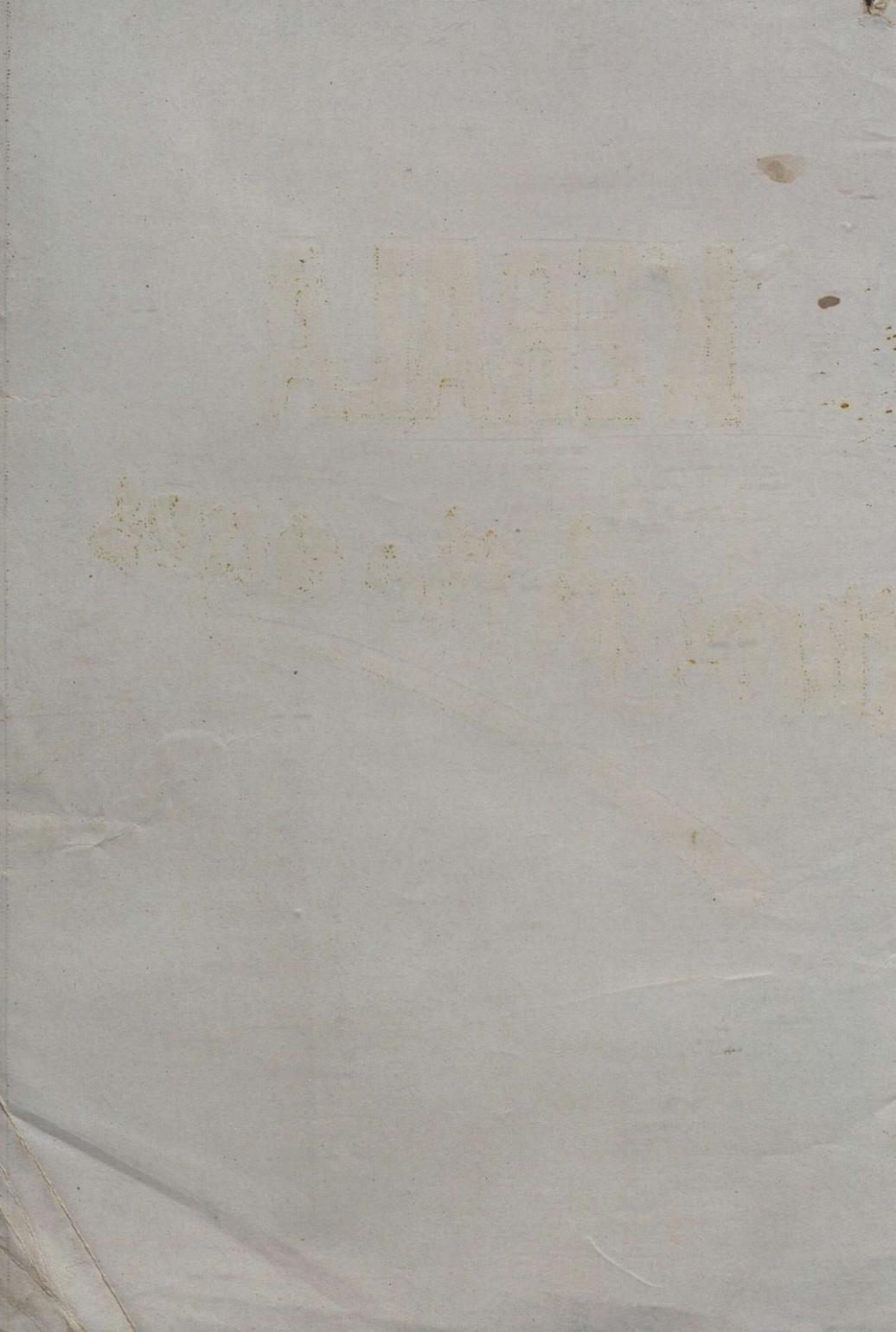


KERALA

through the ages

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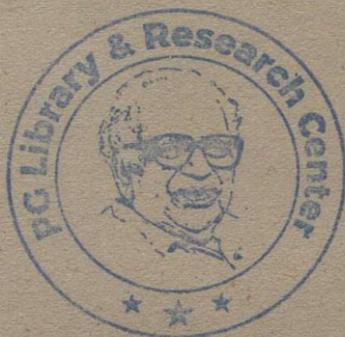
DEPARTMENT OF
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PREFACE

Popular demand has necessitated the fourth edition of our publication "Kerala Through the Ages". This book attempts to present the salient features of the history of Kerala with special emphasis on the development of society and culture. For the serious student of history the canvas unfolded in the following pages reveals possibilities for further research, study and analysis. For the layman it is expected to offer a brief introduction to the complex pattern of society in Kerala.

This study was brought out in collaboration with the Department of History of the University of Kerala and the Department of History of the University of Calicut. Our thanks are due to Dr. M. G. S. Narayan, Dr. A. P. Ibrahim Kunju, Dr. M. P. Sree-kumaran Nayar, Shri M. R. Raghava Warriar and Shri Veluthatt Kesavan who collaborated in this venture.

Trivandrum,
June, 1988.

T. N. JAYADEVAN,
Director of Public Relations.

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PART I

FROM TRIBALISM TO FEUDALISM

THE BACKGROUND

To an outsider, Kerala might appear as the land of Kathakali, Onam, Sankaracharya, boat-races, back-waters, ivory works and intelligent people. On closer acquaintance you gain some awareness about Nayars and Nambudiris, Mappila Muslims and Syrian Christians, the intricacies of the matrilineal joint family, the Guruvayur Sri Krishna Temple, Communism through the ballot box, Sabarimala and Sri Narayana. Everywhere in India, and in many parts of the world, Keralites are known to be smart, hard-working, highly volatile and sociable, and full of adventure. All these qualities come out best when they leave the comfort and security of their own home village and State. You will find them earning their livelihood in all walks of life, but mostly where technical skills and intellectual ability are in demand. They learn languages quickly and mix with different groups of people easily. Irrespective of caste and creed, they come together on various occasions of the year to celebrate Onam, Id or Christmas and then go back to their problems for the rest of the days. Normally they have not one but several Malayalee associations in the same city, all competing heartily for outdoing the other in nurturing their love for Kerala and its culture.

It is often remarked in a lighter vein that Menons, Pillais and Nayars have dominance in the Central services; that the Mappilas of Malabar have invaded and captured the retail markets in big cities like Bombay, Calcutta, Madras and Bangalore and also populated the deserts of West Asia; that Christians from Travancore have made themselves partners in the affluence of Germany and the United States of America. Besides these, in recent years Ezhavas and Harijans from Kerala have been coming up in professions and literature indicating a social revolution triggered by the Indian renaissance.

As you enter Kerala through the Palghat gap, a 32-kilometre break in the long chain of the Western Ghats which stands as the great cloud-capped sentinel of the West Coast, your eyes feast on the cool-green fields and flowering forests on either side. To the Keralite (or Malayalee) this is reminiscent of the traditional Talappoli welcome, by two rows of girls in shining garments, flowing dark hair and smiling faces lit up with the flame or lamps carried in golden trays. A clearly distinctive feature of human geography is the continuous chain of habitation obliterating the boundaries between village and village. The railway or the road will be seen to cut across innumerable rivers and rivulets with recently constructed bridges. These waters running east-west from the Ghats to the sea, hold in their hearts, deep below the turbulent, laughing surface, the secrets of the land's agricultural wealth, the cleanliness and sprightliness of the people and the problems of political and social organisations.

The traveller will observe that the people of Kerala are neither too tall, nor too short; neither too dark nor too fair—they represent a mixture of many races, except perhaps among the forest tribes. The remote ancestors of Keralites might have arrived at different times from different directions—riding the waves or climbing the ghats—to populate the river valleys full of virgin forests. Gradually, when the forests in the plain receded eastward giving place to paddy fields, the technically advanced groups of Aryan settlers and their native associates established ascendancy in Kerala. They organised a feudal agrarian society with caste hierarchy and serfdom either putting down the vanquished natives or driving them into the high ranges. However, they welcomed small bands of sea traders—Jews, Greeks, Romans, Syrian Christians, Arab Musilm and modern Europeans—in succession who came in search of pepper and spices and other forms of forest produce. Thus traditional Kerala society preserved its framework for many centuries in spite of superficial political changes because the pattern of agricultural production and maritime trade remained the same. On the one hand the foreign merchants, the retailers of prosperity, were hospitably received, treated on a par with the feudal chieftains and extended religious tolerance. On the other, the earlier tribal settlers were economically exploited and subdued and socially ostracised with elaborate rules of conduct. Thus the history of Kerala is the story of the growth of this complex and sheltered society which is basically Indian but very much open to West Asian influence. We have a unique regional version of Indian society embroidered with patches of multi-coloured semitic society and culture.

It is difficult today to distinguish among the Keralites between a Musilm, Christian or Hindu or among the Hindus themselves, between a Nayar, Nambudiri or Ezhava. Even half a century ago, such differences in faith and status were amply reflected in dress and manners. Native Muslims were close-cropped, bearded and clad in multi-coloured lungis, their women-folk using a *tattam* to cover the face. The Syrian Christians, who claim to be descendants of the disciples of St. Thomas, dressed and moved about almost like Nayars and Chekons, with the crucifix on their chest as the only differentiating mark. Their women wore dhotis in a special way with fanshaped tresses. Among Hindus, the Nambudiris (Kerala Brahmins) formed the crest of society laying down the rules of behaviour for Kshatriya and Samanta chieftains. Their social life was centered around temples, they formed a leisurely class of landed gentry devoted to scholarship and the arts.

Aristocratic Nayars belonging to big matrilineal joint families—each Taravad house with more than a hundred members—moved about with all pomp and luxury. Poets and artists found patronage in the numerous courts of the chieftains, often fomenting quarrels with one another. The Ezhavas, supposed to be descendants of immigrants from Izham and Ceylon were out-castes in the caste system; but they too counted among themselves a few landed aristocrats and learned scholars, physicians and fighters though the large majority were toddy tappers by way of profession. The Cherumas and Pulayas were the real out-castes. They were not expected to wear a white dhoti or walk on the public roads. There was an appearance of calm and contentment which proved to be completely deceptive. Everything has now been shattered by the whirlwind of a social revolution, still blowing strong with tremendous force.

The caste system has been undermined by the influence of modern education and political action and above all by the impact of the cheap modern theatre. The old ruling houses have disintegrated and a new rich class of industrialists and white-collar officials have suddenly appeared on the scene. People have gone out of Kerala in large numbers and come back to their home towns or villages with a lot of money and values other than the traditional ones.

A good part of the land of Kerala is dominated by the slopes of the Western Ghats where the soil is rich and the forests are thick and where the thunderous rain clouds break their fury bringing out their blessings in a variety of hill products. The outside

world knows little about the rubber and tea estates nestling in the high ranges. The tribal hunters and food gatherers who fill these forests are scared of the light of civilization. They are not known to their more advanced brothers in the plains, but anthropologists and sociologists from the West and their Indian disciples have studied at least some of their groups like the Todar, Kadar, Kurumbar, etc. This twilight world of the Western Ghats contains elements of the most sophisticated modern life in the bungalows of the estates, enveloped by the most natural and the most primitive groups of the human race.

Out in the plains, the swollen rivers have fertilized the fields. The river banks are dotted with prosperous villages. There may be one or two ancient temples or churches or modern mosques, a high school and a market place. Most of the villages of Kerala were subsisting until recently on traditional agriculture with paddy fields and ploughs, bullock-carts and serfs. They are now being connected with a network of modern roads and rendered noisy with factories. The great houses of the Nayars and the Nambudiris have lost their influence, and now their lands too, thanks to progressive land reform legislations. Here and there one may see the dilapidated old Taravad houses. Most of the younger generations of these Taravads have already escaped into the cities and equipped themselves for white-collar jobs with modern education. Free education for backward communities has brought about a social revolution in the villages. Traditional arts and skills have declined, with the sons of artisans and folk dancers opting English education and jobs in cities. Cinema houses have sprung up in the rural areas too. Money orders from Singapore and Penang, Dubai and Bahrain have relieved the poverty of the poorest sections in many places. Food crops gradually give place to cash crops.

Most of the towns are found in the midst of these villages. In fact, they are overgrown villages which rose into prominence in the headquarters of old chieftains. As the towns retain many of the rural traits and the villages are getting highly urbanised, the distance between the two has become reduced. Perhaps a distinctive feature of Kerala society today both in towns and villages is the coming together of the classes. There are no Zamindars and millionaires and no slum-dwellers either. The social boundaries have almost disappeared with the swelling numbers of the middle classes. Most people can read and write and every tea-shop is full of discussion on daily news. Rikshaw-pullers are avid filmfans and critics of literature. Even farm-labourers follow the intricacies and intrigues of power politics. These changes

are basically the products of the literacy-revolution brought about by the school and library movements which swept across Kerala in the early decades of the present century. They brought in their wake reform movements which permeated the cells of every community, fostered the spirit of democracy and socialism and generated a renaissance in literature.

The prominence and opulence of the middle classes—half educated and highly conscious of their own rights—distinguish Kerala from several other parts of India. In a society where feudal ties have broken up, everyone is a hero upto himself (and a villain to the rest) and outside the film world, hero worship is extremely rare.

The coastal regions are mostly inhabited by fisherfolk. The waves of the Arabian sea which kiss the sands of beach over a long line of about 590 kilometres, had brought much wealth and wisdom to Kerala in the past. They carried at least some of the pre-historic settlers belonging to the Proto-Australoid or the Negrito race. They brought Jews and Christians from Syria who established their pockets in harbour towns in the early centuries of the Christian era. There were also the Roman merchants of Greek origin who came in search of pepper. The Arabs also came in large numbers. Judaism, Christianity and Islam are as much part of the Kerala heritage as Jainism, Buddhism and Hinduism. The openness of the sea and the presence of trade winds blowing directly from the Arabian coast to Kerala and back every year suddenly became a source of danger to Kerala's independence with the advent of Vasco da Gama. As a result, the Malabar coast became the training ground of the dominant powers of Europe like the Portuguese, the French, the Dutch and the English before they converted the whole of the continent of Asia into a theatre of war. Exposure to the sea and its influences gave Keralites their acquaintance with several varieties of culture in the ancient world as well as the modern. Perhaps this factor is responsible for a certain trait of adaptability and cosmopolitanism in the personality of Kerala.

The different traits discussed above have been moulded in the course of centuries of conflict and co-operation by means of action and reaction between man and nature. The story of the past is a sealed book out of which scraps of paper have accidentally been exposed. These have to be studied carefully and pieced together for what clues we may get regarding the course of events, the type of personalities and influences which ordained the life-style of this regional society in South India.

CLANNISH CHIEFTAINS AND THE ARYAN SETTLERS

The first set of people who left their footprints on the soil of Kerala may be identified at present only with reference to their burial practices. Their language is not recorded anywhere though it may be reasonably assumed that they spoke an archaic form of Tamil. They constructed strange burial monuments in granite, laterite and pottery, most of which are strikingly similar to the megalithic monuments of West Europe and West Asia suggesting that if they were Dravidians, the Dravidians enjoyed an inter-continental range of distribution spread over many centuries in time. These monuments of Kerala are, however, younger than their counterparts in the rest of Asia. Moreover, along with the menhirs, rock-cut chambers, dolmens with port-hole cists and stone-circle, they included the hatstone (*toppikkallu*) a variety peculiar to Kerala. From the casual accounts of these in early Tamil Sangam literature we know that their makers who are traced back to the 10th century B. C. in archaeological record, continued their favourite rituals down to historical times. Therefore a time bracket between 10th century B. C. and 5th century A. D. may be postulated for these people.

It is clear from the grave-relics, including iron tridents and daggers, that the megalith builders had long emerged out of the stone age into the iron age without passing through a bronze age. In fact, there is very little evidence of the old stone age and new stone age in Kerala. In recent years researches of the Deccan College, Puna, have identified probable sites of Paleolithic settlements in the Palghat region. Several stray finds of Neolithic tools have also been made by researches of Calicut University along the river-beds. However, it is premature to put forward any hypothesis regarding man in the old stone age or new stone age in Kerala.

It is likely that the Mauryan invaders who reached the borders of Mysore encountered the Megalith-making tribes under their own chieftains who lived in hill forts and controlled the surrounding countryside. A whole corpus of ancient Tamil literature known to scholars by the label of Sangam literature has fortunately been preserved. The oldest of these poems might probably have been composed by the wandering bards during the period of the Mauryan Empire. In one of his edicts, Asoka has mentioned the neighbouring peoples like Keralaputra and Satiyaputra together with

Chola, Pandya and Tambapanni or Ceylon. They are clearly referred to in the plural as peoples and not as kings and this may suggest that in the period of Asoka the southernmost tribes were just emerging from the tribal status to civilization. It may even be that contacts with the more advanced Mauryan world accelerated political and social movement among the Cheras and the minor chieftains of Kerala. For example, Asoka's claim to have built convenient roads would signify the intrusion of merchants into this area. His scheme of sending Buddhist missionaries to propagate Dharma could have resulted in the propagation of Brahmi script for which there is evidence in the earliest cave-lable inscriptions around the Chera capital of Karur. Nannan, the famous warlike chieftain of Ezhimalai (near Cannanore), praised many poets as the proud possessor of golden chariots might have been contemporary with the Mauryan Empire.

The early Chera kings of this period have been immortalised, not so much by their wars and conquests but by the court poets who glorified these acts in golden words. They were extremely fortunate in having a band of poets like Mamulanar, Parananar, Gautamanar and Kapilar to sing their exploits in simple and elegant verse. These vedic scholars conducted sacrifices for their tribal chieftains and even concocted puranic genealogies for them. Nedum Cheral Atan, the Chera king of the line of Utiyan Cheral, bore the titles of Kutakko and Imayavaramban. The second title was most probably a Tamil version of Devanampriya employed by Asoka as well as his disciple Tissa of Ceylon. This Chera king is said to have defeated the Kadambas with the help of his naval force and imprisoned a Yavana chieftain. Another great Chera king was Vel Kezhu Kuttuvan who is often identified as Chenkuttuvan the hero of *Chilappatikaram*. His dance with *viralis* and his liberality especially towards poets have been praised in Sangam literature. These Cheras had their capital in Vanchi in the interior, and the famous harbour towns like Tyndis and Muziris on the Arabian sea coast. They ruled over the central portion of present-day Kerala. In course of time they seem to have attracted a good deal of Roman trade. There are vivid pen pictures of Yavana ships coming to Muziri laden with gold and waiting for pepper—the black gold of Romans—at some distance from the shore. The hoards of Roman gold coins unearched from Kottayam and Eyyal in Kerala bear testimony to the authenticity of such statements in Sangam literature.

Besides the Nuvas of Ezhimalai and the Cheras of Vanchi who formed one of the three crowned kings of the south, there were a number of other minor chieftains who flourished in different

parts of Kerala. The Ays near Pottiyil mountains in the extreme south were sometimes under the Cheras and sometimes under the Pandyas and sometimes they asserted their independence. Incidentally, the Pottiyil mountain is associated in tradition with the Sage Agastya, called the father of Tamil grammar and literature. Thus Agastya, the Vedic seer, is associated in mythology with the process of Aryanisation of Tamil culture.

These early kings paid homage to Vedic deities through sacrifices, but continued their worship of the blood-thirsty goddess Kottavai, who lived in the high mountain. There is a curious correspondence between the Tamil deity called Murugan on the one hand and the northern Sanskrit god Skanda Subramanya on the other; and similarly between Mayon and Krishna; between Katalon and Varuna; and between Ventan and Indra. Whether they had separate origins in the North and South leading to identification at a later stage cannot be ascertained today. In the light of Sangam evidence it may be suggested that differences between Aryan and Tamil were conceived in terms of culture more than race. Again what was originally Aryan was accepted in the Tamil land (Tamilakam) with a new regional idiom just as what was originally non-Aryan in North India had entered into the developing matrix of Hindu culture.

The entire Social world of Kerala, as part of Tamilakam, is reflected in the large collection of secular poems which forms the characteristic legacy of the Sangam age. Poems dealing with wars and politics are classified as *Puram* or the Exterior; those dealing with love and romance are classified as *Akam* or the Interior. About a third of Sangam poetry comes from the West Coast and deals with chieftains, towns and hill-forts in this region. The chieftains appear to have carried on war as a full-time profession. Their court poets cultivated a whole mythology of war. Some chieftains are praised for having extracted the teeth of the adversary and exhibited them at the gate of the fortress, while others are congratulated for weaving a thick rope out of the black hair of the women-folk of the vanquished foe in order to chain their elephants.

The armed conflict usually started with a cattle raid. Some of the texts give us a grotesque picture of the cattle-lifting tactics followed by grand feasts and entertainments—the heroes, warriors, and even the poor poets drinking toddy to their satisfaction. Death in the battlefield was a passport to the hero's paradise. Heavenly damsels were imagined to take the soldier away into a world of song and dance much to the chagrin of their worldly

mistresses. There was a practice of erecting hero-stones to commemorate such martyrdom. At least one poet proclaims that there was no God other than the hero-stone. The glamour of golden chariots with shining flags and the pendant of seven crest-jewels taken from the crowns of enemy chieftains intoxicated the chieftains and pushed them to the field of battle. For the ordinary soldier the gift of agricultural villages provided enough temptation to face risk of death even apart from the offer of the martyr's paradise.

Totemic emblems are very much prominent in the accounts of war. Every chieftain had a favourite tree like the mango tree or the neem-tree. Every occasion warranted the use of different flowers—the flower of *Vetci* for cattle-raids; *Karnataka* for counter-attacks; *Vanci* for the regular expedition and *Kanci* for defence. The victorious group decorated themselves with *Vaka* flowers at the time of the grand feast and dance. Meat and toddy were indispensable items for all get-togethers.

Cutting down the enemy's totem tree was another form of declaring war. Sometimes the chieftains are said to have used the enemy's tree for making the war-drum. There are various accounts of blood sacrifices to Kottavai, grand feasts to soldiers, invocation of the war-drum as a diety and the participation of women and poets in the enterprise of war. The practice of *Sati* is also mentioned in some places.

Different forms of dance like *Kuravakkuttu* and *Tunankakkuttu* in which the heroes mingled with a class of dancing girls known as *Viralis* have been described. Some group-dances were performed in the court while others like *Olval Amala* took place in the field immediately after the battle.

The ancient Tamil poets have divided land into five geo-cultural regions—the, *Kurini* or hill area, the *Mulla*, or pasture-land, the *Marutam* or cultivated fields, the *Neyal* or sea-coast and the *Pala* or desert region. They had a clear notion that the topography of the land conditioned the occupations and that each occupation prescribed its characteristic form of belief and culture. Thus *Kurinj* was inhabited mostly by *Kuravar*, experts in hunting and warfare. Their chieftain was known also as Velan, Cheyon, etc; *Kuravakkuttu* was the special form of dance practised by the *Kuravar* women-folk. Those who lived in *Pala* were called *Maravar* and *Eyinar*, their males being robbers and warriors while their females were famous for culinary skills. Highway robbery was practised by them regularly except when they swelled the ranks of soldiers under a great king like the Pandya or Chera.

They worshipped Kottavai, the war-goddess who was taken to be identical with Kali in later times. The *Mulla* region was most suitable for grazing cattle and accordingly the cowherds called *Itayar* formed the mainstay of its population. They worshipped Mayon or Krishna with peaceful music and dance. The fertile fields of *Marutam* produced a class of cultivators called *Uzhavar*, *Velalar*, etc. Their chief deity was *Ventan* or Indra, the rain-god. They organised a month-long festival to propitiate him for the prosperity of agriculture. Feasts with meat and toddy were common amongst richer peasants who were highly respected as the ruler's chief sources of revenue. The oldest profession of the world also thrived there. The coastal area of *Neytal* was populated by *Paratavar* or *Valayar* who made their livelihood from fishing, sea-trade and pearl fishing. Naturally, they feared and worshipped *Katalam* or Varuna, the master of the ocean.

