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## **HISTORY OF KERALA -I**

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## **PART – I**

### **GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY**

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

The physical aspects of the Kerala region is clearly illustrated in the description of the physiography of the erstwhile Travancore State by Lieut. Conner in his report on the survey made at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is worthwhile to quote it in view of the large scale alterations brought in by human

inheritance to the natural landscape of the State. Conner's report runs as follows:-

The face of the country presents considerable diversity, although its general character, except the southern parts, is extremely abrupt and mountainous. The coast, for a short distance along the borders of the lake is generally flat: retreating from it, the surface immediately becomes unequal, roughening into slopes which gradually combine and swell into the mountainous amphitheatre that bounds it on the east, where it falls precipitately, but terminates less abruptly on the south. The collected villages, waving plains, palmyra tops and extensive cultivation of Nanchanad resemble in every particular the neighbouring province of Tirnelvelly, except that in no measure partakes of its comparative arid sterility. Approaching northward this fertile plain is succeeded by the woody and rugged surface of the genuine 'Malayalam' some few champaign tracts enclosed within this ocean of forest relieve the uniformity of the sylvan scene. The extent lining the coast for its whole length presents fertility so near the sea that it imparts a peculiar character to the landscape. This rich and variegated tract is flanked by a mountainous barrier and is finally contrasted with the somber magnificence and desolate solitude of those wilds of which the elephant seems the natural master; and though the landscape may be too much made up of this wild scenery, it boasts of many striking localities and peculiar beauties, if not the sublime, at least romantic and picturesque kinds. The eye is arrested by the wild, rocky, precipitous acclivities and fantastic forms assumed by the mountains in the more southern parts; but proceeding north the bold and elevated contour of the alpine tract is less sharply defined; a few rugged cliffs and spiry points or conical summits alone breaking through the sameness of its rounded and somber outline. This Apennine dissolves into clustering hills and romantic inequalities at whose feet wind innumerable valleys presenting (particularly in the middle parts) the most delightful landscapes whose natural beauties are embellished and diversified by the prospect of churches and pagodas. Indeed, the endless succession of houses and gardens scattered in picturesque order over the face of the country gives it entirely a

different appearance from the other coast, the nudity of whose plains is unfavourably contrasted with the robe of florid and exuberant vegetation that for a great part of the year clothes 'Malayalam'. The areca and coconut everywhere fringe those picturesque and sequestered glens, which gradually expand into the extensive plantations and cultivated lands that skirt the sea and lake. This space is enlivened and fertilized by innumerable rivers and pastoral streams whose borders are crowned with groves and cultivation that, everywhere, following their winding course, present a unique, interesting and charming scenery infinitely more diversified than most other parts of the peninsula and one that would indicate abundance. This is especially the case in Kuttanad, the watery flatness of this fertile fen is relieved by other gardens and habitations so thickly strewn over its surface which exhibits a network of rivers meandering through the verdure they create.

It has also been remarked that "it will be difficult to name another land which, within so narrow limits, combines so many, so varied and much precious natural blessings". Although Conner's description was on the physical aspects of Southern Kerala, it is binding upon the general attributes of physiography of other parts of Kerala as well. However, it may be mentioned that large scale deforestation, extensive transference of natural wood lands into monocultural gardens and intensive reclamation of marshes and margins of kayals have affected the land systems significantly and have also resulted in the scrapping of natural vegetation, particularly in the last two scores of years. A study of the geographical factor in relation to Kerala history assumes special significance in this context.

## **CHAPTER-I**

### **IMPORTANCE OF LOCATION IN PENINSULAR INDIA**

Kerala, the southern most state of India occupies a unique position on the map of the country. With the southernmost extremity at Parassala about 56 kms. up from the lands end of India, it stretches along the shores of Arabian Sea for a distance of about 580 kms with Karnataka State on the North and North-east and Tamil Nadu State on the East and South. The breadth of the State varies from 32 kms in the extreme North and South to over 120 kms. in the middle. It is hemmed between the mighty Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea. Kerala State lies between 8°.17' 30" and 12° 47' 40" north latitudes and 74° 51' and 77° 24' 47" east longitudes. The State is bounded on the North and North-east by South Kanara, Kudagu and Mysore districts of Karnataka State, on the East by Nilgiris, Coimbatore, Madurai, Ramanathapuram and Tirunelveli districts of Tamil Nadu, on the south by Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu and on the west by the Arabian sea. The area of the State is 38,863 sq.kms. Kerala ranks seventeenth in area among the 22 States of India. The area of the State works out to 1.19% of the total area of the country.

According to the 1981 census, Kerala has a population of 25, 403, 217 persons of whom 12,487,981 are males and 12,915,256 females. The population of the State is 3.71% of the population of India. One out of every 27 Indians and

one out of every 173 humans in the world is a Keralite. Considering the size of the population the position of Kerala is twelfth among the 22 States in India.

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

Kerala's contacts with the Roman Empire and other foreign countries had started from the ancient times itself. These contacts were mainly centred on trading activities and cultural contacts. The remains of Teak wood found at Mohanjo daro and the Harappan seals found at south India have made some historians to assume that Kerala had maintained trade relations with the Harappans through sea. The same type of arguments have been put forward by some historians to assume that Kerala had maintained trade relations with Egypt and Sumeria in the ancient times on the basis of some of the material remains found there. However, the existence of Roman trade with Kerala during the ancient period has been proved beyond doubt. Similarly, Kerala had

maintained trade relations with China, Burma, and Malaya etc. from the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. onwards Kautilya's 'Arthashastra' also mentions about the trading activities of north India with Kerala during the Mauryan period.

Kerala maintained better relations with the out-side world than with that of the rest of the country from the very early period. This paved way for the early emergence of the foreign culture to Kerala than the other parts of India. The Keralites had shown much tolerance to receive the ideas and people from the outside world from the ancient period onwards. The overseas trade and cultural contacts helped for the arrival of Jewish, emigrants to Kerala in the ancient period itself. The Christians arrived in Kerala in a much earlier period from the Middle East, which had trade contacts with this land. The popular tradition of Kerala Christians about St. Thomas's arrival has to be identified with these migrations. The Arab travelers and traders had visited the Kerala coast in a much earlier period. The arrival of Islam to Kerala happened through these Arab contacts and the spread of Islam in Kerala can be identified with the legend related with the last Perumal's conversion to Islam. All these religions arrived in Kerala at various times became the integral part of Kerala in the course of time. They all were assimilated to the Kerala society.

Though Kerala maintained its political isolation from north India, it accepted the cultural and religious contributions of the north and assimilated them with the Kerala tradition and made a separate sub-culture. The cultural traditions of the north took more time to reach Kerala but once they arrived they were assimilated to the indigenous culture and paved way for the growth of a common cultural synthesis. The Vedic religion, Buddhism and Jainism arrived Kerala from north India. It is assumed that Jainism and Buddhism had reached Kerala through the trade relations with the best of the country and from Karnataka. The Jaina 'Basadis' of Wayanad and the Jains centres at Trikkanamatilakam and Kallil are the living examples of the spread of Jainism in Kerala. The Buddhist influence on the cultural tradition of Kerala society is still visible.



The Chinese traders arrived Kerala in the ancient period had also contributed for the growth of the social and economic conditions of the people of this state. The Chinese Ware and the Fishing Nets seen in Kerala even today is the result of the Chinese influence. The Europeans who arrived in Kerala in the modern times made deep inroads into the total life style of the people and transformed the individual and the society as a whole in the realm of social, cultural, economic and political outlook.

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

. It was Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan who attacked Kerala in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and brought a large portion under the Mysorean domination. However, the political integration of Kerala with the rest of the country was brought about by the British Malabar under Company's direct rule and Cochin and Travancore through the subsidiary rule. We get references about Keralaputra from the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Rock Edicts of Asoka. According to the Asokan inscriptions the Mauryan

empire had maintained friendly relations with the southern kingdoms including Kerala. Historians like K.A.N. Sastri (A History of South India) and Raghava Iyengar (Some Aspects of Kerala and Tamil Culture) believe that Bindusara, the Mauryan emperor had attacked some parts of Kerala prior to Asoka. But there are no authentic evidences to prove this statement.

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

From the ancient time onwards itself Kerala turned out to be the meeting place of various Indian and Foreign cultures and in the course of time Kerala culture emerged from this intermixture of various cultures. All the cultural traditions that had arrived in Kerala through the ages were assimilated to the common tradition resulting into a sub-culture from the synthesis of various cultures. Kerala also showed the tolerance to accept all the religions that had reached from various parts of the world and allowed them to settle down. All these religions and cultures have undoubtedly contributed for the growth of the cultural tradition of Kerala.

### **MIGRATIONS AND PATTERNS OF SETTLEMENTS.**

Migrations of various groups of people into Kerala had started from the period of Megalithic culture. They came one after the other and so they do not

belong to same ethnic group. Different in their physical features, customs and traditions, life style etc; they all came to Kerala at different periods and together developed a separate sub-culture in the course of time. The process of migration to Kerala was hastened in the course of time due to the tolerant attitude of the early settlers. Some of the early tribes like the Muthvans and Kanikkars had migrated from Tamil Nadu. Their present day customs and traditions are similar to that of the Tamil people. They maintained the language and the cultural traditions of the Tamil people. The tribal people of Kerala were considered as a part of ancient Tamilakam by the classical Tamil writers.

The Nambudiri Brahmins were another community who had migrated to Kerala in the ancient period. The earliest Brahmin settlers came to Kerala from the South Canara region of Karnataka and in the later period some of them came from Tamil Nadu through Palakkad. The Brahmin migrants came to Kerala in different periods in various groups. The course of their migration was from north to south Kerala, stretching from Payyannur in the north to the coastal areas of Bharatapuzha, Pamba and Periyar. The migration and settlement to south Kerala took place only in the later period. The earliest settlement of the Brahmins were in 32 villages stretching from north to south. The Keralolpathi tradition also states about the migration of Brahmins to Kerala and their settlement at 32 villages. The migration of the Nambudiri Brahmins to Kerala was completed by the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

The migration of Jews took place to Kerala by the beginning of Christian era. They had come to Kerala to escape from the persecution of the Roman rulers. The Jews settled at various places like Mattanchery, Mala, Ankamali, Kodungallur etc. The migrations of Christians also took place to Kerala in the ancient period, but no evidences are available to know the exact period of their migration. The Tarisappalli Copper Plate of 9<sup>th</sup> century and the accounts of the foreign travelers confirm the existence of flourishing Christian community at Kollam Kodungallur etc. by that time. According to the popular St. Thomas tradition the migration of Christians took place to Kerala by 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

The migration of Arabs took place at later period and many natives were

converted to Islam at Ponnani. According to one tradition, the Ezhavas migrated to Kerala from Sri Lanka. The migration of various communities to Kerala at different periods have contributed for the growth of a distinct common culture, synthesizing various cultural traditions.

The pattern of settlement developed in Kerala was according to the geographical and cultural peculiarities. The earliest settlement pattern of the tribal people of Kerala was just like that of the pattern seen in other parts of the country. The nucleated village of the tribal people of the present day bears the remnants of earlier patterns. The settlement pattern based upon the nucleated villages was restricted to the high ranges by the tribal people. In the course of time, the people migrated from Karnataka and Tamil Nadu began to settle down in the land between the high ranges and the sea. The land between the high ranges and the sea was cut into small pieces by rivers, back waters, hills etc. So the migrants had to start a new type of settlement pattern in the low-lying areas of Kerala. This paved way for the continuous settlement pattern in Kerala, with each settlement bordering upon the next settlement.

The peculiar type of settlement pattern based upon scattered lands or 'parambu' developed in Kerala as a distinctive pattern from other parts of India. The houses are not found in clustered form instead each house is built in the centre of the 'purayidam' or 'parambu'. A Kerala village consists of a number of 'parambu' with a number of houses scattered through out the village. Each householder has his own land and paddy field. The scattered settlement pattern of Kerala villages is the product of the peculiar geographical feature. The area between the high ranges and the sea is highly fertile and hence the area is thickly populated. Another peculiarity of the settlement pattern of Kerala is that there was no separate and isolated area outside the main village for the lower caste people. While in the other parts of the country the low caste people had their houses outside the main village, houses belonging to different castes situated adjacent to one another in Kerala. When the houses of the Nambudiri Brahmins were called as 'Illams', the houses of other castes were known as either 'Kudi' or 'Cheri'. The coastal area was generally inhabited by the fishermen

community. Separate streets of separate groups of craftsmen are seen in the urban areas of Kerala, like the 'Theru' or street of Weavers, goldsmiths etc.

Separate sections of house holdings for separate religions also were not in practice in Kerala, people belonging to Hindu, Christian and Islam live, in Kerala in adjacent plots. This non-separation between the various religions and castes has contributed much for the total integration of the people of Kerala irrespective of their religious or caste barriers. The Christian churches, the Muslim mosques and the Hindu temples are built nearby with in the villages and this paved way for the communal harmony existed in Kerala. The peculiar type of settlement pattern of Kerala has helped for the growth of a common cultural and political tradition of the people of the state.

## **CHAPTER-II**

### **LANDSCAPE AND SOIL TYPES**

#### **Physiography**

Kerala (8° 15'N to 12° 45'N and 75° 52' E to 77° 08'E) is a narrow strip of South Western part of Peninsular India, with a width varying from 30 km. in the North and South and to about 130 km. in the centre. It covers an area of 38,854.97 km that is 1% of India's total area and geographically, the area can be divided into: (a) the low land coastal area covered by sandy and alluvial soils, (b) the mid land region covered by laterite and (c) the up land with granitic gneiss and charnockite rocks. Kerala enjoys both the Southwest and Northeast monsoons; the high land region receives an annual average of 2500 mm in the south and 5000 mm in the north, the mid land region, 1400 mm in the south and 4000 mm in the north and the low land region, 900 mm in the south and 3500 mm in the north, the physical features of which exhibit a wide ranging variation. The topography of the state covers altitudes ranging from below the Mean Sea Level to about 3000 m. above the mean sea level. The Western Ghats

form an almost continuous mountain chain on the eastern border of the state, occasionally broken by a few passes such as Aruvamozhi and Chenkottai in the south and Palakkad in the centre. The series of mountain ranges and the high intensity of rainfall during the two monsoons, namely the South Western and North Eastern, have given birth to a number of perennial rivers which in their turn have given rise to the formation of varied landscapes. Anamalai (2695m) in the Western Ghats is the highest peak in Peninsular India. There are about 44 rivers that originate from the Ghats and 41 of them drain into either the backwaters or the Arabian Sea. The rivers are mainly monsoon fed and most of them are perennial in character. During the rainy season, rivers flow with turbulence and the larger rivers frequently raise 3 to 4 cm above their danger level causing extensive flooding in midland and coastal areas. The total run of Kerala Rivers is about 2; 50,000 million cubic feet i.e. about 5% of India's total water potential. Kerala has a long coastline running to about 560km. There are 7 lagoons and 27 estuaries of which the Vembanad lake is the largest with an area of 205 km.

Physiographically the region presents varied landforms resulting through complex Geological processes. From the fact that Geological formations of all the ages possible have not been represented in Kerala it may rightly be inferred that the region have been subjected to prolonged periods of erosion and non-deposition. As per the Public Works Department of Kerala, three physiographic zones may be identified in the state viz. (I) the Highland above 76m. (II) The Midland, 7.6 to 76m. and (III) the Low land below 7.6m. Although the entire region may be conceived as a totality of forty four river basins, it is convenient to affect a division of the area into four physiographic provinces viz. the Highlands ranging in altitude from 600 m. to 2500m. the Midlands from 300 m. to 600m. the Lowlands from 30 m. to 300 m. and the Coastal plain with lagoons and sand dunes. The altitude range is asymmetric with the maximum area of about 24,000 sq.km. falling within an elevation of 300m. from the mean sea level. This feature may be attributed to the occurrence of isolated hillocks numerous in the

lowland, which may be considered as the relict forms of hill ranges, originally branching from the Western Ghats and extending upto the shore line or beyond.

### **1. High lands:**

The most prominent physiographic province in the state is the High lands comprising of part of Western Ghats, the most prominent Orographic feature of the peninsular India. The Western Ghats runs south from Tapti River to Kanyakumari as a continuous range fringing the western shore line of India. The Nilgiri, the Anamalai, Palni and the low Vershanad-Andipatti ranges with arcuate projections extending eastward into the Southern plains of Tamil Nadu constitute the Ghat section within Kerala. The highest peak in Western Ghats, the Anamudi (2,817.06m) is situated within Kerala. From the extreme north the ranges run parallel to the coast at a distance or 12km. far as Vevalmalai to the east of Calicut. Here they turn sharply eastward, bends northward and then recede inward upto Vedamalai north of Palghat gap. South of the gap the ranges again attain lofty heights in the Tenmalai region and gradually swell into the Cardamom hill region, which is also known as High Ranges. The Ghat section in this region appears in the shape of an amphitheatre. In spite of this general trend, various peaks are seen to take characteristic configuration either individually or in association with nearby ones. Inter-woven with numerous platforms and twisting valleys, the ranges generally rise to elevations above 2000m. Although the hills individually rise abruptly with steep sides and the whole region is dissected by deep and narrow valleys, the general picture appears to be of numerous mounts rising from a plateau like platform. There are fourteen peaks of elevation above 2,000m. the highest among these being Anamudi which is the highest peak in India next to those in Himalayas. The physiography of High Ranges presents a succession of lofty hills of varying elevation separated by deep valleys and several small plateaus.

The Western Ghats and the adjoining upland terrains are extensive and continuous except for the prominent break in the Palghat area. This Gap – the Palghat gap about 30 km. in width and of 80 km. extend East-West is the only major breach within the Western Ghats. The gap connecting the West coast with

the Peninsular regions in the east is bounded either side by lofty hills of 1,100m. to 2,000 m. in elevation. The elevation in the Gap ranges from 20 m. to 100 m. Another minor breach is in the Ariyankav region which gives access to Tamil Nadu by road and rail. The rail line however passes through several tunnels, the longest among which is about 1.2 km. in length. There are various narrow gaps providing East-West access in the High Ranges also. The southernmost of these connect Kumili in Kerala to Kumbam in Tamil Nadu. Another one to the north at Kambammedu connects Udumbanchola to Tamil Nadu. The pass connecting Tevaram to Cardamom hills is rarely used due to steepness of the route. The northernmost pass connecting Munnar to Bodinaickannur is an established trade route.

