as Treasurer. The Paliath Achan was to manage

the affairs of the kingdom on the advice of the Dutch official. When the chief of Paliyam died leaving a minor as his heir, the Dutch appointed Henrick Reins to the post of Prime Minister of Cochin to attend to the duties on behalf of the minor chief.

War of Vettam Succession

The relations between the Zamorin and the Cochin ruler did not improve even in the Dutch period even though the Zamorin along with the Dutch had fought against the Portuguese and their native allies for the *Mutha Tavazhi* cause. Vira Kerala Varma, the Cochin ruler, felt resentment at the refusal of the Zamorin to return such places as Mapranam, Arattupuzha and Urakam which had been conquered by him from Cochin during his campaigns in Cochin territory. The Raja appealed to the Dutch for help to recover the territory lost by him but the Dutch would not interfere in the conflict. In 1689 Vira Kerala Varma decided to adopt a few members from the Chazhur branch into the Cochin family. The decision had the blessings of the Dutch and the Paliath Achan. The feudatory chiefs of Cochin like the rulers of Parur, Mangat, Karappuram etc., favoured adoption from Vettatnad and they started war on this issue in 1691. The Dutch Army assisted by the forces of Bharani Tirunal Manavikrama, the Zamorin of Calicut and Paliath Achan opposed the Vettatnad faction. They defeated the confederates at Alwaye and plundered the rich lands of Alangad and Parur. At the end of the war the Dutch ceded Chettuvai to the Zamorin and entered into a commercial treaty with him. It may be noted that for the first time since the coming of the European powers to the coast the Zamorin had reversed his traditional role of fighting for the cause of freedom and aligned himself on the side of a foreign power against the native forces fighting against alien domination. The war of Vettam succession is thus an event of great significance.

Conquest of Chettuvai

The Cochin Raja felt disappointed at the turn of events. During the reign of Rama Varma (1701-1721) the frequent clashes between the forces of Cochin and Calicut at last led to the formal declaration of war (1701). The Zamorin invaded Irinjalakuda but he was driven back across Chettuvai territory. The Dutch now gave up their policy of non-intervention and fought on the side of Cochin. The war between Calicut and Cochin went on for nine years without any decisive result. It was ended by the treaty of 1710 according to which the Dutch got Chettuvai and Pappinivattam and Cochin received a large portion of the territories which the Zamorin had seized. The loss of Chettuvai was a severe blow to the Zamorin. The Dutch also built a fort at the place in 1714 in order to prevent future incursions by the Zamorin. This enraged the Zamorin to take action to recover the lost territory. With the encouragement and support of the English factors at Tellicherry he retook Chettuvai in 1715 without any serious encounter. The Zamorin gave permission to Mr. Adam, the Chief of the Tellicherry factory, to build a factory at Chettuvai. The attempts by the Dutch to retake Chettuvai ended in failure. In the meantime the Dutch also

lost Pappinivattam to the Zamorin. In 1716 they made renewed efforts to recover their lost possessions with the Cochin Raja's help. The Dutch capture of Pappinivattam and Chettuvas followed in quick succession and the Zamorin soon withdrew from those parts of the Cochin territory over which he held sway. Both parties were now eager for the termination of hostilities. In February 1718 a treaty was concluded between the Dutch and the Zamorin. Under this treaty the Zamorin formally ceded to the Dutch the Chettuvas island and his possessions in Cochin territory, agreed to pay a war indemnity to the Company and also-pledged himself to live in peace with the ruler of Cochin.

Dutch Policy of Intervention

In the wake of their success over the Zamorin at Chettuvas, the Dutch began to dream of the day when they would establish their unchallenged overlordship over Kerala. Till now the political influence and power of the Dutch was confined to the kingdom of Cochin and some minor chiefdoms in its neighbourhood. As soon as the war with the Zamorin was over, the Dutch sent missions to Purakkad, Kayamkulam, Karappuram and Quilon to impress upon the Rajas concerned the new position of primacy which they had attained on the coast. The Dutch, hereafter, followed a deliberate policy of intervention in the affairs of the minor kingdoms with a view to establishing their predominant influence on the Kerala coast. They resorted to all kinds of intrigues and played one local chief against another. It was hoped that internecine warfare would make each chief seek the help of the Dutch and that this would enable the latter to maintain the balance of power and achieve their long term political aim of suzerainty over Kerala. The Dutch would have had their way and established before long their political hegemony over the whole of Kerala, had not unforeseen circumstances which they had not taken into their calculations intervened in the meantime to reverse the process which they had deliberately set in motion.

Troubles of the Dutch

The Zamorin, in spite of his discomfiture at Chettuvas, took active steps to form an all-Kerala confederacy against the Dutch and their ally, the Cochin Raja. In 1728 he proposed the adoption of a princess from the Tekkumkur family into Calicut in order to wean away the rulers of Tekkumkur and Vadakkumkur from within the orbit of Dutch influence. The Zamorin also sent emissaries to Kayamkulam and other principalities suggesting the early formation of the projected all-Kerala alliance against the Dutch. The defiant attitude of the Zamorin posed a serious threat to the Dutch position in Kerala. At this time the Dutch had also to face other troubles in North Kerala. The Bednore Nayaks had attacked the northern territories and advanced as far as Baliapattam in the Kolathiri Raja's kingdom. The English who were on the side of the Kolathiri persuaded the Dutch to join their campaign against the Nayaks, but before long the Dutch, fell out with the Kolathiri prince on the issue of the price of pepper to be sold to the Dutch at Cannanore. The dispute

was amicably settled in 1737 with the Kolathiri agreeing to sell 1,000 candies of pepper at Rs. 56 per candy. In spite of their alliance with the English the Dutch had realised that the English Company was a serious rival to them in the political and commercial fields. Vam Imhoff who was now guiding the affairs of the Dutch in Kerala formulated plans for annexing the various States and bringing them under Dutch rule in a move to counteract the growth of the British power. But before he could carry out his policy, the Dutch plans were upset by the rise and expansion of Travancore under Marthanda Varma (1729-1758).

Rise of Travancore

Marthanda Varma inflicted a severe defeat on the Dutch in 1741 in the famous battle of Colachel (Kanyakumari district) and he annexed to Travancore one after the other all the States in the neighbourhood with whom the Dutch had been carrying on intrigues. Thus, to the dismay of the Dutch, the Elayadathu Swarupam, Attingal estate, Kayamkulam, Purakkad, Tekkumkur and Vadakkumkur came under the sway of the Travancore ruler during the period 1746-1750. The action of Marthanda Varma shattered the Dutch dream of the conquest of Kerala. It may be noted that the important Dutch establishments at Quilon, Marta, Kayamkulam and Purakkad were absorbed in the kingdom of Travancore as a result of Marthanda Varma's conquests and the Dutch position was considerably weakened. In 1748, the Dutch entered into an agreement with Travancore under which they undertook not to disturb the English factories of Anjengo, Vizhinjam and Edava in Travancore and also promised to help the Raja in the event of his being attacked by any European power. The most far-reaching clause of the treaty was the one which provided for Dutch neutrality in the wars which Travancore might choose to wage against native powers. The provisions of this agreement were formally embodied in the Treaty of Mavelikara (1753). The treaty marked the complete humiliation of the Dutch and their eclipse as a political power in Kerala.

Triumphs of the Zamorin

The Zamorin made a determined bid to regain Chettuvai and Pappinivattam and he started his campaigns in 1755. The Calicut forces attacked Pappinivattam and brought the Vellose Nambiar and Pazhancheri Nair under the Zamorin's sway. The Enamakal fort was also captured from the Dutch. Parur, Trichur and Mullurkara were also brought under the Zamorin's control. The Zamorin had within a short period of nine months practically conquered the whole of Cochin. The Dutch efforts to make him withdraw from Chettuvai did not succeed. In the meantime Cranganore also came under the sway of the Zamorin. The power of Calicut was now at its zenith and Dutch prestige was at its lowest ebb.

The Mysore Invasion

The storm of the Mysore invasion burst at this juncture and produced further complications for the Dutch. When Haider Ali took Calicut in 1766 the representatives of the Dutch Company met him and represented that their

rights to Mapranam and Chettuvai should be respected and the Rajas of Cochin and Travancore should be left undisturbed. But nothing came out of these proposals as Haider insisted on payment of tribute by the Travancore and Cochin Rajas as a token of their allegiance to him. In 1766 Haider's general Sirdar Khan attacked Cochin State by marching through territories over which the Dutch had put forward their claims. Chettuvai and Pappinivattom passed into the hands of Haider without even a show of resistance. Sirdar Khan even demanded of the Dutch to pay 20 years revenue for the territories of the Zamorin which they had held. A Dutch attempt to reoccupy Chettuvai in 1788 met with serious reverse. In 1788 Tipu approached the Dutch with the request for the sale of their forts at Cochin, Cranganore (Kottapuram), and Ayakotta (Palliport), but in the meantime the Dutch Company entered into negotiations with Travancore and sold the forts of Cranganore and Ayakotta to that State.

Fall of Dutch Cochin (1795)

The Dutch had now under their control only the Cochin fort and Tankasseri, a small bit of territory near Quilon. During the Napoleonic war in which Holland fought against England an English force under Major Petrie marched against Cochin from Calicut and enforced the surrender of the Cochin fort by Van Spall. This happened on October 20, 1795. At the end of the war in Europe the Dutch ceded their territories in Kerala including Cochin to the English but the formal cession took place only by the Convention of Paris in 1814.

Causes of Dutch failure

The failure of the Dutch to establish a more enduring dominion in Kerala was due to a variety of causes. The most important cause was the emergence of Travancore as a powerful military State under Marthanda Varma. The Dutch policy of using the Raja of Cochin and the minor chiefs as their 'agents provocateur' in Kerala was not destined to be a permanent success. Marthanda Varma's policy of annexation of neighbouring States upset the balance of power and put the Dutch interests in jeopardy. The Dutch had ultimately to give up their political pretensions and make their exit from the scene. The rise of other European powers like the French and the English also upset the plans of the Dutch. The Support which the Dutch gave to the French in the Napoleonic wars lost them their settlement in Cochin. Unlike in the days of the Portuguese the native powers had acquired considerable military strength in the Dutch period. The armies of the various States were trained after European methods by expert European officers themselves. Thus Marthanda Varma's army was trained and equipped by the Dutch Admiral D'Lannoy. The native powers were also supplied with arms and ammunition by the English from their factories at Calicut and Anjengo in order to help them to carry on their fight against the Dutch. The same policy was pursued also by the French who had established themselves in Mahe in 1725. The superiority enjoyed by the English and the French on the sea made it difficult for the Dutch to interrupt the supply of arms and ammunition to the native powers.

Under these circumstances the Dutch could hardly hold their own for long on the Kerala coast. It may, however, be made clear in this connection that the Dutch failure, unlike that of the Portuguese, was not brought about by administrative inefficiency, moral degeneracy or unpopularity arising from wrong internal policies. In all these respects, the Dutch were superior to the Portuguese. In fact, their failure was due to political developments which were beyond their power to control.

Dutch Administration and Trade

Unlike the Portuguese the Dutch evolved a sound system of administration for the territories under their jurisdiction in Kerala. It was not a feudal system of the Portuguese type with its concomitant evils. There was neither indiscipline nor corruption to vitiate the Dutch administration. The Dutch officers who came to India were men of ability and integrity of character and hence Dutch rule was efficient. The Dutch Company itself was governed by a body of 17 Directors representative of various interests engaged in Indian trade. The Governor-General-in-Council at Batavia was in over-all charge of the Dutch territories in the East. In Kerala their possessions were governed by a Dutch Commandeur and Council with headquarters at Cochin. The Chief Administrator who was second in rank to the Commandeur looked after the commercial interests of the Company.

The functions of the Dutch administration in Kerala were clearly defined into political, military and ecclesiastical. The political functions included, among other things, the protection of commercial interests. The Political Department was headed by the Commandeur and Council assisted by a hierarchy of officials. Unlike the Portuguese, the Dutch made regular payments to their officials. The financial position of the Dutch in Kerala was sound except in the final stages. They kept the accounts faithfully and exercised the utmost economy in expenditure. The Commandeur and the Chief Administrator, however, enjoyed the right to private trade.

The Dutch military establishment was not too much of a burden to the administration. Unlike the Portuguese who maintained large, indisciplined and ill-paid squadrons which were more a liability than an asset, the Dutch military force was a compact one, never exceeding 2,000 in normal times. The Dutch also looked after the welfare of their officers, civil as well as military. They had an efficient medical service and also a number of skilled workmen to attend to the repair of arms, vessels, etc. The Dutch made arrangements for the impartial administration of justice. They also took steps for the treatment of leprosy in the coastal areas which came within their sphere of influence. A hospital for Leprosy patients was opened at Pallipuram. The general approach of the Dutch towards the people was on the whole tolerant and liberal and their administration was at no time vitiated by massacres or other acts of inhuman cruelty.

The main concern of the Dutch was to carry on trade with a view to obtaining the maximum profit. The Dutch Company maintained two separate departments for carrying on trade viz., one for imports and another for exports. Among the items of import were sugar, copper, tin, lead, camphor,

silk etc. The major item of export was pepper and all Dutch efforts were directed towards securing monopoly in the trade of pepper. In addition to pepper, the Dutch also carried on a flourishing trade in cotton goods, particularly the fine piecegoods made in Eraniel and Kottar. Cardamom was also another item of export trade. Apart from the revenues derived from the import and export trade, the Dutch Company also derived revenues from some of the estates which they either administered directly or farmed out to individuals. The Dutch also obtained revenue from the sale of tobacco and arrack as well as from the export of slaves.

Religious Policy of the Dutch

The religious policy of the Dutch was on the whole liberal and tolerant, unlike that of the Portuguese. Nevertheless, for a short period immediately after the Dutch conquest of Cochin, they committed a few acts of religious excesses. They expelled Roman Catholic priests from Cochin and suburbs. The magnificent Jesuit Library in Cochin was pulled down. Tavernier has testified that he saw the Dutch soldiers and seamen “tear several of those beautiful volumes to light their tobacco”. Many stately churches of the Jesuits were either destroyed or converted into ammunition stores. But, after these initial outbursts of intolerance, the Dutch reversed their attitude and thereafter followed an enlightened policy of religious toleration. The Jesuits and other European Catholic missionaries who were expelled were allowed in due course to return and carry on their missionary activities. In 1673 the Carmelite missionaries were given permission to build a church at Chathiath in Ernakulam, the first church built by the Carmelites in Kerala. In the same year they built a church at Verapoly (Varapuzha) on the banks of the Periyar on land given free of rent by the Cochin ruler. A residence for the Carmelite priests was also built there. In 1682 the Carmelites also founded a great seminary at Verapoly which later developed into the St. Joseph’s Pontifical Seminary, Mangalapuzha, Alwaye. In the Dutch period Verapoly attained great prominence and came to be looked upon as an ecclesiastical capital by Catholics all over Kerala. Its tradition is being perpetuated in the present Archdiocese of Verapoly.

Apart from the liberal attitude adopted towards the foreign missionaries, the Dutch also took the native Christians including the Latin Catholics under their protection. The Dutch even appointed the Latin Christians to important positions as they wanted their co-operation for purposes of trade. The Dutch not only did not interfere with the religious practices of the Syrian Christians but even helped them in their efforts to obtain new Bishops from Syria to retain their independence of Rome. Towards the Jews and Gowda Saraswaths (Konkanis) who were the special targets of Portuguese tyranny the Dutch followed a policy of patronage. The Dutch invariably showed respect for the sentiments of the Hindu population. The temples or religious institutions of the Hindus were spared from attack during their campaigns. A treaty with Vadakkumkur signed in September 1750 provided that they would “not molest pagodas or cows”. It may be mentioned that the Dutch administration

in Kerala maintained an ecclesiastical establishment for the sake of their reformed Protestant religion; but it made hardly any impact on the local Christian community. The Dutch do not seem to have made any serious attempt to get recruits to their creed.

Effects of Dutch Contact

The Dutch made some significant contributions to the economy of Kerala. They created conditions favourable for the revival of Kerala trade. New products and scientific techniques of cultivation were introduced with a view to improving the agricultural economy. Coconut was extensively cultivated on the Kerala coast under Dutch auspices. In order to give a fillip to coconut cultivation improved seeds and scientific methods of cultivation were popularised. Vaipin island and Venduruthi were specially chosen by the Dutch to carry out their experiments in coconut cultivation and their success in these places inspired the people to copy the Dutch example and take to large scale coconut cultivation. Trade in coir and coconut oil received an impetus following the increase in the area and outturn under coconut. The Dutch also gave encouragement to the cultivation of rice and indigo. Good quality seedlings were brought from Surat and sown in Ernakulam, Alangad, Venduruthi, Verapoly, etc., and local fishermen were trained in indigo cultivation. New industries like salt farming and dyeing were also introduced by the Dutch. The local rulers took to salt manufacture on an extensive scale and won enormous profits following the example of the Dutch. The Dutch imported into Kerala several expert dyers from Tuticorin and gave them all conveniences and facilities to settle down in Kerala and teach their craft to the native people. The ports of Kerala such as Cochin, Quilon, Anjengo, Colachel and Tengapattanam hummed with brisk activity consequent upon the revival of Kerala economy under the Dutch.

In the educational and cultural fields, the Dutch contact has left very little of an impact. They built no seminaries or educational institutions. But the memoirs, letters and accounts left by the Dutchmen like Visscher, Linschoten, Nieuhoff and Baldaeus have been of inestimable value to scholars of the later period to reconstruct the history of Kerala. The greatest achievement of the Dutch in the cultural field was, perhaps, the compilation of the monumental botanical work, *Hortus Malabaricus*, which deals in detail with the medicinal properties of Indian plants. The work was compiled under the patronage of Admiral Van Rheede and among those who were associated with the great project were the Carmelite monk Mamaeus, three Gowda Saraswath Brahmins, viz., Ranga Bhat, Appu Bhat and Vinayaka Bhat and an Ezhava physician by name Itti Achuthan. The work was completed after several years of dedicated labour and it was finally published from Amsterdam between 1678 and 1703 in twelve volumes with 794 neatly executed copper plate engravings. "A book of its size", says Whitehouse, "on which such care was expended must have consumed a fortune before its publication and confers honour both on those who compiled it and the place where it was compiled".

CHAPTER XVIII

KERALA POLITY AND LIFE IN THE 16th AND 17th CENTURIES

A survey of the general state of polity and society in Kerala in the 16th and 17th centuries is essential for a proper understanding of the history of the period. The accounts of foreigners like Duarte Barbosa and Canter Visscher as well as indigenous works like the *Tuhafat-ul-Mujahidin* of Shaik Zainuddin and the 'Northern Ballads' or *Vadakkam Pattukal* give us interesting glimpses into the social customs and institutions of the age.

Polity

The political and social structure of the land was feudal in character. It has already been made clear that there was no organised central government in Kerala during this period, the country having been split up into a number of *Nadus* or principalities each of which was under a local chieftain called the *Naduvazhi*. The powers of the *Naduvazhi* were vast and varied but they were limited by the local *tara* organization. The *tara* was the local territorial unit of the Nairs organised for civil purposes and it was governed by representatives of the caste. In view of the special position occupied by the *tara kuttams* or local assemblies in the life of the community the *Naduvazhi* was the head of a feudal aristocracy with limited authority and could hardly function as an arbitrary despot.

The *Naduvazhi* enjoyed several sources of income. An important source of income was the *Chunkam* or customs revenue from imports, exports and transports. A succession fee called *Purushantaram* was levied from every person who assumed charge of family property on the death of the previous owner. We have the testimony of Shaik Zainuddin that land tax was not levied from any class of agriculturists. On the other hand, 10 per cent of the profit was collected from all merchants and businessmen, irrespective of caste or creed. The *Naduvazhi* could take over the estates of his decaying neighbouring chiefs. Fines (*Pizha*) of various kinds were levied from the subjects. Those who wanted to fight duels (*ankams*) paid large sums of money (*nattukizhi*) to the chiefs who made arrangements for the fight. The properties of nobles who died without legitimate heirs (*Attaladakam*) also fell to the lot of the *Naduvazhi* and enriched his coffers. The formal consent of the chieftains obtained on payment of a specific sum was necessary for any noble to adopt an heir. It was called *Dattukazhcha*. Different kinds of fees for protection were levied from dependents and strangers, e.g., *Rakshabhogam*, *Changatam*, etc. The *Naduvazhi* also received presents (*Kazhcha*) from his

subjects on such occasions as wedding, funeral, opening of new palaces, etc. The plunder of the cargo from the ship that came ashore also helped the chieftain to increase his income. The *Naduvazhi* had also a monopoly of the various animals captured in his domain. The money received from the sale of women convicted for adultery also brought a large income to the chief. This was called *Pulayattu Pennu*.

Kalari

Notwithstanding the nominal supremacy enjoyed by the *Naduvazhi* in the kingdom, real power lay in the hands of the Nair *Madampimar* or nobles. As already stated, the latter supplied the chieftains with troops in times of war and for this purpose they maintained private armies of their own. The *Kalari* where the youth of the land received training in the technique of warfare was an important institution of the age. The Nairs were the traditional martial class of the land. Apart from the Nairs, the Tiyyas or Ezhavas had also their own martial tradition as is testified to by the heroic deeds of Aromal Chekavar celebrated in the Northern Ballads. The Northern Ballads are replete with references to the institution of the *Kalari* (Gymnasium) and the training in the use of arms (*Kalaripayattu*) imparted therein. The youth of the land, irrespective of sex, were given training in the *Kalari* at a very early age. Unniarcha and Kodumala Kunki who figure in the ballads were two medieval heroines of North Malabar famous for their martial exploits.

Ankam

The martial spirit of the people was sustained and nourished by several military institutions. The military combat known as *Ankam* deserves special mention in this context. According to this custom, if disputes between parties were not satisfactorily settled in the local assemblies of the *Kuttams* of the *tara* and the *nadu*, the parties concerned would have them settled in military combats. A preparation and training for 12 years preceded the fight, for the participants were expected to achieve proficiency in the use of weapons. The participants in the combats were not necessarily parties to the quarrel but their champions paid for that purpose. All those who were approached with the request to take part in the *ankam* acceded to the same as a matter of honour. The *Naduvazhi* was expected to be informed in advance of the decision to fight and paid the *Nattukizhi* so that he could make all the arrangements for the conduct of the *ankam*. It was also customary to pay compensation to the families of those who died in the *ankam*. Foul play in the *ankam* fight was disallowed and the parties were expected to observe the highest ethical standards while taking part in the combat.

Poithu

Another military institution was the *poithu*. Unlike the *ankam* this was a private affair between two individuals or two *desams* and it was not obligatory to inform the public or the *naduvazhi* about the impending fight. The famous fight between Tacholi Otenan and Katirur Kurukkal in which the former lost

his life was one of this kind. The traditional rivalry between heroes usually ended in *poithu* fight.

Kutipaka

Another typical custom of the age was the *kutipaka* (literally house feud). If any person molested or killed another, the members of the family of the victim would nurse feelings of eternal enmity towards the members of the family of the slayer and would wreak vengeance at the earliest opportunity. "Eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth" was the accepted dictum. Many a northern ballad narrates the story of the cold-blooded massacre of all the male children born as members of the slayer's family. A peculiar practice associated with *kutipaka* was that the chieftain of the *nad* took with him the corpse of the victim to his enemy's house and burnt it, along with his house.

Trial By Ordeal

There was no regular judiciary or written code of laws in Kerala during this period. Custom or *maryada* governed the relations between individuals. The ruler gave the verdict in all cases in consultation with his officers or with the Brahmins in obscure cases. The *tara* organisation also played its part in the settlement of disputes. Law was, however, not equalitarian. The Brahmins were punished only by loss of caste even for the most heinous of crimes. And only the Azhuvancheri Tamprakkal could impose even this punishment. A Nair who killed a person below his caste was in the first instance punished only with the imposition of a fine.

Trial by ordeal (*Satya Pariksha*) was common in both civil and criminal cases. Several forms of such trial were in vogue. Thus a man was asked to pick a coin out of a pot of boiling oil with his hand and pronounced guilty or not guilty judging from the state of his hand after a certain lapse of time. Different forms of water and fire ordeals and ordeals by poison and balance were also prevalent. Visscher refers to a peculiar custom of ordeal by snakes or Cobra Capellas. He says, "When a man will not confess a crime they take a mantle and wrap up in it one of those reptiles which are not only poisonous, but are also reckoned sacred by them ; after calling on the gods, the accused must thrust his hand into the mantle and lift up the snake. If he be bitten he is considered guilty." The type of ordeal to which a person was subjected was determined by considerations of caste. Ordeal by balance (*Tukku*) was reserved for Brahmins, fire for Kshatriyas, water for Vaisyas and poison for Sudras.

The system of trial by ordeal prevailed in several temples of Kerala, e.g., Valayanad, Chengannur, Ettumanur, Suchindram, etc. The famous ordeal at Suchindram which was known as *Kaimukku* (Ordeal of boiling ghee) was introduced there by the Namboothiri Brahmins who migrated to the area in the wake of the establishment of Venad supremacy. On the evidence, among others, of the *Sukasandesa* of Lakshmidasa the date of introduction of this ordeal at Suchindram has been assigned to the 13th century or sometime after. The *Kaimukku* was confined to the Namboothiri community and the records of the Suchindram temple show that the vast majority of the trials

were conducted in respect of alleged sexual offences committed by Namboothiri women. It was almost a continuation of the *Smartha Vicharam* under which Namboothiri women accused of adultery were first tried before a caste tribunal of elders. The Polpana Bhattatiri was the chief judge at the Suchindram *Kaimukku*. It may be noted that not only Hindus but non-Hindus like Christians, Muslims and Jews were also sometimes subjected to trial by ordeal in various parts of Kerala, though in Suchindram it was confined to the Namboothiris.

The punishments given to the criminals of the age were very drastic. The body of the person sentenced to death was cut in halves and exposed on a cross bar. Shaik Zainuddin points out that the dead bodies of Muslims who were put to death were entrusted to their co-religionists for burial according to their religious rites while those of non-Muslims were left to jackals and dogs. There was a strange procedure for the punishment of debtors. It was customary to draw a circle round the person with a green branch, invoke the name of the favourite deity and challenge him to leave the circle without satisfying the claims of the creditor. This custom was called *Valakkal*.

Law of Inheritance

Among the social institutions of the age the *Marumakkathayam* or matrilineal system of inheritance and polyandrous marriage deserve special mention. Zainuddin observes that the *Marumakkathayam* or matrilineal system of inheritance was prevalent mainly among the Nairs and a section of the Muslims and the patrilineal (*Makkathayam*) system among the Brahmins, Kammalas, Tiyyas and Mukkuvas. The Ravari or Vyavari Nairs also followed the *Makkathayam* system as is evidenced by Barbosa. The Tiyyas of North Malabar seem to have adopted *Marumakkathayam* only after the 16th century. Zainuddin specifically refers to its prevalence among the Muslims of Cannanore and suburbs and points out that the system was followed by them even though it was anti-Islamic. The "Northern Ballads" also show the supremacy of *Marumakkathayam* and the unique position held by the *Karanavar* in the *tarawad*. The *Karanavar* was consulted on all important matters and his decision was final. Any insult to the *Karanavar* was avenged by the nephew as is evidenced by the action of Aromunni against Chandu even 20 years after the latter treacherously murdered his uncle.

Place of Women in Society

Women of the age enjoyed considerable freedom in society. Except the women of the Namboothiri community who carried the *marakuda* to hide their faces none of the others observed the *purdah* system. The Nair women used to dress themselves in the best of clothes and adorn the most attractive ornaments and throng public places in the company of their men. They also followed the practice of polyandry without any social stigma being attached to their conduct. It may be noted in this connection that while non-fraternal or disparate polyandry prevailed in North Kerala, fraternal polyandry (*Pandavacharam*) was the usual custom in South Kerala till the beginning of

the 20th century. Many reasons are assigned by scholars for the practice of polyandry, but according to Zainuddin, it was adopted mainly to prevent alienation of family property.

Castes and Communities

The Hindu society of the age was organised on the basis of the caste system. The Brahmins stood at the top of the social hierarchy and among them the Namboothiris were reckoned as the highest in rank. Only the eldest son among the Namboothiris married within the caste and all others had *Sambandham* with women belonging to the Nair, Ambalavasi or other communities of equal or higher rank. There were also other Brahmin castes like the Tulu Brahmins and the Gowda Saraswaths who came from outside.

The Nairs and the Tiyyas represented the most powerful castes among the Hindus. Zainuddin refers to the Nairs who constituted the martial class as the more influential and numerous of the two castes. It was customary for the Nairs to move about with sword in hand. Though the main occupation of the Nairs was fighting, some of them were also employed as accountants and clerks in the service of the *Naduvazhi*. Generally they avoided trade, commerce and occupations involving manual labour as lacking in dignity and respectability. The economic condition of the Nairs was unsatisfactory. Their houses were thatched with cadjan leaves as the privilege of roofing them with tiles was denied to them. The Nairs were famous for their fidelity or loyalty. The Portuguese, therefore, employed them as *Changatams* (suicide squads) charged with the duty of defending with their lives any person or property entrusted to their charge. The killing of a *Changatam* or Nair except in a regular battle or duel involved the aggressors in a *Kutipaka* or blood feud with the relatives of the victim which could be made up only after blood vengeance was taken. Barbosa says of the Nairs that they “drink no wine, they do not sleep with women of low caste; all this is forbidden under pain of death”. It may be noted in this connection that drinking was not a serious social evil in Kerala till the 16th century and that the position had become very different by the time of Buchanan’s visit in 1800-01 when the Nairs were addicted to intoxication. Polyandry was also practised by the Nairs. “The more lovers a woman has”, says Barbosa, “the greater is her honour”. Shaik Zainuddin has also noticed the Nair custom of marriage as one which distinguished them from other communities. He says that each woman had two or four husbands and that the men seldom quarrelled, the woman distributing her time among her husbands in the same way as a Muslim distributed his time among his women.

Next below the Nairs in social rank were the Tiyyas. Their main occupation was toddy-tapping, but like the Nairs some of the Tiyyas also received military training. Then there were the Kammalas or artisan classes, the Mukkuvas or the fisher-folk and several other castes like the Pulayas, Kuravas, Parayas, etc., but they occupied only a low status in society and were subjected to all kinds of disabilities.

Social Evils

The caste Hindus like the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Nairs, etc., had a privileged status. They were expected to observe the caste rules most scrupulously. Those who violated the rules were subjected to social ostracism and sold as slaves to Christians or Muslims under orders from the sovereign. Sometimes the offenders were secretly murdered by the relatives to escape the wrath of the sovereign. Barbosa says, "Nair women offending against the law of their sect are sold to Moors and Christians, if the king knows of it before her male relatives. If they know of it before the king, they shut her up and kill her with dagger or spear, saying that, if they did not do so they would remain greatly dishonoured. And the king holds this to be well done."

The Nairs by virtue of their association with the Namboothiris had a high status in society and they observed the rules of caste most rigidly. The evil custom of untouchability was observed by the Namboothiris, Kshatriyas, Nairs, etc. Barbosa says of the Nairs that "they will not touch, one of the low caste nor eat, nor drink, save in the house of a Nair". But the Nairs had the privilege of keeping women belonging to the Velutheda (washerman) and Chaliya (weaver) communities as concubines. When they went to the battle field the Nairs could also move freely with persons of low caste and eat and drink in their houses without fear of excommunication.

Apart from untouchability, unseeability and unapproachability also existed in a dreadful form. A Namboothiri who happened to be seen by a Nayadi or Pulaya considered himself to have been polluted. A strict schedule of distances at which members of castes below the Nairs had to stand with respect to the higher castes was evolved. Thus the Pulaya had to keep a distance of 60 feet from a Nair. When Nair nobles came out in the public roads an attendant of theirs preceded them shouting *po, po* (get away, get away) so that they would not be polluted by a person of low caste even by a chance encounter within the prohibited distance. Failure on the part of the lower castes to make way for the Nairs and other upper castes on the public road even led to their being murdered with the connivance of the custodians of law and order.

The period saw a steep decline in the moral character of the people. This was due to the corrupting influence of caste and the *Janmi* system. The landlords and the upper castes enjoyed all facilities to lead a life of ease and idleness and the law of the land gave them all the protection that they needed. Captain Nieuhoff who visited Karthikapally (Bettimeni) in 1664 speaks of an abominable law that prevailed there. He says, "it is commonly reported in these parts that the king of Batyma made a law by which a man is empowered to kill any woman that should refuse him a kindness". Archbishop Menezes who visited the kingdom towards the end of the 16th century also alludes to the existence of this custom.

The dreadful custom known as *Pulappedi* or *Mannappedi* or *Parappedi* was observed during this period. According to this primitive custom the members of the lower castes like Pulayas, Mannans, etc., enjoyed the privilege of harassing women of higher castes, particularly the Nair caste, during certain

months every year. The Pulayas etc., used to roam about freely in the night during these privileged months in order to abduct women belonging to the Nair caste. The custom was that those women of the Nair caste who were thus carried away by Pulayas and Mannans or at least “polluted by their touch” or even hit by a stone or stick thrown at by them, were treated as outcastes. This custom is referred to by Shaik Zainuddin and Durate Barbosa.

A kind of slave trade prevailed during this age. There were organised bands of robbers who kidnapped the children of the low castes and sold them for pecuniary gain. Children of aristocratic families were also not spared, if circumstances permitted their being kidnapped. Most of these children were sold on the coast to the agents of foreign vessels engaged in trade. There was ‘also agrestic slavery in the sense that slaves were attached to the soil and treated as marketable property. In view of the prevalence of such social evils on a large scale, several Hindus were getting attracted towards Islam and Christianity, leaving the Hindu fold.

Mappilas of North Kerala

Among the non-Hindu communities, the Mappilas held a prominent place in society in North Kerala. They were engaged mainly in trade and commerce. They constituted about one-fifth of the population of Malabar during this period. Some of the Mappilas were *Makkathayis* and others *Marumakkathayis*. But some others followed a mixed system of giving half of their property to sons and the other half to nephews. They enjoyed religious freedom, as the Hindu chiefs and their Hindu subjects adopted a highly tolerant outlook towards the non-Hindus. The *Tuhafat-ul-Mujahidin* is all praise for the tolerance of the Hindu rulers of the day. It is pointed out that though the native Muslims had no influential leaders or chieftains they were still accorded a high place in the body politic by the rulers of the land. The Muslims lived in peace and amity with the followers of other religions. Even the Hindus who became converts to Islam were not subjected to any kind of ill-treatment. As the Muslims had the monopoly of business and trade in North Kerala the Hindus treated them with considerable respect.

Syrian Christians

The general picture of society given above is essentially that of North Kerala, but it may be made clear that the conditions in Central and South Kerala were not basically different. Unlike in North Kerala, the Syrian and Latin Christians formed an important element in the population of Central and South Kerala and they played a prominent part in the public life of the land. Like the Nairs, the Christians also underwent military training. The latter even used to attend the church with sword and shield in hand to the embarrassment of the foreign missionaries. The Portuguese and the Dutch did not hesitate to enlist local Christians in their armies. The Christians of the age were highly enterprising and noted for their courteous manners as is testified to by the evidence of Portuguese and Dutch writers. Unlike the Hindu women, the Christian women (and Muslim women too) were fully dressed,

covering the upper part of their body. They wore practically the same ornaments as the Hindu women. In appearance and dress the Christian male of the age could hardly be distinguished from the Nair, for he too wore the tuft and the ear-ring.

The Christians traded in such commodities as copra, pepper, etc., and their business morality was very high. The vast majority among them were vegetarians, rice, curry and milk being their main items of food. Beef eating had not come into vogue. The Christians as a class were also not addicted to drink during this period. Their civil disputes were settled through the mediation of the church. Several Hindu customs and practices (e.g., observance of untouchability, belief in astrology, *Mantravada*, etc.) were prevalent among them, but the Synod of Diamper (1599) issued a series of decrees with a view to removing all traces of Hindu influence from among the Christians. Under the Portuguese and the Dutch the Christians enjoyed certain privileges which were denied to their Hindu brethren. The treaties concluded by these powers with the native rulers contained special provisions to safeguard the interests of the local Christian population.

The relations between the different communities were on the whole cordial. It is particularly noteworthy that the Hindu rulers of the age continued the policy of religious toleration followed by their predecessors and gave all facilities to the foreign Christian missionaries to carry on their proselytising activities. The relations between the Hindu rulers and their Christian subjects were based on mutual trust and faith. The rulers of the age like the Cochin Raja and the chiefs of Vadakkumkur, Tekkumkur and Ambalapuzha helped not a little in the progress of Christianity in their kingdoms by donating lands for the erection of churches and extending other facilities.

Economic Life

Kerala trade with foreign countries continued in the 16th and 17th centuries. The major ports of the land were Quilon, Cochin and Calicut, but there were also other minor ports like Cannanore, Pantalayani Kollam, Tanur, Chaliyam, Ponnani, Purakkad, Anjengo, Tengapattanam etc., which too played their part in the commerce of the land. Durate Barbosa who visited Quilon in 1514 refers to it as “a great city and good sea-port” in which dwelt Moors, Gentiles and Christians. “They are great merchants and very rich,” says Barbosa, “and own many ships with which they trade to Chholmendel, the island of Ceylon, Bengal, Malacca, Samatara and Pegu; these do not trade with Cambay. There is also in this city much pepper.” Caesar Frederick, the Venetian merchant, who undertook a voyage to the East Indies in 1563-1581 and visited Kerala describes Cochin as the “chiefest place that the Portugals have in the Indies next unto Goa” and he makes specific mention of the rich trade in spices, drugs and similar kinds of merchandise. He says that the Portuguese ships carried from Cochin to Portugal “a great abundance of pepper, great quantities of ginger dried and conserved, wild sinamome, good quality of arecca, great store of cordage of coire made of the bark of the tree of the great nut and better than hempe of which they carry great store into Portugal”.

Pyrard De Laval who visited Calicut in 1607 found it “the busiest and most full of all traffic and commerce in the whole of India. It has merchants from all parts of the world and of all nations and religions by reason of the liberty and security accorded to them there, for the king permits the exercise of every religion and yet it is strictly forbidden to talk, dispute or quarrel on the subject”.

Apart from the Arabs, the native trading classes like the Mappilas, the Chettis, the Gujarathis and the Vyavari (Ravari) Nairs played a leading part in promoting the trade of Calicut. The role of the Mappilas or native Muslims was primarily that of middlemen between foreign Muslims and the native manufacturers and growers. As they were not wealthy enough, they borrowed money from the rich Arab merchants and carried on business on small scale. The attitude of the foreign Muslims towards them was arrogant and overbearing and there were frequent clashes between them and the foreign Muslims of Cairo and Omuz. The Portuguese who were the inveterate enemies of the Arabs tried to play the one against the other by giving better price for the commodities they purchased from the native Muslims than they ever paid for what they got from the Cairo merchants.

In spite of the brisk trade with foreign countries the economy of Kerala during the period showed signs of strain. The fall in the price of pepper and the consequent growth of poverty among large sections of the people have already been alluded to in the chapter on the Portuguese.

CHAPTER XIX

MARTHANDA VARMA AND DHARMA RAJA

In the 18th century Venad (Travancore) produced two illustrious rulers, viz., Marthanda Varma (1729-1758) and Kartika Tirunal Rama Varma (1758-1798), popularly called the Dharma Raja. Under their able guidance and leadership Travancore rose to prominence as a powerful military State. Whereas the former carried out the annexation of several neighbouring States and contributed substantially to the expansion of the kingdom, the latter consolidated the conquests and preserved its territorial integrity in the face of the threat from Mysore. In this chapter we shall attempt a brief review of the achievements of the two rulers.

Marthanda Varma's Policy

Venad at the time of Marthanda Varma's accession to the Trippappur Swarupam (Tiruvitamkode or later Travancore) presented a picture of disorder and confusion. There was no proper administrative machinery for the transaction of government business. The finances of the kingdom were in an extremely unsatisfactory state. The authority of the king was nowhere respected. The *Pillamar* and the *Matampimar* had established themselves as a powerful force in the public life of the State and they were supported by the *Yogakkar*. In short, the feudal elements enjoying the patronage of the priestly class, had the upper hand in the affairs of the State. The rivalries of European powers like the Dutch and the English made the situation more complex. Thus, on his accession to the throne, Marthanda Varma had to face a perilous situation.

The young Marthanda Varma rose to the occasion with a stout heart. He followed a policy of "blood and iron" the basic aim of which was to crush the feudal elements and make royal authority supreme in the kingdom. In order to achieve his aim Marthanda Varma decided to seek help from extraneous sources. Even as *Yuvaraja* he had advised his uncle to enter into treaties with the English East India Company and the Nayaks of Madurai and obtain their help in crushing the power of the feudal elements which opposed royal authority. On his accession he continued the same policies with redoubled vigour. Marthanda Varma's policies ultimately bore rich fruit with the destruction of the power of the feudal barons, the establishment of a strong and centralised monarchy and the expansion of Travancore into a powerful military State.

Marthanda Varma gave his first attention to the task of reorganisation of the administrative system. The finances of the State were improved and every care was taken to ensure economy in public expenditure. Special attention

was bestowed on the reorganisation of the military forces. The army was equipped with better arms and discipline was strictly enforced. He then proceeded to stamp out the forces of rebellion and anarchy.

Suppression of the Pillamar

On Marthanda Varma's accession Padmanabhan Tampi and Raman Tampi, the sons of the previous Raja, put forward their claim to the Trippappur throne according to the patrilineal system of inheritance. They received support from the Pillamar and the *Yogakkar* as well as from the Madurai Nayaks. An army sent by Madurai Nayak was persuaded by the Raja to return home by bribing its commander Azhagappa Mudaliar. In 1730 the Raja initiated vigorous action against the pretenders. While he was camping at Nagercoil, the Tampis were captured and brought before him. They were subsequently executed on his orders. The fate of the Tampis was a grim warning to the Pillamar and their friends. Though they did not create much trouble immediately, they continued their defiant activities which spread disaffection against the king. Marthanda Varma issued peremptory orders for their arrest on a charge of conspiracy against the king. All the rebel leaders were captured and sternly dealt with. The Pottis were immediately banished from the land while the Pillamar were put to death. The properties of the Pillamar were confiscated to the State and their women and children were sold as slaves to the fishermen on the coast. The houses of the rebels were razed to the ground. These drastic steps taken by Marthanda Varma gave the finishing touches to the tottering edifice of the feudal system in Travancore and ushered in a new era of strong and centralised administration under the aegis of the ruling sovereign.

Absorption of Attingal

After crushing the forces of feudalism and anarchy Marthanda Varma turned his attention to the conquest of the neighbouring principalities with a view to enlarging the boundaries of his kingdom. His first act was to assume direct control of the Attingal estate and thus prevent the Attingal Tampurattis from entering into independent transactions with foreign powers like the Dutch, the English, etc. The absorption of Attingal was not the annexation of an independent State as some writers have suggested but only an administrative action pursued by Marthanda Varma in exercise of a legitimate power vested in him as the sovereign of the kingdom and head of the royal house of Venad.

War against Quilon

Marthanda Varma then turned his attention to Quilon (Desinganad) where his uncle Unni Kerala Varma exercised independent sway. This chief had entered into an alliance with the ruler of Kayamkulam. He adopted a princess into his family from Kayamkulam and strengthened the alliance. Unni Kerala Varma also seized the portion of Kallada which belonged to the young ruler of Venad. The Trippappur army under Dalawa Arumukham Pillai marched against Quilon and defeated the Raja. Unni Kerala Varma undertook to cancel the adoption from Kayamkulam, demolish the fortifications and restore



friendly relations with Marthanda Varma. The Raja was brought to Trivandrum and lodged almost as a State prisoner in the Valiakoikkal palace. A contingent of the Trippappur army under Dalawa Arumukham Pillai was stationed at Quilon to maintain peace.

War against Kayamkulam

The discomfiture of the Raja of Quilon alarmed the Raja of Kayamkulam. In the meantime, Marthanda Varma seized the State of Marta and his army was poised against Kayamkulam. The Kayamkulam Raja took the lead in forming a confederacy of Cochin, Purakkad and Vadakkumkur against Marthanda Varma. The Raja sent his secret emissaries to Trivandrum in order to establish contacts with the Quilon Raja and to assure him of the support of the confederacy. The Raja managed to escape to Quilon and join his allies. He built new fortifications and strengthened the defences of Quilon against possible attacks from the Trippappur side. The Dutch professed to support the Raja but their support was insincere. The Kayamkulam Raja invaded the State of Marta and insulted the Rani of Attingal who was residing in the Nedumpuram palace at Tiruvalla. The defiance of the Quilon Raja and the intrigues of the Dutch provoked Marthanda Varma to take vigorous action. The army seized Nedumangad and Kottarakara and prevented the combination of the forces of Elayadathu Swarupam and Kayamkulam. In 1734 he removed the members of the Elayadathu family to Trivandrum. He then sent an army under Ramayyan, his trusted Dalawa, with instructions to capture Quilon but Ramayyan failed to accomplish his mission and was forced to withdraw.

Having equipped his forces with the help of the English and the French, Marthanda Varma renewed military operations against the Quilon Raja. In the campaigns that ensued the ruler of Kayamkulam was killed in battle (1734), but Marthanda Varma failed to achieve his objective. The resistance of Quilon and Kayamkulam continued under the brother of the deceased Raja and Marthanda Varma was forced to concede defeat and return to his headquarters.

War against Elayadathu Swarupam

Marthanda Varma's next campaign was against Elayadathu Swarupam (Kottarakara). When the chief of Elayadathu Swarupam who was kept in solitary confinement at Trivandrum died in 1739 Marthanda Varma refused to recognise the claim of the senior princess to succession. She fled to Tekkumkur where the Raja gave her asylum. The Dutch who were waiting for an opportunity to curb the growing power of Marthanda Varma championed the cause of the exiled princess. Van Imhoff met Marthanda Varma and protested to him against his policies towards the neighbouring States. The meeting between the two leaders only served to aggravate the situation. In 1741 the Dutch formally installed the princess as the ruler of Elayadathu Swarupam in defiance of the wishes of Marthanda Varma. The Trippappur army met the combined forces of the Elayadathu Swarupam and the Dutch

in battle and inflicted a crushing defeat on them. Elayadathu Swarupam was annexed by Marthanda Varma and the princess fled to Cochin for asylum under the Dutch.