These ethnic boundaries were highly flexible and movement from one region to another could be noticed everywhere. Poetic convention has prescribed the different forms of love-songs to different regions. It is stated that originally the people had no marriage or at least rituals associated with marriage. These were instituted by *Ayyar* or *Aryas* according to *Tolkappiyam*, the earliest known work of poetics and grammar variously attributed to periods from 1st century to 5th century A.D. Therefore, scholars have interpreted that marriage ceremony reflected another form of Aryan influence. Following the footsteps of Bharata and Vatsyayana, the poets describe different stages of love, separation and fulfilment in marriage. The chieftain's son and the chieftain's daughter, assisted by suitable companions, figure prominently in all these romances. The elopement of young lovers, the determination of the desperate suitor to make money from trade in distant lands, the risk of capture and family feud involved in the detection of secret romance, the severe tests of sincerity in love etc., form the major themes of *Akam* literature. Compared to classical literature, the earliest effulgence of poetry in Tamilakam exhibits a healthy sense of realism combined with keen observation of contemporary social life. In contrast with early Vedic literature in the North, early Tamil literature in the South is distinguished by its secular tone.

While contact with the Mauryan empire gave the first impulse for the transformation of tribal polity into civilised polity, the stimulus of overseas trade provided by the Roman empire in the first three centuries of the Christian era was responsible for the next phase of development in Tamilakam. This was particularly so in the West Coast where harbour towns had sprung

into existence at the mouth of every river flowing from the Western Ghats to the Arabian sea. Three geographical factors contributed to this development. In the first place came the abundance of pepper and other spices and ivory, sandalwood and peacocks in the Sahya forests. The second factor was the navigability of the rivers connecting the high mountains with the sea, and the third, of course, was the discovery of trade winds which carried sailing ships directly from the Arabian coast to Kerala in less than forty days. This combination produced a boom in Kerala's foreign trade. Pliny and Ptolemy and the anonymous author of the *Periplus* have charted the routes and plotted the distance from one part to another. Their lists of commodities give a correct idea of the hill products of Kerala in ancient and medieval times. Records of the Roman Senate reveal the crucial part played by pepper in the life of ancient Europe. The offer of a few sacks of pepper had the magic effect of persuading even a barbarian like Alaric, the Goth to spare the beautiful city of Rome. Senators blamed the extravagance of Roman ladies who purchased pet animals and birds from India at high prices. They found good reason to be concerned about the drain of gold to the East through the sea-trade. That their anxiety was not unfounded can be seen from the large hoards of Roman coins discovered from Kottayam and Eyyal in Kerala and places like Coimbatore, outside Kerala. A careful student can not only reconstruct the chronology of Roman emperors from the study of their coins in Kerala but also note the fluctuations in trade from the number of coins in each period and the quality of gold in them. The Roman coin Dinarius called *Dinara* seems to have been in currency till the ninth century in Kerala.

The harbours of Naura near Cannanore, Tyndis near Quilandy or Kadalundi, Muziris near Cranganore and Bacare near Alleppey owed their existence primarily to the Roman trade. The existence of the Palghat gap naturally made the hinterland of Muziris wider than that of all others including the whole of Kongudesa. In fact, Muziris, known as Muciri in Tamil, was the first emporium of India and the second capital of the Cheras. We have also references to Roman ships, Roman female body-guards and male palace-guards and Roman wine, besides Roman pirates, in the Sangam literature.

An epic poem named *Chilappatikaram* written by Ilanko Atikal, the younger brother of a Chera king Chenkuttuvan, perhaps best epitomises the social conditions and culture of Tamilakam including Kerala in the early centuries of the Christian era. It is the story of a merchant named Kovalan and his wife Kannaki

belonging to Kaveripumpattanam, the great Chola port on the east coast, which flourished on account of the Roman trade. The infatuation for a dancing girl named Madhavi had taken Kovalan away from Kannaki and impoverished him and the reunited couple set out to start a fresh life at Madurai, the Pandyan capital. Here, the treachery of a goldsmith led to the unjust execution of Kovalan on orders from the Pandyan sovereign. Kannaki, the loyal wife, cursed the Pandyan capital and ran away to the Chera kingdom where she died and was defied by the tribal people. When the saga of the divine wife reached the Chera court, the King decided to sanctify the worship of Kannaki by consecrating her image in his capital in the presence of rulers of South India and Ceylon. This poem embodies the cult of the chaste wife and the epic of the three kingdoms of Tamilakam in one masterpiece. *Manimekhalai*, the sequel to *Chilappatikaram* written by Chattanar, gives the story of the daughter of Madhavi who ultimately left her family profession of dance to become a Buddhist nun. Both these epics present a vivid account of cities and rural areas, merchants, officials and tribals and also the customs and manners and philosophic theories of the Buddhists, Jains and Brahmins in South India. There are also several other works on the Jains and Buddhists in this period which proclaim the strength and popularity of these two heterodox creeds in Tamilakam and particularly in Kerala. As far as the west coast is concerned, Jainism appears to have entered through Wynad in north-west which lies close to Sravana Balgola and also through the Palghat gap in the centre and the southern passes near Nagercoil and Pottiyimalai. They had established pockets in Tirukkuravay (Trikkanamatilakam), Alathur (near Palghat), Kallil (near Perumbavoor) and Chitral (near Nagercoil). Even Tirukkural, the Bible of the Tamil speaking world, exhibits clear traces of Jain influence. Buddhists had an ancient and famous monastery at Srimulavasam in South Kerala, near Ambalapuzha. A number of Buddha images at Bharanikkavu, Nilamperur, Karumadi etc., typical of the later Mahayana style, found in Ceylon, may be attributed to the 8th and 9th centuries A. D. It may be observed that even after the Chera kingdom came fully under Brahmin influence, the minor kingdoms of Kerala like those of Muvas or Mushikas in the North and the Ays or Yadavas in the South continued their affinity towards the non-Vedic sects like Jainism and Buddhism. These two creeds flourished in secluded pockets and finally withered away under the impact of the Bhakti movement in South India.

Incidentally, the Roman contact with Kerala might have given rise to small colonies of Jews and Syrian Christians in the chief

harbour towns of Kerala. The Jews of Cochin believe that their ancestors came to the west coast of India as refugees following the destruction of Jerusalem in the first century of the Christian era. The Syrian Christians claim to be descendants of the converts of St. Thomas, the Apostle. There is no way of checking the truth of such statements with contemporary evidence. Perhaps these legends have to be classed along with the Parasurama legend attributing the creation of the land and the original Brahmin settlements to this puranic hero. There is a tendency to relate the conversion of the last Cheraman Perumal (Chera king) to the prophet himself in spite of obvious chronological incompatibilities. We may, however, confidently assert that the first Brahmin settlements had come into being in the last two or three centuries prior to the Christian era and that Jewish and Christian contacts in sea trade crystallised into permanent pockets in the early centuries of the Christian era. Similarly while Arab contacts were very ancient and Muslims are noticed in Kerala even in the 9th century—some are witnesses in the Syrian copperplates--the conversion of the last Perumal came only three centuries later, with the disintegration of the Chera kingdom of Makotai.

With the decline and fall of the Western Roman empire in the fourth and fifth centuries, there seems to have followed a drying up of the Roman trade. This was accompanied by a corresponding decline of the harbour-towns like Tyndis and Muziris. The Cheras of Vanchi continued their entanglement in Tamil politics as one of the three great ruling powers. There occurred some further political incursions from the North into Tamilakam in the fifth and sixth centuries of the Christian era. This is known as the Kalabhra interregnum. This period fits into that of the rise and growth of the new Kadamba kingdom which claimed suzerainty over the southernmost kingdoms also. Therefore, the Tamil epigraphic sources of the 7th century may be referring to the Kadamba invasions which eclipsed the power of the three great kings. As in the case of the Mauryan threat, the Chera kingdom which lay closest to the Mysore plateau was most exposed to the Kalabhra-Kadamba onslaught also. A Kadamba record of Vishnuvardhana of the 5th century at Edakal cave in Wynad bears testimony to the Kadamba presence in Kerala.

This Kadamba influence led to a fresh wave of Aryan Brahmin migration to Kerala. The traditions of Nambudiris (Kerala Brahmins) recorded in the *Keraloipatti* chronicle refer to Mayuravarman, the Kadamba king, as their patron during the period after Parasurama. The same version is found in Tulu Chronicles like *Gramapaddhati* also. By about the eighth century, the chain of

thirty-two original Brahmin settlements of Kerala had been completed. The Chalukyas, who rose into prominence in this period in Deccan, also patronised Brahmin settlements in a big way. This is proved by some of the records of the Alupa dynasty who were vassals of the Chalukyas in South Canara.

A silent revolution was taking place in the social system of Kerala during the last phase of the Sangam age. This influx of Karnataka Brahmins and the prosperity of their colonies eventually paved the way for the social, cultural and political separation of Kerala from the Tamil country in due course. Dandin (c. 7th century), the court poet of the Pallavas in Kanci, knew some of the great Brahmin scholars of Kerala like Matridatta and Bhavarata. These Brahmin colonies in a Dravidian land were also capable of producing great philosophers like Sankaracharya. However, though Sankara was born in the village of Kaladi in central Kerala he had his philosophical training and activity mostly in Kanci and he set out with determination to establish monasteries in different parts of India. It is interesting to note that this intellectual giant of the 9th century, who saved Hindu orthodoxy through the synthesis of cults and who can well be ranked with St. Thomas aquinas in clarity of thought and comprehensive understanding, was a product of the Post-Sangam new Aryan settlement of Kerala, far removed from the cradle land of Indo-Gangetic civilization.

Tradition as recorded in *Keralotpatti* has preserved a list of thirty-two original Brahmin settlements of Kerala. Cellur, the northernmost among them, was already in existence during the Sangam age. Others came to be established probably in the post-Sangam age. However, early relics to be ascribed to the 9th, 10th and 11th centuries are identified in relation to at least thirty out of the thirty-two settlements*. Even to this day, Brahmins all over Kerala trace ancestry to one of these villages. Apart from these thirty-two, there came into being several other smaller settlements called *upagramas*. The whole of Kerala was in this way covered by a network of temple-centred Brahmin settlements with a large extent of land, a number of tenants and the entailing privileges under their control.

* The following are the thirty-two settlements given in the chronicle:

1. Payyanoor, 2. Talipparambu, 3. Alathiyur, 4. Karathur, 5. Sukapuram,
6. Panniyur, 7. Karikkatu, 8. Isanamangalam, 9. Trichur, 10. Perumanam,
11. Cennasta, 12. Irinjalakuda, 13. Avittathur, 14. North Parur,
15. Airankkulam, 16. Muzhikkulam, 17. Kuzhur, 18. Atur, 19. Chengam-
- nadu, 20. Tirupuppattu, 21. Uliyanur, 22. Kazhktanadu, 23. Errumannur,
24. Kumaranallur, 25. Katamuri, 26. Aranmula, 27. Tiravalla, 28. Kitangur,
29. Chengannur, 30. Kaviyur, 31. Venamani and 32. Niranankara

It is clear that there was some kind of central organisation too. This is attested to by the uniform pattern of revenue and judicial administration and the citation of precedents at Muzhikkulam as valid in several settlements.

Gradually the Brahmins with their more advanced techniques of cultivation and socio-political organisation, their knowledge of the calendar and their strong sense of solidarity, formed the elite in society. They succeeded in raising a feudal fighting class of Nayars and ordered the caste system with numerous gradations of upper, intermediate and lower castes. In this manner the consolidation of the Brahmin settlements and the establishment of their ascendancy gradually paved the way for the rise of a new Malayalam language and a new Malayalee culture. This process was responsible for the evolution of a separate identity of Kerala.

POLITICAL UNITY UNDER THE PERUMALS

A new epoch in Kerala history opened in the 9th century A. D. with the establishment of the later Chera kingdom of Makotai. These rulers, refugees from their ancient capital of Vanchi which had now fallen into the hands of the Pandyas, founded a new capital near the old harbour city of Muciri (Muziris) at present-day Cranganore. This was called Makotai or Mahodayapura. It was built around the great Siva temple of Tiruvanchikulam, the only pilgrim centre of the Saivaites Nayanars in Kerala.

The administrative set up of these kings in their capital, with four celebrate Brahmin ministers called *Tali Adhikarikal* residing in the four great temples of the city, was in conformity with the classical Hindu political style. The royal titles like 'Raja Rajadhiraja Parameswara Bhattaraka', 'Kulasekhara Chakravarthikal' and 'Manukuladitya' would also indicate Sanskrit influence. By this time the Aryan Brahmin colonists of the 32 settlements and their growing branches had consolidated their position on the west coast and completely reorganised society according to their choice. They founded a net-work of landed aristocracy with their large *gramas* (villages) functioning as well-organised semi-autonomous units of local administration. Being the only group with conscious identity, culture and political power they formed themselves into a theocratic oligarchy, wielding real power behind the throne.

In fact, the revival of the Chera kingdom in the 9th century may be seen as a by-product of the Aryan Brahmin settlement and the symptom of the socio-political dominance that they had established. These Perumals had their sovereignty constrained by the pre-existing power of the Brahmin settlements and hereditary chieftains of Kerala. The feudal system of contracts and charters accompanied by the delegation of governmental rights and responsibilities may be noticed here.

The main source of income for the Perumal was land revenue. The Brahmin settlements paid him a lump sum in gold or paddy every year according to an agreement in return for the protection that they enjoyed. He also received the major share of the income from fines paid by culprits for all sorts of economic and social offences. The customs dues from the capital city went to the king but those from other centres went to the respective governors of districts who paid tribute to the sovereign.

Besides, the Perumal had his own royal demesne called Cherikkal which included all the forests and lands not given away to Samantas, Brahmins or merchants on perpetual lease.

No trace of the palace at Makotai remains today. It was found in ruins even in the 16th century by the author of *Kokasandesā* who used its condition to illustrate the fickle nature of the goddess of prosperity. However, it is learnt from the work of a court astronomer of the 9th century that great halls of audience, high mansions and an observatory were part of the palace complex. He also mentions the temple of Ganesa and the *senamukha* (cantonment) where a bell was installed for announcing the time. Sundaramurti Nayanar of the same period has composed a beautiful hymn in praise of the Lord of Tiruvanchikkulam temple. We find poetic accounts of this city in the *Periyapurānam* of the 12th century. The high tower of the city is mentioned in the Viraraghava copper plates. That the settlements of Jews and Christians had been located near the harbour, still known by the old name of Muciri, is revealed by the Jewish copper plates. A detailed study of the surviving relics and records, including the four major temples and several minor temples, would reveal that the plan of the city conformed to the classical *karmuka* type (the bow-shape) mentioned in text-books on town planning and architecture. The old Kali temple at the entrance of the city, which might have been the nerve centre of the cantonment area, continues to attract several thousands of Nayars and Chekons belonging to the old military class in Kerala.

While the Perumal was the Lord of Mahodayapura (Mahodayapura Parameswara) and the overlord of Kerala (Keraladhinatha) he did not administer the entire kingdom directly. Each *nadu* or district had its own hereditary or nominated governor—sometimes a brahmin, sometimes a kshatriya, but more often a Samanta, classified as a Sudra Nayar in caste. Thus the great feudatories were the hereditary governors of Kolattunadu, Purakizhanadu, Kurumpranadu, Eranadu, Valluvanadu, Kizhmalanadu, Vempalanadu and Venadu. Of these, the northern most district of Kolattunadu was almost independent and was forcibly brought under the Chera sovereignty towards the end of the 9th century. The southernmost district of Venadu was carved out of the ancient territory of the Vels where a new harbour city named Kollam was established in A. D. 825. The prosperity of Kollam as a trading centre increased under the leadership of Mar Sapir Iso, the Syrian Christian merchant prince. It became a second capital of the Cheras of Makotai in the period of the protracted Chola wars of the 11th century. In course of time, the foundation era of Kollam city came to be employed all over Kerala and parts of the Pandyan kingdom and Ceylon by astronomers and officials who tagged it on to the Saptarshi era. Therefore the Kollam era came to be known as the Malayalam era in due course. In times of war the feudatories were called to the

capital for counsel and assistance. They led their own contingents of soldiers in battle. The Perumal had a capital force (*Maulasainya*) consisting of 1,000 Nayars (Captains) under the commander-in-chief (Padamel Nayar). Each of these Nayars appears to have had 10 *Chekons* (ordinary soldiers) under his control. Similarly the *Naduvazhis* (district governors) had 300, 500, 600 or 700 Nayars under them with the same type of organisation. These feudal forces raised from the cultivating class were used for protection of property and supervision of local administration.

Some early scholars had considered such bodies to be democratic assemblies, but it is now clear from epigraphic records that they formed an organised militia characteristic of the feudal age. The famous bands of Nayar and Thiyya soldiers known as *Cangatham* in the middle ages might have risen out of such companions of honour, originally conceived as body-guards of the rulers and developed into a landed aristocracy supporting the established order with military power. The word is derived from Sanskrit *Sanghata* meaning group of soldiers. There were also selected captains of such bodies who took an oath to die for their master and with their master and to avenge the death of their master even at the risk of their own life. These were called *Chaver* or suicide squads and they made their first appearance in the course of the Chola wars although they might have come into existence much earlier. The Chera force from Valluvanadu and other districts are found to have taken part in the Chola wars against the Rashtrakutas on the east coast during the 10th century when there was a Chera-Chola alliance. Towards the close of the 10th century, there was an eclipse of the Chola imperial power. When it raised its head again under the leadership of the great Rajaraja Chola there followed a conflict of interest between the Kerala kingdom and the neighbouring Chola empire. This led to a protracted period of war and the Chola conquest of Kerala in the beginning of the 11th century. However, there was a revival of Chera independence in the last quarter of the 11th century under the leadership of Rama Kulasekhara.

The beginning of the 12th century witnessed a renewed attack on Kerala by the combined forces of the Cholas and Pandayas. It was also the period of internal conflicts in the Chera kingdom. Rama Kulasekhara, the last Cheraman Perumal, finally decided to leave the country in the company of some Arab-Muslims. He is believed to have become a convert to Islam and died at a place called Sapher in Arabia. This event has been referred to as the partition of Kerala. What happened in fact was the disappearance of the central power which permitted the various districts to assert their independence. Thus the divisions of the Chera kingdom emerged as principalities under separate chieftains. The flight of the last Perumal, his conversion to Islam and the emergence of the small principalities marked the end of an era.

These were crucial events which shaped the destinies of Kerala for many centuries. The impact of the dismemberment of the Chera kingdom was so great that it is recorded in chronicles and songs and remembered in oral tradition.

Before we leave this period it is necessary to undertake a brief survey of the course of social and cultural development under the Perumals of Makotai. As noted earlier, the Brahmin settlements which possessed large areas of arable land given to them as *Devaswam* and *Brahmaswam* (temple property and Brahmin property) occupied a position of dominance. The temples formed the centre of social life and culture. These Brahmin trustees known as *uralar* (proprietors of the village) controlled their tenants and temple servants through their councils. They collectively undertook to pay a lump sum as annual revenue (*attakkol*) to the sovereign. Their councils were presided over by the king's representatives, the district governors or other officers deputed by them. Through a network of agreements and precedents they managed the affairs of the temple and its properties. They organised *salas* for Vedic instruction and military training. Temple festivals like Onam and Vishu were conducted on a large scale. The dancing girls of the temple known as *Tevadickikal* (Devadasi) amassed much wealth and acquired social prominence. To begin with they might have been pious women of unsullied virtue dedicated to the deity of the temple. In course of time they degenerated into courtesans of a mercenary type. Apart from the priests and servants there were many classes of dependants around the temple. Among these were the *Chakyars* (actors), the *Variyars* (accountants) the *Marars* (drummers), etc. From the ranks of these hereditary servants with different skills rose famous scholars, musicians, astrologers, physicians and story-tellers of the medieval times.

From the class of temple tenants were recruited the *Nayars* and *Chekons* of the traditional army. They were at once agriculturists and fighters. These tenants did not cultivate the land but only supervised the labour of *Pulayar*, *Cherumar*, etc., the unfortunate aborigines who were left behind in the onward march of civilization. They were gradually reduced to serfdom. By clinging to land they failed to acquire the techniques of social organisation and the training necessary to take advantage of social change. They came to be bought and sold as part of the land itself. They represent the other side of the middle ages in Kerala.

Some of the kings and chieftains were interested in cultural activities and construction work. Cheraman Perumal Nayanar, one of the early kings of Makotai, was raised to the status of a Saivite saint. Kulasekhara Alvar, another Chera king of the 9th century, became a devotee of Vishnu. Both have left behind their beautiful hymns in

Tamil. It is believed that the Alvar was also the author of a devotional hymn in Sanskrit called *Mukundamala*. It is possible that he was identical with the famous Sanskrit playwright whose two works—*Tapatisamvarana* and *Subhadradhananjaya*—have become part and parcel of Kerala's dramatic tradition. Kulasekhara seems to have adapted Sanskrit plays to suit the taste of the Kerala audience. In this reformed condition the Sanskrit theatre survived in Kerala while to be staged even today.

As early as the beginning of the 7th century the scholarship of Kerala Brahmins like Bavarata and Matrudatta was known to Dandin at the Pallava court in Kancipuram. The famous Sankaracharya who synthesised various cults and brought into being a unified philosophy and religion of Hinduism in the beginning of the 9th century was born in the village of Kaladi in central Kerala. With this background of Vedic training from the land of his birth he went out to Kanchi and other places putting to shame all adversaries with his incisive logic and unique mastery of language. Several Sanskrit poets like Vasubhatta, Ravideva and Narayana flourished under the patronage of the Chera kings who were themselves poets and dramatists writing in both Tamil and Sanskrit. The Chera kingdom also produced in this period other philosophers like Sarvajanatman, the author of *Sankshepasarivrika* and *Pramanalakshana*, and astronomers like Sankaranarayana, the author of *Laghubhaskariyavyakhya*. The *Chakiyars* of Kerala prepared stage versions of the plays of Saktibhadra, Mahendra Varman, Bodhayana, Kulasekhara and Bhasa which became popular and continue to be staged even today.

There was considerable progress in the field of temple architecture and sculpture. In the absence of granite of high quality there was no development in sculpture peculiar to Kerala. The cave temples and structural temples of the 9th century exhibit the Pallava style and in the later period they reflect the trends found in the Chola empire. Kerala temples were mostly small in size but they represent an exquisite symmetry of plans. Circular and apsidal shrines are found more frequently in Kerala than elsewhere.

Sometimes even experts like Stella Kramrisch have been misled into the feeling that there was a Kerala style of architecture. In fact the partition of the shrine was common to Kerala and other parts of Tamilakam though the difference in the roofing technique often created a different appearance. In order to withstand the heavy monsoon, double or triple roofs or a steep roof coming close to the earth was necessary. However inside the roof the structure was almost a copy of the Pandyan or Chola shrine. In sculpture also the Keralatiles of this period imitated their Pallava predecessors and Chola contemporaries.

A few dwarapala figures at Kaviyur and Vizhinjam, a Dakshinamurthi figure at Irungalakode, a few Vishnu idols in ruined temples and several dancing scenes on the Sopana at Tirukkadithanam and Tirukkulasekharapuram testify to the maturity of the sculptors and their artistic vision. In course of time the Kerala idiom with its own rounded faces and features, heavy ornaments and slightly dwarfish figures came to be expressed more in wood than in stone.

In this period Kerala was chiefly a land of agricultural villages. The scattered Brahmin settlements were better organised and more prosperous than other villages and they were also prominent in the field of culture. The rest of the cultivated land was distributed among the ruling families of the centre and the districts in the form of Cherikkal, i.e., royal estates. These were directly administered by the officials. Not much is known about their internal structure since they have left behind no records; but it may be assumed that apart from the upper most Brahmin elite the pyramidal structure of tenants, sub-tenants, artisans and serfs remained the same as in the Brahmin dominated villages.

It was a feudal society with a graded hierarchy, with hereditary occupations and well-defined duties and responsibilities for each class of people. Proprietorship of land was closely related to political power and administration. Scholars, artisans and skilled workers were mostly paid in terms of land. This is known as *Virutti* or service tenure.