The Wayanad plateau to the South of Nilgiri hills at 900 – 950m. with a general slope towards East and North East forms part of the most extensive land Systems in India. It merges with the Mysore Plateau in the north. The Plateau is delimited on the west by a long escarpment. The region might have been uplifted by stages from great depth as evidenced by their hyper-granulite facies character. The postulated faulting of the Western Ghats in mid-miocene (Krishnan, 1961) also might have affected by Wayanad surface in a major way. The linear hillock of magnetite quartzite at Pandalur and Devala and granitic domes around Kalpetta and Tovarimalai may be identified as erosion outlier of the Wayanad surface.

A section of the Western Ghats is seen to extend through Thodupuzha upto the eastern margin of Alwaye taluk. The rugged hilly terrain alters itself with terrace type platforms westward, interspersed with narrow valleys. Even after merger with the midland region at about an elevation of 300m. the succession of hills continues westward into small hillocks highly worn-down by erosion. The whole of Thodupuzha taluk is above 300 m. in elevation and hills of 900 m. or more are not uncommon. The slopes gradually recede from steep to gentle and to undulating nature.

There are evidences of polycyclic development of plantation surfaces in Kerala. Parthasaradhi and Vaidyanadhan (1974) have identified two Geomorphological surfaces in the Kerala region adjoining the Nilgiri surface, viz.



the Wayanad surface at 900 – 950 m. and the Malabar surface at about 75 m. According to Demongeot (1975), there are only two surfaces in the Palghat area of Kerala, the upper one sloping from 350 m. at the Palghat gap upto 75 m. towards the coast with a lateritic cover and the lower one representing the present coastal plains.

Tirugnanasambandam (1976) recognize five erosional surfaces in central Kerala with distinct altitudinal ranges from 550 m. at the top to 15 – 17 m. at the lowest. Five surfaces have been recognized (Murthy, et. At. 1976) at 1500 m. 699 – 900 m. 330 – 390 m. 150 – 210 m. and 60 – 120 m. on a regional scale. In conformity with the above Sinha Roy (1979) identified four surfaces at 1200 – 1300 m. 150 – 200 m. 60 – 100 m. and 20 – 50 m. These surfaces have variable angle of slope towards west and their hinge zone is located roughly in the coastal strip. The existence of such a hinge zone indicates that the onshore areas of this region has undergone periodic uplift, that are punctuated by phases of erosion.

The Western Ghat region in general presents a succession of buffs, ridges and conical peaks and is of irregular and regged topography. Most of the lofty, steep-sloped hills stand isolated, detached by low valleys. The elevation of the hills gradually decrease toward the west. Small platforms occurring among these hills may be considered as saddles in the original chains, shaped into the present form through age-old erosion.

**Mid land:** From the main range of the Ghat, rocky spurns run out towards the west, in most cases extending almost to a short distance from the sea shore. From Kallada river southward, these secondary ranges soften down into undulating slopes intersected by glens and valleys which grow wider as the elevation of the hills decrease and are very productive. North of the Cardamom hills, excepting the Palghat gap area, the long spurs and extensive ravines of the Ghat mountains are seen to merge westward into genrler slopes, rolling downs and gradually widening valleys which end themselves abruptly in cliffs giving way to lowlands. Owing to the fringing mountains in the east, numerous streams and rivers flow westward in winding courses thereby hollowing out long valleys for themselves. This region of undulating topography, ranging in elevation

between 300 m. and 600 m. is termed the Mid lands. The region is luxuriously under laterite cover. The midland, which ranges in elevation from 8 to 75m, are intersected by a number of rivers and streams. The laterite plateau stretches from the hilly terrain to the low land in a succession of gentle slopes and near the coast, it merges with coastal plains and lagoons. A series of planation surfaces (stabilized erosional level signifying a break in the denudation process) have been noticed in this area. The highlands comprise the western slopes of the Western Ghats, which, through a series of ridges and peaks merge with the midlands at relatively lower elevations. The eastern flank of the Western Ghats is rather precipitous with very steep gradients at most places terminating abruptly with the flatland topography of Tamil Nadu.

**The Low Land:** The Low Land ranging from 30 m. to 300 m. is a surface of erosion (Peneplain) dissected by numerous streams and rivers, flood plains, rockcut terraces, cut and fill terrace and colluvium 20 to 100 km in width, this region of differential relief shows a gradient of 6 to 10° from North to South. It will be of interest to note that the direction of the present day rivers is at right angles to the general slope of the peneplain. The low lands, which are below 8m elevation, is a low-lying plain of varying width with successive stretches of sand bars, beach ridges, spits, barriers, estuaries, backwaters and various fluvio-marine land forms. The backwaters that generally run parallel to the coast are occasionally connected to the sea by permanent or seasonal creeks. The coast of Kerala is comparatively straight and is similar to Konkan coast in this respect. The faulting which means an observable displacement along a fracture/plane of discontinuity, along the west coast of India has resulted in the straight Kerala coastline.

**Coastal Plain:** The coastal plain is an extensively vast plain with low relief. Most of the area shows a relief of 4 to 6 m. above the present day sea-level. A characteristic feature of the coastal plain is the existence of numerous beach dune ridges trending roughly parallel to the present shore line, following the general trend of the strand plain. This strand plain is covered with extensive marshy areas and lagoons. In fact the marshes and the lagoons exist in the

depressions between the abandoned beach dunes ridges. The strand plain averages about 10km. in width for the entire length and is widest in the central part. The maximum width between the oldest ridge and the youngest one close to the present shore line is 18km. Another peculiar feature of the coastal plain is that it is furrowed across by numerous sub-parallel rock ridges: many of which are partly covered by the sea. The sandy body is continuous between the ridges and all the way across the strand plain, except for the areas under kayals and marshes. It may rightly be assumed that the sand is continuing under these features even. The depressions between the ridges contain lenses of modern alluvium, inter-mixed with marine sand. Most of the rivers in this area discharge into the kayals at present.

The bore hole data indicate that the sediments in the strand plain are Holocene sands on the top, sands and clays under it and tertiary sediments at the bottom. The beach dune sediment yield themselves to a four fold grouping. In all the boreholes the stratigraphic columns the Vaikom beds, Quilon beds, Warkalli beds and the top layers of Holocene sands are seen. The Vaikom beds probably represent a fluvial facies which formed along the slopes and depressions probably as alluvial fans or channel fill deposits. The overlying Quilon sediments are unequivocally of marine origin; resulting from the invasion of the area by the sea. However it seems that the sea has withdrawn or the shoreline migrated westward making room for the deposition of Warkalli beds. The phase might probably have been synchronous to the Late Miocene regression, during which sea-level fluctuated rapidly, dropping down to a maximum of 65 fathoms and reaching somewhere near its present level. This might have happened 25,000 to 30,000 years before present. During the Holocene, there might have been a period of rapid transgression, followed by a period of slow transgression and then a period of relative stability. The gradual evolution of the coastal plain may be attributed to the above phases in combination to the abundant supply of sediments brought down by the numerous streams. The configuration of the coastline had been continuously varying and is facing a period of erosional transgression at present. The length of

the present coast line of Kerala is 560km. and is almost straight for over a great part of its length from Calicut to Quilon. In other parts however, indentations and protuberances are not uncommon.

Several scholars have attempted to study the geology and geomorphology of Malabar and the earliest instance seems to be that of Buchanan, way back in the year 1800. However, studies on quaternary sediments, and climatic and sea level changes are relatively lesser. We owe the available knowledge about both geology and geomorphology of Kerala and its sea-board to a number of studies beginning with articles in Madras Journal of Literature and Science XII and Records of Geological Survey of India. The stratigraphic succession of Kerala can be grouped mainly into three divisions namely: (a) Precambrian, (b) Tertiaries, and (c) Recent and subrecent.

#### **a) Precambrian Crystalline**

Majority of the rocks of Kerala, particularly the granulites, and associated gneisses, belong to Precambrian Age that signifies the consolidation of the earth's crust (more than 4 billion years ago) to about 570 million years (Cambrian) before present. The Precambrian crystalline consists of charnockite suites, pyroxene granulites, charnockitic gneisses, calc granulites, khondalites, garnet sillimanite gneiss, graphite biotite gneiss, quartzite, garnet biotite gneiss, cordierite gneiss, biotite hornblende gneiss, granites, pegmatitic veins and gabbro or dolerite dykes.

(1) The crystalline rocks of the Kerala region constitute an important segment of the south Indian Precambrian terrain where evidences for major units of the Archaean continental crust such as granulites, granites gneisses and green stones are well preserved.

(2) South Kerala is significant in depicting the major divide between the magmatized metasedimentary and metaigneous rocks (Khondalitic rocks which include graphite bearing garnetiferous and non-garnetiferous sillimanite gneisses with the charnockite group of rocks in the north along the Achenkovil Tectonic Zone. The charnockitic group of rocks extended in the

northwards upto the southern flank of the Palakkad gap. Metasediments and gneisses in the Idukki – Munnar region represent the western continuation of the Madurai block in Tamil Nadu. The oldest recognizable rock assemblages in Kerala are localised mainly in northern Kerala as enclaves of knondalitic rocks). These occur as linear en-echelon bands extending from the Karnataka boarder through Wayanad to the eastern parts of the Kasargod District.

Intrusive phase within the Kerala region includes sporadic occurrence of basic and ultrabasic bodies and dykes belonging to Lower-Middle Proterozoic Age, pegmatites of Middle Proterozoic Age, a host of younger granites (Late Precambrian – Early Palaeozoic Age) with associated pegmatites and later dolerite dykes, contemporaneous with Cretaceous-Palaeocene Deccan basalt magmatism. These are attributed to the time of the west coast faulting.

#### **b) Tertiaries**

The Tertiary sedimentary formations of Kerala basin unconformably overlies the Precambrians. There are sedimentaries spread over a part of the south-western continental margin of Peninsular India. These are essentially neogene and Quaternary sediments. Our geological knowledge about them is derived primarily from the pioneering study made during the colonial period. The marine and non-marine rock formations of Kerala have exposures at many localities such as Edava, Karichal, Kundara, Padappakkara, Paravur Varkala, Thonnakkal, and Kottayam in the south; and Payangadi, Cheruvattur and Nileswaram in the north. As have been recognized by scholars, there are two major depositions of which one is between Trivandrum and Ponnani in the south and central Kerala respectively with a maximum width of 16 km. between Quilon and Kundara. The other is between Cannanore and Kasargod in the north with a maximum width of 10km. at Cheruvattur. The tertiary rocks in the Quilon – Varkala area are divided into Quilon beds, consisting of limestone and calcareous clays and the Varkala beds, comprising sandstone and clays with lignite. The entire Cenozoic sequences of coastal Kerala have been designated as Malabar Super Group comprising Karichal formation, Varkkala Group and Vembanad formation. There is yet another formation named after Alleppey. The

sedimentaries between Varkkala and Cochin have been classified into five lithological units. However, studies on the lithology of these sediments by the workers of the CGWB through exploratory bore hole data; indicate that the upper Tertiary sediments in Kerala consist of three distinct formations namely the Varkala, the Quilon and the Vaikom.

The lower most unit of the Tertiaries i.e. Vaikom beds, is exposed near Vaikom in the Kottayam District. The classic unit contains sand stones, clays, gravels, coarse sands, sandy calcareous clays and thin lignite seams and this formation is typically a continental facies. The Quilon formation is of calcareous marine facies whereas the Varkala is of terrigenous facies (the sum total of features such as sedimentary rock type, mineral content, sedimentary structure, fossil content etc. that characterize a sediment as having been deposited in an environment). The type area for Quilon formation is Padappakkara near Quilon. Its formation consists of fossiliferous lime stone, laterites, sandy clays, clayey sands, carbonaceous clays, marls and calcareous sand stone. It is of early Miocene age.

The Varkala formation consists of variegated sand stone and clays. White grey carbonaceous clays, lignite and marcasite are also noticed. Varkala are of Miocene Age and overlie the Quilon formation. Poorly sorted sands are common and the maximum thickness is 60m. The total aerial extent is approximately 2000 sq.km. Varkala sand stone consists of fractured and fragmented angular grains of quartz due to weathering and laterisation. They have also reported heavy minerals like biotite, magnetite, and ilmenite with minor amounts of zircon, garnets, sillimanite and pyroxenes. In the Ernakulam and Trissur Districts, the Tertiary sedimentaries are seen rarely as surface exposures, but it occurs all along the coastal belt underlying the Quaternary alluvium.

The Tertiaries are found overlying the crystalline massifs at a few places in central Kerala. They are composed of loosely consolidated sand intercalated with variegated clay, carbonaceous clay and thin streaks of lignite. The outcrops of Tertiary formations only occupy about 30 km. area near Kodungallur in the Trissur District and are also found at places like Manjummal and Manjali in the

Ernakulam District. These rocks are extensively laterised which have masked their original characteristics. The outcrop pattern of Tertiary formations of Trissur District conforms to outliers towards the east with a larger part underlying the surficial alluvial sediments in the west. According to CGWB report of 1993, these Tertiary formations are classified as Vaikom beds.

**Laterite** is a notable physiographical feature of Kerala. The word 'laterite' is derived from the Latin word 'later' for bricks. It was first noticed geologically by Buchanan (1800) from Angadippuram in northern Kerala. The residual formation of laterite occurs as a cover over the crystalline rock and sedimentaries in 60% of Kerala's surface area except the highland areas. They are considered to be residual deposits formed under special climatic conditions which are ideal for active weathering. It is mainly composed of hydrated oxides of Fe and Al together with minor amount of Mn, Ti, V and Zn. The minerals present are kaolin, quartz, goethite, haematite, tremolite and gibbsite. These rocks are considered to be the primary source of black minerals in the beach sands of Kerala. The thickness of laterite capping in Kerala varies from a few cm. to approximately 30m.

### **Quaternary Sediments.**

In the geological time scale, the Quaternary period represents the past two million years that constitute the last of the four geological periods. The major climatic events like glaciations and interglaciations and the corresponding remarkable changes in the sea-level have occurred during this short span of geological time. The Quaternary period, subdivided into Pleistocene and Holocene (meaning 'recent' 'most recent' and in geological time sense), is marked by the appearance of human beings and the evolution of cultures. According to our present knowledge true horses, elephants and oxen started appearing on earth during the period and the practice of domestication of dog, sheep and cattle began. Marine transgression and regression were common during this time which have resulted in the shifting of the coast-lines world over. The rise and fall in sea-level have left their signatures in the sedimentaries of the coastal plains and inland areas. Further the oscillations have resulted in geomorphological

changes like the development of backwaters, estuaries, formation of marine terraces, spits, barriers, beach ridges and shifting of river courses. Occurrence of relief beaches of late Pleistocene and Holocene ages will below the present Mean Sea Level strongly supports the belief that as the ice sheets retreated following the last glacial maximum, the coast line shifted its position towards land due to increase in the volume of the oceans. However, not all submerged beaches of the same age lie at the same elevation, indicating that the ocean did not rise uniformly at all places.

The coastal plains are generally covered by the Quaternary sediments comprising sands, clays, laterite, peat beds, petrified and semi petrified woods, older red teri sands, beach and sand dune deposits, sand dune deposits, sand bars, lime shell deposits, alluvium and soil, and underlain by bedded strata of Tertiaries. The formations exhibit a complex pattern of marine, estuarine and fluvial origin. Marine and estuarine sediments are even found farther inland and so also riverine sediments in coastal areas. Generally marine and estuarine deposits concentrate around in backwaters and lowlying areas, and alluvium along river valleys. Majority of beach ridge sediments, shell deposits and valley fills of river basins are considered to be Holocene in age. The marine, lagoonal and estuarine sediments comprising of black clays and sands and their admixtures with occasional shell layers are noticed in the lowlands adjoining backwaters along the coast. The kole lands and river valleys in the coastal plains are covered by alluvium consisting of gravel, sands and clays. The lithological unit IV, the youngest in the classification consists of black clays, shell-beds and beach-sands and the major part of it is of Quaternary age. This Quaternary unit (approximately 80m thick) is distinguishable from Tertiary unit III by the presence of a ferruginous (iron rich) laterite horizon in the subsurface sedimentary column.

The Quaternary sediments of the study area include black clayey, silty and muddy sediments intercalated with sands, peat beds and shells. These sediments are found throughout the coastal areas in all subsurface columns. Lateritic clays are also seen in the subsurface coastal sedimentary column of the



study area. The quaternary sediments exposed on the surface in the study area are white beach sands, brown beach sands, shell deposits, black clays and older alluvium. The older alluvium and brown sands are found lateritised in some areas. The Quaternary is the most important stratigraphic division with regard to the mineral wealth of Kerala. The important mineral deposits of the Quaternary sediments are beach placers, silica sands, and shell and clay deposits. The beach placer deposits are the main source of ilmenite, monazite, zircon, garnet and sillimanite. The silica sands are widely used in the manufacture of glass and glass products. Shell deposits are used for making cement and lime. The clay deposits of inland river basin and kule lands are the main raw material for tile and brick manufacturing.

### **Sea level Changes**

In the study of Quaternary coastal landscape and coastal evolution, eustatic change of sea-level is the most important and dominant factor. The eustatic change in sea-level is brought about as a result of glaciations and deglaciations (melting and solidifying of ice sheets, going under and coming out of the thick cover of ice) that happened on a global scale. Four major Ice Ages named after Gunz, Mindel, Riss and Wurm respectively, have been identified to have occurred during the Quaternary period. In each Ice age, sea level lowered considerably, say, to the tune of around 100 m and in the succeeding interglacial phase, it again rose either to the previous level or above/below it. The last glacial maxima has occurred around 18000 to 12000 yrs. B.P. as a result of Wurm Ice Age. The maximum lowering of sea-level is believed to have occurred during this phase and the estimates vary between 80 and 140m. During the most rapid deglaciation phase that followed the last Ice Age, from about 1000-7000 yrs B.P., the sea-level might have risen at a rate of 10m/yr. Quaternary climatic and sea level changes on the West Coast of India have been studied by several scholars who specialized the Holocene sea level fluctuations in the western Indian shelf. Neogene and Quaternary transgressional (relating to incursion of the sea on to a wide expanse of land) and regressional (relating to withdrawal of the sea from land laying bare a wide expanse) history of the West

Coast etc. It has been understood that there was a marine regressional phase before 35000 years B.P. and a transgression around 30000 years B.P. followed by a regression upto 10000 years B.P. The sea seems to have started rising after 15000 years B.P. and reached a height of 3m above the present level around 5000 years B.P. Indian evidences show that the maximum lowering of sea-level to the tune of about 100m below the present level occurred around 14500 yrs B.P. following a small rise of about 20m (i.e. 100-80m) at about 12500 yrs B.P. with a net rate of 10m/1000 yrs. This was followed by a still stand of sea-level for about 2500 years B.P. Again from 10000 years B.P. to 7000 years B.P. sea-level rose at a faster rate (20m/1000 years). After 7000 yrs B.P. it fluctuated more or less at the present level. On a global scale, the sea-level was within a few meters to its present level around 6000 years B.P. Thereafter the local climatic and tectonic events seem to have resulted in minor fluctuations in sea-level. It is now generally agreed that specific areas should have had their own sea-level curves for the Holocene period rather than a generalized curve generated for other regions.