Battle of Colachel (1741)

Marthanda Varma then launched a series of attacks on the Dutch forts in the area and captured all of them. His determined policies made a major clash with the Dutch inevitable. A Dutch force equipped with artillery landed at Colachel from Ceylon and conquered the country up to Kottar. The Dutch forces then advanced against Kalkulam, the capital of Marthanda Varma. The Raja who was then in the north promptly marched his army to the south and arrived at Kalkulam just in time to prevent its capture by the Dutch. In the famous battle fought at Colachel (10th August 1741) the forces of Marthanda Varma won a resounding victory over the Dutch. A large number of Dutchmen were captured prisoners, the most distinguished among them being D'Lannoy who was later made the 'Valia Kappithan' of Marthanda Varma's army. A disaster of the first magnitude for the Dutch, the battle of Colachel shattered for all time to come their dream of the conquest of Kerala. The path of northward expansion was now clear for Marthanda Varma and he started before long the campaigns for the annexation of the northern States.

Annexation of Kayamkulam (1746)

After their defeat at Colachel the Dutch concentrated their attention on Quilon. With the help of the Raja of Quilon, they seized Vamanapuram, but were forced to withdraw under heavy pressure. A six thousand strong Trippappur (Travancore) army under Ramayyan Dalawa laid siege to the Dutch fort at Quilon but the fort was defended by the Dutch and Kayamkulam forces under the command of Achutha Warriar, the gallant minister of the Kayamkulam Raja. The Trippappur forces were forced to retreat and the combined forces moved southwards and seized Kilimanur (1742). Marthanda Varma now brought down a few squadrons of cavalry from Tirunelveli and marched against Kilimanur at the head of a large army. While the Raja himself held the supreme command of the army, it was divided for purposes of action into three squadrons, led by prince Rama Varma, Ramayyan Dalawa and D'Lannoy. Kilimanur was taken and the Dutch and Kayamkulam forces retreated to Quilon with heavy loss. The Travancore army then advanced towards Kayamkulam. After some resistance, the Raja sued for peace. By the treaty of Mannar (1742) Kayamkulam became a vassal of Travancore and the Raja ceded to that State all the territories which formerly belonged to the Quilon branch.

The Raja of Kayamkulam was, however, not in a mood to keep his promises. He soon entered into negotiations with Vadakkumkur, Tekkumkur and Purakkad and having received assurances of their support violated his treaty obligations with impunity. Another Travancore army under Ramayyan Dalawa now marched against Kayamkulam. The Kayamkulam Raja failed to get the expected help from his allies. In his despair he sent his family in

disguise to Trichur and threw all the valuables in his palace into the Kayamkulam lake. The Raja thereafter fled from his kingdom. The Travancore army captured the Kayamkulam fort and palace. In the course of the search of the palace, it was found *that* some of the arms and military stores bore the name of “Devanarayana”. This was clear proof of the complicity of the Raja of Chempakasseri (Purakkad or Ambalapuzha) in the wars fought by Kayamkulam against Travancore.

Annexation of Ambalapuzha, etc.

Immediately after the annexation of Kayamkulam (1746) Marthanda Varma turned his attention to those northern States which had sided with Kayamkulam. His first target was Ambalapuzha. The Ambalapuzha forces led by Mathur Panikkar and Tekkedathu Bhattatiri deserted their master and joined the Travancore side. The Travancore forces under D’Lannoy annexed the State and sent the Raja to the south as a prisoner at Trivandrum. Marthanda Varma then turned his attention against Tekkumkur and Vadakkumkur both of which had supported the Kayamkulam Raja in his hostilities against Travancore. Neither State could offer any strong resistance to Travancore. In 1749-50 both Tekkumkur and Vadakkumkur were annexed without any serious fight. In 1754 Minachil which was under the Nijavakkat Karthas was also annexed to Travancore. Meanwhile, by the treaty of 1748, ratified later by the treaty of Mavelikkara (1753), the Dutch had undertaken to follow a strict policy of non-involvement in native disputes. They also repudiated their commitments to other Kerala princes and agreed to live in peace with Travancore. The treaty was a tremendous gain to Marthanda Varma as it ensured the success of his mission of the political unification of large areas of Kerala under the supremacy of Travancore.

Rebellion in the North

In spite of all these triumphs Marthanda Varma could hardly accomplish the task of consolidation of the dominions conquered by him, for in 1754 the northern part of the newly expanded State was ablaze with rebellion. The exiled Rajas of Ambalapuzha, Tekkumkur and Vadakkumkur sought the help of the Cochin Raja to throw off the yoke of Travancore. The Cochin ruler had been sorely aggrieved against Travancore at this time, as Marthanda Varma had conquered Karappuram which belonged to Cochin and handed it over to the Chazhur Tampans to be administered as a feudatory of Travancore. He therefore promptly took up the leadership of the proposed alliance. The movement in the north assumed the character of a mass upsurge. The Cochin Raja, his nobility and the Dutch at Cochin soon mobilised all their resources for a final fight against Marthanda Varma in support of the cause of the dispossessed princes. The whole army was placed under the leadership of Palliyil Idikkela Menon, a gallant soldier in the service of the Cochin Raja.

Battle of Ambalapuzha

The main Cochin army landed at Purakkad and took up positions there by the end of 1756. Another contingent marched through Karappuram and

joined forces with the main army. The Travancore army under prince Rama Varma, Ramayyan and D'Lannoy met the Cochin forces in battle at Anandeswaram (3rd January 1754). After an indecisive fight the Cochin forces withdrew to Ambalapuzha and regrouped themselves. In a decisive battle that ensued the Cochin forces were routed and put to flight. A large number of the Cochin nobility perished in the fight. Idikkela Menon, the Commander of the Cochin forces, was captured and executed. In the wake of the victory Ramayyan conquered the whole of Karappuram and set up his camp at Arukutti. Prince Rama Varma captured all Cochin territories up to Udayamperur in the south and Mamala in the east. The Cochin Raja sued for peace. The Travancore army was now in possession of all the territories up to Arukutti.

Travancore- Cochin Alliance

In 1757 a treaty of alliance was concluded between Travancore and Cochin against the Zamorin of Calicut who had occupied large portions of Cochin territory and was preparing for an invasion of Travancore. The initiative for the signing of the treaty was taken by Paliath Komi Achan who had been taken to Trivandrum as a prisoner after the battle of Ambalapuzha in 1754 and who had now returned home to assume the office of the Prime Minister of Cochin. The treaty provided for mutual friendship between Travancore and Cochin. Travancore promised help to Cochin in its war against the Zamorin of Calicut on condition that if Travancore were to capture any territories, other than those which originally belonged to Cochin, they should exclusively go to that State. The Cochin Raja undertook not to render help to the dispossessed princes or to enter into any kind of relationship with them. The treaty was a decisive gain to Marthanda Varma as he got a peaceful neighbour on the northern border of his State.

Troubles on the Eastern Frontier

Marthanda Varma had to face serious troubles on his eastern frontier. In 1740, Nagercoil, Suchindram and Kottar were invaded by Chanda Sahib and Baba Sahib, two relatives of the Nawab of Arcot. Ramayyan bought off the invaders by paying a large sum of money and they withdrew. In 1752 while the Travancore ruler was busy with his campaigns in the north to put down the popular uprising, Moodemiah, the Governor of Trichinopoly, seized Kalakkad, Valliyur and adjoining places in Tirunelveli which belonged to Travancore. Moodemiah was also persuaded to give back the conquered territories in return for a large sum of money. In the meantime Muhammad Ali, the Nawab of the Carnatic, sent his brother Mahfuz Khan to supersede Moodemiah. The Travancore garrison withdrew from Kalakkad under heavy pressure from Mahfuz Khan's army which included 500 Europeans and 2,000 Indians sent by the English East India Company. But after the suppression of the northern rebellion Marthanda Varma turned his attention to the Eastern frontier. The Kalakkad fort was recaptured and a garrison of 200 horses and 500 sepoys were made prisoners.

Administration

The reign of Marthanda Varma saw the introduction of some important administrative reforms. It was the Raja's good fortune to have been assisted in the task of administration by able and loyal ministers of the calibre of Ramayyan Dalawa. The administrative system was improved considerably. Several works of public utility were undertaken all over the kingdom. The palace at Padmanabhapuram was improved and several new buildings like the Krishnapuram palace were constructed. There was improvement of communication following the opening of new roads and canals. The improvement of agriculture received the special attention of the Raja. Irrigation works like the Ponmana and Puthen dams were executed. The latter, while irrigating vast areas, of land, also supplied drinking water to the inhabitants of Padmanabhapuram and suburbs. A number of canals, reservoirs, and tanks were also constructed in order to provide water for irrigation purposes. The defence system received the special attention of the ruler. Forts were built in important centres like Padmanabhapuram, Trivandrum, etc. The old forts in places like Quilon, Mavelikara, Changanacherry, etc., were repaired. The Travancore army was trained and equipped after the European model. D'Lannoy, the Dutch Admiral, captured as prisoner in the battle of Colachel, helped the Raja considerably in this task.

The collection of revenue received the special attention of the Raja. In 1739 Mallan Sankaran of Palliyadi was appointed on special duty to effect the settlement of lands, both wet and dry. The classification of lands under the main heads of *Devaswam*, *Brahmaswam*, *Danam* and *Pandaravakd* was introduced by Mallan Sankaran. The double crop lands were assessed at twice the *pattom* for single crop lands. Every landholder was given a *Patta* specifying the tax levied on each item of land. The commercial department of the kingdom was reorganised. The Government reserved for itself the monopoly of trade in such articles as pepper, tobacco, cassia, areca, etc., and built depots at different places to store these articles. *Chowkies* or customs houses were set up on the frontier in order to prevent smuggling. Special care was taken to collect export and import duties. Mavelikara was made the headquarters of the commercial department. Salt manufacture was made a State monopoly.

Marthanda Varma reorganised the system of administration with the village under the *Pravarthikar* as the lowest unit. The *Pravarthikar* was the man of all work attending to all affairs which required the attention of the state at the village level. A group of villages constituted the *Mandapathu vatukkal* which was under the *Karyakar* who was the prototype of the modern Tahsildar. An important innovation introduced by Marthanda Varma was the framing of the annual budget called the *Pativukanakku* allotting specific sums of money for various items of public expenditure.

Dedication of the Kingdom to Sri Padmanabha

One of the most important acts of Marthanda Varma was the dedication (*Trippatidanam*) of the newly expanded kingdom of Travancore to his tutelary

deity, Sri Padmanabha of Trivandrum. The event took place on Wednesday, January 3, 1750, which coincided with the auspicious day of Revati asterism on Makaram 5, 725 K.E. The implication of this step was that thereafter the king and his successors became the servants of Sri Padmanabha (*Padmanabhadhasas*) and ruled the kingdom in his name and as a sacred trust. It went a long way in preventing future rebellions against the state, for the impression was created that any such rebellion would be an irreligious act. The *Trippatidanam* helped in the long run to ensure political stability.

Even before this act of dedication Marthanda Varma had taken steps to repair the temple and improve its administration. The work of repair and construction of additional structures was started in 1731 and completed in 1733. The idol of Sri Padmanabha was reconsecrated with 12,000 *Salagramams* specially brought down for the purpose from the bed of the river Gandak. The platform built of a large single piece of stone known as *Ottakkalmandapam* was erected in the temple during this period. The construction of the Eastern *Gopuram* of the temple which commenced in 1566 A.D. was completed up to its fifth storey after the dedication of the kingdom. The *utsavam* in the temple came to be conducted on a large scale. The *Bhadradiyam* and *Murajayam* modelled after the religious ceremonies associated with Karthavirarjuna in the *Puranas* were introduced in the temple.

Cultural Progress

Side by side with the progress of religion we find the progress of literature and arts. Trivandrum became a centre of intellectual and artistic activities. Poets like Ramapurathu Warriar and Kunjan Numbiar came to adorn the court. Temple arts like *Kuthu*, *Patakam*, *Kathakali* and *Tullal* received all encouragement. The art of mural painting reached a high level of excellence as is evidenced by the murals in the Padmanabhapuram palace. Thus the reign of Marthanda Varma saw not only the expansion of Travancore and the establishment of a centralised administration, but also the spectacular progress of religion, literature and arts. He is rightly regarded as the 'Maker of Modern Travancore'.

DHARMA RAJA

Karthika Tirunal Rama Varma (1758-1798), who is known to history as the Dharma Raja, succeeded Marthanda Varma on the throne of Travancore. He had his training under his illustrious uncle and hence he continued to pursue the policies of the previous reign. Like Marthanda Varma, the Dharma Raja was also an able administrator and patron of learning and arts. It was his aim to consolidate the territorial gains made by his uncle and to confer on his subjects the benefits of settled administration. In this task he was helped by such distinguished statesmen as Ayyappan Marthanda Pillai and Raja Kesava Das who served as Chief Ministers.

Relations with Cochin and Calicut

The most significant development in the early years of his reign was the alliance between Travancore and Cochin (1762). Komi Achan, the Chief

Minister of Cochin, visited Travancore and drafted the terms of a treaty of friendship. According to the terms of this treaty Travancore was to assist Cochin in recovering from the Zamorin her lost possessions as far as Pukaitha in the north and Chittar in the east and also certain villages in Valluvanad. The Travancore ruler was to help Cochin in the war against the Zamorin. In 1761 Raja Kerala Varma of Cochin visited Travancore and solemnly ratified the treaty by an oath before the diety of Suchindram in the presence of Ayyappan Marthanda Pillai and Komi Achan.

In pursuance of the provisions of the treaty a Travancore army under Ayyappan Marthanda Pillai and D'Lannoy landed at Ernakulam and went into action against the Zamorin. The Zamorin's forces were driven out of Cochin territory. The Zamorin himself sued for peace and the war which had lasted for eight months came to an end. Travancore obtained possession of Alangad and Parur in accordance with the terms of the earlier treaty. The newly acquired territories were promptly dedicated to Sri Padmanabha by the Dharma Raja after the example of his uncle. In 1763 the Zamorin himself paid a visit to the Travancore Raja at Padmanabhapuram. He agreed to live in friendship with Travancore, to pay Rs. 1,50,000 as indemnity towards the war expenses and to desist from further hostilities against Cochin. It is worth mentioning here that the newborn friendship between the rulers of Cochin, Travancore and Calicut was brought about by the exigencies of the political situation created by the common threat posed by the rise of Mysore under Haider Ali.

Relations with the Nawab of the Carnatic

As in the reign of Marthanda Varma troubles arose in the Eastern frontier during the reign of Dharma Raja also. Maphiz Khan, the Governor of the Nawab of the Carnatic, captured Kalakkad and entered Aramboli fort. An army under Kumaran Chempakaraman Pillai defeated him and forced him to vacate Aramboli fort, but the Khan retained Kalakkad and took possession of Shencottah. Maphiz Khan was in the meantime superseded by Yusuf Khan. The new Governor wanted to have friendly relations with Travancore. Kalakkad was given back to Travancore at the instance of the English East India Company. The Travancore troops helped Yusuf Khan to crush all opposition from the former Governor Maphiz and his men who had challenged the authority of the new Governor. In the meantime, Yusuf Khan became intoxicated with power and he invaded Travancore on the refusal of its ruler to help him in his rebellion against his Nawab. The rebellion of Yusuf Khan failed as a result of the help rendered to the Nawab by the English.

In 1764 the Travancore Raja acceded to the demand of the Nawab for the cession of Kalakkad and withdrew to Tovala. In 1765 a treaty was concluded between the Nawab and the Travancore Raja under the auspices of the English. Under this treaty, Travancore gave up all its claim to the territories on the other side of the Ghats except Shencotta. However, the State was later given Shencotta and Cape Comorin on payment of an annual subsidy. The treaty demonstrated the growing influence of the English East India Company in

the affairs of Travancore. In 1764 the Company got permission from the Raja to erect a flagstaff at Vizhinjam.

Relations with Mysore

The reign of the Dharma Raja saw the invasion of Kerala by the Mysore rulers, Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan. The demand of the Mysore ruler that Travancore should acknowledge his supremacy was turned down. The Dharma Raja provided asylum in Travancore to a large number of princes, Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Nairs, Ezhavas, etc., who had fled from North Malabar in the wake of the Mysore invasions and gave them all facilities to settle down in different parts of his territory. The Zamorin, the Kolathiri and the members of the Cochin family were among those who were thus given asylum.¹ The celebrated Manorama Tampuratti of the Zamorin's family was one of the refuge princesses living in Travancore. Travancore came to be called *Dharma Rajyam* (Land of Charity) and its ruler the Dharma Raja in the wake of these acts of charity.

The Dharma Raja also took steps to defend the northern parts of his kingdom against Mysorean aggression. He purchased the Cranganore and Pallipuram forts from the Dutch in 1789 and built the famous *Nedumkotta* or Travancore Lines in Central Kerala to prevent the incursions of the Mysorean army. It may be mentioned that it was D'Lannoy who built the *Nedumkotta*. Kesava Das, the Diwan or Chief Minister of the Dharma Raja, also bestowed his special attention on strengthening the defences in the northern parts of the State. The excellent defence system worked out by the Diwan played its part in influencing Tipu's decision to withdraw from Central Kerala where he had advanced as far as Alwaye (1790).

Administrative Reforms

The reign of the Dharma Raja was an epoch of administrative and cultural progress. The Raja was served by two able Chief Ministers, viz., Ayyappan Marthanda Pillai and Raja Kesava Das. The credit for the reorganisation of the Revenue Department and the division of the state into three revenue units, *Tekkemukham*, *Vadakkemukham* and *Padinjare mukham*, goes to Marthanda Pillai. Each of the revenue divisions was placed under an officer called *Sarvadhikaryakkar*. The work of revenue collection was systematised and proper accounts were kept. Cultivable waste lands were brought under cultivation on an extensive scale. Varkala was developed into the nucleus of a flourishing town by Ayyappan Marthanda Pillai.

Raja Kesava Das (Kesava Pillai) was the first Chief Minister of Travancore who assumed the title Diwan. He was respectfully referred to by his countrymen as *Valia Divanji*. He distinguished himself in several capacities in the service of the Dharma Raja before he was appointed as Chief Minister.

1. The royal families which live with their seats as Mariappally, Ennakkad, Mavelikara, Aranmula, Prayikara and Nedumpuram in Central Travancore take their origin from the members of the Chirakkal family (Kolathiri) who came to Travancore from North Malabar during the Mysore invasion.

He showed his abilities as a statesman and diplomat during the period of the Mysore wars when he had to conduct delicate negotiations with the English East India Company and the neighbouring states. The treaty of 1795 concluded between Travancore and the English East India Company was negotiated by him and it provided the basis on which the future relations between the English and the State of Travancore were developed.

Kesava Das proved himself to be a talented administrator. He took special steps to develop agriculture and industries. Irrigation works were executed and fresh lands were brought under cultivation. Needy agriculturists were helped with loans and remission of taxes. In 1773 a comprehensive revenue survey was made and tenures were classified. The system of transport and communication was improved. A network of canals and roads was opened with a view to providing facilities for export and import trade. Special attention was bestowed on the development of ports. The existing ports like Colachel and Puntura were improved. Vizhinjam was developed into a small port where ships too were built for the promotion of commerce.

The greatest of the achievements of Kesava Das was the opening of a new port of Alleppey which was then a mere jungle inhabited by monkeys and jackals. In view of the personal interest taken by the Diwan, Alleppey developed before long into a port town with a warehouse and a number of shops. Merchants, artisans and labourers from outside were encouraged to settle down at the place. Traders from such places as Bombay, Saurashtra and Surat also came down to Alleppey, attracted by the facilities offered to them by the Government. A timber depot was also opened at Alleppey in view of its commercial importance and Mathu Tharakan, a rich Christian merchant, was given the monopolistic right to collect all the timber of North Travancore and store it in the depot for sale.

Raja Kesava Das also bestowed personal attention on the development of Trivandrum city. The modern Chalai bazaar, the main shopping centre in the city, owes its origin to his vision and organising ability. Kottar in South Travancore was developed into an important commercial town. Weavers, painters, dyers and other artisans were invited to and settled in the town. The Diwan also completed the construction of the *Gopuram* of the Sri Padmanabhaswami temple which had made considerable progress in the previous reign. Raja Kesava Das also issued a series of new coins. It was in recognition of his great abilities and the meritorious services rendered by him that the Governor-General, Lord Mornington, conferred on the Diwan the title 'Raja Kesava Das'.

Cultural Progress

The reign of the Dharma Raja marked an important epoch in the cultural history of Kerala. Having inherited the status of *Sri Padmanabhadasa*, he took special interest in the proper upkeep of the Sri Padmanabhaswami temple. The *Kulasekhara Mandapam*, noted for its wonderful stone sculptures and musical pillars, was his contribution to the temple complex. The Raja was himself a great scholar and poet and he enriched Malayalam literature by

his numerous literary works. The Travancore court under the Dharma Raja was adorned by some of the greatest luminaries in Kerala's literary firmament. The great poets, Kunjan Nambiar and Unnayi Warriar, enjoyed his benevolent patronage. The Dharma Raja composed some exquisite *Kathakali* poems. Deeply interested in the promotion of *Kathakali*, he founded the *Kottaram Kathakali Yogam* and introduced what is known as the southern school of *Kathakali* (*Tekkan Kalari*). Compositions like Unnayi Warriar's *Nalacharitham* were staged first in the Sri Padmanabhaswami temple under royal patronage. The well-known treatise on the *Natyasastra* of Bharatamuni known as *Balarama Bharatam* was composed by him. The Dharma Raja held a *Pandita Sadas* or council of learned men periodically for the purpose of encouraging and rewarding scholars and men of letters. Though an orthodox Hindu, the Raja patronised the followers of other religions too. He received from the Pope of Rome a letter of appreciation. It was the Dharma Raja who shifted the capital of Travancore from Padmanabhapuram to Trivandrum in the closing years of his reign, the Secretariat, however, continuing to function at Quilon. When the Raja passed away in 1798 after a long reign of 40 years he was already 74 years old. The people referred to him as the *Kizhavan Raja* as a mark of their affection. Judged by whatever standards of merit, Rama Varma, the Dharma Raja, has claims to be regarded as one of the greatest rulers of Travancore.

CHAPTER XX

HISTORY OF COCHIN (1500-1805)

In Chapter XII we have traced the origin and early history of Cochin. In this chapter we shall briefly sketch its history from 1500 to 1805 (*ie.*, from the arrival of the Portuguese at Cochin to the end of the reign of Saktan Tampuran) with special reference to the rulers of Cochin and the main achievements and events of their reigns.

Rulers of the Portuguese Period

Unni Rama Koil I was the ruler of Cochin when Cabral, the Portuguese Captain, landed at the place. He gave trade facilities to the Portuguese and established good relations with them. Under Unni Rama Koil II (1503-1537) the friendship with the Portuguese was strengthened and Cochin rose to political prominence with their help.

Vira Kerala Varma (1537-1565), the next ruler, kept up friendly relations with the Portuguese in the early part of his reign, but the Portuguese plunder of the temple of Palluruthi imposed a heavy strain on their relations. It was during his reign that the war with Vadakkumkur took place. In the battle of Vaduthala the Vadakkumkur chief was slain, it was to Vira Kerala Varma that the Portuguese presented the palace newly built by them at Mattancherri (the later Dutch Palace) about 1555.

Vira Kerala Varma was succeeded by Kesava Rama Varma (1565-1601), the most outstanding ruler of Cochin in the Portuguese period. His was a long and eventful reign. He patronised poets and men of letters, of whom the most important were Balakavi, the author of the *Rama Varma Vilasa* and *Ratnaketudaya* and Narayana, the Mazhamangalam poet, who wrote the *Rajaratnavaliyam Champu* and the *Naishadha Champu*. It was during the reign of this ruler that the Jews settled in Cochin and built the Jew Town (1567) very near to the Raja's palace. The Raja gave to the Konkans (Gowda Saraswaths) a rent-free site in Mattancherri to build the now famous Tirumala Devaswam temple (1599). The reign saw a successful popular revolt against the Portuguese who had got the whole of the customs duties levied at Cochin assigned to them by the king by having recourse to coercion. The famous Synod of Diamper (1599) was a notable event of the reign. Kesava Rama Varma went on a pilgrimage to Benares in his old age and he died there on May 3, 1601.

Vira Kerala Varma (1601-1615), the successor of Kesava Rama Varma, was the patron of Melpattur Narayana Bhattatiri. The latter wrote

the *Gosrinagaravarnana* and *Virakeralaprasasthi* under the patronage of the king. Perhaps, Nilakanta, the author of the Malayalam *Champu*, *Tenkailanaihodayam*, was also patronised by this ruler. Ravi Varma (1615-1624) and Vira Kerala Varma (1624-1637) had uneventful reigns. Goda Varma (1637-1645), Vira Rayira Varma (1645-46) and Vira Kerala Varma (1646-1650) also made no mark as rulers. The last mentioned of the above rulers issued a royal decree or *Titturam* granting to the Konkanis or Gowda Saraswaths certain civil and criminal powers within the Tirumala Devaswam *Sanketam* in Mattancherri. His immediate successor was Rama Varma (1650-1656) and on his death Rani Gangadhara Lakshmi (1656-1658), the only woman who exercised ruling powers in the long and chequered history of the Cochin royal house, acted as Regent. Rama Varma (1658-1662), an adoptee from Vettatnad, ascended the throne at the end of the regency. This ruler was killed in the fight before the Mattancherri palace on February 22, 1662. Goda Varma, another adoptee from Vettatnad who came to the throne in 1662, was overthrown by the Dutch after the surrender of the Cochin fort in January 1663 and Vira Kerala Varma of the *Mutha Tavazhi* was installed on the throne of Cochin.

Dutch Ascendancy in Cochin

With the accession of Vira Kerala Varma (1663-1687) began the period of subordination of Cochin to the Dutch. In March 1663 was concluded the first treaty between the Raja of Cochin and the Dutch East India Company to which reference has already been made. The Cochin ruler placed himself and his kingdom under the protection of the Dutch. In February 1675 was concluded the agreement between the Dutch Company and the members of the Cochin royal family and Paliath Achan restricting adoption to the Cochin family from the *Mutha Tavazhi* and Chazhur branches. In September 1674 there was a fresh treaty prescribing allowances for the Cochin princes and bringing the kingdom under the effective control of the Dutch. Under an agreement of May 1678 the Paliath Achan as Prime Minister was to look after the affairs of the kingdom of Cochin under the guidance of the Dutch and the king was reduced to the status of an ornamental figure-head.

The reign of Rama Varma (1687-1693). saw the war of Vettam succession to which reference has been made in the chapter on the Dutch. The Dutch, the Zamorin and the Paliath Achan supported the cause of the Chazhur branch and the Rajas of Parur and Alangad and the Matampis of Karappuram supported the Vettatnad faction which stood for adoption from Vettam royal family. The Vettatnad faction was defeated by the Dutch. The period saw a commercial treaty between the Zamorin and the Dutch and this caused intense disappointment to the Cochin ruler.

Ravi Varma (1693-1697), an adoptee from the Chazhur branch, was the next ruler. He conveyed to the Dutch his feelings of displeasure at the growing friendship with the Zamorin. In the reign of the next ruler, Rama Varma (1697-1701), a treaty was concluded between the Dutch and Cochin (April 1698) under which the Raja was allowed a share of the customs duties. During

this period the Zamorin again invaded Cochin. The war between Calicut and Cochin continued for nine years without decisive result during the reign of Rama Varma (1701-1721). By the treaty of 1710, which terminated the war, some of the territories taken away from Cochin were given back to that State but in 1715 the Zamorin renewed the military operations in Cochin territory. The war was ended by the treaty of 1717 under which the Zamorin undertook to live in peace with Cochin. Raja Rama Varma got back from the Zamorin all his ancestral territories except Perumpadappu and a few villages in Vanneri. During the reign of Rama Varma the Nair nobles became very refractory and the king had therefore to take various measures to bring them under effective control.

Dismissal and Reinstatement of Paliath Achan

Ravi Varma (1721-1731), the next ruler, was notorious for his weakness. The local nobles rose frequently in armed rebellion against his authority and the king had to spend much of his time in suppressing these rebellions. The Raja dismissed the Paliath Achan from the Prime Ministership of Cochin with the approval of the Dutch, for the Chief of Paliyam committed several acts of high-handedness and incurred the displeasure of the Raja and the Dutch Company. The estates of the Chief lying outside Chennamangalam were confiscated. Meanwhile, the Paliyam Chief died and a new Achan succeeded to the dignity. The new Chief apologised for the misdeeds of his predecessor and was reinstated to all the possessions and dignities of his ancestor.

Rama Varma (1731-1746), the next Cochin king, was notoriously weak and oppressive. He came into clash with the Anchi Kaimals who were consequently given protection by the Dutch. The reign saw the rise in the power of the Paliath Achan and an increase in the extent of the estates owned by his family.

Chazhur Dispute

Rama Varma (1731-1746) was succeeded by Kerala Varma (1746-1749) and then by Rama Varma (1749-1760). In the reign of the latter ruler, the members of the Chazhur branch (Chazhur Tampans) rose in revolt, demanding the restoration of the dignity of *Perumpadappu Muppil* which they had been compelled to relinquish sometime back. Marthanda Varma espoused the cause of the Chazhur Tampans and marched his army into Karappuram. The title of Perumpadappu Muppil was revived and Karappuram was handed over to the Tampans. The reign of Rama Varma saw such important political developments as the formation of the northern confederacy under Cochin, the battle of Ambalapuzha (1754), the Zamorin's invasion and the treaty between Travancore and Cochin (1757).

Alliance with Travancore

Kerala Varma (1760-1775) took further steps to strengthen the relations with Travancore. Komi Achan, the Prime Minister who valued the friendship of Travancore, visited Trivandrum and drew up a draft treaty. In August 1762 Kerala Varma himself visited Travancore and solemnly ratified the treaty

before the deity of Suchindram. It was in pursuance of the provisions of this treaty that the Dharma Raja sent his army under Dalawa Ayyappan Marthanda Pillai to help Cochin in the wars against the Zamorin. The Travancore army withdrew from Cochin territory in 1764. The Cochin Raja conferred on Ayyappan Marthanda Pillai the village of Puthenchirai as a token of his appreciation for the Dalawa. At the end of the war the kingdoms of Parur and Alangad came into the possession of Travancore.

Mysorean Invasion

The reign of Kerala Varma saw the Mysorean invasion of Kerala. In 1774 the Cochin Raja undertook to pay one lakh of Ikkeri pagodas as subsidy to Mysore. In 1776 Sirdar Khan, the Mysore general, entered Cochin territory via Chowghat and occupied Trichur. The Cochin Raja agreed to become a tributary of Mysore and to pay a *Nuzzar* of one lakh of pagodas and four elephants besides an annual tribute of 30,000 pagodas.

Rama Varma (1775-1790) was the next ruler of Cochin. He was a weak prince and at the instance of the Dharma Raja and the Dutch Company he delegated in 1769 all his authority to Rama Varma, the first prince (heir presumptive) who was 26 years old at that time. The prince who was thus entrusted with administrative responsibility was a person of extraordinary ability and is known to history as Saktan Tampuran (the strong prince). Though he formally ascended the throne only in 1790, he was in full charge of the administration of the State from 1769 onwards.

During the reign of Rama Varma (1775-1790) the Raja of Cochin was called upon by Tipu to play the role of a mediator between Mysore and Travancore with a view to securing the subordination of the latter State to the former, but the Raja's effort only met with rebuff. Tipu brought large areas of Cochin territory under his control but immediately after the exit of the Sultan, the Cochin Raja threw off his allegiance to Mysore and entered into a treaty with the English East India Company (January 1791).

Saktan Tampuran (1790-1805)

Ram Varma, the Saktan Tampuran, had in the meantime ascended throne. He was an able administrator, diplomat and statesman and he followed in Cochin the same policy which Marthanda Varma followed towards the feudal nobles in Travancore. Even before his accession to the throne the power of the Nair nobles in Cochin had been crippled, thanks to the vigorous action taken by Paliath Komi Achan. Their powers had been vested in officers directly appointed by the king. The wealthiest of the nobles had been deprived of their property and reduced to abject poverty. The State had been divided into taluks called *Kovilakathumvatukkals* each of which was under a *Karyakar*. The village under the *Pravarthikar* had become the lowest unit of administration. The Saktan Tampuran continued the policy of centralisation. He improved the finances of the State and rooted out corruption. A special class of officers called captains of *Subas* were appointed to exercise a close watch over the conduct of officials.

While suppressing the power of the feudal nobility Saktan Tampuran also took steps to cripple the power of the Brahmin clergy. He discontinued the institution of the *Yogiatiripads*, the ecclesiastical heads of the Vadakkunnathan and Perumanam Devaswams. The management of these temples was taken over by the government. The Raja was, however, very harsh in his treatment of the Konkanis and the Latin Christians. He extracted money from wealthy businessmen among the Konkanis and even attempted to take forcible possession of the image and costly jewels of the deity of the Tirumala Devaswam temple at Mattancherri belonging to that community. The Latin Christians who had enjoyed certain privileges under the Portuguese and the Dutch were harassed by the ruler in all possible ways. Many Latin Christians were deprived of their land and properties and expelled from the kingdom. Saktan Tampuran's policy towards the Syrian Christians, however, offers a contrast. He gave them lands and settled them in the heart of important towns like Trichur, Chalakudi, Kunnamkulam, Irinjalakuda, Tripunithura etc.

General Progress in Cochin

The reign of Saktan Tampuran was an epoch of economic and social progress in the history of Cochin. While the Syrian Christians who were settled in the chief towns carried on trade and contributed to the commercial prosperity of the State, the Raja also took steps to provide them with all amenities for carrying on trade. Markets were opened in all major centres. Special attention was bestowed on the repair and renovation of temples. In addition to the Vadakkunnathan and Perumanam temples, the Tiruvilwamala temple was also taken over by the government. The temples of Kudalmanikkam and Tiruvanchikulam which had suffered destruction at the hands of Tipu's men were renovated by the Raja. The Trichur Puram, the festival of festivals, which is celebrated with all pomp and grandeur even today, was instituted by the ruler. Saktan Tampuran also took interest in the execution of works of public utility such as roads, bridges, lakes, rest houses etc. Irrigation works received his special attention. Justice was administered without fear or favour in the Cochin kingdom during the reign of Saktan Tampuran. There was complete security of person and property as robbers and deacoits were relentlessly suppressed. Thus, on the whole, the reign of Saktan Tampuran was an important epoch in the history of Cochin. As in the reign of Marthanda Varma in Travancore, it saw the end of the feudal era in Cochin and the beginnings of a highly centralised administration under the personal supervision and guidance of the ruler.

CHAPTER XXI

THE MYSOREAN INTERLUDE

The Mysorean invasion which took place in the latter half of the 18th century represents a brief interlude in the long and chequered history of Kerala. It was brought about by the internal compulsions of contemporary Malabar politics as well as by the aggressive designs of Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan, the Muslim rulers of Mysore. The main factor which facilitated the conquest was the lack of unity and co-operation among the rulers of Kerala. The expansionist policies pursued by the Zamorin of Calicut had sparked off a series of conflicts between Calicut and the neighbouring principalities and created political conditions favourable for the Mysorean intervention. The rivalry between the Kolathiri and the Ali Raja of Cannanore was also a factor of considerable importance. While the local powers and chieftains were engaged in internecine warfare, the European powers were carrying on intrigues with them with a view to furthering their trade interests. Haider Ali saw in the situation a unique opportunity to interfere in Kerala politics and promote his own expansionist aims. Haider's desire to get access to the French settlement of Mahe in order to ensure a steady supply of arms from the west to feed his military machine also prompted him to embark on his Kerala adventure.

Intervention in Palghat

The earliest instance of Mysorean intervention in Kerala is recorded in the Palghat sector. In 1756-57 the ruling Zamorin of the day annexed Naduvattam which formed part of the dominions of the Palghat Raja. Komu Achan, the Raja of Palghat, sought the help of the king of Mysore in resisting the Zamorin's aggression. The Mysore ruler ordered Haider Ali who was the Faujdar of Dindigal to proceed to the help of the Palghat Raja. But as Haider had to leave immediately for Seringapatam, the Mysore army which went to the assistance of Palghat was commanded by his brother-in-law Mukudam Ali. The prompt and effective action taken by the combined forces of Mysore and Palghat put the Calicut forces to flight. The Zamorin was also forced to restore his Palghat conquests and to pay a war indemnity of 12 lakhs of rupees to Mysore.

Haider's First Invasion of North Kerala

As soon as Haider Ali ascended the throne of Mysore (1761) he decided to pursue his expansionist aims in Kerala. His conquest of the Bednore kingdom in 1763 brought him to the very borders of Kerala in the north. Haider called upon the Nileswaream Raja to restore some of the frontier fortresses which had originally belonged to Bednore, but the Raja turned down the demand.

Haider now decided on an invasion of North Kerala. At this juncture he got an invitation from the Ali Raja of Cannanore to interfere in the affairs of Kolathunad. The Prince Regent of Kolathunad, the *de facto* ruler of that kingdom, was facing a challenge to his authority from a junior prince by name Kappu Tampan. This prince too made overtures to Haider at the instigation of the Ali Raja. Early in 1764 Haider sent one of his emissaries, Ananta Rao to Tellicherry and obtained from the English factors there a pledge of their neutrality in the event of a conflict between Mysore and the Kerala powers.

In February 1766 Haider marched his army into North Kerala. The Mysore army consisted of 12,000 chosen troops including 4,000 cavalry and it was ably assisted by the Ali Raja's militia numbering about 8,000. Decisive engagements were fought at Madayi and Baliapatam. The palace of the Kolathiri at Chirakkal was seized and its members took refuge in the Tiruvangad temple in Tellicherry. Haider then proceeded against Kottayam. The Raja of that kingdom surrendered after a feeble resistance. After the conquest of Kottayam, the Mysorean army marched against Kadathanad. Here Haider met with stiff resistance, but by his superior strategy he put the Kadathanad Raja to flight. He then advanced southwards after securing his communication by a cordon of block-houses (*Lakkidi Kottas*) and entered Kurumbranad on his way to Calicut. In a desperate bid to stave off the impending crisis the Zamorin met Haider and offered him all his treasure and property as gift, but the latter demanded a colossal sum of one crore of gold *Mohurs*. The Zamorin could not accede to Haider's demand. The Mysorean army thereupon entered Calicut. The Zamorin sent the members of his family to Ponnani, blew up his palace and committed self-immolation.

Rebellions in Malabar

Haider was now the supreme master of Calicut but as the monsoon was fast approaching he returned to Coimbatore, leaving behind him a contingent of 3,000 regular troops aided by the Ali Raja and the local Mappilas. A Brahmin by name Madanna who was an experienced revenue officer in Mysore service was appointed as Civil Governor of the newly conquered Malabar province with headquarters at Calicut.

Haider's departure was the signal for a popular upheaval in Kerala. The Kottayam and Kadathanad Nairs unfurled the flag of revolt and retook many places. Prince Kappu Tampan also joined the revolt against Haider. In Calicut the Mysorean garrison was closely besieged by the Nairs who had risen in revolt *en masse* all over the province. On receipt of the dismal tidings from Malabar Haider rushed immediately to Kerala in a desperate bid to crush the insurrection. The Mysorean army advanced rapidly devastating the countryside as it marched. Haider resorted to a series of draconian measures to cripple the strength of the Nairs. His measures were successful and the rebellion subsided for the time being. Haider again retired to Coimbatore. On his return from Kerala he was called upon to deal with the threat of a Mahratta invasion.

The difficulties of Haider emboldened the Kerala Chiefs to rise again in rebellion. Kottayam was in the vanguard of the rebellion in the north and a Mysorean force of 4,000 troops was beaten back. In Calicut where the Mysorean garrison was closely besieged by the rebels the situation was saved for Haider by the diplomacy of Madanna. Haider's army which was on the verge of defeat withdrew after receiving monetary compensation from the Nair chiefs. The Zamorin also agreed to pay an annual tribute to Haider. Negotiations were opened with the chiefs in North Kerala also and Haider agreed to withdraw his troops on the following terms : (1) A war indemnity was to be paid to him. (2) The Ali Raja was not to be disturbed. (3) Palghat with its fort was to remain in his possession. The Mysore troops were withdrawn from Kerala in 1768.

Haider's Second Attempt on Kerala

Haider decided on a second attempt in Kerala in 1773 following his conquest of Coorg. A Mysore army under Srinivasa Rao and Syed Sahib pushed through the Tamarasseri pass in December 1773. The Kerala Chiefs offered no resistance and Mysorean authority was re-established in Malabar. Srinivasa Rao was appointed Civil Governor and Sirdar Khan as Commander-in-Chief. Haider now turned his attention to Cochin. The Raja was called upon to pay a sum of one lakh of *Ikkeri pagodas* as a contribution to the war expenses and he readily agreed. But the Rajas's refusal to concede the demand for payment of the revenue collected during the previous years for Talappilli Melvattam, claimed to be part of Zamorin's territory, infuriated Sirdar Khan. The Mysore army marched from Chowghat by way of Kunnamkulam and captured Trichur. The Cochin Raja now sent emissaries to Seringapatam and managed to secure the withdrawal of the Mysorean army from Trichur (October 1776) by undertaking to pay tribute to Mysore. The Cochin Raja's claim over Talappilli Melvattam was accepted by Haider and that of the Zamorin rejected. In the meantime, the Dutch turned down the request of Haider for permission to his troops to march through the territories under Dutch control for attacking Travancore. The Mysore army under the Khan marched against Chettuvai which belonged to the Dutch. The Chettuvai fort and Pappinivattam were soon captured. This was followed by the conquest of the territory of the Cranganore Raja. Sirdar Khan could not continue his campaigns further south as his onward march was obstructed by the Travancore Lines or *Nedumkotta* built on the initiative of Raja Kesava Das.

Haider's Relations with the British and the French

By this time Haider's policy in Kerala underwent a profound change. Instead of sending Civil and Military Governors from Mysore to rule over the conquered territories he decided to utilise the services of friendly chiefs for the purpose. The prince Regent of Kolathunad was thus appointed as Haider's representative to carry on the administration in North Malabar. The zealous prince proceeded against the Kurangoth Nair and the Kottayam Raja and tried to secure their allegiance to Haider. The experiment was extended to

other parts of Kerala as well and during the period 1775-76 there was comparative lull on the Malabar front. However, Haider could not crush the spirit of resistance of the Nairs and a fresh rebellion broke out in 1778.

In the meantime war broke out between the English and the French, in Europe (1778). Haider was concerned about the safety of Mahe and he instructed the Prince Regent to render all help to the French in retaining their hold over that settlement. The troops of the prince struck at Tellicherry and this brought the Zamorin and Kottayam Raja also into the fight on the side of the English factors. The English also took vigorous action and brought about the capitulation of Mahe (March 1779). The Kottayam Raja and the Zamorin seized the opportunity and recovered most of their dominions from Haider. The Mysoreans assisted by the troops of the Kadathanad Raja and Prince Regent of Kolathunad now mounted the offensive against the English. The English troops evacuated Mahe and concentrated themselves in the Tellicherry fort. With Haider's invasion of the Carnatic the English initiated talks for an alliance with the Zamorin and the Raja of Travancore. While the talks were in progress the troops of Sirdar Khan laid siege to Tellicherry both from sea and land (October 1780). The siege lasted for 18 months. In May 1781 reinforcements arrived for the British under Major Abington. Tellicherry was saved and Mahe was recaptured on 9th January 1782.

The failure of Haider to capture Tellicherry boosted the morale of the Kerala rebels. The Nairs again rose in rebellion against Mysore rule. Major Abington in the meantime captured Calicut (February 1782). The Nairs wiped out the Mysorean garrisons in all parts of Malabar and Mysorean authority came to be restricted to Palghat only. The reverses suffered by the Mysorean army prompted Haider to send his son Tipu to restore his authority in Kerala, but before any decisive result could be achieved Haider Ali passed away on December 7, 1782 and Tipu was obliged to leave for Mysore in haste to occupy his father's throne.

Tipu's Early Triumphs

Immediately after Tipu's departure an English army under Col. Fullerton captured the Palghat fort (November 1783) and put the Zamorin in charge of the territory surrounding it. But Tipu returned to Kerala before long and reconquered the whole of South Malabar upto the Kotta river. He could not continue his advance further northwards in the face of opposition from the English factors at Tellicherry. In December 1783, the English stormed Cannanore and compelled the Bibi to enter into a treaty of friendship with them. Nevertheless, by the treaty of Mangalore (1784) which concluded the Second Mysore War, the Company gave up the claims and declared the rulers of Kerala to be the friends and allies of Tipu. This was a tacit recognition of Mysorean authority over Kerala.

Tipu's Conquest of Calicut

Tipu's affairs in Malabar were not being managed well when the province came back under his control in 1783. Arshad Beg Khan, a capable officer had

been appointed as Governor of Malabar by Haider Ali on the eve of his death. But Tipu's oppressive policies caused deep resentment among the local population and even the Mappilas of Ernad and Valluvanad rose in revolt. On the suggestion of Arshad Beg Khan, Tipu himself descended on Malabar at the head of a large army in January 1788 via the Tamarasseri pass and marched towards Calicut, without encountering any serious opposition on the way. During his sojourn in Malabar the Sultan conceived the idea of effecting a thorough overhauling of the administrative set-up and social system of Malabar and he started introducing unpopular innovations with a view to achieving the desired objective. One of his grandiose projects was the transfer of the capital of the province of Malabar from Calicut to Feroke, on the southern banks of the Beypore river in the outskirts of Calicut city, but it ended in failure.

Tipu introduced some drastic innovations in an attempt to effect a radical reorganisation of the social system of Malabar. The system of polyandry came in for severe condemnation in a proclamation issued by him to the people of Malabar in 1788. Tipu's action created universal resentment among the people and the whole country rose in rebellion. The local Rajas sought the East India Company's protection against the high-handedness of the Mysore ruler. Calicut was attacked in November 1788 by the Nairs headed by Ravi Varma and other princes of the *Patinjare Kovilakam*. Tipu sent 6,000 troops under M. Lally to raise the siege, but the redoubtable Ravi Varma could not be driven out of the field. Early in 1789 Tipu himself came to Malabar *via* the Tamarasseri pass to enforce his unpopular policies among an unwilling people at the point of the sword.