The tenants were expected to pay all sorts of dues to the landlord like *alkasu* (slave-money for keeping serfs and slaves), *Manayira*, (roof-tax), *menippon* (capitation fee for holding the post of community leader), *iravucoru* (payment for the maintenance of soldiers), *talavila* and *mulavila* (head-price and breast-price). There were other forms of customary dues like *Onanel* (Onam dues) and *patayaninel* (dues for a form of military entertainment of tournament). Different types of skilled workers paid some form of professional tax or other. For example, the toddy tappers had to pay *talakkanam* and *enikkanam* for the right of using the fetter and the ladder. The oil mongers had to pay *kutanazhi*, a payment of one *nazhi* of oil per pot of oil. The merchants paid *ulku* (sulka—a kind of sales-tax) both at the time of entry into the market and at the time of sale. There was also *pakudam* or vehicle-tax for both boats on water and carts on land. Besides these, a kind of weighing tax and measuring tax—*tulakkuli* and *mirakkuli*—had to be paid to the custodian of weights and measures. They paid *tattarakkuli* for strong rooms of godowns and *pantalkkanam* for temporary sheds erected on the property of landlord of temple.

In the case of aristocratic persons there were special privileges like those of putting up additional storeys or ornamental arches and gates in the house. These were occasions for chieftains to realise additional

revenues. Even the use of silk turbans, palanquins, procession lamps and instrumental music as status symbols invited taxation from the State. There was the universal system of *Kazhcca* or tribute which a subordinate paid to the superior at the time of ceremonial meeting and celebrations of a religious or domestic nature.

A peculiarity of the social system in Kerala which does not appear in Sangam literature comes to notice in the epigraphic and literary records of this age. This is the matrilineal form of inheritance. Many theories have been put forward to account for it but a satisfactory, comprehensive explanation is yet to be formulated. It is wrong to equate matriliney in Kerala with the same system found among hill tribes in the Himalayas or in Africa, because it continued long after other tribal characteristics disappeared and the people had emerged fully into the daylight of civilisation. Matrilineal traits among southern groups are mentioned in the *Mahabharata*. The fact that they are not explicitly portrayed in Sangam works made Prof. Elamkulam and Prof. Sreedhara Menon ascribe the origin of *marumakkattayam* (inheritance through the nephew in the literal sense) to the wars of the 11th century. This is not convincing because even greater wars in other areas and in other parts of the world have not produced such a radical change in the law of succession. Moreover it is now revealed that epigraphic and literary sources begin to bring out the matrilineal order at least from the 9th century. It may, therefore, be presumed that the tribal matrilineal trait present in West Coast society earlier, but not prominently displayed in the Sangam age was now strengthened by certain features. In their anxiety to preserve undivided the *Brahmaswam* lands, the Brahmin settlers permitted only their eldest sons to marry within the community. The junior members carried on informally with female members of the tenants and servants of the temple families. They could not bequeath property to their children or even maintain the wife and children. Still they were coveted husbands among the humbler folk on account of their social status and religious influence. This new form of alliance must have saved ancient tribal matriliney from getting atrophied in course of time and also given it a new lease of life. The most complete observance of this form of inheritance is found among the Kshatriyas, Ambalavasis and Nayars who were closest to the Brahmins in Kerala groups.

In spite of the predominantly agrarian character of society, trade and commerce flourished on account of certain peculiar gifts of nature. The hill products from the Western Ghats, carried down the many rivers to natural harbours on the Arabian sea, readily secured a market in West Asia and Europe. A number of Jewish and Christian traders exploited the situation with the help of the monsoon. As they possessed much wealth in gold, the native chieftains were prepared to overlook differences in faith and race and extend to them religious toleration as well as social equality. Moreover, unlike the conquering forces who came to

the North-west of India, these merchants were not inclined to, or capable of, disturbing the established order. On the other hand the Syrian Christian and Jewish leaders like Mar Sapir Iso and Joseph Rabban came to the rescue of the Chera kings in times of war and earned their gratitude in full measure. This is evident from the Syrian and Jewish copper plates. The status of the foreign merchants as leaders of corporations like *Manigramam* and *Anjuvannam* received official recognition from the ruler. The Christians and Jews were also granted exemption from taxes and dues and the seventy-aristocratic privileges including the right to sound war-drums and bugles, construct gateways with arches, carry weapons and ornamental lamps in procession and use the palanquin.

Like other feudal potentates they too enjoyed these privileges in hereditary succession. With regard to the Jews it has been specified that sons as well as nephews could inherit their title to *Anjuvannam* thus leaving them the option between partilineal and matrilineal forms of inheritance. This is an index of the localisation of external elements in this part of India.

There is another side of the shining medal in the prevalence of serfdom and slavery in Kerala. The references to slave tax (*alkasu*) among the dues paid by merchants would establish the fact of slavery. Again, there are several instances of the Pulayas being bought and sold with plots of land. Those among the old tribal hierarchy who failed to move along with the Brahmins in the new social revolution were driven to the wall and deprived of all chances of advancement. The deterioration in their position was directly proportionate to the development of the Aryan (Brahmin) society and culture.

FEUDAL POLITY AND CULTURE

The loss of political unity did not lead to the loss of political independence in Kerala. In fact, the ghost of the Chera kingdom haunted the destiny of Kerala as a guardian deity for many centuries to come. Each minor chieftain who became the ruler of a small principality claimed the gift of the last Cheraman Perumal as the sanction behind his throne—or any ornamental chair which passed for a throne. While the Kshatriya rulers of Cochin professed to be the direct descendants of Cheraman Perumal according to the matrilineal order, the rulers of Venad traced the foundation of their kingdom back to the son of Rama Kulasekhara and even adopted his coronation name Kulasekhara as a hereditary title. Similarly the governors of Ernad, who became the masters of Calicut city later, based their claims on the last Cheraman's gift of a sword with instruction "to die and kill for conquest". The Raja of Valluvanad was puffed up with pride about his legacy as the president of the grand Mamankam festival at Tirunavai. Kolattiri also cherished the Chera system of administration as a sacred trust permitting only the minimum changes which overtook them in spite of themselves in due course.

There were many other small principalities, but everyone of them reckoned their history from the last Cheraman Perumal's pilgrimage to Mecca. The power of the myth was such that basically the Chera political institutions continued for many centuries more.

In this game of power politics the Zamorin, Raja of Calicut enjoyed certain special advantages of location. His new headquarters near Calicut harbour attracted Arab traders in large numbers. With their help, the port-city as well as the kingdom advanced quickly in prosperity and fame. The rulers also exhibited statesmanship enough to guarantee religious tolerance to all sects and creeds in the big international mart in Kozhikode. The Arab world knew the Zamorin as their trusted friend and therefore the Europeans came to hear about him at first as a Moorish merchant prince.

Calicut is the anglicised form of the Arab word "Kaalikoot" derived from the native term Kozhikode. Within a generation of

the disappearance of Chera power, the governors of Ernad moved from their interior home at Nedyiruppu to the coastal strip of Kozhikode which the last Perumal had presented to Mana Vikrama in recognition of his distinguished military service. They succeeded in driving out the Porlatiri chief in the neighbourhood and in "capturing" the trusteeship of the Kozhikode Tali temple by liquidating the Brahmins who resisted. Gradually the Eradis (rulers of Ernad), now known to the world better as the Zamorins of Calicut, grew in prosperity and power as a result of the gains from the Arab trade. They managed to bring the neighbouring chieftains of Parpanad and Vettattunad in the South, as well as Kurumbranad and Puranad (Kottayam) in the North, within their sphere of influence.

It is interesting to note the role that the Arab and native Muslims played in the development of the Calicut Kingdom. A Muslim was appointed as the commissioner of the port under the title of Shah Bandar Koya. In course of time he came to be called Sabandra Koya or simply Kozhikode Koya. This became a hereditary office. According to the chronicles of the royal family, the Kozhikode Koya advised the Zamorin to capture Tirunavai region from the ruler of Valluvanad. He wanted his master to have the privilege of presiding over the Mamankam festival (Mahamagha) celebrated once in twelve years at that place. With the help of the Koya's vessels coming up the Ponnani river, the Zamorin's forces ultimately succeeded in this venture.

Surprisingly enough the blood-feud which opened with this victory lasted for about five centuries. Thousands of people congregating on the dry river-bed for the Mamankam festival regularly witnessed the desperate bid of a handful of a Valluvanad soldiers, belonging to the bodyguard of the Raja, to overpower the forty thousand strong standing army of Kozhikode. As they fought their way to death with determination, they were called 'Chaver' meaning suicide-squad. The Mamankam was an ancient river festival on the model of the Kumbhamela at Prayaga and the Simhastha at Ujjain. It was observed at Tirunavai, on the banks of Bharathapuzha or Ponnani river, when Jupiter stood in Simha lagna. People believed that the holy waters of Ganga were present in this river at that particular time. In course of time the appearance of the Chaver fighting their way to death became the central attraction of this festival in spite of all its colourful processions, pomp and pageantry.

The Zamorin's victory over the Valluvanad Raja brought him directly into contact with the rulers of Cochin, thereby opening a long chapter of protracted Calicut-Cochin wars. Several minor incidents

involving the intrigues of courtiers and the details of temple rituals are mentioned among the causes of these wars. However, they belonged basically to the category of fratricidal wars characteristic of feudal society everywhere. They were born of the contest for supremacy in Kerala and could not stop unless one of the two powers could remove the other completely from the scene. The support of Arab wealth and equipment favoured Calicut against Cochin during the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries until it was counter-balanced by the European powers—Portuguese and Dutch—on the other side.

In this great conflict not only the princes and princelings of Kerala but the entire population had to take sides. The big influential Brahmin community split into two—the Panniyur faction supporting the Zamorin and the Cokiram faction supporting the Raja of Cochin. Panniyur and Cokiram were the most influential among the Nambudiri or Kerala Brahmin settlements after the fall of Makotai. Their leaders are cited as witnesses in the Vira Raghava copper plates (1125 A. D.) issued by the titular “emperor” of Makotai. Gradually they fell apart in the contest for leadership within the Brahmin community of Kerala. Reverberations of this conflict, which extended from the rituals and forms of sacrifice to the modes of speech and dress, filled many a work of medieval Malayalam literature. The Panniyur group, which was rather unorthodox in all matters, chose the Zamorin as their patron; and the Cokiram group naturally found themselves in the opposite camp. Incidentally this infighting of the Brahmins enabled the Zamorin to retrieve part of his loss in stature due to his Arab-Muslim alliance.

Nevertheless the Zamorin had to pay a big price for this compromise. His Brahmin supporters from the Panniyur group advised him to institute a grand competition for different branches of traditional scholarship at Kozhikode Tali temple. This was known as Revathi Pattattanam (Bhattasthanam) in memory of the birth asterism of the Zamorin who started the competition. Every year the most outstanding scholars in Mimamsa, Vedanta, Tarkka, Vyakarana etc., were honoured by the Zamorin at the Kozhikode Tali Temple with the presentation of a purse. Some of the great personalities in the world of letters like those of the Payyur Bhattas (authors of several Mimamsa works), Uddanda the poet from Tanjore (author of Kokila Sandesa and Mallika Maruta), Kakkasseri Damodara Bhatta (author of Vasumati Manavikrama), Chennas Narayana Bhatta (author of Tantrasamuchaya) and Punam Nambudiri (author of Ramayanam Champu) were closely associated with

this institution. Their activities created a medieval academy with its headquarters in Kozhikode Tali temple. Popular tradition speaks about eighteen royal poets in the court of the 15th century king Mana Vikrama the great of Kozhikode.

The successors of the Cheraman Perumals at Kodungallur had to shift their capital from Kodungallur (Cranganore) after the middle of the fourteenth century. Even before that their sway over the neighbouring districts diminished to the vanishing point and their power dwindled into insignificance. Apart from the Vira Raghava copper plates we do not possess any of their official documents but there are Malayalam literary works of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries which refer to them still as the over-lords of all Kerala. This would only go to prove that the glory of the imperial family name of the Perumals persisted in the imagination of the people.

A great upheaval at the bottom of the sea in 1341 A. D. covered the natural harbour at Kodungallur with silt and sand while a new island was thrown up further south. This was known as Pudu Vaippu (the new land) and the era of Pudu Vaippu was used for all calculations in that region. This phenomenon was also responsible for opening a new natural harbour which came to be known as Cochazhi (the small harbour) and Cochi in common parlance and as Cochin in the English language. Eventually the small harbour of Cochin outdid the big harbour of Kodungallur in commercial prosperity and the royal family also had to shift their capital to that place.

The central part of Kerala controlled by the rulers of Cochin was the seat of Nambudiri (Brahmin) orthodoxy and Nayar aristocracy which it had inherited from the days of the perumals. Weakness on the part of the faction-ridden family with five branches opened the floodgates of anarchy. The position of the rulers of Cochin illustrates best the dichotomy between ritual status and political power in medieval Kerala.. From the beginning they had over-grown vassals like the Brahmin Kings of Edappalli and the Samantha chiefs of Paliyath house. Though the Raja of Cochin was respected all over Kerala as the direct descendant of the Perumals and the noblest representative of the Kshatriya race, the inhibiting weight of tradition made him incapable of adopting new policies and strategy to suit the changing times. He remained the highest patron of Brahminical rituals and scholarship but wealth and power slipped out of his hands and they were followed by art and literature.

While Calicut (Kozhikode) became the most powerful among the successor-states of the Chera kingdom in the north, Venad was the rising star in the southern part of Kerala. Sangramma Dhira Ravi Varma Kulasekhara was the most famous among the kings of Venad in early medieval times. He led a victorious expedition to Madurai and Kanchi and performed a fresh coronation ceremony on the banks of river Vegavati (1313), crowning himself as the monarch of all South India. However, this was a short-lived victory in the midst of the kaleidoscopic changes occurring in the Pandya territory where the invasion of Malik Kafur had created disturbed conditions in which a number of Tamil chieftains contested with alternate success for the glorious title of the empire.

Geographically and culturally, the kingdom of Venad remained partly in Keraladesa and partly in Pandyadesa. In the immediate post-Chera period its territorial expansion was chiefly in the direction of the South. As a result, the capital itself shifted from Kollam to Trivandrum. The rulers and their Nayar aristocrats were greatly interested in the fertile fields of Aynad and Nanchinad and they spent most of their time and energy in wars for the conquest and retention of those regions. The Venad area was conspicuous by the absence of the original settlements of Tulu-Kerala Brahmins whose leadership and dominance had been responsible for the distinctive character of Kerala society and culture. In course of time the great wealth of the kings of Venad, who enjoyed the benefits of the Chinese trade with the southern tip of the peninsula, could attract some of the Kerala Brahmins (Nambudiris) to settle down at Trivandrum, Suchindram and other places. Nevertheless, too much of involvement in Tamil politics weakened the impact of Venad on the rest of Kerala.

The post-Chera period has rightly been described by Prof. Elamkulam as the orgiastic season of the Nambudiri elite. With the disappearance of central government, the semi-autonomous Brahmin settlements became almost completely autonomous and independent. Nominally they were subjected to some raja or other but the feudal rajas did not possess enough power to control them. The leading Brahmin families in some of the big Sanketas like Panniyur, Cokiram, Trikkakara, and Tiruvalla were as powerful as the neighbouring rajas themselves if not more. They did not have to pay tax or tribute to any one and they came to enjoy absolute power within the Sanketa or territorial jurisdiction of their chief temple. Many of the Samantha and Nayar chieftains were sons of Nambudiris, born of 'sambandham' and inferior to them in ritual status as ordained by caste. The sacerdotal office and scholarship

also conferred an aura of unquestionable authority on the Brahmin landlords. They were in a position to conquer without a sword and govern without the sceptre.

In fact this unchallenged monopoly of power and property was made possible in Kerala by the Nambudiri-Nayar alliance. Whereas the Brahmins formed an exclusive community devoid of marriage ties with other groups everywhere in India, in Kerala alone they contracted matrimonial relations with the ruling classes through the curious form of alliance called sambandam—a sort of respectable concubinage. This was a matter of cruel necessity for the junior members of Nambudiri families who were debarred from regular marriage within the community for fear of the possibility of partition. It was a form of luxury for the patriarchs in the rich Nambudiri families. For samanta and Nayar chieftains this kind of Brahmin alliance offered entry into the enchanted world of Aryan society at least by the backdoor. The net result was that Kerala, as different from other parts of India, did not experience the cleavage between Brahmins and non-Brahmins, between Aryans and non-Aryans, in society and culture.

These Nayars, who were at first recruited from the aboriginal tribal groups as domestic servants, tenants and soliders, gradually rose to the position of a strong ruling and fighting class, partly Aryan and partly Dravidian in blood as well as in their way of life. They formed a large intermediary group shielding the Brahmins from the rest and at the same time providing a link between them and the under-world of agricultural and industrial workers including serfs and slaves. While feudal tenure in lands provided to the male members of high-class Nayar families virtual ownership of land, the loose pattern of sambandam between Nambudiris and Nayar women gave these females a certain respectability and independence.

The orgiastic season of Nambudiris gradually transformed the majority of them into a type of drones. Though subservient to Nambudiri hegemony in sex and spirituality, the warlike Nayars with well-exercised bodies and Spartan habits of discipline, acquired the management of property and society. The master class of Nambudiris underwent a process of emasculation by giving themselves up to pleasure. This enabled the servant class of Nayars, who had imbibed the rudiments of Aryan philosophy and culture from their close contact with the former to become the real rulers by taking over the reins of administration. The five centuries which followed the dissolution of Chera kingdom witnessed what appears outwardly as the blossoming of Nambudiri aristocracy but which was at the same time, in terms of historical evolution, the period of its decadence.

By about the 16th century the Nambudiris were finished as a forward-looking, dynamic social force. Their solidarity in the "Grama" organisation, cemented by strict rules of property and hierarchy, and jealously preserved by means of cruel punishments like ostracism and ex-communication gave way to arrogant individualism and sensualism. In order to continue their pleasures uninterrupted they had to leave more and more things in the hands of Nayar secretaries. Invariably they also had to please their Nayar mistresses with all sorts of concessions. For the great Brahmin landlords in Kerala, fraternising with Nayar tenants really meant surrender though the old forms of authority were maintained for a few centuries more. The strategy which helped Nambudiris originally to come to power carried its own punishment since gradual emasculation was inherent in the nature of the compromise which brought into being a Nambudiri-Nayar alliance.

The transition from Nambudiri dominance to Nayar dominance in the post-Chera period was so slow as to be unnoticeable, but the gulf between the Nambudiri-Nayar upper class and the Tiyya-Pulaya lower class was growing rapidly. To accommodate the class differences properly, the four-fold caste system came to be subdivided with infinite gradations, based on real occupation, habit and political influence. All these variations could not be reflected by the standard unit of untouchability. Therefore new dimensions of distance-pollution were invented with unapproachability and unperceivability added on to the scale. Exclusiveness in food and marriage was extended to dress, housing areas and public roads too.

With increasing rigidity of caste, the worst sufferers were Pulayar, Parayar, Cherumar etc. They were attached to plots of cultivable land and exchanged along with it without any right to family or children. This condition is amply represented in medieval documents which unfortunately tell us very little about other aspects of their life. From the travellers' accounts about a practice called Pulappedi, Mannappedi, etc., one gets a glimpse of the bitterness in the relations between Pulayas and Nayars in medieval times. In a certain period of the year, during the month of 'Karthika' the Pulayas came out of their enclosures. They hung around the Nayar houses. If they spotted a Nayar woman walking alone without male company after sunset they would throw a stick or stone at her and by means of this distant touch they earned the right to appropriate her as a slave. This might be the relic of an ancient feud between the two sections of aboriginals—those who went over to the Brahmin settlements to undertake their service and those who remained outside.

The medieval Hindu temples and a few Christian churches and Muslim mosques of this period remain to this day as the standing monuments of that by-gone age. Several structural temples with a simple garbhagraha mandapa and prakara now developed into complex forms incorporating within two rounds of prakara (fortress walls) many separate shrines of minor deities. In the course of renovation the mandapas also multiplied and storeys were added with more ornamental sculpture. Gopuras came up at one or two entrance gates though they were equal to those in Chola-Pandya regions in terms of size and extravagance. An interesting development of this period in temple architecture and sculpture was the duplication of members in each section, the most conspicuous manifestation of this tendency being found on the pillars and pilasters. All the items like the square base, octogonal shaft, palaka (slab), itala (petal), kumbha (vessel) and even the ornamental banana sprout hanging at the sides doubled and sometimes trebled. The kudus on eaves enclosing human or animal faces and the toranas of geese and elephants became increasingly more ornamental. The panyaras acquired some double pilasters and their tops were decorated with wide-spread, fan-shaped, wave-crested foliage. This kind of ornamentation and duplication of members can be identified as a common feature in this period in all South India.

In the sculpture of images also there was the same ornamentation—the abundance of garlands and crown jewels, the elaboration of kankana, katisutra and yajnopavita and the stylised variations of folds and tresses—a trend of which we find in climax in Hoysala sculpture. Looking at parallel developments all over South India it would appear that earlier dynastic labels like Pallava, Chalukya, Chola, Pandya, Hoysala etc., are misleading. However, for want of a better terminology at present we may state that in Kerala we find at this period a mixture of Hoysala and later Chola influence. A certain regional idiom also has come into existence. It appears in the heavy chins and flat circular faces, broad and heavy limbs and short stature. There is a preference for large size in figures. Concern for facial expression and animation seems to give way to the passion for decoration and stylisation with the result that a certain crudity and stiffness of the limbs characterises post-Chera sculpture.

The typical structures of the 14th-15th century period, both in architecture and sculpture, are to be found at Talipparamba (old Perum Cellur), Panniyur, Cokiram, Irinjalakkuda, Vaikkom, Trikkodithanam, etc. Stray pieces of sculpture, identified as the products of this period by the porous headgear, beaded garlands and grim faces with wide open eyes and nostrils, are collected in the State museums at Trichur, Kayamkulam and Trivandrum and also

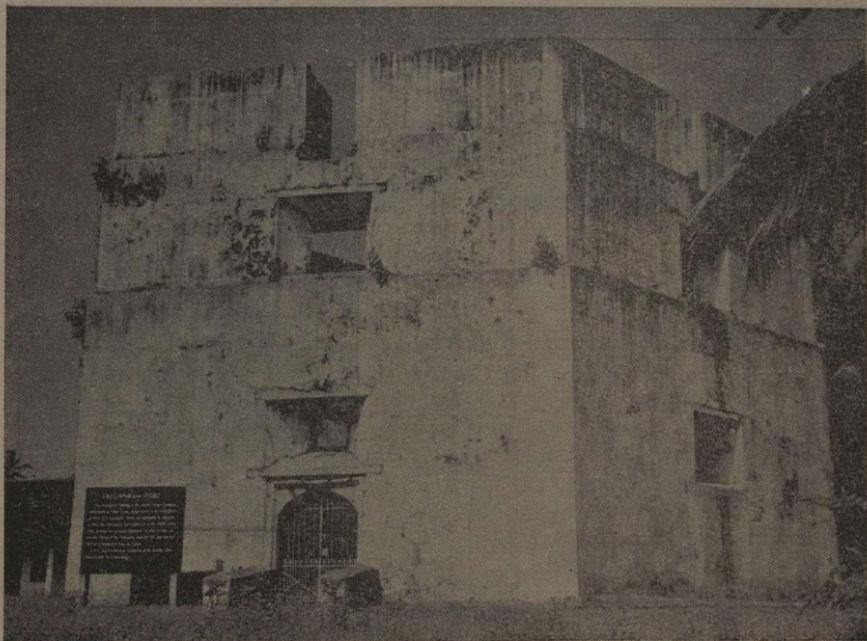
at the Calicut University Museum of History and Culture. The most numerous among them are the idols of Vishnu, Bhagavathi and Ganesa in which a new Kerala idiom is very much in evidence. Timber takes the place of stone in this period and Kerala seems to have discovered her inner self in elaborate wood-work which gradually took the place of stone-sculpture. Wood naturally imposed certain characteristics like roundness of face and limbs on animal and human figures. The tendency to fix as many forms as possible in limited space gave the designs a crowded appearance. Realistic simplicity and natural grace eventually gave place to complexity, vulgarity and exuberance. Even Christian art in churches at Palur, Kadamattam, Kotamangalam etc., followed the Hindu pattern and style and the lotus and dragon motifs were freely employed in their sculpture.