There are about a dozen C14 dating ranging from 5000 to 3000 years B.P. for the coastal Kerala that help unravel the sea-level changes. Almost all the published C14 dates fall in Holocene period and majority of them correspond to the generally accepted fast eustatic rise of sea-level during the early Holocene period. During the most rapid phase of deglaciation, from about 10000 to 7000 years B.P. sea-level may have risen at a rate of 10m per 1000 years all over the world. The dates reported from coastal Kerala that ranges between 9000 to 6000 B.P. indicate that sea-level was much below than the present level before Holocene and it started rising in the early Holocene and crossed the present level around 6000 years B.P. It is suggested here that the flooding as a result of this transgression had destroyed the mangrove vegetation in the coastal areas giving rise to extensive peat deposits. Mid-Holocene period in general represents a higher sea level about 5m higher than present level all over coastal Kerala. Throughout the high sea level phase shell and peat were deposited in the inland regions of Kerala. The regression from 5000 to 3000 years B.P. must have

helped the growth of sand-bars that separated the sea from the mainland and ultimately resulted in the development of the present day coastal landscape with backwaters and estuaries or with barrier beaches, palaeo-beach ridges and swales.

### **Formation of the Coast.**

Systematic development of the Kerala coast was a consequence of the transgressive-regressive marine regime aided by fluvio-marine interactive processes mainly during Holocene times (10,000 years B.P). The transgressive phase at the end of Pleistocene (around 25,000 years B.P) saw the sea waters lapping at the foothills of the lateritic cliffs. Ample of evidence exist for establishing the transgression limit upto this margin of the unsubmerged landmass presently represented by the geomorphic divide at around 30 to 60 m. Above MSL. The zone between the lowlands (60 to 30m above msl) and the coastal plains (30 to 0m above MSL) exhibits several subterranean carbonaceous clay and carbonized wood horizons. They prominently feature along an alignment through Changanassery, Kottayam, Vaikom, Cochin and Kodungallur. The high rate of sediment supply was provided by the westerly flowing rivers, ensuring a quick burial of the submerged forests resulting in the present day carbonized woods. This together with the marine processes, through offlap depositional sequences, ensured the emergence and stabilization of the Kerala coast. The widest expanse of the coastal build-up during Holocene times is evidenced between Kodungallur in the north and Kayamkulam in the south. This stretch can be divided into two sectors lying to the north and south of Cochin, viz. the Kodungallur-Cochin sector and the Kayamkulam – Alleppey – Cochin Sector.

The offlap sedimentary sequences bear testimony to the emergence of the Kerala coast and are available all along the coastline of Kerala through well marked exposures at the Karichall cliffs near Trivandrum the Varkala formation at Varkala, the Quilon beds at Padappakkara near Quilon, the Vaikom beds near Kottayam and in northern Kerala at Payangadi, Cheruvathur and Nileswaram. However, it is only the central sector of the Kerala region with its widest expanse of the coastal sedimentaries and fluvio-marine interactive

systems that clearly depict the various stages in the emergence of the coast with all the related morphological features, litho-stratigraphic sequences and drainage network patterns that establish this conclusively.

### **1. Kayamkulam – Alleppey – Cochin Sector**

This sector is characterized by linear land-locked lakes (including the Vembanad lake), braided channel systems, abandoned channels, ox-bow lakes, channel bars, flood plain and river terrace deposits, sandy flats and coast parallel linear lagoons. They all testify to the interaction of dominantly fluvial processes with a supportive marine environment. The alignment through the eastern margin of the Vembanad lake and further south through Changanssery and Mavelikkara marks the earliest palaeocostline. Near Kumarakom, on the transitory margin from the lateritic lowlands to the coastal plains several deep wells reveal carbonaceous clay deposits which have been  $^{14}\text{C}$  dated at  $30340 \pm 1860$  years BP (Pawar et., al 1983). These clay horizons possibly indicate the earliest deposited sediments after the later Pleistocene transgressive epoch. This appears to be the prelude for the imminent Holocene drama. Evidence for the above is seen in the form of extensive Karipadams (a local reference to these carbonized wood horizons which literally translate as “charcoal fields”) in and around Kumarakom and Vaikom on the eastern edge of the present day Vembanad lake. The carbonized wood has been  $^{14}\text{C}$  dated at  $7050 \pm 130$  years BP, marks the initiation of Holocene sedimentation. Major river systems debouching into the sea in this sector includes the Achenkovil, Pamba and Manimala Rivers. They contribute to a sudden and heavy sediment influx which resulted in the choking of the palaeodeltas and filling up of marshy tracts adjoining the palaeo-mainland. The palaeo-channel remnant of the major Achenkovil River near Mavelikara stands as evidence for heavy siltation and blockage of the channel forcing it to merge with the Pamba river system further east. The present day Vembanad Lake, probably represents a rapidly subsiding basin concomitant with heavy loading of the sediment pile and subsequently getting landlocked due to the build-up of a sandy bar to its extension in a northerly direction towards Cochin is deemed responsible for the linearity and narrowing of the Vembanad

lake wherefrom it finally opens out into the sea through the Cochin estuary. The alignment of the western margin of Vembanad Lake from Cochin through Shertallai and east of Alleppey down through Haripad and west of Kayamkulam marks the palaeocoastline configuration during late Holocene.

The extensive linear sand-strip welded on to the late Holocene coastline of Kerala during relatively recent time (2000 years to about 200 years BP) reveals a dominance of marine over fluvial process. Fluvial sediment influxes and dominantly longshore sediments are reworked by the sea and deposited as linear sand ridges. The latter (distinctly seen as strand lines aerial photographs) represent intermittent equilibrium stages in the stabilization of a prograding coast. Back barrier lagoons and linear channels or kayal-s also signify distinct intervals in the build-up of the coast.

## **2. Cochin-Kodungallur sector**

This coastal belt has not been affected by erosion and thus affords numerous evidence that relate to the successive stages of its development as an emergent coast. The morphometric signature of the sector reveals a transition from lowland (30 to 60m above msl) to the coastal plains (0 to 30m above msl). The area further to the east of Cochin and Aluva, well within the lowland morphometric zones, has a weathered landform signifying a topography with a palaeo-dendritic drainage pattern maturing into a meandering and sluggish fluvial system. The topographic expression denotes fairly flat weathered profiles overlying a crystalline basement (the latter rarely exposed except in a few well sections). The thick lateritic terraces or flats describe the lowest planation surfaces (ranging from 30 to 60m level)-perhaps indicative of the final stage of upliftment of the Western Ghats. The westward extension of these westerly sloping plantation surface often grade imperceptibly into lateritic slumps and lateritic soil slopes which extend down below the alluvial soil cover. The lowland-coastal zone transition delineated in a NNWSSE alignment marks the beginning of a typical fluvial pattern evidencing excessive sediment supply and choking of the drainage system with consequent braiding of the channel systems, abandoning of channels, and formation of disconnected water bodies with a

pronounced linearity and ox-bow lakes. The Oncittotu offers a typical example of being an abandoned channel of the major Periyar distributary. The channel bars, in between the braided channels, with successive addition of sediment, form large sandy flats. Extensive sand-ridges or palaeo-barrier beaches with intervening swampy and marshy troughs mark the coastal morphology from north of Kodungallur to Cochin. Several locations near Alangad, east of Varapuzha, Parur and Kodungallur, almost form a continuous alignment subterranean horizon of carbonized wood and at deeper levels, carbonaceous clay. Though not as extensive as the Karippattam-s, they are of identical nature and in all probability relate to the very same period of submergence and sediment burial ideal for carbonification under reducing conditions. The alignment through Kodungallur and Tattapalli River to Cochin marks the coastal configuration during late Holocene times and has apparently remained stable up to the eighteenth century.

### **Stages in the Emergence of the Coast.**

#### **Stage 1**

The Original Unsubmerged Landmass: The alignment of the Pullut River and the Varapuzha River approximately marks the earliest palaeocoastline or the configuration of the original unsubmerged landmass. Delineation of the Palaeocoastline is primarily based on the occurrence of weathered lateritic profiles overlying a crystalline (charnockite) basement to its east. The lateritic terraces merge into lateritic soil slumps near the palaeocoastline. Intervening valleys and low lying depressions are filled by thick alluvial piles of sand and intercalated carbonaceous clay horizons. Several locations north of Alangad, are all in continuous alignment and reveal sub-surface outcrops of carbonized wood. The carbonized debris, and assortment of barks, thorny branches, stalks of leaves, winged seeds and bits of trunk are seen in the form of peal or lignite. Associated with the carbonized wood are marcasite needles and pyrite tubules. Intermittent monsoon produced fluvial discharge of a heavy volume of coarse (sand) sediments together with much organic debris, which, deposited in the isolated depressions was ideal for carbonification under reducing

conditions. Similar carbonized wood occurrences were 14c dated at  $7050 \pm 130$  yr. B.P. carbonaceous clay horizons in the Kurichi area further south have been 14c dated to  $30,340 \pm 1860$  yr. B.P. The notable difference between the two dates may be ascribed to the fact that they occur at two different levels both stratigraphically and chronologically.

## **Stage 2**

Development of Zone – II: The 4 to 6km wide grayish sandy and clayey zone, essentially parallel to the present day coast (NW to settlement) is an emergent sandy tract resulting from the heavy fluvial sediment discharge. The numerous rivers flowing from Zone-1 into the sea formed a deltaic system. Successive growth of the channel bars gave rise to a braided drainage pattern, preserved even at present, and because of the constant change in river course due to blockage of the river mouth through sediment deposition. This is well displayed by the distributaries of the Periyar and the Varapuzha Rivers. Constant fluvial discharge aided the growth of the channel bars, which developed into extensive sandy flats with intercalated carbonaceous clay horizons; this is typical of Zone-2. However, in the Kodungallur area, strand lines and linear sand dunes are evidences for a periodic cyclicity in the regression of the sea and indicate dominance of marine forces in the landform evolution. On the whole however, development of Zone-2 in the second stage of coastal evolution evidences predominance of the fluvial regime over marine processes.

## **Stage 3**

Development of Zone-III: Debauching of sediments into the Tattapalli River did not fill up the river because of the linear flow into the Periyar River in the north and due to its expansive connection with the Cochin estuary in the south. However, the heavy sediment discharge from the rivers and the wave action of the sea combined to facilitate sediment deposition to the west of the present day Tattapalli River to form a linear, brown, silty sand zone, probably because of the high energy conditions prevalent in a dominantly marine regime. Coastal development in the third stage is quite different from the earlier stages. From

Munambam to Cochin, the axis of Zone-3 is represented by a mega-sand ridge with width variation in the range of 1 to 1.5 Km. The widening of this linear sand ridge to its present dimension is consequential to the formation of the succeeding zone (Zone-4).

The northern extension of Zone-3 evidences a formation dominantly dependent on marine processes with minimal fluvial interaction. The Eriyad, Azhikod and Edavilangu areas show strand lines or sharp linear sand ridges/dunes. These are very clear in the aerial photographs and present a typical landform morphology indicating periodic coastal development. The pronounced longshore drift parallel to the coast has a tendency to deposit the sediment load to the north and south of the river-mouth as linear sand banks parallel to the coast. A period of stability is ensured after the formation of a linear sand ridge. The succeeding monsoon produced a high sediment discharge from the fluvial system which was again distributed by the marine processes as linear sand ridges along the coast. The stable phase during the formation of two consecutive sand ridges contributed to the development of an intermediate linear trough. The cyclic alternation of these processes gave rise to the typical coastal morphology of linear sand ridges/dunes alternating with linear troughs. The linear troughs accumulate organic debris forming a black carbonaceous clay. The extensive occurrence of sand ridges indicates a minimal role of fluvial agencies. Samples analysed from the linear sand ridges and flats are negatively skewed and provide added evidence for its deposition under marine condition.

#### **State 4**

Development of Zone – IV: The final stage in the development or emergence of Kodungallur Cochin coast is manifest in the formation of Zone-IV, a linear sandy strip 200 to 700m, of recent age. It has been inferred from the comparison on the shorelines that the sea has regressed by 1.2km. In the coastal stretch about 4km. north of Cochin and about 0.4m in the coastal stretch about 10km. north of the Periyar River mouth. Beach profiling studies show that Kodungallur-Cochin coast had local fluctuations affecting the coastline configuration of the sand beach as a seasonal phenomenon. The seasonal



changes due to erosion in the beaches of Kerala have been noted from April to August i.e. during the Southwest monsoon and accretion thereafter. The development of Zone-IV, the linear sandy beach of Recent Age must have taken place a long time after the formation of Zone-III. This is substantiated through the present day occurrence of large and disconnected linear water bodies in between Zone-4 and Zone-3. The line connecting these linear water bodies or kayal-s marks the palaeocoastline that existed before the formation of Zone-4. The mechanism involved in the formation of the coastal sandy strip (Zone-4) is dependent on the sediment discharge of the Periyar River and its distributaries into the sea and the longshore drift of the ocean currents. A dominant north to south direction for the littoral drift, and the seasonal reversal of the littoral drift all along the coast has been proposed. During the present study (post monsoon period) the longshore drift was from north to Northwest. The westerly flowing sediment laden drift is deflected by the Northwest drifting; ocean currents giving rise to sediment laden 'interference' currents which in turn impinge at an oblique angle back on the coast to the north and south of the Periyar River mouth. This coastal build-up mechanism is prevalent in the post-monsoon period. The current direction is of paramount interest as it determines the direction of littoral transport. It has been demonstrated in the light of the movement of beach sand in the Vizhinjam Bay on the west coast of India that the angularity of wave incidence is the major factor that decides the direction of littoral transport. Evidences for the formation of an offshore sand bar parallel to the coast and due west of the Periyar River mouth probably represent the juvenile stages in the formation of a sand strip.

A study of the litho-stratigraphy, landform development and the present day coast indicate that both fluvial and marine processes influenced the development of the Kodungallur-Cochin coast. The coastal tract (Zone-2) immediately adjoining the original landmass (Zone-1) envisages a dominant fluvial mechanism involving a very high supply of sediment load. Zone-3 envisages both marine and fluvial processes evidenced by strand lines, linear sand dunes and palaeo-channels, extensive and isolated water bodies

progressively being silted up to emerge as a flat, partly submerged marshy tract. The last stage of the development of the coast is observed in Zone-IV where successive sandy layers are seasonally added on to form a narrow sandy beach, a direct consequence foreign the interference of the sediment laden outflowing river currents and the longshore ocean drift, mainly in the post-monsoon period. Thus we see that the development of an emerging coast starts with a predominantly fluvial mechanism, later transforming into an intrinsic fluvio-marine interaction process and ending up as a dominant marine regime with the complete emergence and stabilization of the coast.

### **Development of the Coast.**

From north to south, the configuration of the earliest palaeo-coastline is marked by the alignment of the Pullut River near Kodungallur, through the zone to the east of the intensely braided Varapuzha River as also to the east of the Cochin estuary and further south through the eastern extremities of the Vembanad Lake, at near Kumarakom and further through Changanassery and Mavelikara. To sum up, the distinct zone between the earliest palaeo-coastline and the alignment of the Tattapalli River west of Kodungallur and further south along the western margin of Vembanad Lake through Cochin, Shertallai, east of Alleppey and down to Kayamkulam in the south represents the coastal clayey sand tract that emerged during Holocene times (7000 to 2000 years BP). The numerous rivers flowing from the mainland into the sea formed a palaeo-deltaic system. Successive growth of the channel bars gave rise to a braided drainage pattern. This is well displayed in the distributaries of the Periyar, Varapuzha, Muvattupuzha, Pamba and Achenkovil river systems. Constant fluvial discharge aided the growth of channel bars which developed into extensive sandy flats with intervening clayey (carbonaceous) troughs indicating temporary stands in the build-up of the coast. The coastal development in this period witnessed an intricate balance between the fluvial and marine interactive processes. The development of the coast was complete at around late Holocene (about 2000 years BP). Historical evidences, like the existence of the Kodungallur port, subscribe to its stable existence almost till the 18<sup>th</sup> century. During late Holocene

to Recent times, the role of fluvial processes were relatively diminished and a marine dominant regime gave rise to linear sandy strips being progressively welded on to the coast. The coast parallel sand ridges and strand lines bear evidence to the periodic cyclicity of the accretionary mechanism that gave rise to the present Kerala coast.

The palaeo-fluvial network of the Periyar River basin affords a detailed insight into the role of the fluvial processes and the extent of its interaction with the marine processes, which led to the emergence of the coast. Sudden and heavy siltation and blockage of the paleo-deltas and marshy tracts adjoining the paleomainland has resulted in the present day sandy flats with sub-terranean carbonized wood and clay horizons dated between  $30,340 \pm 1860$  yr. B.P. to  $7050 \pm 130$  yr B.P. A palaeocoastline configuration is inferred from the alignment of these carbonaceous deposits. Subsequent development of the coast has a domination of marine processes over fluvial. Periodic regression of the sea leaves an emergent coast with linear sandy ridges alternating with troughs having a predominance of clay and organic debris. Palaeocoastline systems signifying distinct intervals in the build-up of the coast are marked by back-barrier lagoons and linear river channels. On the basis of age data, litho-variation and morphometric characteristics (like linear sand ridges, strand lines and intervening troughs besides a distinct drainage network consisting of braided channels, or-bow lakes and abandoned channels); linear coastal strips have been delineated as zones developed successively in the emergence of the coast. A tentative chronological sequence is also proposed for these zones. The formation of present day off-shore sand bars and coastal sandy spits at the mouth of the Periyar River has been analysed to identify the mechanism involving the long shore currents, the sediment laden fluvial currents and the consequent interference of eddies generated by them. This helps us understand to some extent the palaeo-processes that contributed to the development of the Cochin-Kodungallur coast. The Kodungallur-Cochin coastal belt represents one of the few areas along the Kerala coast that is not much affected by erosion and consequent incursion of the sea. An integrated study including aerial photo

interpretation of Cochin-Kodungallur area has been carried out to identify morphological units, processes and the mechanics involved in the phased built-up of the coast.