Tipu Sultan in Cannanore

After leaving a force at Calicut to deal with the Nairs the Sultan proceeded northwards. Tipu's advance created alarm among the local chiefs and many of them took refuge in the Tellicherry factory and later fled from there to Travancore. Tipu sent a strong communication to the English factors at Tellicherry protesting against their action in providing asylum to the local chieftains. Later he visited Cannanore and celebrated the marriage of his son Abdul Khalic with the daughter of the Bibi. He also handed over to the Bibi a portion of the Kolathiri Raja's territory. Tipu then moved southwards along the coast to Chowghat and from there retired to Coimbatore.

Tipu's attack on Travancore

Tipu's next target was Travancore. He resented the Dharma Raja's policy of affording asylum in his kingdom to the Zamorin and other local chieftains. Tipu tried to win over the Travancore Raja by diplomacy. His attempt to utilise the services of the Cochin Raja in this regard bore no fruit. The Raja of Travancore in the meantime purchased the Cranganore and Pallippuram (Ayakotta) forts from the Dutch and strengthened the Travancore Lines. This provoked the wrath of the Sultan. Having failed to win over the Raja of Travancore by diplomacy, Tipu decided to invade that state and bring it under

his subjection. He entered Cochin territory from Coimbatore in November 1789 and after a long and devastating march, arrived at Trichur on December 14, 1789. He stayed there for a month and made the town the headquarters of a new Collectorate with jurisdiction over all the territories under his control in Kerala.

Tipu attacked the Travancore Lines on the 29th December 1789 with an army of 7,000 men, but it was difficult to effect a breach in the 'contemptible wall' and continue his southward advance. On the 15th April 1790 the Travancore Lines were breached and Travancore troops were put to flight. Tipu then proceeded to Cranganore and captured the fort. The forts at Kuriyappalli and Ayakotta (Pallipuram) fell in quick succession. The Mysore troops before long subdued Alangad and Parur and encamped at Alwaye. At this time the monsoon broke out and Tipu had to suspend military operations. At Alwaye the Sultan received information that the British had declared war on Mysore and that their army was marching on Seringapatam. He immediately took the decision to withdraw his forces from Kerala and left via Coimbatore.

End of Mysore Occupation

The retreat of Tipu was followed by the destruction of Mysore authority all over Kerala. The Zamorin and the Cochin Raja declared themselves to be in favour of the English and on September 22, 1770, the strategic Palghat fort surrendered to Colonel Stuart. The region from Chowghat to Cannanore was soon cleared of the Mysorean troops. The Bibi of Cannanore showed some signs of resistance. An English army under General Abercromby was specially sent from Bombay to capture the fort. The siege of Cannanore started on December 14, 1790, and within four days the Bibi conveyed her desire to surrender. Tipu's force of 5,000 men stationed at Cannanore was disarmed and the British troops marched into Cannanore fort and occupied it. The whole of Malabar was now in the hands of the English. By the treaties of Seringapatam signed on February 22 and March 18, 1792, Tipu formally ceded Malabar to the British. The ceded province did not include Wynad. But it included Cochin State and Coorg. Thus the Mysorean attempts for about a quarter of a century to establish hegemony over Kerala ultimately ended only in the establishment of British supremacy.

Results of the Mysorean Invasion

The Mysorean conquest of Kerala produced important political, economic and social results. The most important of the political results was the disappearance of the feudal system of administration and its replacement by a centralised system of government. The Nairs who played a prominent part in the resistance to Haider and Tipu lost their position of pre-eminence in the body politic of the State. Most of the *Naduvazhis* and local chieftains left their subjects at the mercy of the invader and sought political asylum in Travancore. The disappearance of the *Naduvazhis* and the Nair gentry from

the scene enabled the Mysore rulers to set up a centralised system of administration in the territories which came under their sway.

The Mysorean system was based on modern and progressive ideas. The land revenue system of Malabar was modernised. A system of land tax based on the actual produce of the land was introduced. The tax was collected directly from the tenant through officials. The tenant thus got an added dignity in the new set-up and the interests of the *Janmi* or landowner were adversely affected. The Mysore rulers also introduced a new variety of coinage and opened up a network of roads connecting the different parts of North Kerala. Tipu Sultan is often regarded as the pioneer of roads in Malabar. Colonel Dow who reported on the condition of the roads in Malabar in 1796 observes as follows : “Tipu projected and in a great part finished an extensive chain of roads that connected all the principal places in Malabar and pervaded the wildest parts of the country.” As the destination of the wide network of roads constructed by Tipu was Seringapatam and the route led over the Ghats, he spared no labour or expense in rendering it practicable for transporting artillery. The British administrators built up their administrative and political system in Malabar on the foundations laid by the Mysoreans.

The Mysorean invasion administered a ‘shock treatment’ to the traditional Kerala society. During the pre-Mysorean era the upper castes like the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Nairs etc., enjoyed a privileged status in society. Haider and Tipu showed scant respect for these high castes and even took steps to deprive them of their time-honoured privileges. The Nairs were the special target of the fury of the Mysore rulers. Several of their women and children were sold as slaves and they were even declared as the lowest of the castes. The spectacle of the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Nairs and other high caste Hindus being seized and converted to Islam or forced to flee from their old sanctuaries had a tremendous psychological impact on the people. It served to shatter the myth of their social superiority and instilled among the members of the lower classes a consciousness of their own dignity and status. The Mysore invasion thus sounded the death-knell of the old social order and inaugurated a new era of social change in the history of Kerala.

The Mysorean interlude was not an unmixed blessing. The interminable, warfare which characterised the age spelt the economic ruin of the country. The brutalities indulged in by the Mysoreans led to large scale migration from Malabar of people belonging to all walks of life. The peasants who suffered at the hands of the Mysoreans took refuge in the forests and jungles. This led to the ruin of agriculture. The flight of the Namboothiris and Kshatriyas who were the traditional patrons of arts and letters resulted in a kind of stagnation in the field of culture. The Mysorean invasion led to the ruin of many a flourishing town. Trade and commerce also suffered heavily. The country passed through a period of economic depression. The suspension of the cultivation of pepper vines in different parts of the country brought the pepper trade almost to a standstill. The decline of agriculture and trade crippled the economy of the land and led to the impoverishment of large

sections of the population. The gold and silver which Kerala had acquired as a result of centuries of trade contacts with the West practically disappeared from the land.

However, it is also pointed out that there was a bright side to the economic scene. Tipu took steps to control the working of European companies and prevent them from manipulating the prices of agricultural commodities to the disadvantage of the cultivators. The prices of spices and other articles which were in great demand in the West were fixed by the State. Trade in pepper, sandalwood and cardamom was made a state monopoly. These were procured at fixed prices from the cultivators and stored in State warehouses set up at such centres as Vadakara, Mahe, Quilandy, Calicut etc. Foreign merchants who wanted these commodities for export had to buy them from those warehouses at prices fixed by the State. This policy enabled the farmers to get fair price for their products. Yet another measure of the Sultan was to open centres of trade in foreign countries, e.g., Muscat, Jiddah, Ormuz, Pegu etc. This too gave an impetus to trade. The Sultan also organised a trading company and offered shares to those who were interested in promoting trade. The share-holders were assured of fifty percent of their investment as dividend. A pearl fishery was set up on the Malabar Coast and divers were specially brought from Muscat for its operation.

The religious policy of the Mysore rulers in Kerala is a subject of controversy. While both Haider and Tipu had the reputation of being tolerant rulers in Mysore, the charge of religious persecution has been levelled against them in Kerala. Instances of forcible conversion and destruction of temples in Kerala have been pointed out to reinforce the point. Those writers who have been sympathetic to Tipu point out the extenuating circumstances under which such occurrences took place. They argue that it was not religious bias which operated as a factor behind such forcible conversions or destruction of temples. On the other hand, political and economic reasons were behind the initiation of steps in these directions. Only a few prisoners of war were converted to Islam as a punishment for the crime, of opposing Mysorean authority. Moreover, native soldiers, when hard pressed by the enemy forces used to take refuge in temples, as had been the practice so far. Such temples were spared by the Hindu rulers of Kerala during millitary operations. Tipu was not inclined to observe this custom (*maryada*). He decided to attack such temples with a view to ferreting out the enemy troops. It is also pointed out that Tipu was badly in need of cash and other resources for carrying on his campaigns and this might also have prompted him to plunder some rich temples. The allegation that Tipu Sultan followed religious persecution as a matter of religious policy is thus denied. The fact that Tipu made endowments of land and cash to temples like Guruvayur and Tiruvanchikulam has also been cited as evidence of the liberal attitude which he adopted in religious matters.¹

1. Dr. A.P. Ibrahim Kunju, *Mysore-Kerala Relations*, pp.56-72

Be that as it may, it cannot be denied that the Mysore rulers were guilty of religious excesses during their occupation of Kerala. This brought about a cleavage between the Hindu and Muslim communities and dealt a blow to the cause of communal harmony. The local Muslim population had sided with the invaders in their campaigns and this too roused the bitter hostility of their Hindu brethren. Under Mysore rule the Muslims had also enjoyed a privileged status. The British who succeeded the Mysore rulers to the overlordship of Malabar did not recognise this privileged status. The Mappilas were unable to reconcile themselves to this loss of status and hence they frequently rose in revolt against British authority. It may not be wrong to regard the Mappila riots of the 19th century as the outcome of the Mysore invasions. Thus the Mysorean conquest had its evil effects also.

CHAPTER XXII

THE GROWTH OF BRITISH POWER

Like the Portuguese and the Dutch the English also came to Kerala for purposes of trade. The first Englishman who came to Kerala was perhaps Master Ralph Fitch. In 1583 he left England for the East in the company of some other merchants and came to Cochin. This voyage was undertaken long before James Lancaster sailed from Plymouth in 1591. Hence Ralph Fitch is often called the 'Pioneer Englishman'.

Early English Relations with Kerala

In 1615 Captain Keeling arrived off Calicut with three ships which brought Sir Thomas Roe on his embassy to the court of Jahangir. He concluded a treaty with the Zamorin according to which the English were to assist Calicut in expelling the Portuguese from Cranganore and Cochin. The Zamorin gave the English freedom of trade in his dominions. The English did not help the Zamorin against the Portuguese in pursuance of the provisions of the treaty but they left the coast leaving behind them ten men to open warehouses at Ponnani and Calicut. In 1634-35 during the last days of the Portuguese power the English East India Company entered into an agreement with the Portuguese according to which they got access to all Portuguese ports in Kerala. British merchants exported pepper to England for the first time from Cochin in 1636. In 1644 the English obtained permission from the king of Venad to build a factory at Vizhinjam. In the meantime, the Dutch capture of the Portuguese possessions upset the plans of the British. When the Dutch captured Cochin in 1663, the English factors stationed there left for Ponnani. British interests suffered heavily in the other ports as well. In 1664 the Zamorin gave the English permission to build a factory at Calicut, but as he was suspicious of the motives of all foreign traders he was not inclined to give them further sites in his territory.

English at Anjengo

Faced with difficulties at Calicut the English turned their attention to other parts of the Kerala coast. In 1684 they obtained from the Rani of Attingal a sandy spot of land at Anjengo for the location of a factory. In 1690 they also obtained permission to build a fort at Anjengo. The fort was completed in 1695. The acquisition of Anjengo was a substantial gain to the English for the place commanded the line of water communication to the north and provided ample facilities for trade. A depot for military stores was also opened here and before long Anjengo developed into the most important English possession on the west coast, next only to Bombay. It also provided a

convenient foothold from where the English East India Company could extend its sphere of influence in South and Central Kerala. However, the grant of concessions to the English at Anjengo provoked the wrath of the local population and in 1697 the factory at Anjengo was subjected to a violent attack by the local people, but it proved abortive. The main reason behind the people's resentment was the action of the British in manipulating the price of pepper to the detriment of the interests of the cultivators.

Attingal Outbreak (1721)

In 1721 a crisis was precipitated in the affairs of the Anjengo factory. The factors at Anjengo under the chief factor Gyfford had antagonised the local population by their corrupt practices and overbearing conduct but they had been keeping the Rani of Attingal in good humour by sending her costly presents every year. In 1721 the agents of the Pillamar who were exercising sway over the area demanded that the usual presents due to the Rani be delivered to them for transmission to her. Gyfford turned down the demand and proceeded to Attingal at the head of a contingent of 140 Englishmen to hand over the presents to the Rani in person. The local inhabitants were provoked by this show of strength. They attacked the party and massacred all the Englishmen (April 15, 1721). The rebels then proceeded to Anjengo and laid siege to the fort which was defended by Gunnar Ince. The siege lasted for six months and it ended with the arrival of reinforcements from Tellicherry. The Anjengo revolt is important in the sense that it was the first organised revolt against British authority in Kerala. Following its failure the English and the Rani entered into an agreement under which the Company was compensated for all the losses sustained during the attack on Anjengo and was also given the sole monopoly of trade in pepper as well as the right to erect factories in places of its choice.

Treaty between the English and Travancore (1723)

In April 1723 a formal treaty was concluded between the English East India Company and the king of Travancore (Tiruvitamkode). It may be mentioned that this is "the first treaty negotiated by the English East India Company with an Indian State". Under the provisions of this treaty, the chief of the Trippappur Swarupam undertook to construct a fort at Colachel for the English at his own cost and the Company undertook to supply the artillery and ammunitions of war for the fort. This treaty which laid the foundations of friendship between Travancore and the English East India Company was signed by Prince Marthanda Varma and Dr. Alexander Orme, the Commander of Anjengo, representing the two parties. In August 1723, Dr. Alexander Orme formally communicated to the Raja the Company's willingness to render all help to him in suppressing the power of the Pillamar and the feudal nobility. In 1726 the Rani of Attingal gave the English the site for a factory at Edava. The policy of friendship and alliance between the English and Travancore was further developed during the reign of Marthanda Varma.

English Factory at Tellicherry

While the English were steadily building up their influence in South Kerala, they took steps to safeguard their interests in north Kerala as well. They negotiated with the *Vadakkellamkur* or Northern Regent of Kolathunad and obtained from him permission to set up a factory at Tellicherry. The factory site was situated in the territory of Kurangoth Nair who disapproved of the grant. The exact date of the establishment of the factory is not known. Birdwood suggests 1683 and Logan 1694-95 as the probable date. When the English Companies were united in 1702, Tellicherry was, along with Karwar, Calicut and Anjengo, one of the affiliated factories of Bombay. Its affairs were administered by a Chief and a Council called 'Factors'.

As at Anjengo the English at Tellicherry had also to face stiff opposition from the local population. In 1704-05 one of the rival Kolathiri princes, in alliance with the Kurangoth Nair, raided the Company's warehouse and inflicted heavy damage on property. Following this the English obtained from the Prince Regent permission to erect a fort at Tellicherry and persuaded the Prince himself to lay the foundation stone thereof. The construction of the fort was completed and it was formally handed over to the Company by the *Vadakkellamkur* on August 20, 1708. In the meantime, the Kurangoth Nair continued to harass the Company's settlement but in September 1719 he suspended hostilities and formally entered into a treaty of friendship with the Company. He gave the English the monopoly of trade in pepper in his domain without payment of any customs duty. The trade of the English at Tellicherry prospered considerably in spite of the many troubles the Company had to face in the initial stages.

Beginnings of the Anglo-French Conflict

The British power in North Kerala had before long to face serious threat from the French who were their rivals in the political and commercial fields. In 1725 a French fleet under M. de Pardaillan appeared off Mayyazhi (Mahe), 4 miles south of Tellicherry and captured it from the chief of Kadathanad. The French presence in nearby Mahe was a potential menace to the English and the French began to intrigue for the support of the native princes. Mr. Adam who was then the Chief of the Tellicherry factory gave all encouragement and assistance to the Kadathanad ruler to carry on his fight against the French, but in September 1725 the ruler suspended hostilities owing to financial difficulties. The French now instigated the Kurangoth Nair to continue his efforts to recover Tellicherry from the English. There were a number of skirmishes in which the English and the French troops were involved. The fighting in North Malabar was not approved of either by the British or the French Government and in pursuance of instructions received from their superiors the English at Tellicherry and the French at Mahe agreed to live in peace (1728).

Acquisition of Dharmapattanam

In spite of the restoration of peace in the Mahe sector, the English had to face troubles in the north from the Dutch who were still in possession of Fort St. Angelo (Cannanore). The Dutch instigated the Ali Raja to start hostilities against the English. The English, however, turned the tables against the Muslim chief by ousting him from Dharmapattanam Island with the help of the Kottayam Raja. The English also assisted the Prince Regent of Chirakkal in his campaigns against the Ali Raja. In return for the help so rendered Udaya Varman, the Prince Regent, granted to the Company in 1730 the monopoly of trade in Iruvazhinad, Dharmapattanam and Randathara with permission to hoist their flag. In 1732 the Bednore forces attacked the Kolathiri kingdom and advanced beyond the Valapattanam river. During the Canarese war (1732-1736) the English obtained exclusive possession of the Dharmapattanam Island by concluding treaties with the Prince Regent, the Ali Raja and the Kottayam chief. They rendered much assistance to the Prince Regent in the war against the Bednore forces and in their efforts. They were assisted by the Kottayam Raja and the Dutch. The Canarese forces were routed in 1736.

Anglo-French Conflict (1739-1749)

During the Canarese war the French at Mahe provoked several incidents and created difficulties for the English. In November 1741 the French Admiral Mahe Labourdonnais arrived at Mahe (Mayyazhi) with a squadron of five ships to lay siege to Tellicherry but instead of engaging the English in battle the French Admiral waged war with the Kadathanad ruler and captured some of his entrenchments. Labourdonnais restored friendly relations with the English before he left the coast for Mauritius in 1742. Both the parties agreed to dismantle their military outposts in the Kurangoth Nair's territory and to withdraw from there their guns and garrisons.

When war broke out between England and France in Europe in 1744 the French and the English in North Malabar desisted from hostilities. There were, however, some minor skirmishes. The treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle (1749) which ended the war in Europe brought about peace between the two powers in North Kerala also.

Siege of Tellicherry

Prince Udaya Varman who was friendly to the English died in June 1746 and was succeeded by prince Kunhiraman. The new prince was hostile to the English. He had married the Kadathanad chief's sister and built a house for her at Iruvazhinad. He wanted to establish his son therein as the ruler at the expense of the Nambiaris. The project failed, but in 1750 the Kadathanad ruler (Vazhunnar) formally assumed the title 'Raja' with the consent of the Prince Regent. The new chief of the Tellicherry fort, Dorril, intrigued with the old Kolathiri Raja against Kunhiraman and this resulted in the siege of Tellicherry by the combined forces of Kolathunad, Kottayam and Kadathanad. Several of the strategic forts including Tiruvangad were captured. In the

meantime, the French too entered the field and took the Nileswaram fort. At this juncture Dorril by his machinations treated a split among the allies. In November 1751 he ensured the defection of the Kottayam Raja from the alliance. This was followed by an armistice between the English and the Prince Regent arranged under the auspices of the Kottayam Raja (May 1752).

Fall of Mahe

The outbreak of the war between England and France in Europe in October 1756 found its echoes in Kerala. The English had made all preparations for a show-down with the French when on January 31, 1761, they received the thrilling news of the fall of Pondicherry (16th January). On the 3rd February M. Louet, the Commandant of Mahe, was called upon to surrender and ten days later the English flag flew over Mahe. However, by the treaty of Paris, Mahe was restored to the French and the French moved back to their settlement on October 20, 1765.

The Mysorean Invasion and Growth of British Power

The period of the Mysorean invasion was one of stress and strain for the English East India Company's possessions in Kerala. The Tellicherry factory had to face many a crisis during the period. In 1764 Ananta Rao, an emissary of Haider, met the factors and obtained from them an assurance of English neutrality in the event of war between Mysore and the Kerala powers. The neutrality of the English was an important factor which facilitated the early success of Haider in his campaign in Kerala (1766). During his second invasion of Kerala beginning in 1773 Haider came into open clash with the English at Tellicherry. His alliance with the French at Mahe was mainly responsible for this development. The story of the British Success in capturing Mahe and the failure of Haider to capture Tellicherry has already been narrated in the previous chapter.

The English troops actively helped the Zamorin and the local chieftains in their fight against the Mysore rulers. The English army under Major Abington played a notable part in the capture of Calicut in 1782 while another army under Col. Fullerton captured the Palghat fort in 1783. With the accession of Tipu Sultan the hostilities between the English and Mysore became more pronounced. The local rulers like the Zamorin sought their active help in throwing off the Mysorean yoke. The Tellicherry factory gave asylum to a number of local chieftains and followers during Tipu's campaign in 1789. With Tipu's march on Travancore in 1789 the English decided to enter the war actively on the side of the Raja of Travancore who was their protected ally.

With the British march on Seringapatam (1790) the Mysore troops withdrew from Kerala and their old strongholds fell one after the other. Palghat fort fell to Col. Stuart on September 22, 1790, and it opened the doors to British entry into the whole of Malabar. One of the last strongholds to fall was Cannanore which belonged to the Arakkal Bibi. The events leading to the conquest of Cannanore fort by General Abercromby have already been

described in the previous chapter. By the treaties of Seringapatam (1792) the whole of Malabar (except Wynad), Cochin and Coorg were ceded to the English by Tipu. With the fall of Seringapatam at the end of the last Mysore war (1799) South Canara, which included the Kasaragod-Hosdurg area, passed under the British at this time. While the English brought Malabar and South Canara gradually under their direct rule by pensioning off the local chieftains, they entered into separate treaty relations with the rulers of Travancore and Cochin conceding to them the status of vassals.

Political Settlement in Malabar

Though Malabar came into the hands of the British according to the terms of the Treaty of Seringapatam (1792) it was not considered expedient to take charge of the administration of the province straightaway. Nor was the Company inclined to fulfil the promise which Lord Cornwallis had given to the exiled rulers that they would be restored to their former territories on the expulsion of Tipu. General Abercromby, Governor of Bombay, was deputed to negotiate provisional agreements with local rulers in regard to the collection of revenue for the coming year and to recommend an interim arrangement for the administration of the newly acquired territories in Malabar. On his recommendation two Commissioners, Mr. Farmer and Major Dow, were appointed to effect the political settlement of Malabar and carry on the administration. They negotiated settlements for the collection of revenue with all the local powers including the Zamorin and the Raja of Chirakkal. The chiefs were to exercise authority subject to the control of the Company and they were to pay a fixed tribute to the Company. The agreements so entered into with the local powers were at first only for one year and then they were renewed for a period of five years each.

In December 1792 the two Commissioners were joined by Jonathan Duncan and Charles Boddam. The 'Joint Commissioners' evolved a new administrative system for Malabar. They proclaimed freedom of trade in all articles except pepper which was treated as a monopoly. A proclamation was issued in 1792 prohibiting slave trade. The Joint Commissioners later entered into separate agreements with the local rulers setting their claims and defining their permanent status in relation to the Company. The question of the allowances (*Malikhanas*) of the different Rajas was also settled in due course to the satisfaction of the parties.

On March 30, 1793, Malabar was divided into two administrative divisions, *viz.*, Northern and Southern with headquarters at Tellicherry and Cherpulasseri respectively. Each division was placed under the control of a Superintendent. A Supervisor and Chief Magistrate was appointed for the whole of Malabar with headquarters at Calicut and he was to exercise general control over the Superintendents. In 1796 the office of the Supervisor was merged in a Commission sent to Malabar to enquire into the charges levelled by the Zamorin against the last Supervisor James Stevens. With the transfer of Malabar from Bombay to Madras presidency on May 20, 1800, the

Commission was abolished. Major Macleod, the Principal Collector, took charge of the district of Malabar on October 1, 1801.

Treaties with Cochin and Travancore

The Company entered into fresh treaties with the rulers of Cochin and Travancore. By a treaty concluded with the Company in 1791 the Cochin Raja undertook to become a vassal of the English and to pay an annual tribute. The Company agreed to help the Raja in recovering the territories captured from Cochin by Tipu, but he was to exercise control over them under the supreme direction of the Company. The Raja was also assured by the British of all the protection due to a faithful ally. In 1800 Cochin was placed under the control of the Madras Government. Cochin State thus passed under the political control of the English.

As for Travancore, the English East India Company demanded that the Raja should defray the entire expenditure of the war. The Raja appealed to Lord Cornwallis who took a lenient view of the whole affair. A formal treaty was concluded between Travancore and the English East India Company in 1795 according to which the Raja accepted British supremacy and the Company promised help to the State in the event of external aggression. Col. Macaulay was later appointed as British Resident in Travancore. A fresh treaty of alliance and friendship was concluded between the English and Travancore in 1805. Under this treaty Travancore became a subsidiary ally of the British and accepted British protection. The amount of tribute to be paid by the State was fixed at Rs. 8,00,000 per annum. The treaty conferred on the British the specific power to interfere in its internal affairs in the event of internal strife or rebellion. The Raja also undertook to abide by whatever advice the Company might choose to give him in regard to the internal administration of the State. The treaty of 1805 which was negotiated by Velu Tampi Dalawa resulted in the loss of the political freedom of Travancore.

Thus during a decade or two after the exit of Tipu the whole of Kerala passed under the political control of the English East India Company.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE CHALLENGE TO BRITISH SUPREMACY

The establishment of British supremacy over the different regions of Kerala did not go unchallenged by patriotic elements of the population. In the closing years of the 18th and the early decades of the 19th century there were organised attempts to overthrow British authority and regain the lost independence. The Malabar, Travancore and Cochin areas of modern Kerala played their part in these early struggles for independence.

Rebellion of the Patinjare Kovilakam Rajas

The earliest of the resistance movements was led by some members of the Zamorin's family itself. Following the withdrawal of Tipu the ruling Zamorin returned from Travancore and formally celebrated his *Ariyittuvazhcha* (April 1792). In the discussions with the Commissioners the Zamorin's minister, Swaminatha Pattar insisted on the restoration of the former territories to his chief but the Company rejected the demand. The Zamorin eventually yielded and entered into a political settlement with the Company. Their agreement was not approved of by the *Patinjare Kovilakam* branch of the Zamorin's family. The members of this family asserted their independence. The senior prince of the family was seized by Captain Burchall at Cherpulasseri but he died within a couple of days. His brother and nephew were arrested but they were released on the surety of the *Kizhakke Kovilakam* Raja. The released princes made a vain attempt on the life of Swaminatha Pattar, the minister of the Zamorin, who was collaborating with the English. Then they proceeded to the south with a view to mobilising the people in the rebellion against the British. Unni Mutha Muppan, a Mappila chief and some Gowndan Poligar chiefs of Coimbatore, who had rebelled against Tipu joined the princes. Kunhi Achan, the Palghat Raja, whose claims to the management of his kingdom had been rejected by the Commissioners, also helped the princes. The Supervisor of Malabar announced a reward of Rs. 5,000 for the capture of the rebel princes. The English forces under Captain Burchall pursued them to the Anamala Mountains and from there they escaped to Travancore. The two Rajas subsequently returned to Malabar and agreed to live peacefully at Calicut on a pension of Rs. 10,000.

Pazhassi Revolt I (1793-1797)

The more serious of the revolts against the British in Malabar were organised by Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja of the Kottayam royal family. The primary cause of the first revolt organised by the Pazhassi Raja during the period 1793-1797 was the mistaken revenue policy of the British. The Mysoreans

had collected their revenue direct from the cultivators through their officials. The British reversed this policy and farmed out the collection of revenue to the different Rajas for lump sums. The leases, at first yearly, were renewed in 1794 for a period of five years. The Rajas failed to collect the revenues in the face of organised opposition from the people. The assessments were also unduly harsh and the people had not the capacity to pay. The people resisted the attempt at forcible collection and thus challenged British authority. While this was the general case in all the kingdoms, Kottayam had an additional cause for complaint. Kerala Varma, a junior prince of the family, had helped the English in their campaigns against Tipu but after the withdrawal of Tipu, the Company's officials ignored him and leased Kottayam in 1793 for one year to his uncle, the Kurumbranad Raja. The action was deeply resented by the people of Kottayam who held Kerala Varma in high esteem.

The Pazhassi Raja objected to the arrangement made by the Company and unfurled the banner of revolt against the Company and his uncle. He stopped all collection of revenue in Kottayam. The Commissioners looked upon the Pazhassi Raja as "the most intractable and unreasonable of all the Rajas" and took all measures to bring about his subjugation. But as the Raja was exceedingly popular in this region, the British suspended tax collection for a period of one year. In the meantime, the Kurumbranad Raja's lease was renewed for five years in open defiance of the Pazhassi Raja's wishes and the revolt took a violent turn.

The Raja stopped all collection of revenue from Kottayam on 28th June 1795 and openly challenged British authority. He gave asylum to one of the Iruvazhinad Nambiars whom the Supervisor had declared a rebel. Two Mappilas who had committed robbery in the house of a Chetti were at this time sentenced to death by the Raja. The Company's officials ordered the Raja's arrest on a charge of murder but they failed to carry out the order. British troops were stationed at Kottayam bazaar and Manathana in 1795 to help the Kurumbranad tax-collectors but owing to the tactics of the Pazhassi Raja and his men the work of revenue collection could not be carried out. In April 1795 a contingent of British troops under Lt. Gordon made an attempt to seize the Raja in his place at Pazhassi, but on entering the palace they found that "the bird had flown away". They plundered the Raja's palace and carried away all valuables.

The Pazhassi Raja now retired to the mountains of Wynad and resorted to guerilla warfare. In June 1796 he stopped all traffic on the Kuttiadi Ghat. The British now entered into negotiations with the Raja and permitted him to return to his palace at Pazhassi. But there was fresh misunderstanding between the officials of the Company and the Raja and the latter withdrew again to the Wynad jungles along with his followers. On the 18th December 1796 the British Commissioners issued a proclamation forbidding the people to co-operate with the Pazhassi Raja. In the meantime, the Raja established contacts with Tipu's men beyond the border and sought the help of Mysore in driving the English out of Wynad. Some of the Kurumbranad Raja's men also crossed over to the Raja's side. In January 1797 a series of engagements took place in

which several Englishmen lost their lives. The British garrisons were forced to withdraw from Wynad into the plain country.

In March 1797 a British force under Col. Dow marched without opposition up to the Periya Pass and he was to be joined by another contingent under Lt. Mealey. In battles fought on three consecutive days from the 9th to the 11th March, British forces were overpowered by thousands of Nairs and Kurichiyas who had rallied under the banner of the Pazhassi Raja. Col. Dow decided to withdraw his forces from Wynad, but on their way they were attacked by the Pazhassi troops. On March 18, 1797, a contingent of 1,100 men under Major Cameron was ambushed and cut to pieces while making their way through the Periya Pass. The situation was critical for the British and truce with the Pazhassi Raja became a matter of political expediency. Jonathan Duncan, the Governor of Bombay, came to Malabar and worked out a compromise with the Raja. The agreement with the Kurubranad Raja was cancelled and the rebellion was brought to an end through the mediation of the Chirakkal Raja. The Pazhassi Raja accepted a pension of Rs. 8,000 per annum and agreed to live in peace with the Company.

Pazhassi Revolt II (1800-1805)

The armistice arranged between the English and the Pazhassi Raja in 1797 was not destined to last long. In 1800 the Raja again rose in revolt against British authority. The immediate cause of the second revolt was the British move to take possession of Wynad which had been ceded to them by the Mysore ruler under the Partition Treaty following the fall of Seringapatam (1799). The Pazhassi Raja claimed the district as his own and resisted all the attempts of the British to seize Wynad. He raised a large body of Nairs, Kurichiyas, local Mappilas and Muslims from outside and organised an efficient army to fight the British. The Raja was ably served by such loyal lieutenants as Kannavath Sankaran Nambiar, Kaiteri Ambu Nair, Edachanna Kungan Nair and the Kurichiya leader, Talakkal Chandu. Himself a brilliant strategist the Raja gave special training to his troops in the technique of guerilla warfare so as to carry on the fight effectively against the English in the jungles of Wynad.

The British Government decided to take up the challenge seriously and crush the rebellion with an iron hand. In 1800 Sir Arthur Wellesley (the later Duke of Wellington) was appointed as Commander-in-Chief of the British forces in Malabar, South Canara and Mysore. General Wellesley came to Tellicherry and planned his military strategy against his adversary. In an attempt to evolve counter-measures to meet the guerilla tactics of the Raja, the General built a network of new roads and set up military outposts at select places in the low country from where he could send light detachments in all directions to hunt out the guerillas.

The epic resistance of the Pazhassi Raja began during the monsoon of June-July 1800. The Pazhassi troops came down the Ghats and attacked Mr. Brown's spice plantation at Anjarakandi and some of the British outposts. Early in 1801 Col. Stevenson entered Wynad from Mysore at the head of a large army. His aim was to construct a chain of forts from the Mysore frontier

up to the Tamarasseri Pass, open up communication with Calicut, cut off the Pazhassi Raja from his followers in South Malabar and then converge on the Raja's palace at Pazhassi from all directions. The British troops achieved a large measure of success in their campaigns and all places of strategic importance in Wynad soon came into their hands. The Pazhassi Raja became a wanderer in the jungles accompanied by his wife and close followers. The Raja's followers were hunted down and prominent leaders like Chuzhali Nambiar and Peruvayyal Nambiar were captured. The latter was hanged at Kannavam. It seemed as though the resistance movement had been crushed and the Raja's surrender was imminent.

In November 1801 a detachment of British troops under Lt. Edward captured Kannavath Sankaran Nambiar, a prominent lieutenant of the Raja and hanged him on the hill near his house at Kannavam. This was a serious blow to the Pazhassi cause. In January 1802 Major Macleod, the Collector, issued orders disarming the district. In spite of these developments the rebellion did not die out. In October 1802 the rebels under the leadership of Edachanna Kungan Nair and Talakkal Chandu captured the Panamaram fort and massacred its seventy strong garrison. This victory thrilled, the Pazhassi patriots and before long they mustered strong and controlled all Wynad passes. The British rushed troops to Wynad from all directions and the Pazhassi men again withdrew into the safety of the jungles.

In the meantime, Major Macleod had antagonised the entire civilian population by an enhancement of land assessments and revision of the table of exchange. A mass upheaval followed and the Pazhassi troops seized the opportunity to come out of their retreat and make common cause with the people in the low country. There were violent outbreaks even in such places as Cannanore and Dharmapattanam Island. The Pazhassi troops also ravaged the spice plantation at Anjarakandi. The British troops in Wynad were now undergoing terrible privations, many of them having fallen victims to Malaria. The Company's officials organised a new body of 1,200 policemen called *Kolkars* to deal with the small body of Pazhassi troops in the various parts of the country.

Martyrdom of the Pazhassi Raja

Early in 1804 Thomas Harvey Baber, a young and energetic British officer, came as the Sub-Collector of Tellicherry and he was entrusted with the responsibility of crushing the Pazhassi revolt. He suppressed with the help of the *Kolkars* several local uprisings in the Chirakkal area. In April 1804 he formulated a new policy by which the people residing in each locality were responsible for non-co-operation with the rebels and for giving full information about their movements. In the wake of these measures the Raja was forced to withdraw all his men into the jungles of Wynad. The Madras army under Col. Macleod pursued them into the jungles and crushed all opposition. On the 16th June a proclamation was issued offering rewards for the apprehension of the Pazhassi Raja and his close lieutenants. Following the proclamation the *Kolkars* set about the task of capturing the insurgents and stamping out the insurrection. Many an encounter took place between

Pazhassi troops and the *Kolkars*. Talakkal Chandu, the Kurichiya hero, was captured in one such encounter.

The British now enforced a strict blockade of the Pazhassi Raja in his jungle retreat. Baber eventually followed the Raja and his men into the jungle. On the 30th November 1805 the Raja was shot dead. Four of his lieutenants were killed and two were captured prisoners along with his consort and several female attendants. Baber took the Raja's dead body in his own palanquin to Manantoddy and cremated it with 'customary honours', for, as he reported to the Principal Collector of Malabar in his letter dated 31st December 1805, "although a rebel, he was one of the natural chieftains of the country and might be considered on that account rather a fallen enemy". The death of the Pazhassi Raja symbolised the collapse of the resistance movement. The other leaders either committed suicide or were killed in encounters or deported.

The Pazhassi revolt was in a true sense a popular struggle or people's war for national liberation and all classes of people, irrespective of caste or religion, took an active part in it. T. H. Baber has himself characterised the Pazhassi Raja as 'an extraordinary and singular character' and testified to his amazing popularity with the masses. "In all classes," says Baber, "I observed a decided interest in the Pychy Raja towards whom the inhabitants entertained a regard and respect bordering on veneration which not even his death can efface". In spite of his failure to attain his objective of throwing the British out of the country, the Pazhassi Raja's death as a martyr to the cause of freedom has invested his life with a unique halo and won for the great prince an abiding place in the hearts of his fellow countrymen.

Revolt of Velu Tampi and Paliath Achan

During the period following the suppression of the Pazhassi revolt in North Kerala another great challenge was hurled at British authority in Travancore and Cochin. The leaders of the revolt were Velu Tampi Dalawa and Paliath Achan, the chief ministers of the respective States. Velu Tampi had risen to the high position of Dalawa in Travancore after having led a successful popular revolt against bureaucratic misrule and forced the hands of the king to yield to the demands of the people. In 1805 he had played a leading part in negotiating the treaty with the English East India Company. Till the conclusion of this treaty Velu Tampi maintained friendly relations with the English Company and their Resident in Travancore, Col. Macaulay. But before long the Resident interfered actively in the internal administration of the State and came into clash with the Dalawa. An order issued by the Dalawa, attaching the lands of Mathu Tharakan who owed large sums of money to the Travancore Exchequer by way of taxes, was cancelled by Col. Macaulay. The Resident also insisted on the prompt payment of the arrears of tribute due to the Company at a time when the State government was in financial difficulties. The overbearing conduct of the Resident exasperated the Dalawa and he took the crucial decision to organise a revolt against the English.

The Travancore Dalawa found a friend and ally in Paliath Achan, his counterpart in Cochin. Cochin had all along been aggrieved against the Company as most of the territorial claims of that State had been settled by the

English to its disadvantage. English agents had been interfering in the affairs of Cochin and creating difficulties for its administration. Resident Macaulay gave asylum to one Kunhikrishna Menon of Nadavaramba who had fallen out with the Paliath Achan. The Achan demanded the surrender of Menon. On Macaulay's refusal to oblige him, the Achan joined hands with Velu Tampi in organising a revolt against the English.

Attack on Cochin (1809)

The two ministers drew up a common plan of action. They enlisted men for active service from all parts of their States and gave them regular military training. They also established contacts with the French at Mauritius through two. Muslim agents and received from them vague assurances of help to overthrow the British power from Kerala. Velu Tampi is said to have had some communication even with the Americans.¹ He also sought to bring the Mahrattas and the Polygars of Madurai within the fold of a broad based anti-British alliance. The revolt started with an incident at Cochin. On the midnight of December 18, 1808, the Resident's house at Cochin was stormed by a force of 600 men commanded by the Achan and two of Velu Tampi's officers. In the meantime Macaulay and his friend Kunhikrishna Menon escaped in a British ship which had just arrived at Cochin with reinforcements from Malabar. The rebels thereupon broke open the jail at Cochin and set all the prisoners free. On January 19, 1809, the combined forces of Cochin and Travancore numbering about 3,000 launched an attack on Cochin, but they were forced to withdraw after a heavy loss.

Kundara Proclamation

In Travancore the revolt took place according to plan. In the early stages of the revolt itself Velu Tampi moved from Alleppey to Quilon. Following the departure of the Dalawa some British officers were murdered in Alleppey. The Dalawa set up his headquarters at Kundara and from there he issued his famous proclamation dated 1st Makaram 984 (January 11, 1809) indicting British rule and exhorting the people to rally under his banner for a patriotic struggle against the foreigners. The people responded enthusiastically to the Dalawa's call. A grim battle was fought at Quilon in which the British troops destroyed the Dalawa's house and inflicted heavy casualties on the rebels. This shattered the morale of the Dalawa's army.

Martyrdom of Velu Tampi

The prospects of the revolt now looked bleak, but Velu Tampi continued to fight gallantly. In the meantime a British army under Col. St. Leger entered Travancore through the Aramboli Pass and thrust into the interior. On February 19, 1809, the forts of Udayagiri and Padmanabhapuram fell into their hands. Col. St. Leger then advanced towards Trivandrum and encamped at Pappanamcode, in its suburbs. To make matters worse, the British had inflicted a severe defeat on the Paliath Achan in Cochin and brought about

1. Chaudhri, Dr. S.B., *Civil Disturbances in India (1765-1857)*, p.135.

his defection from the anti-British alliance (February 27, 1809). The Travancore Raja, having found his cause hopeless, sued for peace. He also issued orders for the Dalawa's arrest Velu Tampi who had only sometime back visited Trivandrum and paid his respects to the Raja now proceeded to the north and took refuge in the house of the Potti of the Bhagavathi temple at Mannadi. Here, he was overpowered by the Raja's men but before they could capture him alive, the Dalawa committed suicide. His dead body was taken to Trivandrum and exposed on a common gibbet at Kannanmula. The house of the Dalawa was razed to the ground and his relatives were deported to the Maldives.

In spite of the failure of his revolt, Velu Tampi has every claim to be regarded as one of the pioneers of the freedom struggle in the country. He was the first statesman and leader of modern India who made effective use of his hold on the people as well as his oratorical skill to organise a mass revolt against foreign domination. It is true that he failed to achieve his ultimate aim in organising the revolt, but his failure was inevitable in the circumstances prevailing in the country at the time. Like the Pazhassi Raja, his illustrious contemporary in North Kerala, Velu Tampi too died a martyr to the cause of freedom. His supreme sacrifice has served to this day as a beacon of inspiration to his fellow countrymen in the struggles for political liberty and clean administration. It is only appropriate that a statue of the gallant Dalawa erected out of donations from a grateful public now adorns the premises of the Kerala Secretariat at Trivandrum.

Following the failure of Velu Tampi's revolt, the English East India Company tightened their grip over the rulers of Cochin and Travancore. The Paliath Achan was deported to Madras and was never again allowed to visit Cochin. By a treaty concluded on 6th May 1809 Cochin became a subsidiary ally of the British and accepted a British force for protection. The Raja undertook to be guided by the Company's advice in all internal matters. In Travancore too the new Diwan Ummini Tampi negotiated peace with the British. The native force of Travancore was disbanded and the defence of the State was entrusted to the British subsidiary force.

Kurichiya Revolt (1812)

During the period of Velu Thampi's revolt there was practically no disturbance in Malabar. However, in 1812 the Kurichiyas and Kurumbars of Wynad rose in revolt as a protest against the British Government's policy of collecting revenue from them in cash rather than in kind. They besieged the British garrisons at Sultan's Battery and Manantoddy. The British moved troops into Wynad from Mysore and the coast and put down the insurrection. The Kurichiya revolt was the last of the early revolts that broke out in Malabar against British supremacy. After the restoration of peace the authorities directed their attention to the task of internal reconstruction. In spite of the loss of political freedom Travancore, Cochin and Malabar forged ahead in all directions thanks to some of the progressive policies immediately followed by the new administration.

CHAPTER XXIV

ENLIGHTENED ADMINISTRATION IN TRAVANCORE

The beginnings of enlightened administration in Travancore may be associated with the reign of Marthanda Varma (1729-1758) and the Dharma Raja (1758-1798). The framework of the future administrative system of Travancore was evolved under these rulers and several progressive and liberal reforms were introduced. These have already been described in detail in Chapter XIX.

Dismissal of the Triumvirate

The death of the Dharma Raja and the accession of Balarama Varma (1798-1810) witnessed a reversal of the liberal policies of the previous epoch. The new ruler was weak and incompetent and he practically abdicated his powers into the hands of an unpopular clique consisting of Jayanthan Sankaran Nampoori, Sankaranarayana Chetty and Mathu Tharakan. The inglorious partnership of these ministers has been described as a triumvirate of 'ignorance, profligacy and rapacity'. They were interested in promoting their own financial interests and not in public welfare. Their policies brought the State to the brink of financial bankruptcy and they began to levy forced loans from prominent individuals with a view to enriching the exchequer. Among the persons thus called upon to make the payment, was Velu Tampi who was the *Karyakar* of Talakkulam. Velu Tampi who was a fighter reacted sharply to this unreasonable demand on his purse and he promptly organised a popular revolt against the king's ministers. Thousands of insurgents from Nanjanad marched to Trivandrum under his leadership and compelled the Raja to dismiss his unpopular ministers and give them exemplary punishments (1799). The rebel leaders Chempakaraman Pillai of Chirayinkil and Velu Tampi were appointed as *Valiya Sarvadhikaryakar* (Dalawa) and *Mulaku Matissila Karyakar* (Commerce Minister) respectively. This was a signal victory for the popular cause and perhaps the first one of its kind in the modern history of Kerala. In 1800 Velu Tampi himself was appointed Dalawa with the approval of Resident Macaulay.

Velu Tampi's Reforms

Velu Tampi introduced a series of beneficial reforms. He purified the administration by dismissing corrupt and dishonest officials. Every step was taken to facilitate the expeditious disposal of work in government offices. The revenue department was reorganised under the Dalawa's personal supervision and the prompt collection of revenue was ensured. The officers

in all divisions and taluks of the State were called upon to submit daily returns of income and expenditure. Velu Tampi also gave attention to the promotion of education at the village level. The Dalawa took personal interest in the welfare and prosperity of towns like Trivandrum, Quilon and Alleppey. The city of Trivandrum was improved and a number of public buildings were constructed. The *Huzur Cutchery* was constructed at Quilon and extensive bazaars were laid out. The Dalawa took steps for the development of the town and port of Alleppey on proper lines. He opened a network of roads and established weekly and bi-weekly markets at important centres, e.g., Changanacherry, Talayolaparambu and Alangad. Uncultivable waste lands were brought under paddy cultivation on a large scale. The bushy island of Patiramanal in the Vembanad lake was cleared and brought under paddy or coconut cultivation. Thus Velu Tampi made his mark as an able administrator.