Lusty and voluptuous female figures adorn the pillars of medieval Kuthambalams (dancehalls) in all the famous temples. Just as the Kuthambalam occupied a prominent place in society, the Kuthachis or dancing girls of the temple came to be recognised as the central characters in upper-class society life. Most of the surviving literary works—the earliest works in Malayalam language—are devoted to the praise of the beauty, skill and popularity of the dancing girls and the pomp and majesty of their palatial residence. Poets vied with each other in pleasing them through ornamental verse. High sounding sanskritic titles like Maralekha, Vasantamalika etc., were given to them. This was a distinction which Devadassis (Tever+adi+achi=Tevadichi in Malayalam) of the period shared with the royalty and aristocracy—a good indication of their status and role in social life.

They were often the mistresses of princes, and generally entertained a whole crowd of admirers including Chettis (wealthy merchants), Bhattas (learned Brahmin professors) and Chatras (boastful Brahmin students of the Vedic colleges). They were well-versed in dance and poetry and enjoyed the company of poets. Among the numerous tevadichi ballads of this period (14th-16th century) like Uniyachi, Unniyadi, Unnichirutevi and Unnili depicting girls of different parts of Kerala as heroines and divinities, there is at least one piece of pungent satire called Chandrotsavam which describes an imaginary moon-festival where all the dancers and dance fans of Kerala participate in a sort of comic parade. The philosophy of courtesanship is expounded in Vaisikatantram, while the grammar and poetics of Manipravala literature of this type are elaborated in Lilatilakam.



*Umbrella Stone at Chengamanad
Pallippuram Fort at Vypeen. Built in 1503; believed to be the earliest
European building extant in India.*





A Relief from Vaikom Temple



*Hanuman—Kottakkal
Temple—9th Century*



Kudakoothu—Thrakkodithanam Temple



Budha—Kanyaguptha

*Kallil Temple
near Perumbavur*

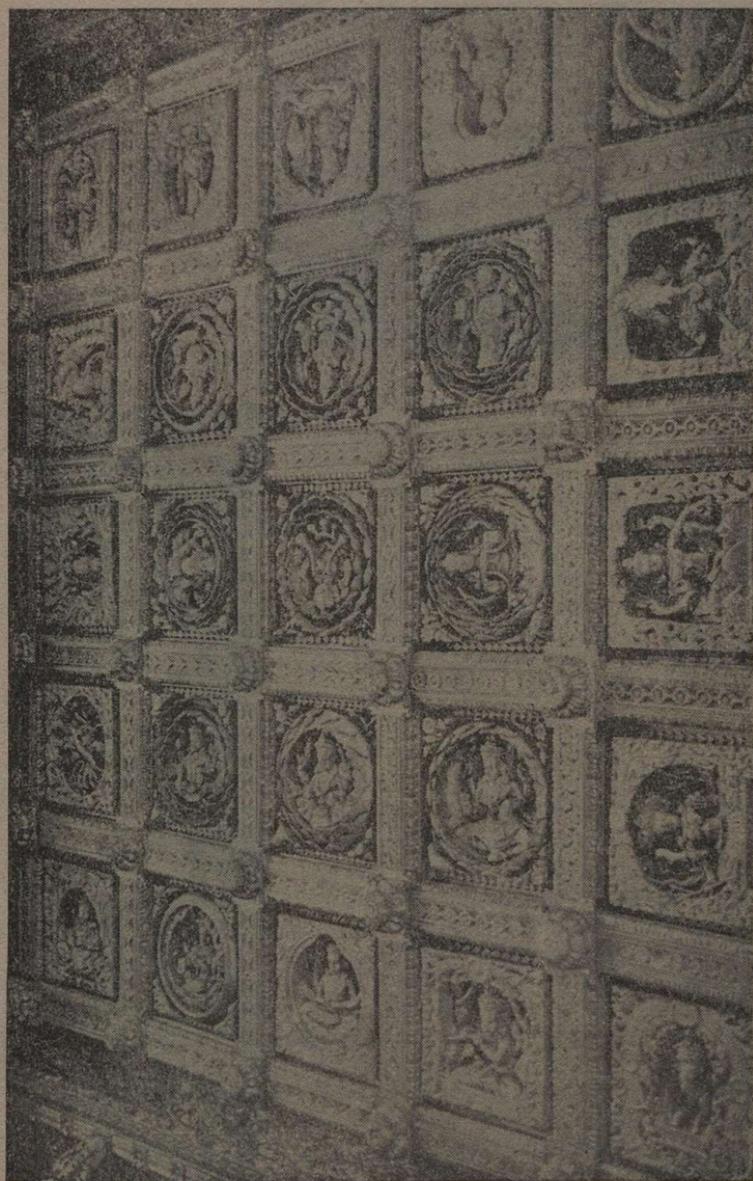




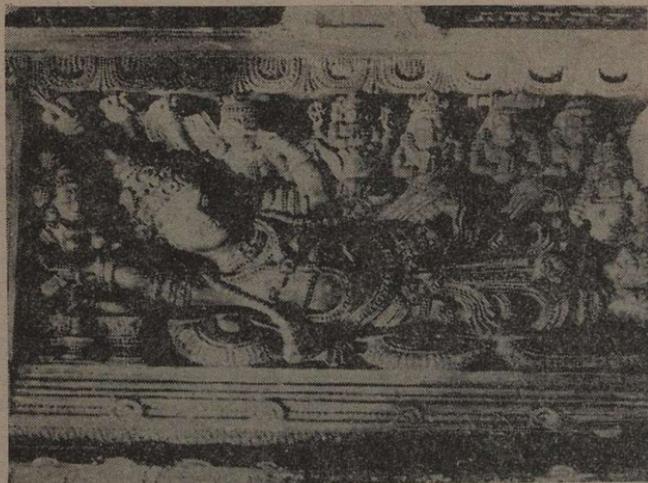
Kudamkoothu—Kidangoor Temple



Wood Carvings—Chathankulangara



Sculpture—Chathankulangara Temple



*Wood Carvings—
Chathankulangara*

*Dwarapalaka—Kaviyoor
Temple—8th Century A. D.*



In short the courtesan's mansion was as significant an institution as the chieftain's palace and the Brahmanical temple of this age. No wonder Prof. Elamkulam wrote in rather derogatory terms about what he called the Kuthambalam culture of Kerala in the feudal age. Not only wealth and power but also poetry and art were placed at the feet of the courtesans. If the previous epoch had been one of devotion to god and kings, it was followed by one of devotion to sex-queens both in the temple and the palace. Vulgarity and sensuality formed the hallmark of literature. It engendered superficiality of spirit and repetitive formalism in style.

Perhaps this brief account would not be properly balanced if we do not point out the polarisation between asceticism and eroticism in the upper-class society of this age. While the majority of Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Samantas were devoted to the mundane pursuit of material pleasures, there were a few like the Payyur Patteris who justified the title of 'Rishi' by their singleminded pursuit of a particular branch of knowledge. They are found in different fields, like Chennas the author of *Tantrasamuchaya*, a treatise on sacred architecture and sculpture, Parameswara, the founder of Drigganita system of astronomy based on observation with the naked eye, and the anonymous author of *Ashtangahridaya*, the short encyclopaedia of Ayurvedic science. However, the number of such disciplined efforts remained small, and even there the majority of scholars were collecting frivolous, flimsy and repetitive forms of information and composing verse to enshrine verbal acrobatics rather than true wisdom or love.

In this period a good deal of scientific and philosophical thought embodied in classical Sanskrit and Tamil literature had filtered through the Brahmin scholars to their dependent classes and to some extent to the common people. This provided the foundation of the sub-national culture of Kerala. Apart from the Manipravalam works composed by upper-caste scholars, a number of pure Malayalam songs in praise of gods and heroes appear to have come into existence. These marked the beginnings of *Pattu* and *Kilippattu* literature. Though their best available specimens are attributable to a slightly later period i.e., sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the movement that culminated in Thunchath Ezhuthachan's epoch-making translations of epics and puranas had started much earlier in the Ramayana works of Niranam poets and the *Ramakathappattu* (14th century) hailed as the earliest work of genuine Malayalam language.

The *Payyannur Pattola*, of which only fragments are available, also belongs to this period and narrates the story of a romance

and naval adventure. At least a few of the *Vadakan Pattukal* (Ballads of North Malabar) from Kadathanad are centred on the Puthuram family of Chekon (Thiyya) mercenaries and could be placed in the 14th-15th centuries. These popular songs, as different from the decadent literature of the highest leisure-class of Nambudiris, open out a different world in which the fluctuations of fortune among traders, the family feuds among the fighters, tragic and comic love affairs, grand popular festivals and heroic tournaments give us a taste of the noise and tumult of somewhat prosperous middle-class life. The Vellala Chettis, Naduvazhi Nayars, richer groups of Chekons, as well as the Syrian Christians and Jews of Cochin and the Koyas of Kozhikode, all of them partook, in this medieval pageantry. Here we witness the flowering of traditional Kerala culture.

With agricultural and commercial prosperity bubbling up in the villages, the festivals like Onam and Vishu which began as mere sectarian religious observances acquired the character of popular celebrations in Kerala. They were fixed up as the time when tenants had to pay their feudal dues to the owners of land. Even during this period the percentage of surplus appropriated by the rulers and landowners left sufficient margin for the middle tenants to enjoy life. Their enthusiasm transformed Onam, a Vaishnava sacred day commemorating the Vamana incarnation, into a harvest festival. This gave occasion for the relics of time-less tribalism in the form of group dances (Kolkkali, Kaikottikkali, etc.) and physical contests (Onathallu, Padayani etc.) to emerge once again as part and parcel of a popular culture. Besides this great annual function, there were local festivals in each Brahmanical temple and Dravidian Kavu—sometimes in honour of puranic deities like Vishnu and Bhagavati, sometimes in honour of deified men and women like Parassinikkadavu Muthappan, Sabarimala Ayyappan and Katankottu Makkam, and sometimes in honour of serpents too. Various popular forms of Theyyam and Tira. Purakkali and Patakkali combined the ancient Tamil vigour and the new Aryan sophistication in colour, movement and tune.

The Kalari system of fencing, probably imported from Tulunad, became rooted in Kerala. In an epoch of spreading anarchy, Cangatams (Sanghata) or bands of mercenary soldiers attached themselves to rich men who paid them for protecting their property and lives. The older and greater potentates had small groups of hereditary body guards called Chaver who took an oath to die for their master and take revenge if the master was killed in warfare. Most ordinary men and women practised weapons for self-defence. Though intellectual training was reserved for

Brahmins and a few of their favourites, physical culture was universally encouraged. The Panikkars (instructors in arms) belonging to Nayar, Chekon, Christian and Muslim communities were highly respected in the countryside.

This feudal society of Kerala was prosperous and complacent. It was so accustomed to the established order in the course of centuries that habitual submission to force in the caste frame work produced a semblance of harmony and balance. At the same time, it was blissfully ignorant of the Afghan, Pattan and Mongol invasions which uprooted ancient Hindu society in most parts of India beyond the Sahya mountain, the great sentinel of Kerala. This coastal area had, along with the rest of Tamilakam, remained outside the big empires in the past. This time also it escaped the catastrophe of Alauddin Khilji's campaign which pushed southward straight to Rameswaram without turning this side or that side.

Here the Arab Muslims, who followed the footsteps of Syrian Jews and Christians in trade, received hospitality from kings at Cannanore and Calicut and acquired the monopoly of spices in maritime commerce. A strange but healthy cultural symbiosis permitted the co-existence of small Jewish, Christian and Muslim groups under the patronage of Hindu monarchs and Brahmin oligarchs though Jainism and Buddhism had already been pushed out or absorbed in due course. The kings and people were so much immersed in their own petty feuds that even the appearance of Portuguese naval power on the distant horizon of the Arabian sea did not open their eyes to the perils and prospects of the modern age.

PART II

EUROPEAN IMPERIALISM

PORTUGUESE IMPERIALISM

The arrival of Vasco da Gama at Calicut on 21st May, 1498, marked the beginning of a new epoch in the commercial history of Kerala. It also opened a new chapter in the relations between the different States in Kerala. The relations between the Muslim traders, who had monopolised the foreign trade of the country, and the rulers had been most cordial. Shaykh Zaynuddin, who wrote towards the close of the 15th century, observed: "The Muslims throughout Malabar have no *amir* possessed of power to rule over them. The rulers have respect and regard for the Muslims, because the increase in the number of cities was due to them" (*Tuhfaiul-Mujahidin*, p. 51). The Muslims, on their part, refrained interfering in the internal squabbles of these kingdoms so that they did not earn the odium of either section in the quarrel.

The aim of the Portuguese in coming to the east was to secure the spices of the east to the exclusion of all other merchants. The instructions to Cabral, the Captain-General of the second expedition, made this crystal clear. "Besides settling the factories if the Zamorin would not quickly consent or give sufficient lading to the ships he should make cruel war upon him for his injurious conduct to Vasco da Gama. If the Zamorin consented to the establishment of a factory and trade, the General was secretly to request him not to allow any of the Moors of Mecca to remain or trade in Calicut or any other harbour in his dominions" (Castenheda, *Discovery and Conquest of India—Kerr, Collection of Voyages and Travels*, II, 396).

The attempt made by the Portuguese to monopolise the trade of the country and the claim of sovereignty over the high seas were against the accepted mores of conduct of the Middle Ages. The Portuguese claim of sovereignty over the seas was thus stated by Barros, the official historian of the Portuguese: "Although by common right the seas are common and open to all navigators, yet this law has force only in Europe, among the Christian flock But with respect to these Moors and Gentiles, who are outside the law of Jesus Christ (they) cannot be privileged with the benefits of our laws" (Correa, *Three Voyages of Vasco da Gama*, Introduction, p. xxx).

It is no wonder that the overweening ambition of the Portuguese persuaded them to put such questionable principles to practice. To Da Gama's demand to expell all Muslim traders from the kingdom, the Zamorin gave as answer that he could not justly drive out more than four thousand families of them, who were his subjects. Calicut, for centuries, had been a free port. The Portuguese were welcome to trade there as any one else. The Portuguese Captains, who were not satisfied with this policy of the Zamorin, let loose a reign of terror on the coast.

To profit from the peculiar political set-up of innumerable petty principalities that dotted the Kerala coast, the Portuguese attempted to set the weak against the strong and the subordinate chieftains against their sovereigns. It was in pursuance of this policy that the Portuguese supported the Cochin Raja against the Zamorin who claimed sovereign rights over Cochin. It is related that every new incumbent to the 'sthanam' of the Zamorin used to inaugurate his reign by marching into Cochin and receiving the allegiance of the Cochin Raja afresh. Therefore when the Portuguese landed at Cochin after their quarrel with Zamorin, the Raja of Cochin welcomed them with open arms. The Raja hoped to throw off the yoke of the Zamorin with Portuguese help. Consequently, the Raja served the Portuguese with a slavish attitude, swallowing all insults and the overbearing conduct of the Portuguese officers. The Portuguese even succeeded in setting such a minor chieftain as the Raja of Tanur against the Zamorin. The Raja expressed his desire to become a Christian and in 1549 he was sent to Goa, where he was admitted to Catholic faith. On his return, he ordered his subjects to turn Christians within twenty days, under pain of expulsion from the kingdom. "It was well perhaps, they did not obey, for his own conversion was not lasting".

The Portuguese claim of monopoly of trade and their savage cruelty compelled the Zamorin to fight them. The failure of his arms and the economic dislocation caused by Portuguese activities, persuaded the Zamorin to fight them with all the resources at his disposal. His early naval conflicts with Portuguese fleets proved beyond doubt the inferiority of the Malabar fleets in weaponry and tactics; the Zamorin thereupon reorganised his fleet under the able leadership of the Kunhali Marakkars. A large number of small but faster *paraos* (Patav, large boat) were built, which could manoeuvre easily in engagements and move out, in case of reverses, to shallow waters, where pursuit by the bigger Portuguese ships would be impossible. This newly organised fleet under the Marakkars soon became a real threat to Portuguese shipping and trade. To meet their menace, the Portuguese had to keep regular fleets to convoy their ships. But as the English and Dutch

travellers accounts would show even this convoy system did not benefit the Portuguese. Ralph Fitch noted in 1589: "They (the Malabars) range all the coast from Ceylon to Goa, and go by four or five paros or boats together; and have in them fifty or three score men and board presently. They do much harm on that coast and take every year many foists and boats of the Portugals". (Foster. W. *Early Travels in India*, p. 65)

Another move made by the Zamorin to destroy the power of the Portuguese was to attack Cochin, their base of operations, and bring it under control. While the Calicut armies engaged the Cochin armies supported by Portuguese soldiers, Malabar seamen invaded Portuguese possessions on the east coast and in Ceylon, in collaboration with the local rulers. Though these attempts failed to derive the Portuguese out of Cochin, they put the defensive arrangements of the Portuguese out of gear and dislocated their shipping and trade to such a degree that they could not provide enough lading for their annual fleet home.

The Zamorin even attempted to rope in the states bordering the Arabian sea affected by Portuguese activities, in a coalition to fight them. The first attempt in this direction was made by a coalition of Egypt, Gujarat and Calicut. Though the combined fleet won an initial success at Chaul, the coalition disintegrated owing to the defection of the Gujarat fleet. Another attempt to form a confederacy of Turkey, Calicut and Gujarat failed mainly on account of the overbearing conduct of the Turkish commander. A third coalition consisting of the Sultans of Bijapur and Ahmadnager and the Zamorin succeeded only partly, as the Sultans later raised the siege they had laid against Goa and Chaul. But the Zamorin continued the siege against Caliyam and compelled the Portuguese to evacuate it.

As the activities of the Malabar seamen under the Kunhalis threatened their trade and shipping the Portuguese were forced to seek the aid of their erstwhile enemy, the Zamorin, against them. The Zamorin who had recently been antagonised, joined the Portuguese and after two sieges reduced Kottakkal, their headquarters. The fall of Kottakkal and the death of Kunhali, however, did not avail the Portuguese any respite from fighting, which they hoped for. Malabar seamen began to harass Portuguese shipping and trade with a vengeance. The coming of the Dutch and the English, who were on inimical terms with the Portuguese, provided greater facilities for their work.

DUTCH ATTEMPT TO DOMINATE KERALA

The Dutch, who had come to the East in a spirit of competition with the Portuguese tried from the outset to drive out the Portuguese from the eastern seas and take over their position. Therefore, when the Mutha Thaivazhi Prince of Cochin sought their help against the Ilaya Thaivazhi Prince and their supporters—the Portuguese—the Dutch immediately agreed to help him. By February, 1663, they had finally overthrown the Portuguese power on the Malabar coast. But the condition of the Cochin King did not improve. It was only a fall from the frying pan into the fire. By the treaty of March, 1663 the King of Cochin recognised and accepted "the Company as his Guardians and Benefactors in consideration of the fact that the Hon'ble Company reinstated him on the musnud after he had been dispossessed of his territory". (*Cochin Treaties*, No. C).

The treaty which the Dutch subsequently concluded with the Rajas of the Malabar coast clearly showed their monopolistic tendencies. The English factories at Purakkad reported to Surat: "The Dutch by their contract with this King will not suffer any buyers or sellers in any part of his country but themselves" (Foster, W. *English Factories in India* 1661-64, p. 261). Cochin Raja's dependence on the Dutch went to such lengths that the Dutch acquired an effective voice not only in the administration but even in Cochin succession. This interference naturally brought about opposition to the Dutch from the Cochin princes and nobles. The opposition reached such grave proportions that the Dutch were forced to seek the aid of the Zamorin.

The continued conflict between the Zamorin and the Cochin Raja soon involved the Dutch also in the fight. In October, 1709, Dutch forces succeeded in capturing Chettuvay, belonging to the Zamorin. The construction of a fort at Chettuvay was resisted by the Zamorin, who captured it in January, 1715. The effect of the loss of Chettuvay was tremendous. Visscher wrote: "The natives thought that we were ruined" (*Letters from Malabar*, p. 27). Two attempts to recover Chettuvay ended in failure upon which a considerable force was sent from Batavia in January 1717.

War continued throughout the year and the Dutch occupied the whole of Chettuvay Manappuram. But the peace that was concluded in February, 1718, did not bring any material benefit to the Dutch, except the cession of Chettuvay.

By the second quarter of the eighteenth century the power of the Dutch had diminished so much that local powers began to challenge their supremacy. Their attempt to curb the fast growing power of Travancore by supporting the Quilon and Kayamkulam princes was foiled in the battle of Kulachal (August 1741). More than a signal defeat, it portended the weakening of the Dutch hold on the Kerala coast. With the mounting pressure exerted by the Zamorin and other local rulers, the power of the Dutch declined rapidly and they were compelled to accede to such humiliating terms as were contained in the Treaty of Mavelikkara (1753) with Travancore.

Taking advantage of the Dutch debacle, the Zamorin captured Chettuvay and overran considerable portions of Cochin territory. The Raja of Cochin, who found that no Dutch help would be forthcoming to drive out the Zamorin, concluded an alliance with Travancore. Similarly during the invasion of Malabar by Haidar Ali finding the utter helplessness of the Dutch, the Raja of Cochin accepted the supremacy of Mysore by agreeing to pay tribute. During the Mysorean hegemony, the Dutch had lost all control over Cochin affairs. With the withdrawal of the Mysoreans, the Dutch power declined rapidly and made for English supremacy on the Malabar coast.

ESTABLISHMENT OF BRITISH RULE

From the beginning of their arrival on the Malabar coast, the English had to face stiff opposition first from the Portuguese and then from the Dutch, who supplanted them on the Malabar coast. By the second quarter of the seventeenth century, the Dutch opposition to the Portuguese became so strong that the Portuguese tried to conciliate the English by providing them port facilities in the ports under their control. It was in consequence of this arrangement that the English were able to export pepper to England direct from the Malabar ports. It was in July, 1682, that the English obtained from the 'Vadakkilamkur' Prince of Kolattunad permission to settle at Tellicherry. In 1694 they also settled at Anjengo in Travancore. It was from these settlements that the English were able to extend their influence over Kerala.

From the beginning of their trading activities in India, the English had strictly kept themselves aloof from interfering in local quarrels. This was mainly in deference to the advice tendered by Sir Thomas Roe, the English Ambassador to the court of the Mughal Emperor, Jahangir. "A warr and trafique", he wrote, "are incompatible. . . . It is the beggaring of the Portugall. It hath beene also the error of the Dutch, who seek plantation here by the sword" (Foster W. (E.d), *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe to India* Pp. 304-4). But very soon the Company had to make radical changes in their views, as they realised that only if "the Kings will get the full power in their hands that then the Company will enjoy a free and full trade, provided they duly pay their customs and Annual presents" (*Letters to Tellicherry*, Vol. I. p. 24). Therefore, the Company decided "in spite of money expenses, to put down the enemies and subject the country to the King" (Logan, W. *Treaties c.*, Pt. I. No. XII). This momentous declaration, though made in connection with the troubled affairs in Travancore, had equal relevance to a Malabar kingdom where local chieftains were defying authority.

Another fact of British imperialism that began to show itself clearly by this time, was the assistance provided by the Company to local powers to fight their common enemies, without getting themselves involved in direct fighting. Thus the company assisted

both Martanda Varma, King of Travancore, and the Zamorin, in their quarrel with the Dutch and other local powers. It was mainly with the assistance provided by the English, that both were enabled to continue the fight with the Dutch for a long time. Though the Zamorin was finally worsted and had to retire from the contest, Martanda Varma not only defeated the Dutch but also exposed their military weakness. The Dutch Factories at Cochin reported to Batavia in October, 1741, that the King of Travancore and the Company's rivals had assiduously spread throughout Malabar the news of the Company's troubles in Java so much so that the native chiefs thought the time had come "to shake off the Company's heavy yoke and drive (them) from the coast" (Dutch MSS., Vol. 335, F. 148).