The seaboard of Malabar betrays trends of North-Northwest by South-Southeast affording scanty shelter to shipping against Southwest monsoon. There is no deep water close in shore. The muddy seabed shelves gradually for thirty to forty miles from the coast to a depth of 100 fathoms and suddenly drops to 1000 fathoms. In certain places there are rock formations. These are exemplified by the 'sacrifice rock' about eight miles out to sea off the mouth of the Kotta River, and the reefs at Tellicherry, Calicut and Thankasseri. There are big and small 'mudbanks' which occur at rare intervals along the seaboard from the Kottakkal in the north to Cape Comorin in the south. These mudbanks are peculiar to this part of the West Coast of India. The most famous are those at Alleppey, Narakkal, Calicut and Panthalayinikkollam. When the sea is smooth, the banks are discoverable only by soundings for mud; but with the onset of monsoon the bed of mud is stirred up, and the anchorages calm down as if oil had been poured on their waters. The mud itself, which is peculiar and is not found elsewhere along the Sea Coast, is dark green in colour, fine in texture and oily to the touch.

The Alleppey bank is peculiar in that sometimes its smooth surface is disturbed by what is known as mud 'volcanoes', huge masses of mud and water, which come bubbling up from below often bringing with them dead fishes and roots and trunks of trees. The absence of mud 'volcanoes' at Narakkal, Calicut and Panthalayinikkollam is explained by the fact that those places lie near the mouths of rivers, and so the pressure of water in the neighbouring regions is less. The tranquilising effect of the mud is due to the oil there in. The early laboratory results from the Geological Survey at Calcutta proved that the oil is derived partly no doubt from the decomposition of organic matter in the mud and is also possibly generated under the influence of the moderate heat in the subjascent lignitiferous deposits.

### **Morphometrics**

The morphometric signature of the area reveals a transition from the lowland (30m to 60m elevation) to the coastal landforms (0m to 30m elevation). The area near Aluva and Edappally, well within the lowland morphometric zones has a weathered landform signifying topography with a palaeo-dendritic drainage pattern maturing into a meandering and sluggish fluvial system. The topographic expression denotes fairly flat weathered profiles overlying a crystalline basement (the latter rarely exposed except in a few well sections). The thick lateritic terraces or flats describe the lowest planation surfaces (ranging from 30 to 60m level – perhaps indicative of the final stage of upliftment of the Western Ghats. The westward extension of these planation surfaces (sloping towards west) often grade into lateritic slumps and lateritic soil slopes which extend down below the alluvial cover. The lowland coastal zone transition belt delineated in a Northwest-Southeast orientation shows a braided drainage network besides numerous palaeo-channels, ox-bow lakes and disconnected water bodies. The Onchittottu offers a typical example of an abandoned channel. These abandoned channels are of significance in delineating zones of sudden sediment fill and will be dealt with later. The coastal tract shows an advanced degree of river braiding wherein the channel bars in between the braided channels, with successive addition of sediment form large sandy flats subject to partial seasonal submergence. Extensive sand ridges or palaeo-barrier beaches with intervening swampy and marshy troughs mark the coastal morphology from Munambam to Cochin. In and around the Kodungallur area, the landform development typifies a regressive marine condition marked closely spaced strand lines or linear sand ridges with intervening linear troughs. Essentially parallel to the coast, these strand lines are important in determining the intermittent equilibrium stages during regression of the sea consequent to coastal build-up.

Physiographical studies of the extant landscape of Kerala have revealed the presence of a good number of palaeo-channels of the dead rivers, most of which are paddy fields or marshy regions today. They have more or less an east-west orientation having well developed meanders with paired terraces, both of

erosional and depositional nature. Some of them still retain small streams at their basins indicating their archaic character. Digging at several places has yielded beds of pebbles or gravels at several meters depth proving them as palaeo-channels of ancient rivers. Most of these palaeo-channels show linkage with the major river systems of backwaters that show the dieing nature of the dendritic pattern of our river systems. The negative trend of the monsoon during the late Holocene combined with the sea level and land level changes might have caused the disappearance of several rivers. This would mean that Kerala had a very large number of rivers till the late Holocene period. The occurrence of sub-fossil wood from different parts of the Kerala coast as well as below the sea level shows that the land was covered extensively by forests during the late Pleistocene and Holocene periods. The whole landmass of Kerala, excluding the marshy and waterlogged lowlands, from the coast to the high ranges was thickly forested until the proliferation of human settlements and expansion of agriculture. In fact, until the beginning of wet-rice agriculture in the wetland plains, the landscape represented a typical rain-forest ecosystem. Peoples and cultures were there but as an integral part of the forests. The long millennia of hunting/gathering cultures were cultures within the forests. Even during the millennia of primordial agriculture human cultures had made little distinction from nature. The subsistence activities of peoples were largely natural and hence hardly consequential to the ecosystems. Though shifting cultivation involved cutting and burning, the activities as such were not traumatic to the forest ecosystems because of the marginal nature of the landscape modifications. Those who had subsisted on the slash and burn techniques were the last set of the environmental peoples. Their successors who reclaimed the wet-rice landscape ecosystems were the first to make fundamental changes in the environment.

### **Mineral resources.**

Kerala, though not very rich in mineral resources, has a prolific source of a few minerals obtained from the beach sands such as ilmenite, rutile and monazite. Other minerals which are being actively exploited are different varieties of clays, limestone, limeshell and silica sand. Occurrences of bauxite, graphite

and iron ore in economic quantities; so far they remained untapped. Allanite was found to be present in small pegmatite veins in charnockite gneiss north of Puthiyamuthur and in pyroxene granulite in Sholayar dam area in Trichur district. This mineral is also noted to occur in Peralimala granite in Kannur district. Amazonstone is a green variety of felspar occurs in Ambalavayal granite of waynad district. Amethyst is violet coloured transparent quartz is known to occur in pegmatite veins in a number of localities in Idukki district and in sheared pegmatite at Nellikala of Quilon district. Amber locally called Kallinji is a fossiliferous resin, occurs frequently with the carbonaceous clay and woody horizons in Alleppey and Kottayam districts.

Bauxite, the chief ore mineral of aluminium occurs as pockets within laterite. Important deposits are located in Kannur, Alleppey, and Quilon and Trivandrum districts. Minor occurrences of bauxite in Malappuram district are recorded from Kottakkal, Parappur, Volakkara, Melmuri, Chappanangadi and Cherusola in Trichur district at Mattan near Guruvayur and near Alur; in Alleppey district at Peringara and Arikkara; and in Trivandrum district at Karicha and Aakulam. The State has vast resources of different varieties of clays like china clay (kaolin), ball and fire clay, and brick and tile clay. These types are of both residual and sedimentary origin. The chief deposits of china clay are found in Cannanore, Ernakulam, Quilon and Trivandrum districts. Other occurrences of china clay are known at Chalakudi, Kizhupullikara etc. in Trichur district, Payimbra in Calicut district and in Mookuthala, Kaithaparamba and Mukkali in Palghat district.

Sedimentary rocks cropping out along the Kerala coast contain several beds of ball and fire clay which are suitable for refractory industries. These are worked out mainly from Cannanore, Ernakulam, Alleppey, Quilon and Trivandrum districts. A total of 10 million tones of fire clay and 2 million tones of ball clay are believed to be available in these districts. Ball clays occur at Patuvam, Karivellur, Eripuram and Payangadi areas. Occurrences of fire clay are located at Amballur, Kanjiramattam Thamarakulam area and other areas. Ball and fire clay deposits are seen at Kumbalam, Kanjirakattuseri Kundaman, Velichikala, Kazhakuttam, Pallipuram, Nadayara and other areas. Brick and tile

clay are worth mentioning at Feroke in Calicut district, Chalakudi, Ollur and Amballur in Trichur district, Alwaye and Angamali in Ernakulam district and at Quilon. At a number of places throughout the State, brick is made from brick clay. The brick and tile clay are mostly of alluvial origin.

A mineral valued as an abrasive and gemstone, Corundum occurs at the contact of metamorphosed ultra-basic rocks with the magmatitic gneisses in Maddaru area (Sultan's Battery) Wynad district. It is also seen as rare crystals within the ultrabasic rocks of Sreekandapuram area and in pegmatite veins perla area in Cannanore district. Chalcopyrite is an ore mineral of copper occurring in small quantities which are not of economic value has been reported from Vadavathur, 5km. east of Kottayam, in auriferous quartz veins of Wynad and Malappuram district and in granitic and pegmatitic bodies almost throughout the State. Gold was taken to Solomon's Capital from Ophir in Kerala, says Bible. A cause of the prosperity of Nannan king of Ezhimala was the gold in his country. In Kautilya's Arthashastra (4<sup>th</sup> century B.C) there is reference of the best pearls chourneyam found in river Churni (Periyar). The ancient Romans carried from Kerala such luxuries as Pearls and diamonds in exchange for their gold. The Kerala coast is today known for its rich deposits of ilmenite and this has considerably added to the strategic importance of the State on the world map.

### **Fauna and Flora**

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



English to the Kerala coast in modern times and led to the establishment of European domination over the country. The forests of Kerala abound in some of the rarest species of timber and they have been very much in demand in the foreign markets. The teak-wood from Kerala found its way to foreign countries even centuries before the dawn of the Christian era as is evidenced by the discovery of teak in the ruins of Ur. The magnificent teak of the Kerala forests appears to have been used for the manufacture of the ships that fought in the battle of Trafalgar and brought victory to Nelson.

### **CHAPTER-III**

## THE WESTERN GHATS

### **Mountains and Hills**

The mountains and hills of Kerala have played their part in its history. The Western Ghats have formed almost an unbroken wall guarding the eastern frontier and helped the people of Kerala to lead a sheltered life of their own through the centuries. The Ghats range from 3,000 ft. to more than 8,000 ft. above the sea level. The Mountains forming the Western Ghats range from 915 to 1525 metres above sea-level on the Coorg and Wayanad slope with one or two peaks rising over 1825 m. and upto nearly 2430 m. But on the Nilgiri-Kundalface the average height springs upto over 1825 m. It falls again to about 1225 m. and lowers on the Southern slopes of Nilgiris and again rises to a high altitude in the Vadamala, fringing the northern edge of the Palghat gap. On the south edge of the gap the Tenmala, outliers of the lofty Anamala Mountains commence with an elevation of 1225 to 1525 m. above mean sea level. Dwarfed into insignificance, compared with the Ghat Mountains in the background, there also occur, dotted about on the plain country, several hills on considerable elevation.

The Anamudi peak in the High Ranges of Kottayam district rises to a height of 8,841 ft. and represents the highest point in India south of the Himalayas. The Agastyakutam, the southernmost peak in the Ghats is 6,132 ft. above sea level and figures in the popular tradition connected with Agastyamuni. Apart from the many hills and peaks which form part of the regular Ghats there are several hills which lay dotted here and there over the plain country. Some of the hills of Kerala are important from the political and cultural points of view. Ezhimala or Mount Eli, the conspicuous isolated hills jutting into the sea on the Cannanore coast in North Kerala, was in the early centuries of the Christian era the seat of a flourishing kingdom. It has served as a well-known landmark for mariners from very early times. The Puralimala in Tellicherry taluk played a crucial role in the Pazhassi revolt of the British period

and it has a place of importance in Kerala history almost akin to that of the Aravali hills in the annals of Rajasthan.

Some of the most important pilgrim centres of Kerala are located either on the top of the hills or in their valleys. The famous Tirunelli temple in North Wayanad taluk lies in the valley of the Brahmagiri peak (5,276 ft.). The celebrated Sastha shrine situated on the top of the Sabarimala (3,790 ft.) in Peermede taluk is perhaps the most important centre of Hindu pilgrimage in Kerala. The Catholic church (St. Thomas Church) located on the top of the Malayattur hill (1,500 ft.) in the Alwaye taluk is one of the major centres of Christian pilgrimage in the State. The hills and mountains have thus come to have a religious halo in popular imagination. They have also been of great value in safeguarding the territorial integrity and political freedom of the land. The Western Ghats have prevented large-scale incursions into Kerala by aggressive powers from beyond and have thus acted as a natural wall of protection. The Portuguese who landed on the Kerala coast were cut off by this mountain barrier from all contact with the interior of Peninsular India and prevented from building up a permanent Indian empire. It may be noted that the English who landed on the eastern coast fared better in comparison with the Portuguese.

Among the peaks rising abruptly from the Wayanad plateau at an average elevation of 915 m. the most noteworthy are the Banasura mala (1912m.) and the Brahmagiri peak (1608m.) The Banasuramala derives its name from the allusion that the fort of the mythological character Banasura was situated at its summit. Brahmagiri is believed to be the abode of Lord Brahma. Eight kilometers to the north of Manantoddy is a lofty ridge branching off from the Ghats and six kilometers to its north is the Brahmagiri peak. This ridge forms the limit common to Coorg and Wayanad and between these two ridges lies the valley of Tirunelli. The Peria Ghat is an important pass into the Wayanad plateau and the main road passes from it through Manantoddy to Mysore. The smuggler's pass from Dindigal to Manattana is a minor one. From Morampara hill at the head of the Peria Ghat one can have a panoramic view of the lowland upto the coast. At the foot of the Ghat which are here at 1.225 to 1.525 m. are the Kannothe and

Kottiyoor reserve forests. Kanakamala a lofty spar of the Ghats projects into the plains within 16 kilometres of Tellicherry. The isolated ridge in Tellicherry taluk, the Puralimala has played a notable part in the historic Pazhassi struggle. The Veidalmala (1371.6 m.), a long, level, grassy mountain ranging transverse to the Ghats in Taliparamba taluk ends precipitously on its western face. The Ezhimala on the coast, which is only 260 m. in height, had been a land mark from historic times.

The highest mountain in the Ghat section within the district of Kozhikode is the Vaval mala (2339m.) in Ernad Taluk. The Mountains in Palghat section range in height from 915 to 2133 metres and is spread over all the taluks in the district. The most important among these are the Ananginada (2386 m.). Karimala (1998 m.) and the Padagiri (1585 m.) The ranges that form the portion of the Western Ghat in Trichur district range in height from 330 m. to 1440 m. above mean sea level. Among the labyrinth of these ranges, some rough elevated tablelands are to be found. The hills in Ernakulam district are mostly less than 915 m. in elevation. The most noteworthy among these are the Kudayathur Vindiyans a group of hills ranging in altitude around 915 m.

The Ghat section in Idukki district constitutes numerous mountains of great height and varied configuration and the associated uplands. The mountains in this section rise to elevation of more than 2,000 metres with high plateaus in between and some of the loftier ones are entirely detached from the surrounding lands. The Western Ghats in this district reaches the highest elevation in the Anamudi (2817.06 m.), which is the highest peak in Kerala and the highest in India next to those of the Himalayas. There are several other peaks more or less near the Anamudi varying in elevation from 1981.31 m. to 2698.68 m. These mountains together with the summit plain from which they rise form the High Ranges. Though often termed as a plateau, the High Ranges is really a succession of high hills with deep valleys between them, comprising also of several small plateaus like Gudarmala, Devikulam, Anaycoodu, Eravimala, Perumalmala, Anchanad and Vattavada. These plateaus are at heights ranging

from 935 m. to 2.225 m. Even the valleys in High Ranges are above 935 m. in elevation.

The height of the Western Ghats decreases toward south. In the Pathanamthitta and Quilon districts the average elevation is 1220 m. The highest peaks in Pathanamthitta section are the Sivagiri mala (1744 m.) and the Meen Mala (1734 m.) The maximum height attained in the Pathanapuram section (Quilon district) is at Muthira mala (1041.5 m.). Further south in Trivandrum district the average height falls to about 300 m. However the peak Agasthyamudi near the boundary of Nedumangad with Neyyattinkara taluk rises to a lofty height (1869 m.). Another important hill is the Mukkunni malai (1074 m.) in Neyyattinkara taluk. From the mountains in the east, the land slopes to the west in a series of hills and valleys traversed by several rivulets.

### **Passes**

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

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

## CHAPTER-IV

### RIVER SYSTEMS AND BACK WATERS

#### **RIVERS.**

Kerala is rich in water potential. There are 41 west-flowing rivers in the State in addition to three east-flowing ones, which are the tributaries of the Kaveri. Only four of the rivers exceed 100 miles in length. They are the Bharatapuzha (156 miles), the Periyar (142 miles), the Pamba (110 miles) and the Beypore or Chaliyar (105 miles). All other rivers are relatively small, the average length being about 40 Miles. The Rivers of Kerala have considerably influenced its historical and cultural development. They figure in one way or other in the history and cultural life of the people of Kerala. Several places of historical and cultural importance are located on the banks of the rivers. Tirunavai, the place where the famous pan-Kerala assembly called Mamankam was held under the presidency of the Zamorins of Calicut till the latter half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, is situated on the banks of the Bharatapuzha. It was here that the mortal remains of national leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Lal Bahadur Sastri were immersed in recent times. Kaladi, the birthplace of Sankaracharya stands on the banks of the river Periyar. The Periyar looms large in the traditions and legends that have grown around the name of the great Advaita philosopher. Alwaye, where the famous Sivaratri festival is held every year in the month of Kumbham (February-March), is another place of cultural importance on the banks of this river. On the river Pamba are located such places of religious importance as Aranmula, Chengannur, Maramon and Edathwa.

The rivers have also played their part in the political and military history of the State. The floods in the river Periyar in 1341 choked the mouth of the Cranganore harbour and rendered it useless for purposes of trade. Cochin rose into prominence simultaneously as a rival to Cranganore and before long it developed into the major harbour on the Kerala coast. The floods of 1341 are also

believed to have brought into existence the island of Vaipin from the sea and according to one school of thought the Puduvaipu era commencing in 1341 commemorates this event. Further, it was the floods in the same river that prevented Tipu Sultan in 1789 from continuing his aggressive advance south of Alwaye and attacking Travancore. In modern times the rivers of Kerala have been successfully harnessed in the service of man. Several important irrigation projects like the Malampuzha, Peechi and Periyar Valley have been executed in recent years and these project sites have almost become the centres of modern pilgrimage. The topography of the Western Ghats and the high intensity of rainfall also make Kerala's rivers rich in hydroelectric potential. Hydro-electric projects like the Pallivasal, Sengulam, Peringalkuthy and Sabarigiri deserve special mention in this connection and they have contributed not a little in quickening the pace of the industrialization of modern Kerala. It is worth mentioning that the most important industrial centres of the State like Punalur, Elur, Kallai and Baliapatam have risen on the banks of its rivers. The contribution of the river system to the development of Kerala is thus unique in every sense.