Ummini Tampi

Ummini Tampi who replaced Velu Tampi as Dalawa also introduced some far-reaching reforms. He improved the finances of the State by tapping all available sources of income. A system of ‘watch and war’ (*Kaval*) was introduced and jails were established in every district. He established four courts—*Insuaff Cutcheries*— for the dispensation of justice, each court consisting of a Nair judge and the necessary staff. The Diwan cleared the jungle between Trivandrum and Neyyattinkara and settled a large number of weavers in the area. The township which grew up was named Balaramapuram after the reigning Raja. A scheme for the development of Vizhinjam as the premier port of Travancore was drawn up. In spite of these beneficial reforms introduced by Ummini Tampi, the Dalawa was unpopular. Rani Gouri Lakshmi Bai who assumed the reins of government in 1810 dismissed Ummini Tampi and appointed Resident Col. Munro as Diwan.

Rani Gouri Lakshmi Bai

The reign of Rani Gouri Lakshmi Bai (1810-1815) saw the introduction of several enlightened reforms. She was ably assisted in the task of administration by Munro, the Resident-Diwan. Munro introduced in Travancore a system of administration modelled after the system prevailing in British India. The secretariat system was introduced by him and all correspondence at the State level was to be carried on with his knowledge and under his signature. Corrupt and dishonest officials were dismissed and men of integrity were appointed in their place. The Diwan took all possible steps to achieve economy in public expenditure. Each landholder was given a *Pattayam* in which the extent of the land held by him, the nature of the tenure, Government demand etc., were noted. This facilitated the methodical collection of revenue. The arrears of taxes were promptly collected and strict rules were framed to prevent embezzlement of public funds. An efficient system of audit and accounts was introduced. Several obnoxious impositions and irksome taxes which were a burden to the people were done away with. The designation of the *Karyakar* was changed to *Tahsildar* as in British India. He was deprived of his

military and judicial powers and made a mere collector of revenue. *Chowkies* or customs houses were established in suitable places with a view to preventing smuggling. Slavery was abolished in Travancore by a royal proclamation issued in 1812.

The scheme of judicial administration was reformed. Zilla courts were established at five select centres in the State, *viz.*, Padmanabhapuram, Trivandrum, Mavelikara, Vaikam and Alwaye. A Court of Appeal was set up at Trivandrum with five judges including the Diwan himself. Munro drafted a set of rules called *Chattavariolas* based on the *Dharma Sastras*, the regulations in vogue under the Company and the established usages in the country. These were promulgated in 1811 for the guidance of the courts of law. The Police Department was enlarged and brought under the direct personal supervision of the Diwan. Another far-reaching reform introduced by Munro was the assumption of the direct management of the *Devaswams* by the Government in order to prevent their mismanagement (September 1811). The reforms of Munro modernised the administration of Travancore to a very great extent.

Gouri Parvati Bai

The regency of Gouri Parvati Bai (1815-1829) was an era of administrative and social progress in the history of Travancore. Col. Munro who relinquished the post of Diwan in 1814 continued to guide the administration of the State till he laid down office as Resident in 1818. Agriculture and trade registered considerable progress during this period. Cultivation of waste lands and hill tops was given top priority. The restrictions on trade were removed by the abolition of several export and import duties. Freedom of trade was guaranteed within the State. Communications were improved and coinage was reformed. Several unjust feudal levies were abolished. The practice of employment of labour for government work without payment of wages known as *Uzhiyam* was stopped by the Rani.

The Rani introduced several reforms calculated to establish social freedom and civic equality. The Nairs, Ezhavas and other Sudra communities were permitted to wear ornaments of gold and silver without making the customary payment to the State. The poll tax levied from several castes was repealed. All persons, irrespective of caste and status, were permitted by a royal proclamation to have tiled roofs for their houses. Christian missions were given all facilities to carry on their evangelising activities. Rent-free land and free timber were supplied for the erection of churches. The London Mission Society (L.M.S.) at Nagercoil established itself on a firm footing in 1816 under the Rani's patronage. The Church Mission Society (C.M.S.) was given all help to carry on its activities at Alleppey and Kottayam. It was given a tract of land in Kallada in Quilon district (Munro Island) for the specific purpose of promoting education among the Syrians. Thus the regency of Rani Gouri Paravati Bai was an epoch of liberal administration.

Swati Tirunal

The reign of Swati Tirunal (1829-1847) was a 'Golden Age' in the history of modern Travancore. The Raja was a great scholar and multi-linguist. A musician and musical composer of rare talents, his reign saw the encouragement of fine arts in the Travancore Court's (See Chapter XXX for details). The reign of Swati Tirunal also witnessed far-reaching changes in the administrative set-up. He reformed the judicial system by opening Munsiff Courts for the disposal of petty civil and police cases. A code of regulations framed on the British Indian model was issued in 1835. The Suchindram *Kaimukku* or ordeal of boiling ghee was stopped by Swati Tirunal. The *Huzur Cutchery* and other public offices were shifted from Quilon to Trivandrum in order to enable the Raja to bestow his personal attention on the administration of the State. With this the transfer of the capital of the State to Trivandrum was completed in every sense.

With Swati Tirunal is associated the beginning of English education in Travancore. An English school was opened at Trivandrum in 1834 and it was converted into the Raja's Free School in 1836. District schools were also opened simultaneously as feeders to this central institution. The Trivandrum Observatory was opened in 1836. A charity hospital was also set up at the capital. A Department of Engineering was specially set up to attend to works of public utility. An Irrigation Maramath Department was organised to attend to irrigation works in Nanjanad. The Raja abolished 165 minor duties and gave an impetus to internal trade.

A very significant achievement of the reign was the census of the population of the State taken in 1836 with the help of the Tahsildars. The Raja also started a revenue survey (1837 A.D.) with 'the object of measuring every field and fixing the assessment rates for different classes of coconut and other income-yielding trees. Thus, on the whole, Swati Tirunal's reign was one of enlightened administration and economic progress. The Raja was called by his subjects 'Garbha Sriman,' *ie.*, one who was the sovereign even from his birth.

Utram Tirunal Marthanda Varma

Utram Tirunal Marthanda Varma (1847-1860) continued the good work of his predecessor. He bestowed his attention first on the improvement of the finances of the State by enforcing strict economy in expenditure in the palace, public works and *Devaswams*. In 1853 a royal proclamation was issued emancipating all future children of Government slaves and laying down liberal regulations for their all round improvement. In 1859 another proclamation abolished all restrictions in regard to the covering of their upper parts by Shanar women in South Travancore. The Raja did not neglect education. A school for girls was opened at Trivandrum in 1859 and prizes were instituted for such of the students who came out successful in the annual examinations in the Raja's Free School at Trivandrum. The first Post Office in Travancore was opened at Alleppey (1857) during the reign of this ruler. The first modern factory for the manufacture of coir was also opened at Alleppey (1859) by an American by name James Darragh. Thus the reign of

Uthram Tirunal was one of the uninterrupted progress in the history of modern Travancore.

Ayilyam Tirunal

Ayilyam Tirunal (1860-1880) continued the progressive policies of his predecessor. Sir T. Madhava Rao who assumed office as Diwan in 1858 during the closing years of the previous reign continued in that capacity till 1872 and left his mark on the administration of the State. The reign saw the abolition of the monopoly of pepper and tobacco. These measures gave a fillip to pepper cultivation and cheapened tobacco for the consumer. The beginnings of agrarian reform in Travancore may be associated with the reign of Ayilyam Tirunal. The Pandarapattam Proclamation (1865) enfranchised all Sirkar Pattam lands and made them heritable and transferable while the Janmi-Kudiyam Proclamation (1867) provided for fixity of tenure to the tenant. The land tax in Nanjanad was reduced. The British Codes of Civil and Criminal Procedure were enforced in Travancore in 1861 with appropriate changes. Courts of small causes were set up at convenient centres. The Sirkar Anchal (Postal Service) was thrown open to the public in 1861. A full-fledged Arts College was established at Trivandrum in 1866. A number of English, Malayalam and Tamil schools were opened all over the State. Hospitals were established in select centres. In Trivandrum a large Civil Hospital and a Lunatic Asylum were opened.

Seshayya Sastri who succeeded T. Madhava Rao as Diwan in 1872 was an equally zealous administrator. The needs of communication and irrigation claimed his attention. One of the Varkala tunnels constructed at a cost of Rs. 10 lakhs was opened in 1875. Among the buildings that arose during this period may be mentioned those of the Trivandrum Museum and the main building of the present University College. The system of grant-in-aid to private educational institutions was introduced. A Law class was opened at Trivandrum in 1874. The first systematic Census of Travancore was taken on May 18, 1875. The magnificent building accommodating the main block of the present Kerala Government Secretariat at Trivandrum was designed by Chief Engineer Barton in 1865 and it was formally opened by Ayilyam Tirunal in 1869.

Diwan Nanu Pillai, who succeeded Seshayya Sastri in 1872, took special interest in the execution of public works and irrigation projects. Many public buildings, roads, bridges and rest-houses were built. A new system of audit of accounts was introduced. A set of rules was promulgated for the conservancy and sanitation of Trivandrum town. New hospitals were also opened in selected centres and vaccination was introduced for government servants. By the time of Ayilyam Tirunal Travancore had already taken its place in the front rank of the Indian States and in 1866 the title of 'Maharaja' was conferred on the ruler of Travancore by the British Crown in recognition of the progressive administration of the State.

Visakhham Tirunal

Rama Varma Visakhham Tirunal (1880-1885) bestowed his attention on every branch of administration. One of the most important reforms of the reign was the re-organisation of the police force. The functions of the Police and the Magistracy were separated. A comprehensive survey and settlement of lands was announced in a royal proclamation issued in May 1883. Many oppressive taxes were abolished. Agricultural exhibitions were organised and handicrafts were encouraged. Elementary education made great progress under the system of grant-in-aid. The irrigation system of Nanjanad was further improved and extended.

Sri Mulam Tirunal

The reign of Sri Mulam Tirunal Rama Varma (1885-1924) was an epoch of many-sided achievements. The reform of the system of land revenue administration engaged the attention of the ruler at the very beginning of his reign. The settlement operations which began in the previous reign were speeded up and the settlement proclamation was issued in 1886. A new Department of Agriculture was organised in 1908. Agricultural demonstration farms were opened in Trivandrum and Quilon. The agriculturists were given loans under the Agricultural Loans Regulations. Irrigation facilities were improved in all parts of the State. The work on the Kothayar project in Nanjanad was started in 1895. An Economic Development Board was set up to co-ordinate the activities of different departments.

The reign of Sri Mulam Tirunal witnessed giant strides in the field of education. Private agencies were given all encouragement and help in their educational activities. The principle of free primary education was recognised. A Director of Public Instruction was appointed to co-ordinate all educational activities. An Education Code was introduced. The education of the backward classes was given special attention. Government schools were thrown open to the boys and girls of the so-called untouchable communities. Educated men from these castes were appointed to the public service. Technical schools were also opened. A Sanskrit College, an Ayurveda College, a Second Grade College for Women and a Law College were opened at Trivandrum. The publication of Oriental Manuscripts was undertaken under the auspices of a separate department. An Archaeology Department was also formed. Libraries and Reading Rooms were given liberal grants. A Reformatory was established for the education of juvenile delinquents.

There was considerable improvement in communication. Roads, bridges and canals were built all over the State. The survey of the railway line from Quilon to Trivandrum was taken up in 1900-01. A number of traveller's bungalows and rest-houses were built in different parts of the State.

The improvement of the medical services was another achievement of the reign. Qualified physicians and surgeons were appointed in Government hospitals. The hospitals for women and children were properly equipped and grants were given to some of the hospitals run by missionary societies. The

opening of the Ayurveda College and the introduction of a system of grant-in-aid to *Vaidyasalas* helped to encourage the Ayurvedic system of medical treatment. Nagercoil, Trivandrum, Alleppey, Quilon and Kottayam were declared as conservancy towns and the Division Peishkars were entrusted with the control of sanitary administration. The Towns Conservancy and Improvement Act (1891-92) provided for the constitution of a Town Fund and the formation of Town Improvement Committees. Vaccination was effectively enforced.

Perhaps, the most significant of Sri Mulam Tirunal's reforms was the formation of the Legislative Council (1888). To start with, it consisted of 8 members of whom 3 were non-officials and it had the Diwan as its President. The Council so set up was, perhaps, the first institution of its kind in an Indian State. In 1898 the strength of the Council was increased by providing for a maximum of 15 members and a minimum of 8. In 1904 the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly (Prajā Sabha) consisting of members chosen by the Government to represent taluks and certain special interests was formed to ascertain the wishes of the people in regard to the administration of the State. In due course the principle of election was recognised. The members of the Popular Assembly were given the power of electing a good proportion of the members of the Legislative Council. By an Act passed in 1095 K.E. (1919-20) the maximum number of members of the Legislative Council was fixed at 25 and the minimum at 15. Of these two-fifths were to be non-officials. The Act of 1097 K.E. (1921-22) further raised the strength of the Council to 50 members of whom 35 were non-officials, 28 of the latter being elected by electoral constituencies, general and special. The qualification for vote was the payment of an annual tax of Rs. 5. It is worth mentioning that women also enjoyed the right to vote. However, the total number of votes under the Act came to only less than a lakh, *ie.*, about 2.5 % of the total population.

Regency of Setu Lakshmi Bai

Setu Lakshmi Bai acted as Regent from 1924 to 1931 during the minority of Chitra Tirunal Balarama Varma. Mr. M. E. Watts, the first Mi-time non-Hindu Diwan of Travancore, held office during this period. One of the notable reforms of the regency was the formation of Village Panchayats under a law passed in 1925 for developing self-government in rural areas. A number of highways were opened in different parts of the State, particularly in the High Ranges. The College for Women at Trivandrum was raised to the first grade. The Regent also introduced some progressive social reforms like the abolition of the *Devadasi* (*Kudikkari*) system in the temples of South Travancore and of the primitive custom of animal sacrifice in temples under the control of the Devaswam Department. The Nair Regulation of 1925 which sought to substitute the principle of *Makkathayam* for the *Marumakkathayam* law of inheritance was another important measure of the period.

Sri Chitra Tirunal Balarama Varma

The reign of Sri Chitra Tirunal Balarama Varma (1931-1949), the last of the ruling sovereigns of Travancore, saw the reconstitution of the Legislature

and the introduction of more administrative and social reforms. Under the Legislative Reforms Act of 1108 K.E. (1932-33) the Travancore Legislature was reformed on the basis of wider franchise. The Legislature was bicameral, the Sri Mulam Assembly and the Sri Chitra State Council constituting the two houses. The Sri Mulam Assembly came to have 72 members. Of these only 10 were officials. Out of the 62 non-officials 43 were elected from general constituencies and 5 by special constituencies representing special interests like planters, landlords and merchants. The Diwan was its ex-officio President but the Assembly was given the right to have an elected Vice-President. The Sri Chitra State Council consisted of 37 members of whom 27 were non-officials and the remaining officials. Of the non-officials 16 were elected by general constituencies and 6 by special interests. Both the houses could discuss and vote on administrative and legislative subjects. They could also consider and vote on the annual budget but the Legislative Council, unlike the Assembly, had no power to reduce the amount under any demand. The Assembly as well as the Council had the right of interpellation and the power to move resolutions on matters of public interest.

Apart from the Legislative Reforms Act, thereign of Sri Chitra Tirunal witnessed the introduction of several salutary administrative and social reforms. A Public Service Commission was appointed in 1935 in order to ensure fair representation for all communities in appointments to Government service on the basis of a system of communal rotation, The Temple Entry Proclamation (1936) and the establishment of the Travancore University (1937) were significant achievements. The Travancore Land Mortgage Bank was established in 1932. The Government took steps to relieve rural indebtedness under the Agricultural Debt Relief Act (1937). The Travancore Village Unions Act (1939) was passed to foster rural development. The industrialisation of the State was given top priority. A number of factories such as the Travancore Rubber Works, Trivandrum, the Ceramic Factory, Kundara, the Plywood Factory, Punalur and the Fertilisers and Chemicals Travancore, Limited, Elur etc., were started during this period. The towns of Punalur, Kundara and Elur owe their present industrial importance to the policies pursued during this reign. The execution of the Pallivasal Hydroelectric scheme and the introduction of State Transport Services were among the other notable achievements of the period. In carrying out the policy of administrative and social reforms the Maharaja was assisted by his able Diwan Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Ayyar. However, the reign of Sri Chitra Tirunal was a period of unprecedented political unrest. The story of the political movement and the measures taken by the Government to meet it will be dealt with in a separate chapter.

The foregoing survey of the administrative and constitutional changes in Travancore in the 19th and 20th centuries would show that the State had an impressive record of enlightened administration to its credit and that it was one of the progressive States of India under British rule.

PROGRESS OF COCHIN

The history of Cochin as a progressive State commences with the reign of Saktan Tampuran (1790-1805). The foundation of a centralised system of administration was laid by him. The period immediately following the death of Saktan Tampuran was one of political turmoil and hence very little of progress could be achieved in the field of administration. The failure of the revolt of the Paliath Achan in 1809 led to the installation of his rival Kunhikrishna Menon of Nadavaramba as Chief Minister of the State, with the approval of the British. Menon mismanaged the affairs of the State and brought it on the verge of financial bankruptcy.

In 1812 he was sacked and Col. Munro, the British Resident, was appointed as Diwan of Cochin in order to reorganise the administration of the State on modern lines. From the time of Munro's appointment in 1812 till the abolition of the office of Diwan in 1947 Cochin was served by a long line of able Diwans. Hence the administrative and social progress of the State during this long period is sketched below under each of the prominent Diwans.

Col. Munro

Col. Munro (1812-1818) embarked on a methodical scheme of administrative reorganisation. The reforms introduced by him in Cochin bear a close resemblance to those he introduced in Travancore. He stamped out all elements of corruption and lawlessness. The *Karyakars* were deprived of their judicial functions and made mere collectors of revenue. Munro organised a police force (*Tannadars*) and placed it under the control of *Tanna Nayaks* in each taluk. He set up two subordinate courts at Trichur and Tripunithura and a Huzur Court with appellate jurisdiction at Ernakulam. The Diwan did away with a series of vexatious imposts which hampered the progress of trade. Arrangements were made for the systematic collection of land revenue and other taxes due to the State. The system of audit and accounts prevailing in British India was introduced in Cochin and an Accounts Department was organised. The major *Devaswams* or temples were brought under the direct control of the government. Education was given special attention and a vernacular school was established in every *Pravarti* or village. Munro also took steps to safeguard the interest of the minority community. A Christian judge was appointed to each of the courts and a large number of Christians were taken into the public service. The reforms of Munro modernised the administration of Cochin and paved the way for the progressive reforms introduced by the Diwans of later days.

Nanjappayya

Nanjappayya (1815-1825) who succeeded Munro as Diwan of Cochin was an able administrator. He reorganised the judicial system by replacing the Subordinate Courts at Trichur and Tripunithura by the Zilla Courts of Trichur and Anchi Kaimal (Ernakulam) and the Huzur Court by the Court of Appeal. A comprehensive Code of Civil and Criminal Procedure was passed on the model of the one prevailing in British India. The *Karyakars* were redesignated as *Tahsildars* as in neighbouring Travancore. Measures were taken to develop, the forests of the State. The Western system of medical treatment was introduced. Vaccination against smallpox was adopted as a State policy. The Diwan gave all assistance to the English missionary, Rev. J. Dawson, to open a dispensary and an English school at Mattancherri. A proclamation was issued in 1821 forbidding the punishment of slaves by their owners. The survey and settlement of lands known as *Kandezhuthu* were started in 1821 and completed in 1827. The Diwan issued a new coin called the *Puthan*.

Venkatasubbayya

Seshagiri Rao (1825-1830) and Edamana Sankara Menon (1830-1835) who succeeded Nanjappayya were neither able nor enlightened administrators and hence they failed to leave their mark on the administration of the State. Venkatasubbayya (1835-1840), the next Diwan introduced several important administrative reforms. He issued four elaborate Regulations which brought the administration of justice in Cochin into line with that of British India. The survey and settlement of garden lands were carried out in 1837-38 and a large number of taxable trees, planted since 1808, were brought to account. The Diwan gave priority to schemes for agricultural improvement. Experimental gardens were opened in Ernakulam, Trichur and other Taluk headquarters and agriculturists were supplied with improved varieties of seeds. The vernacular schools set up by Munro were abolished but a better organised vernacular school was opened in each Taluk headquarters. English schools were established in Trichur and Mattancherri.

Sankara Warriar

Sankara Warriar who succeeded Venkatasubbayya as Diwan held office for 17 years, *i.e.*, from 1840 to 1856. He was an able administrator and reformer and the reforms introduced by him helped to raise Cochin to the front rank of the well-governed States of India. He gave his first attention to the finances of the State. By prompt collection of taxes and economy in expenditure he converted the deficit budget of Cochin into a surplus one. A comprehensive programme of public works was carried out. A number of roads, bridges and canals were built and rest-houses were provided at suitable places for the convenience of travellers. Several minor irrigation works like *Chiras* (embankments), tanks, etc., were taken up for execution and large areas of cultivable waste lands were brought under the plough. The Diwan encouraged trade by abolishing irksome levies and tolls. In 1854 a proclamation was issued abolishing slavery and emancipating all the slaves in the State. Social services like education and public health also claimed Sankara Warriar's

attention. In 1845 was opened the Elementary English School at Ernakulam, the nucleus of the Maharaja's College of later days. The Charity Hospital at Ernakulam which later developed into the General Hospital was also opened during this period. Thus the period of the Diwanship of Sankara Warriar was one of liberal and progressive administration.

Sankunni Menon

The immediate successor of Sankara Warriar was Venkata Rao (1856-1860) but he was unpopular and was removed from office in 1860. Thottakkat Sankunni Menon, the son of Sankara Warriar, then assumed charge as Diwan and held office for 19 years, *i.e.*, from 1860 to 1879. His period of office was marked by improvement in every branch of administration. He reformed administration of justice by prescribing qualifications for lawyers and judges. He established Munsiff's Courts in all taluks for the disposal of petty civil cases. A Department of Public Works was organised in 1865 under a European Engineer and it attended to all works of public utility under the personal guidance of the Diwan. Many of the roads built by Sankara Warriar were metalled by his son. Several new roads, canals and bridges were constructed. The construction of embankments and drainage canals in Vaipin Island helped to bring large areas under paddy and coconut cultivation. The extension of the railway from Shoranur to Ernakulam was negotiated with the railway authorities. The English school at Ernakulam was raised to a Second Grade College and English schools were opened in all Taluk headquarters. A hospital was established at Trichur and the Ernakulam hospital was improved. The benefits of the Sirkar Anchal (indigenous postal system) were made available to the public. The Diwan put an end to the system of compulsory labour for State purposes as well as to the sale and purchase of slaves. These reforms introduced by Sankunni Menon have earned for him a high rank among the administrators who laid the foundations of modern Kerala.

Govinda Menon

Govinda Menon, the brother of Sankunni Menon, was the next Diwan (1879-1889). He continued the liberal policies of his brother. He opened the first school for girls in Cochin State at Trichur in 1889 in commemoration of the jubilee of Queen Victoria. The system of grant-in-aid to private schools was introduced. Police forces were reorganised on more modern lines. Civil and Criminal Procedure Codes modelled after those of British India were enacted in Cochin during this period. The Raja's Court of Appeal was set up. The improvement of the Ernakulam foreshore by large-scale reclamation from the adjoining backwaters, was a significant achievement of this Diwan. Some of the disputes with Travancore in regard to boundaries and the right to the management of temples such as those of Irinjalakuda, Elangunnappuzha and Perumanam were settled during the period of the Diwanship of Govinda Menon.

Other Diwans

C. Tiruvenkatacharya was Diwan from 1889 to 1892. Government Primary schools, Vernacular and English, were opened by him in different parts of the

State and a more liberal system of grant-in-aid to the private schools was introduced. V. Subramania Pillai (1892-1896) reorganised the Medical Department and appointed a full-time Chief Medical Officer to be in charge of it. During the Diwanship of P. Rajagopalachari (1896-1901) the railway line from Shoranur to Ernakulam was completed. The system of audit and accounts prevailing in British India was introduced in Cochin. A Chief Court with a Chief Justice and two puisne Judges was set up for Cochin under Regulation 11 of 1076 K.E. (1900-01). The administration of the jails was reformed. A cadastral survey of the state was commenced. It was continued under his successors. L. Locke (1901-02) and N. Pattabhirama Rao (1902-1907).

A. R. Banerji (1907-1914) completed the revenue settlement and adopted measures for the proper maintenance of land records. The police force was reorganised. A Department of Public Health was organised and Sanitary Inspectors were appointed. New departments were set up for the development of Agriculture and Fisheries. Technical and Commercial schools were set up in important centres. Town Councils were formed under the Municipal Regulation of 1910. The citizens of Ernakulam town were supplied with protected water brought from Chowara. Schemes for the development of Cochin Port were formulated. The citizens of the State were given preference in the matter of appointments to the State service.

J. W. Bhole (1914-1919) who succeeded A R. Banerji gave his attention to agrarian reforms. In 1914 a Tenancy Regulation was enacted. Village Panchayats and Co-operative Societies were started. The former were entrusted with judicial functions in due course.

T. Vijayaraghavachari (1919-1922) took genuine interest in the advancement of the backward classes. The industrialisation of Cochin was given special attention. The Nair Regulation (1920), the first piece of social legislation in Cochin, was passed into law. The spread of female education was a significant achievement of the period. The Village Panchayats and Municipal Councils were given increased powers.

Cochin came to have its Legislative Council during the Diwanship of P. Narayana Menon (1922-1925). The Council which was inaugurated in 1925 had a non-official majority, 30 out of 45 members being elected on the basis of wide franchise. The experimental stage of the Cochin Harbour development scheme was completed during this period.

Under T. S. Narayana Iyer (1925-1930) Mattancherri and some other towns were provided with protected water supply. During the Diwanship of C. G. Herbert (1930-1935) the Shoranur-Cochin railway was converted from metre gauge to broad gauge. The Cochin Harbour development scheme made further progress. A system of agricultural loans was introduced. A special department was set up for the protection of the Depressed Classes.

R. K. Shanmukham Chetti

Sir R. K. Shanmukham Chetti was Diwan of Cochin from 1935 to 1941. His period of office was marked by all-round administrative progress. The Cochin Secretariat was organised on modern lines under his personal guidance. The

Land Mortgage Bank and the Debt Conciliation Board were set up in the interest of the agriculturists in distress. The Cochin Harbour development scheme was successfully completed. Ernakulam town was beautified and provided with electric lights. A Staff Selection Board was set up for making recruitment to the State service on the basis of a scheme of communal rotation in regard to appointments. The Cochin High Court was formally opened on June 18, 1938, at Ernakulam. The Cochin Tenancy Act of 1113 M.E. (1937) was passed to confer security of tenure on *Kanams* created between 1885 and 1915 and to restrict the ground for eviction. The most significant reform of R. K. Shanmukham Chetti was the introduction of Dyarchy under which the administration of certain departments of the State Government was entrusted to a Minister responsible to the State Legislature.

R. K. Shanmukham Chetti retired in 1941. A. F. W. Dixon (1941-1943), Sir George Boag (1943-'44) and C. P. Karunakara Menon (1944-1947) were the next Diwans of Cochin. Under them Cochin passed through the period of political agitations which culminated in the grant of responsible government in 1947. A detailed account of these agitations would be given in a separate chapter.

Genealogy of Cochin Rulers

The genealogy of the Cochin rulers who were on the throne from 1895 to 1949 is given below in order to bring the dynastic history of Cochin up to date:

1. Rama Varma	(Died at Vellarappilli)	1805-1809
2 . KeralaVarma	(Died at Tripunithura)	1809-1828
3 . Rama Varma	(Died at Tripunithura)	1828-1837
4 . Rama Varma	(Died at Irinjalakuda)	1837-1844
5. Rama Varma	(Died at Trichur)	1844-1851
6. KeralaVarma	(Died at Benares)	1851-1853
7. Ravi Varma	(Died at Tripunithura)	1853-1864
8. Rama Varma	(Died at Tripunithura)	1864-1888
9. KeralaVarma	(Died at Tripunithura)	1888-1895
10. Rama Varma	(Died at Trichur)	1895-1914
11. Rama Varma	(Died at Madras)	1914-1932
12. Rama Varma	(Died at Chowara)	1932-1941
13. KeralaVarma	(Died at Tripunithura)	1941-1943
14. Ravi Varma	(Died at Tripunithura)	1943-1946
15. KeralaVarma	(Died at Ernakulam)	1946-1948
16. Rama Varma	(Died at Tripunithura)	1948-1964

Of the rulers mentioned above, Rama Varma (1895-1914) abdicated the throne in 1914, owing to differences of opinion with the paramount power and during the reign of the last ruler Rama Varma (Parikshit Tampuran) Cochin State was integrated with Travancore on July 1, 1949, to form the new State of Travancore-Cochin.

CHAPTER XXVI

BRITISH MALABAR

As stated in Chapter XXIII, the district of Malabar became part of the Madras Presidency on May 21, 1800. A Principal Collector assisted by nine Subordinate Collectors was put in charge of its administration and Major Macleod took charge as the first Principal Collector of Malabar on October 1, 1801. The Malabar district thereafter made progress as a distinct administrative unit of the Madras Presidency. It may, however, be made clear that the progress of British Malabar was not so spectacular as that of the princely States of Travancore and Cochin.

Judicial Organisation

One of the earliest endeavours of the British administration was to evolve a judicial system for Malabar. Even as early as 1793 the Joint Commissioners promulgated a code for the administration of civil and criminal justice. The Northern and Southern Superintendents were invested with civil and criminal jurisdiction in their respective divisions and local *Darogas* were set up in seven select centres of the district. In 1802 the judicial and executive functions were separated under the Cornwallis Code. A Provincial Court was established at Tellicherry and Zilla Courts at Tellicherry and Calicut. Several changes in the judicial organisation of Malabar took place since then until at last the district came to be divided into the District Judgeships of North and South Malabar, with headquarters at Tellicherry and Calicut respectively.

Improvement of Communications

There was the steady improvement of communications in the district under the British administration. The Pazhassi revolt gave an impetus to road building activity and the interior areas of Malabar were opened up by military roads. Some companies of the Madras Pioneers worked in the district between 1810 and 1830 and undertook the construction of several roads, the Periya Ghatroad being the most important. The road from Cannanore to Coorg was constructed in 1848-1851 and it was an important link in the communication system of the district. The rise of the plantation industry in Wynad also gave a spurt to road building activities in North Malabar. During the period 1861-1907 the railway line was laid from the southern end of the district to the north.

Economic Progress

The Malabar district made progress in the economic and social fields as a result of the labours of the Government as well as of private agencies. In 1797 the English East India Company established a Spice Plantation at Anjarakandi

and in 1799 it was handed over to Mr. Murdoch Brown. Coffee, cinnamon, pepper, nutmeg and such other crops were cultivated here on an experimental basis. It was from here that coffee was introduced into Wynad. The plantation continues to this day, though only cinnamon is grown here. It may be mentioned that the Anjarakandi Cinnamon Plantation is believed to be the biggest of its kind in the world. Before the end of the 19th century several tea estates also sprang up in the Wynad area of Malabar. The industrial development of the district also received attention. The Basel Evangelical Mission was responsible for starting some of the earliest weaving mills and tile factories in Malabar. The first tile factory was started in Pudiyaarakallu near Calicut in 1874. The oldest weaving mills were started at Cannanore and Calicut by the Mission.

Educational Activities

In the 19th century the Malabar district made progress in the field of education. The Basel Missionaries were pioneers in this field also. The Basel Evangelical Mission opened a primary school at Kallayi (Calicut) in 1848 and it developed into the Malabar Christian College of later days. The Mission opened at Tellicherry on March 1, 1857, the first English school in North Malabar. Dr. Gundert, the founder of the Basel Mission in Malabar, was also the first Government Inspector of Schools in Malabar and South Canara. The Tellicherry Brennen School started in 1862 under the auspices of the Basel Mission with an endowment of Rs. 12,000 left by Mr. Brennen, Master Attendant at Tellicherry was later taken over by the Government and developed into the Government Brennen College. The modern Victoria College, Palghat, began in 1866 as a rate school and the Zamorin's College (at present the Guruvayurappan College) Calicut, in 1877 as a school for the young princes in the Zamorin's family.

Local Self-Government

In the field of local self-government also Malabar made considerable progress in the 19th century. The Municipalities of Calicut, Tellicherry, Cannanore, Palghat and Fort Cochin came into existence in 1866 or 1867 under the provisions of the Madras Town Improvement Act in 1865. The local bodies also provided social services to the people by running educational institutions and dispensaries.

Mappila Riots

As the Malabar district was making progress in the administrative, economic and social fields, it also passed through a phase of violent disturbances known as the 'Mappila Riots'. Twenty-two such riots were reported from different parts of Malabar, particularly the Ernad and Valluvanad taluks, during the period 1836-1856. The common feature of these riots was that a Mappila or group of Mappilas would murder Hindu *Janmis* and desecrate Hindu temples. The genesis of these outbreaks is a much discussed question. According to one school of thought the Mappila outbreaks were nothing more than premeditated acts of religious fanaticism. T.L. Strange, a Judge,

who was appointed on special duty to enquire into the causes of the outbreaks strongly held this view and he recommended a policy of repression. As suggested by him, a special police force (Malabar Special Police) was organised in 1854 to crush the disturbances with an iron hand. The Mappila riots continued on a more violent, scale even after the adoption of this policy and in 1855 H.V. Connolly, th District Magistrate of Malabar, was murdered by four Mappila convicts in his bungalow at Calicut.

As the unrest continued unabated, the opinion grew in volume that the Mappila outbreaks had their origin in agrarian depression and poverty. In 1881 Mr. Lagan was appointed as Special Commissioner to enquire into the land tenures and tenant rights in Malabar and suggest ways and means of redressing the genuine grievances of the Mappila community. He came to the conclusion that the Mappila outrages were an attempt “to counter-act the overwhelming influence, when backed by the British Courts, of the *Janmis* in the exercise of the novel powers of ouster-and eviction for rent conferred on them”. In other words, the mistaken revenue policy of the British Government according to which the Hindu *Janmi* was considered as the real lord of the soil and the Mappila riots as being entitled to no rights on land was pinpointed by Logan as the real cause of the Mappila unrest. In pursuance of Logan’s recommendations the Malabar Compensation for Tenants Improvements Act (Act I of 1900) was passed into law to protect the tenant from arbitrary eviction by the landlord. The Act failed to meet the demands of the situation and the Mappila outbreaks continued to disturb the peace of the district till the beginning of the 20th century. In fact, such factors as poverty, agrarian grievance and religious bigotry helped to keep alive the spirit of discontent and defiance among the Mappilas and led them to indulge in violent outbreaks. However, the increasing avenues of employment provided over the years by the army, plantations, railways, trade and commerce as well as the spread of liberal education among the more affluent sections of the Mappila community eventually helped to bring about a climate of peace.

Beginnings of the National Movement

British Malabar played a leading part in the National movement which culminated in the achievement of Independence by India in 1947. The Indian National Congress founded in 1885 had its adherents in Malabar from very early days. In 1897 Sir C. Sankaran Nair, a distinguished son of Malabar, presided over the Amraoti session of the Congress. A conference was held at Calicut under the auspices of the Congress in 1904 with C. Vijayaraghavachariar in the chair. A District Congress Committee was formed in Malabar in 1908. A branch of the All India Home Rule League founded by Dr. Annie Beasant in 1916 also started functioning in the district. K. P. Kesava Menon functioned as the Secretary of the District Congress Committee, as well as of the Home Rule League. From 1916 onwards political conferences were held in Malabar to bring the grievances of the people to the attention of the Government.

Home Rule Movement

The Great War (1914-1918) gave an impetus to the National movement in Malabar. In 1916 a public meeting held in the Calicut Town Hall to mobilise public support for the war efforts of the Government created history. K. P. Kesava Menon who was denied permission by Collector Innes to address the meeting in Malayalam staged a walkout from the hall accompanied by the vast majority of the audience. The incident was symbolic in so far as it demonstrated the rising tempo of the National movement.

The end of the war saw the announcement of the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms (1919) and a great controversy arose as to whether the reforms should be accepted or not. The fifth Malabar District Political Conference held at Manjeri on April 28, 1920, in the presence of Dr. Annie Beasant passed a resolution declaring the reforms to be unsatisfactory and disappointing. It also called for the early introduction of agrarian reforms in Malabar. The conference was attended by 1,309 delegates from all parts of the district. Following the passage of the resolution there was a cleavage at the conference between the moderate and extremist elements. The landlords and rich men left the Congress organisation and its leadership passed into the hands of extremists, who championed the cause of the peasants, the workers and the middle class. Manjeri may be called 'a Surat in reverse', for here, unlike at Surat in 1907, the Moderates and not the Extremists had to leave the Congress.

Non-co-operation

With the assumption of the leadership of the Indian National Congress by Mahatma Gandhi in 1920 began a new era in the history of the National movement in Malabar as well. The Non-co-operation movement which was started after the Nagpur Congress of the year made considerable headway in Malabar. There was the widespread boycott of foreign goods, courts of law and educational institutions in the district. Meanwhile, the Khilafat movement was started as a protest against the action of the British Government in disrupting the Turkish Empire and depriving the Sultan of Turkey of his spiritual headship as the Khalifa. This agitation also made a tremendous impact on the Muslim population of Malabar. The Khilafat work was organised all over the country under the auspices of the Congress and therefore, for a while the Congress and Khilafat movements merged themselves into a single movement in which Hindus and the Muslims took part with great enthusiasm. Mahatma Gandhi and Maulana Shaukat Ali visited Malabar to organise Khilafat Committees and to accelerate the tempo of the National movement against the foreign government. In April 1921 the first All Kerala Political Conference attended by delegates from Malabar, Travancore and Cochin was held at Ottappalam under the presidency of T. Prakasam. Several of the prominent Congress leaders who attended the conference were manhandled by the police.

Malabar Rebellion (1921)

The most important event connected with the political movement in Malabar during this period was the Malabar Rebellion of 1921. The progress of the Khilafat movement in Ernad and Valluvanad taluks created alarm in official quarters and the Government brought these two taluks under Section 144 of the Indian Penal Code. The British police let loose a reign of terror against the Mappilas. The attempted arrest of Vadakke Vittil Muhammad, the Secretary of the local Khilafat Committee at Pukottur in Ernad taluk, led to a series of violent clashes between the police and the Mappilas in the Ernad and Valluvanad taluks. The Mappilas attacked police stations, looted Government treasuries and destroyed Government offices. The rebellion was led by such leaders as Variankunnath Kunjahammad Haji, Sithi Koya Tungal of Kumaranputhur and Ali Musaliyar. The rebels achieved a large measure of success in extirpating British authority in their strongholds like Malappuram, Tirurangadi, Manjeri and Perintalmanna and establishing their own government in these places. The Government rushed British and Gurkha troops to the trouble-spots in a desperate bid to crush the revolt. Martial law was declared and repressive measures were adopted. One of the tragic episodes of the rebellion was the 'Wagon Tragedy' in which 61 of the 90 Mappilas carried as prisoners in a closed railway goods wagon from Tirur to Coimbatore on November 20, 1921, had died of suffocation by the time the train reached Podanur. Sumit Sarkar calls the incident 'the Black Hole of Podanur'.

In the later stages of the Malabar Rebellion the Mappilas committed several violent atrocities and forfeited the sympathy of the majority community. What began originally as a reaction against police repression turned out in its last phase to be a sort of communal flare-up in which the Hindus became the special targets of attacks by the Mappilas. There were even some cases of forcible conversion and looting of the wealth and property of the Hindus. It is pointed out by writers who look upon the Malabar Rebellion of 1921 as an agrarian or *Janmi-Kudiyan* conflict that the Mappilas engaged in these outrages were tenants who were being harassed and exploited by Hindu *Janmis*. The latter, it is alleged, had helped the police in ferreting out the rebel leaders and this provided the provocation to the Mappila tenants to turn against the Hindu *Janmis* and indulge in acts of violence bordering on religious fanaticism. This would suggest that religious fanaticism was not the cause but the result of the outbreak of 1921. The Congress leaders like M.P. Narayana Menon, K. P. Kesava Menon, K. Kelappan, E. Moidus Maulavi and Muhammad Abdur Rahiman tried their best to check the violent turn of events, but their efforts did not prove successful. The rebellion was at last suppressed by the British Government with an iron hand. The rebel leaders were captured and shot, while hundreds were either imprisoned or deported. It is estimated that about 10,000 people lost their lives in this rebellion. It may be mentioned that the Rebellion of 1921 was a gigantic national upheaval against British authority and not a mere Mappila outbreak as British writers have characterised.

Birth of Political Journalism

The post-rebellion period in Malabar was one of comparative lull. The Congress organisation practically went into the wilderness. However, the period saw the birth of political journalism in Malabar.

In March 1923 K.P. Kesava Menon and other Congress workers started the *Mathrubhumi* from Calicut to popularise the message of the Congress. *The AlAmin* started publication from Calicut in October 1924 under the editorship of Muhammad Abdur Rahiman with the aim of fostering the spirit of nationalism among the Muslim masses. A movement for tenancy reform was also started in Malabar during this period under the leadership of Mannath Krishnan Nair, K.P. Raman Menon, G. Sankaran Nair and others. It was this movement which eventually forced the hands of the Government to pass the Malabar Tenancy Act (1930).

In the later twenties political activity was renewed in Malabar under the Indian National Congress. The movement for the boycott of the Simon Commission (1928) created a stir among the people. Meanwhile, the fourth All Kerala Political Conference which met at Payyannur in May 1928 under the presidency of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru passed a resolution requesting the Indian National Congress to adopt Complete Independence (*Purna Swaraj*) as the goal of the National movement. The presidential address of Nehru laying stress on the socialist ideology and the resolution adopted at the conference gave a fresh stimulus to political activity in Malabar.

Salt Satyagraha

The Salt Satyagraha which began under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi in March 1930 had its repercussions in Kerala as well. Payyannur was the main venue of the Salt Satyagraha in Malabar. Several batches of Satyagrahis from Calicut, Palghat and other parts of Kerala marched to Payyannur to take part in the struggle. The Satyagraha went off peacefully in the early stages, but with the arrest of Mahatma Gandhi on May 5, affairs took a new turn. The Government resorted to a series of repressive measures to break up the struggle. On 12th May the Satyagrahis who assembled at Calicut beach to break the salt laws were attacked by the police party and more than 30 persons were wounded. P. Krishna Pillai and R.V. Sarma exhibited rare heroism in defending the National Flag from forcible seizure by the police on this occasion. The Satyagraha camp at Payyannur was raided and its inmates were lathi-charged. All the top leaders of the Congress like K. Kelappan, Muhammad Abdur Rahiman, and K. Madhavan Nair were arrested and sentenced to rigorous imprisonment. Side by side with the Salt Satyagraha, the Congress workers also organised the picketing of toddy shops and the boycott of foreign goods. The Civil Disobedience movement came to an end with the release of Gandhiji on January 26, 1931, and the Gandhi-Irwin Pact of March 4, 1931. The withdrawal of the movement was disapproved by the younger elements in the Congress organisation but there was no immediate split in the party. The fifth All Kerala Political Conference which met at Badagara on May 5, 1931, under the presidency of J. M. Sen Gupta passed, among others, an

important resolution urging temple entry. The Guruvayur Satyagraha (1931-'32) was an offshoot of this resolution.

Civil Disobedience (1932)

Malabar played an important part in the Second Civil Disobedience movement which began in January 1932, following the failure of the Round Table Conference held in London the previous year. The Congress was declared an unlawful organisation and the British Government issued a series of Ordinances to put down the agitation. Nevertheless, thousands of people came forward to participate in the movement. The movement was accompanied by organised boycott of courts of law, educational institutions, foreign goods and toddy shops. All the four hundred delegates who attended the Sixth All Kerala Political Conference held at Calicut (September 1932) were arrested. A significant feature of the movement was that a large number of women took an active part in it and courted arrest. Special mention may be made of the episode involving the arrest, trial and conviction of Mrs. L.S. Prabhu of Tellicherry for having picketed a shop selling foreign goods. On her refusal to pay the fine of Rs. 1,000 imposed on her by the court, she was called upon to surrender all the gold ornaments on her body including the *tali* or *mangalya sutra* (marriage badge). The action of the authorities captured all-India attention and led to widespread protests. Eventually the Government was forced to bow to the force of public opinion and return the *tali* to Mrs. Prabhu. The Civil Disobedience movement was formally withdrawn in May 1935.

Split in the Congress

During the period following the withdrawal of the Civil Disobedience movement the Congress organisation in Kerala split itself up into two wings, viz., the Rightists and the Leftists. The latter constituted themselves into the Kerala unit of the All India Congress Socialist Party formed in 1934 and functioned as a separate group within the Congress under the guidance of leaders like E. M. Sankaran Namboothiripad and P. Krishna Pillai. An extremist group of Nationalist Muslims under the leadership of Muhammad Abdur Rahiman also came into existence during the period. The Rightists who subscribed to the Gandhian ideology were gradually ousted from the leadership of the organisation by the Leftists and the Nationalist Muslims who had, in the meantime, also built up their influence among the workers, peasants, students and teachers of Malabar. A meeting of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee held at Shoranur in October 1934 expressed lack of faith in the efficacy of the Gandhian principles of Truth and Non-Violence as weapons in the fight for 'Swaraj'. In spite of the group rivalries in the Congress almost all the Congress candidates from Malabar were returned to the Madras Legislature in the elections held in 1937 and the Malabar Congress leader Kongattil Raman Menon became a Minister in the Rajagopalachari Cabinet (1937-1939).