Soon after, a golden opportunity was provided by the Mysorean invasion of Malabar to set the grip of the Company on the local Rajas and chieftains. Both Haidar and Tipu had realised the nature of British imperialism and had been trying to thwart their attempts to control South Indian politics. The English had by this time succeeded in establishing their hold over the Carnatic by supporting Muhammad Ali against Chanda Sahib. The attempt of Haidar and Tipu, by conquering Canara and Malabar and trying to subjugate Cochin and Travancore, was to cover both flanks of the Carnatic and thus squeeze the English eventually out of South India. The English, who had realised this serious threat to their security, took early steps to canvass support from local rulers, and make alliances with a view to containing the expansion of Mysore and if possible overthrow the power of Haidar and Tipu. As early as February, 1768, the Tellicherry Factories had advised their commandant stationed at Onore: ". . . From Mostyn's advices the Morattas affairs are so circumstanced as will not permit them to interfere. This, added to our Forces upon the other Coast having gained some considerable advantages over the Enemy, seems to render the present juncture as favourable as could be wished for effectively distressing Hyder Ally's affairs upon this coast, with which view we have determined on detaching you, with as considerable a military and marine force as can possibly be spared to attack his fleet and possessions and by every means in your power to harass and distress his affairs" (Tellicherry Factory Records—Malabar Expedition Against Hyder Ali, Vol. 2600, F. 2).

The Treaty of Mangalore (1784) terminating the Second Anglo-Mysore War, was not at all pleasing to the Company's authorities, especially the Telicherry Factories. They had addressed the English Commissioners during the negotiations for peace to secure the independence of the Malabar Rajas and chieftains "in

as much as the welfare of the Company's settlement and their Chinese investments, depended upon the degree of independence which might be secured for these chieftains". Further, as early as August 1782, while the war was in progress, the Resident at Tellicherry had proposed to take the Rajas of Kottayam and Katattanad and the Iruvalinad Nambiyars under the protection of the Company on payment of annual tribute, but the proposal was turned down by the Bombay Government. All these attempts clearly showed that the aim of the Company was to gain political control over the rich pepper-producing district in Malabar.

In order to "harass and distress his affairs", the English Factories at Tellicherry assisted the rebellious chieftains and rulers of Malabar with cash and military stores. Tipu complained that the Factories gave shelter to the rebels in their territory and "by your advice they go out at night and rob in the Circar's district".

The circumstances which prompted Tipu to break with Travancore was not only her alliance with the English, but also the refuge she granted to the rebels of Malabar in her territory. During the Second Anglo-Mysore War, Travancore not only gave free passage to English troops through her country, but also provided a contingent of Travancore troops to assist in the military operations. Regarding this affair Van Angelbeck, the Dutch Commander at Cochin, wrote to the Raja of Cochin: It is understood that the Senior Raja of Travancore is inclined to send his own men, along with the English soldiers who arrived from Tinnevely, to the north and to reinstate the chiefs of the Zamorin's country. We believe that he will not do so. . . . If the chiefs to the Zamorin's country are assisted, it is certain that he and his subjects will suffer greatly through the hostility of Nawab Haidar Ali to the Trippappur Svarupam. Even for his alliance with the English, the Nawab is greatly incensed at the Raja'. (Cochin Archives, Miscellaneous Correspondence, List XII, No. 17)

In addition to the help rendered to the English in the war, Travancore acted as a haven of refuge to the rebel Rajas and Chiefs of Malabar, who when they found their position too hot in Malabar escaped to Travancore. When the Mysore army concentrations were withdrawn, these Rajas, and Chiefs returned to their ancient dominions and created fresh trouble. From the time of Haider it was a standing complaint that the King of Travancore was harbouring rebels against the Mysore Government. Tipu often made the same complaint, and on his complaint the Government of Madras warned the Raja as late as April, 1783, "not to

give assistance or encouragement to any of the poligars or others on the Malabar coast with whom Tipu may have many disputes" (Mily Coun. Corr. Vol. 37, No. 36). In spite of this warning, Travancore used to give shelter to the rebel chiefs of Malabar. It is no wonder therefore that Tipu concluded that the King of Travancore was "the cause of giving much trouble to the Circar".

Another complaint of Tipu was that the Raja of Travancore had purchased the two Dutch forts of Kodungallur and Ayakkota, which really belonged to the Cochin Raja, who was a tributary of Mysore. Tipu's demand to return the forts to the Dutch was not acceded to by the King of Travancore, in spite of the refusal of the Madras Governor to approve the purchase.

Failing to accommodate the differences with the Raja of Travancore peacefully, Tipu marched his troops to the neighbourhood of the Travancore Lines. It was hoped that Mysore troop concentration on his frontiers might induce the Raja to accommodate his differences with the Sulthan. But instead it caused skirmishes on the frontier, which inevitably led to a full scale war (April, 1790). By the time the news of the invasion of Travancore reached the Governor-General, he had succeeded in organising a coalition of the Marathas and the Nizam against Tipu. He therefore immediately declared war on Tipu. The declaration was well-timed. As Lord Cornwallis, the Governor General wrote to Gen. Meadows, the new Governor of Madras "At present we have every prospect of aid from the country powers, while he (Tipu) can expect no assistance from France". Further to the organisation of the coalition, the Governor-General had advised the Bombay Government to encourage the Malabar Chieftains to rebel against Tipu and promise them support in the undertaking. "In order to secure a willing obedience from the Malabar Chiefs", Lord Cornwallis wrote, "we should be contented with their paying a moderate tribute, provided that they would give the Company advantageous privileges for carrying on a commerce in the valuable possession of their country" (NA., Pol., Proc., Cons., 4).

But even before these instructions were received, the Chief of Telicherry, *suo moto*, had granted *Cowls* (agreements) to the Malabar Rajas and Chiefs, guaranteeing to "assist and protect", them, if they "enter heartily into the war against Tipu Sultan and act vigourously against him". The English forces, with the support of native troops supplied by the Rajas and chiefs had, on the meantime attacked Mysorean strongholds and captured them. By the Treaty of Seringapatam (18th March, 1792), which concluded the Third Anglo-Mysore War, all the possessions of Tipu in Malabar passed under the rule of the Company.

BRITISH SUPERMACY OVER KERALA

On the cession of Malabar to the British, the Governments of Bengal and Bombay appointed a Joint Commission, "to inspect into the state and condition of the Province of Malabar" and to devise a system for its future government. But the Commission was specially asked to lose no time in coming to an agreement with all the chiefs for some specific revenue to be paid for the coming year. In pursuance of these instructions the Joint Commissioners made a detailed enquiry into the form and nature of the government that existed in the different territories of Malabar previous to their cession to the Company. At the same time the Commissioners also entered into agreements with the local chieftains for the collection of revenue and administration of justice within their territories. But soon these arrangements broke down due to several reasons. Firstly, the Rajas and chiefs, who were restored to their ancient dominions could not be prevented from fleecing the peasants and oppressing the Mappilas on the ground that they had supported the Mysorean conquerors. This policy naturally created serious disturbances in the country, which in many cases necessitated the requisition of English troops to quell them. These continuous disturbances coupled with the failure of the Rajas and chiefs to remit the revenue collections in time, persuaded the Company's government to take over the administration of the different territories into their own hands, after paying *Malikhana* to them. Thus by 1802, the whole of the Malabar Province came under the direct control of the Company.

But this change-over did not take place without vehement opposition from the Chieftains and the people in general. Of the several rebellions that broke out during this period, the Pazhassi Rebellion was the most serious and it so strained the resources of the Government that they had to seek the assistance of the 'Iron Duke', Athur Wellesley, for devising measures to quell the rebellion.

The Pazhassi Rebellion was so called, as the prime mover in the rebellion was Kerala Varma, popularly known as Pazhassi Raja. He belonged to the Padinjare Kovilakam branch of Kottayam royal family, which had its headquarters at Pazhassi. He was one of the very few Princes of Malabar who had refused to flee during the Mysorean occupation of Malabar. From his mountain fastness in the Kottayam country, he continued to oppose the Mysorean administration. He also



Scrolls of Jewish Synagogue, Cochin



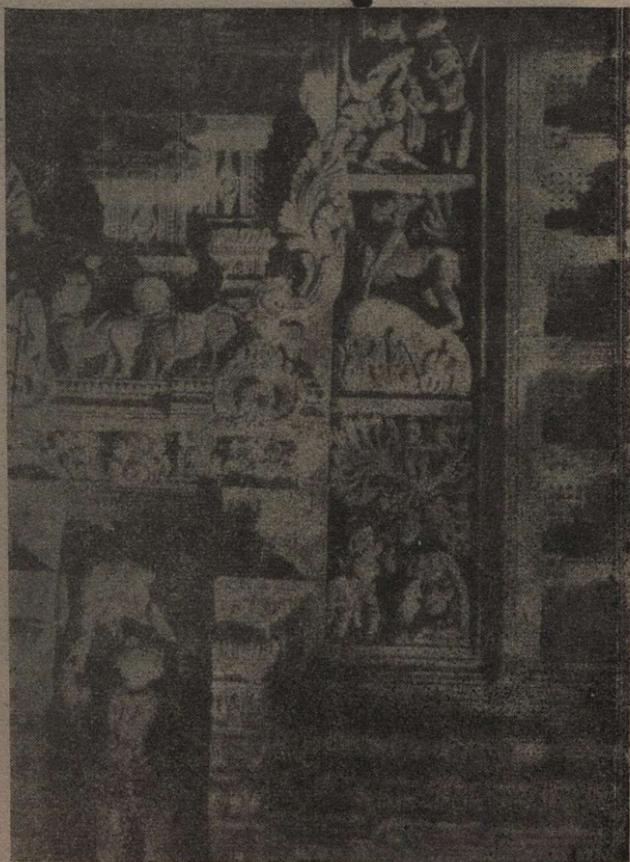
Narasimha—Wood Carving—Chathankulangara Temple



*Swathi Thirunal, the Maharaja of Travancore (early 19th Century)
who left a rich legacy of Songs in six languages .*



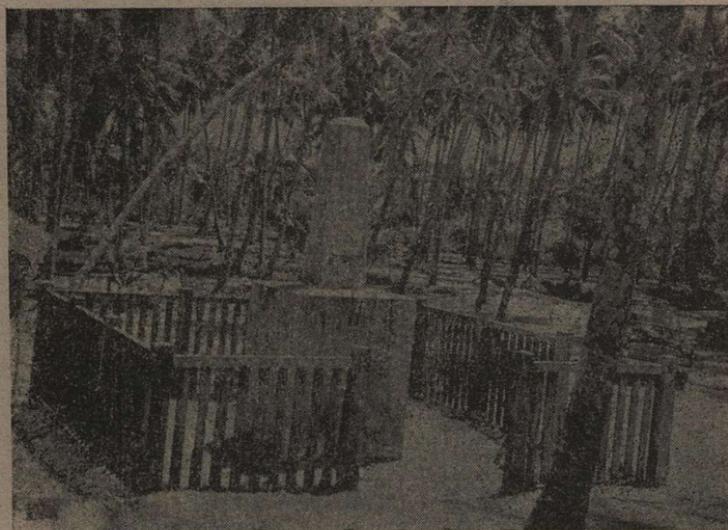
*Mural
Painting*



Wood Carving

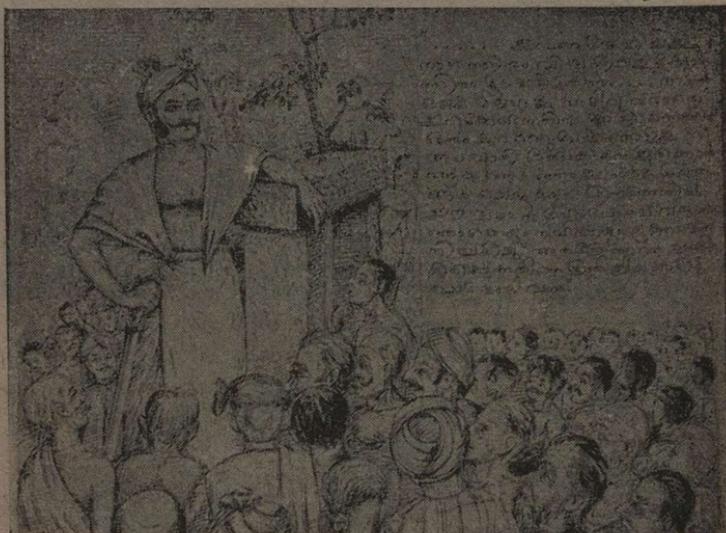


*A Jain Temple. Jainism today has more followers than
Budhism in Kerala*



*Kappad in Kozhikode District where
Vasco da Gama landed in May 1498.*

*Kundara Vilambaram—Sketch—Velu Thampi Dalava of
Travancore issued the historic proclamation in January 1809
urging the people to rise against the British*

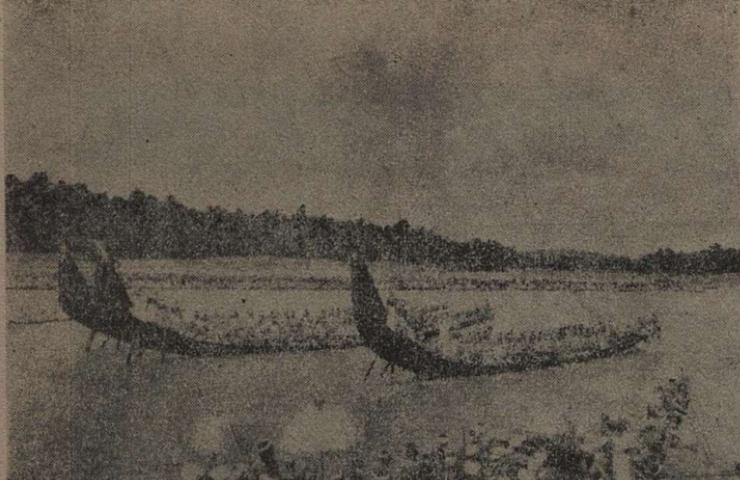




Kathakali—the classical Dance Drama of Kerala

Kolkali—Group Dance of Malabar Muslims





*Colourful boat
races—Symbolic of
the maritime
tradition of
Keralites*



*Sculpture—
Sree Padmanabha-
Swami Temple,
Trivandrum.*

provided assistance to the Tellicherry Factory with men and materials when the Factory was attacked. But when permanent arrangements were made in 1793 by the Joint Commissioner for the collection of revenue, the settlement of the Kottayam country was made with Vira Varma, the Raja of Kurumbranad. Kerala Varma felt that his prior services to the Company were forgotten and he was left in the lurch by the Company's officers. Thereupon he turned a rebel and created such a havoc in the country that the Company authorities were hard put to meet the situation. The hilly nature of the country and the strong support which he received from the Kurichiyar and other hill-tribes, prevented any effective action from being taken to curb the rebellion. The rebellion was so successful that Jonathan Duncan, Governor of Bombay, was compelled to admit "the great evil in this unhappy contest arises principally out of the Pyche Raja's extraordinary success which renders it dangerous to the Company's interest and disgraceful to our national character to yield too far in concession to this chiefly insurgent, till at least we shall have vindicated the credit of our arms by showing him that he cannot expect to continue successfully to contend against us (Government Committee Diaries, Vol. 2136, p. 599).

But English arms failing to inflict such a defeat on the Pazhassi Raja, the Company's authorities agreed to restore the treasure captured from the Pazhassi palace by the English forces, and to bestow a pension of 8000 rupees on him. "I have proceeded in this painful and melancholy duty" Duncan observed "in the idea that the troops have unfortunately occasioned considerable loss and serious provocation to the Pyche Raja by the plunder of his mansion. Every means has therefore been taken to redress his grievances by the full and complete return of his property" (Ibid. 2142, pp. 2711-12). Peace was thus restored for the time being, with the Pazhassi Raja on his part keeping the peace in the country-side.

But soon after, trouble started again on the cession of Wayanad to Malabar after the conclusion of the Fourth Anglo-Mysore War (1799). The English took direct control of the administration of the Kottayam and Wayanad districts. The Pazhassi Raja also laid claim to the district of Wayanad on the ground that it has been granted to him by Tipu and he persisted in keeping possession of it. But the Supreme Government issued orders to punish the Raja for his intransigence. Arthur Wellesley was deputed to Malabar as Commander of the English forces. Col. Wellesley had realised the seriousness of the rising in Malabar even before his arrival in the country, for he wrote from Srirangapatam to Lieut. Col. Bowels, the Officer-Commanding in Malabar in February 1800: "From the experience which the officers of the Bombay establishment have of

the species of warfare of this man (the Pazhassi Raja) and of the Nairs in general, you will doubtless be of opinion that as large a detachment should be formed in Malabar as can be spared". *Supplementary Despatches & Memoranda of Field Marshal Arthur, Duke of Wellington, Vol. 1, p. 447*).

Even the minute plan of operations devised by Arthur Wellesley did not bring an early end to the rebellion. But the plan put into operation by him gradually began to yield results. By clearing the jungles, by forbidding merchants to sell articles to strangers, and by preventing supplies from reaching the rebels, the Company's authorities were able to break the back of the rebellion. By the end of 1801, Col. Stevenson reported that the rebellion was "at a very low ebb". With the assistance of corps of Kolkar (police) recruited and trained, Baber, the Sub-Collector of North Malabar, was able to give the chase to the Pazhassi Raja and his followers from place to place. Towards the close of December 1805 Baber's Kolkar came upon a party of rebels on the banks of the 'Mawilla Todda' in Wayanad. Immediately they were attacked and several of the rebels fell, the rest having fled. It was only learnt later that the Pazhassi Raja was amongst the first who had fallen.

Baber was so touched by the gallantry of the Raja that he arranged customary honours to be performed at his funeral. In communicating the death of the Raja he wrote: "Thus terminated the career of a man who has been enabled to persevere in hostilities against the Company for near nine years during which many thousand valuable lives had been sacrificed and sums of money, beyond all calculation, expended. But it will not be necessary for me to enlarge to you, who are so well acquainted with this Chieftain's history, on the leading features of so extraordinary and singular a character. The records of India and England will convey to posterity a just idea of him" (Malabar Collectorate Records, Inward Register, Public Department Vol. 2172, Ff. 25-26).

Thus came to an end the Pazhassi Rebellion, one of the most serious outbreaks against the British in South India, which caused incalculable misery and suffering to the people and cost an enormous amount to the Company's treasury.

During the Mysorean invasions, apart from the state of war created by them, important political developments had taken place in Cochin and Travancore. While Dutch influence in the politics of these two States declined at this time, British influence increased correspondingly. These two States began to depend increasingly on British help as a support against the Mysorean threat. As soon as Tipu withdrew from Travancore and Cochin to meet the allied invasion of his own country, the Cochin Raja openly threw off his

allegiance to Mysore and joined the English side (September, 1790). By this treaty in return for a graduated tribute, the Company agreed to assist him to recover possession of the territories wrested by Tipu Sultan.

During the examination of the Cochin Raja's claim of sovereignty over certain territories, the Commission constituted for this purpose found that his claim over certain territories could not be substantiated. Hence such claims were dismissed by the Commissioners. The whole process of enquiry was delayed by the procrastinating tactics adopted by the Raja of Cochin.

As regards Travancore, the Company's officers claimed that the Third Anglo-Mysore War was undertaken in defence of Travancore and therefore the Raja should meet the entire expenditure of the war. He was asked to pay either four-fifths of the revenue of the State or if it was agreeable, one half of the revenues, provided he met the expenses of the British contingent. The Raja raised loans and collected unusual taxes, and paid 14 lakhs of rupees. He now appealed to the Governor-General and impressed upon him the iniquity of demanding from Travancore the entire expense of the war. Upon a full consideration of the question, Sir John Shore, the Governor-General, agreed to withdraw the additional demand for money from Travancore, but at the same time insisted on the conclusion of a new treaty. The new treaty, concluded on 17th November 1795, practically reduced Travancore from the position of friend and ally of the English East India Company to that of a protected ally. The Raja was also forced to entertain a subsidiary force far beyond his capacity to subsidise. To make matters worse, the Company now claimed a monopoly in the pepper trade of the country. Pepper was the main export item of Travancore, on which her economic prosperity rested. The situation in Travancore, after the declaration of the pepper monopoly was thus described in a letter which the Portuguese Governor-General at Goa wrote home: "The English make a monopoly (of pepper) from Mount Deli to Cape Commorin, wishing to claim for themselves in the first place all the produce from which the King (of Travancore), derives any profit. . . . The said English fearing that they will not get from the said King as large a quantity as they desire, have provided themselves with certain light war vessels which go round the ports of this kingdom every day in order to terrorise over the said King so that they alone and no other nation can obtain pepper" (Quoted by Holden Furber, *John Company at Work*, pp. 27-48).

The natural outcome of all these developments was to drag Travancore into the vortex of a financial crisis. The King was forced to raise loans from bankers and merchants. He even took a loan

of six lakhs of rupees from the Bombay Government. He imposed monopolies and transit duties, which adversely affected the commercial prosperity of the kingdom. To make matters worse there was a fall in the production of pepper. The unscrupulous merchants exploited the monopolies to their advantage, which inexorably led to financial bankruptcy of the state. Subsidy and loan repayments fell into arrears. The financial embarrassment that Rama Varma (1758-98) faced during his last days was thus described by Sir T. Madhava Rao: "Even extraordinary taxation failed to yield adequate means to answer the incessant call for funds. The Maharaja felt that he could not, without exciting dangerous discontent among his subjects, increase their burdens, and saw no alternative but that of raising loans. Funds were indeed thus obtained to meet the pressing exigencies of the State, but the obligations incurred inevitably led to difficulties of the gravest character, difficulties which embittered the closing years of the Maharaja and culminated in a perilous crisis in the reign of his successor" (*Tiruvitamkur Charitram Malayalam* p. 284).

The Company's authorities did not show the least consideration for the distress of the Travancore King, which was mainly of their own making. They insistently demanded the clearing of the arrears of tribute and the delivery of the stipulated quantity of pepper. The new Maharaja was in a quandary. He could neither increase the already high rate of taxes without seriously endangering his own position, nor displease the Company's authorities by failing to pay up the arrears. Velu Thampi, the newly appointed Dalava, tried his utmost to reduce expenditure and increase the revenues of the State. By a judicious use of support to the Resident, Col. Macaulay, and firmness in his dealings with corrupt and inefficient officers, Velu Thampi was able not only to tone up the administration of the State but also secure appropriation of the Company's Government. The attempt of the Dalava to abolish the field allowances paid to the State troops in times of peace, led to a revolt of the Travancore troops. Though the insurrection was brought to an end by the exertions of the native troops alone, the Company's authorities were visibly shaken. Though by this time a major portion of South India had come under the control of the Company they were not yet sure of their ground. Therefore when the news of the insurrection reached Fort William, Lord Wellesley immediately asked the Madras Government to insist on a modification of the treaty of 1795, so that British forces could be used to aid the Raja in quelling internal commotions as well. At the same time the Madras Government decided to increase the subsidy. The Dalava tried his best to get the amount of the subsidy reduced and the King was bitterly hostile to the very question of revision of the treaty.

Finally the treaty of Perpetual Friendship and Alliance was signed on 12th January, 1805. Two of the most important clauses of the agreement were: (1) If the subsidy fell into arrears, the Governor-General-in-Council was permitted to take over the administration of such part or parts of the Raja's territories as would "discharge the subsidy amount", and (2) the Raja agreed to abide by the advice of the Company's officers for the bettering and improvement of the administration (Aitchison, C. U. A. *Collection of Treaties, R c., Vol. X. pp. 135-39*).

The apprehensions created by the treaty and the insistence of the Resident, bordering on coercion, to clear the arrears of tribute, set even trusted friends of the Company, like the Dalava, into thinking that the Company was not at all considerate to the well-being of the State and its people. The haughtiness and intemperate language of the Resident estranged the Dalava from him. The Dalava began to concert measures for an open rebellion against the British in defence of the King and the country.