**Drainage:** The drainage pattern of the region is in conformity with the physiographic divisions, with the summit of the Western Ghats forming the watershed between the drainage system of Kerala and that of the Eastern plains. There are 41 west flowing rivers in the Kerala region, the majority of which drain themselves into the kayals. The highland region of the Western Ghats comprises the sediment sources zone, while the midland and parts of lowland areas is the transfer zone for most of the drainage basins.

Analysts have pointed out that there are two knick points for the rivers at 500 – 800 and 90 – 150 metre elevations, which correspond to two prominent breaks in slope and mark the boundary between the Midlands and the Low lands respectively. One of the characteristic features of the rivers in the Kerala region is their having almost straight course. This, coupled with the nature of the river profiles suggest that the drainage pattern is controlled to a great extent by tectonic features. Diversity of drainage patterns and stream directions is



observed in the hilly regions. These must have been the remnants of earlier drainage, constantly captured and eliminated by the headward erosion of the present westerly drainage. The majority of the rivers in Kerala flow in a general westerly direction. Most of the rivers follow the structural trend of rocks. In the coastal plains, which are covered by a thick mantle of alluvium and laterite, the streams flow with a low gradient towards the sea.

The rivers have incised drainage pattern controlled by structural features – faults, shear zones and joints. The knick points cited above as observed by researchers may indicate neotectonic isostatic movements, the details of which are yet to be brought out through Geophysical observations. Although dimensionally small in comparison to rivers in other parts of India, the rivers in Kerala gain prominence on account of the heavy load of water and sediment drained annually, contributed by the copious rainfall and the rapidly falling terrain. The forty one west-flowing rivers mostly have their source in the Western-Ghats and drain into the Lakshadweep Sea either directly or through the Kayals. Ten of these rivers have a portion of their catchment areas in the neighbouring States; either in Karnataka or in Tamil Nadu. Apart from the forty one rivers listed in table 2; there are a few more streams such as the Kumbala, the Kalnad, the Bekal, and the Pooraparamba etc. which have separate watersheds and exit directly or through the backwaters into the Lakshadweep Sea. However these rivers are very small, having lengths less than 15 km. Although they have not been discussed separately, their catchments and water resources have been considered along with those of the large basins adjacent to them. Brief accounts of the important rivers is given below: -

### **WEST FLOWING RIVERS**

**1. Manjeswar River:** Originating from Balepuni hills on the border between Kerala and Karnataka at 60 m. above mean sea level, the river Manjeswar flows through the villages Vorkadi, Pavuru and Badaje and then enters Manjeswar town. After a 16 km. course, this river falls into the Uppala kayal. The extent of the basin is 90 sq. km.

**2. Uppala River:** Uppala River rises at about 150 m. above Mean sea level from the Virakamba Hills in Karnataka and enters Kerala after a southward course of 7 km. and runs through the state boundary for about 6 km. In Kerala it flows Westward through the villages Minja, Kuluru, Bekuru and Kodibail all in the Kasargod taluk. The estuary of this 50 km. long river has widened itself into a small lake, through which the Manjeswar River finds its exit. Out of the total catchment area of 250 sq.km. of this river, 174 sq.km. lie within the state of Karnataka.

**3. Shiriya River:** Originating from Anekundi Reserve forest in Karnataka, at an elevation of about 230 m. above Mean sea level. Shiriya flows 11 km. towards west and then turns north and flows in that direction for 6 km. through Karnataka. Then it follows a westerly course for 30 km., changes its direction and flows in a South-westerly direction for 8 km., through the villages Puttige, Mugu, Angadimogaru, Badoor, Maire, Kundlamerkala, Arikadi, Ujar, Ulvar and Bombrana. The river then flows a westerly direction for 10 km. and then in a south-westerly direction for 3 km. through the villages Kayyar, Ichlangod, Shiriya and Bombrana before joining the sea through the Kumbla backwaters. The Kumbla a small originating in Edanad also empties into the same backwaters. The Pallaradka hole, one of the tributaries to Shiriya, also originates in Karnataka and joins the main river from the left in Angadi mogaru. The other important tributaries are the Kallejethodu, the Kanyana thodu and the eramatti Hole. The upper reaches of the main river are variously known at different reaches. The length of Shiriya is 67 km. and the total drainage area 587 sq. km. out of this, 297 sq. km. lie within Karnataka.

**4. Mogral River:** The 34 km. long Mogral River has its entire course within Kerala. Rising from Kanathur in Karadka R.F. it flows through Bettipadi, Muliya and Yedhir. From Yedhir, the river meanders through fairly flat regions in the villages Madhur and Patla and empties into the sea after forming a stretch of backwaters, 5 km. long. A distance of 20 km. of the course from the mouth is tidal. The area of the basin is 132 sq.km.

**5. Chandragiri River:** One of the major rivers in the state, the Chandragiri River originates at 1,220 m. above Mean sea level from Patti Ghat R.F. in Karnataka. Its main tributary Payaswani also rises from Patti Ghat at 1350 m. above Mean sea level. These two tributaries combine to form the main river at about 15 km. upstream of its mouth. The river has a total length of 105 km. and drains an area of 1,407 sq.km. of which 836 sq. km. lie within Karnataka. After the confluence with Payaswani, the waters of Chandragiri become tidal. The river flows to north and then south widening itself and forming small braids (thuruths) which hardly stand above water during floods. The river winds round the Kasargod town in U-shape, before its entrance to sea. The left arm expands into a long stretch of backwaters. The minor port of Kasaragod is located here. There is very evidence for this river having shifted its course at the mouth.

**6. Chittari River:** The Chittari basin includes the watersheds of the rivers Kalnad, Bekal and Chittari. The small stream Kalnad rises from Chettianchal hillocks at an elevation of 91 m. Kalnad stream is 8 km. long and joins Kalnad backwaters at 2 km. upstream of its outlet to sea. The extent of the basin is 16 sq.km. The Bekal river is formed by the joining together of two small streams originating from Kaniyadka and Maladka respectively. Though the river rises at an elevation of 75 m., it abruptly drops to 15 m. in the course of about 3 km. Bekal River is 40 km. The area of its catchment area is 32 sq.km. The tidal reach is upto 3 km. from the mouth. The Chittari is formed by a number of rivulets – originating from Cherambe, Tayakulam and Pullur, which flow down to form a backwater before emptying into the Lakshadweep Sea. 25km. long, the Chittari drains an area of 97 Sq.km. The River is tidal for about 6 km. from the mouth.

**7. Nileswar River:** Rising from Kinanur in Hosdurg taluk, the Nileswar River is known as Pallichal thodu in its initials reaches. Its main tributaries Aryangal thodu and the Baigote Hole join the main river 8 km. downstream of its origin. Though the source of the river is at about 140 m. above Mean sea level the bed falls to 15 m. elevation within a course of 8 km. It joins the Karingote River towards its mouth at Kottappuram to the South-West of Nileswaram town. The

length of the river is 46 km; the last 10 to 11 km. reached being tidal. It has a drainage area of 190 sq.km.

**8. Karingote River:** Originating at an elevation of 1520 m. in Coorg district, Karnataka, the Karingote, one of the major rivers in Kerala, flows down the steep of the Western Ghats in the initial reaches until the bedlevel falls to 460 m. within a distance of 8 km. Its two main tributaries, the Mundore and the Padianmala Hole join at a level of 250 m. Another tributary; the Mundroth Hole joins the main river at Pulingom at a bed – level elevation of 36 m. Almost all the main streams in Karingote system flow in a South-Westerly direction. After the confluence with the Nileswaram River, the channel gets split into several distributaries before falling into the sea near Thuruthi. The common estuary of the Karingote and Nileswar rivers extended southwards parallel too the coast forming the long stretch of Kavvai kayal. The Karingote River has a length of 64 km. with a catchment area of 561 sq.km. About 132 sq.km. of its catchment lie within Karnataka.

**9. Kavvayi River:** This is a small river, which originates in Cheemeni village at 385 m. above Mean sea level and flows past Alpadampa and Vadasseri before emptying into the Kavvai kayal at Udamanthai. It has a length of 31 km. and a catchment area of 43 sq.km.

**10. Peruvamba River:** Rising from Pekkunnu in the slopes of Western Ghats at 325 m. above Mean sea level, the 51 km. long Peruvamba River flow through the villages Peringoni, Kuttur, Mathamangalam and Kunhimangalam. To the east of Ezhimala, the river bifurcates: one branch falls into the Kavvayi kayal and the other empties directly into the sea. The Macharuthodu, the main tributary of this river also originates from Pekkunnu and joins the river at Mathamangalam; Peruvamba has a drainage area of 300 sq. km.

**11. Ramapuram River:** This is a small river 19 km. long, which joins the southward branch of Peruvamba River and empties into the sea to the south of Ezhimala. It has its origin at 57 m. above mean sea level in the Iringal hills,

flows through the villages of Pariyaram, Kolapratvayal, Cheruthazham and Madai and has a total basin area of 52 sq.km.

**12.Kuppam (Payangadi) River:** The Kuppam River otherwise known as Payangadi River flows through the Taliparamba and Cannanore taluks. It originates from the Padinalkad Ghat reserve forest in Coorg district; Karnataka at an elevation of 1630 m. The length of the river is 82 km. The Kuppam system drains a total area of 539 sq.km. of which an area of 70 sq.km. is in Karnataka. Its main tributaries are the Pakkattupuzha, Alakutta thodu, Kuttile puzha, Mukkutta thodu and the Chiriya thodu. The river has a steep course in its initial reaches but on entering Kerala State after a run of 12 km. the bed-level falls to 115 m. It follows a course almost parallel to that of Valapattanam River but at Payangadi takes a sudden twist to the south and flows parallel to the coast. It therefore joins the Valapattanam estuary before its exit into the sea. The combined mouths of these rivers have now been transferred into the minor fishing port, Azhikkal.

**13.Valapattanam River:** Valapattanam River originates from the Brahmagiri Ghat Reserve forest within Karnataka at an altitude 900 – 1350 m. above Mean sea level and drains into the sea at Azhikkal after combining with Koppam River. About 19 km. of its upper reach is within the boundaries of Karnataka. Entering Kerala, it flows through the villages Iritty, Perunana, Irikkur, Kallisseri and Valapattanam. The major tributaries of this river are the Sreekantapuram River, Valiapuzha, Venipuzha and the Aralam Puzha. The basin is very undulating; the cultivable land lying mostly in the valleys. The total drainage area of this river basin is 1,867 sq.km. of which 546 sq.km. is outside the State. The length of the river is 110 km. of all the rivers in the Malabar region, maximum volume of water is drained by the Valapattanam system.

**14. Anjarakandy River:** Having its origin in the Kannothe reserve forest at an altitude of 600 m. above M.S.L., the Anjarakandy river traverses through dense forest and hilly terrain in the upper reaches for a distance of 16 km. The river falls rapidly and at Kannavam, the bed-level is at 89 m. above M.S.L. Two small tributaries the Kappu thodu and the Idumba thodu join the main river near

Kunderipoyil. Thereafter the river takes a winding course till Orikkara where it bifurcates: one branch heading south towards the sea to empty itself at 3 km. north to Tellicherry town. This branch of the river which winds around the Dharmadam Island is locally known as Dharmadam puzha. The other branch falls into the sea 5 km. north of Tellicherry. The basin has an area of 412 sq. km., entirely within Kerala. The length of the river is 48 km. The valley of Anjarakandy is especially suited for the cultivation of exotics.

**15. Tellicherry River:** This River also known as Ponnayam River, has its source in the Kannothe R.F. at an elevation of 550m. above Mean sea-level. Its only right bank tributary joins the main river about 14 km. above its mouth. The Tellicherry River, having a length of 28 km. and a drainage area of 132 sq. km. flows through the villages Cheruvancheri, Mudiyanaga, Pattayam, Mokeri and Pandakkal. At Pandakkal, it still forms the boundary of the Mahe Enclave. This River used to be known as Koodali River, on account of the location of the ancient fort of that name at its mouth.

**16. Mahe River:** The Mahe River, also called Mayyazhi puzha has its source at 910 m. above Mean sea level on the Western slopes of the Wayanad Hills. The river has no major tributaries, but is fed by a number of rivulets from either side. This 54 km. long river passes through many agricultural villages of moderate settlement before falling into the sea at Mahe about 6 km. south of Tellicherry. The last reaches of this river serves as the boundary line between Mahe and Kerala region. The area of Mahe basin is 394 sq. km.

**17. Kuttiyadi River:** Rising from the Narikota ranges on the western slopes of the Wayanad Hills, at an elevation of 1220 m. above Mean sea level, the Kuttiyadi river flows through Badagara, Quilandy and Kozhikode taluks. The river is also known as Murat River. It falls into the sea at Kottakkal 7 km. south of Badagara. The Kuttiyadi River has a length of 74 km. and along with its tributaries drains an area of 583 sq. km. The major tributaries of this river are the Onipuzha, the Vannathipuzha, and the Madappallipuzha. The historical Kottakkal fort is situated at the mouth of this river. Hence this river has derived the name Kottapuzha.

**18. Korapuzha:** This River is formed by the confluence of the Agalapuzha outlet with the Pannur puzha. While Agalapuzha is more or less a backwater, the Pannurpuzha originates from Arikankunnu at about 610 m. above M.S.L. The Korapuzha falls into the sea at Elathoor. The total length of Korapuzha is 40 km. and the area of its basin is 624 sq.km.

**19. Kallai River:** The Kallai River has its origin in Cherikkulathur, at an elevation of 45 m. Winding through many villages of thick settlement, the river empties into the sea near Kallai, the famed timber-trading centre. The stream which forces its way to the sea only during monsoon period is an insignificant one and attains a length of 22 km. only. Connected with it is an extensive backwater, which is looped on to the Beypore River by a narrow creek.

**20. Beypore River (Chaliyar):** This is one of the major rivers of Kerala. It originates from the Ilambaleri hills in Tamil Nadu, at an elevation of 2066m. above M.S.L. The important tributaries of this river are the Chalipuzha, Punnapuzha, Pandiyar, Karimpuzha, Cherupuzha, Kanhirapuzha, arumbanpuzha, Vadapurampuzha, Irinjipuzha and Iruthilly puzha. This inter state river commands a drainage area of 2,923 sq.km. of which 388 km. empties into the sea to the west of Feroke town. The mouth of this river has been converted into a minor fishing port. Beypore river draws a great part of its waters from above the crest of the Ghat ranges, and in this aspect stands unique among the rivers of the Malabar region. It is famed of old, for its auriferous sands. The three main tributaries of this river unite a few kilometers above Nilambur. The eastern tributary, the Karimpuzha rises below Mukurti peak and drains the densely wooded valley between Gulikal hill and the Nilgiri and Makurti peaks. The middle one, the Ponpuzha (Gold River) drains the Ochterlong valley and the south-east of the Marappanmadi of the Nilgiri – Wayanad area and passes over the ridge of the Ghats in a succession of rocky cataracts a few kilometers south of the Karkkur pass. The Western most tributary the Chaliyar leaps down from the crest of the Wayanad hills in a magnificent waterfall near the Chalad pass and drains the valley east of the Vavumala. The three streams reinforced by many large feeders unite in the heart of the famous teak plantations in the middle of

the Nilambur Valley. The areas around this confluence have been yielding minor quantities of gold collected from placer deposits.

**21. Kadalundi River:** The Kadalundi River known also by the names Karimpuzha and Oravanpurampuzha is formed by the confluence of its two main tributaries, the Olipuzha and the Veliyar. The Olipuzha takes its origin from the Cherakkomban mala at an elevation of 1,160 m. above M.S.L. The Veliyar rises from the forests of the Erattakkomban mala at an elevation of 1,190 m. above M.S.L. From the wilds of the Silent Valley, the river flows down through Eranad and Valluvanad taluks and empties itself into the sea at about 5 km. south of Beypore, after a circuitous course of 130 km. Close observations in the basin have revealed shifts in the course of Kadalundi. The drainage area is 1,099 sq.km. Based on a project, proposed as early as 1857 to complete an uninterrupted system of water communication from Badagara to Trivandrum, several attempts were made to construct a navigable canal from Kadalundi to Bharathapuzha. The creek so made is still existent but is impassable except for small country boats; that too at the peak of the monsoon. The oily mud which oozes up from below into the water of the canal causes great obstruction to navigation. The Pooraparamba, a small river 8 km. long is also to be included in the Kadalundi system. Including its drainage area of 23 sq.km. The total area of the Kadalundi basin may be conceived as 1,122 sq.km.

**22. Tirur River:** This is a small river, 48 km. long draining an area of 117 sq.km. Rising at an elevation of 86m. in Atavanad in Tirur taluk, it traces a S. Westerly course in its initial reaches upto Tirunavaya, wherefrom it changes to a N. Westerly course. After some distance it resumes its original direction till its confluence with Bharathapuzha to the North of Ponnani town. In its upper reaches, the Tirur River is known as Vallilapuzha. Tirur town is located within this basin.

**23. Bharathapuzha:** This is the second longest river in Kerala. The Bharathapuzha has its origin from the Anamalai Hills at an elevation of 1,964 m. above M.S.L. and flows through the district of Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu into Kerala and then through Palghat, Malappuram and Trichur districts, to join the



sea finally near Ponnani town. Bharathapuzha has four important tributaries viz. (i) Gayatri puzha, (ii) Kannadi puzha (Chittur puzha), (iii) Kalpathipuzha and (iv) Thuthapuzha. Among these major tributaries, Gayatri puzha originates from Anamalai Hills. In the downward course it touches Kollengode, Nemmara, Alathur, Wadakkancheri, Koniazhi and Pazhayannur and joins the main river at Mayannur. Gayatri puzha has five subtributaries viz., (i) the Mangalam river in which the Mangalam dam is located, (ii) the Ayalurpuzha in which the Pothundy dam is located; (iii) the Vandazi puzha; (iv) the Meenkara river in which the Meenkara dam is located; and Chulliar in which the Chulliar dam is located. The Cherrakuzhi weir is located across the Gayatri river near Pazhayannur.