Debut of the Muslim League

The late thirties saw the rise of the Muslim League as an important factor in Malabar politics. Though the All India Muslim League had been founded in Dacca as early as 1906 and it had set up branches in certain parts of Malabar even in 1917, the League did not have a well-knit organisation in the district till the mid-thirties. The victory of the Muslim League candidate Abdul Sattar Sait in the elections to the Central Legislative Assembly (1934) from the South Canara Constituency defeating the Congress leader, Muhammad Abdur Rahiman by 1,960 votes as against 1,638 votes polled by the latter, marked the debut of the Muslim League as an active force in Malabar politics. Abdur Rahiman Ali Raja of Cannanore was elected in 1937 as the first President of the Malabar Muslim League.

Rise of the Communist Party

The leftist elements represented by the Congress Socialist group in the Congress organisation emerged as the Communist Party of Malabar in 1939. When the Second World War broke out in 1939 the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee under Communist leadership took an unequivocal stand in favour of a mass struggle to overthrow British rule. The resignation of the Congress Ministries in 1939 and the later decision to start 'Individual Satyagraha' failed to enthuse the radical elements in the Kerala Provincial Congress. The K.P.C.C. gave a call to the people to observe September 15 as Anti-Imperialist Day. The action of the K.P.C.C. was disapproved by the Congress Working Committee but demonstrations and meetings were organised on a large scale in Malabar in defiance of the directive from the central leadership. There were violent clashes between the police and the people in such places as Tellicherry, Morazha, Mattannur, and Kayyur and precious lives were lost. Four peasants who were tried in connection with the Kayyur outbreak (March 28, 1941) were sentenced to death. The developments in Malabar led to the suspension of the K.P.C.C. and the constitution of an Ad-Hoc Committee to reorganise the Congress activities in Malabar. The leftists now left the Congress en bloc and joined the ranks of the Communist Party.

'Quit India' movement

The 'Quit India' movement of 1942 had only its faint echoes in Malabar. This was due to the change in the policies of the Communist Party. The Communists who were advocating a mass struggle to overthrow British rule adopted a policy of co-operation with the British Government in their war efforts, following the entry of Russia in the war against the Axis powers (June 22, 1941). However, some young workers inside the Congress constituted themselves into a Socialist group under the leadership of Dr. K.B. Menon and played their part in the 'Quit India' movement. They organised meetings and demonstrations in defiance of Government ban and also organised the boycott of schools, colleges and courts of law. A secret journal called *Swatantra Bharatam* was published during this period. There were also a few violent

incidents involving disruption of communications and attack on Government offices and police stations. The Kizharyur bomb case in which 27 persons including Dr. K. B. Menon were chargesheeted was the most important episode of the struggle.

Independence and After

During the period immediately following the achievement of Indian Independence (August 15, 1947) Malabar continued as a district of Madras State. In the general elections of 1951 an alliance between the Kisan Mazdur Praja Party and the Communists led to a series of electoral reverses for the Congress. The Congress could capture only 4 out of the 30 seats from Malabar in the Madras Legislature. When the States of the Indian Union were reorganised on linguistic basis on November 1, 1956 the Malabar district, along with the Kasaragod area of South Canara, was added on to Travancore-Cochin to form part of the new State of Kerala.

CHAPTER XXVII

POLITICAL MOVEMENTS IN TRAVANCORE AND COCHIN

The princely States of Travancore and Cochin have had their own struggles and agitations of a political character from the very beginning of the British period. The agitations which took place in the early period had for their aim the establishment of good government and those of the later period the achievement of political rights like the association of the people at the various levels of administration. In this chapter we shall briefly review the history of these agitations with particular reference to the struggles which culminated in the achievement of responsible government in Travancore and Cochin in 1947.

Early Struggles in Travancore

The earliest of the political struggles in modern Travancore was the one led by Velu Tampi in 1799 against the misrule of the triumvirate comprised of Jayantan Sankaran Nampoori, Sankaranarayana Chetti and Mathu Tharakan, to which reference has already been made. Velu Tampi had mobilised thousands of people under his banner and led them to Trivandrum to place their grievances before the sovereign. The demonstrators demanded the dismissal of the unpopular ministers and the Raja had to accede to the demand and appoint the leaders of the people as his ministers. The incident is important in so far as it demonstrated for the first time the organised strength of the people. But in the first half of the 19th century, apart from the revolt against the British led by Velu Tampi Dalawa, there were no other political upheavals and the internal administration of the State was carried on by the rulers in an atmosphere of relative peace, with the advice of Diwans who were brought from outside.

Malayali and Ezhava Memorials

Towards the closing decades, of the 19th century the educated middle class in Travancore asserted itself. A series of constitutional agitations followed. There was widespread resentment among the educated classes against the Government's policy of importing persons from outside, particularly Tamil Brahmins, to hold the most important posts in the public services even when persons with similar qualifications were available inside the State. It may be noted that the influx of Tamil Brahmins into Travancore civil service started from the days of Ramayyan Dalawa and it continued right through the 19th century.

In 1882 three students of the Maharaja's College, Trivandrum, were expelled from the college on suspicion that they had contributed articles to newspapers protesting against the policy of the State Government in appointing non-Travancoreans to the State service. They were G. Parameswaran Pillai (Barrister G.P. Pillai of later days), R. Ranga Rao (son of Diwan Peishkar R. Ranganatha Rao) and N. Raman Pillai (son of former Diwan Nanu Pillai). The order of expulsion of these students was issued by the Diwan Rama Iyengar with the special sanction of the ruler in disregard of the objection raised by the College Principal John Ross, an Englishman. Considering the role of G. Parameswaran Pillai in this episode he has come to be called 'the father of political movement' in modern Travancore.

The resentment of the people against the policy of appointing outsiders to Travancore service found concrete expression in the 'Malayali Memorial' submitted to the Maharaja on January 1, 1891. The petition which was signed by 10,028 persons belonging to all castes and creeds drew the attention of the Maharaja to the exclusion of the educated natives from the higher grades of the public service and pleaded that rules be enacted to provide them with a fair quota of Government appointments. The great patriot G.P. Pillai was the brain behind the whole move.

The 'Malayali Memorial' agitation served its purpose in rousing the political consciousness of the people and paved the way for the submission to the Maharaja on September 3, 1896, of the 'Ezhava Memorial' signed by 13,176 members of the Ezhava community under the leadership of Dr. Palpu. It may be mentioned in this connection that Ezhavas and other backward communities were then being denied the right of admission to Government schools or entry into public services. Dr. Palpu himself had to seek employment in Mysore service after being denied entry as a Doctor in the Travancore Medical Department. The Ezhava Memorial requested the Maharaja to confer on the Ezhavas the same rights and privileges which were being enjoyed by those of their caste who had become converts to Christianity. The response of the Travancore Government to the Ezhava Memorial was negative. This disappointed the memorialists.

A second 'Ezhava Memorial' was therefore presented by the leaders of the Ezhava community to Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of India, during his visit to Trivandrum in 1900. It drew the attention of the Viceroy to the manifold grievances of the Ezhava community and sought early redress. The Viceroy took the stand that the Paramount power could not interfere in such 'minor details of administration'. Thus the second Ezhava Memorial also failed, to produce any positive result. Nevertheless, the Ezhava Memorial agitation helped to rouse the social and political consciousness of the Ezhavas and prepare them for future struggles in the cause of social justice.

Swadesabhimani Ramakrishna Pillai

The reign of Sri Mulam Tirunal was a period of political unrest. The policies of the Diwan P. Rajagopalachari created resentment among certain sections of the population. K. Ramakrishna Pillai, the editor of the *Swadesabhimani*,

owned by Vakkam Abdul Khadir Maulavi, the popular Muslim leader published a series of articles criticising the Diwan. The Government took serious notice of these articles and deported Ramakrishna Pillai from the State by a Royal Proclamation issued on September 26, 1910. The publication of the periodical was banned and the press from which it was published was confiscated to the Government. The action of the Government evoked universal opposition. Ramakrishna Pillai died a political exile at Cannanore in April 1916 after a protracted illness. Incidentally, it may be mentioned that even as early as 1912 when Marx and his ideas were unknown in India, Ramakrishna Pillai published in Malayalam a biography of Karl Marx.

The Cult of Terrorism

The cult of terrorism which found expression in certain parts of India during the freedom struggle found its echoes in Travancore. The branches of a secret society formed after the model of the Anusilan Samiti, Calcutta, sprang up in such places as Shencottah, Punalur and Quilon on the initiative of an educated young man by name Nilakanta Brahmachari. Vanchi Iyer, a clerk in the Forest office at Punalur, came under the spell of this society. In June 1911 he took upon himself the successful mission of murdering Mr. Ashe, Collector of Tirunelveli, at the Maniyachi Railway Station and later committed suicide by shooting himself. Nilakantam and other accomplices of Vanchi Iyer were sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment by a Bench of the Madras High Court for their complicity in the murder of Ashe.

Chempakaraman Pillai

Among the Indian revolutionaries functioning abroad in the cause of Indian freedom in the early part of this century was one from Trivandrum, namely, Chempakaraman Pillai (1891-1934). Having gone abroad in 1908 for higher studies, he eventually settled in Berlin. He organised the Indian revolutionaries in Europe and set up the International Pro-India Committee to work for the Indian cause. During World War I, he enlisted the support of the German authorities in all his endeavours. Chempakaraman Pillai could establish a good personal rapport with Kaiser William. He visited South Africa and held talks with Gandhiji. He joined the German Navy as an officer and landed at Madras, in the German ship EMDEN which shelled the military targets in the city on September 22, 1914. Subsequently, he made his heroic escape and returned to Germany where he pursued his activities in the cause of Indian freedom with renewed vigour. When a Provisional Government of Free India was set up at Kabul in December, 1915 with the famous revolutionary Mohamed Barkatullah as Prime Minister, Chempakaraman Pillai served in it in the capacity of Foreign Minister. During the post-war period he tried his best to promote trade between India and Germany, especially in Swadeshi goods and thus promote Indian industrial development. He met Subhas Chandra Bose in 1933, and is reported to have mooted the idea of the formation of an Indian National Army under the

auspices of the Indian revolutionary organisations functioning abroad, in the event of the outbreak of another world war. In fact, the role of Champakaraman Pillai recalls that of Subhas Chandra Bose during World War II.

Agitation for Civic Rights

An important political movement of Travancore in the early part of this century was what has come to be known as *Poura Samatvavada Prakshobhanam*. Its objective was the achievement of civic rights. The agitation was carried on under the joint auspices of the three major sections of the population, viz., the *Avarnas* of the Hindu community, the Muslims and the Christians. The members of these communities had a grievance in so far as they were denied appointments to the Land Revenue department, the reason being that the Devaswams were being administered by this department. The policy of the Government in this regard was tantamount to denial of social justice. In order to put an end of this unfair discrimination the leaders of the three communities joined together and formed the Civic Rights League in 1919. The League was led by leaders like E.J. John and T.K. Madhavan. They took up the issue with the Government. In 1922 a Royal Proclamation providing for the bifurcation of Land Revenue department was issued by Sri Mulam Tirunal. Two new departments came into vogue, viz., Revenue and Devaswams. *The Avarnas* among the Hindus, the Christians and the Muslims were given appointments in the new Revenue department, though the Devaswams department continued to be the exclusive preserve of the *Savarnas*. Thus as a result of the activities of the Civic Rights League the principle of equality of opportunity, in respect of appointments to government service, to all classes of subjects, irrespective of caste or faith, was conceded to a limited extent. The *Poura Samatvavada Prakshobhanam* succeeded in realising its objective at least partially.

Early Activities of the Congress

During the reign of Sri Mulam Tirunal the Indian National Congress started its activities in Travancore. A Congress committee was formed in Trivandrum about 1919 on the initiative of young enthusiasts like A.K. Pillai, V.Achutha Menon and others and they organised the boycott of foreign goods. The year 1922 saw a serious students agitation in Travancore as a protest, against the increase in tuition fees by Diwan Raghaviah. The Government put down the agitation with an iron hand. When Sri Mulam Tirunal passed away in 1924 the Vaikam Satyagraha had already created a stir all over the State. In 1929 a State People's Conference was held at Trivandrum under the presidency of Sir M. Visweswariah and it passed resolutions demanding the introduction of responsible government in Indian States. Political activity in Travancore received a fillip with the formation of the Youth League in 1931. The new organisation played a leading role in organising the boycott of foreign goods during the Civil Disobedience movement of the early thirties.

Nivarthana Agitation

In the early thirties Travancore passed through one of the most tempestuous political agitations in its history. The agitation known as *Nivarthana* (Abstention) movement was started as a protest against the constitutional reforms of 1932. It was feared by the Ezhavas, the Muslims and a section of the Christian community that under the new scheme they would get only a lesser number of seats in the State Legislature than they were entitled to on a strict population basis while the Nairs, being the largest body of tax-payers, would get more seats than what they really deserved on the basis of their voting strength. These communities, therefore, demanded that they should be given representation in the Legislature in proportion to their numerical strength. As the demand was not immediately conceded, they formed an organisation of their own called *Samyukta Rashtriya Samiti* (Joint Political Congress) and exhorted the voters to abstain from voting in the elections held under the new scheme. The organisation was led by such leaders as N.V. Joseph, T.M. Varghese and C. Kesavan.

The *Nivarthana* (Abstention) agitation spread to all parts of the State. C. Kesavan was arrested in June 1935, following a speech he made at Kozhancheri. He was tried for sedition and sentenced to two years rigorous imprisonment. Meanwhile, the Government appointed a Public Service Commissioner to ensure fair representation for the backward communities in the public services on the basis of a scheme of communal rotation and also widened the franchise by reducing the property qualification. A specific number of seats were allotted in the Ezhava, Muslim and Christian communities. The changes in electoral law were formally announced by the Government in August 1936. In the elections held to the reformed Legislature in April-May 1937 the candidates put up by the Joint Political Congress came out successful from a large number of constituencies. T. M. Varghese who was the leader of the party in the Sri. Mulam Assembly became its elected Deputy President. However, the open welcome accorded by him to C. Kesavan on his release from prison “on behalf of the 51 lakhs of people of Travancore” cost him the Deputy Presidentship, for a vote of no confidence was passed against him in the Sri Mulam Assembly at the instance of Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Ayyar, the Diwan-President and T. M. Varghese was removed from the office of the Deputy President.

Struggle for Responsible Government

The course of events in Travancore highlighted the urgent need for the early achievement of responsible government. In February 1938 the Joint Political Congress transformed itself into a new organisation called the Travancore State Congress with Pattom A Thanu Pillai as its first President. C. Kesavan, T. M. Varghese and other prominent leaders of the Joint Political Congress emerged as leaders of the State Congress also. The aim of the new organisation was the achievement of full responsible government for the people of Travancore. The Travancore State Congress decided to launch direct action to achieve its goal. Before it took the final plunge it presented a memorial to

the Maharaja urging the need for the early grant of responsible government to the people of the State. The memorial also contained a series of charges against the Diwan Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Ayyar and demanded his dismissal from office.

The Government of Travancore decided to suppress the threatened agitation with a strong hand. The State Congress and the Youth League were declared unlawful organisations. Under these circumstances the State Congress working Committee decided to launch a Civil Disobedience movement with effect from August 26, 1938. The movement began in full swing as planned and all the top leaders of the Congress were arrested and sent to prison. There were a series of violent clashes between the people and the police in different parts of the State. In Neyyattinkara the police opened fire and one person by name Raghavan was killed. In Alleppey the workers resorted to a general strike and paralysed public life in the region. On October 24 a mammoth public meeting and demonstration took place at Alleppey and the police opened fire at the workers marching through the streets.

The Action Council of the State Congress planned a huge demonstration at Trivandrum in November during the birthday celebration of the Maharaja. Faced with a difficult situation, the Government withdrew the ban on the State Congress and the Youth League and released all the leaders from prison. The State Congress could not, however, carry on its normal political activities as the Government's attitude to the organisation continued to be hostile. The Diwan, C. P. Ramaswamy Ayyar, insisted on the withdrawal of the memorial presented to the Maharaja as a condition precedent to the conduct of any negotiations between the Government and the State Congress on the subject of constitutional reforms in Travancore. The State Congress Working Committee decided to withdraw the memorial on Gandhiji's advice and this created a split in the Congress. The radical section left the organisation and later transformed itself into the Communist Party.

Punnapra-Vayalar Upheaval

The 'Quit India' movement of 1942 did not produce any serious repercussions in Travancore as most of the top leaders of the Congress were then in jail and the Communists had decided to support the British Government in their war efforts. The end of the war, however, saw a violent political upheaval in the State under Communist auspices. In January 1946 Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Ayyar announced his proposal for constitutional reforms which provided for an irremovable executive on the 'American model'. The State Congress rejected the scheme as unacceptable. The slogan 'American Modal Arabi Kadalil' rent the air everywhere in the State. The Communists organised a violent struggle in their strongholds in Alleppey District in a bold bid to put an end to the autocratic rule of the Diwan and achieve responsible government. In October 1946 Vayalar and Pinnapra witnessed a violent mass upheaval in which the workers openly challenged the authority of the Government and came into violent clash with the police and the military.

On October 25 the Travancore Government declared Martial Law in Alleppey and Shertallai and Diwan Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Ayyar himself assumed supreme command of the police and military operations in the area. The Travancore armed forces stationed in Shertallai town moved against the Communist Camp at Vayalar (October 26 and 27) which lay surrounded by water on three sides. The workers at Vayalar put up a stiff resistance with bamboo spikes, stones and axes, but the police and the military opened fire with machine guns in a determined move to crush the insurrection. In the massacre that took place at Vayalar on October 27, 1946 more than 150 persons lost their lives on the spot and many more succumbed to injuries later. In the firings which took place in two other places on the same day 130 people were killed. It is estimated that about a thousand people lost their lives in the Punnapra-Vayalar outbreak. The tragic events of Vayalar and Punnapra came as a rude shock to public opinion all over the State and stiffened the attitude of the people against the Diwan Sir. C. P. Ramaswamy Ayyar and his continuance in office.

Responsible Government in Travancore

The achievement of responsible government in Travancore came as the dramatic climax to a series of sensational developments that took place in the year 1946-47. The Indian Independence Act (1946) provided for the lapse of Paramountcy of the British Crown over the Indian States with effect from the date of withdrawal of the British power from India. Sir. C. P. Ramaswamy Ayyar announced on June 11, 1947, that Travancore would set itself up as an independent State with effect from the date on which the British withdrew from India. The action of the Diwan aroused a bitter controversy inside and outside the State. Travancore was again in the vortex of a political struggle and the Government resorted to a series of repressive measures to meet the situation. One of the highlights of the struggle was the police firing at Pettah, Trivandrum, in which three persons including a student by name Rajendran were killed. A few days after the incident, an unsuccessful attempt was made on Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Ayyar's life when the Diwan was attending a function in the Swati Tirunal Academy of Music at Trivandrum (July 25, 1947). The Diwan escaped with minor injuries and very soon left the state for good. Immediately after this incident the Maharaja intimated to Lord Mountbatten, the Governor-General, his decision to accept the Instrument of Accession and take Travancore into the Indian Union.

Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Ayyar resigned the office of Diwan on August 19, 1947, and was succeeded in that office by P.G.N. Unnithan. On March 24, 1948, the first popular Ministry of Travancore consisting of Pattom A. Thanu Pillai, C. Kesavan and T. M. Varghese was installed in office. The Thanu Pillai Ministry had to resign office on October 22, 1948, following the split in the Congress Legislature Party and a new Ministry headed by T. K. Narayana Pillai came to power. It was while this Ministry was in office that the integration of Travancore and Cochin took place on July 1, 1949.

Early Political Agitations in Cochin

As in Travancore, in Cochin also the desire for good government asserted itself even in the early days of British rule. A notable instance of an organised political move to change the *status quo* was in 1834. The administration of Edamana Sankara Menon, the Diwan, was so corrupt and inefficient that a deputation consisting of representatives of the Brahmin, Nair and Christian communities waited on the Governor of Madras at Ooty and presented a charge-sheet against the Diwan. Menon was placed under suspension and was later sentenced to five years' rigorous imprisonment after a judicial trial. There was a similar move against Diwan Venkata Rao (1856-1860) who had also proved himself to be unpopular. Deputations of leading citizens waited on the Governor of Madras at Ooty and Madras and demanded the dismissal of the Diwan. In 1859 when the Governor of Madras visited Cochin a crowd of 10,000 people surrounded the Bolghatti Residency and demanded the dismissal of the Diwan. Venkata Rao was compulsorily retired in 1860. The abdication of Sri Rama Varma (1890-1914), the Cochin ruler, owing to differences of opinion with the paramount power, was also a notable political development in the history of modern Cochin.

Early Congress Activities

The National movement in British India under the leadership of the Indian National Congress had its echoes in Cochin. A committee of the Indian National Congress was functioning in Trichur, even as early as 1919. Several Congressmen from the State took part in the various Non-Co-operation and Civil Disobedience movements carried on under Gandhiji's leadership and courted arrest. In 1933 the peasants and workers of Cranganore agitated for relief from the burden of indebtedness and necessary reforms had to be introduced to redress their grievances.

'Electricity Agitation' (1936)

The most spectacular of the agitations in Cochin was the one organised in Trichur town in 1936 as a protest against the decision of the Cochin Government under the Diwan Sir R. K. Shanmukham Chetti to entrust the distribution of electric power in the town to a private company. The agitation, in spite of its localised character and limited objectives, helped to bring the people of all castes and communities on a common platform and as such it was a truly popular movement. Leaders like E. Ikkanda Warriar and Dr. A. R. Menon came into the limelight during this agitation. The Government of Cochin adopted repressive measures to put down the agitation and ultimately it fizzled out.

However, it served to bring the influential Christian community of Trichur into the National movement in the State.

Demand for Responsible Government

In the late thirties the Cochin District Congress Committee made itself active in the public life of Cochin. In 1937 a Political Conference was held at Trichur

under the presidency of Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramiah. The talk of an agitation for responsible government in Cochin was in the air.

The Indian National Congress had by its Haripura Resolution of 1938 decided to keep aloof from active entanglement in the affairs of the Native States and hence the idea of an agitation for responsible government under the auspices of the Congress was shelved for the time being. In the meantime, the Government of Cochin announced a scheme of constitutional reforms in a move to placate public opinion. It may be mentioned in this context that while in Travancore the Government tried to suppress the political agitations for responsible government in that State, its counterpart in Cochin adopted an enlightened policy of meeting the demand in stages.

Dyarchy in Cochin

The constitutional reforms referred to above were embodied in the Government of Cochin Act passed on June 17, 1938. A scheme of Dyarchy on the pattern of the system which prevailed in British India under the Montague-Chelmsford reforms was introduced in Cochin. 'The Constitution', said Dr. A. B. Keith, "is wisely framed as a first contribution to the achievement of responsible government in full". A popularly elected Minister chosen by majority vote from among the members of the Cochin Legislative Council was given charge of certain Departments of the State Government like Agriculture, Co-operation, Public Health, Panchayats, Industries etc. The Legislative Council was to consist of 58 members of whom 38 were elected. In the elections held under the new scheme two distinct groups emerged in the Cochin Legislature, *viz.*, the Cochin Congress (13 seats) and the Cochin State Congress (12 seats). The leader of the former group, Ambat Sivarama Menon, became the first popular Minister of Cochin and on his death Dr. A. R. Menon was sworn in as Minister on September 5, 1938. In February 1942 Dr. Menon resigned in the wake of a no-confidence motion and was succeeded by T. K. Nair.

Rise of Cochin State Praja Mandal

The experiment in Dyarchy did not satisfy the progressive sections of the population of Cochin. Hence in 1941 a new organisation called the Cochin State Praja Mandal was formed with the declared objective of starting an agitation for the achievement of responsible government. The Government of Cochin with A.F.W. Dixon as Diwan decided to put down the proposed agitation. The first annual session of the Praja Mandal scheduled to be held at Irinjalakuda in January 1942 was banned, but in spite of police vigilance the conference did take place. Some of the delegates who attended it were arrested and sent to jail. The ban on the Praja Mandal was withdrawn in due course and the arrested delegates were released, but the organisation was not in a position to carry on its activities in a normal way.

The 'Quit India' movement of 1942 led to the revival of political activity in Cochin. Several demonstrations and meetings were held in the State under the auspices of the Praja Mandal and many of its active workers were arrested.

The movement gave an opportunity to the Praja Mandal to rehabilitate itself and the effect was seen in the elections to the Cochin Legislature held in May 1945 when 12 out of the 19 candidates who contested on its ticket got elected. The Praja Mandal members functioned as an active opposition in the Legislature. In the meantime, the Maharaja of Cochin had transferred a few more departments to the control of the Legislature and one more Minister was appointed from among its members.

Praja Mandal in Office

The Cochin State Praja Mandal held its annual session at Ernakulam in July 1946 and drew up plans for a State-wide agitation for the achievement of responsible government in Cochin. The 29th of July when the State Legislature opened its session in Ernakulam was observed as 'Responsible Government Day'. The Praja Mandal members boycotted the session and later a Memorial was submitted to the Maharaja by 20 members of the Legislature urging the need for the early grant of responsible government. A no-confidence motion was passed in the then Council of Ministers consisting of Parambil Lonappan and K. Balakrishna Menon. The Ministers resigned and their departments were transferred to the control of the Diwan. On August 17, 1946, the Maharaja sent a message to the Legislature expressing his willingness to transfer all departments of the State Government except Law and Order and Finance to Ministers responsible to the State Legislature. The Praja Mandal in alliance with two other small groups decided to form a Ministry. The two groups were the Progressive Party led by T.K. Nair and the Socialist Party led by K. Ayyappan. The first popular Ministry of Cochin consisting of Panampilli Govinda Menon, C.R. Iyyunni, K. Ayyappan and T. K. Nair assumed office on September 9, 1946. This is also the first instance of a Coalition Ministry being formed in modern Kerala.

On August 14, 1947, the Maharaja of Cochin issued a Proclamation taking away even the Departments of Finance and Law and Order from the Diwan. While Finance was transferred to the control of the popular Ministry, the portfolio of Law and Order was entrusted by the Maharaja to T. K. Nair, one of the Ministers, to be administered by him under his guidance. The arrangement broke down and finally ended in the resignation of all the Ministers except T. K. Nair. The immediate cause of the resignation was the controversy over the propriety of a lathi charge which took place at Rajendra Maidan, Ernakulam, on October 18, 1947. A new Cabinet of three Ministers headed by T. K. Nair was sworn in.

In the general elections held to the Cochin Legislative Council in September 1948 the Praja Mandal was returned with a clear majority. It is worth noting in this context that this was the first ever election to be held to a Legislature anywhere in India on the basis of universal adult franchise. By this time the Praja Mandal had merged in the Indian National Congress and hence the first Congress Ministry assumed office in Cochin with E. Ikkanda Warriar as Chief Minister (September 20, 1948). During the tenure of office of this Ministry the State of Cochin was merged with Travancore (July 1, 1949) and the new State of Travancore-Cochin came into existence.

CHAPTER XXVIII

TRAVANCORE - COCHIN AND KERALA

The formation of the State of Kerala on November 1, 1956, marked the realization of a long cherished desire of the Malayalam-speaking people to have a State of their own. Public opinion had been in favour of the formation of such a State since the early decades of this century. The division of Kerala by the British into three administrative units, *viz.*, Malabar, Travancore and Cochin acted as an obstacle to the early formation of such a State. Moreover, a portion of the Malayalam-speaking area, *viz.*, the present Kasargod and Hosdurg taluks formed part of a fourth administrative unit, *viz.*, the district of South Canara. An account of the popular movement for the formation of the State of Kerala, or *Aikya Kerala* as it was popularly called, comprising all the areas referred to above and the political history of the State since its formation in 1956 are given in the following sections.

Aikya Kerala Movement

One of the earliest resolutions on the subject of united Kerala was passed at the State Peoples' Conference held at Ernakulam in April 1928. The Conference was attended by delegates from all parts of Kerala and one of the resolutions passed therein called for the early formation of *Aikya Kerala*. The Payyannur Political Conference held in May 1928 under the presidency of Jawaharlal Nehru also passed a resolution requesting the Central Congress leadership to take steps to constitute Kerala into a separate province at the time of the framing of a Constitution for Free India. The series of All-Kerala Political Conferences held under the auspices of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee since 1921 helped to bring political workers from all the three administrative units on a common platform and to make them think in terms of a united State.

The movement for the formation of a Kerala state gathered momentum in the forties when the prospects of Indian independence looked bright. In a message sent to the Cochin Legislative Council on July 29, 1946, Sri Kerala Varma, the then Maharaja of Cochin, expressed himself in favour of the early formation of a Kerala State comprised of Travancore, Cochin and British Malabar. A sub-committee of the Kerala Provincial Congress formed for the purpose met at Cheruturuthi late in 1946 under the presidentship of K. P. Kesava Menon and decided to convene an Aikya Kerala Conference at an early date. The Aikya Kerala Conference held at Trichur in April 1947 under the presidentship of K. Kelappan was an offshoot of this decision. It was attended by hundreds of delegates from all parts of Kerala and was more

representative in character than any other conference held in Kerala till then. The reigning Maharaja of Cochin, Sri Kerala Varma, attended the conference and spoke himself in favour of the establishment of a united Kerala State comprising of British Malabar, Cochin and Travancore. The conference passed a resolution moved by the Congress leader E. Moidu Maulavi, urging the early formation of Aikya Kerala and also elected a standing council of 100 members to follow it up by action. In February 1949 a similar Aikya Kerala Convention was held at Alwaye and in November 1949 another at Palghat to press for the formation of Kerala State.

Integration of Travancore and Cochin

In the meantime, the policy of merger and integration of Native States initiated by the States Ministry of the Government of India under the guidance of Sardar Vallabhai Patel had improved the prospects of the early formation of a united Kerala. On July 1, 1949, the State of Travancore-Cochin came into existence. This was the first positive step taken in the direction of the formation of the State of Kerala. The State of Travancore-Cochin started functioning under good auspices. The Maharajas of the two States willingly signed the Covenant of Integration. The Maharaja of Travancore became the Rajapramukh of the new State while the Maharaja of Cochin offered "to efface himself completely in order that his people might enjoy a larger life". The Legislatures and the Ministries of the two States were combined to form the Legislature and the Ministry of the new State of Travancore-Cochin. It was decided to locate the capital of the State at Trivandrum and the High Court at Ernakulam.

Rise and Fall of Ministries

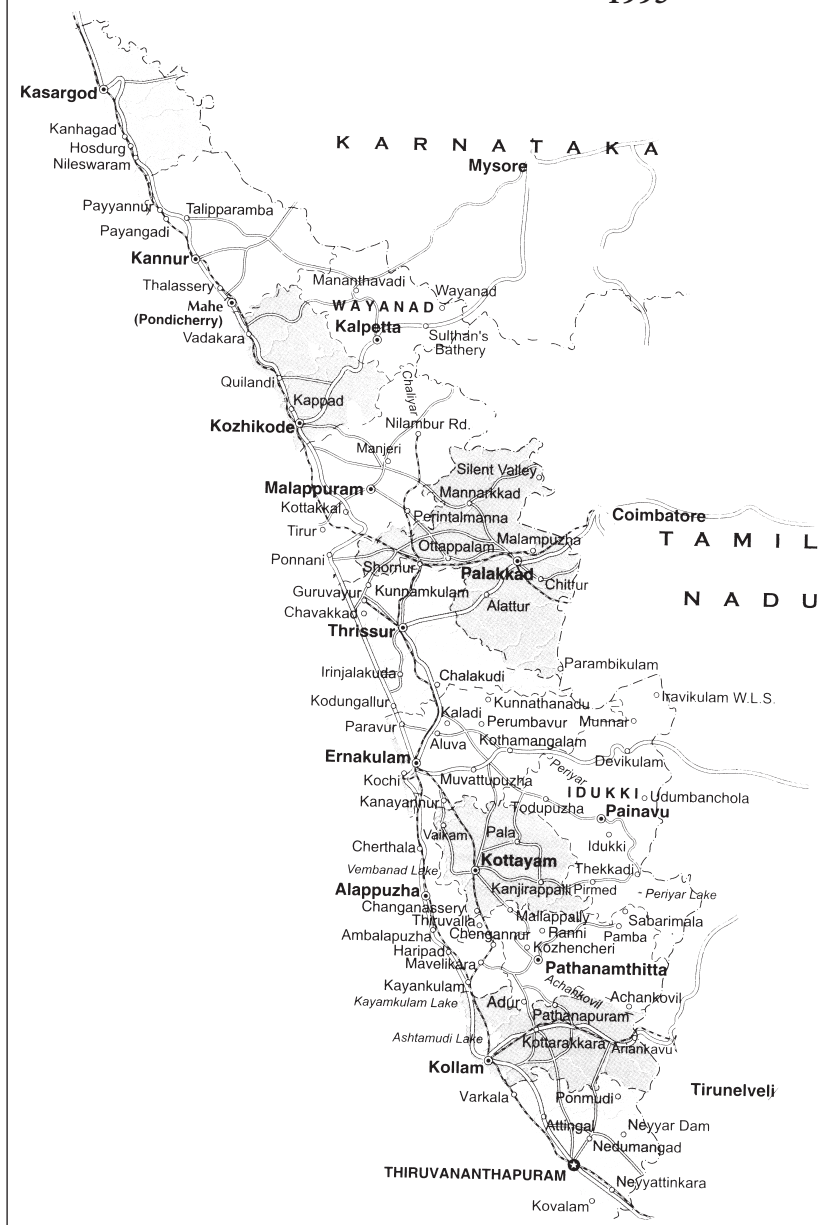
The first popular ministry in Travancore-Cochin was headed by T. K. Narayana Pillai, the Chief Minister of Travancore, at the time of the integration. It continued in office, with occasional changes in personnel, till February 1951 when it was forced to resign in the wake of internal dissensions within the Congress Party. A new ministry under the Chief Ministership of C. Kesavan was then in office for a short period.

In the general elections of 1951-52 the Congress Party secured only 44 seats out of 108 in the State Legislature, but the party still managed to form a ministry under A.J. John with the help of the Travancore Tamilnad Congress. With the withdrawal of support by the Travancore Tamilnad Congress the John Ministry fell in September 1953, but it continued in office as a caretaker government.

In the mid-term elections held in February 1954 to the Travancore-Cochin Legislative Assembly the Congress Party got only 45 out of a total of 118 seats. In a bid to avoid the formation of a coalition government by opposition parties led by the Communists, the Congress Party extended its support to a Praja Socialist Party (P. S. P.) Ministry. Though the P.S.P. had only 19 members in the Assembly, it formed a ministry on March 17, 1954, with Pattom A Thanu Pillai as Chief Minister. During the period of the P.S.P. Ministry the

KERALA

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Travancore Tamilnad Congress launched a vigorous campaign for the merger of the Tamil-speaking areas of South Travancore in the neighbouring State of Madras. The agitation in the south took a violent turn and the police opened fire near Marthandam killing seven persons. A no-confidence motion supported by the Congress party in the Legislature now brought down the minority P. S.P. Ministry.

In February 1955 a Congress Ministry headed by Panampilli Govinda Menon assumed office with the support of the Tamilnad Congress. This Cabinet fell in March 1956 owing to internal dissensions in the Congress Party. The fall of the Panampilli Ministry was followed by the first spell of President's Rule in the State.

Formation of Kerala State

It was during the period of President's Rule in Travancore-Cochin that the decision on the re-organization of the States of the Indian Union on linguistic basis was taken by the Government of India. Under the States Re-organization Act of 1956 the four Southern taluks of Tovala, Agatiswaram, Kalkulam and Vilavancode and a part of the Shencottah taluk were separated from Travancore-Cochin and included in Madras State. The district of Malabar and the Kasaragod taluk of South Canara district were added on to the remaining portions of Travancore-Cochin to constitute the new State of Kerala. The State of Kerala formally came into existence on November 1, 1956, with a Governor as the head of the State. The last vestiges of princely rule in Kerala also disappeared with the end of the institution of Rajapramukh consequent upon the formation of the new State.

Constitutional Developments in Kerala

The first general elections to the Kerala State Legislature were held in February and March 1957. The Communist Party of India and a few Independents supported by it secured 65 of the 126 seats in the Legislature. President's Rule came to an end on April 5, 1957 and a Communist Ministry under the Chief Ministership of E. M. S. Namboothiripad came to power. Some of the legislative measures and policies of the Communist Government evoked opposition in certain quarters and led to an agitation for its overthrow in 1959. The agitation known as '*Vimochana Samaram*' or 'Liberation Struggle' began on June 12 under the leadership of Mannath Padmanabhan, the N.S.S. leader and all the non-Communist political parties of Kerala including the Congress, the P.S.P., the R.S.P. and the Muslim League took part in it. The agitation took such a serious turn that the police had to open fire in four places, *viz.*, Ankamali, Pullivila, Vettukad and Cheriatura killing in all 15 persons. Towards the end of July the administration of the State had virtually broken down. The Governor of Kerala reported to the President of India that the constitutional administration of the State had collapsed and on July 31, 1959, the President issued a Proclamation taking over the administration of the State under Section 356 of the Constitution of India.

In February 1960 fresh elections were held to the Kerala State Legislature. There was now an electoral alliance between the Congress, the P.S.P. and the Muslim League against the Communist Party. The triple alliance annexed 95 seats as against 29 seats won by the Communist Party and Independents supported by it. In the wake of the victory of the alliance a Congress-P.S.P. Coalition Ministry with Pattom A. Thanu Pillai, the P.S.P. leader, as Chief Minister was sworn in on February 22, 1960, and President's Rule came to an end. The Speakership of the Assembly went to the Muslim League in this new set-up.

In September 1962 Pattom A. Thanu Pillai was appointed as the Governor of Punjab State and R. Sankar, the leader of the Congress Party, became the Chief Minister. The P.S.P. eventually left the alliance owing to differences of opinion with its partner, the Muslim League leaving even earlier. The Congress Ministry under R. Sankar resigned office on September 10, 1964, following the defection of 15 members from the Congress Legislature Party and their support to the opposition in getting a motion of no-confidence passed against the Congress Government on the floor of the Legislature. The rebel Congress M.L.A.s organised a new party called the Kerala Congress.

With the fall of the Sankar Ministry Kerala State was again placed under President's Rule. The major political development of the period was the split in the Communist Party, *viz.*, the Marxist Communist Party as distinct from the Communist Party of India. Meanwhile, the Praja Socialist Party had merged with the Socialist Party of India and a new party called the Samyukta Socialist Party had also come into existence. In the mid-term elections of 1965 all the political parties contested independently of each other without any electoral alliance. Hence none of the parties got a clear majority of seats in the new Legislature. On the report of the Governor that it would not be possible to form any stable ministry in the State the President of India issued another Proclamation on March 24, 1965, dissolving the newly elected Legislative Assembly of the State. The State of Kerala continued to be under President's Rule.

In the General Election of 1967 a united front of seven political parties led by the Communist Party (Marxist) was voted to power with a thumping majority of 117 out of the 133 seats in the Kerala Legislative Assembly, the Indian National Congress and the Kerala Congress being reduced to the position of small groups in the Legislature. A United Front Ministry headed by E. M. Sankaran Namboothiripad, the leader of the Communist Party (Marxist), assumed office in Kerala on March 6, 1967, and the long spell of President's Rule came to an end. The Namboothiripad Ministry, however, fell in October 1969 and a new Non-Marxist Coalition Ministry under the leadership of C. Achutha Menon, the leader of the C.P.I., was sworn in on November, 1, 1969.

The Communist Party (Marxist) emerged as the main opposition party in the State Legislative Assembly. On August 1, 1970, the Achutha Menon Ministry resigned following its decision to seek a fresh mandate from the

people through a new General Election. The State Assembly was dissolved and President's Rule was proclaimed. In the General Election held in September 1970 a united front under the joint leadership of the Indian National Congress and the Communist Party of India won a clear majority. A new ministry under the leadership of the C.P.I. leader C. Achutha Menon assumed office (October 4, 1970), with the support of the Congress Party. The Congress formally entered the Ministry on September 25, 1971.

In the normal course, the next General Elections should have taken place in Kerala in the latter half of 1976. However, in the wake of the declaration of Emergency by the President of India in June 1975, and the decision to postpone elections throughout the country, the General Elections due to take place in Kerala in 1976 were postponed. In these circumstances the second Achutha Menon Ministry continued in office for its full term of five years and even beyond a record as far as Kerala State was concerned. A significant development of the period was that the Kerala Congress which was till then in the opposition also joined the Ministry.

With the withdrawal of the Emergency, General Elections were held in the country in March 1977. Whereas the elections brought the newly formed Janata Party to power at the Centre and in many North Indian States, Kerala presented an entirely different picture. Here the united front consisting of the Indian National Congress, the Communist Party of India, the Indian Union Muslim League, the Kerala Congress and the Revolutionary Socialist Party annexed 111 of the total of 140 seats. A new Ministry headed by K. Karunakaran, the leader of the Congress Legislature Party, assumed office on March, 23, 1977. However, the Karunakaran Ministry was short-lived as the Chief Minister had to resign after a month on the issue of police excesses committed in what came to be known as the 'Rajan Case'.

The fall of the Karunakaran Ministry was followed by the formation of a new ministry headed by A. K. Antony, President of the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee. Though not a member of the Legislative Assembly at the time of his being sworn in as the Chief Minister, Antony soon got himself elected to the Assembly in a bye-election. The Antony Ministry was in office from April 25, 1977, to October 28, 1978. It was during this period that the Indian National Congress faced a vertical split on the issue of the continued leadership of the party by Mrs. Indira Gandhi. A. K. Antony who headed the anti-Indira section in the party resigned office in protest against the decision of his party High Command to support Mrs. Gandhi in the Chickamagalur bye-election.

The new Ministry which assumed office on October 29, 1978, was headed by P. K. Vasudevan Nair, the leader of the C.P.I. It continued to be in power till October 12, 1979, when the Chief Minister tendered his resignation following differences of opinion among the front partners on the issue of the validation of what is known as the Gift Deeds Legislation. Another Ministry headed by the Muslim League leader C. H. Muhammad Koya held office from October 12 to December 5, 1979. The major political parties kept themselves out of

this ministry which included the representatives of such small groups as the P.S.P. and the N.D.P. but it survived in office for a short period thanks to the support extended to it by the Congress (I), Congress (U) and some other groups. The Koya Ministry resigned in the wake of the withdrawal of support by the Congress (U) and the Kerala Congress (Mani group).

President's Rule was proclaimed on December 5, 1979, and elections to the Legislative Assembly were held in January 1980. The Left Democratic Front led by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) captured 93 out of 140 seats in the Legislature. The new Left Democratic Front Ministry headed by E. K. Nayanar, the Marxist leader, was sworn in on January 25, 1980.

The Nayanar Ministry fell on October 20, 1981, following the withdrawal of support by the Congress (Antony group) and Kerala Congress (Mani group) and Kerala came under President's Rule (October 21 to December 27, 1981). Meanwhile, there was a realignment of parties and the erstwhile Congress (I) led opposition emerged as the majority party in the Legislature with the formal entry of the Congress (Antony group) and Kerala Congress (Mani group) into its ranks. A new ministry under the Congress (I) leader K. Karunakaran assumed office on December 28. It sustained itself in power with the casting vote of the Speaker and subsequently resigned (March 17, 1982) following the loss of majority in the Assembly as a consequence of defection. Kerala had another spell of President's Rule from March 17 to May 23, 1982.

In the general elections to the Kerala Assembly held in May 1982 the United Democratic Front led by the Congress (I) had an edge over the rival Left United Front led by the Communist Party of India (Marxist). It won 77 out of 140 seats in the Assembly. A new coalition ministry with Karunakaran, the Congress (I) leader, as Chief Minister assumed office on May 24, 1982.

It continued in office for the full term. In the general election held to the Kerala Legislative Assembly in March 1987 the United Democratic Front suffered defeat at the hands of the opposition Left Democratic Front and a new L.D.F. Ministry with the C.P.M. leader E. K. Nayanar as Chief Minister came to power in Kerala on March 25, 1987. It had the support of 79 members in a house of 140 members. It is significant to note in this context that the Left Democratic Front had gone to the polls with the clear stand that it would have no alliance with communal or caste-based parties and that this stand was endorsed by the electorate. Thus after a long spell a Coalition Ministry without the Muslim League and the Kerala Congress as partners came to office in Kerala, thereby opening a new chapter in the history of coalition politics in the State.

The Nayanar Ministry continued till June 24, 1991 when the United Democratic Front was voted back to power and another Ministry with the Congress (I) leader K. Karunakaran as Chief Minister assumed office. This ministry had to lay down office on March 22, 1995 with the resignation of the Chief Minister K. Karunakaran following a revolt in the ranks of the coalition partners against his leadership. A new U.D.F. Ministry with A.K. Antony as Chief Minister came to power.

In May 1996 the LDF was voted to power and E.K.Nayanar again became the Chief minister.

In May 2001 general elections were held and the UDF under the leadership of the Congress came to power having won 100 seats in the Assembly. Another ministry headed by A.K.Antony came to power and it continued to be in office till his resignation following the total rout of the Congress in the Lok Sabha elections of 2004. On August 31, 2004 Oommen Chandy succeeded A.K.Antony as Chief Minister. However in the general elections held in May 2006, the LDF was voted to power with 98 seats to its credit and a new ministry with V.S.Achuthanandan as Chief minister was sworn in.

CHAPTER XXIX

TOWARDS A NEW SOCIETY

The 19th and 20th centuries witnessed the emergence of a new social order in Kerala under the impact of diverse social, economic and cultural influences. Even towards the end of the 18th century the traditional social structure had begun to show signs of tottering. The centralising policies of Marthanda Varma and Saktan Tampuran and the shock of the Mysorean invasion served to give the *coup de grace* to the old social order and to usher in before long a new era wherein the feudal mobility and the caste aristocracy lost their old position of primacy. Customs and institutions of a feudal character and several other vestiges of the old order remained to be modified or wiped out. Before we deal with the various stages by which the new social order was ushered in, we shall briefly review the state of society in Kerala in the 18th century and the first half of the 19th century.

Kerala Society in the 18th and 19th Centuries

Kerala society was not based on the principles of social freedom and equality. Its chief characteristic was the deep chasm which separated the high castes from the low castes. In spite of the centralisation of authority in the hands of the king in Travancore and Cochin and the assumption of direct administration by the English East India Company in Malabar, the upper castes like the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas and the Nairs, continued to enjoy several privileges and immunities. They constituted the land owning class and they freely oppressed the tenant class consisting mainly of such communities as the Mappilas, the Ezhavas etc. In fact, under British rule the rulers, chiefs and *Janmis* became even more powerful than before as the British wanted their active support and co-operation in sustaining their own authority.