Velu Thampi secretly began to recruit soldiers and collect arms. There was whole-hearted support from all sections of the population for this move. The Paliyatt Achan, the premier nobleman of Cochin, had been on inimical terms with the Resident, and he also agreed to join Velu Thampi in this contemplated insurrection.

The insurrection, though a formidable one, was shortlived on account of the defection of the Paliyatt Achan and the large contingents the Company's authorities were able to deploy in Travancore. Though Velu Thampi had attempted to bring about an anti-British alliance of an all India character he did not succeed in the attempt. In his letter to the Zamorin, Velu Thampi wrote: "If all now rise, and unanimously act with one mind, there will be no need for continuing allegiance to the Europeans" (Secret Sundries, Vol. 6659, FF. 324-5). "Chimerical as the scheme may now appear, it was not entirely impracticable. The Marathas were still smarting under their recent discomfiture and had not yet been reconciled to their subordinate status. There was no lack of disaffection among the Moplas and Nayars and France was at open-war with Britain. Maratha-Malabar combination backed by France might very well succeed where Travancore and Cochin failed" (S. N. Sen, A Note on Velu Thampi's Rebellion, *IHRC, Proc. Vol. XIX, P. 173*).

On 1st Makaram, 984 M. E. (16th January 1809 A. D.), Velu Thampi issued a proclamation at Kundara, calling upon the people to rise *en masse* in defence of the King, their country, and their religion. The people rose against the British and in many places British troops were put in imminent peril. But as British contingents began to converge on Travancore from different directions, the rebels lost heart and the

revolt began to peter out. The Raja, who was anxious about the safety of his throne, wrote to the Resident requesting for the cessation of hostilities. On March 2nd, 1809, peace was concluded. Velu Thampi was searched out and when troops surrounded the Mannadi temple, where he had hidden himself, he committed suicide.

On the suppression of the rebellion, the Madras Government considered it necessary to make arrangements "to prevent the authority and resources of the country from being employed in designs hostile to the British interests, and which shall be conducive to the advancement of the prosperity and welfare of both the States" (C. U. Aitchison, *op. cit.*, Vol. X pp. 161-62). A new treaty was imposed upon Travancore (6th January, 1809), with the same clauses as were found in the treaty of 1805.

The natural consequences of fighting with the British and losing the fight overtook Cochin and Travancore. No visible changes took place in the political set-up, but British control over these States increased in inverse proportion to the decrease in the power of the King.

The history of early resistance against the British would be incomplete without a reference to the revolt of the Kurichiyas of Wayanad in 1812. It was a unique almost pathetic, instance of a revolt which has not been honoured even with a footnote in standard accounts of the freedom movement in Kerala. The details of the uprising lie buried in archival records hitherto untapped by historians. The Kurichiyas and Kurumbar were a fairly numerous tribal folk inhabiting the mountains of Wayanad. Strongly wedded to ancestral customs and loyalties, the placidity of their tribal life was rudely disturbed by the British acquisition of Wayanad. Led by their chieftain Thalakkal Chandu they constituted the main prop of Pazhassi Raja's militia at the time of the revolt and earned for him many victories in his guerilla war against the British. In consequence, after the suppression of the Pazhassi insurrection, the British brought Wayanad under their strict surveillance which subjected Kurichiyas to untold abuses and misery. Many of them were seized, reduced to slavery and made to serve officials and Englishmen. But what brought havoc to their simple, rustic life was the new revenue settlement made by the principal Collector of Malabar, Thomas Warden. It was not the enhanced rate of revenue, heavy and arbitrary though it was, which caused the discontent of the Kurichiyas, but the mode of its collection: they were to pay the revenue in cash rather than in the traditional mode of kind. Defaulters were cruelly treated—properties seized, tenants forcibly evicted from lands, personal effects distrained, privacy of houses molested; and the like. In fact, it was not the revenue or its strict collection, but the arbitrariness of the rack-renting revenue officials that drove the tribals from destitution and desperation to mad fury.

The rebellion broke out apparently suddenly on 25, March 1812. It speaks much for the unity of the tribals that they kept all their preparations a closely guarded secret until the rebellion began under the leadership of their chieftain Rama Namby. It is true that some disaffected Nayars and Tiyyas, mostly employed in the revenue and police establishments, knew about the preparatory work, but they too out of hatred towards British kept in hidden and later acutally gave the leadership to the tribals hoping to create a general uprising against the company administration. Kurichiya priests declared the rebellion to be sanctified by the blessings of tribal gods. A number of Kurichiyas had been in the employ of the Company as *Kolkars* (policemen), but when the rebellion started all, except four, left the service and joined their kinsmen. Thus, on the whole, the rebellion had the characteristics of a mass uprising, though restricted to one locality.

Within a few days the rebellion spread in the whole of Wayanad. The Kurichiyas took possession of all important passes leading to Wayanad and cut supplies and reinforcements to the ambushed British troops in the valley. Armed Kurichiya bands roamed about the region and occasionally descended to the plains, terrorising those inhabitants who did not actively support them. For a few days at least British administration ceased to function in the Wayanad area. The magnitude of the insurrection is revealed by the fact that Thomas Baber, Sub-Collector of the division had to frantically requisition troops from Malabar, Canara and Mysore as the local British regiment was insufficient to deal with the uprising.

Despite the serious proportions of the rebellion, tribal heroism with tribal weapons was powerless before the sophisticated military machine of the English Company. Early in April, British troops from Mysore and Cannanore moved into the jungles from different directions, combed out the guerilla bands and suppressed them. Terror-stricken groups voluntarily surrendered, pledged fealty and betrayed the hide-outs of others. By the beginning of May, 1812, the revolt was completely crushed and quiet returned to Wayanad. It must be said to the credit of the British that subsequently they did not adopt a cruel and vindictive attitude towards the tribals. Instead, they became aware of the need for lessening the rigours of the revenue administration that occasioned such uprisings.

Thus, by 1812, British control was effectively established over all the three regions of Kerala-Malabar, Cochin and Travancore.

EUROPEAN IMPACT ON SOCIETY AND CULTURE

Customs and institutions die hard in a feudal society. These being indistinguishably mixed with social and religious ideas, people were averse to make any kind of change in them. As foreigners were considered Mlecha (unclean people), there was little chance for their beliefs and practices being adopted by the Hindu community at large. But at the same time Kerala society could not escape the mounting pressure which totally different social and religious systems exerted on it. Thus though Kerala society underwent little apparent change, there were significant trends of change in every aspect of society.

The section of Kerala society that was affected most were the Nayars. They formed the chief fighting and executive class of the society. Fighting being their main occupation, they underwent special and elaborate training for the purpose. But the introduction of gunpowder by the Portuguese made fighting with sword and shield obsolete. Cavalry and artillery wings of the army became popular and they were manned mainly by Muslims and Christians. The uprooting of the royal houses and chieftaincies during the period of the Mysorean inroads and British occupation ruined the prospect of employment of the Nayars, who shunned all professions other than those of arms and of Government service. The Nayars consequently swelled the ranks of the unemployed.

Another section of the population that underwent great changes was "the untouchables", whose very presence within 72 feet was considered polluting to the higher castes. These polluting castes now made use of the opportunity offered by the conquests. By accepting the religion of the conquerors, they could not only remove the shackles of the caste system, but could better their economic prospects.

Conditions soon began to change as a result of the close monopoly of trade claimed and enforced by the Portuguese and the inhuman cruelty shown by them towards those who tried to break the monopoly. Shaykh Zaynuddin thus described the effects of the

exclusive Portuguese monopoly on the country: "The Muslim merchants were not permitted to trade in all merchandise except in goods for which the Portuguese had little interest. The commodities in which the Portuguese had interest yielded large profits. They assumed the right of exclusive possession of the trade in such commodities, and it was not possible for others to encroach on their rights. Their monopoly started at pepper and ginger but gradually they added to the list cinnamon, clove, spice and such other articles which yielded large profits. The Muslims were forbidden to do business in all these articles and to undertake sea-voyage for trade purposes to the Arabian coast, Malacca, Ashi (Achin?), Danasri (Philippine Is?) and other places. Thus there remained nothing for the Muslims of Malabar, but the petty trade in arecanut, coconut, cloths and such other things. Their sea-traffic also was confined to Jazrat, Konkan, Sholamandal, and round about Quail" (op cit. p. 81).

The shock of defeat, coupled with the serious economic dislocation caused by the loss of trade completely destroyed the Muslim morale. The Portuguese further tried to befriend the Hindus. Zaynuddin wrote: "The Portuguese were hostile only to the Muslims and their faith and not to Nayars and other unbelievers of Malabar" (Ibid., p. 62). As a result of this policy, Muslims and their trade suffered grievously. Not only the traders but the trading centres also were ruined. As Danvers observed: "Several of the most important emporia which had for centuries been noted as the principal seats of trade in the East were effectively ruined. Ormuz, Calicut, Cochin, Quilon and Malabar, deprived of their commerce, sunk under Portuguese mismanagement, never afterwards recovered their commercial supremacy" (The Portuguese in India, Vol. I, XXXVIIIff).

The loss of trade affected the economy of the Zamorin as well, which loosened the bonds of cordial relations that existed so far between him and the Muslims. The Zamorin was forced either to abandon the cause of the Muslims or face economic ruin. Reasons were easily found for breaking with the Muslims. The rise to prominence of the Kunhali Marakkars and their reported disloyal activities gave a lever to Portuguese insinuations. The Zamorin was persuaded to ally himself with the Portuguese to punish his over-mighty subject. The fall of Kunhali and the fall of Kottakkal, which betokened the end of their trading activities, finally and irrevocably alienated the Muslims from the Zamorin.

Apart from the monopoly of trade they enforced, the Portuguese also tried to effect forcible conversion of Indians to Christianity. In

Goa they had established a court of inquisition and indulged in forcible conversion and religious persecution on a large scale. On account of their ruthless persecution, Gouda Saraswaths migrated from Goa and established themselves in and around Cochin. Similarly the Jews who had been settled at Kodungallur for centuries were forced to scatter themselves in the different interior towns of Cochin.

Neither did the Portuguese spare their own brethren in faith, the Syrian Christians of Kerala. The surprising fact was that on the arrival of the Portuguese on the Malabar coast, this Christians had given them a ready welcome. Mar Jacob, their Bishop, wrote to the Pope: "I have won all these Christians of this country for thy service so that when thou shalt be in need of them thou shalt find in it over 25,000 warriors. . . ." (Ferrol, Fr. *The Jesuits in Malabar*, Vol. II, p. 139). But the Syrian Christians who offered their services were soon disillusioned when the Portuguese tried to bring them under the Latin Church. In the *Synod of Diamper* (1599), the Portuguese tried to extirpate, 'Nestorian Hersy' and bring the Christian community under the supremacy of the Latin Church. This attempt led to violent reaction, which resulted in the *Revolt of the Coonan Cross* (1653), which irrevocably broke the Syrian Christians away from the 'Romish church.'

The decline of the Portuguese, their replacement with the Dutch, and the arrival of rival European Companies, like the English and the French, did not materially alter the situation in Kerala, as the newcomers also followed the same policy of trade monopoly as the Portuguese. However, the one relieving feature of the situation was that the new European nations were neither interested in conversion nor in the acquisition of territory in the beginning. The English, who soon secured the position of *primus inter pares* among the European competitors, began to entertain dreams of territorial conquest on the coast. But the conquest of the Malabar kingdoms by Haidar and Tipu prevented the fulfilment of their dreams for the time being. By secretly providing monetary and military assistance to the Malabar rulers, the English tried to keep up the disturbances that took place against Mysorean occupation off and on. Convinced of the commercial and strategic importance of Malabar, the Bombay Government in 1790 reminded Gen. Abercromby of the necessity of acquiring possession of the country. "The territory from Goa to Cochin, from the sea-coast to the Ghauts", they wrote, "includes a country valuable in every respect of situation, produce, revenue and commerce; by fortifying the passes in the mountains it may be defended with a small body of troops, and by our having possession of the ports, Tipu will be

cut off from all communications with the French and other European powers, who have hitherto supplied him with military stores and he will thereby be effectually excluded from a very essential resource for carrying on future wars" (*Poona Residency Correspondence, Vol. III, No. 448*).

Besides the monetary and military assistance provided to the rulers of the Malabar kingdoms, the English carried on a systematic propaganda war to discredit the Mysorean administration. Haidar and Tipu especially were charged with religious persecution and destruction of temples. It is possible that stray cases of forcible conversion took place, but they were never in consonance with State policy nor encouraged by the Sultans. Large number of conversions, especially from the lower rungs of society, did take place during the period, but this was more a political move to escape from the cruel inhibitions inherent in the Malabar caste system and to gain advantages by siding with the conquerors.

One important result of the European dominance, as we have found was the loss of trading facilities by the Muslims. Deprived of their traditional means of livelihood, and forsaken by their rulers, Muslims seem to have developed a sort of sullen hostility to the majority community. This hostility prompted a large portion of the Mappilas to side with the conquerors during the Mysorean invasions. As soon as Tipu's forces were driven out of Malabar the Rajas and Chieftains who were reinstated, began a systematic oppression of the Mappilas, whom they came to regard as their enemies. This state of affairs was primarily responsible for the beginnings of the social unrest that manifested itself during the early British period.

Momentous changes took place in Kerala society during the period, the most significant of which was the disappearance of several vestiges of feudalism that plagued Kerala society during the middle ages. The worst features of feudalism were weakness of royalty and the intractability of local chieftains. The resulting chaos in the country not only encouraged political instability in the country but also created a situation in which no trade or industry could thrive. It was this peculiar situation that enabled the European Companies to interfere in the internal affairs of the Kerala Kingdoms. The Portuguese and the Dutch set one power against the other and encouraged subordinate chieftains to act against their sovereigns. The first blow against the feudalistic set-up in Kerala was struck by Marthanda Varma (1729-58), the founder of the Travancore State. By destroying the refractory *Pillamar and Karyakkar*, the hereditary officers of the Kingdom, and by bringing

under control the Tavazhis (branches of the royal family), Marthanda Varma set the pace for the consolidation of Kerala Kingdoms. Soon after consolidating the tiny Venad Kingdom, he overran quite easily the Northern principalities of Kayamkulam, Tekkumkur, Vadakkumkur and Purakkad, on the pretext that they had assisted the Prince of Quilon, a Tavazhi member, against him. The rulers fled the country precipitately without offering sustained resistance, but the leaderless armies of these Kingdoms did not give in so easily. There was a great upsurge of the people in the Northern Principalities, to meet which Marthanda Varma was hard put and had to secure arms and ammunitions and fresh contingents to fight it. When the rebellion was finally put down, the Travancore administration wisely undertook several ameliorative measures to reconcile the people of the conquered regions to the new regime. The measure certainly had the desired effect, for we find the people of the northern parts rising as one man behind the Travancore throne against the invasion of the Mysore Sultans.

The same policy was followed by Saktan Thampuran (1790-1805) of Cochin, by suppressing the feudal nobility and the Brahmin clergy of Cochin, who set royal power at naught and sided with the Zamorin, whenever he invaded the Cochin kingdom. During the Mysorean invasion a good number of Nayar and Brahmin chieftains of Malabar had fled the country. The several measures which the Mysore administration effected in Malabar in the agrarian, fiscal and social fields brought about many welcome changes in socio-political institutions and economic structure of the country. Had not the British established their paramount power over the Kerala kingdoms, following the withdrawal of Mysore, and by their conservative attitude tried to maintain the status quo in the social and economic structure of the country, much of the evils attendant on the feudalistic socio-economic organisation that persisted for several more decades would have been wiped off long ago.

PART III
TOWARD FREEDOM

PART III

EDWARD T. LEWIS

HISTORIANS AND FREEDOM MOVEMENT IN KERALA

When the bells tolled on November 1, 1956, bringing in the new State of Kerala, it was only a dream come true. The long historic search of a people for an identity—old in terms of centuries and coeval with the evolution and growth of Malayalam language and culture—had now come to an end. It was a search for unity within the wider framework of Indian unity which had been disrupted for centuries on account of historical factors. The twin search—for regional identity and national unity and freedom—went hand in hand though for obvious reasons the second received a primacy over the first which had to wait until the realisation of the latter.

Kerala's contribution to India's struggle for freedom and national unity has not been told completely or objectively so far. *A few accounts no doubt exist, but they could not claim to be anything more than documented story-telling and journalism. This has been due to many factors. Paucity of source materials and the difficulty, of access to them, nearness to the event, the reluctance of the academy and the like are some of the difficulties that stand in the way of objective research. However, a more important reason could be found in the low level of historical studies in the State, the absence of specialisation in higher education and the consequent limitation in the supply of competent historians. Clio has employed many servants but inspired only very few.

Mention must also be made of the political condition of Kerala as having a bearing on the limitation of historical studies. Since the break-up of the Kulasekhara Kingdom (or empire as some would prefer to call it) until the beginning of the nineteenth century Kerala was politically distracted and divided into numerous warring principalities. With the consolidation of British power following the repulsion of Mysorean invasions, she came to be divided into the two princely States of Travancore and Cochin and the district of Malabar within the province of Madras. This division ended only

*The only major attempt is by the regional Records Survey Committee, Kerala. Two volumes of the History of Freedom movement in Kerala 1970-72 have been published, bringing the account upto the year 1938.

in 1956. The nature of the freedom movement and struggle was also different in essential respects in the three divisions. The preparation of comprehensive history of the political struggle in this geographical region was therefore not an easy task for any historian embarking on the venture.

These limitations are, no doubt, real but by no means insurmountable. In themselves they do not provide a valid justification for the non-appearance of a full-fledged study of the topic, even a generation after the attainment of independence. That, again, under-scores the point mentioned above, namely, the relative backwardness of modern historical scholarship in Kerala.

NATURE OF EARLY RESISTANCE

The part played by Kerala in India's struggle for freedom had been relatively speaking, neither great nor small. The statement is apt to be taken as disparaging by regionalist patriots, but the fact must nevertheless be admitted. It might seem surprising that Kerala which for decade led other parts of the country in the matter not only of population but also literacy, education, enlightenment and modernisation did not play a crucial or decisive role in the national freedom movement. So too is the fact that she did not throw up many to positions of front-rank leadership in the national struggle. This was due to many circumstances. Apart from the fact that the struggle in the princely states had never been as intense as it turned out to be in the British-Indian provinces and that the people in the princely states had to wage a parallel struggle against princely autocracy, another reason might be found in the socio-economic set-up of Kerala as it developed in the context of British colonialism. Under the British impact Kerala society was started into the path of modernisation quite early despite the barriers of caste, custom and tradition, but this did not lead to a corresponding modernisation of the economy in all its aspects and on a large scale. Though rich in natural resources and the people industrious, a well-entrenched capitalist system and a capitalist class did not develop in Kerala. In consequence economic development was slow in pace and different in nature from other parts of India. Kerala's socio-economic structure despite the advent of modernisation, hovered for long between a weak feudalism and shy capitalism. Social disabilities economic inequalities, as well as poverty were there in Kerala, but they were neither as intense nor qualitatively similar as in many other parts of India. Moreover owing to British impact, education of a western type developed in Kerala quite early, and those who received it under conditions of princely rule, took to the various professions where they excelled. What was gain to the professions thus became a loss to politics. This is a plausible explanation for the relatively limited number of political leaders from Kerala at the national level as contrasted to the professions or local level politics.

It should not be supposed from the foregoing that though Kerala's role in the national freedom struggle was comparatively less than that of say, Maharashtra, Bengal, or U. P., it was less significant. Nor was it devoid of distinctiveness. In fact Kerala, whose spices and calicoes attracted foreigners from time immemorial and from whose shores western imperialism began its operations in the Indian sub-continent, was also the first to understand the nature of foreign penetration and try, though unsuccessfully, to ward off the peril. But the history of this early resistance has found scarce mention in what may be called national histories of modern India.

The earliest recorded instance of resistance against Europeans occurred within two years of Vasco da Gama's landing at Calicut. It was provoked by the tactlessness and barbarism of the Portuguese under Cabral. It led to a violent reaction from the Mappilas and Nayars who killed many Portuguese on land, and the Portuguese in return killed hundreds of Mappilas on the high seas. Ultimately the conflict brought the Portuguese to Cochin and paved the way for the unhealthy conflict between the Cochin ruler and the Zamorin which enabled the Europeans to interfere in local politics.

For the next two centuries and a half, politics in Kerala had all the appearance of an enlarged *Kudippaka* or *Kurmatsaram* with the foreign power holding the balance in profit. It was a mixture of tribalism and medievalism into which was tossed the aggressive modernism of the west. The traditional feuds among the ruling principalities of Kerala began to assume a new shape and intensity owing to the interference of the western colonial powers. Each conflict weakened the native powers and correspondingly strengthened the role of the westerner. Each conflict, moreover, reflected more or less the European rivalry of the western nations and thus Kerala was linked to the eddies and currents of international power politics. As in Europe, so too in Kerala (and in other parts of India), England emerged victorious at the expense of the other European powers.

The expansion of the British power in Kerala was not a smooth affair. Until the consolidation of British power in the second decade of the nineteenth century there were occasions of stiff, violent resistance against the foreigner. Those that occurred at Anjengo in 1695, at Tellichery in 1704 and, perhaps, the first organised revolt of the natives, at Anjengo in 1721 have been examined in the previous pages. They were not merely sporadic and local but singularly lacking in that spirit of nationalism which was animating the nations of Europe at that time. The ruling

dynasts and politically powerful elements in Kerala did not even dimly perceive that the English Company was the entering wedge of European imperialism strong in its socio-economic foundations.

In the wake of the Mysorean invasions occurred the Pazhassi and Velu Tampi rebellions, mentioned in detail in the earlier pages. These revolts have an important place in the history of violent resistance against British authority, but the nature of these revolts still remains a controversial theme among historians. How far were these revolts informed by a truly nationalistic spirit? In the light of their political activities antecedent to their respective rebellions, could their rebellions be regarded as anything more than feudal insurrections? What was the extent of mass participation in them? These questions still remain unanswered. As yet no detailed and critical study of the rebellions has been done by any historian. But popular history has woven around them a chapter of brilliant heroism which in the days of the national freedom movement served as a valuable source of inspiration for the Keralites.

Among the early revolts against British authority, the one that showed the uniqueness of a popular insurrection was the Kurichiya revolt of 1812, details of which have been outlined earlier. The failure of the revolt was a foregone conclusion, but that does not minimise its significance in the history of early resistance against British authority. Though confined to limited area in north Malabar, it was truly a mass uprising due to economic grievances and official high handedness, a peasant revolt unlike the Pazhassi and Velu Tampi rebellions. In this sense it was perhaps one of the earliest peasant movements in the history of Indian resistance to British power. The revolt has therefore imparted a distinctiveness to the freedom struggle in Kerala.

A CENTURY OF POLITICAL QUIESCENCE

The Kurichiya uprising was the last of the early revolts, organised and violent, against British power in Kerala. Since then, for almost a century, Kerala was in a State of political quiescence. A sense of helplessness against the British authority, an awareness that British rule had come here to stay, became the dominant note in popular mind. This 'illusion of permanence' about the new dispensation engendered and enforced a general feeling of acquiescence with the British authority that was to characterise Kerala life for a long period to come.

The only exception to the general vogue of 'Pax Britannica' was a series of violent disturbances known as 'Moplah Riots' in Malabar from about 1834 to the close of the century. Though the riots occurred in different parts of Malabar, they were mostly confined to the Eranad and Valluvanad taluks and their peak period was from 1835 to 1853. Opinions widely differ on the nature and causes of these riots. Agrarian grievances of the Mappilas, their general economic backwardness and the low level of education must be mentioned as fundamental factors behind these outbreaks. Communal fanaticism also could not be ruled out since the victims of the outrages were invariably the Hindu jenmis. On the whole the riots, though sporadic, posed a serious law and order problem and considerably affected Hindu-Muslim relations in Malabar. Ultimately, the repressive policy of the British Government on the one hand and the implementation of ameliorative and welfare measures like tenancy reform on the other helped to bring about a decline of the riots at the turn of the century. In recent times many historians of the class conflict school have attempted to establish a link between these riots and the 'Moplah Rebellion 1921' and regard the latter as a logical culmination of the former. More detailed studies, however, have to be made before anything definite can be said about the nature of the Mappila riots.