The Kannadi River also rises from the Anamalai Hills, flows through Thathamangalam and Chittur and joins the main river near Parali. Three sub-streams combine to form this river; they are (i) the Palar, (ii) the Aliyar and (iii) the Uppar. The Chitturpuzha project is located on this tributary. In the upper reaches of Aliyar, the Tamil Nadu Government has constructed two reservoirs. The Kalpathipuzha is formed by four streams: the Koraiyar, the Varattar, the Walayar and the Malampuzha. Koraiyar and Varattar originate from the Anamalai Hills and after their confluence, flow towards west to join with Walayar near Tampalam. The river is thereafter called Koraiyar. The Malampuzha river joins the Koraiyar about 10 km. downstream. A major irrigation reservoir of Kerala, the Malampuzha is located on this stream. The Walayar reservoir is the second irrigation project in this part. The Thuthapuzha starts from the Silent Valley hills and after a circuitous course, joins the main river about 2 km. from Pallipuram railway station. The important streams, which feed Thuthapuzha, are the Kinthipuzha, Kanjira puzha, Ambankadavu and Thuppanad puzha. The Kanjiramukku thodu is also included in this basin.

The 209 km. long Bharathapuzha has an extensive basin of 6,186 sq.km. This basin is spread over 11 taluks from Western Ghats to the Sea. About two thirds of the drainage basin is 4,400 sq.km. lie in Kerala State while the rest of the area is in Tamil Nadu. However the area among the mountains exposed to the full force of the S.W.T monsoon is comparatively small. In hot

weather, the wide sandy bed of the river is almost dry except for a few miles from its mouth: but in the monsoon, laden boats ascent from the mouth region to considerable distances. The estuary at Ponnani is perennially open to sea. Northward from the estuary, a wide reach of backwater stretches away upto Tirur and to the south the river is linked by a canal with the Velliankod and Chettuvai backwaters and ultimately with the long line of inland water way that ends only by Trivandrum.

**24. Keecheri River:** Also known as Wadakkancherry river or Alur puzha; this small river originates from Machad mala at about 365 m. height. In the upper reaches, it flows in a N.W. direction upto Nellai and then traverses westward upto Choondal. Having met with its only tributary the Choondal thodu; the river turns s. westward to join the Kole Canals – the drainage outlets from Enamackal Lake, the Mathukkara. The combined channel then moves down to the sea through Chettuvai estuary. The total length of Keecheri River is 51 km. It has a total drainage area of 401 sq. km.

**25. Puzhakkal River:** The streams Parathode and Poomala thodu originating from the hills of Killanoor Village combines with the Naduthode flowing down from Manalithara hills to form a small river. This is further joined by the Kattachirathodu originating from Mudikotty. The Puzhakkal river thus formed covers a channel of 29 km. and flows past the northern outskirts of Trichur town before draining itself into the Kole lands. The area drained by Puzhakkal is estimated to be 234 sq. km.

**26. Karuvannur River:** This River originates from the Western Ghats and is fed by its two main tributaries viz., the Manali and the Karumali. The Manali originates from Vaniampara hills at an elevation of 365 m. The Chimony and Muply, the two subtributaries of the Karumali, originate from Pumalai at 1,100-metre height. The Pillathodu joins the Karumali just downstream of the confluence of Chimony with Muply. Manali and Karumali join together at Palakkadavu near Arattupuzha. The Karuvannur river then takes as westerly direction upto Panamkulam and then a westerly course. Just before it joins the backwaters, it bifurcates. One of these branches flows northward and enters the

sea at Chettuvai. While the other traces a southward course to join the Periyar at Kodungallur. The length of Karuvannur river is 48 km; the area of the basin is 1054 sq.km.

**27. Chalakudy River:** The Chalakudi River is formed by the confluence of five streams, originating from Anamalai Hills viz., Parambikkulam, Kuriakutty, Sholayar, Karappara and Anakkayam. All these rivers rise at elevations above 470 m. Of these Parambikkulam river and Sholayar have their origin and initial reaches within Tamil Nadu, thus rendering the Chalakudi an interstate river. In the initial course, this river passes through thick forest and the channel contains many waterfalls until it reaches the palins at Kanjirappally. Chalakudi River empties into the right arm of Periyar at Puthenvelikkara. The river derives its name from the Chalakudi town located within its basin. The length of this river is 130 km. Out of the total drainage area of 1,404 sq.km. about 300 sq.km. is in Tamil Nadu.

**28. Periyar:** This is the longest river in Kerala and also is the largest in potential. The Periyar River is formed by the confluence of a number of rivulets originating from the Sivagiri Hills at elevations above 1,830m. From its origin, the river traces a rocky northward path, receiving several streamlets on way. About 48 km. downstream, the Mullayar joins the main river at a bed-level elevation of 854 m. In the course of the next sixteen kilometers the river is again met by several streams and about 11 km. down stream it passes through a narrow gauge. Thereafter the Periyar changes its course and flows in a north-westerly direction and winds through till it reaches Vandiperiyar. The river then passes through another gorge below which it is joined by the tributary Perumthurai Aar. Periyar continues in a northerly direction for about 18 km. till the confluence of Kattappana Aar at an elevation of 640 m. The direction of course changes to north-west thereafter. The path of the river continues through the Idukki gorge between the hills Kuravan mala and Kurathi mala. Below the Idukki gorge it is joined by the Cheruthoni Aar at 540 m. height. After this the river turns north, till the confluence of the Perinjankutty Aar at an elevation of 305 m. and continues in the same direction till the joining point of its major

tributary, the Muthirapuzha which come from the opposite direction. After this confluence, the Periyar takes as west-north-westerly direction and descends by about 244 m. within a distance of 15 km. At Kokkaranipara, the river spills over a cliff about 30 m. in height. The course below this is beneath an overhanging rock and in summer days, the river seemingly disappears for some distance. From Karimala, 16 km. downstream of its confluence with the Muthirapuzha, the Periyar is navigable for country boats. The Thotti Aar joins the main river from right. Further down, the river is joined by the Idamala Aar. The river falls very gently upto Kayattuvakayam and then takes a rapid succession upto Malayattur. In this reach it receives a few more streams. After Malayattur the river winds its way for a distance of 23 km. through Kalady and Chowara and reaches Alwaye where it gets bifurcated into the Mangalapuzha branch and the Marthanda Varma branch. Upstream of this break, a small distributary loops off at Kaladi which rejoins the Mangalathupuzha at Chengamanad. The Mangalathupuzha flows north west and receives the Chalakudi river at Puthenvelikkara and then broadens itself into a backwater at Munambam. At this point, the bed-level reaches below Mean sea level and the river course is tidal. The river finally empties into the sea. The other distributary (Marthanda Varma branch) flows in a southerly direction, initially splits up into two dissecting the industrial regions here and before emptying into the Varapuzha kayal splits further into several branches. The length of Periyar from its origin to its confluence with the sea is 244 km. The river has a drainage area of 5,398 sq. km. out of which 115 sq. km. in Tamil Nadu

**29. Muvattupuzha River:** The Muvattupuzha River is formed by the confluence of three rivers, the Thodupuzha Aar, Kaliyar and Kothamangalam River. The main tributary the Thodupuzha Aar, rising from the Tharagamkanam hills at 1,094 m. above Mean sea level is joined by several rivulets from either side along its 38 km. course and it joins the other two main tributaries near Muvattupuzha. The tail waters from Moolamattam pumphouse connected to Idukki project are being drained into Thodupuzha and this significantly increases the capacity of this river. The Kaliyar 44 km. in length is joined by Kothamangalam river, 2

km.upstream of its confluence with Thodupuzha Aar. The Muvattupuzha river after covering a course of 15 km. mostly through low lands, bifurcates at Vettikkattumukku into the Murinjapuzha and the the Ithipuzha which further split into several channels before finally emptying themselves into the Vembanad Kayal.The length of Muvattupuzha river is 121 km.The total drainage area of 1,544 sq.km. is spread over 45 villages of dense settlement.

**30. Meenachil River:** The Initial reach of the Meenachil River is the Kadapuzha flowing down from Western Ghats as a combination of several streams.It is joined by Konipad thodu to form the Kalathukadavu Aar.The Trikkovil Aar joins it at Cheripad.The Poonjar River combines with the main river at Erattupettah.At this point the river takes a sharp turn from a southern direction to a westward course until the confluence with Chittar at Kondur. Another tributary, Payyappara thodu joins it at Lalam.A few miles upstream of Kottayam, the river bifurcates and the first branch flows northward to join the Vembanad kayal through a criss-cross distributary system.The other branch initially flowing westward takes a sudden turn to the south, skirting the Kottayam town and finally ends in Vembanad kayal through split channels. The Meenachil River is 78 km. long and has a drainage area of 1,272 sq.km.

**31. Manimala River:** Rising at an altitude of 1156m. above M.S.L. in Tatamala, the river flows through estate lands, fed by several rivulets enroute. From Manimala it continues in a winding course and finally joins the Pamba River at Neerettupuram.The River passes through many places of importance and drains an area of 847 sq.km.The length of the river is 90 km.

**32.Pamba River:** The Pamba river, the third longest among rivers in Kerala, is formed by the confluence of Pamba Aar, Kakki Aar, Arudai Aar, Kakkad Aar and Kall Aar.The Pamba Aar in turn is formed by several streams having their origin from Peermade plateau at altitudes above 1650 m.The Pamba after receiving the Kakki Aar flows in westerly direction till the Adudai Aar joins it near Udumpara Malai.The River then turns,south-westward till Perunthenaruvi.At Narayanamuzhi it turns the follows a south-easterly course until the Kakkad Aar joins it at Perunad.Then it takes a south-ward course upto Vadasserikkara

where it is joined by Kallar. From this point the river flows north-west till Ranni. Thereafter it traces a westerly course upto Kuriannur, turns south towards Kjozhencherry and again flows west upto Pandanad. Here the river bifurcates: one branch flowing in a south westerly direction to Neerettupuram, where it is joined by Manimala river. The other branch continues westward, receives Achencoil River at Veeyapuram, splits and flows around Parumala and finally rejoin Pamba. After the confluence with Manimala River, the Pamba river branches off into several channels such as Nedumudi Aar and Palluruthy Aar and finally empty into the Vembanad lake. The Pamba River has a course of 176 kms. and a basin of 2,235 sq.km. in extent. The distributary system in its lower reaches along with the low lands bordering the Vembanad Lake from the Kuttanad.

**33. Achencoil River:** Several small streams originating at altitudes above 700 m. join together to form the Achencoil River. At Tharamukku, a canal branches off from this river, known as Kuttemperoor Canarese, which joins Pamba River. Achencoil River then continues westward and again splits into various channels. The main branch flowing in a North-westerly direction joins the Pamba at Veeyapuram. The other branches drain directly into the kayal. 128 km. long, the Achencoil River drains an area of 1,484 sq.km. The basin contains many important centres and towns.

**34. Pallickal River:** The River rises from the southern slopes of Kalaritarakkunnu at an elevation of 60m. above mean sea level. After a winding course of 42 km. it empties into the Kozhikottu kayal near Karunagapally. The Pallickal basin is 220 sq. km. in area.

**35. Kallada River:** This River is formed by three rivers, the Kuluthupuzha, Chendurni and Kalthuruthy, which join together near Parappar. From Parappar, the river flows north-west under the name Punalur Aar upto Urukunnu and then westward upto Mukkadavu where it is joined by a small tributary. Taking a North-westerly direction upto Pathanapuram, it again flows west upto Enath. Thereafter it traces a south-westerly course till its fall into the Ashtamudi

kayal. The length of this river is 121 km. and the area of the basin is 1,699 sq.km.

**36. Ithikkara River:** Originating from Madathara at a height of 240 m. above Mean sea level, the 56 km. long Ithikkara River drains an area of 642 sq.km. before emptying into the Paravur kayal.

**37. Ayroor River:** Another small river, 17 km. long which rises at Navaikulam, flows west and empties into Nadayara kayal. The area of its basin is 66 sq.km.

**38. Vamanapuram River:** The Vamanapuram River originates from the Chemmunji Mottai; at about 1,860 m. above Mean sea level. Its main tributaries are the Kalaipara Aar, Pannivadi Aar, Ponmudi Aar, Chittar and manjappara Aar. After the confluence with upper Chittar it flows westward, receives Manjappara Aar and continues its western course. About 3 km. downstream from Palode, there is a 13 m. fall known as Meenmutti. About 3 km. downstream from Vamanapuram the Kilimanoor Aar joins it. The river falls into the Anjuthengu kayal after covering a course of 88 km. The drainage area is 687 sq.km.

**39. Mamom River:** This is another small river emptying into the Anjuthengu kayal near Chirayankil. During its course a channel branches off from the main river at Koonthallur to join the Vamanapuram river. Having its origin at Panthalakkottu Hills, it traces a course of 27 km. and drains 114 sq.km.

**40. Karamana River:** The Karamana River has its origin from Chemmunji Mottai at an elevation of 1,605 m. above Mean sea level. The river is formed by the confluence of several streams such as Kavi Aar, Attai Aar, Vaiyapadi Aar and Todai Aar. Its main tributary is the Killi Aar, which joins it at Nadakkara. Maintaining a south-westerly course throughout, the Karamana river empties into the sea near Thiruvallam. The length of the river is 68 km. It has a catchment area of 702 sq.km. The river passes through the outskirts of Trivandrum.

**41. Neyyar:** This is the southernmost river in Kerala. It originates from Agasthya mala at an elevation of about 1,860 m. above Mean sea level. From there it flows

down rapidly along steep slopes in its higher reaches and then winds its way through flat country in the lower reaches. In the initial stages the course is in a southwesterly direction but at Ottasekharamangalam the river turns and flows west. It again takes a south-westerly course from Valappallikonam upto its fall. The Neyyar is 56 km. long and has a total drainage area of 497 sq.km.

### **East Flowing**

The east flowing inter State River Kauvery has its catchment spread over the States of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Three of its main tributaries have their origin and initial reaches within Kerala. These are the **Kabbini, Bhavani and Pambar**; the three east flowing rivers of Kerala. Kabbini river has its origin in the Western Ghat region of Wayanad district and is fed by four important tributaries Panamaram, Manantoddy, Babali and Noolpuzha. These rivers have their origins at elevation above 1,350 m. The Kabbini in its course demarcates the boundary of Kerala for a distance of 12 km. The total drainage area of Kabbini upto the point where it crosses the State boundary is 2,070 sq.km. of which an extent of 1,920 sq.km. is within Kerala. The Bhavani River rises from Western Ghats at about 2,500 m. elevations in Nilgiri district of Tamil Nadu. After an initial course of 13 km. it enters the Kerala State and flows southward for about 29 km. upto Mukkali. Thereafter it takes a sharp and circuitous turn around the Malleswara peak. Beyond Mukkali the river flows almost north easterly till its re-entry into Tamil Nadu at Kalkandiyoor. Its main tributaries within Kerala are the Siruvani and Varagar. The catchment area of Bhavani in Kerala is 562 sq.km. The third east – flowing river, the Pambar, originates in Devikolam taluk at an altitude of 1950 m. above mean sea level. In its initial reaches, it is locally called Thalayar. It crosses into Tamil Nadu after tracing a course of 29 km. within Kerala. The main tributaries of Pambar are the Iravikulam, Myladi, Thirthamala, Chengalar and Thenar. The Thenar has a 12 km. flow path in Kerala and joins Pambar after crossing the borders to form the Amaravathi River, a tributary to Kauvery. The total drainage of Pambar including that of Thenar, within Kerala is 384 sq.km.

### **BACKWATERS**



In addition to the rivers, Kerala has a continuous chain of lagoons and backwaters that run parallel to the sea-coast and receive water from the numerous streams and rivers of the land. They facilitate almost through communication between the northern and southern parts of Kerala. There are 27 estuaries and seven lagoons within the Kerala region which are mostly interconnected by natural or man-made canals. The string of backwaters (Kayals), generally running parallel to the coast and having arms extending between the offshore bars occupy extensive area. The kayals are considered to be of three major categories on the basis of their Geomorphic and geological setting of the coastal plain. They are (I) those contained within the beach ridge complex area such as Vembanad and Kayamkulam kayals; (II) those occurring in the Warkalli terrain but have undergone some modification of morphology along the throats by growth of spits and (III) those occurring within the Warkalli terrain extending to the eastern margin of the coastal plain such as the Ashtamudi kayal. Of these the first category have their long axis running parallel to the shore line and are very narrow when compared to the length. Set well within the strand plain, these kayals are separated from the sea by large barrier spits interrupted by tidal passes. On the contrary the Ashtamudi kayal of the third category has its longest axis perpendicular to the shore. The margins of Ashtamudi kayal are fringed with dipping laterite hills of Tertiary age which are steadily wearing back due to human interference. There is considerable fresh water inflow into the kayals from upland, particularly during the rainy season. When the rivers are at spate, the kayals overflow and discharge sizeable quantities of sediment into the sea. During the dry season, the sea water may tide up into the kayals for considerable distances. This results in seasonal fluctuations in salinity, rate of sedimentation and organic transport.

The important backwaters in the coastal tract contained within Kasargode and Cannanore districts are Kumbla, Kalnad, Bekal, Chittari and Kavvai. Among these, the first four are the estuaries formed at the mouths of the respective rivers. The Kavvai kayal extends parallel to the coast for a distance of 21 km. with outlets at the mouths of Karingote and Ezhimala rivers. Three other rivers

viz., Peruvamba, Kavvai and Ramapuram rivers also drain into this lake. There are a few islets (thuruths) in this kayal, the major ones being Madakkal, Edalakkad, and Vadakkekkad. To the south, this kayal is connected to Payangadi-Valapattanam rivers by Sultan's canal. The project for converting the northern outlet of this kayal into a minor fishing port is half-way on. Extensive made-lands is a peculiar feature around this kayal. Study of old maps reveal considerable narrowing of Kavvai kayal. The wide mouth of Valapattanam Payangadi rivers has been converted into a minor fishing port. The Sultan's canal, about 3.2 km. in length is an artificial canal dug by Ali Raja (1766) when managing the Kolathiri domains for Hyder Ali. It connects Ezhimala river with the estuary of Payangadi – Valapattanam rivers and can provide uninterrupted water communication at all seasons. The Agalapuzha, literally meaning 'broad river', in Calicut district also may be considered as a kayal. This backwater extends to a north-south distance of 25.6 km., parallel to the sea upto its merger with the Elattur river close to its mouth. No significant rivers drain into it at present and nearly all the drainage from the Ghats at this point is intercepted by the main stream and tributaries of the Kotta river. It would seem as if the Kotta river had at one time found its way to the sea by this outlet instead of by the channel now in use and indeed even now the water level in the Kotta river sometimes rise so high as to threaten to breach through the narrow isthmus separating it from the Agalapuzha, the water-level of which rises of course much less rapidly in floods. This difference of level in floods necessitates the maintenance of a water-lock at the entrance of the Payoli canal from the Kotta river: The man – made Payoli canal of about 1.6 km. in length connects Agalapuzha to Kotta river.