The law that prevailed in the land was not equalitarian. The upper castes enjoyed exemption from the payment of land tax. The Brahmins even enjoyed immunity from death penalty. It was also the prerogative of Brahmin Judges to give judgements in all important cases. The penal code was extremely severe as far as the lower castes were concerned. The death penalty was imposed even for ordinary offences like theft, killing of cows, etc. Trampling to death under an elephant, blowing from the mouth of a cannon, hanging spread over three days (*Chitravadham*), mutilation, etc., were among the common forms of punishment. The members of the backward communities were treated in the most inhuman and barbarous manner by the officials of the king. In fact, they were subjected to the worst form of tyranny with the connivance of persons in authority. The letter addressed by the ruler of Cochin

to the Joint Commissioners in 1793 in reply to an enquiry made by the latter in regard to the state of judicial administration in that State is reproduced here in full as it throws light on the caste-ridden and inequitable character of the judicial system.¹

The laws of our realm are thus set forth :

“First : As to how questions regarding the adjustment of legal relations between persons, the rights and duties of vendors and purchasers, and disputes concerning lands and tracts are settled. When such disputes are brought before the Darbar a few Brahmans together with four or eight other learned men of age and experience, well versed in the laws relating to landlords and tenants, impartial in their conduct and possessing discretion and firmness, are assembled together to hear the parties and to recommend a settlement which, if approved of by the Darbar, the dispute will be adjusted accordingly. The decision will be explained to the parties, and counterparts of documents embodying the same, agreed to by both parties, and attested by witnesses will be executed and exchanged between them. If fresh disputes arise concerning the same transaction and the parties appeal to the Darbar, the terms of the document which had been exchanged will be enforced after hearing the parties and witnesses once more. When disputes concerning land arise some, 4 or 8 Brahmans of learning and a similar number of other men of intelligence, firmness and experience of the locality are assembled who, after hearing both parties, submit their decision to the Raja (*Koima*) who, if he is satisfied with the decision as just and equitable, will confirm it and enforce it”

“Secondly : As to how grave crimes such as causing death or hurt, highway robbery and theft, injuries and offences involving loss of caste are dealt with : In cases of homicide, the accused person is arrested and tried before Brahmans and 4 or other learned men and, if found guilty, he is punished with death. In cases of hurt, if, on trial of the offender, the offence is proved, and if the complainant was of caste below the Sudra, the offender is condemned to pay a sum required to get the wounds healed. He is further fined and ordered to report himself everyday before the authorities so that he may not repeat the offence. If the wounds inflicted are serious, the offender is kept in custody and if his victim dies of the wounds, the offender is punished. If the hurt was caused to a Brahman or a Nair and blood appears, the offender is punished. In the case of highway robbery and theft as also in the case of theft from the treasury of the palace or of temples, the culprit is brought before the king and, if the offence is brought home to him, the stolen property found in his possession or traced to the possession of anyone else through him, is secured and the offender punished.”

“The punishment in the case of highway robbery is that fixed by the Brahmans and other learned men called together to try the offence. The usual punishments inflicted for petty thefts and other miscellaneous offences are imprisonment for terms of six months and periods of years, whipping,

1. K.P. Padmanabha Menon, *History of Kerala* (Vol.II, pp.291-294).

finer, the loss of a limb or organ, etc., in proportion to the gravity of each particular offence.”

“In the case of caste offence, in castes below the Sudra down to Chandalas, the accused persons are tried by the 6 Vaidikas by whom those who have to be put out of caste are excommunicated according to the nature of their offence. The others are treated according to the rules of caste. In the case of those belonging to castes below the Sudra, subject to a Kshatriya king, delinquents are purified by the king giving a vessel with water and by the Vaidikas performing certain purificatory ceremonies. If a Brahman is accused of any caste offence, he is tried by the Smartta of the kingdom. And if it is Brahman woman who is accused, the Smarttan, a representative of the king and a few learned Brahmins assemble together to perform a certain ceremony, after which the woman is put out of caste and is handed over to the king. In the case of the Brahman male, a like ceremony is gone through by the Smarttan, the representative of the king and four virtuous Brahmins, and if made an outcaste, he is expelled from the country. The remaining members of the family of the guilty person are readmitted to all caste privileges on the 6 Vaidikas performing a ceremony. If the person outcasted belongs to any caste below the Sudras down to Chandalas, the remaining members of his family are purified after the person excommunicated is turned out. In the case of the Brahman outcaste, the 6 Vaidikas have to perform certain rites before the members of the family can be readmitted to caste.”

“*Thirdly* : As regards the question how the laws specified above are ascertained : In cases which are investigated by the 6 Vaidikas and the Smarttan, the rules and observances governing them are those prescribed by their law-books. In all other cases men of discretion and firmness are summoned to investigate causes and the king acts on the result of such investigation. A Chogan, Mappila, Pulayan or Parayan condemned to death for any crime is hanged. If the condemned man is a Sudra or Mappila, he is beheaded with the sword or impaled. Usages vary in different localities.”

Slavery in the most primitive form prevailed in the land even in the beginning of the 19th century. A large number of slaves were subjected to agrestic slavery in the sense that being attached to the land and its owner they could be bought and sold like chattels by the land owning class. The *Janmis* had even the power to put them to death without being called to account. In short, the slaves were not being treated as human beings entitled to any rights or privileges. None of them could enjoy social amenities like keeping milch-cows, wearing fine clothes, moving in conveyances, living in tiled houses, using metallic utensils, etc. Women of lower castes including Ezhavas were prevented from wearing the blouse. It may be mentioned that members of several Sudra castes including Nairs were also denied certain social privileges and amenities. Individuals among them who wanted to enjoy privileges like wearing gold ornaments, riding in palanquins, using certain types of cloth, head-gear or timbrella, growing moustaches, etc., had to make payments (*Atiyara*) to the king or *Naduvazhi* at prescribed rates and obtain licences. It

was also customary to make payments or presentations to the landlord or *Naduvazhi* on all ceremonial occasions and also on the death of a person. The result was that there was a series of inequitable taxes and cesses which imposed a heavy burden on the under-privileged sections of the society. Consequently, the poor became poorer still.

The levy of a tax, on some pretext or other, from a backward community was the surest way of raising revenue for the State. The members of the low castes had to pay a certain fee for the conduct of their marriages. They had also to pay a kind of house-tax for their huts. The looms, oil mills, boats, nets, palanquins, etc., were all taxed. Every occupational class had to pay some cess or other to the State or do service without being remunerated. If at all remuneration was paid, it was done in kind. "Everything at all taxable," says Rev. Mateer, "was availed of and every special occasion was made an excuse for squeezing the laborious classes of their hard earnings." He adds further, "Narrow short-sighted laws, exclusive legislation and oppressive monopolies effectually hindered the extension of trade, the growth of commerce and the spread of agriculture, while barbarous caste restrictions produced disunion and national weakness. The use of the public highways was forbidden to outcastes and anyone daring to pass on within polluting distance of a Nayar would be cut down at once. To secure immediate recognition of such classes they were required to be uncovered above the waist; shoes, umbrellas, fine clothes, and costly ornaments were interdicted to them. The holding of umbrellas was prohibited to all castes except Brahmins on public occasions, though the rains were pouring upon them. The proper salutation from a female to persons of rank was to uncover the bosom."

Apart from the above weaknesses or defects in the social structure, there were many others which called for immediate attention as society advanced. With the spread of education and liberal ideas the backward communities became restive as they were denied entry into temples, schools and public services. Untouchability and unapproachability were so perfectly worked out that each caste was completely segregated from the other. The practice of pollution was widely observed. The members of the lower castes had not the right to walk along the approach roads leading to temples — a privilege which was enjoyed even by their non-Hindu brethren.

Much more than the caste system, the institution of subcaste perpetuated social exclusiveness and effectively prevented social mobility. Neither inter-marriage nor inter-dining was permitted between members of various subcastes. This ban was strictly enforced among the Nairs and the Ezhavas. The Hindu society also suffered from economic impoverishment arising from wasteful expenditure connected with the observance of such irrational social customs as *Talikettu Kalyanam*, *Tirandukuli*, etc. The traditional *Marumakkathayam* system had also caused very serious dissatisfaction among the Nairs, Ezhavas, etc., and it generated considerable family tension in these communities. The institution of marriage was also associated with such social evils as child marriage and polygamy. Moreover, the mounting agrarian unrest

among the tenant classes arising from arbitrary evictions, rack-renting and social tyranny produced everywhere a feeling that land reforms were overdue. The demand for agrarian reform grew in momentum under such circumstances. With this picture of society in the background we may review the changes that took place in Kerala in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Early Administrative and Social Changes

The British and Indian administrators who were actuated by liberal impulses introduced even in the early decades of the 19th century a series of administrative and social reforms with a view to modernising administration and society in Kerala. The most important of the reforms so introduced have already been mentioned in the earlier chapters, but they may be recapitulated here for the sake of continuity. The abolition of slavery was one of the important steps taken in Malabar, Travancore and Cochin towards the establishment of a new society. The administration in all the three territorial units was overhauled with, a view to bringing it into conformity with the modern concept of government. Hereditary offices were abolished. Corrupt officials were dismissed from service. A judicial organization based on Western principles was introduced. Apart from a regular chain of civil and criminal courts, codes of civil and criminal laws on the Western model were introduced with view to systematising judicial procedure and establishing the Rule of Law. The innumerable feudal imposts and cesses which interfered with individual freedom and stifled free economic activity were done away with. Compulsory labour (*uzhiyam*) for the government without payment of remuneration was abolished and the system of service based on payment of wages and salaries was introduced. The restrictions in regard to the use of conveyances, ornaments and dress were gradually removed. In many cases the change was brought about only by hard struggles.

Shanar Agitation

Special mention may be made, in this connection, of the struggle of the Shanars of South Travancore to secure for their womenfolk the same rights in regard to dress as were enjoyed by the upper sections of the Hindus. The struggle, also called the 'Breast-Cloth Agitation', had the support of Christian Missionaries. The military and the police had to be rushed to that area to deal with the situation arising from serious breaches of law and order. During the Diwanship of Col. Munro an order was issued permitting the Shanar women who became converts to Christianity to cover their bodies with jackets (*Kuppayams*). Not satisfied with this order they began appearing in public wearing not only jackets, but also an additional scarf over their shoulders in the manner of the Hindu women of the upper castes (Brahmins). It was this action of the Shanar women that provoked attacks on them by Hindus and led to breaches of peace. The agitation of the Shanars eventually led to the Royal Proclamation of July 26, 1859, abolishing all restrictions in the matter of the covering of the upper parts by Shanar women, though there was still the stipulation that they should not imitate the dress of the women of upper

castes. Even this stipulation was subsequently removed at the instance of the British Government. Thus social changes of a far-reaching character were introduced partly on the initiative of the administration and partly under the pressure of circumstances.

Western Education and the Work of Christian Missionaries

The introduction of Western education acted as a catalytic agent. The British administration recognised no caste barriers in the matter of recruitment to the services, though this was not fully true of the administrations of Travancore and Cochin where the upper castes were patronised by the princely order. The different communities of the land, particularly the Nairs and the Christians, soon took to Western education in order to become eligible for recruitment to Government service. The role of the Christian missionaries in the spread of Western education and liberal ideas deserves special mention in this context.

In Travancore and Cochin several Protestant Missions started work in the early decades of the 19th century under the patronage of the local rulers. A Prussian missionary by name W. T. Ringletaube established schools in Nagercoil and some other centres in South Travancore between 1806 and 1816. The most distinguished of the Christian missionaries who worked in South Travancore was Rev. Mead of the London Mission Society.

During the period 1817-1873 he devoted his whole energy to educational work. The C.M.S. Mission was active in Kottayam since 1813 when the Syrian Christians set up a college and a seminary at the place for the training of their priests and ministers. The missionaries set up a Grammar school at Kottayam in 1821. Among the C.M.S. missionaries who did pioneering work in Kottayam, Bailey, Baker and Fenn deserve special mention. A school for girls was set up at Alleppey by the C.M.S. missionaries even prior to the year 1825. An English school was opened at Mattancherri by the British missionary, Rev. J. Dawson, in 1818 with financial aid from the Cochin Government. The credit for having laid the foundations of Western education in the Malabar area goes to the Basel German Evangelical Mission. In 1848 they started a primary school in Kallayi and in 1856 an English school in Tellicherry. The name of Dr. Gundert deserves special mention in connection with the work of the B.E. Mission in Malabar.

The work of the Christian missionaries and the spread of Western education helped to bring about a radical social change. Moreover, the special attention bestowed by the missionaries on evangelical work among the backward classes in Hindu society and the large number of conversions that took place to Christianity from among the ranks of the Hindus served to highlight the evils in Hindu social organisation and to create an atmosphere in favour of radical religious and social reform. In the meantime, the opening of factories in urban centres, the increasing migration of population from rural to urban areas and the rapid expansion of the means of communication also helped to usher in an era of social mobility and to mitigate the evils in the traditional Kerala society.

Religious and Social Reform Movements

The early decades of the 20th century witnessed the beginning of powerful social reform movements in Kerala, the impact of which was felt by the members of the upper castes too. Even the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas and other upper castes came within the fold of these movements and advocated radical social reform. The all India Hindu reform movements led by such organisations as the Ramakrishna Mission, the Theosophical Society and the Arya Samaj helped to create in the minds of the Hindus of Kerala too a keen awareness of the evils of the caste system. The services of Swami Agamananda (1896-1961) of the Ramakrishna Advaita Asramam, Kaladi, in the cause of the eradication of caste barriers and Harijan uplift deserve special mention. But the reform movements which made the greatest impact on the public life of Kerala were of local origin and were led by Chattampi Swamikal (1853-1924) and Sri Narayana Guru (1854-1928). The services of Brahmanda Sivayogi Swami Vagbhatananda and Vaikunta Swami also deserve notice in this context.

Chattampi Swamikal

Chattampi Swamikal was born in a Nair family at Kannanmula, in Trivandrum as the son of a Nambuthiri Brahmin. He revolted against the existing social order in which the Brahmins enjoyed a monopolistic position. He wanted the major Hindu communities like the Nairs and the Ezhavas to play their legitimate role in society. The work of Chattampi Swamikal was mainly confined to the ranks of the Nair community, for he believed that a social awakening among them would serve as an inspiration to the non-Brahmin castes and set the pace for the great social change. As a social and religious reformer, his main achievement was that he could rouse the social consciousness of the Nairs and make them fight against the social evils that had crept into their ranks. These evils included untouchability, sub-caste barriers and observance of irrational social practices like *Talikettukalyanam*, *Tirandukuli* etc. which impoverished many a middle class Nair family. In fact, Chattampi Swamikal worked in close co-operation with Sri Narayana Guru in the common cause of Hindu social and religious regeneration. He attained *Samadhi* at Panmana in 1924 and the temple and *Asramam* founded by his devotees are visited by large numbers of people even today.

Sri Narayana Guru

Sri Narayana Guru who was born in an Ezhava family at Chempazhanti near Trivandrum made a solid contribution to the social change in Kerala. Like Chattampi Swamikal, he too revolted against Brahmin ascendancy and campaigned for the mitigation of the rigours of caste. He consecrated shrines in several parts of Kerala primarily for the worship of the Ezhavas and permitted entry into them by the Pulayas and other low castes considered inferior to the Ezhavas in the social scale. To those who questioned his right as an Ezhava to consecrate temples Sri Narayana Guru gave the challenging reply that he was consecrating "the Ezhava Siva and not the Brahmin Siva". The Ezhavas

themselves officiated as priests in the temples founded by the Swamiji. He also campaigned against the observance of such practices as *Talikettukalyanam*, *Tirandukuli*, etc., among the Ezhavas and achieved a large measure of success in persuading them to give up these practices. Sri Narayana Guru had a highly eclectic outlook in religious matters as is evidenced by his famous saying “One Caste, one Religion, one God for man”. He has been hailed as “the father of Modern Kerala Renaissance”. The Swamiji attained *Samadhi* at Varkala in 1928 and the place has become an important centre of pilgrimage. The work of Chattampi Swamikal and Sri Narayana Guru helped to rouse the Hindus from their age-long slumber and to give the Hindu religious reform movement in Kerala a social bias and a practical turn.

Brahmananda Sivayogi

Brahmananda Sivayogi (1852-1929), the founder of the Sidhasramam at Alathur in Palghat district, was a believer in the *Yoga* system of philosophy which stands for discipline of a high order for the body and the mind. He condemned caste barriers, penance, pilgrimages, idol worship etc. practised by the Hindus as irrational. The Hindu scriptures which sanctioned these practices were also denounced as pernicious. Sivayogi championed the cause of social reform among the Hindus by advocating change in the *Marumakkathayam* system of inheritance, widow marriage, prohibition of liquor, female education etc. He laid stress on non-violence, peace, acquisition of knowledge (*Jnana*), social equality, happiness (*ananda*) etc., as being essential for the welfare of mankind. He expounded his radical views in his works like *Mokshapradipam*, *Ananda-sutram* etc. The personality and teachings of Brahmananda Sivayogi exercised a profound influence on the social life of Kerala.

Swami Vagbhatananda

Vagbhatananda Gurudeva, (1885-1939) born at Kottayam in North Malabar, played a decisive role in the social reform movement in modern Kerala. His charismatic personality and oratorical skill attracted towards him a large number of followers including those of the *Savarna* castes. Early in his career he was drawn towards the Brahma Samaj, but subsequently he founded his own *Atma Vidya Sangham* in order to propagate his teachings. He denounced caste barriers and idol worship and exhorted his followers to abjure such practices. He also campaigned vigorously against addiction to liquor and championed the cause of prohibition. The teachings of Vagbhatananda helped to strengthen the base of the nationalist movement particularly in north Kerala.

Vaikunta Swami

Vaikunta Swami (also known as Muthukutti Swami) (1809-1851) was born at Thoppil in the present Kanyakumari district. A man of progressive social outlook, he founded in 1836 an organization called ‘Samatva Samajam’ in order to fight for the redressal of the grievances of the *Avarnas* as well as against the shortcomings and lapses in the state administration. The Samatva

Samajam seems to be the earliest social organisation in Kerala and Vaikunta Swami a pioneer among social revolutionaries. He was arrested in 1837 during the reign of Swati Tirunal and lodged in the Singarathoppu jail in Trivandrum. Ayyaguru who was the Jailor at the time accepted Vaikunta Swami as his Guru. The work of Vaikunta Swami in the cause of social equality was one of the primary causes behind the 'Breast-Goth Agitation' referred to earlier. His works in Tamil entitled *Akilathiruttu* and *Arulnol* are noted for their historical, biographical and philosophical content.

Rise of Communal Organisations

The rise of communal organizations dedicated to the cause of social reform helped to supplement the activities of Chattampi Swamikal, Sri Narayana Guru and other social reformers. The most important of these organizations were the Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (S.N.D.P.) and the Nair Service Society (N.S.S.).

The S.N.D.P. Yogam came into existence on May 15, 1903, under the inspiration of Sri Narayana Guru, its first annual session having been held at Aruvipuram in 1904 under his guidance. Among its moving spirits in the early days were Dr. Palpu and Kumaran Asan. It developed before long into the representative organization of the Ezhava community and made a substantial contribution to the all-round progress of the Ezhavas. The basic aim of the Yogam has been to popularise the message of Sri Narayana Guru and bring about the social and spiritual regeneration of the Ezhavas and other backward communities.

Apart from the S.N.D.P. Yogam, newspapers like *Sujanandini* started by Kesavan Asan from Paravur in 1891 and *Kerala Kaumudi* started by C. V. Kunhiraman from Mayyanad in 1911, also helped to spread Sri Narayana Guru's message of social reform among the masses. Mention may also be made in this context of the work of the *Sahodara Sangham* founded by the noted Ezhava leader, K. Ayyappan, at Cherai in 1917 with the object of eradicating the evils of caste and popularising the idea of *misra-bhojanam* (interdining) among the Ezhavas and other castes considered inferior to them in the social scale such as the Arayas, the Pulayas, etc.

The N.S.S. was founded on October 31, 1914, by Mannath Padmanabhan and a band of zealous young men under his leadership. It was organised on the pattern of the Servants of India Society of G.K. Gokhale and its motto was service to the community in general and the Nairs in particular. In the early years it provided effective leadership to many a movement for social reform like the eradication of the barriers of subcaste, the abolition of old, decadent and wasteful practices like *Talikettukalyanam*, *Tirandukuli*, etc., and the mitigation of the evils of the joint family system among the Nairs. Elimination of the evil of untouchability and removal of disruptive social tendencies were some of the other fields in which the Society worked effectively.

The rise of communal organizations with a social purpose was not confined to the Nairs and the Ezhavas. Even among the Namboothiris the desire for social reform was strong! The *Yogakshema* movement was started

among them in 1908 in order to agitate for the marriage of all the junior Namboothiri males within the community itself, to popularise the study of English and to abolish the *purdah* system from among the Namboothiri females. Among the leading lights of the Sabha in its early days were E.M.S. Namboothiripad and V.T. Bhattatiripad. The slogan of the Yogakshema Sabha in those days was “Make Namboothiri a human being”.

Movement for Eradication of Untouchability

The most important of the social reform movements of Kerala was the agitation for removal of untouchability. The movement drew inspiration not only from the message of social reformers like Chattampi Swamikal, Sri Narayana Guru and Kumaran Asan and social organizations like the N.S.S. and S.N.D.P. Yogam but also from the Indian National Congress under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi.

One of the earliest leaders of the movement was C. Krishnan (1867-1938), the Editor of the *Mitavadi*, Calicut. He campaigned vigorously against untouchability in the columns of his paper. In November 1917 Krishnan openly defied the order of the Malabar Collector denying freedom to the Tiyyas and other backward classes to walk along the approach roads to the Tali temple, Calicut. In doing so, he had the full support of Manjeri Ramalyer (later Anagarika Raman), a political and social activist of the day. The incident served to focus public attention on the need for the early eradication of untouchability.

Another able advocate of the cause in Kerala was T.K. Madhavan (1886—1930). A dynamic leader endowed with a passion for social justice, Madhavan, was also a fearless journalist. He championed the cause of the untouchables in the columns of the *Desabhimani* which he edited. Madhavan bestowed his attention first on getting the approach roads to temples opened to the *Avarnas* or untouchables as a prelude to the bigger campaign for temple entry itself. He attended the Coconada Congress (1923) and enlisted Congress support in his fight for social justice.

Vaikam Satyagraha

The first major struggle of the movement was the famous Vaikam Satyagraha (1924-25). In addition to T. K. Madhavan several other top leaders like K. P. Kesava Menon, Mannath Pamaanabhan, Changanacherry Parameswaran Pillai, C.V. Kunhiraman and K. Kelappan were associated with the Vaikam Satyagraha. Its aim was to get the approach roads to the Vaikam temple opened for the *Avarnas* of the Hindu community. One of the highlights of the Satyagraha was the *Savarna Jatha* organised under the leadership of Mannath Padmanabhan, by the caste Hindus who supported the movement. The members of the *Jatha* came to Trivandrum and submitted their demand before the Regent Setu Lakshmi Bai. The Vaikam Satyagraha and the *Savarna Jatha* helped to influence public opinion in the State in favour of temple entry. Though the Satyagrahis at Vaikam were arrested and harassed in many ways during the 20 month old struggle, the Satyagraha finally ended in success

in 1925 thanks to the intervention of Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi paid a visit to Travancore and held discussions with the Rani and state officials and also met Sri. Narayana Guru at Varkala. The approach roads to the temple were formally opened to all Hindus, irrespective of caste. But this concession was not extended to the *Avarnas* in the case of other temples in Travancore. Hence movements for getting the approach roads opened to the *Avarnas* were organized in such centres as Ambalapuzha, Tiruvarpu, Suchindram, etc., during the period following the successful termination of the Vaikam Satyagraha. By 1928 approach roads to all temples were thrown open to all Hindus, irrespective of caste, in the whole of Travancore.

Guruvayur Satyagraha

One of the most important struggles connected with the campaign for the eradication of untouchability was the Guruvayur Satyagraha (1931-32). The Satyagraha was started on November 1, 1931 under the auspices of the Kerala Provincial Congress in order to get the Guruvayur temple opened to all Hindus. The leader of the Satyagraha was K. Kelappan and the Captain of the Volunteer Corps A.K. Gopalan. The Satyagraha attracted countrywide attention and political workers from all over India converged on Guruvayur to extend help to the Satyagrahis. The Zamorin, who was the trustee of the temple, adopted an uncompromising attitude towards the demand for temple entry. T. Subramanian Tirumumbu, the captain of the temple entry campaign, was arrested on November 7. P. Krishna Pillai was brutally assaulted by the temple officials for ringing the bell in front of the Sri Kovil, a privilege enjoyed by Brahmins only. One of the major incidents connected with the Satyagraha was the assault on A.K. Gopalan on December 26 by the opponents of the Satyagraha movement. It roused the passions of the people and they attempted to force entry into the temple by removing the barricades. The temple was closed and all *Pujas* suspended for about a month. The Satyagraha had run its course for 10 months when K. Kelappan entered on an indefinite fast before the temple on September 21, 1932, but he gave up the fast on October 2, 1932, on Gandhiji's advice. A limited referendum was held thereafter under the auspices of the Congress among the Hindus of Ponnani taluk in order to ascertain the views of the people on the issue of temple entry. About 70 % of the people signified their approval of temple entry for Harijans. The majority among them were women who were traditionally conservative. Thus, though the Guruvayur Satyagraha failed to achieve its immediate objective, it had helped to create a climate in favour of the eradication of untouchability.

Temple Entry

The movement for temple entry registered its crowning victory when Sri Chitra Tirunal Balarama Varma, the Maharaja of Travancore, issued his famous Temple Entry Proclamation on November 12, 1936. The Proclamation which is the first of its kind in India is a historic document Gandhiji hailed it as 'a miracle of modern times' and "a *smriti* which is the people's charter of spiritual emancipation". Its full text is given below :

“Profoundly convinced of the truth and validity of our religion, believing that it is based on divine guidance and on all comprehending toleration, knowing that in its practice it has, throughout the centuries, adapted itself to the needs of changing times, solicitous that none of Our Hindu subjects should by reasons of birth or caste or community be denied the consolations and solace of the Hindu faith, we have decided and hereby declare, ordain and command that, subject to such rules and conditions as may be laid down and imposed by us for preserving their proper atmosphere and maintaining their rituals and observances, there should henceforth be no restriction placed on any Hindu by birth or religion on entering and worshipping at the temples controlled by Us and Our Government”.

The Temple Entry Proclamation of the Maharaja of Travancore came as a bomb-shell in orthodox Hindu circles, but it gave a message of hope and good cheer to the down-trodden Harijans and other backward classes. It brought about a silent and bloodless revolution in Hindu society. However, it took one more decade for the reform to be introduced in Cochin and Malabar. The Temple Entry Authorisation Proclamation V of 1123 (1947-'48) issued by the Maharaja of Cochin opened the temples in that State to all Hindus, irrespective of caste. The Madras Temple Entry Act of 1947 extended this reform to the Malabar area. With the dawn of Independence, untouchability has been abolished by legislation and those who practise it have been made liable to punishment. The historic movement for the eradication of untouchability in Kerala thus achieved concrete results.

Ayyankali

A reference may also be made in this connection to the services rendered by another noted social reformer of modern times, *viz.*, Ayyankali (1866-1941), in the cause of the eradication of untouchability in Kerala. Born in the Pulaya community which had suffered from social disabilities through the ages, he gave leadership to the movement started by the Pulayas and other depressed classes for their own social advancement. The activities of organizations like the S.N.D.P. Yogam and social reformers like Sri Narayana Guru inspired Ayyankali to start organisational work among the Harijans and agitate for rights that had so far been denied to them. It was as a result of his endeavours that the Pulaya community secured the right to walk in freedom along the public roads in Travancore. In 1907 he founded the Sadhu Jana Paripalana Yogam after the model of the S.N.D.P. Yogam and before long, it came to have a wide network of branches all over the State and initiated a vigorous campaign for the uplift of the Harijans. In recognition of his outstanding services to the Harijan community Ayyankali was nominated by the Travancore Government as a member of the Sri Mulam Praja Sabha and this provided him with a respectable forum wherefrom he could carry on his fight for social equality

and justice with the goodwill and co-operation of the leaders of other communities. The Temple Entry Proclamation of 1936 thrilled the heart of this gallant fighter and at a public meeting held at Venganur, his birthplace, to welcome Mahatma Gandhi who visited Travancore in the wake of the historic event, Ayyankali's services came in for special praise. Whatever progress the Harijans have achieved in recent decades in Kerala is in no small measure due to the untiring and selfless efforts of Ayyankali.

Paliyam Satyagraha

In spite of the many gains scored by the campaign for eradication of untouchability, it continued to be observed in some form or other in the immediate post-independence period. Hence the campaign had to be renewed vigorously during this period as well. An important episode connected with this phase of the campaign is the Paliyam Satyagraha. The road in front of the main residence of the Paliat Achan, the erstwhile hereditary Chief Minister of Cochin, at Chennamangalam was not open to *Avarnas* and non-Hindus. The main political parties and social organizations of the State formed an Action Council to organize a Satyagraha to force the Paliyam family to throw open the road to all people, irrespective of caste or religion. The Satyagraha went on for hundred days during the period December-April 1948. The volunteers who took part in it were subjected to repressive measures like arrest, lathi-charge etc. The one redeeming feature of the movement was that it evoked the willing participation of even the princes of the royal families of Cochin and Kodungallur as well as of several members of Namboothiri families. On the hundredth day of the Satyagraha a freedom fighter by name A.G. Velayudhan met with tragic death in a police lathi-charge. The Satyagraha was suspended. Meanwhile, on Vishu day in 1948 all temples in Cochin were thrown open to all Hindus, irrespective of caste. As a result the *Avarnas* and non-Hindus also got the right to walk along the Paliyam road.

Vakkam Abdul Khadir Maulavi

The social reform movement in Kerala was not confined to the Hindu community alone. The Muslims who were educationally backward were also affected by the winds of change. One of the most important of the Muslim social reformers was Vakkam Abdul Khadir Maulavi (1873-1932). A scholar in Arabic, Persian, Urdu and Malayalam, he laboured hard for the social uplift and moral regeneration of his community. He exhorted the Muslims to discard all un-Islamic practices, to take to English education in increasing numbers and to play an active part in modern progressive movements. The Maulavi Sahib has an honoured place in the history of journalism in Kerala. He edited such periodicals as the *Muslim* and the *Deepika*, the latter carrying in every issue the translation of a few verses from the *Koran*. The *Swadesabhimani* edited by K. Ramakrishna Pillai was owned by him. Abdul Khadir Maulavi also popularised Arabic-Malayalam by publishing an Arabic-Malayalam monthly called *Al Islam*. On the pattern of the communal organizations started by the Ezhavas and the Nairs, the Maulavi Sahib also

founded such organizations as the Travancore Muslim Mahajana Sabha and Chirayinkil Taluk Muslim Samajam for carrying on active work for the social uplift of the Muslims and dissemination of liberal ideas among them. The progress of the Muslim community of Kerala in the educational and social fields is largely due to the pioneering work done by the Maulavi Sahib.

Reform of the Laws of Inheritance and Marriage

Another movement of socio-economic importance was the agitation for reform of the laws of inheritance and marriage. The Kerala society comprised of several castes like the Nairs, the Ezhavas, the Nanjanad Vellalas, the Mappilas of Malabar, etc., who followed the *Marumakkathayam* system of succession and inheritance. The autocratic powers exercised by the *Karanavar* in the *Marumakkathayam* family led to the revolt of the younger generation against the system. Though the wife and children of the *Karanavar* had no legal claims to his wealth and property, in actual practice they appropriated for themselves all the gains which the *Karanavar* was able to make out of the management of the *tarawad* property. In fact, the joint family system had failed, to work harmoniously.

A movement for the abolition of the system was started in Travancore under the auspices of the Nair Service Society and it won the support of all progressive sections of the community. The question of change in the law of inheritance engaged the serious attention of government. The first Nair Act passed into law in 1912 was the first important piece of legislation on the subject. It did not give complete satisfaction to the progressive sections of the community because it did not provide for individual partition of the Nair *tarawads* but only for *tavazhi* partition. Moreover, it sanctioned half the self-acquired property of a male to his children and the other half to his nephews. The second Nair Act passed in 1925 provided for individual partition and also deprived the nephews of all claims to the properties of their uncles. The Act also made polygamy illegal. The Nair Act was followed by the Ezhava Act (1925) and the Nanjanad Vellala Act (1926) providing for similar changes in the law of inheritance and imposing legal prohibition in the matter of polygamy.

The Cochin area did not lag behind Travancore in the matter of progressive legislation regarding the law of inheritance, succession, marriage, etc. The Cochin Nair Regulation of 1095 K.E. (1919-'20) imposed curbs on the *Karanavar* and facilitated the partition of joint families. It legalised customary marriage and declared the wife and children as being entitled to maintenance by the husband or father. The Regulation also prohibited polygamy. The Cochin Nair Act of 1113 (1937-'38) which superseded the Nair Regulation of 1095 brought about the complete disruption of the institution of *Marumakkathayam*. It laid down that the wife and children of a husband or father were his legal heirs and as such entitled to get his properties. The Act provided that every member of a *tarawad* could claim his share of the properties of the *tarawad* by demanding individual partition. The Act also

prohibited the marriage of a female under 16 years of age or of a male under 21 years of age in addition to repeating the prohibition imposed on the practice of polygamy by the earlier Act.

As for the Malabar area, the Madras *Marumakkathayam* Act (1933) allowed partition of *tarawad* property and legalised inheritance from father to son. The Mappila *Marumakkathayam* Act (1939) conferred on the Muslim members of the *Marumakkathayam* families the right to claim partition of their *tarawad* and the property which they thus came to acquire was thereafter to be governed by the *Shariat* law. Further, in 1949 the Madras Legislature passed an Act extending the provisions of the *Shariat* Act passed by the Central Legislature in 1937 to properties owned by Muslims in Madras State and thereafter, the Muslims of Malabar who followed *Marumakkathayam* also came to be governed by the patrilineal law of inheritance observed by Muslims everywhere.

Mention may also be made in this connection of the Madras Namboothiri Act (1933) which brought about changes in the law of inheritance governing the Namboothiris of Malabar. It provided that every member of an *illam*, whether male or female, had an equal share in the family property. The junior Namboothiris were also permitted to marry Namboothiri girls and thereby the children of all the junior members of an *illam* became the legal heirs to the property of the *illam*.

The last in the series of legislative measures intended to reform the system of inheritance is the Kerala Joint Hindu Family System (Abolition) Act, 1975 passed by the Kerala Legislative Assembly. It has ensured the disintegration of the *Marumakkathayam* system and ushered in the *Makkathayam* system which is in vogue among progressive societies all over the world.

Agrarian Reforms

The complicated relationship between the landlords and tenants in Kerala necessitated the introduction of land reforms from the 19th century onwards. One of the earliest pieces of land legislation in Travancore was the Pandara Pattam Proclamation of 1040 Kollara Era (June 1865) which was hailed as “the Magna Carta of the Travancore ryots”. It enfranchised Sirkar Pattam lands, conferred proprietary rights on the holders of *Pandaravaka* (Sirkar) lands and protected the tenants from the fear of arbitrary eviction. This was followed by the Royal Proclamation of 1042 K.E. (1867) which defined the rights and obligations of tenants and landlords. The Proclamation was codified as the Janmi-Kudiyam Regulation of 1071 K.E. (1896) and later amended by Regulation XII of 1108 K.E. (1932) which conferred full proprietary rights on the *Kudiyans* subject to the payment of *Janmikaram*.

In Cochin land reforms were introduced first to prevent evictions and grant permanent rights to the tenants. A royal writ or *Titturam* issued in 1038 K.E. (1863) prevented eviction of *Kanam* tenants before a period of 12 years. But it was only a temporary palliative and in 1915 the Tenancy Act of

1090 K.E. was enacted to grant fixity of tenure to those who took *Kanam* holdings before 1885 and to provide for payment of compensation to tenants for the improvements effected by them. The Cochin Tenancy Act of 1113 K.E. (1938) which superseded the above Act conferred security of tenure on *Kanams* created between 1885 and 1915 and imposed further restrictions on eviction of tenants. Yet another piece of land reform in Cochin was the Verumpattamdars Act (1943) which protected the interests of the tenants-at-will and granted security of tenure to lessees and sub-lessees in respect of their holdings.

In Malabar the frequent evictions and levy of excessive rents strained the relations between the landlord and tenant and led to serious disturbances which marred the peace of the district. Mr. Logan who enquired into the causes of the Mappila outbreaks recommended the grant of fixity of tenure to certain classes of tenants and on his recommendation the Malabar Compensation for Tenants Improvement Act of 1887 was passed to prevent the growing practice of eviction. It was amended in 1900 to rectify certain defects but rack-renting and eviction continued still on a large scale. The Malabar Tenancy Act of 1930 contained elaborate provisions to confer security of tenure on several categories of tenants and to enable the aggrieved party to have the fair rent fixed by civil courts. The Act was amended in 1945, 1951 and 1954 in order to prevent eviction and safeguard the interests of the tenants more effectively.

The introduction of agrarian reforms received the special attention of Government since the achievement of Independence. The Travancore-Cochin Government passed the Stay of Eviction Proceedings Act (1950) to give protection to the riots from arbitrary eviction. On the formation of Kerala State the Kerala Stay of Eviction Proceedings Act (1957) was passed to prevent eviction of tenants, *Kudikidappukar* and certain other classes of cultivating tenants. The Kerala Agriculturists Debt Relief Act (1958) and the Kerala Compensation for Tenants Improvements Act (1958) were also important enactments intended to confer benefits on the agriculturists. The Kerala Agrarian Relations Act (1960) was a revolutionary piece of land legislation which sought to fix a ceiling on the extent of land that could be owned by a family or adult married person and to distribute among the landless all the lands available in excess of the ceiling. The tenants were also given fixity of tenure, freedom from eviction and the benefit of fair rent to be fixed by Land Tribunals. As the Act was struck down by the Kerala High Court in 1962, the Kerala Land Reforms Act (1963) was enacted. This Act bans the creation of fresh tenancies, confers on the tenant the right to purchase his owner's land and prescribes a ceiling in regard to the extent of land that can be owned by a family. Amended in 1969, it abolishes the *Janmi* system in Kerala and confers full rights of ownership on the tillers of the soil. Kerala has turned out to be one of the few states in India where the slogan 'Land to the Tiller' has become a reality. Thus the series of land reforms introduced in Kerala since

the latter half of the 19th century have helped in accelerating the pace of the social and economic progress of the State.

Social Welfare Schemes

Apart from the land reforms, the Government has taken the initiative in introducing a series of measures calculated to achieve the goal of a Welfare State. Prohibition was one of the social reforms so introduced. It is interesting to note that the temperance ideal had been popular in Kerala even as early as the 18th century. It is on record that in 1787 the ruler of Travancore formally prohibited the use of *Takara* or palm brandy on pain of forfeiture of property. The ideal of prohibition was popularised by the social and political workers in the days of the National movement. With the dawn of Independence prohibition was formally introduced in certain parts of the State. The Malabar area went completely dry on October 1, 1947, when the Madras Prohibition Act (1937) came into force in the erstwhile Malabar district. In Travancore and Cochin prohibition was introduced in select taluks. It may, however, be mentioned here that prohibition was scrapped in Kerala with effect from May 1, 1967.

Kerala has also made progress in the field of labour legislation and welfare. While the Central Acts like the Industrial Disputes Act (1947), the Minimum Wages Act (1948), the Employee's State Insurance Act (1948), the Employees Provident Fund Act (1952), etc., etc., are in force in the State and they confer substantial benefits on the labour population, there are also State Acts like the Kerala Maternity Benefit Act (1957) and the Kerala Industrial Establishments Act (1957) of which the industrial labourers in Kerala are beneficiaries. In recent times such progressive measures as the Old Age Pension Scheme, pension for destitute widows and physically handicapped persons and allowance for unemployed youth have been introduced to confer benefits on the less fortunate sections of the society. The one lakh houses scheme which has helped thousands of homeless families deserves special mention. Primary education in the State has for long been completely free and this has enabled Kerala to achieve the ideal of 'total literacy' among the States of the Indian Union.

Planned Development

Kerala has had its share of development under the National Five-Year Plans inaugurated in 1951 and the benefits accruing there from have also quickened the pace of its march towards a new society. The increase in agricultural production was given top priority in the Plans and with this object in view, a large number of irrigation projects have been executed. Special mention may be made in this connection of such projects as the Malampuzha, Peechi, Mangalam, Chalakudi, Periyar Valley and Neyyar. The industrialisation of the State has also received attention. The Hindustan Machine Tools, Limited, Kalamasseri, the Cochin Oil Refinery Limited, the Cochin Ship Yard and such other industrial concerns that have sprung up in recent times have brightened the industrial prospects of the State. The Hydroelectric projects

like Poringalkuthu, Sengulam, Sabarigiri, Idukki etc., are also important milestones in the economic progress of the State. The claims of education and culture have not been neglected. The Kerala, Calicut, Mahatma Gandhi (Kottayam) and Cochin Universities as well as the Kerala Agricultural University serve the cause of higher education, in the State. The Sri Sankaracharya Sanskrit University functions with headquarters at Kaladi. The Kerala Kala Mandalam at Cheruturuthi provides instruction in the traditional art forms of Kerala like *Kathakali*, *Mohini Attam* etc. The establishment of such cultural institutions as the Kerala Sahitya Akademi, the Kerala Sangita Nataka Akademi and the Kerala Lalita Kala Akademi with headquarters at Trichur after the formation of Kerala State also deserves mention among the notable achievements in the field of culture.

Rise of the New Economic and Professional Classes

The last but not the least important factor that has contributed to the evolution of a new society in Kerala in recent decades is the emergence of the new economic and professional classes and the increasingly important part they have come to play in public life. The traditional Kerala Society in which the caste of a person and the extent of the landed property owned by him determined his standing in the social scale is now a thing of the past. the revolutionary economic and social changes that have taken place in quick succession in recent decades have brought the new economic and professional classes to the fore. The disruption of the old Joint family and *Marumakkathayam* system of inheritance, the eradication of untouchability, the spread of Western education and liberal ideas, the increasing entry of the lower classes into the public services, the introduction of adult franchise, the progress of industrialisation, the decline in the power of the land owning classes, the rise of the new peasant classes with rights in the soil and above all, the disappearance of royalty have dealt the blow to the old social order. At the same time the industrial workers, the businessmen, the Government officials, the teachers, the lawyers, the doctors, the engineers and journalists constitute the new economic and professional classes that have taken the place of the members of the old caste-ridden and landed aristocracy in Kerala. In recent decades, there has been a steady outflow of Keralites to foreign countries, particularly to the Gulf area, in search of employment. This has led to the emergence of a neo-rich class which has come to exercise a deep influence on modern Kerala society and economy. Thus a new and dynamic society is gradually taking the place of the decadent and stationary one of the 19th and early 20th century.

CHAPTER XXX

LITERATURE AND ARTS

The contribution of Kerala to the cultural heritage of India in the fields of literature and arts is substantial in every sense. In the preceding chapters some aspects of the subject have come in for casual treatment. In this Chapter we shall sketch briefly the story of the progress of literature and arts in Kerala through the ages.

Origin of Malayalam

Till about 800 A.D. Kerala was almost a part of Tamilakam and the language of the region was Tamil with its own peculiar local characteristics. Some of the leading Tamil poets like Parananar, Ilango Adikal and Kulasekhara Alvar hailed from Kerala. The origin of Malayalam as a distinct language may be traced to the 9th century AD. In fact, Malayalam was the last of the four Dravidian languages to take distinct shape, the other three being Tamil, Kannada and Telugu. It had its origin in the primitive Tamil spoken in Kerala but its gradual evolution in its present form was influenced by the circumstances that prevailed in Kerala during the various phases of its history. Having originated as an offshoot of Tamil, it came under the influence of Sanskrit and Prakrit when the Brahmins became an important element in the population of Kerala and in due course it came to have a literature of its own. It may be mentioned here that with its emergence as a distinct language Malayalam discarded the old *Vattezhuthu* script and evolved a new script based on *Grantha* used in South India for writing Sanskrit.

Manipravalam

In the course of the 9th to the 12th centuries a new literary language known as *Manipravalam* came into vogue. A curious mixture of Tamil and Sanskrit, this new language served as the vehicle of literary expression after the 11th century. Tolan, the earliest known poet in the language and the author of the *Attaprakarams* and *Kramadipika* is believed to have composed some of the verses in the *Manipravalam* style. The first full-fledged *Manipravalam* work is the *Vaisikatantram* which embodies the advice given by a mother to her daughter on the art of enticement. Some old songs like *Nalupadam* in *Yatrakali* and *Payyannur Pattola* are also regarded by scholars as of very early origin. The *Bhasha Kautiliya*, a Malayalam commentary on the *Arthashastra*, is regarded as a work of the 12th century. It is worth mentioning that even 800 years ago the Malayalam language had developed to such an extent as to produce a simple and at the same time, comprehensive commentary of great merit on such an erudite Sanskrit treatise as the *Arthashastra*. The

Ramacharitam was also perhaps composed about this time. A *Mahakavya* written with the *Yudhakanda* of the *Ramayana* as the main theme, it is noted for its artistic beauty and richness of ideas.