Barring the sporadic Mappila outrages, political tranquillity prevailed over the whole of Kerala for roughly a century since the suppression of the Velu Thampi and Kurichiya revolts. With Malabar directly administered by the British as part of the Madras presidency, and Cochin and Travancore under princely rule, controlled and guided by the Paramount Power, Kerala enjoyed perhaps the longest span of relative peace in her history. It was, moreover, the period when she felt the full impact of the West, through the agency of the British, which helped say, as it were, the foundations of New Kerala.

When governmental and administrative stability (to be sure, it was imposed from above and not devoid of serious shortcomings) prevailed over the three territorial divisions of Kerala and when scope for political activity was practically non-existent, the attention of both government and people turned towards non-political matters. Under the aegis of the British government and enlightened rulers of Cochin and Travancore, substantial developments took place in the administrative, social economic, and cultural fields. In all the three units of Kerala, reforms and changes were introduced in the administration, bringing it into line with modern concepts of government. The judiciary and the legal system were completely reorganised in accordance with western principles. Public works like roads, irrigation, communication, etc., received special attention of the governments. Humanitarian and welfare measures—abolition of slavery, removal of the ban in wearing of upper-cloth by the low-caste people, to mention a few—were undertaken. The introduction and spread of the cash economy, the increased emphasis on agricultural improvement, especially the development of plantations, the growth of medium-sized industries like tiles, coir, etc., had not merely developed the economy of Kerala, but also profoundly altered social relationships. Above all, the nineteenth century saw the introduction and spread of western education, in which a very significant role was played by the various Christian missionaries. Through the medium of English education, Kerala was exposed to the full blast of western civilisation and became like other progressive parts of India an 'adopted heir' of European Enlightenment. Her intellectual isolation was broken and the princely State of Travancore in particular attained, in the words of Sir T. Madhava Rao, "a distinguished pre-eminence of cultivated intellect in South India".

It must, however, be mentioned that most of these reforms, such as English education and tenancy reforms, undertaken either directly by the British government or through the princely governments, were not based on purely disinterested motives. In fact they were intended to strengthen the foundation and the hold of British power in Kerala. But the positive impact of these reforms should not be overlooked. Reforms necessarily entailed changes in the conditions and outlook of the people, and changes in turn necessarily led to further reforms, and so on in a Hegelian strain they went hand in hand. Thus underneath the political placidity, Kerala was on the whole undergoing a gradual and steady transformation. The word 'renaissance' is old and stereo typed with European overtones, but that expressive term may still be used to denote the vast transformation that was quietly coming over Kerala society in the 19th century.

One important aspect of this renaissance deserves to be specifically mentioned: it was the awakening of the masses, the lower orders in the Hindu society, against social injustices and evils existing for a long time.

"The period of awakening of the masses to a sense of worth and importance", says Romain Rolland "is a critical period in the history of a people. It may be either explosive and destructive or gentle and constructive; but the effect is revolutionary in both cases. The most serious criticism against a violent revolution is that it rarely achieves its original purpose. The second type is more permanent and far-reaching in its effects". Towards the last quarter of the nineteenth century Kerala witnessed a profound awakening which expressed itself in a number of socio-religious reform movements, militant in spirit but on the whole peaceful and non-violent in action. The movements were of utmost significance in Kerala because she had for centuries tolerated the caste system in its most oppressive form. Ironically Kerala had also a rich and truly magnificent folk tradition and collection of folk-legends, like the story of Pakkanar, which clearly point to the utter meaninglessness of caste and emphasise the purity of mind, not birth, as equal to divinity. Nevertheless, in actual practice, caste system and caste taboos existed in such a heinous way that the lower orders were not only 'untouchable' but also 'unapproachable'. With the advent of direct British rule in Malabar, caste system was no doubt separated from the administrative machinery, but social status and economic competence of the individual were still determined by his position in the caste hierarchy. In the princely states the hold of the caste was longer and until the twentieth century governmental positions were denied to lower castes and non-Hindus. However, in the new climate of peace and under the impact of economic changes and the new learning, there was an increasing protest against the disabilities and evils associated with the operation of the caste system. The demand for social equality led to powerful social reform movements which were also the earliest democratic mass movements in Kerala.

The most important among these movements was the one inspired by Sri Narayana Guru (1855-1928), the Ezhava Saint. Born in a village near Trivandrum, he was remarkably devout by temperament and quite early in life he developed a deep interest in Sanskrit and Hindu Philosophy in which he became one of the most original thinkers of the last one hundred years. He fearlessly criticised and campaigned against the rigours of the caste, the Brahmin hegemony, and the numerous social disabilities of the Ezhavas and other lower castes. He voluntarily took to the life of a wandering Sanyasi and in 1887 founded a small Siva temple at Aruvipuram, south of Trivandrum. When the *Savarnas* questioned the propriety of an untouchable consecrating a temple, the Guru gave the telling retort that the temple was dedicated not to the 'Brahmin Siva' but to the 'Ezhava Siva' served by Ezhava priests. This amounted to a veritable social revolution and soon Sri Narayana became the rallying point for the Ezhavas and Thiyyas to unite and organise. In 1899 a small *yogam* (committee or society) was formed to look after the management of the Aruvipuram temple and within a short time it grew

into the Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana (SNDP) Yogam, literally, the society for the propagation of the moral teachings of Sri Narayana. The Swami and the Sangha drew to them a brilliant band of dedicated workers, like Dr. Palpu and the poet Kumaran Asan, whose efforts constitute an eloquent testimony to what a community, subjected to centuries of social tyranny, can do and achieve through unity, idealism and organisation. The SNDP is today one of the most influential organisations that function in Kerala. It must, however, be emphasised that Sri Narayana was no sectarian philosopher and leader. His philosophy was the *advaita*, as enshrined in the Upanishads, which he summed up in the celebrated mantra: 'One Caste, One Religion, One God for Man'. A programme of action founded upon such sublime humanism and social purpose was not destined to remain confined to one caste only, it soon became the philosophy of Hindu reformation, encompassing all castes, including the Brahmins.

Like the Ezhavas, the Nayars also felt the need for reform. The position of the Nayars, however, was different from that of the Ezhavas. The Nayars though *Savarnas*, were lower in rank in the caste hierarchy and in some respects they were a polluting caste to the Brahmins. Nevertheless, over the centuries, in the course of the evolution of a feudal militaristic society, the Nayars developed a peculiar social relationship with the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas. This was through the institution of *sambandham* (non-legal marriage) and the matrilineal joint family. Throughout the medieval period and until well into the nineteenth century, the system ensured Nayar dominance in Kerala. Though socially inferior to Brahmins, they had status. The impartible property of the joint family gave them economic strength of a feudal character. And when caste system was linked with administration, they dominated the civil and military establishments. However, by the middle of the nineteenth century, though the Nayars were still the dominant class, decline had already set in. The very institutions which had ensured the strength of the Nayar community earlier, now became productive of numerous evils. The joint-family stifled individual initiative an enterprise while the system of marriage produced immorality and vices; both helped only Brahmin ascendancy. Added to these, were the changes that came with the political hegemony of the British. The impact of the market economy, the disappearance of the traditional military training, the absorption of new values through the new system of education in western style, the emergence of the lower castes to self-consciousness and their cry for equality and privileges—all these by the beginning of the twentieth century brought about a decline of Nayar dominance. The Nayars, to be sure, did not sink; but as Robin Jeffrey says: "they could no longer regard buoyancy as their birthright; in future, like Christians and *avarna* Hindus, they too would have to swim". The sense of decline gave an impetus to the spirit of reform that expressed itself in the work of religious men like Chattambi Swamikal (1854-1924) in

literature, in the press and platform and later in legislative enactments in respect of marriage, inheritance, property rights, etc. Ultimately the movement crystallised in the foundation of the Nair Service Society (1914) which functions today as the premier Nayar organisation in Kerala.

The impulse to change was not confined to the Ezhavas and other untouchables and the Nayars. As a matter of fact, in varying degrees, it characterised every caste in the Hindu society as well as the Christians and the Muslims. By the second decade of the twentieth century there was scarcely a caste or a religious community in Kerala which did not have its own separate organisation. This presents an interesting phenomenon. Kerala justly famous as the most literate and progressive part of India, tended to have the largest number of caste and communal organisations. Many writers have regarded this as a reactionary trend in Kerala society. Others like E. M. S. Namboodiripad pointed out that these caste organisations were the first to rouse and organise the masses of their respective communities against some aspects of the oppressive social order. Further, the peasants belonging to these caste organisations, especially of the lower castes, were first roused by their respective organisations and this trend later helped the class organisation of the peasantry and bring them into the fold of the anti-imperialist national movement. Nevertheless, the negative impact of such communal organisations cannot be overlooked. As each community united, organised itself and achieved strength through success, there developed a natural rivalry which, in course of time, spilled over to politics. Thus politics in Kerala, especially in the princely states since the 1940's, became the politics of segmented society wherein the effectiveness of a leader was proportionate to the backing he got from his community or caste. Oftentimes, Kerala politics showed up as the art of delicate balancing of communal interest groups.

It should be clear from the foregoing that since 1812 until almost the close of the century, though political life was characterised by inactivity and society presented an outward calmness, underneath forces were forming and developing that produced a ferment. This current of social transformation gradually widened into the mainstream of the political struggle for freedom and responsible government in the twentieth century.

STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM: 20th CENTURY

It is difficult to generalise about the movement and struggle for freedom in Kerala without the risk of oversimplification. This is because the nature and intensity of the struggle were different in the three territorial divisions of Kerala. On the whole, in the princely states of Cochin and Travancore, the political struggle for freedom developed slower than the movement for socio-economic reforms, whereas in Malabar, directly administered by the British, the tempo of the political struggle was quicker than socio-economic reform movements. For the sake of convenience, the history of the freedom movement in Kerala could be broken up chronologically into three phases: upto 1920, 1920-38 and 1938-47.

Towards the last quarter of the nineteenth century owing to a variety of factors, nationalism was emerging in India, centred mostly in the provinces. Contrary to Macaulay's prediction, the very first generation of English-educated Indian gentlemen clamoured for reforms, political concessions and avenues for their increasing participation in the governance of the country. The movement found its concrete embodiment in the Indian National Congress established in 1885. It was an elitist organisation confined to the educated well-to-do and its battles were on a constitutional plane for specific reforms. However, it soon became the spearhead of the Indian nationalist movement and the temper of its struggle showed a decided change with the emergence of the extremists at the dawn of the present century.

These developments in the north and at the national level did not go unnoticed in distant Kerala, though until 1919 political movement was decidedly slow. A few Keralites—G. P. Pillai, Sir C. Sankaran Nayar and Rayru Nambiar among them—actively participated in the activities of the Congress and Sankaran Nayar presided over the Amraoti session of the Congress in 1897. However, they worked in their individual capacity; they represented only themselves and most of them were living, or had settled down outside Kerala. In 1904, under the auspices of the Congress, a conference was held in Calicut and in 1908 a District Congress Committee was formed in Malabar. Beyond this there was no political activity worth the name in Malabar until the outbreak of the first world war.

The princely states of Travancore and Cochin had a little edge over Malabar in the beginning of organised political agitation for the benefits of good government. On two occasions, in 1839 and 1859, prominent citizens of Cochin petitioned to the Governor of Madras for action against corrupt Dewans and on both occasions the requests were honoured with the removal of the officials accused. In Travancore, political agitation began with the Nayars who found their dominance declining and resented the monopolisation of higher offices by the Tamil Brahmins drawn from outside Kerala. While the resentment expressed through the columns of the press had been mounting, their appetite for political participation was whetted with the formation of the Travancore Legislative Council in 1888—the first ever legislature started in an Indian state. This was the background of the famous Malayali Memorial submitted to the Maharaja in 1891. It bore the signatures of over ten thousand people, including a sprinkling of Ezhavas, Christians and Muslims. Its architects were G. P. Pillai and K. P. Sankara Menon. Ostensibly drafted on the basis of the popular cry 'Travancore for Travancoreans' it was really a Nayar plea for privileges and positions. In consequence, it was soon followed by an Ezhava Memorial (1896), submitted over thirteen thousand signatures, pleading for the extension of civic rights, Government jobs etc., to the lower castes. No immediate action followed from the government, to the disappointment of the memorialists. But the impact of both was considerable: they started the constitutional style of political agitation in Travancore.

Perhaps the one event of the pre 1914 period that deeply stirred the feelings of the people and roused their political consciousness was the deportation of K. Ramakrishna Pillai, editor of *Swadeshabhimani* in Travancore. Among the patriots of Kerala in the early years of the present century, he was singularly devoid of the craze for power or position or wealth. Struggling in poverty, yet inflexible in fortitude and courage, he drew his powerful pen to expose the true nature of the palace politics and the corruption and favouritism that surrounded it. For attacking the politics of the Dewan P. Rajagopalachari, and exhorting the people to demand for self-government, he was deported in 1911—a martyrdom for a righteous journalist in the service of his fellowmen. He is also to be remembered as the author of a biography of Karl Marx (1912), the first one to appear in any Indian language, and hence a pioneer Indian to be inspired by socialist consciousness.

Political activity in Kerala, especially in Malabar, received a new tempo with the outbreak of the first world war and the spread of Home Rule ideas. Home Rule Leagues sprouted in different places in Malabar and the work of young Congressmen like K. P. Kesava Menon received enthusiastic encouragement from the people. In 1916 and 1917, the annual meetings of the District Congress Committee were held with great fanfare under the name of Malabar District Political Conference and

the Home Rule League leaders, Mrs. Annie Besant and C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer, addressed them. The conferences passed resolutions on self-government for India and requested the government to release political prisoners arrested in connection with Home Rule propaganda. Representatives from Kerala were included in the Home Rule League deputation that waited on the Secretary of State, Montagu, then in Delhi to submit their views on the proposed constitutional reforms. Further, there was also an expansion of the congress work into Cochin and Travancore and, wing to the work of young enthusiasts like A K. Pillai, Congress Committees were started in Trivandrum, Trichur and Ernakulam.

Thus by 1919 there was considerable political enthusiasm in Kerala but organised political work was still at the foundational level. Further, whatever political activity existed was due to the enthusiasm of a handful of educated youngmen, supported by some members of the landlord and moneyed class. Politics was constitutional and elitist; it did not filter down to or originate from the masses.

Winds of change, however, were fast blowing over the Indian political scene, and under the double impact of the debates over the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms and the circumstances that led to the emergence of Mahatma Gandhi to a position of front rank leadership of the Congress, political activity in Kerala felt a new spur. It should also be remembered that this was the period when the national movement had moved beyond the middle class stage and became more real with the increasing involvement of the masses.

The first signs of the impending change were clearly seen at the fifth Malabar District Political Conference held at Manjeri on April 20, 1920. About 1300 delegates from different parts of Malabar attended the conference. Mrs. Beasant was also present. For the first time in Kerala this conference openly revealed the cleavage between the moderates and the extremists. The main issue squarely fought out was whether the Montford scheme should be accepted or rejected. Mrs. Beasant strongly argued in favour of the acceptance of the scheme and the rejection of the proposed programme of non-co-operation. This disgusted the extremists who, led by K. P. Raman Menon, moved the resolution declaring India fit for full self-government and the Montagu constitution inadequate and disappointing. The extremists carried the day with an overwhelming majority that led Mrs. Beasant and her following to stage a walk-out. The same was the case with the resolution on Khilafat passed after rejecting Mrs. Beasant's amendment against non-co-operation. Equally significant was the resolution demanding legislation to protect the interests of the tenants. It was stoutly opposed by the landlords at the conference. They held that land was private property, the right to which should

not be infringed or regulated. Twenty-one landlords signed a protest against what they regarded as the impropriety of considering the resolution at a conference which did not properly represent the landlords. After a battle royal when the resolution was put to vote the opposing camps voted as they had done on the issue of non-co-operation—the moderates supporting the landlord interests, the extremists standing for tenant rights. The latter won. The Manjeri conference was thus a landmark in the history of the political struggle, registering the triumph of the popular and progressive forces.

The Manjeri conference was the last of the Malabar district political conferences. For in 1920, in pursuance of the resolution of the Nagpur Congress to organise provincial Congress committees on a linguistic basis, a Kerala Provincial Congress Committee was formed integrating Congress activities in the three territorial divisions of Kerala. The first All Kerala Political Conference held at Ottapalam in April, 1921, was attended by delegates from Malabar, Cochin and Travancore. That was the beginning of the move for a united Kerala which became a reality in terms of law thirty-five years later.

By the time the Ottapalam Conference was held the non-co-operation programme was in full swing. The Gandhian movement had a tremendous impact on Kerala. She did not lag behind any other part of India in the number of people who joined the satyagraha campaigns and who willingly dedicated their life and efforts for the implementation of the various items of Gandhiji's constructive programme. The non-cooperation movement was particularly strong in Malabar where the Mappilas were agitated over the Khilafat issue. Following Gandhiji's visit to Malabar in August, 1921, the movement became widespread. Khilafat committees sprang up in large numbers and the fraternisation between the Hindus and Muslims through work in the Congress-Khilafat committees was a truly remarkable feature of the non-cooperation movement in its early stages.

It was in the course of the non-cooperation and Khilafat movements that Kerala witnessed what was really the most tragic episode in her freedom struggle, namely, the Mappila Rebellion or, as has been increasingly called, the Malabar Rebellion of 1921. The story of this most unfortunate event has not been told completely or objectively so far. However, its main outlines are more or less clear. The reported speed at which the Khilafat agitation spread especially in the Eranad and Valluvanad taluks created alarm in official circles. Official documents betray considerable wobbling

among the authorities, both local and provincial, over the appropriate action to be taken. It seems that a perplexed officialdom acted on the policy: when in doubt, suppress. Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code was clamped down over the two taluks, meetings were banned and many people were arrested in the name of law and order. In the midst of this occurred an incident on 19, August, 1921, which started a chain reaction. On a charge of having stolen a pistol from the palace of the Hindu royal family of Nilambur, the police attempted to arrest Vadakkevittil Muhammed who was the secretary of the Khilafat committee of Pukottur in Eranad. A crowd of 2000 Mappilas from the neighbourhood collected and foiled the police attempt. The next day a police party including some senior officers in their search for Khilafat rebels entered the famous Mambram mosque at Tirurangadi, seized some records and arrested a few Khilafat volunteers. A rumour that the mosque was desecrated spread like wildfire and instantaneously hundreds of rustic Mappilas converged on Tirurangadi. Led by Ali Musaliyar, the priest of the mosque, the crowd besieged the local police station. The police fired and the mob reacted in mad fury with whatever weapons they had. Violence spread and convulsed Eranad and Valluvanad taluks and their neighbourhood for the ensuing two months and over. The rebels attacked police stations, looted treasuries, destroyed the records in the sub-registry offices, and for a few weeks at least the writ of the British government did not run in the area. One of the rebels, Kunhammed Haji, even assumed the title of King, issued edicts against the British and the janmis and guaranteed protection to the Hindus. Congress leaders like K. P. Kesava Menon, Kelappan, M. P. Narayana Menon, K. Madhavan Nair and Muhammed Abdur Rahiman tried their utmost to check violence, but their efforts failed. Towards the later stages of rebellion, may be owing to unfounded rumours of the Hindus having helped the police or sought police help, there were instances of atrocities perpetrated on Hindus which marred the relations between the two communities. Meanwhile the government rushed British and Gurkha regiments to the area, martial law was declared and repression unleashed. By November the rebellion was practically crushed, though some of the rebels were not nabbed until December. What the rebellion cost in terms of the human toll, it is difficult to know; the government, for various reasons, refused an investigation in this regard; however, most accounts point to a figure of not less than ten thousand lives. The epilogue—in the sense that it came to be known only later—was the 'Wagon tragedy' in which 61 of the 90 Mappila prisoners packed in a closed railway goods wagon and carried to Coimbatore jails died of suffocation on 10, November, 1921. Relief operations in the

rebellion ravaged areas, undertaken mostly by voluntary agencies which received help and funds from Gandhiji, lasted for over six months.

While the important incidents and military events in the course of the rebellion are fairly well known sharpest differences of opinion exist on the nature and causes of the upheaval. The official view of the British government regarded it as the inevitable result of the non-cooperation and Khilafat movement and tended to emphasise the communalist character of the revolt. This view has been persistently rejected by the Indian National Congress. The Congress viewed the rebellion as the consequence of the repressive policy of the government. At the same time the Congress, as could be seen from the resolution adopted at the Ahmedabad session of 1921, refused to consider the rebellion as a part of the freedom struggle on the ground that the rebels did not adhere to Gandhiji's insistence on the principle of non-violence. In subsequent times, some of the leaders who were witnesses or participants in the freedom movement, looked back on the events and left reminiscent accounts of autobiographical writings, articles, etc. While most of them are valuable as materials for the historian, it must be pointed out that what they left unsaid are oftentimes more eloquent than what they said. Recently, an increasing number of writers and historians of Marxist orientation have attempted to analyse the socio-economic factors behind the rebellion and highlight its class character. In their view it was a peasant revolt against feudal oppression and a desperate attempt to redress economic grievances.

So far no academic historian has attempted any detailed study of the rebellion (The only exception is a study by Professor G. Kotovsky, of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences, Moscow. It was prepared in the 1950's and remains unpublished). One major reason for the non-appearance of a historical study is the difficulty of getting source materials owing to the statutory restriction of fifty years for confidential records to be released to scholars. The time-bar is over, but even then many documents are still kept 'confidential' in the archives. Like the government, the academy also seems to have some reluctance in undertaking the study for fear that their conclusions, however objective, may offend the sentiments of the communities involved in the rebellion. Lately, in several universities, historians have initiated studies on the event but it may take several years before their analyses and conclusions could be known. Until then it will be prudent to withhold judgements or opinions on the nature and causes of the revolt of 1921

Following the suppression of the Malabar rebellion and until almost the end of the decade, the purely political struggle for freedom was on a low key. However, the spirit of the people was kept up through the organisational activities of the Congressmen and political journalism. The annual All Kerala Political Conference convened under the auspices of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee sought to bring together political workers from all parts of Kerala. The conference held at Payyannur in May, 1928, was particularly significant as it adopted a resolution requesting the Congress to declare complete independence as its goal. The States' Peoples Conference was also held at Ernakulam in 1928, and at Trivandrum in 1929. There was, in addition, considerable journalistic activity of a political kind and this was best illustrated by the starting of the nationalist newspaper Mathrubhumi (Calicut) in 1923.

The lull in political activity was largely made up on the social front. It may be remembered that Gandhiji's primary emphasis was on the constructive programme which, he used to say, must precede, accompany and follow the political struggle. The various items in the constructive programme were truly the building blocks of national development on the socio-economic and cultural fronts, and without them the political struggle would be lifeless and meaningless. The constructive programme, moreover, was one in which all people could join together and work irrespective of political views or affiliations. It was therefore a peaceful yet fundamental kind of revolution.

In the gloom that followed the suppression of the Malabar rebellion and the withdrawal of the non-cooperation movement, the constructive programme caught on the attention of the patriotic workers. And in Kerala, ridden as she was by castes and sub-castes and where a large part of the population was untouchable, the cry for social equality was particularly strong. This was the background of the famous satyagraha at the Vaikkam temple (1924), to be followed up later at the Guruvayoor temple (1931). Both of them exemplified the immense potentialities of satyagraha as an instrument of social change and both were started with the blessings of Gandhiji.