Another important artificial water course in Calicut district is the Conolly canal, interconnecting the three rivers Elattur, Kallai and Beypur. It was imperfectly completed in 1948 as part of a scheme to extend inland navigation facilities available in Travancore area toward Malabar. The canal, cuts through several small ridges and hence is of irregular width. The Kallai estuary is wide enough to be treated as a small backwater. There are two canals branching off

from Bharathapuzha from near its mouth towards right and left. The canal on the right runs north upto Tirur. The leftward canal known as Ponnani canal runs south for a distance of 3.2 km. and connects itself with Velliankod kayal and runs further on upto Chettuvai river. This backwater system consists of a group of lagoons; the drainage of which is completely controlled by tidal action. Velliankod kayal is connected to Chavakkad kayal through narrow creeks. No stream of importance drains itself into either Velliankod system or Chavakkad kayal. Running about 24 km. the systems get connected to the sea in the south through Chettuvai River. The freshwater lakes Enamakkal and Manakkodi in Trichur taluk are interconnected and may be treated as a single system. Fed by the Karuvannor, Viyyoor and Wadakkancheri rivers; the system extends over an area of 25 km. This system drains out into the backwaters through two narrow outlets at Enamakkal and Karamchira. Bunding at these points facilitates cultivation of paddy in the marginal beds of these lakes. Large scale reclamation has been affected following modern devices to check salt water incursion from the backwaters. The Muriyad Lake in Mukundapuram taluk, which is much smaller in extent than the above is fed by several small streams and its surplus waters flow into the Karuvannur river during rainy seasons. It is brought under cultivation during the dry season. The irregular shaped marshy body, partly extending into Palghat district can hardly be considered a lake; and has been considerably narrowed down through reclamation and alteration into paddy fields.

Apart from Ponnani canal, there are three more navigation canals in Trichur district viz., the Conolly canal lying between Chavakkad and Mukundapuram taluks, the Shanmughom canal in Mukundapuram taluk and the Puthenthodu in Trichur Taluk. The Conolly canal, 12.8 km. long, connects Karanchira puzha with the backwaters at Vallivattom. The Shanmughom canal, branches off from Conolly canal and runs 7 km. long upto Irinjalakuda. Puthenthodu, the other canal connects Trichur to Karuvannur puzha. There are two small backwaters in the Parur taluk of Ernakulam district; the northern one is the Kodungallur kayal and the southern one the varapuzha kayal. The Periyar

falls in the Varapuzha kayal. A north to south canal of length 11.2 km. connects the villages of Cheranallur and Edapally in Kanayannur taluk. Another canal 8 km. long flows along the boundaries of Elamkulam and Ernakulam.

Although the Vembanad estuary has its mouth in Cochin, much of its extent lies within Alleppey district. Vembanad, the largest kayal in Kerala, extends from Cochin to Alleppey for a distance of 83 km. at widths ranging from about 15 km. to a few hundred metres. The area of this lake is approximately 205 km. Five important rivers viz., the Muvattupuzha, the Minachil, the Manimala, the Pamba and the Achankoil discharge their waters into this kayal. Draining a total catchment area of at 6,630 km. these rivers discharge about 5,61, 000 MC ft. of water annually. The Vembanad kayal is bordered by the taluks Ambalapuzha and Shertallai of Alleppey districts and those of Vaikom, Kottayam and Changacherry of Kottayam district. The lowlands around the southern margins of Vembanad kayal have been extensively made into paddy fields through constructing bunds and pumping out the waters within. Since the tidal effect reaches upto the southern margin of the lake, the waters remain highly saline except in rainy season rendering Puncha cultivation unproductive. In order to prevent saline intrusion into the lake and the connected waterbodies further south, a bed-regulator across the neck of the lake connecting Thannirmukkom on the west to Vechur on the east has been constructed. This regulator is the longest of its kind in India.

There are many islands and thuruths inside the Kodungallur – Vembanad kayals. The prominent among them are Willingdon island, Vaipin and Ramanthuruth, Cheria Kadamakudi, Ponjikara (Bolghatty), Vallarpadom, Valiakadamakudi, Kumbalam, Panangad, Cheppanam, Nettur, Pizhala, Kankattuthu ruthu, Korampadom, Cheranallur, Chathannur, Pathiramanal, Pallippuram and Perumbalam are the other inlets of significance. South of Vembanad is the 30.4 km. long Kayamkulam kayal, with an area extent of 59.6 km. from Karthikapally to Panmana. The shallow parts of this kayal have been altered into agricultural fields and the waterbody is considerably narrowed down. The Chavara – Panmana thodu connects it to Ashtamudikayal. It has a narrow outlet to sea at

Kayamkulam. The Ashtamudi kayal in Quilon district is unique in its configuration and extent. The name itself is derived from the fact that this backwater branches off into eight creeks; known by different local names. Running north from Quilon, Ashtamudi kayal is 16 km. long while the total width is about 15 km. Average width of individual creeks is around 3 km. The Kallada river empties through this kayal. The outlet to the sea is at Neendakara, which now been protected as a fishing port. A bridge 408.6 m. (1338 feet) long spans the backwater to the east of Neendakara.

South of Ashtamudi, there is a small but deep backwater known as Paravur kayal. Its outlet to sea is often hindered by sand bars. The Ithikara river empties into this kayal. The Kollamthodu connects Paravur kayal to Ashtamudi. Another one the Paravur thodu likewise connects it to the Edava and Nadayara kayals to the south. These two small kayals lying partly in Trivandrum district are also separated from the sea by sandbars which are cut only in rainy season. A chain of Kayals interconnected by man-made canals run down to Trivandrum faciling inland navigation along the coastal zone. This waterway, if properly repaired and maintained would provide a straight route from Trivandrum to Tirur. The kayals in Trivandrum district from north to south are Anjuthengu, Kadinamkulam and Veli. These are comparatively small and shallow. To provide uninterrupted water way two tunnels have been constructed across the Warkalli cliffs of lengths 283 m. and 721 m. respectively.

### **FRESH WATER LAKES**

Besides the above backwaters there are a few freshwater lakes in Kerala. The southernmost of them is the Vellayani Lake south of Trivandrum. The Sasthamkotta Lake in Quilon district is the only major freshwater lake in Kerala. It is situated on the right bank of Kallada river. The lake is surrounded by high ridges in all the three sides and is protected on the east by an earthern bund, about 1.6 km. in length. Although the areal extent is small (3.7km) the lake is generally deep, the maximum depth being 14.3 m. There is no stream draining into this lake. In south Wayanad, there is small waterbody called Pookkot Lake which is perennially full.

## **The Shore**

The 560 m. shore lines of Kerala with a generally straight configuration has a number of offsets towards east and the major ones are at Kotekunnu north of Azhikkal and Kadalur south of Badagara. These are due to faults. Between Kotekunnu and Alleppey the coastline moves inward into the land. The concavity of the coastline may be related to the structural feature and also to the resistance of rocks exposed to the high wave action during the South West monsoon in this region. The curved coastline of Kerala is exactly in North East direction of 9<sup>th</sup> degree and 8<sup>th</sup> degree channels between Laccadive and Maldiva islands. Out of the 560 km. of total coastline, about 360 km. in different reaches is subject to active erosion. Raju and Raju (1982) have estimated a net loss of 600 m. wide belt of coast during the last 120 years, on account of erosion. The chain of Kayals admixed with the estuaries formed at the mouth of the rivers retain a perennial waterbody almost parallel to the shoreline. Heavy tidal inflow during monsoon and other tidal peaks result in the breaking of the narrow sandy ridge between these water columns and the sea. Likewise during dry seasons the existing openings may be barred by accumulated sediments. Tidal action may thus result in breaking and building up of sand bars which in turn may cause considerable changes in the total configuration of the coastline. Apart from these minor phenomena, the coastline might have been subjected to serious alterations through river channel changes. Geomorphological observations have revealed shifting of river mouths by long distances in considerably short periods. The coastal stretch, generally occupied by sand bars and spits, intervened in many a place by overhanging cliffs and sub-parallel rock ridges manifest a compound aspect of submergence and emergence.

The rock exposures and cliffs along the coastline are of 3 to 29 metres in elevation. The cliffs are invariably capped by laterites and are made up of incoherent sedimentary formations downwards. Because of this they are subject to heavy undercutting, resulting in profile recession. Close scrutiny of satellite imageries covering the area suggest that these cliffs as well as the sub-parallel rock ridges might have evolved as the result of NW-settlement and N.N.W. –

S.S.E. fractures. The rock-ridges close to the shoreline may be considered as remnants of erstwhile sea cliffs. Hardly above water level these ridges are seen to extend into the shelf area sloping westward to limits not yet determined. On the shorefront where they appear to be protruding rock-ridges, metamorphosed sedimentaries are in prominence but the subaqueous parts constitute laterites which are characteristically reddish brown.

Early writers like Strabo (A.D. 19) and Pliny, the elder (A.D. 77) have mentioned about several minor ports like Musiri, Tundi, Naoora and Nelkunda, as to have been, situated on the Kerala coast. The anonymous author of the 'Periplus of the Erythrean Sea' (A.D. 80 – 89) has furnished many details about these ports, which were flourishing in trade and other tertiary activities. These ports have however lost their identity and are left untraceable now. Historians have been trying to locate these ports all through, but have not yet succeeded in fixing them. The references about these ports contain stadia distances between one port and another as well as other physical and cultural identifications. The classic literature in Tamil has gone a step ahead indicating the Geomorphic unit (tinai) in which these places were situated. In spite of all these hints the historians have not arrived at a consensus in locating them.

## **CHAPTER-V**

### **CHANGING ROLES OF THE ARABIAN SEA**

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

### **CLIMATE AND RAINFALL.**

Kerala falls in the region of tropical monsoon climate. On the basis of hydro-meteorological conditions, four seasons are identified namely, premonsoon or hot weather period (March-May), Southwest monsoon (June-



September), Northeast monsoon (October-December) and winter (January-February). The Southwest monsoon constitutes the principal and primary rainy season which gives 75% of the annual rainfall while Northeast monsoon provides a secondary rainy season. The winter months are characterized by minimum clouds and rainfall, and the premonsoon is a period of increasing thunderstorm activity. The total annual rainfall of the state varies from about 4500 mm in the northern Kerala to about 2000 mm in the south (average 3010 mm). The Ernakulam (3210mm) and Trissur District (3160mm) receive rainfall a little above the state average. The atmospheric temperature is maximum ( $>32^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) during premonsoon period and from June onwards it gradually decreases due to heavy rainfall. An increasing trend of temperature is noticed again during October-November.

Our knowledge about the palaeoclimate of Kerala is very limited, for researches in the area are in a desideratum as yet. On the basis of the planktonic foraminiferal (Micro size life forms that float on water) frequency changes four intervals of major climatic cooling have been recognized in Indian Ocean region, one in late Pliocene (2-3 my B.P.), and three in the Pleistocene; i.e. at 1.6 my (immediately above the Pliocene-Pleistocene boundary), at 0.6 my and during the late Pleistocene. A detailed account of oceanographic and climatic changes during late Quaternary period worked out on the basis of the temporal variation in the composition of faunal assemblages from inner shelf sediments off-Kerala coast, is available now. The account shows a weak upwelling in association with a weak monsoon between 23000 and 18000 yrs B.P. However, the intensity of upwelling and monsoonal strength had increased gradually around 18000-15000 yrs B.P. followed by a brief interval of weak monsoon. A strong monsoon from 12000 to 10000 yrs B.P. has also been predicted. The Southwest monsoon was weaker around 5000 yrs B.P. with minor fluctuations in its strength.

Based on pollen analysis of core samples from sediments off-Cochin, a lesser mangrove pollen from 22000 to 18000 yrs B.P. suggesting dry climatic condition has been observed (Van Campo, 1980). However, a good frequency of

mangrove taxa of around 11000 yrs B.P.suggesting humid climatic conditions has been recorded. The decline of mangrove vegetation after 6000 yrs, B.P. is largely attributed to biotic influence. Based on carbon isotopic record of tropical peats of Nilgiris, it has been suggested that the predominance of C4 plants was due to a very arid phase and weak monsoons during LGM i.e. 20000 – 16000 B.P. The early Holocene (10000-6000 years B.P) is again marked by a shift towards C4 vegetation, indicating a progressively more arid climate.

Notwithstanding the limited nature of scientific observations some facts about the winds of Kerala can be presented. The curious persistence with which the wind flows from the Northwest even in the so-called Southwest monsoon, is noticeable. The explanation is that the monsoon current, which approaches the Peninsula of India from an almost westerly direction, there encounters an elevated land surface, the trend of which is toward the South-Southeast, and, though a considerable portion surmounts the ghats and enters India, yet a large part of the surface air is deflected southwards and becomes a northwesterly wind. Originating in the Indian Ocean between Australia and Malagasi the monsoon winds blow Southwest for six months and Northeast for the remaining portion of the year. Towards the end of the month of May when the sun is in the northern hemisphere the higher plateau gets over heated and as a result of this, the atmospheric pressure of the region lowers. This makes the air above the southern sea move northward to the continent. Thus is formed the monsoon wind. When these winds reach equatorial Africa they get tilted eastwards unobstructedly, reaching straight to the Malabar coast of India. These winds have been a regular phenomenon.

The Southwest monsoon breaks early in June and after the first violent burst persistent rain sets in. On the coast the air current is steady rather than strong. But inland as it advances nearer to the Palakkad Gap, its velocity increases, and furious gusts sweeps the rain along almost parallel with the ground. In September the current grows weak, and from October onwards growing stronger as the weather gets hotter, land winds blow at night and in the mornings. In the month of February, March and April a hot wind rushes in the

Palakkad region from the burning plains of Coimbatore. The Northwest monsoon sometimes fails, the Southwest never; and, the latter brings three quarters of the rainfall to the Malabar region.

## **PART-II**

### **SOURCES AND HISTORICAL WRITINGS**

Sources help to reconstruct the history of any country and any society. The real sources have to be separated from legends and fables, the real task of the historian of Kerala history is to delete legends and fables from the actual sources and use them in a more scientific and objective way. For a historian, the reconstruction of the ancient period of Kerala is a difficult task, as they've developed no separate faculty of history in ancient Kerala. But the sources available in Kerala like, material remains, inscriptions, coins, monuments, arts and crafts, the accounts of foreign travelers, literary works etc. help a historian for the reconstruction of the ancient history of this specific geographical unit.

Sources of Kerala history can mainly be divided into two broad divisions – Traditional sources and Non-traditional sources. The traditional sources include all types of oral and written legends and fables relating to the origin of Kerala and the development of the society. The non-traditional sources include archaeological evidences, monuments, epigraphy, numismatics foreign notices and literary works. The non-traditional sources are divided into Primary and Secondary sources. The evidences that directly signify an historical event or a situation are called Primary sources, which include archaeological materials, coins, monuments, copper plates, inscriptions, seals etc. The evidences that indirectly relate with a specific historical event or a situation are known as the Secondary sources, comprising written records, literary evidences, travelers accounts etc. The information given in the secondary sources has to be compared and verified with that of other sources to make sure of its authenticity. The works written on the basis of the informations collected from the Primary and Secondary sources are called the Tertiary Sources. Textbooks of authority are considered as the Tertiary Sources. The historian must bestow his attention on verifying the authenticity of the available source materials than on their

classifications. The reconstruction of Kerala History requires careful verification and analysis of the Traditional sources with that of the non-traditional sources.