Champus and Sandesa Kavyas

In the 13th and 14th centuries the Malayalam language produced two distinct forms of poetic expression, viz., *Champus* and *Sandesa Kavyas*. The former comprised of narratives in verse. The *Unniachicharitam* and *Unnichirutevicharitam* are the *Champus* produced in the 13th century and *Unniaticharitam* in the 14th century. As stated elsewhere, all these works are devoted to detailed descriptions of Devadasis who had attained fame in their days. The most exquisite of the early *Kavyas* in Malayalam was the *Unnunilisesandesam* composed by an anonymous author in the latter half of the 14th century, i.e., between 1350 and 1365 A.D. Written in imitation of the *Meghaduta*, the *Unnunilisesandesam* contains a beautiful description of the route from Trivandrum to Kaduthuruthi and also furnishes some historical information. The messenger in this poem is Aditya Varma Sarvanganatha who was then the Yuvaraja of Venad. The *Kokasandesam* was another *Sandesa Kavya* composed about 1400 A.D. Perhaps, some of the verses quoted in the *Lilatilakam* might have also been taken from some of the other *Sandesa Kavyas* produced during this period.

Niranam Poets and Cherusseri

The most celebrated names in medieval Malayalam are those of the Niranam poets. They may be assigned to the 15th century. The most outstanding of the Niranam poets was Rama Panikkar, otherwise known as Kannassan. He wrote the *Ramayana*, *Bharatam*, *Bhagavatam* and *Sivaratrimahatmyam*. Though mainly translations from Sanskrit, all these works are distinguished by their originality of treatment. It is not clear whether Madhava, the author of the Malayalam translation of the *Bhagavat Gita* and Sankara, the author of the *Bharatamala*, belonged to the same family as Kannassan. It seems that the resemblances in language, style and metre have led writers on the history of Malayalam literature to include them also among the Niranam poets. These poets revived the tradition of religious poetry relegated to the background by the secular literature of the *Champus* and the *Sandesa Kavyas*.

Another notable Malayalam work produced in the 15th century was the *Krishna Gatha* of Cherusseri who enjoyed the patronage of Udaya Varman Kolathiri (1446-1475). Though it contains several verses which come under the class of erotic poetry, the *Krishna Gatha* is even now a source of delight to the reader by virtue of its simplicity and felicity of expression.

Later Champus

The 15th and 16th centuries marked a new phase in the evolution of Malayalam literature. The language had almost completely liberated itself from the influence of Tamil and at the same time assimilated in full the influence of Sanskrit. The period was also remarkable in the sense that Malayalam literature was patronised in the courts of kings and chieftains. Punam

Namboothiri, one of the 18 celebrated royal poets (*Patinettara Kavikal*) who flourished in the court of Manavikrama (1466-1471), the Zamorin of Calicut, is remembered for his *Ramayana Champu*. Narayana, the most famous of the Mazhamangalam (Mahishamangalam) poets, who wrote the *Naishadham*, *Rajaratnavaliyam* and other *Champus* enjoyed the patronage of Kesava Rama Varma (1565-1601), the ruler of Cochin.

If the theme of the early *Champus* was the description of the *Devadasis* of the day, the medieval *Champus* drew their themes from the *Puranas* and were written in imitation of the Sanskrit *Champus* in all respects. There is ample evidence to believe that they were used for the exposition of stories by Chakiars. The Malayalam metre and allusions to contemporary social life which distinguish the early and medieval *Champus* might have provided inspiration and guidance to Kunjan Nambiar in later days. The *Chandrolsavam*, a Malayalam poem of exquisite beauty composed by a Namboothiri poet, is also assigned to the early 16th century. The “Moon Festival” conducted by a Devadasi by name Medinivennilavu is the theme of this highly erotic poem.

Bhakti Poetry

The Bhakti cult found its supreme literary expression in Malayalam in the works of Tunchat Ezhuthachan and Puntanam Namboothiri. Tunchat Ramanujam Ezhuthachan flourished in the latter half of the 16th century and the beginning of the 17th. The greatest of the Malayalam poets, he has made the most significant contribution to the growth of Malayalam literature. In his hands the *Killpattu* (parrot-song) as a form of literary composition attained a high level of perfection. The *Adhyatma Ramayanam* and *Mahabharatam* of Ezhuthachan are even today the greatest classics in Malayalam and they have won for their author the epithet the “Father of Malayalam Language”. Ezhuthachan worked out a miracle in the field of cultural expansion by disseminating knowledge in quarters which had been traditionally denied all access to its storehouse.

Puntanam Namboothiri (1547-1640) was a great devotee of *Guruvayurappan* (Krishna of Guruvayur) and reference has already been made in an earlier chapter to his high standing among the poets of the *Bhakti* cult. His *Krishna Karnamritam*, *Gnanapana* and *Santanagopalam* have won for him an immortal place among the greatest of the *Bhakti* poets.

Another great literary celebrity of the 17th century was Kottayam Kerala Varma (1645-1696) who helped Umayamma Rani of Venad. He wrote such works as *Valmiki Ramayanam*, *Patala Ramayanam*, *Padmanabha Kirtanam*, etc.

Attakathas

The second half of the 17th century saw the emergence of a new branch of literature in Malayalam known as the *Attakatha*. It comprised of the verses composed to be sung by singers in the background while the actors on the *Kathakali* stage played their parts. A prince of Kottarakara who lived in the latter of the 17th and the early part of the 18th century composed regular

Attakathas in Malayalam on the story of the *Ramayana* for staging a new art form invented by him, viz., the *Ramanattam*. The *Attakathas* were written after the model of the *Krishna Giti* in Sanskrit written by Manaveda, the Zamorin of Calicut (1655-1658) for the sake of staging *Krishnanattam*.

Another celebrated name associated with *Attakatha* was Vidwan Tampuran of the Kottayam royal family. A poet of rare talents he composed four *Attakathas*, viz., *Bakavadham*, *Kalyana Saungandhikam*, *Kirmiravadham* and *Kalakeyavadham*. Known as the Kottayam plays, they occupy a high place in *Kathakali* literature. Vidwan Tampuran lived in the second half of the 17th and the first half of the 18th century.

The *Attakatha* as a distinct form of literature made continued progress in the 18th century. The most outstanding names in the field are those of Unnayi Warriar, Kartika Tirunal Rama Varma (Dharma Raja) and Aswati Tirunal. The *Nalacharitam* written by Unnayi Warriar is the greatest of the *Kathakali* works in Malayalam. In its literary excellence it equals Kalidasa's *Sakuntala*. The *Rajasuyam*, *Narakasura vadham*, *Subhadraharanam* etc., composed by Kartika Tirunal and *Ambarisha Charitam*, *Putanamoksham*, *Rukminiswaymvaram*, etc., by Aswati Tirunal have also been extremely popular with the lovers of *Kathakali*. Irayimman Tampi (1782-1856) composed three famous *Attakathas*, viz., *Kichakavadham*, *Uttaraswayamvaram* and *Dakshayagam*. The *Ravana Vijaya* written by Vidwan Koil Tampuran (1821-1845) is also popular with the *Kathakali* actors. It is worth mentioning that Ravana is the hero of this *Attakatha*.

Kunjan Nambiar and Ramapurath Warriar

In the 18th century Malayalam literature was enriched by the works of Kunjan Nambiar and Ramapurath Warriar. Both the scholars enjoyed the patronage of Marthanda Varma and the Dharma Raja of Travancore. The former was born at Killikurissimangalam in Malabar and came to Trivandrum from the Chempakasseri court when that kingdom was annexed by Marthanda Varma (1746). A people's poet *par excellence*, Kunjan Nambiar has immortalised himself by his *Tullal* songs. The great merit of these songs is that they are written in simple language which even the illiterate people can understand. Nambiar's songs are also distinguished by the social satire they contain and their fine sense of humour. His poems allude to several prevailing social customs and have thus a local colouring even in the midst of their Puranic themes. Nambiar was essentially a poet of realism and he used Malayalam poetry for the first time as an instrument of social change. There is also a view that Ramapanivadan who wrote several Sanskrit dramas and poems was none other than Kunjan Nambiar.

Ramapurath Warriar's *Kuchelavritam Vanchipattu* (Boat Song) which deals with the story of Kuchela is one of the best poems in the Malayalam language. This one devotional poem of exquisite charm has won for its author an immortal place among the greatest poets in Malayalam.

Literary Activities of Early Christian Missionaries

Before we proceed to discuss the progress of Malayalam literature in the various fields in the 19th and 20th centuries, a reference may be made to the impact of the coming of the European powers on the development of Malayalam. The introduction of printing by the Portuguese missionaries was a radical innovation. In 1577 they set up printing presses in Cochin and Vaipicotta. Such works as *Christiya Matatatwam (Doctrina Christina)* and *Christiya Vanakkam* were printed here (1579), but the types used were Tamil and not Malayalam. The printing press at Vaipicotta was shifted to Cranganore in 1603 and from there to Ambazhakatt in 1663 after the establishment of Dutch power. The *Hortus Malabaricus* written in Latin and published under Dutch auspices from Amsterdam during the period 1678 to 1703 contains the earliest passages in Malayalam types. The Catholic missionaries who worked at Ambazhakatt and Verapoly compiled grammatical works and dictionaries. Early in the 18th century Arnos Patiri (John Ernestus Hanxleden), a German Missionary who came to Kerala (1699), wrote a Grammar and a Dictionary in Malayalam. He has also a few Malayalam poems to his credit. In 1712 Anjelo Francis wrote a popular Grammar in the language.

In the latter half of the 18th century Father Cement published a Malayalam Dictionary to help foreign missionaries in the study of the language. The *Samkshepa Vedartham (Compendiosa)* compiled by the same, missionary and published from Rome in 1772 is the first full-fledged Malayalam work printed in the language using Malayalam types. The *Vedatarkam* written in 1768 at Alangad by Kariyattil Ouseph Kattanar is a notable work on Christian theology. One of the most interesting and valuable works of the period is the *Vartamana Pustakam* or *Travel to Rome* by Paremakkil Thoma Kattanar (1740-1799). It is the first travel account in Malayalam and is noted for the shrewd observations of men and affairs it contains. Fr. Paulino Bartolomeo who lived at Verapoly from 1777 to 1789 was a scholar in Malayalam. Among his works may be mentioned the poems *Tresiacharitham* and *Devashalgunam* and the prose work *Kudasa Pustakam*.

The English and Protestant missionaries who came to Kerala in large numbers towards the end of the 18th century and the early decades of the 19th century also took to the serious study of Malayalam. Robert Drummond published from Bombay in 1799 his *Grammar of the Malayalam Language*. Another work on Malayalam Grammar was compiled by F. Spring. Both the works were written primarily for the benefit of the officials of the English East India Company. The C.M.S. Press, Kottayam, was established in 1821 by Rev. Benjamin Bailey and several books in Malayalam were published from here in due course. In 1846 Rev. Bailey published a Malayalam-English Dictionary. The most celebrated of the dictionaries compiled under Christian missionary auspices was the *Malayalam-English Nighantu* (1872) by Dr. Hermann Gundert of the Basel German Evangelical Mission. Dr. Gundert has to his credit nineteen other scholarly works in Malayalam dealing with such diverse

subjects as language, grammar, history, theology, etc. The *Rajyasamacharam* (June 1847) and *Paschimodayam* (October 1847) started by him from Tellicherry are the two earliest Malayalam periodicals or newspapers. Rev. Richard Collins who was the principal of the C.M.S. College, Kottayam, published a Malayalam Dictionary of his own in 1865.

Growth of Malayalam Literature in the 19th century

The period from 1770, *i.e.*, the year of the death of Kunjan Nambiar to 1829, *i.e.*, the year of accession of Swati Tirunal to the throne of Travancore was one of stagnation in the history of Malayalam literature. The Mysore invasions and the revolts against British supremacy which took place during the period produced an atmosphere of unrest and turmoil not very congenial to the flowering of literature. The period of stagnation, however, came to an end with the reign of Swati Tirunal in Travancore. The Raja was himself a talented poet and musical composer. Irayimman Tampi who adorned his court and to whom reference has already been made as the author of three well-known *Attakathas*, composed several works of literary merit. The most popular of his literary compositions was the *tarattu* or lullaby beginning with *Omanatingal Kitavo*. Sankaranatha Joshier (1790—1858) of North Malabar, a high official under Swati Tirunal, took up the translation into Malayalam of the Sanskrit work, *Devi Bhagavatam*, which he had brought from the Punjab where he had served as a Minister in the Cabinet of Ranjit Singh. He could finish only eight cantos of this work and on his death it was completed by his son Attukal Sankara Pillai.

The immediate post-Swati Tirunal period was characterised by a large output of translations, letters written in poetry and the compositions of 'instant poets'. Then came the momentous age of modern Malayalam literature which produced the great stalwart Kerala Varma Valia Koil Tampuran (1845-1914) and his illustrious nephew A.R. Raja Raja Varma (1863-1918). The former wrote the famous translation of *Sakuntalam* which won for him the title of 'Kerala Kalidasa'. His *Mayura Sandesam* is one of the best known poems in the language. He wrote a highly ornamental style and his language contained a large admixture of Sanskrit words. Raja Raja Varma who is known to the world of letters by his title 'Kerala Panini' wrote the *Kerala Paniniyam*, *Bhashabhushanam*, *Vrithamanjari* and *Sahitya Sahyam* which have won for him lasting fame as a scholar of outstanding merit. He was also a poet of very high order and his translations of *Kumarasambhava* and such other works are very popular. His *Malayavilasam* marks the beginning of modern Malayalam poetry. A.R. Raja Raja Varma played a pioneering role in popularising the idea of a separate university for the state to promote the cause of Malayalam language and Kerala culture.

During the same period the Cranganore royal family produced some of the brightest luminaries of the Kerala literary firmament. Kunhikuttan Tampuran (1865-1913), the most gifted of the poets of this family, translated the whole of the *Mahabharata* into Malayalam in an incredibly short time and this achievement earned for him the title of 'Kerala Vyasa'. Kochunni

Tampuran of the same family wrote two *Mahakavyas*, viz., *Pandavodayam* and *Vanchisavamsam*. In the 19th century the Cranganore court was a rendezvous for scholars and literary men from all parts of Kerala. The Venmani, Sivolli, Naduvam and Oravankara Namboothiris produced their exquisite poems under the patronage of the Cranganore royal family. These poets who took to the writing of poetry almost as a pastime succeeded in making it a popular literary form.

It might be relevant in this context to refer to the *Mahakavyas* in Malayalam. Several writers composed works in the traditional *Mahakavya* style during this period. The first in the series was the *Ramachandravilasam* by Azhakath Padmanabha Kurup. Apart from Kochunni Tampuran of the Cranganore family referred to earlier, K.C. Kesava Pillai, Kattakkayathil Cherian Mappila, Pantalam Kerala Varma, Vadakkumkur Raja Raja Varma and others also attained fame as composers of *Mahakavyas*. Vallathol and Ullur who made their mark in later days as ‘Mahakavis’ in every sense of the term undertook the writing of *Mahakavyas* in the initial stages of their career as poets.

Modern Malayalam Poetry

After the time of Kunjan Nambiar Malayalam poetry came to be gradually divorced from the realities of life. It was bankrupt of ideas and lacked intrinsic worth and vitality. However, a number of poems noted for the external beauty of their diction came to be produced during this period. The leader of this group of poets was Kerala Varma Valia Koil Tampuran. As opposed to it was the progressive school led by A.R. Raja Raja Varma. A great debate took place on the fundamentals of poetry. Almost all the leading literary men of Kerala identified themselves with the one or the other of these groups. The immediate outcome of this polarisation in the literary camp was the production of two *Mahakavyas*, viz., *Umakeralam* by Ullur and *Kesaviyam* by K.C. Kesava Pillai, the former representing the traditional school and the latter the opposite one. Though neither group won a spectacular victory, this clash of ideas helped poetry to regain its lost soul. Modern Western poetry, particularly romantic poetry, provided inspiration to Malayalam poets during this period. The *Malayavilasam* of Raja Raja Varma published in 1895 contributed a new poetic form. V. C. Balakrishna Panikkar (1889—1915) who died at a very early age composed his *Vilapam* and *Viswarupam* which marked the first important stage in the evolution of modern Malayalam poetry with its emphasis on the emotional aspect.

Kumaran Asan (1873-1924), Vallathol Narayana Menon (1878-1958) and Ullur S. Parameswara Iyer (1879-1949) won dignity for Malayalam poetry by their valuable contributions. The age of these stalwarts each of whom had a distinct individuality of his own and was actuated by independent ideals marked the Golden Age of Malayalam poetry.

Of the poets mentioned above only Kumaran Asan has no *Mahakavya* to his credit. It was his small lyrical poem, the *Vina Puvu*, which won for Asan immortal fame as a great poet or *Mahakavi*. Asan presented romanticism in

Malayalam with all the richness of its beauties. The chief trait of his poetry is its emphasis on love and compassion. The most important of Asan's works are *Vina Puvu*, *Nalini*, *Lila*, *Sri Buddha Charitam*, *Prarodanam*, *Chintavishtayaya Sita*, *Duravastha*, *Chandala Bhikshuki*, *Karuna*, etc. After Ezhuthachan Malayalam poetry reaches the height of its emotional attainment in the works of Kumaran Asan. Having worked for long as the General Secretary of the S.N.D.P. Yogam, Asan had ample opportunities to get himself acquainted with the social life of Kerala at close quarters. His consciousness of the inequalities rampant in Kerala society made him raise his voice against such evils as caste barriers and campaign vigorously for social reform. His poems like *Duravastha* and *Chandala Bhikshuki* were written in this background. Asan was in every sense a revolutionary who liberated Malayalam poetry and Kerala life from the shackles of traditionalism.

Vallathol is often described as the poet of Indian nationalism and freedom. Nationalism is however, only one of the facets of his poetry. From the *Mahakavya* of *Chitrayogam* to the rich poems collected in the *Sathitya Manjari* we find the evolution of the mind of a master poet. He showed remarkable genius in the presentation of Puranic themes with dramatic liveliness and romantic charm. His outstanding works are the *Badhira Vilapam*, *Bandhanasthanaya Anirudhan*, *Oru Katha*, *Sishyanum Makanum*, *Magdalana Mariyam*, *Kochu Sita*, *Achanum Makalum*, *Sahitya Manjari* etc. Apart from his original works Vallathol has enriched Malayalam literature also by his translations of the *Valmiki Ramayana*, and the *Rig Veda*. Vallathol's nationalism which made him raise his powerful voice against social inequality and political bondage was, however, not a narrow gospel. It was, in fact, an all-embracing internationalism which endowed him with a broad perspective and a cosmopolitan outlook. He found no contradiction in saluting the socialist system in front of Lenin's Tomb and at the same time paying respectful homage to the memory of his great teacher Mahatma Gandhi. It was as a result of Vallathol's effort that the art of *Kathakali* was revived in Kerala and it came to acquire world-wide reputation in modern times.

Reference has already been made to the *Umakeralam* of Ullur. The novelty of this work is that its theme is borrowed from local history. Most of his poems have Puranic stories or historical events as their themes. Ullur's works like *Karna bhushanam*, *Pingala* etc., attract the reader more by the moral values they enshrine than by their artistic beauty. His poems written in a highly ornamental and complex style are at their best in their emphasis on ethical and moral principles. His minor poems are characterised by intense emotional fervour, some of them like the *Premasangitam* having taken their lasting place in Malayalam poetry. The services rendered by Ullur to Malayalam prose are equally invaluable. Only a prodigy of his calibre could have written a monumental work like the *Kerala Sahitya Charitram* which was published in five volumes after his death.

Poets like K. P. Karuppan, Nalappat Narayana Menon, Kuttipurath Kesavan Nair, Pallath Raman, M. R. Krishna Warriar and K. M. Panikkar who lived

and composed their works almost during the same period deserve to be remembered for some significant contribution or other. K. P. Karuppan wielded his pen effectively against social inequalities which denied to the members of the backward communities opportunities for self-realisation and self-expression in society. Nalappat Narayana Menon has immortalised himself in Malayalam poetry by his beautiful elegy, the *Kannunirtulli*. The poems of Kuttipurath Kesavan Nair contain beautiful descriptions of the rural life of Kerala. The poems of Pallath Raman are vigorous pleas for social justice. M. R. Krishna Warriar has represented some of the ordinary incidents of everyday life in his poems written in simple style. Though some of his poems like *Kurumba*, *Tevan*, *Bhargavi*, etc., which deal with “the short and simple annals” of the common people were at one time exceedingly popular, they have lost their appeal in modern times. Sardar K. M. Panikkar was a polymath who adorned everything that he touched and he enriched almost every branch of Malayalam literature by his valuable works. His works include the erotic poems *Premagiti*, *Balikamatam* and *Chaduktimuktavali*, the *Bhupasandesam*, a *Sandesa Kavya*, the *Raider Naikan*, a *Champu* and humorous skits like the *Pankiparinayam*, *Suhimara Vijayam* and *Sinimataram*.

Edappalli Raghavan Pillai (1909-1935) and Changampuzha Krishna Pillai (1903-1948) are two popular poets who created a stir in Malayalam poetry in modern times. Both these writers who met with premature death were poets of melancholy and as such were kindred spirits. They lived and worked in a feudal society with its lack of scruples and concomitant evils and vagaries. Hence there was a feeling of inferiority in their mental make-up. The effect of this may be seen in the beautiful poems they composed. The economic depression and feeling of insecurity which gripped the youth of the country in the wake of the first World War served to make their sense of disillusionment and frustration almost complete. Changampuzha also tried to enshrine in his poems the sentiments and thoughts of the community around him. Having failed to evolve a clear purpose or consciousness of life the poet drew inspiration from the fleeting moments of life and sang without any mental reservation or equipoise. The sweet melody or music of his verses and the romantic feelings they served to inspire in the minds of the youth made Changampuzha the people’s bard even when Vallathol and Ullur were alive. Though more than four decades have elapsed since his death, some of the poems of Changampuzha continue to have their popular appeal even today by virtue of their music overtones and artistic beauty.

It can be stated without being guilty of exaggeration that poetry is the most lively branch of modern Malayalam literature. It is not an accident that Mahakavi G. Sankara Kurup came to be acclaimed in recent times as the greatest poet of India. Incidentally, it may be pointed out that he is also the most criticised of the modern Malayalam poets. G’s poetry has two facets, viz., spiritualism and materialism. His mind is as much sensitive to such external events as the murder of Lumumba or the bombing of Vietnam as to

the mysteries of the Universe or the beauties of nature or the feelings of poor couples in remote villages. The significance of the first all-India award for the best literary work produced in Indian languages during the period 1920-1958 to Sankara Kurup's *Odakuzhal* by the Bharatiya Gnana Pidham (1966) lies in the fact that Malayalam poetry attained dazzling heights of glory at his hands and it came to be enthroned in its seat of honour in modern Indian literature.

Malayalam literature has produced a number of other illustrious poets, who have won general acclaim, e.g., K. K. Raja, Balamani Amma, Vennikulam Gopala Kurup, P. Kunhiraman Nair, Edasseri Govindan Nair, et al. A poet who grew under the influence of the 'Cranganore School', K. K. Raja has composed innumerable verses which embody his own mental experiences and he retained till his death his old youthful vigour. The poems of Balamani Amma show the evolution of the mind of a poetess of rare talent who blossomed through her works into the Mother of the whole world. Vennikulam presented the softer emotions of life through his poems written in simple style free from artificialities. P. Kunhiraman Nair revels in singing the beauties of Nature while Edasseri takes delight in presenting the realities of rough life in his characteristically rough way.

In addition, there are a number of poets belonging to a new generation who have their clear concept of life and have evolved their own poetic styles. One of the outstanding names in this group is that of Vailopilli Sreedhara Menon who achieved a large measure of success in harmonising in his poems the currents of national and international life with the basic emotions of humanity. The horizons of modern Malayalam poetry are undergoing steady expansion at the hands of the poets of the new generation. Among these may be mentioned M. P. Appan, K. Ayyappa Panikkar, O. N. V. Kurup, Sugatha Kumari, Chemmanam Chacko and Kadammanitta Ramakrishnan.

Novels and Short Stories

The history of the novel in Malayalam commences with the publication of the *Kundalata* (1887) by T. M. Appu Nedungadi. But the first novel *par excellence* is the *Indulekha* (1889) by O. Chandu Menon. While depicting the evils of the feudal Society of Kerala in a masterly manner, the *Indulekha* has for its main theme the salutary change that took place in Kerala life in the wake of the spread of English education. Indulekha, the heroine of the novel, is the symbol of the emancipated womanhood that emerged in modern Kerala in its march towards a new society. She shows greater courage and determination than Madhavan, the hero, in resisting meaningless conventions and superstitions. In its simplicity of style, skill in the delineation of characters and sparkling sense of humour the *Indulekha* stands out as a masterpiece of its kind in Malayalam literature. Chandu Menon's *Sarada* is also a novel which illustrates another decadent trend in the feudal society of Kerala, viz., the craze for litigation. The work which was envisaged to be completed in three parts was left unfinished, only the first part having been published.

C. V. Raman Pillai (1858-1922) was one of the pioneer architects of the novel in Malayalam. The *Marthanda Varma*, the *Rama Raja Bahadur*, the *Dharma Raja* and the *Premamrutam* are the most important of his novels. The first three are historical novels which deal with events from Travancore history. The author has succeeded admirably in bringing back to life some of the historical personages of the past and fitting them in their proper historical backgrounds. Though a modern reader is likely to feel annoyed at his flamboyant style, it is the distinct merit of C. V.'s works that he does not make any of his characters speak in that style. There are very few novelists in Malayalam who have made such effective use of the native dialect in the presentation of characters as C. V. Whatever be the reaction of the modern reader to the author's devotion to royalty, it does not in the least mar the artistic beauty of his literary compositions.

Among the other historical novels produced during the age may be mentioned the *Bhutarayar* by Appan Tampuran, the *Velluvakamaran* by Chengalathu Kunhirama Menon (M.R.K.C), the *Keralaputran* by Ambadi Narayana Poduval, the *Keralaswaran* by Raman Nambisan and the *Cheraman Perumal* by Kappana Krishna Menon. Of the above the *Velluvakamaran* deals with the story of an enterprising Nair youth of North Malabar who embraced Islam and served Haider Ali in many a high position with the name of Shaik Ayaz. The other novels have been written in the background of the ancient history of Kerala.

The most notable of the historical novels in Malayalam are those of the reputed historian Sardar K. M. Panikkar and they are distinguished by the genuineness of their historical backgrounds. These novels are the *Punarkottuswarupam*, *Parankipatayali*, *Keralasimham* and *Kalyanamal*. The *Kalyanamal* was written in the background of Indian history. The *Keralasimham* stands out for its literary excellence. Its theme is the epic struggle waged by Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja against the British.

The period immediately following Chandu Menon and C. V. Raman Pillai was, on the whole, one of stagnation in the field of Malayalam novel. The only work worth mentioning during this period is the *Aphante Makal* by Bhavatratan Nampoothiripad published in 1930. Its publication served as the harbinger of the shape of things to come in the field of the Malayalam novel in later years.

It was with the blossoming of the gifted short-story writers of the language into novelists that novel as a branch of literature acquired new life and vitality in Malayalam. The most outstanding names among modern novelists are those of Takazhi Sivasankara Pillai, P. Kesavadev, Vaikam Muhammad Bashir, S. K. Pottekkat, P. C. Kuttikrishnan et al. It was perhaps the wide chasm between the potentialities of life in the universe and the limitations inherent in the short-story as a literary form, that prompted these writers to take to the writing of novels. The progress made by Western literature through the medium of the novel might also have attracted them to the field.

All the writers mentioned above carried on an uncompromising fight against traditionalism and brought Malayalam literature into intimate contact with the life of the common people. It may be mentioned in this context that the Samasta Kerala Sahitya Parishad founded in 1927 developed gradually into an organisation in which the traditionalists or writers of the orthodox school got the upper hand. It was felt by a section of the writers that the organization refused to take note of the new and progressive trends in literature. Consequently, the new generation of writers who were in an impatient hurry to adopt themes from the life of the common man explored new avenues of their own. In the meantime, scholars like Kesari Balakrishna Pillai brought this new generation of young writers within the sphere of influence of western literature. It was also during this period that the teachings of Karl Marx and Freud held out their fascination to the new group of writers. In 1937 a new organisation called the Progressive Writers Association (*Purogamana Sahitya Samiti*) took shape in Kerala. The short-story writers of Malayalam who made their mark as novelists in later years dominated this organization. The scavenger, the rickshaw-puller, the labourer in the farm and the factory worker became the heroes of novels at the hands of these new novelists. The *Odayilninnu* by Kesavadev, the *Tottiyude Makan* by Takazhi, the *Balyakalasakhi* by Bashir, the *Vishakanyaka* by Pottekkat and *Sundarikalum Sundaranmarum* by P.C. Kuttikrishnan are among the outstanding novels which were produced during this period. All these works are the products of intimate understanding of the realities of Kerala life by their authors.

In Takazhi's novels even the earth on which his characters strut about is turned into another character of vitality. Though in his early days he was curious about the mental perversities of his characters, his imagination and idealism led him before long to identify himself with the hopes and aspirations of the scavenger of Alleppey, the peasant of Kuttanad and the fisherfolk of the sea coast of Nirkunnapuzha. It was Takazhi's *Chemmin* that helped Malayalam to force its entry into the portals of world literature.

In the novels of Kesavadev may be seen the stream of life flowing in all its vigour and explosiveness. His Pappu is the first proletarian hero in Malayalam and he is not likely to be surpassed by any other character. Kesavadev's *Odayilninnu* heralds the dawn of a new era in the history of the Malayalam novel. Though it has won for Kesavadev a unique place among the modern novelists in Malayalam, his *Bharandalayam* really represents his crowning victory as a novelist. The latter is a literary work of superb artistic beauty, an imperishable memorial to the humanism of its author.

The merit of Bashir's works is that under the garb of presenting social problems he unfolds the working of the human mind. The hopes and frustrations and the joys and sorrows of humanity are represented vividly through his characters. Even while dealing with the most serious social problems the novels of Pottekkat never fail to assume the thin garb of romanticism. Even in such novels as *Vishakanyaka*, *Oru Teruvinte Katha* etc., this trait stands out prominently.

P. C. Kuttikrishnan has tried to present life in all its vastness and variety through his novels. He allows his characters to develop themselves of their own accord and seldom tries to mould them exclusively after his own image. His novels appeal to the reader by virtue of their fine sense of humour, rustic simplicity and bluntness and poetic charm.

In recent times a new generation of promising novelists has sprung up in Kerala. Cherukad, the author of the *Manninte Maril*, *Muthassi* etc., and some others who belong to this group have already won wide acclaim. The novelists of the new generation who have made their mark in recent times include M.T. Vasudevan Nair, O.V. Vijayan, K. Surendran, C. Radhakrishnan, 'Vilasini' (M.K. Menon), M. Mukundan, G. Vivekanandan, Anand and V.K.N. Most of them have tried to analyse in their works the external and inner aspects of social life after the model of the Western novelists from whom they seek inspiration. Several translations of English, French and Russian novels have also appeared in Malayalam in recent times. The number of translations from other Indian languages is also not negligible.

The short-story, like the novel, also originated as a distinct branch of Malayalam literature as a result of the contacts with Western literature. Among the early short-story writers of repute Oduvil Kunhikrishna Menon, C. S. Gopala Panikkar, Ambadi Narayana Poduval, Chengalathu Kunhirama Menon, K. Sukumaran, E. V. Krishna Filial, et al., deserve special mention. The stories written by them helped to lend colour and variety to contemporary literature which laid its main emphasis on poetry, but they did not succeed in embodying the deeper emotions of life. In fact, they served only as substitutes for erotic poems.

In the early thirties of this century the short-story in Malayalam had already entered a new phase. It was during this period that leading Malayalam novelists of the present day started their career as short-story writers. Many of them continued to adorn this branch of literature, for years to come, e.g., Ponkunnam Varkey, Lalitambika Antaranjanam, E. M. Kovur, *et al.* The late Karur Neelakanta Pillai belonged to this school.

In the early stages of its growth the influence of Western writers like Maupassant, Anton Chekhov and Maxim Gorky is perceptible in Malayalam short story. At least a few of the short-story writers wrote their first stories in imitation of these Western writers. The distinctive traits of the short-story of this period are a tendency to analyse the workings of the human mind in a peculiar way, an eagerness to expose the decadent trends in society and a spirit of righteous indignation or protest against the prevailing social inequalities.

In his early days Takazhi attempted to analyse the basic emotions underlying the relationship between man and woman, but in course of time he felt himself attracted towards the larger life of the middle class and the proletariat. The distinguishing traits of his stories are the simplicity and elegance of their style and the unique capacity of the author to penetrate into

the hearts of his characters with a view to analysing the deepest of human emotions.

The themes of Kesavadev's short-stories are the grim realities of social life, particularly the inequalities arising from the economic division of society into 'haves' and 'have-nots'. In his works he creates many a clash of ideas, reinforcing those human values which deserve to be cherished and shattering those which deserve to be shattered. In this process Dev creates characters according to his fancy, taking pride in lionising those whom he likes and opposing ruthlessly such of those whom he dislikes. It was Kesavadev who showed the way to other writers by depicting the life of the down-trodden in Malayalam literature and enshrining new and eternal values in Kerala life. The vigour of his style has its roots in his deep sincerity.

Bashir represents a class by himself among Malayalam writers. Though his stories have a strong political and social basis, the theme of love in all its aspects is predominant in them. Each of his stories embodies his intimate personal experience. This is particularly true of his early works. But, as years passed, Bashir's works assumed the form of biting satire on the perversities and shortcomings of social life. His sense of humour is inimitable. Each of his stories is an eloquent commentary on the inherent strength and beauty of the conversational language in Malayalam.

Ponkunnam Varkey is a short-story writer with a clear purpose and consciousness of life. In his works he wages a kind of crusade against some of the alleged lapses of Christian priesthood. In this respect he has practically no equal among the short-story writers of the day. Perhaps, some would consider it a defect with him that in certain dramatic situations in his stories he forgets himself after being overwhelmed by a sense of humanism and justice and indulges in loud thinking. But as one who firmly believes that literature is the expression of life in all its aspects, Varkey himself does not seem to consider this a defect at all.

In the choice of his themes S. K. Pottekkat has followed the path of realism and in their treatment that of romanticism. The dreams and aspirations of the author lay enshrined in his characters who are noted for their natural charm. The style of Pottekkat has a poetic beauty of its own. P. C. Kuttikrishnan opens out to his readers the mysteries of the human heart susceptible to diverse emotions. It is a pleasing spectacle to see the common people and their ordinary lives presented through his stories which are perfect works of art. Extremely sparing in the use of words P. C. Kuttikrishnan is no rigid dogmatist to propagate any particular idea with undue fervour. On the other hand, his ideas lay hidden in the inner core of the story. Karur Nilakanta Pillai tells his stories like an old uncle gifted with a sense of humour. Even when he narrates an insignificant incident in his story the theme comes to acquire a meaningful purpose and seriousness of its own. His stories are extremely thought-provoking. E. M. Kovur tried in his early days to portray the humorous and lighter side of life with a touch of romanticism. The satirist in him derived satisfaction by parodying in his works some of the shortcomings

of modern society. There is no other short-story writer in Malayalam who satirises so effectively the tendency among the modern youth to look fashionable or civilized in the eyes of others by shining in borrowed feathers. E. M. Kovur also won fame as a talented novelist through his *Kadu*.

Lalitambika Antarjananam made her debut into Malayalam literature as a poetess. But eventually she embraced the short-story as the most appropriate literary form for the effective presentation of the experiences of her community as well as of her own. A representative of the Namboothiri women who have led a cloistered life through the centuries, it is a tribute to her powers of observation and narration that she has composed a large number of stories of great literary excellence. These stories which have for their theme the servitude and agonies of the Namboothiri women confined to their *illams* also mirror the basic human emotions and the endearing thoughts and anxieties of motherhood.

The progress of the short-story in modern Malayalam is indeed many-sided. Many young writers are of late coming to the fore relegating the stalwarts of the older generations to the background. These include M.T. Vasudevan Nair, T. Padmanabhan, Kaakkanadan, M. Mukundan, Zakkariah, V.K.N. and Madhavikutty. The difference between the short story and the lyric poem has also narrowed down considerably in recent years.

Drama

The *Kudiyattam* of old represented the elaborate acting of Sanskrit dramas. Reference has already been made to the ancient Kerala dramatists like Kulasekhara and Saktibhadra. The popularity of the traditional Sanskrit drama as a form of entertainment waned considerably with the appearance of *Kathakali* Kerala which patronised all the literary movements in Sanskrit gave up the drama most probably because it was felt that *Kathakali* served the purpose of a visual art *par excellence* and satisfied the artistic carvings of the people. Be that as it may, the Malayalam drama as a distinct branch of literature and form of art originated only very late.

In 1880 Kerala Varma translated the *Abhijnana Sakuntalam* and it came to be acted in a masterly manner. The history of the Malayalam drama actually commences with this event With the translation of the *Uttararamacharitam* and *Janakiparinayam* by Chathukutty Mannadiar the scope of the Malayalam drama expanded considerably.

As the general public began to evince unusual interest in the drama as a form of art, several independent dramatic compositions made their appearance in Malayalam. The *Kalyaninatakam* of Kochunni Tampuran, the *Chandrika* of Kunhikuttan Tampuran, the *Lakshmi kalyanam* of K.C. Kesava pillai and *Ebraikutty* of Kandathil Varghese Mappila deserve special notice among these works. The last mentioned of the above works incorporated within itself some of the features of the English drama. Varghese Mappila himself translated Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew* into Malayalam with the title *Kalahinidamanakam*. Subsequent to this appeared such dramas as *Subhadrarjunam* by Tottakat Ikkavu Amma, *Lakshana sangam* by

Kunhikuttan Tampuran, *Umayavaham* by Kochunni Tampuran and *Bhagavat Dutu* by Naduvath Achchan Namboothiri. This was followed by a large output of translations as well as original works of doubtful literary merit. It was the *Chakki Chankaram* of Munshi Rama Kurup that put an end to this spate of cheap productions.

The period that followed saw the output of dramas written in imitation of similar works in Tamil. The *Harischandra Charitam* of Chakrapani Warriar, the *Naishadham* of T.C. Achutha Menon, the *Sadarama* of K.C. Kesava Pillai, etc., are among the most important productions in this group. Though these dramas may appear rather comic to the people of the present generation, they succeeded in satisfying the aesthetic tastes of the people of those days and thus played a decisive role in the development of the modern Malayalam theatre.

With the educated classes taking increasing interest in Western drama C.V. Raman Pillai produced a series of short plays based on life in Trivandrum city and the new craze for fashion among the educated youth and these were staged by amateur dramatic clubs with a large measure of success. Having found that these plays provided only entertainment C.V. himself soon presented his historical novels in the form of dramas. The welcome accorded to these historical dramas prompted E.V. Krishna Pillai to write dramas in prose after their model. Dramatists like N.P. Chellappan Nair followed in the footsteps of E.V. in later years.

As the drama began to portray consciously the social life of the people, it developed before long into a serious branch of Malayalam literature. Such dramas as V.T. Bhattatiripad's *Adukkalayilninnu Arangathekku*, M.P. Bhattatiripad's *Ritumati* and K. Damodaran's *Pattabaki* heralded the beginning of this new era in Malayalam drama. The first two dramas mentioned above brought to the stage the woes of the cloistered life led by Namboothiri women. The *Pattabaki* presents the woes of the peasantry in the background of the philosophy of class conflict and exhorts them to follow the path of revolution to achieve their ends.

Subsequently, hundreds of dramas dealing with diverse themes came to be published. None of them had, however, enough literary merit to attain abiding fame. It was at this juncture that the dramas of N. Krishna Pillai, refreshingly original in their contents and treatment of the subject matter, made their appearance. They opened a new chapter in the history of Malayalam literature. A live social problem, characters which are tossed about under its stress and strain, conversation which reveals the innermost recesses of the human heart, the firmness of human relationships — these are some of the qualities which distinguish Krishna Pillai's dramas. He accepts Ibsen as his ideal and patterned his dramas after him. His *Bhagnabhavanam*, *Kanyaka*, *Balabalam*, *Anuranjanam*, etc., have drawn their themes mainly from the life of the upper middle class. Though he gives primary importance in his works to the inner conflicts of his characters, he is generally unconcerned with the economic foundations of the society in which they live. On the whole the

professional theatre in Malayalam developed by stages. It took shape with the staging of the *Manipravala Sakuntalam* and *Uttararamacharitam*. Musical dramas like *Sadarama* marked the next stage in its evolution. The dramatic representation of Kumaran Asan's *Karuna* marked another decisive phase. The theatre suffered a decline when social dramas began to be staged in the form of musical plays. Under these circumstances dramas like *Anarkali* written in prose came to be successfully staged for a time. This was followed by the period of political dramas. These dramas have succeeded to a large extent in influencing the cultural life of Kerala. They have accepted the medium of the music and the song in giving effective expression to the human emotions and are not free from shortcomings. Nevertheless, they have won popular appreciation and have gifted to Malayalam many a dramatist of distinction.

Literary Criticism

Literary criticism on modern lines had its origin in Malayalam since the days of A. R. Raja Raja Varma. The long preface he wrote on his commentary on the *Nalacharitam* and the brief forward he contributed to Asan's *Nalini* set the pace as model of literary criticism in modern Malayalam. The former shows an attempt to evaluate a work which had already won an abiding place in Malayalam literature while the latter contains a penetrating criticism of contemporary Malayalam poetry.

Sahitya Panchananan P. K. Narayana Pillai was another literary critic of great renown. The criticisms he wrote in Western style on the works of such literary giants as Ezhuthachan, Cherusseri, Unnayi Warriar and Kunjan Nambiar have elicited general appreciation. K. Ramakrishna Pillai, D. Padmanabhan Unni and C S. Nair also deserve to be mentioned in this context.

When Malayalam literature came into increasing contact with the realities of life and new movements originated in the field it was Kesari A. Balakrishna Pillai who supplied leadership to the writers of the day. Reference has already been made to his role in enlivening the literary field in Malayalam by initiating the young minds into, the new trends in Western literature. His work in this regard did not, however, turn out to be an unmixed blessing. While it encouraged some writers to take to new forms of literary criticism, it also led to others adopting the Western technique without any genuine appreciation of its content and spirit. It is worth mentioning here that the attempts of A. Balakrishna Pillai himself to evaluate contemporary literary works by applying Western standards under diverse names baffled the ordinary reader, making it difficult for him to distinguish between the merits and demerits of such works.

M. P. Paul's is an unforgettable name in Malayalam literature. As one who mastered Western literary technique, he provided leadership to the progressive trends in modern Malayalam. His *Cherukathaprasthanam* and *Noval Sahityam* written after a comprehensive study of the short-stories and novels in the language have acquired the dignity of authoritative works.

The most outstanding of the later celebrities in the field of literary criticism in Malayalam are Joseph Mundasseri and Kuttikrishna Marar. Mundasseri's chief contribution lies in the fact that he inaugurated a new technique of literary criticism by advocating a progressive outlook and evolving a synthesis of Eastern and Western literary tenets. His success in holding aloft the banner of 'Progressive Literature' in the face of stiff opposition from orthodox scholars has won for him a place among leading Malayalam writers. His studies of the great poets or 'Mahakavis' of modern Malayalam hold the field even today as learned treatises on the subject. The decidedly partisan attitude which he adopts often lends colour to his writings.

Kuttikrishna Marar is a distinguished representative of the literary heritage of India. Nevertheless, he does not belong to the orthodox school. It is his distinction that he has maintained an individuality of his own all through his works. Marar's style has also a sharpness and elegance peculiar to him. Among the other notable literary critics in modern Malayalam Kuttupuzha Krishna Pillai, S. Guptan Nair, Sukumar Azhikode, M. Krishnan Nair and M. Leelavati deserve notice.

It may also be mentioned in this context that Marxism has exercised considerable influence on current Malayalam literature. Consequently, a new system of literary criticism based on the fundamental principles of Marxism has also come into vogue in Malayalam in recent times. Writers like M. S. Devadas belong to this school.

Essay and Scientific Literature

The essay and scientific literature cannot be said to have made appreciable progress in Malayalam when compared to the progress achieved by other branches. Vengayil Kunhirama Nayanar who was known to the world of letters by his pen name 'Kesari' was one of the pioneer essayists in the language. Kandathil Varghese Mappila, the founder of the *Malayala Manorama* (1890), C. Achutha Menon, the Editor of *Vidyavinodini*, R. Eswara Pillai, Murkoth Kumaran, C. V. Kunhiraman who edited both the *Malayala Rajyam* and the *Kerala Kaumudi*, M. Raja Raja Varma, K. R. Krishna Pillai, E. V. Krishna Pillai and M. R. Nair (*Sanjayan*) were also outstanding names in the field. Kesari, E. V. and Sanjayan distinguished themselves in the field of humour and satire. Kesari never missed an opportunity to caricature situations in life which provided innocent fun. E. V. who made his own life a huge satire took delight in exposing the follies and idiosyncrasies of the so-called respectable men in high society. He drew humorous sketches of the incompatibilities of life and the comic situations of misfortune created by man by his own follies. The works of Sanjayan are masterpieces of humour and satire but they have a touch of pathos about them. E. M. Kovur and N. P. Chellappan Nair are two writers who followed in the footsteps of E. V. in this branch of literature.

Malayalam has yet to make its innings in the field of technical and scientific literature. Among the earliest works in the field may be mentioned the *Navina Sastra Pidhika* by M. Raja Raja Varma and *Paschatya Sastra Sidhantam* by K. R. Krishna Pillai. Among those who have rendered signal service to this branch

of Malayalam literature in recent times may be mentioned Dr. K. Bhaskaran Nair, the author of *Sastrathinte Gati Adunika Sastram*, *Parinamam*, *Pranilokam*, etc., M. Balarama Menon the author of the *Paramanu*. and *Sastradipti*, and P. K. Koru, the author of the *Karanapadhati*, *Varaganitha Pravesika* etc. P.T. Bhaskara Panikkar who excels in expounding scientific subjects to beginners in simple language is another outstanding name in this field.

The first treatise on Economics in the Malayalam language seems to have been written by C. Achutha Menon, the Editor of the *Vidyavinodini* The *Arthanirupanam* by M. Raja Raja Varma is also another work in this branch. K. S. Lakshmana Panikkar, the author of the *Panathinte Katha* and *Sampathika Vikasam*, was a noted writer in the field. The *Nanaya Prasnam*, *Uruppika*, *Dhanasastra Tatwanganal*, *Dhanasastra Pravesika*, etc. by K. Damodaran are works on Economics written in the background of Marxist theory.