The move for social equality was expressed through the demand for temple entry for the untouchables and at Vaikkam the particular demand was only for the grant of right of passage to the untouchables along the approach roads to the temple. The moving spirit behind the satyagraha was the Ezhava leader, T. K. Madhavan, and

enlightened leaders of the forward communities—K. P. Kesava Menon, Kelappan, Mannath Padmanabhan, George Joseph, to mention a few—actively participated in the struggle. The savarna jatha organised by the caste Hindus eloquently dramatised the sympathy of the enlightened for the cause. After a twenty-month struggle during which there were numerous instances of violence and suffering, the temple authorities agreed to open all the roads except the eastern one, and at this point, on the advice of Gandhiji, the satyagraha was withdrawn. At Guruvayoor, the satyagraha for temple entry was started in November, 1931, by Kelappan under the auspices of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee. After ten months, during which period there were some instances of violence towards the volunteers Kelappan began an indefinite fast which, however, was given up on the advice of Gandhiji. On both the occasions, it must be conceded, the declared immediate objective was not completely realised and there was considerable disappointment for the satyagrahis. A recent study entitled *Vaikkam Satyagraha and Gandhiji* states that “the satyagrahis surrendered unconditionally to the state power and withdrew with a heavy load of moral defeat on their back”. In a sense the stricture is not unmerited, but it is not possible to overlook the tremendous wave of moral sympathy and strength generated by the satyagraha. That perhaps helped to avert a violent social conflict over the issue in Kerala. It is significant that when the Temple Entry Proclamation was issued in Travancore on November 12, 1936, not a gun was fired by the government in order to implement it.

The Guruvayoor satyagraha coincided with the second phase of the civil disobedience movement started by Gandhiji with his famous Salt March in March, 1930. The movement had an enthusiastic response from all parts of Kerala. In several places, particularly at Payyannur and Calicut salt laws were broken and hundreds of agitators courted arrest. Despite the ban on Congress activities, there was considerable organised boycott of courts, schools, foreign goods and wine shops. An index to the activity should be mentioned the formation of the Youth League in Travancore. It was able to enlist the dedicated services of quite a good number of spirited, radical-minded, young men who later became the prop of the Travancore State Congress.

An important feature of the new wave of anti-imperialist struggle of the 1930's was the impetus it gave to the people in the princely states to agitate for political democracy and responsible government. Already, the States' Peoples Conferences of 1928 and 1929 had passed

resolutions urging the immediate introduction of responsible government in Cochin and Travancore. In the wake of the civil disobedience campaigns, the parallel movement for responsible government began in a peculiar way in Travancore and Cochin. In Travancore, what came to be called the Nivartana (abstention) movement began as a protest against the inadequacy of the constitutional reforms of 1932. The term 'abstention' was ingeniously devised to distinguish it from the non-cooperation movement though its operation was much the same. The Ezhavas, the Christians and the Muslims apprehended that the new reforms, owing to the provision for restricted franchise on the basis of property and other qualifications, would secure for them far less number of seats in the enlarged legislature than those of the Nayars. They, therefore, demanded that seats should be apportioned on the basis of population strength.

However, the Government did not favourably view the demands, which compelled the abstentionists to organise what they called a Joint Political Congress to exhort the voters to abstain from voting. Since the three communities formed about seventy per cent of the population the agitation had the characteristics of a mass movement. Many leaders from the forward communities sympathised with the legitimacy of the demands and actively participated in the agitation. The Government adopted a repressive policy at first but later yielded to the demands of the abstentionists to some extent by reducing the property qualification and allocating a specific number of seats in the legislature for the three communities. In the elections held in 1937 most of the candidates put up by the Joint Political Congress were elected. However, the policy of the Dewan, C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer—especially the political use he made of the Temple Entry Proclamation, his attitude towards the powerful Christian community, and his attempts to create a division among the abstentionists by drawing some of the leaders to the allurements of office—threatened to create degeneracy among the rank and file of the abstentionists. To conserve the success already gained by the abstention movement and carry further the agitation for responsible government became the need of the hour. This was more so because the Haripura session of the Congress in January, 1938, had resolved that the Congress as such would keep itself aloof from involvement in the affairs of the princely States, which meant that the struggle for responsible government in the States would be the responsibility of the people themselves of the States. It was in this situation that the leaders of the Joint Political Congress, especially T. M. Varghese and C. Kesavan, decided to form a new organisation, merging the identity of the Joint Political Congress in

it. Thus was formed, in February 1938, the Travancore State Congress with Pattom A. Thanu Pillai as its first president. It was pledged to the goal of achieving full responsible government for the people of Travancore.

In Cochin, too, the demand for responsible government had started in the wake of what was interestingly called the "electricity agitation" of 1936. It was caused by the policy of the Dewan, R. K. Shanmugham Chetty, who gave the right of power supply in Trichur town to a private company, much against the wishes of the local people, especially the Christians. Owing to the stern measures of the Government, the agitation failed. But it impressed upon the leaders the need to found an organisation for a more effective agitation against the Government and for democracy. On the morrow of the Haripura Congress, the Cochin State Congress was started and thus by the beginning of 1938 the parallel agitation for responsible government had gathered momentum in the two princely States.

An important feature of the freedom movement in Kerala in the late 1920's and 1930's was the increasing involvement of the peasants and workers. This was to release a tremendous mass force to the mainstream of national movement giving it a new momentum and social content. It was the consequence of the steady erosion of the old feudal landlord-tenant relationship and the gradual emergence of a self-conscious peasantry. The rise of the new class was symbolised by the holding of massive convention of the tenants at Ernakulam in 1928. It was presided over by Lala Lajpat Rai and it resulted in the formation of the All Kerala Tenants Association. This new trend and the effective leadership of men like K. P. Raman Menon and G. Sankaran Nair compelled the Madras Government to pass the famous Malabar Tenancy Act (1930) which extended security of tenure and fair rents to the tenants. To be sure, it was a half measure which had to be amended several times later; but it clearly reflected the rising strength of the new forces. In Cochin also the peasant movement was fairly strong. The agitation of the agricultural workers of Cranganore early in 1932 for relief from rural indebtedness, though severely treated by the Government, was ultimately successful. In 1935 the earliest Kisan Sangham was formed at Kolachery Malabar, to resist local feudal oppression and towards the end of the decade a number of such organisations were started in the villages of Malabar.

The working class in the industries and factories also did not lag behind the peasants and farm labourers. As early as 1920-21, the coir workers of Alleppey had organised into a union and it is

on record that the demand for responsible government was mooted in one of its earliest annual meetings, long before the inception of the Travancore State Congress. Towards the close of the decade there were several unions in the coastal belt of Travancore. In July, 1928, the railway workers of Kerala joined their comrades in other parts of south India in organising a successful strike under the leadership of V. V. Giri. During 1934-35 the collective action of the workers found expression in a series of industrial strikes in Alleppey, Trichur, Calicut, Cannanore and other places. This new development culminated in the formation of the All Kerala Trade Union Congress in 1935. However, owing to the extremely slow pace of industrialisation, the emergence of the industrial and factory workers as an active force in politics had to wait until after the attainment of independence.

The peasant and labour movement of the 1930's was to a great extent the cause as well as the consequence of the emergence of a powerful left wing in politics. Educated young Congressmen from Kerala, through their participation in all-India conferences and through the inspiration they derived from the life and work of men like Bhagat Singh, M. N. Roy and others, became increasingly drawn to the intellectual orientation of leftist leaders. The example of Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhash Chandra Bose, Acharya Narendra Dev and others provided a powerful incentive to the youth of Kerala and many of them had already developed an intellectual refuge in the ideas of socialism and communism. It may be remembered that as early as 1931, a young man, N. P. Kurikkal, published a hand bill entitled "The Indian Communist Party" which was banned by the Travancore Government as soon as it appeared. It was the apparent failure of the Gandhian political techniques and his withdrawal of the civil disobedience movement in 1934 that sorely disappointed many radicals and drew them more and more to the left. In 1934 left nationalists joined together and under the leadership of E. M. S. Namboodiripad and P. K. Krishna Pillai organised the Congress Socialist Party. They preferred to remain organisationally within the Congress and call themselves socialists because in 1934 the Communist Party was declared unlawful by the British Government. A powerful factor that helped the growth of the left group was the support it received from the radical section of the nationalist Muslims in Malabar. Left groups started functioning in several parts of Malabar and soon the Kerala Provisional Congress Committee was dominated by them. So much so that in October, 1934, they passed a resolution in the meeting of the K. P. C. C. that Gandhiji's weapons of truth and non-violence would

be ineffective in the struggle for freedom. Nevertheless both the left and right groups joined together in order to ensure the success of the Congress candidates in the elections of 1936.

Thus, during the second phase of the political struggle, the slackness of the pre 1920 days was largely made up. By 1938-39 Kerala was fully drawn into the national struggle for freedom as well as the struggle for responsible government in the princely states. The temper of the times was well expressed by E. M. S. Namboodiripad when he wrote:

“Here was a combination of all those factors that together make a real national democratic movement—the movement of the entire people for freedom from alien rule; the movement of the peasants for freedom from landlord exploitation; the movement of the Malayalee nation for national unity; the movement of the masses belonging to the lower castes, as well as of the progressives belonging to the higher castes, for major and basic changes in the existing social order; the movement of the intellectuals for the development of a modern progressive culture. Nor was this movement confined to one or two classes, strata and groups of people, but like all genuine national democratic movements, embraced the entire people, from the illiterate peasants to the enlightened and patriotic sections of the feudal upper classes”.

THE LAST PHASE

The history of the last phase of the freedom movement, comprising the eight or nine years to independence, though most important, is perhaps the most difficult to relate. The events and happenings, the forces and tendencies of the period, are well within the living memory of those who are in the middle age and above. History is the memory of experience and since the experiences of the individuals and groups are varied, opinions and ideas are liable to vary. Agreements may be found, but conflicts, too, are there. Until the passions and prejudices are over, and details and documents are made available for analysis, the academic historian must be content to relate only the major outlines.

In Malabar, as mentioned earlier, the last phase opened with the emergence of a powerful left wing that captured the leadership of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee and adopted a radical position at variance with the national policy of the Indian National Congress. The rift came into the open with the outbreak of the Second World War, the resignation of the Congress Ministries in the provinces and the starting of individual satyagraha. The left-wing formed a more intense mass struggle against British imperialism. Thus, contrary to the directive of the Congress, the left dominated K. P. C. C. observed an anti-imperialist day on September 15, 1940. This led to violent clashes between the police and the demonstrators in several places, especially Tellicherry, Morazha and Kayyur. The K. P. C. C. was therefore suspended and the leftists under the leadership of E. M. S. Namboodiripad, P. Krishna Pillai and A. K. Gopalan, met in secret conclave at Pinarayi, and thus in December 1939, was born the Communist Party. Having left the Congress and in order to strengthen its forces for the impending struggle against British imperialism, they turned to intensive organisational work among peasants, agricultural workers, industrial labour and students.

While these developments were taking place in Malabar, the struggle for responsible government had begun in Cochin and Travancore. Comparatively, the struggle in Cochin was far less in intensity than that in Travancore. This was because the ruler

of Cochin adopted on the whole a lenient policy of political concessions which averted violent clashes. Thus in June 1938, a dyarchical form of government was established, allowing popular ministers to control some departments. The system did not work well and the Cochin Praja Mandalam, founded in 1941, began to agitate for full responsibility in government.

In Travancore, with the formation of the State Congress and its decision to launch direct action, the struggle for responsible government assumed the character of a mass movement. The Congress, from the beginning, was bitterly critical of the Dewan, C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer, and in a memorial submitted to the Maharaja they levelled a series of charges against him and asked for his dismissal. The infuriated Dewan adopted repressive measures and banned the State Congress, and the Youth League. The Congress therefore, launched the civil disobedience movement which led to several clashes between the people and the police in several places. The rising tempo of the movement forced the Government to lift the ban, but the Dewan refused to open negotiations until the charges were withdrawn. Gandhiji intervened and the charges were withdrawn. But that created a split in the Congress. The members of the Youth League left the State Congress to form the Communist Party. As in Malabar, the Communist Party strengthened its base by intensive work among peasants and workers.

This was the situation when the Quit India Movement began in 1942. It generated considerable enthusiasm, especially among the students. But on the whole it did not lead to violent repercussions as in other parts of India. This was because most of the Congress leaders were behind bars and the Communist Party was opposed to it. Nevertheless, there were disturbances in many places involving disruption of communications, burning of offices, etc. The Kizhariyur (Malabar) bomb case was the only major episode of violence.

The end of the Quit India Movement saw Malabar returning to elections and constitutional government. Freedom and independence saw Malabar as a district of Madras province. In Cochin dyarchy was finally abolished and on the eve of Independence the Dewanship ended and a popular ministry under Panampilly Govinda Menon was sworn in to power.

Travancore, however, was not destined to have a peaceful transition to freedom and democracy. In October 1946, she had to face one of the most violent upheavals in her recent history. Known as the Punnpra-Vayalar revolt, it developed as a reaction

to the constitutional scheme proposed by the Dewan, C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer, early in January, 1946. The scheme provided for adult franchise but retained the dewanship as well as an irremovable executive. The State Congress rejected the scheme. The Communists not only rejected the scheme but decided to launch a violent struggle in order "to throw the American model into the Arabian sea" and bring an end to the oppressive rule of the Dewan. It may be remembered that the Communist Party had been building up its strength among the kisans and labourers, and the spiralling prices, unemployment and famine in the wake of the Second World War afforded it a peculiarly favourable climate for the expansion of its activities. The coastal taluks of Alleppey and Shertallai were, in particular, strongholds of the Party with its numerous unions covering the fishermen, coir workers, toddy-tappers, boat crew and agricultural labourers. While Latin Catholic fishermen of Punnapra, in Alleppey, were at the mercy of the usurious money-lender, the Ezhavas of the village of Vayalar, in Shertallai, were the tenants of a few landlord families who persistently kept the agricultural wages miserably low. Poverty, squalor and disease stalked the land while famine accounted for a heavy human toll (21,000 according to an estimate of the Servants of India Society which conducted relief operations).

It was on this extremely receptive ground that the rudiments of class war and surplus value were broadcast by the workers of the Communist Party. Regular study classes were held and prominent leaders of the party used to participate in them. By the middle of 1946 there were many camps of the workers in the area. Volunteers from the working class were recruited and training given to them in a military style by some ex-servicemen. This increased the tension in the area and there were reports of landlord-tenant clashes. When intelligence reports reached the Government, not merely police but the military was also deployed. This only worsened the situation. In the midst of this came the call for a general strike by the All Travancore Trade Union Congress on October 20, 1946. It is stated that the Dewan sent some agents to discuss the matter with the leaders and to dissuade them from the proposed strike. But these were of no avail as the Party was unflinching in its stance. Consequently, martial law was declared in the area and the Dewan himself assumed the functions of the commander-in-chief. The impassioned workers and volunteers preferred confrontation—stones, bamboo spikes, area spears and swords confronting machine guns. What followed, from 24 to 27 October, was a tale of heroism and tragedy. The

toll, in terms of human lives, has not been reckoned and perhaps will never be known. For months to come Punnapra-Vayalar had the appearance of a ghastly grave—of men as well as aspirations.

The story of this misfired revolt has never been told completely. Like many other events in Kerala history its details and nature could be unravelled only by the future. As it is, opinions are sharply divided over causes and failure. It is for the future historian to find out where the truth lies.

The suppression of the revolt did not mean the end of difficulties for the Dewan. There was a decided change in the attitude of the people who regarded his continuance in office as productive of more evils. Things reached a political crisis again when the British announced their intention to leave India. Dewan announced, in what was in fact the height of un wisdom on his part, that Travancore would remain an independent state on the lapse of British paramountcy. This triggered a fierce controversy both inside and outside the State and the Dewan, to suppress dissent, unleashed the forces of repression. In the midst of repression and confusion, an unsuccessful attempt was made on his life on July 25, 1947. The Dewan made his exit from the State and with it the dream of an independent Travancore. When freedom came, Travancore was part of the Indian Union and steps were taken to instal the first popular ministry under Pattom A. Thanu Pillai.

BIRTH OF NEW KERALA

With the attainment of independence and freedom under responsible government, the movement for a united-Aikya-Kerala attained a fresh momentum. In pursuance of an inspiring appeal from the Maharaja of Cochin, an Aikya-Kerala conference had already met at Trichur in April, 1947. Under the leadership of Kelappan and K. P. Kesava Menon a standing council was formed for follow-up action. In 1949 conventions were held in Alwaye and Palghat to press for the formation of the Kerala State.

The first step in this direction was taken on July 1, 1949, when following the national policy of integration initiated by Sardar Vallabhai Patel, the states of Cochin and Travancore were merged into Travancore-Cochin under a Rajpramukh.

In the meantime the idea of reorganising the Indian states on a linguistic basis was actively engaging the attention of the national leadership of the Congress and the Central Government. The final step was taken with the appointment of the States Reorganisation Commission. On the basis of the report of the Commission it was decided to add the Malabar district and the Kasargod taluk of South Kanara district to Travancore-Cochin and to separate the Tamil-speaking southern region of old Travancore from Travancore-Cochin for inclusion in Madras state. On November 1, 1956, the new State of Kerala was formally inaugurated amidst universal rejoicing. The Land of Parasurama thus regained its identity within the unity of the Land of Bharata.

PART IV

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

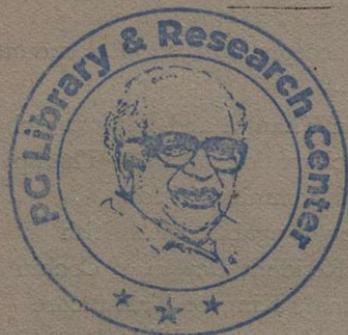
Important Dates in Kerala History

- c 300 B.C. Katyayana mentions Kerala.
- c 270 B.C. Asoka's Major Rock Edict No. 2 mentions Keralaputras
- c 200 B.C. Patanjali mentions Kerala in his *Mahabhashya*
- 45 A.D. Hippalu's discovery of the monsoons.
- 52 A.D. Legend of St. Thomas's mission to Kerala
- 74 A.D. Pliny mentions Kerala in his *Natural History*
- 550 A.D. Cosmas Indicopleustes mentions Kerala products like pepper and narikela (Arjellialarge nut).
- c 630 A.D. Dandin, a court poet of Narasimha Varman Pallava, refers to two learned Brahmins from Kerala in his *Avanthisundari Katha*
- 788 A.D. Birth of Sankaracharya
- c 800 A.D. Coronation of Raja Rajadhiraja Parameswara Bhattaraka Sri Rajasekhara Devar, first known Chera king of Makotai (Mahodayapuram)
- 820 A.D. Death of Sankaracharya
- 824-25 A.D. Beginning of Kollam Era
- 844 A.D. Coronation of Sthanu Ravi Kulasekhara
- 849 A.D. Tarisappalli Copper Plates of Sthanu Ravi to Syrian Christians.
- 869 A.D. Composition of *Sankaranarayaniyam*, a treatise on astronomy by Sankaranarayana, astronomer in the Court of Sthanu Ravi
- c 880 A.D. Chera conquest of the Musaka Kingdom
- 898 A.D. Grant to Sreemulavasam, the Buddhist monastery, by the Ay King Vikramaditya Varaguna
- 949 A.D. Vallan Kumaran and a number of Kerala chieftains participate in the Chola war against the Rastrakutas at Takkolam.
- 962 A.D. Coronation of Bhaskara Ravi Manukuladitya.
- 988 A.D. Destruction of Kantalur Sala by Rajaraja Chola

- 1000 A.D. Copper plate grant of Bhaskara Ravi to Joseph Rabban, Chief of the Jews at Cochin
- 1089 A.D. Coronation of Rama Varma Kulasekhara
- 1096 A.D. Destruction of Kollam by Kulottunga
- 1102 A.D. Recapture of Kollam
- 1124 A.D. Disappearance of Ramavarma Kulasekhara, the last of the Cheraman Perumals of Makotai, Disintegration of the Chera Kingdom.
- 1225 A.D. Grant of Vira Raghava to Iravikortan
- c 1293 A.D. Marco Polo refers to Kollam, Kumari and Eli
- 1341 A.D. Puduvaippu Era
- 1343-45 A.D. Ibn Batuta visits Kerala
- 1412 A.D. Ma Huan visits Cochin and Calicut
- 1443 A.D. Abdur Razak visits Calicut as the Ambassador of the Persian Emperor Shah Rukha to the Zamorin.
- May 17, 1498 Vasco da Gama arrives at Calicut
- September 1503 Earliest European forts built in India: at Cochin and Cannanore.
- 1508 A.D. Battle of Chaul. Portuguese fleet defeated by a combined fleet of Egypt, Gujarat and Calicut
- 1531 A.D. The Portuguese built a fort at Chaliyam
- 1571 A.D. Chaliyam fort captured by the Zamorin
- 1599 A.D. Synod of Udayamperur
- 1600 A.D. Fall of Kottakkal and murder of Kunhali IV by the Portuguese
- 1634 A.D. Battle of Kaniyamkulam
- 1653 A.D. Revolt of the Coonan Cross
- January 6, 1663 Capture of Cochin by the Dutch
- 1678-84 Umayamma Rani, the first woman ruler to Venad (Travancore)
- 1694 Tellicherry Factory established
- 1695 Anjengo Factory established
- 1696 Proclamation of Kerala Varma abolishing Pulappedi and Mannappedi
- April 21, 1721 Attingal outbreak in which 10 Englishmen belonging to the Anjengo Factory massacred

- 1715-17 Dutch War against the Zamorin
- 1725 Mahe captured by the French
- 1729-58 Marthanda Varma, King of Travancore
- 1739 First Land Revenue Settlement in Travancore
- August 10, 1741 Surrender of the Dutch at Kulachal
- 1750 Truppaddidanam (Dedication of the Kingdom)
- 1753 Treaty of Mavelikkara between Travancore and the Dutch
- 1755 Last Mamamka (Mahamagha) festival at Tirunavai
- 1758-98 Rama Varma (Dharma Raja), Ruler of Travancore
- 1761-62 Travancore assisted Cochin to recover Cochin territories from the Zamorin
- 1765 Treaty between Travancore and the Nawab of the Carnatic
- 1766 Haidar Ali invades Malabar Kingdoms
- 1789 Mysore forces attack Travancore
- 1790-1805 Rama Varma Sakthan Thampuran, King of Cochin
- 1791 Treaty between Cochin and the British
- 1792 Treaty of Sreerangapatam; Malabar ceded to the British
- 1794-97 Pazhassi Raja's revolt against the British—first stage
- October 20, 1795 Fall of Dutch Cochin
- 1795 Subsidiary Alliance with Travancore
- 1800-1805 Pazhassi Raja's revolt—Second stage
- 1801 Transfer of Malabar Province from Bombay Presidency to the Madras Presidency
- 1805 Travancore accepts British Paramountcy; Death of Pazhassi Raja.
- 1808-09 Revolt of Velu Thampi and Paliyatt Achan
- January 11, 1809 Kundara Proclamation of Velu Thampi
- 1809 Velu Thampi commits suicide
- 1812 Kurichya Revolt against the British
- 1812-18 Col. Munro, Resident Dewan of Cochin and Travancore
- 1829-47 Swathi Thirunal, King of Travancore
- 1834 First English school established at Trivandrum
- March 1, 1858 First English school established at Tellicherry
- 1885-1924 Sri Mulam Thirunal, King of Travancore

1836	First Census taken in Travancore
1845	English Ele. School established at Ernakulam
1866	First Arts College established at Trivandrum
1885	Establishment of the Legislative Council
January 1, 1891	Malayali Memorial
1904	Establishment of the Sri Mulam Praja Sabha
1911	Deportation of Swadesabhimani Ramakrishna Pillai
1921	Mappila Rebellion or Malabar Rebellion
1924-31	Regency of Sethulakshmi Bai
1931-49	Sri Chittira Tirunal Bala Rama Varma.
1932	Nivarttana (Abstention) Movement started
1936	Temply Entry Proclamation
1937	Establishment of Travancore University
1938	Dyarchy in Cochin
1942	Punnapra-Vayalar rising
1946	Praja Mandal in Office in Cochin
1947	Establishment of responsible government in Travancore
July 1, 1949	Integration of Travancore and Cochin
November 1, 1956	Formation of Kerala State.



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KERALA

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