Biography and Travelogue

Murkoth Kumaran and Kunnath Janardhana Menon were the first to write biographies of literary merit in Malayalam. The former wrote the biographies of O. Chandu Menon, Vengayil Kunhirama Nayanar and Sri Narayana Guru while the latter wrote the biographical sketches of V. C. Balakrishna Panikkar and Kumaran Asan. Among the biographies which appeared later the *Sahitya Panchananan* and *C. V. Roman Pillai* by P. K. Parameswaran Nair, the *Swadesabhimani* by K. Bhaskara Pillai and *Raja Ravi Varma* and *Swarajyabhimani* by N. Balakrishnan Nair stand out as the most prominent. The *Narayanaguruswami* by M.K. Sanu also deserves notice.

The *Ente Nadukadathal* written by Swadesabhimani Ramakrishna Pillai about his exile from Travancore and the *Vyazhavattasmaranakal* written by his wife B. Kalyani Amma are the earliest autobiographies of merit in Malayalam. The *S marana Mandalam* by P.K. Narayana Pillai, the *Jivita Samranakal* by E.V. Krishna Pillai, the *Atma Katha* by K. M. Pannikar, the *Ente Purvakala Smaranakal* by A. K. Gopalan, the *Kazhinja Kalam* by K. P. Kesava Menon, the *Jivita Samaram* by C. Kesavan, the *Jivitha Smaranakal* by Mannath Padmanabhan, the *Kozhinja Ilakal* by Joseph Mundasseri and the *Smaranakal* by Mrs. M.P. Paul are notable autobiographies of merit.

Reference has already been made to the *Varthamana Pushtakam* of Thomas Kattinar as the first travelogue in Malayalam. After a long time was published the *BilathiVisesham* of K. P. Kesava Menon. S.K. Pottekkat has written the maximum number of travel accounts in Malayalam. K.M. Panikkar's *Randu Chainayil*, A.K Gopalan's *Njan Oru Putiya Lokam Kandu*, Dr. K. Bhaskaran Nair's *Putumayute Lokam*, N.V. Krishna Warrior's *Amerikkayilude* and K. M. George's *Amerikkayil Poya Katha* are only a few of the many travel accounts that have appeared in Malayalam.

Grammar, Dictionary, History of Language etc.

Dr. Gundert's *Malayala Bhasha Vyakaranam* is the first comprehensive grammatical work in Malayalam. Rev. George Mathen, Kovunni Nedungadi

and Seshagiri Prabhu have also compiled works on grammar. A. R. Raja Raja Varma's *Kerala Paniniyam* is still the basic work in the field.

The first important dictionary is that of Dr. Gundert and it stands out even today as a model of its kind by virtue of its scientific worth. The *Sabdataravali* of Srikantheswaram Padmanabha Pillai and the *Navayugabhasha Nighantu* of R. Narayana Panikkar are also notable works in the field. In addition to T. Ramalingam Pillai's *English-Malayalam Dictionary*, a similar work by C. Madhavan Pillai has also been published. Suranad P.M. Kunjan Pillai who was engaged in the compilation of a comprehensive Malayalam Lexicon under the auspices of the University of Kerala published two volumes in the series. This has been followed by those of Dr. K. V. Namboothiripad and Dr. B. C. Balakrishnan.

The first work on the history of Malayalam literature is the *Malayala Bhasha Charitram* of P. Govinda Pillai. Following him P. Sankaran Nambiar and R. Narayana Panikkar brought out their works. The most monumental work on the subject is, however, the *Kerala Sahitya Charitram* of Ullur published in five volumes. The *Malayala Sahityavum Christianikalum* by Dr. P. J. Thomas is also a highly informative work. The *Sahitya Charitram Prasthanangalilude* edited by Dr. K.M. George and published by the Sahitya Pravarthaka Sahakaran Sangham, Kottayam, is another notable publication in the field. Among the outstanding scholars who have written on the origin and evolution of the Malayalam language the names of A. R. Raja Raja Varma, Dr. Goda Varma and Prof. Elamkulam P. N. Kunjan Pillai deserve mention.

Historical Works

It would be relevant to the scope of this chapter to refer to some of the outstanding scholars who have enriched historical studies and research in Kerala by their works in Malayalam as well as English. The pioneer in this field also is Dr. Gundert. His *Kerala Pazhama* deals with the history of the Portuguese power in Kerala from 1498 to 1531. Pachu Muthatu wrote in 1868 a short history of Travancore. The *Kochi Rajya Charitram* by K. P. Padmanabha Menon has for long been the only historical work in Malayalam giving a continuous narrative of Kerala history. Scholars like Chattampi Swamikal, Attur Krishna Pisharoti, R. Narayana Panikkar, K. Damodaran, P. C. Manavikraman Raja, E. M. S. Namboothiripad, Suranad P. N. Kunjan Pillai, M. R. Balakrishna Warriar and V.R. Parameswaran Pillai have published works to their credit in this field. Puthiezhat Raman Menon's *Saktan Tampuran*, S. Sanku Ayyar's *Kerala Charitrathile Chila Ajnata Bhagangal* and *Keralavum Buddhamatavum*, Dr. T. I. Poonen's *Lantakkar Keralathil*, the *Keralathinte Samskarika Charitram* by P. K. Gopalakrishnan and P.A. Syed Muhammad's *Kerala Muslim Charitam* also deserve mention. The most valuable of the Malayalam works on Kerala history published in recent times are, however, those of Prof. Elamkulam P.N. Kunjan Pillai. His *Kerala Charitrathile Iruladanja Edukal*, *Chila Kerala Charitra Prasnangal*, *Keralam Anchum Arum Nuttandukalil* etc., which are the result of a scientific study of all available literary, linguistic and epigraphical evidence throw welcome

light on the history of Kerala from the Sangam age to the Portuguese period and enable us to have a continuous history of Kerala from the earliest times. The *Kerala Charitram* published by the Kerala History Association is a mine of information.

The earliest of the regular historical works in English is the *History of Travancore* by Shungoonny Menon published in 1878. The publication of the *Malabar Manual* by Logan in 1887 was a notable event and it was followed by Nagam Aiyah's *Travancore State Manual* in 1906 and C. Achutha Menon's *Cochin State Manual* in 1911. The *Malabar District Gazetteer* by Innes and Evans appeared in 1908. A revised and enlarged edition of the *Travancore State Manual* by T.K. Velu Pillai was published in 1940. A notable writer of the early period who deserves special mention is Prof. P. Sundaram Pillai, for his *Early Sovereigns of Travancore* was the first work in which an attempt was made to reconstruct Kerala history from a study of inscriptional sources. K. G. Sessa Ayyar's *Chera Kings of the Sangam Period* and Dr. S. Krishnaswami Ayyangar's *Seran Vanji* helped to throw light on the history of ancient Kerala. The studies of the tribes and castes of Cochin and Travancore by the eminent anthropologists, L. K. Ananthakrishna Ayyar and L. A. Krishna Ayyar respectively, are also valuable to the social historian of Kerala.

The *History of Kerala* (Vols I, II, III & IV) by K. P. Padmanabha Menon written in the form of notes to Visscher's *Letters from Malabar* is a monumental work and it serves even now as the best reference book for the historian of Kerala. Among other important works in the field may be mentioned *The Malabar and the Portuguese*, *The Malabar and the Dutch* and *History of Kerala* (1498-1801) by K. M. Panikkar, *The Zamorins of Calicut and A History of Kerala* by K.V. Krishna Ayyar, *Medieval Kerala* by P.K.S. Raja, *The Dutch in Malabar and Buddhism in Kerala* Dr. P.C. Alexander, the *Kunjalis* by O.K. Nambiar, *A Survey of the Rise of the Dutch Power in Malabar* by T.I. Poonen, *Ancient Kerala* by Komattil Achutha Menon and the *Suchindram Temple* by Dr. K.K. Pillai. The Bibliography given at the end of this book provides information about other authors and their works on the history of Kerala.

The History chapters of the District and State Gazetteers published by the Government of Kerala since 1962 might be of some help in the study of Kerala history in regular chronological order from the beginning. In addition, such miscellaneous publications as the *Travancore Archaeological Series*, the *Kerala Society Papers*, the *Rama Varma Research Institute Bulletin* and the *Journal of Kerala Studies* (University of Kerala) have also made notable contributions to Kerala historical studies and research.

Contributions to Sanskrit Literature

Kerala has made its inestimable contributions to the various branches of Sanskrit literature. The Namboothiri Brahmins and the *Sabha Mutts* of ancient Kerala played leading part in the promotion of Sanskrit learning and studies. Kerala produced Sanskrit scholars of merit even before the

beginning of the Kollam era (825 AD.). The *Avantisundari Kathasara* of Dandin (8th century AD.) mentions two great Sanskrit scholars of Kerala by name Matrudatta and Bhavarata. According to a widely prevalent tradition Vararuchi, the great astronomer, was a scholar from Kerala. Another great scholar of ancient Kerala was Bhaskara I, the author of the astronomical works *Mahabhaskariya* and *Laghubhaskariya*.

The *Grahacharanibandhana*, another astronomical work written about 700 A.D., is assigned to Haridatta, one of the earlier authorities on Astronomy from Kerala. The *Sankaranarayaniyam*, a commentary written by Sankaranarayana, the court astronomer of Sthanu Ravi, on the *Laghubhaskariya* was a notable work on Astronomy produced in the early period.

Prabhakara, the great *Mimamsaka*, belonged to Kerala. He wrote two commentaries on Sabara's Bhashya. Sankracharaya's contributions to Sanskrit literature and Hindu philosophy have already been emphasised in Chapter XI. His commentaries on the *Upanishads*, the *Brahma Sutras* and the *Bhagavat Gita* are among the most valuable contributions of Kerala to Sanskrit. The *Ascharaya chudamani* of Saktibhadra is believed to be the first full-fledged drama composed in South India. Among the other important dramatic compositions of the early period may be mentioned the *Subhadradhananjaya* and *Tapatisamvarana* of dramatist Kulasekhara. The *Mukundamala* by Kulasekhara Alwar is one of the best known devotional lyrics in Sanskrit popular throughout India. The *Krishnakarnamrita* of Lilasuka or Vilwamangalm I is another devotional work of great charm and appeal. Mention may also be made of Vasudeva Bhattatiri who composed the *Yudhistiravijaya* and other *Yamaka Kavyas* under the patronage of the Kulasekharas. Yet another notable Sanskrit scholar of the early period was Tolan, to whom reference has already been made. He wrote *Mahodayapuresacharitam*, a *Mahakavya* in praise of the Kulasekharas.

The early period is noted for the rich output of Mahakavyas. The *Mushakavamsa* written by poet Atula about 1100 A.D. is a historical *Mahakavya* which throws light on the history of the Mushaka kingdom. Among the other notable *kavyas* may be mentioned *Sukasandesa* of Lakshmidasa, the *Sivavilasam* of Damodara, the *Krishnavijaya* of Sankara Kavi and the *Krishnavilasam* of Sukumara. The *Pradyumunabhyudayam* of King Ravi Varma Kulasekhara (1299-1314) of Venad was an important dramatic composition of the early period. It was written specifically for the purpose of being staged in the Sree Padmanabhaswami temple in connection with the *Utsavam*. This ruler was also the patron of Samudrabandha, the commentator of *Alankarasarvaswa*. The *Lilatilakam*, the valuable work on Grammar and Poetics, is ascribed to the 14th century.

Sanskrit literature made spectacular progress under the patronage of the early Zamorins of Calicut and other local rulers. Uddanda Sastrikal, the author of the *Kokilasandesa* and *Mallika-maruta*, Kakkasseri Bhattatiri, the author of the *Vasumatimanavikrama* and Chennas Narayana Namboothiri,

the author of the *Tantrasamuchaya* were among the 18 celebrated royal poets or *Patinettarakavikal* who flourished in the court of the Zamorin. The Bhattatiris who also come under this category rendered great services to Sanskrit literature in the 14th and 15th centuries. The Payyur family which had its headquarters at Porkalam near Kunnamkulam produced a long line of scholars. The most celebrated among them were Maharshi and his brothers Sankara and Bhavadasa and Parameswara, the son of Maharshi. The Payyur scholars specialised in *Mimamsa* literature. Parameswara, one of the Payyur Bhattatiris referred to above, was called *Mimamsa Chakravarti* and he has written valuable commentaries on the works of Mandana Misra and Vachapati Misra. He was held in such high esteem that Uddanda Sastrikal is said to have courted a certificate from him for his *Mallikamaruta*.

The Namboothiris of the Mahishamangalam (Mazhamangalam) family have also enriched Sanskrit literature by their learned works. The great astrologer Sankara belonged to this family. His son Narayana wrote such works as *Mahishamangalam Bhana* and *Vyavaharamala*. Parameswara, the author of the *Asauchadipika*, was another Mahishamangalam poet. The *Tantrasamgraham* and *Aryabhattiyabhashyam* of Nilakanta Somayajin are significant contributions to the science of *Jyotisha*.

Narayana Bhattatiri of Melpattur, the author of the *Narayaniyam*, was one of the greatest of the Sanskrit scholars. In addition to the *Narayaniyam*, he composed the *Sripadasaptati*, a devotional lyric of 70 verses in praise of the Goddess of Mukkola. Besides these devotional works, Narayana Bhattatiri wrote the *Prakriya sarvaswa*, a commentary on the *Panini Sutras*. It is said to have been finished in 60 days. His *Manameyodaya* is a notable work on the *Mimamsa* system of the Kumarila school while *Kriyakrama* deals with the domestic rituals of a section of the Namboothiri Brahmins. Melpattur has also to his credit a number of *Champus* and *Prabandhas* in Sanskrit composed for the sake of narration of *Kuthu* by the Chakiars. He enjoyed the patronage of the contemporary rulers of Calicut, Cochin and Chempakasseri and wrote the *Manameyodaya*, the *Matamahisaprasasti* and *Dhatukavya* respectively at the instance of these rulers.

Achuta Pisharoti of Trikkantiyur, the *Guru* of Melpattur Bhattatiri, was a great Sanskrit scholar, grammarian and astronomer. His *Karanothama* is a treatise on astronomical calculations while the *Uparagakriyakrama* deals with eclipses. Ramapanivadan, sometimes identified with Kunjan Nambiar, wrote the Sanskrit drama *Sitaraghava* under the patronage of Marthanda Varma. His *Madanaketu charita*, *Chandrika* and *Lilavati* are also notable dramatic works and the *Purvabharata Champu*, one of the chief *Champu* works in Sanskrit. The *Rasasadana* by Goda Varma Yuvaraja of Cranganore is one of the well-known *Bhanas* (one act plays) in Sanskrit. He has also written a Sanskrit poem entitled *Rama Charita*.

Aswati Tirunal Rama Varma, a prince of Travancore (18th century), was a notable Sanskrit scholar. Swathi Tirunal, the Raja of Travancore, has to his credit the *Bhakta Manjari*, *Sri Padmanabha Prabhandham*, *Sri*

Padmamanabha Dasakam etc. Kerala Varma Valia Koil Tampuran's *Visakhavijaya* is a *Mahakavya* of great merit dealing with Visakhm Tirunal. A. R. Raja Raja Varma is the author of the *Angala Samrajya*, a historical *Mahakavya* which deals with the British period of Indian history. The poem is written after the model of the *Raghuvamsa*.

Kaikkulangara Rama Warriar (1817-1916) was a distinguished Sanskrit scholar of modern Kerala. He wrote several well-known Malayalam commentaries on Sanskrit works like the *Raghuvamsa*, *Meghaduta*, *Ashtangahridaya*, *Amarakosa* etc. Among his Sanskrit works may be mentioned *Vaganandalahari*, *Vidyaksharamala* etc.

The Cochin royal family has produced outstanding Sanskrit scholars in recent times. Rama Varma, the Cochin Raja who abdicated in 1914, was a great Sanskrit scholar and patron of learning and he founded the Sanskrit College at Tripunithura to promote Sanskrit studies. Rama Varma Parikshit Tampuran, the last of the ruling sovereigns of Cochin, was one of the most distinguished Sanskrit scholars of recent times. Among his works may be mentioned *Subodhini*, *Bhavarthadipika*, *Prahlada Charita* etc. He also wrote a commentary on the *Abhijnana Sakunatala* of Kalidasa in collaboration with the famous scholar, K. Rama Pisharoty, who has written the well-known commentary on the *Dhwanyaloka*.

The cultural and social awakening that took place in Kerala in the early part of the 20th century has had its effect on Sanskrit literature also. The Malayalam poems of Asan, Vallathol and Ullur have been translated into Sanskrit. *Mahakavikrataya* and *Kerala Bhashavivarthaha* are two collections of the short poems of Ullur and Asan rendered into Sanskrit by E.V. Raman Namboothiri. N. Gopala Pillai translated into Sanskrit Asan's *Chintavishtayayasita* under the name *Sitavicharalahari* and also Ullur's *Premasangitam*. Sri Chattampi Swamikal and Sri Narayana Guru have composed Sanskrit works. The former has written the *Stavaratnavali* and *Parama sivastava* and the latter the *Darsanamala* and *Municharyapanchama*. The life of Sri Narayana Guru is the theme of a *Mahakavya* entitled *Sri Narayana Vijayam* by Prof. K. Balarama Panikkar. Dr. K. N. Ezhuthachan has written the *Keralodaya*, a *Mahakavya* which presents the panorama of Kerala history through the ages. A distinguished Christian scholar, Prof. P. C. Devasia, has written the *Kristu bhagavatam*, which presents the life of Jesus Christ. A work of great merit, it is illustrative of the recent trend towards Indianisation in the Kerala Church.

The foregoing is only a brief survey of Kerala's contribution to Sanskrit. The *Keraliya Samskrita Sahitya Charitram* (Vols. I-VI) in Malayalam by Vadakkumkur Raja Raja Varma is a scholarly attempt at a detailed study of the subject.

Ayurveda

The contribution of Kerala to the theory and practice of Ayurveda is considerable. There are a number of works in Malayalam which deal with the Ayurvedic system of medical treatment. The most important of these are

Sarvanga Chikitsa Ratnam, *Vaidya Manorama*, *Yogamruta*, *Vaidyamanjari* etc. There are also works which deal with special branches like Toxicology (*Vishavaidya*), Paediatrics (*Bala Chikitsa*) and Eye Treatment (*Netra Chikitsa*) and also diseases such as Leprosy, Diabetes, Tuberculosis etc. The *Prayogasamuchaya* by Kerala Varma, the Maharaja of Cochin (1914-1943), is an authoritative work on Toxicology. *Ayurveda Nighandu* and *Ayurveda Ratnakarakosam* are two Ayurvedic Dictionaries in Malayalam. Dr.L.A.Ravi Varma's *Sariram* and *Arogya Margangal* are also notable works. The *Sarachandrika* by the noted scholar, Paravur Kesavan Asan, is a significant contribution to the literature on Ayurveda.

In addition to these original works, there are a number of commentaries on Sanskrit Ayurvedic works like *Ashtangahridaya*, *Susruta Samhita* and *Charaka Samhita*. The physicians of Kerala followed mainly the *Ashtangahridaya* school of *Ayurveda* and there are as many as four commentaries on this work. Dr. P. S. Warriar has written the *Ashtanga Sarira* in Sanskrit dealing with the human anatomy. His *Brihat Sariram* is yet another notable work.

The Ayurvedic system has made commendable progress on the practical side. The *Ashta Vaidyans* of Kerala belonging to eight Namboothiri families are hereditary physicians of repute. The *Panchakarma* treatment has been resorted to effectively by the Ayurvedic physicians of Kerala from early days. In *Dhara*, *Pizhichal*, *Navarakizhi*, *Uzhichal* and *Sirovasti* the Kerala physicians stand unsurpassed. Kerala has also been famous for its rare medicinal herbs and plants and its has been supplying raw drugs to all parts of India.

Music

Kerala has an enviable tradition in the field of music. The ancient art forms like *kuthu* and *kudiyattam* gave ample scope for the exercise of musical talent. There are a number of musical treatises in Malayalam, e.g., *Sangita Chudamani*, *Tala Vidhikal*, *Swara Taladi Lakshanam*, *Sangita Vidhikal*, *Sangita Sastram*, *Sangita Manjari* etc. The *Balarama Bharatam* by the Dharma Raja contains a clear exposition of many aspects of music and dance. The *Bhashashtapati*, the Malayalam translation of the *Gita Govinda* by Ramapurath Warriar, contains many *talas* and *ragas* different from those in the original. Irayimman Tampi is credited with no less than 500 classical songs and he was one of the greatest musical composers of Kerala. The *Tullal* songs of Kunjan Nambiar and the innumerable *Kathakali padas* which are set in specific *ragas* and *talas* have also enriched the music of Kerala.

The contributions of Swati Tirunal (1829-1847), the ruler of Travancore, deserve special mention in any study of Kerala music. His reign may verily be called the 'Augustan Age of Kerala Music.' Swati Tirunal was the greatest patron of music that the Travancore royal family produced. He sought to achieve a synthesis of classical Karnatak and Hindustani styles in the field of music. There are more than 150 of his musical compositions in such languages as Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada, Telugu, Sanskrit and Hindi. He had a thorough grasp of musical technique and of several art forms. A prince

among the composers of his age, he set his hands on all forms of musical composition such as *Swarjiths*, *Varnams*, *Kirtanams*, *Padams*, *Tillanas*, *Drupads* etc. But he has no equal as a composer of *Varnams* in the richness and variety of which there are probably no parallels in the whole range of Hindu Music. A remarkable feature of his compositions is the profuse use of *Swaraksharas*, i.e., *Swara* symbols tallying in important places with the initial or other important letters of the words to which the music is set.

The magic of Swati Tirunal's name attracted to the Travancore court some of the best musicians and singers of the age from all parts of the state and outside. Musicians from such distant places as Benares, Poona, Lahore, Oudh, Hyderabad, Tanjore etc., adorned his court. Among those patronised by Swati Tirunal were Imam Fakir of Lahore, Pir Muhammed of Tiruchirapalli, Haridas Gosayin of Oudh, the four Tamil brothers Vativelu, Sivanandan, Chinnayya, and Ponnayya, Parameswara Bhagavathar of Palghat and above all, Shadkala Govinda Marar and Krishna Marar, the great musical prodigies.

Govinda Marar was a cripple gifted with a celestial voice. He could devise a *Tamburu* with seven strings instead of the usual four and acquired the rare distinction of being able to sing *Pallavis* to six degrees of time. The latter feat won for him the epithet *Shadkala*. Having been sent by Swati Tirunal on a delicate mission to Tiruvayyur to persuade Saint Tyagaraja to come to Trivandrum, Govinda Marar got a rare opportunity to exhibit his musical talent before the Saint and his disciples. Tyagaraja was so impressed by the performance of Govinda Marar that he composed and sang instantaneously the famous Telugu song *Entaro Mahanubhavalu Antarikil Vandanam* (There are even so many great men in this world and I bow to all of them) as a tribute to his distinguished visitor.

In fact, Travancore under Swati Tirunal was, like Elizabethan England, 'a nest of singing birds'. It is worth mentioning that Vativelu received the handsome salary of Rs. 110 per month when Munsiffs and Tahsildars in Travancore were being paid only Rs. 40 and Rs. 30 respectively.

In more recent times too the theory and practice of music have registered considerable development. The *Sangita Malika* by K. C. Kesava Pillai is a brilliant exposition of the science of music. He has also composed about a 100 songs which entitle him to a place of honour in the gallery of the greatest musical composers of Kerala. The *Sangita Chandrika* by Attur Krishna Pisharoty is also a notable treatise on music. Among the top exponents of Karnatak music who have won Presidential awards for music Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar and Palghat Mani hail from Kerala. Thus Kerala's contribution to music is by no means insignificant.

Painting

The art of painting has also developed in Kerala through the ages. 'Art in Kerala', says Dr. Cousins, "as in the rest of India ; has always been the expression of religious ideas and sentiments. The temples have been the centres of its origin and growth". The temple of Tiruvanchikulam contains the earliest specimens of the Kerala murals. They have been assigned to the age of the

Kulasekharas (800-1102 AD.). The places at Padmanabhapuram, Krishanpuram and Mattancherri (Dutch Palace) and the temple of Sri Padmanabha at Trivandrum contain some of the most exquisite paintings of the later period. The most important of the other temples of Kerala where Mural paintings are found have been mentioned in Chapter II.

A study of the Kerala paintings shows that they are reminiscent of the South Indian styles of painting prevalent from the days of the Pallavas of Kanchi. The Vijayanagar schools of painting prevalent in Tanjore and Mysore also exercised their influence on local paintings, as artists and painters from these parts were sometimes imported into Kerala to execute works. Apart from temples and palaces there are a number of churches with their own murals. There are fine portraits in them of the Virgin and Christian saints which have been executed by Indian artists under European guidance in regard to design and they represent a fine blending of the local and European styles.

The closing decades of the 18th century and the first half of the 19th century saw decline of the art of painting in Kerala. The reason for this was the political unrest and turmoil that prevailed over the land. The last decades of the 19th century saw the revival of the art.

The most outstanding name in the field of Kerala painting during this period is that of Raja Ravi Varma (1848-1906) of the Kilimanur family. He chose puranic stories as the themes of his paintings but he adopted mainly the technique of European oil painting. The Raja also excelled in portrait painting. Some of his original paintings exhibited in Europe and America won for him world-wide recognition as a master painter. The paintings of Raja Ravi Varma are preserved in the Sri Chitra Art Gallery, Trivandrum and other major Art Galleries of India. Raja Raja Varma and Mangala Bai Tampuratti who also belonged to the Kilimanur family have enriched the art of painting by their numerous productions. Madhava Menon and K. C. S. Pannikkar are two outstanding painters from Kerala in recent times.

Architecture and Sculpture

Ancient Kerala has made its notable contribution to the science of architecture. The *Tantrasamuchaya*, *Vastuvidya*, *Manushyalayachandrika* and *Silparatna* are well-known treatises on the subject. Kerala architects have produced their masterpieces. In Chapter II some of the most important examples of Kerala architecture and sculpture have already been mentioned and it is not considered necessary to cover the same ground again. In these fields, as in others, we find a confluence of diverse cultural influences. Kerala developed its own indigenous style of domestic architecture, e.g., the *Nalukettu* but the influences of non-Kerala styles may be seen in many of its temples, churches, mosques, palaces etc.

A few temples of South Kerala like the Sri Padmanabha Swami temple, Trivandrum and the Parasurama shrine at Tiruvallam bear evidence of the fusion of the Dravidian and Kerala styles of architecture. The influences of

the Pallava, Chalukya, Pandya, Chola, and Vijayanagar styles may also be seen in the sculptural representation in Kerala temples. Some writers have sought to discover traces of resemblance between the architecture of Nepal and Tibet and that of Kerala in so far as wood is used in abundance in the construction of temples and buildings in all these places. Fergusson, an authority on Indian and Eastern Architecture, finds the resemblance so glaring that he finds in it unimpeachable proof of intimate contacts in the past between Nepal and Tibet on the one side and the Kerala coast on the other. Moreover, some have sought to find in the architecture of the buildings and temples of Kerala strong evidence of Chinese influence which is said to have sprung from early Chinese trade relations with Kerala. The particular pattern of roofing of houses (the gabled roof) which is seen all along the coastal tract from Quilon to Cochin is alleged to be the product of Chinese influence.

The 'Dutch Palace' at Mattancherri originally built by the Portuguese in 1555 shows a synthesis of Kerala and Portuguese styles. The Portuguese built many handsome and spacious buildings of the European type for their churches, monasteries and convents. The St. Francis Church, Cochin, the St. Teresa's Church and Convent at Ernakulam, the Kanjur Church, Vellarappilli and the St. Mary's Church, Vallarpadam represent new architectural designs. There are also a number of mosques in Kerala built after the Indo-Saracenic style of architecture.

Religious Arts

Kerala has through the centuries developed several art forms of a religious or quasi-religious character. They grew in the atmosphere of its temples which have all along been centres of great cultural activity. The origin and chief characteristics of the most important of these art forms may be mentioned here.

Kudiyattam is an ancient temple art of Kerala in which two or more characters take part. Hence, it literally means 'acting together'. The verses sung in the play are in Sanskrit and the actors use the science of *Mudras* (signs). An interesting innovation introduced in *Kudiyattam* was the clown who caricatured the moods of the hero and sent the audience to roars of laughter. Tolan who lived in the Kulasekhara age (800-1102) was closely associated with the development of *Kudiyattam*,

Chakiarkuthu is a kind of mono-act in which, unlike in *Kudiyattam*, a single actor, *Ie.*, the Chakiar expounds Puranic stories before his audience. In the course of his narration which is done in a very effective and persuasive manner the Chakiar acts the role of all characters and exercises the unchallenged privilege of indulging in satirical comments on individuals among the audience and also on contemporary affairs in order to drive home the moral of his story. *Kuthu* is performed at night in *Kuthambalams* specially erected for this purpose in the major temples of Kerala.

Mohini Attam (Dance of the Temptress) was an old temple art of Kerala reminiscent of the *Bharata Natyam* prevalent on the east coast. It was

performed in the open air by young women specially trained in the art of dancing with body movements and appropriate gestures set to the tune of background music and orchestra. The art came to be associated with the lowest orders of Hindu society and hence it acquired a kind of disrepute and languished before long for want of patronage. The patronage extended to it in later days by Swati Tirunal and Mahakavi Vallathol has helped to invest it with respectability in recent times.

Kathakali is the world famous dance drama of Kerala. The popular Belief is that it was an improvement on the *Krishnanattam*, a kind of dance-drama developed by Manaveda, the Zamorin of Calicut, on the model of the folk dance known as *Ashtapadiyattam*. Tradition ascribes the immediate origin of *Kathakali* to the *Ramanattam* developed by a Kottarakara Tampuran who lived in the latter half of the 17th century and the first half of the 18th century. The prince is said to have dramatised in Malayalam the story of Rama and organized a new type of performance (*Ramanattam*) closely modelled on the *Krishnanattam*. The story goes that he did so as a measure of retaliation against the Zamorin who refused to accede to his request to send the *Krishnanattam* troupe to his kingdom. Whatever be the truth of these versions, the modern art of *Kathakali* represents a harmonious blending of several art forms that have developed in Kerala through the centuries.

The peculiarity of the *Kathakali* is that in it the actors do not speak. On the other hand, they act dialogic sections called *padams* through suitable gestures (*mudras*) and facial expressions as the songs are recited by singers in the background. The *Kathakali* actors wear gorgeous garments, headgears and ornaments and their faces are painted in different colours. The make-up varies from character to character and indicates the nature of their respective roles. *Kathakali* is staged usually in the night and only male actors take part in it.

Kathakali, as it is performed today, embodies several improvements effected in it since its inception. The most important of these improvements were effected by the Kalladikode *Yogam* and Kapplingat Nambootiri, the former emphasising the *Nritham* or dancing aspect and the latter the *Abhinaya* or acting aspect. In recent times, there has been a revival of the art thanks to the patronage extended to it by Mahakavi Vallathol. The Kerala Kala Mandalam was founded by the poet at Cheruthuruthi mainly for the purpose of training the modern youth in the art of *Kathakali*. Some of the notable *Kathakali* actors like Guru Kunju Kurup have received Presidential awards.

Ottam Tullal is another typical temple art of Kerala. It is a kind of solo-dance in which one person dressed in colourful costumes recites *Tullal* songs to the accompaniment of dancing and singing. The origin of *Ottam Tullal* is traced to the 18th century. It was developed by the great poet, Kunjan Nambiar as a counterblast to *Kuthu*. The story goes that Nambiar was beating the *mizhavu* (drum) at a *Kuthu* performance in the Ambalapuzha temple and he was publicly rebuked by the Chakiar for having struck a wrong note. Nambiar was so much annoyed by this public rebuke that he organized his first *Tullal*

performance the very next day not far from the place where his erstwhile master performed *Kuthu*. There are, however, quite a few scholars who consider the above story as apocryphal. They believe that *Ottam Tullal* was an improvement on two earlier popular dance forms, viz., *Sitankan Tullal* and *Parayan Tullal* which were being performed in the nearby Sastha temple at Takazhi during the annual *Patayani* festival in Medam (April-May) to entertain the non-Brahmin sections of the Hindu community. Whatever be the truth behind these versions, it is clear that *Ottam Tullal* provided a popular entertainment to the literate as well as the illiterate sections of the people.

A dance form akin to the *Kathakali* is prevalent in the temples of Kasaragod Taluk. It is called *Yaksha Gana*. It is a very ancient and popular form of dramatic representation in the Kannada language and resembles *Kathakali* in the matter of dress, accompaniments and songs. Some of the rarest *ragas* of Carnatic music are presented in *Yaksha Gana*. However, it is not a dumb show like *Kathakali*, for the actors in *Yaksha Gana* speak. Parthi Subba who belonged to Kumbala in Kasaragod Taluk is regarded as the 'Father of *Yaksha Gana*'.

Patakam and *Harikatha* are also popular temple arts of Kerala. The former is a simpler form of *Kuthu* in which a single actor expounds Puranic stories. *Harikatha* closely resembles *Patakam* but it has more musical overtones and hence is more popular. The *Kathaprasangam* of recent days is a modified form of *Harikatha* which has accepted secular and social themes for its performance.

The *Teyyam* or *Teyyattam* of the erstwhile North Malabar area is unique among the ritual dances of South India. *Teyyattam* literally means the dance of God, *Teyyam* being a corruption of the word *Daivam* or God. The performer in *Teyyattam* impersonates the popular deity and gives expression to its activities in the form of measured steps and rhythmic dances from the time he gets possessed and gives up his role. *Teyyattam* is a colourful and vigorous dance in which the performer wears resplendent costumes and a towering headgear (*mudi*), sometimes more than, 1.5 metres in height. He dances to the tune of the resounding music produced by the *asuravadyams* and the rhythmic beating of a number of drums accompanied by *Kuzhals* (clarion) and a large number of cymbals. The dance is staged primarily in the Bhagavati temples of North Malabar and the performers usually belong to particular tribes or castes.

The temple *Utsavams* provide occasions for the performance of certain other temple arts which involve the use of musical instruments. The most important of these are *Chendamelam*, *Tayambaka* and *Panchavadyam*. *Chendamelam* is the play of drums in unison with the tune of other musical instruments. *Tayambaka* is a classical piece of drum which, with its climaxes and anti-climaxes lasting for hours, provides thrill and excitement to the audience. *Panchavadyam*, as the very name indicates, involves the play of five musical instruments viz., *Maddalam*, *Timila*, *Edakka*, *Sankhu* and *Talam*.

The synchronisation of sounds emanating in varying pitches from all these five instruments elevates the atmosphere and thrills the audience.

Reference may also be made in this connection to the *Chavittunatakam* which is now almost extinct. It was evolved in the 17th and 18th centuries as a Christian alternative to the Hindu *Kathakali* with a view to presenting Biblical themes to Christian audiences. The foreign missionaries had a hand in working out the details of this form and hence the *Chavittunatakam* resembles the European opera in several respects. The chief characteristic of the *Chavittunatakam* is that actors in it stamp on the wooden stage with their feet to the accompaniment of songs and drums. It was sarcastically called *Tattupolippan* after the loud and unpleasant noise so produced by the actors. The actors in the *Chavittunatakam*, unlike in *Kathakali*, speak and sing. The art has now almost vanished from Kerala for want of encouragement and patronage.

Martial Arts

In addition to the religious arts mentioned above Kerala has developed its own martial art forms too. The most important of these is the *Kalaripayattu* to which a casual reference has already been made in an earlier chapter. Each *Desam* or locality had a *Kalari* or Gymnasium with a *Guru* at its head and both boys and girls received physical training in it. The training given in the *Kalari* is called *Kalaripayattu*. The pupils are given regular physical exercises and training in the use of such weapons as *Kuruvati* (short stick), spear, dagger, sword, shield, etc. The most promising of the trainees are taught the *Marmas*, viz., the vulnerable points in the human system. *Kalaripayattu* declined after the 17th century but in recent times it has staged a revival thanks to the activities of various *Kalari Sanghams*.

The *Parisakali* of North Malabar and the *Velakali* of Travancore are two other martial arts which involve considerable physical training and knowledge of the use of the arms. The latter is also semi-religious in the sense that it is a mock-fight representing the battle between the Pandavas and the Kauravas at Kurukshetra. It is played in connection with the temple festivals at Shertallai and Ambalapuzha as well as in the Sri Padmanabhaswami temple at Trivandrum.

There are also other martial arts like *Valeru* (sword throwing), *Kunderu* (javeline throwing) and *Njaninmelkali* (tight rope walking) which are performed in connection with festivals in temples.

A very important contribution of Kerala in the field of martial arts in recent times is the Circus. The Cannanore-Tellicherry area of North Kerala is known as the home of Circus in India.

The great Circus Acharya of Kerala, Keeleri Kunhikannan Teacher, was born here in 1858. His mastery over the art of *Kalaripayattu* and wrestling helped him to study the modes of gymnastics and sports practised by the English officers who came to Tellicherry. Kunhikannan Teacher founded in 1901 the first Circus Training Institute at Tellicherry with the object of training

young men in Circus. He introduced several radical reforms in Circus by initiating a variety of thrilling feats and training a large body of young men in the art. A series of Circus Companies came to be started since his days and out of about 50 such leading companies in India today all, except two or three, are owned by Malayalis hailing from the Tellicherry-Cannanore area of Kerala. Thus the martial arts like *Kalaripayattu* practised by the people of Kerala through the centuries have helped in putting the State in the forefront of Indian Circus.

The foregoing survey of the contributions of Kerala to the cultural heritage of India in the fields of literature and arts does by no means cover the whole range of the subject matter. Only the most important aspects have been considered here. Even this brief survey would, however, help to convey to the reader a fairly good picture of the important place occupied by Kerala on the cultural map of India. We have now come to the end of our story and we may conclude with a note of optimism. It can confidently be expected that the genius of Kerala would continue to blossom forth in all its vigour and vitality in the years to come and that Kerala culture would soar to more dazzling heights of glory enriching the great Indian heritage.

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GLOSSARY

<i>Ahimsa</i>	Non-Violence.
<i>AikyaKerala</i>	United Kerala.
<i>Amsam</i>	Village.
<i>Anacharams</i>	Irregular or special customs.
<i>Anchal</i>	Indigenous Postal System.
<i>Andu</i>	Year.
<i>Arat</i>	The festival of taking the deity in procession for bath on the last day of a temple festival.
<i>Arival</i>	Sickle.
<i>Ariyittuvazheha</i>	The ceremony connected with the coronation of the Zamorin.
<i>Ashta Vaidyans</i>	Eight celebrated Ayurvedic physicians of Kerala belonging to eight Namboothiri families.
<i>Atiyara</i>	Presents made to the king or chieftain in token of homage.
<i>Avarnas</i>	Backward Classes among Hindus.
<i>Azhi</i>	The place where the backwater meets the sea.
<i>Bhakti</i>	Devotion
<i>Bhatta</i>	A title of distinction conferred on Brahmin Sanskrit scholars.
<i>Brahmaswam</i>	Property belonging to Brahmin <i>Janmis</i> .
<i>Birudas</i>	Titles.
<i>Cadjan</i>	The dried leaf of the palmyra tree.
<i>Chattavariolas</i>	A digest of laws framed for the guidance of officials of Government
<i>Chaiurvarnya castes.</i>	The Hindu social system based on the four
<i>Chaver</i>	Suicide Squads.
<i>Chikitsa</i>	Treatment.
<i>Chowki</i>	Customs House.
<i>Churunas</i>	Bundles of Records in rolls.
<i>Dalawa</i>	The title used in Travancore to signify the office of the Chief Minister till the early 19 th century.
<i>Danam</i>	Gift.

<i>Desam</i>	Territorial division or locality.
<i>Desavazhi</i>	A local chieftain.
<i>Devaswam</i>	Property belonging to temple.
<i>Divya desams</i>	Holy Places.
<i>Diwan</i>	Chief Minister of an erstwhile Indian State.
<i>Elaya Tavazhi</i>	The Junior branch of a family.
<i>Ezhuthupalli</i>	Old village school.
<i>Garbha Sriman</i>	The epithet given to Sri Swati Tirunal to signify that he was “king even in the womb”.
<i>Gopuram</i>	The entrance tower of a temple.
<i>Gramam</i>	Village.
<i>Gramakkar</i>	Villagers.
<i>Granadhavari</i>	Chronicle.
<i>Guru</i>	Religious preceptor; teacher.
<i>Harijans</i>	The name which literally means “Men of God” was used by Mahatma Gandhi with reference to the untouchables, or the members of the lowest castes among Hindus.
<i>Huzur Cutchery</i>	Secretariat.
<i>Illam</i>	House of a Namboothiri.
<i>Janmi</i>	Landlord.
<i>Janmikaram</i>	Rent due to the landlord from the tenants.
<i>Jatha</i>	Procession.
<i>Kacham</i>	Agreement.
<i>Kalappa</i>	Plough.
<i>Kalari</i>	Gymnasium or Military Academy.
<i>Kalaripayattu</i>	Training in combat given in a Kalari.
<i>Kanam</i>	A system of land tenure under which the tenant holds land by paying a fixed sum to the <i>Janmi</i> for a specified period.
<i>Kandezhuthu</i>	A kind of revenue settlement.
<i>Kara</i>	The sub-division of a village.
<i>Karalar</i>	Tenants of temple lands.
<i>Kudiyans</i>	Tenants.
<i>Karanavar</i>	The senior male member of a matriarchal family.
<i>Kattanar</i>	Christian priests.

<i>Kayal</i>	Lake or Lagoon.
<i>Kettukazhcha</i>	A temple festival prevalent in the erstwhile Central Travancore area.
<i>Kizhakke Kovilakam</i>	Eastern Palace.
<i>Kizhavan Raja</i>	Old King -The epithet was used with reference to the Dharma Raja as a mark of affection.
<i>Kovil</i>	Temple; palace.
<i>Koyiladhikarikal</i>	The officer-in-charge of the temples.
<i>Kurmalsaram</i>	Faction fight.
<i>Kuthambalam</i>	A hall specially built for the performance of Cheddar Kuthu in temples.
<i>Kuttam</i>	A local body.
<i>Madham</i>	Monastery.
<i>Makkathayam</i>	Patrilineal system of inheritance.
<i>Malikhana</i>	Pension paid by the British Government to the local rulers deprived of their kingdoms.
<i>Mantravadam</i>	Exorcism.
<i>Mantapa</i>	Platform.
<i>Marumakkathayam</i>	Matrilineal system of inheritance.
<i>Matampimar</i>	Nair nobles.
<i>Melkoima</i>	Over lordship.
<i>Misra Bhojanam</i>	Inter-dining.
<i>Mutha Tavazhi</i>	Senior branch of a family.
<i>Nad or Nadu</i>	A district.
<i>Naduvazhi</i>	A local chieftain or Raja.
<i>Nittu</i>	Royal decree.
<i>Nukam</i>	Yoke.
<i>Nuzzar</i>	A present made to king.
<i>Onam</i>	The national festival of Kerala which falls in Chingam (August-September) every year.
<i>Onathallu</i>	A game of combat indulged in during the Onam season.
<i>Patinjare Kovilakam</i>	Western palace.
<i>Pandaravaka</i>	Belonging to Government.
<i>Pandavacharam</i>	Fraternal Polyandry.
<i>Para</i>	A grain measure holding 10 <i>Edangazhis</i> .

<i>Pattam</i>	Rent.
<i>Pattukal</i>	Songs or ballads.
<i>Pattayam</i>	Document given to land-owners specifying details of their property.
<i>Pazhayakuru</i>	Old sect of Christians.
<i>Puja</i>	Offering of flowers to a deity ; worship.
<i>Pulappedi</i>	Fear from Pulayas, a backward community.
<i>Puthenkuru</i>	New sect of Christians.
<i>Raga</i>	Tune.
<i>Ratha</i>	Chariot
<i>Rishi</i>	Sage.
<i>Sabha</i>	An Assembly.
<i>Salai</i>	Vedic College.
<i>Sambandham</i>	Marriage.
<i>Sanketam</i>	Temple Sanctuary.
<i>Sati</i>	The obsolete custom of the widow immolating herself in the funeral pyre of her husband.
<i>Sattar</i>	Pupils.
<i>Satyagraha</i>	Civil Disobedience movement; any kind of protest action.
<i>SatyaPariksha</i>	Trial by ordeal.
<i>Savamas</i>	High Caste Hindus.
<i>Sirkar</i>	Government.
<i>Smarta Vicharam</i>	Namboothiri Caste Tribunal.
<i>Srikovil</i>	<i>Sanctum Sanctorum</i> of a temple.
<i>Swamiyar</i>	High priest of a temple.
<i>Swayamvaram</i>	A system of marriage under which the bride chooses the bridegroom of her own free will from among those assembled.
<i>Tala</i>	Rhythm.
<i>Tali</i>	A neck ornament tied as a marriage badge.
<i>Taliketttu Kalyanam</i>	The ceremony of tying the <i>Tali</i> .
<i>Tanna-Nayak</i>	Officer-in-charge of a Police-Station.
<i>Tara</i>	Tribal group of Nairs.
<i>Tarawad</i>	A family.

<i>Tavazhi</i>	The branch of a matriarchal family.
<i>Tirandukuli</i>	The ceremony performed when a girl attains puberty.
<i>Tirthankaras</i>	Jain saints or priests.
<i>Titturam</i>	Royal Order.
<i>Utsavam</i>	Periodical temple festival.
<i>Uralar</i>	Temple trustees.
<i>Uzhiyam</i>	Forced labor without wages
<i>Vaidikan</i>	Brahmin well-versed in the <i>Vedas</i> .
<i>Vaidyasala</i>	Dispensary of an Ayurvedic physician
<i>Vattezhuthu</i>	An old script which is now defunct.
<i>Vihara</i>	Shrine.
<i>Vimochana Samaram</i>	Liberation struggle.
<i>Vishu</i>	A festival which falls on the first day of Medam (April-May) every year
<i>Yoga</i>	Sacrifice.
<i>Yogam</i>	Congregation or Council.
<i>Yogakkar</i>	Members of the <i>Yogam</i> .
<i>YuvaRaja</i>	Heir-apparent.