## **CHAPTER-I**

### **LEGENDS AND PERCEPTIONS**

#### **Parasurama Legend.**

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

Whatever be its historical authenticity, the Parasurama legend embodies some geographical and geological facts pertaining to ancient Kerala. Though geography is, as K.M. Panikkar has observed, "the most permanent and invariable factor of history", it is an accepted fact that the geographical features of a country do not themselves remain stationary in all ages. The consensus of opinion among scholars is that a substantial portion of Kerala must have been

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

### **Origin of the name of the State**

There are many theories regarding the origin of the names Kerala and Malabar and most of them to a very great extent, shrouded in the mists of tradition. Revenue. Fr. Heras reads in a Mohenjodaro pictograph Karmukil Malayalam adu (Malabar of the rain clouds). If the inference is taken as correct, it is obvious that Kerala as a geographical unit must have existed as early as B.C. 2500. On the basis of the microliths discovered at Calicut and Cochin, it is claimed that Kerala had become the abode of man in about B.C. 400. Kerala was known to the Greeks and Romans and is mentioned in the inscription of Asoka: in Kautilya's Arthashastra, in the great epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata and in the works of Kalidasa. The earliest epigraphic record that mentions Kerala is Asoka's Rock Edict II of B.C. 257. In it the name of the country is called Keralaputa. This name corresponds to Pliny's Celobotras and Ptolemy's Kerobotros. P.T. Srinivasa Iyengar tried to correlate Kerala with the cherapadha of the Taittiriya Aranyaka and the Seri of the Buddhist Jatakas. Likewise V.R. Ramachandra Dikshitar attempted to connect it with

Charia in Asia Minor. According to the Sanskrit work Harivamsa it is claimed to be named after one of the four sons of Akrida, the other being Pandya, Kola and Chola. The description of Kerala by Kalidasa as Dooran Muktanudanuan (long extending liberation from the sea or in other words a gift of the sea) of course refers to the wellknown Parasurama tradition. This tradition like other legends of Indian mythology is centred round the story of a celebrated conqueror by name Parasurama but it is scarcely possible through the mist a fable even to conjecture anything respecting the real existence of the pergonage or events connected with him. The Grecian Iliad and Odyssey are in comparison with our legends and authentic chronicles. Antiquarian research is only now beginning to find means of supplementing the deficiency caused by the absence of materials constructed or collected by usual historic methods. The most ancient facts about Kerala, like the rest of South India, are remarkable. Geology and natural history make it certain that at a time within the bounds of human knowledge this part of our motherland did not form part of Asia. The Sanskrit Puranic writers, the Sri Lanka Buddhist literature and the local traditions of the West Coast, all indicate in different manners a great disturbance of the point of the Peninsula and Sri Lanka within recent times. The geological and geographical features of both South India and Sri Lanka are similar in several respects on the basis of which Wilhelm Geiger rightly concludes that, in times gone by Sri Lanka was an out-stretched region of the Dekkan plateau. He says: "Ceylong is essentially a part of the Dekkan, the vast plateau of South India and consists geologically of a solid mass of pre-cambrian crystalline rock, chiefly Biotilegneiss with hands of white crystalline limestone". The similarity of flora and fauna with those of South India also points to the fact that the two were originally parts of the same land mass. The English theologians assign this Noachian deluge to 2348 B.C. and the Sri Lanka Buddhists to the latest submergence in the region of Sri Lanka to B.C. 2387. This evidently lends support to the parasurama tradition, which is couched under the garb of diving grandeur. According to the popular parasurama legend, the land crust that forms Kerala was raised from the depths of the ocean as a result of the severe penance by Parasurama, the Brahmin Avatar of Vishnu for his revengeful wars and destructive campaign against the Kshatriyas. The



turbulent God Parasurama flung his battle-axe far out into the heaving sea and waters extending from Gokarnam to Kanyakumari receded and the land of Kerala emerged into sun and air. Whatever might be the historical basis of this tradition it is generally believed that these points to the seismological factors that led to the emergence of the land? There is certainly some scientific evidence regarding the aqueous origin of our land. Some geologists contend that in a former geological period there was a vast fresh water lake of which the eastern shore roughly represented the present coastline of Kerala. But this contention is refuted on the ground that if it was a fresh-water lake it could not have had any connection with the sea. According to the majority opinion the fact is that the parasurama legend referred to the period when Kerala had attained stability after some seismic catastrophe. It is also contended that the silting up process was slow and lasted for centuries. According to I.C. Chacko the state of things indicated by the Parasurama legend came into being at least 2000 years before Christ. The Western Ghats, which form the eastern border of the State, showed definite evidence of a geological cataclysm in the gaping discontinuity of the Palghat gap which is about 30 kms. broad. Here the mountains appear thrown boack and heaped up as if some overwhelming deluge had burst through sweeping them to left and right. On either side there are the towering Nilgiris and the Anamalais over topping the chain of Ghats by several thousand metres. The coastal belt of Alleppey district is like a sandy sea-shore which has been extended inland. Marine fossils including coral reefs have been uneqrthed near Vazhappally in Changanacherry. Geologists therefore feel that the Arabian sea must have once extended right upto the foot of the Western Ghats. A cataclysm could have resulted in the sea receding and the submerged bed emerging to the surface. The numerous rivers which take their source in the Western Ghats could have subsequently brought down much quantities of silt and mud and deposited them on the newly formed coastal region. A section of the geologists are of the view that subterranean passages link the sea with the rivers and backwaters inland, the accumulating silt in them finds its way into the littoral currents and thereby leads to form mud banks. Mud banks occur along with the sea board from the Kotta River to Cape Comorin the most

remarkable being those of Panthalayani Kollam, Calicut and Alleppey. These banks have been known to mariners from very ancient times as smooth and safe anchorages, even when the sea is rough. However Kerala is a littoral State with its 44 rivers seeking their source from the Sahyadri and flowing westward to find their fusion with the Arabian Sea. Kerala represents a riparian civilization unique and unparalleled anywhere else in India.

Among the many explanations offered for the name of the land, the most probable is the one, which refers to the above origin. The simple fact that the name Kerala is found in the Ramayana or Mahabharatha or in several of the Puranas such as the Vayu, Malsya, Markandeya, Skanda, Padma and so on and in the works of Kalidasa, Rajasekhara and other Sanskrit poets cannot make it certain that the word is of Sanskrit origin. Cheralam and Cheram are other names used with references to Kerala. Dr. Caldwell thinks that “probably Kerala was the earliest form of the word, Kerala a Sanskrit derivative. One meaning of the word Kera is coconut palm. But Caldwell says “It must be only a secondary meaning, the name of the country itself being probably the origin of this name of its most characteristics tree”. Some scholars derive the name of Kerala from the word Kera (Coconut). It is one of the characteristic products of the West Coast. But Dr. Gundert observes that the word Keram is the Canarese form of Cheram and he describes Keralam as Cheram – the country between Gokarnam and Kumari. The interpretation that Kerala means the land of Kera or coconut palm is not tenable from the philological and historical points of view. The origin of the term may probably be from the root Cher which means to join. It seems to be the most appropriate interpretation because it points to the geological fact that the region was under submersion at a remote period of history and afterwards when the ocean drew back it was joined to the Southern peninsula which is embodied in the Parasurama tradition. This meaning is clear in the compound word Cheralam in which Alam means region or land. Cher also means added and to give the meaning the land which was added by the recession of the sea.

Malabar is another name given to the country. This term was used for the first time in 1150 A.D., after the coming of the Arabs to this land. It has various forms with the change of vowels – Malibar, Manibar, Mulibar, and Munibar. The early European travelers used other forms which were written Melibar, Manibar, Milibar, Minubar, Melibaria, Malabaria etc. Cosmos Indicopleustes (6<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) the Egyptian merchant mentions a town Male on the West Coast of India as a great emporium of pepper trade. Al Biruni (970 – 1039 A.D.) appears to have been the first to call the country Malabar. The celebrated author of the *Manual of Malabar* suggests that the name Malabar is of semi-foreign origin. To quote him “the first two syllables are almost certainly the ordinary Dravidian word Mala (Hill, Mountain) and Bar is probably the Arabic word Barr (continent) or the Persian Bar (country)”. According to him the name is reminiscent of the word Malanadu which literally means the hill country. Many variants of the name are found in the ancient Mohammedan and European writers. Lassen thinks that bar is identical with Sanskrit Vra (Region) and that the form might have been Malayavara. But Dr. Caldwell did not accept this derivation on the ground that this term is never found used. Dr. Gundert suggested the possibility of the derivation of Bar from the Arabic Barr meaning continent. According to Colonial Yule Bar is a Persian word appearing in Zanzibar, Malabar etc. During the Gampola and Kotte periods in the History of Ceylon, Kerala is referred to as Malala. Bishop R. Caldwell is of the view that the origin of the name is from Ma’bar literally meaning the passage. It was the names given by the early Arabian merchants to that portion of the Coromandal Coast which was nearest Ceylon and from which it was easiest to pass over to the island from the continent. The Portuguese call the inhabitants Malabares. But all these derivations seem to be wrong and far-fetched in view of the fact that the country is called Malanadu in medieval Tamil and early Malayalam. The term Malabar is a corruption of the alternative word Malayalam\* (Hills slope) which also means the hill country. In this connection the derivation of the word Nicobar from Nakkabaram (the land of the naked) may be cited. There is no doubt that the word Malabar is a westernized form of Malavaram, which means the hilly country.

### St. Thomas Legend

In the Gospel of John St. Thomas who is called 'Didymus' appears actively just before the account of the raising of the Lazarus from the dead. When the grieving sisters 'Martha & Maria sent a special messenger to Jesus who was in exile at 'Peria', Jesus said "Let us go back to Judea". All the other apostles dissuaded Jesus from this perilous journey but St. Thomas said **"Let us go too, and be killed along with him"**. Here is the sincere versus of a bold man who was determined to follow Jesus. That same commitment brought him from Judea to various places in India and to be a martyr for the millions of Indian sub-continent. Again, at the last supper, when Jesus revealed that he is going to leave them, St. Thomas came out with his doubt **"Lord we do not know where Thou art going; how are we know the way there?"** And Jesus answered lovingly for the whole mankind: "I am the way; I am the truth and Life; nobody can come to the Father except through me. Generations to come will be indebted to the doubting St. Thomas for this illuminating glance into the eternal life.

It is interesting to note that Malikayal' Speaks of St. Thoma's arrival by sea to the port of 'Maliankara' (Kodungallur). The commercial history of the times lends support to this assumption. He must have either sailed from Kalyan in north India or from the island of 'Socotra'. He established the following 7 churches and a Christian community in Malayattor as it is narrated in "St. Thomas parvam" by Rabban. It is the hoary and unquestioned tradition in Malabar, which is corroborated by the customs of the place and by the ethnological research, that the Apostle was signally successful in the conversion of the high cast 'Nambuthiri Brahmins'. Four of the leading Brahmin families are believed to have been raised to the privilege of the priesthood. They are:

- a) Palamattam (Pakalomattam)
- b) Sankarapuri
- c) Kalli &
- d) Kalliankave.

Some of them still exist in 'Koravilangad' a place near Kottayam in Kerala. The head of the Malabar Church-the Archdeacon- had to be selected from Pakalomattam. This practice was continued among the Jacobite seceders till a hundred years ago. There is a strong belief throughout Malabar that St. Thomas founded 7 Churches or group of Christians in the following places and the imprints and tradition proves it true.

### **Early Migration of Christians from Palayur to Travancore**

In the history of Kerala, having put a stamp that will not fade, Brahmin families like, Kalikave, Pagalomattom, and Shankarapuri were among the families who received Baptism in Palayoor. The families of Shankarapuri and Pagalomattom were given priestly status by St. Thomas. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD all the four Family migrated from Palayoor via Angamali, kadathuruthi to Ettmanoor. The Devasom of Ettmanoor did not allow them to stay there and sent them to a place 5 Km. away which was the Forest of the Goddess Kali. In those days the Forest of goddess kali was believed to be full of witches and Devils and people were scared to stay in such places. The people who came from Palayoor stayed there without any fear not knowing about these facts. To prove this there are documents. The entire house names, house numbers, survey numbers are there in the Government Records. Survey 460/5, 460/6, 519/8 belonged to these Families. During those days there was no place for worship or Burial and the families worshipped at home and used their own property to bury the dead. Where these 4 families stayed they established a Chapel. There still exists 5 Graves near the famous Forest of Kali (Kalikave) Grotto. It is believed that these are the graves of 5 important members of these families. This cemetery was just next to the Shakutirikal Family. Right now it is in the procession of Claratu Bhavan Seminary.

**The Koravelangattu church:** It is believed that the above said 4 families and the Kadapoor family, which came from Palayoor, joined together and established the Koravelangattu Church. The Kalli and the Pagalomattom Families stayed on the Northern side of the church and the Shankarapuri, Kalikavu and the Kadapoor families stayed on the Southern side of the Church. So it came to be

that Shankarapuri Family got the house name Thekkedethu meaning Southern Side, and Pagalomattom Family got the house name Vadakaedethu meaning Northern Side. There were a lot of priests in these families for many generations.

### **Trade Relationships**

Extensive trade relations existed between Malabar and the Mediterranean countries even before the Christian era. The numerous golden coins of the Roman Empire which have been found all over the south, as well as many recent discoveries offer abundant proof that Roman trade centers existed along the southern coasts of India. While King Solomon was ruling over the Israelites (B.C. 970-930), his warships brought back to his country valuable merchandise supposed to be from Muziris (Cranganore), a defunct international port of Malabar. While discussing the dealings of the Phoenicians with Muziris, the Roman historian Pliny (A.D. 23-79) complained that every year they were sending large sum of money to India for silk, pearls, gems and spices. He also remarked that the Malabar ships were visiting the Persian Gulf Aden, the Red Sea and Egypt. Pliny, Ptolemy (A.D. 100-160) and the Periplus of the Erythraean Sea give much detailed information about the trading centers of Malabar. Diplomatic relations between India and Roman Empire existed even before the Christian era. There were Jewish colonies in Malabar in the first century.

### **In South India**

Regarding the apostolate of St. Thomas in the Malabar Coast of India (Present Kerala), **we have a very ancient narrative from a manuscript preserved by an old family at Palayur.** It treats extensively about the journeys of St. Thomas on the Malabar Coast. It is best for the interested people to go through this narrative as a whole to have an idea of the tradition, which is rite in Kerala. Apostle St. Thomas reached 'Muziri in AD 51-52 from the northern part of Indian peninsula visiting many inland-countries and sharing the Gospel in many places as you see the imprints. Perhaps, one reason of selecting the southern coast was flourishing Jewish settlements in along the coast in Kodungallur, Cochin, Madras etc., which date back to the Jewish Diaspora or

even back to King Solomon's trading centres. Another reason was the flourishing Roman trade links. "The Apostle St. Thomas landed at Maliankara (i.e. Cranganore) with Habban, the merchant. He (St. Thomas) worked great miracles and in eight months established in that town, the Church of Jesus Christ. Then he went to Mailepuram (Mylapore – Madras) where he preached the Gospel of the Lord for four months and a half and embarked for China. He remained in China for four and a half months and returned to Mailepuram. After he had been there for a month or so, the son-in-law of the King of 'Tiruvanchikulam' came to him and besought him to return to Malabar. They embarked on a ship and came to Maliankara (Kodungallur), where in less than six months, the Apostle converted the King and his family, 40 Jews and 400 heathens.

**It is interesting to note that Malikayal' speaks of St. Thomas arrival by Sea.** The commercial history of the times lends support to this assumption. He must have either sailed from Kalyan in north India or from the island of 'Socotra'. St. Francis Xavier, who landed at Socotra on his way to India about AD 1545, declared that the natives of these islands render special honours to the apostle St. Thomas, claiming them to be the descendents of Christians begotten to Jesus Christ through that Apostle in these countries.

Ka, Naa Subrahmanyam quotes D'Orsay, who consolidating all the available records states that, after forming, on the west coast, several congregations out of Jews and Dravidi people, "Apostle St. Thomas reached Meliapore (Mylapore-Madras). The fame of his miracles had preceded him. The Raja (King Mahadevan) received baptism and a part of his subjects embraced the Gospel. This excited the hatred and jealousy of the Brahmins (The super class people & Priests) and Apostle St. Thomas was pierced with a lance". T.N. Gopal in the Vivekananda Prakashan commenting on this record, states "the legend also has it that he suffered a cruel death at the hands of the irate Brahmins. In so far as it points to the hostility that St. Thomas should have provoked among the guardians of Hinduism, the legend has validity. He was preaching to the people Church surmounted by a cross and ordained priests. One of the first that he ordained was the Son-in-law of the King. King was named Andrew and the Son-

in-law, Peter. Accompanied by Peter, the Apostle went to Quilon (Kollam) where he planted a cross and baptized 2400 heathens. From Quilon, he went to the mountain place. Chayal' remained there a whole year as he had done at Quilon and baptized 2,800 heathens and planted a cross. At the request of the two chiefs of 'Triepalesuaram' he returned to that village. But seeing that the people had desecrated the cross he had erected there, he cursed the village (which at the present – day is a heap of ruins) Nevertheless; he remained there for two months. He again erected the cross and instructed the people so that they might not return to heathenism and ordained priest St. Thomas, one of the chiefs who had always remained strong in his faith. During these two months that he remained at 'Triepalesuaram', he confirmed in their faith all the Christians and converted 200 pagans. Not far from there, to the south, he built the Church of 'Niranam' and ordained priests, his first disciple St. Thomas Maliyakel who has a native of the place. He then repaired to 'Kokkamangalam', where he dwelt one year and converted 1500 heathens erected a cross and taught the people how to honour God. He visited again Kottakavu – Parur, remaining there nearly a year and converted 2,200 people. There he went by the southern road to Maliankara and was pleased to see the flourishing state of that Christian community. He stayed there only two weeks and started for the north, proceeding to 'Palayur' where in one month he baptized 1,280 pagans, and according to his habit, erected a great cross. Towards the end of the year, 59 (AD 59) he returned to Maliepuram (Mylapore).

He came back to Malabar and the Angels protected him during the journey. He remained two months in 'Maleattur' and converted 220 pagans. He stayed a whole year at 'Niranam' and was satisfied with the faith of the people there and with the exemplary life they led, and gave Confirmation to all those that had not yet received sacrament. He proceeded to 'Chayal' taking with him his disciple, St. Thomas Rabban Malikayal. During the year he stayed there, he built a Church and ordained priests and conferred the holy sacrament of Confirmation on all who had not yet received it. After that he took leave of the Christians and told them that they would never see him again. And he started for



the country of Tamils. St. Thomas Rabban and Peter, the son-in-law of the King, accompanied him for seven miles and a half and took leave of him.

### **Proof of his Arrival.**

Historians today believe that St. Thomas planted the seed of the gospel on Indian soil. This is the general trend of their thinking. During Apostolic times there were well-frequented trade routes, by land and/or water, connecting North-West India (today Pakistan), the West Coast and the East Coast, with North Africa and West Asia. **Thus Alexandria, Aden, Socotra, Ormuz, Ctesiphon, Caesarea, Taxila, Broach, Kodungallur (Muziris) and even Rome were inter-linked.** The witnesses of different authors belonging to different places, Churches, cultures, centuries and races (and often speaking different languages) supporting the Apostle's Indian mission provide an almost unassailable bulwark of evidence, along with the South Indian tradition that is woven into a myriad details of folklore, placenames, family traditions, social customs, monuments, copper plates, ancient songs, liturgical texts etc. The following are some of the early references to the Indian sojourn of St. Thomas in foreign sources: (All these testimonies are of a date prior to the commencement of the Malayalam or Kollam era, i.e. A.D. 825. Many of these belong to centuries immediately following the first Ecumenical Council of 325). One of the earliest works to refer to St. Thomas as the Apostle who evangelized the India of today is the Syriac work entitled 'The Doctrine of the Apostles', which according to critics, date from the second century A.D. **Here are the Passages:**

#### **1. 'The Doctrine of the Apostles'**

'After death of the Apostles, there were Guides and Rulers in the Churches; and whatever the Apostles communicated to them, and they had received from them, they taught to the multitudes. They, again, at their deaths also committed and delivered to their disciples after them everything which they had received from the Apostles; also what James had written from Jerusalem and Simon from the City of Rome, and John from Ephesus and Mark from the great Alexandria, and Andrew from Phrygia and Luke from Macedonia and

Judas St. Thomas from India, that the epistles of an Apostle might be received and read in the Churches in every place, like those Triumphs of their Acts which Luke wrote, are read, that by this the Apostles might be known...."India and all its own countries and those bordering on it, even to the farthest sea, received the Apostles' Hand of Priesthood from Judas St. Thomas, who was Guide and Ruler in the Church which he built there and ministered there'.

## **2. The Acts of Judas St. Thomas, Century: 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> (c. 180-230), Church represented: Syrian**

One of the source books for the life and mission of St. Thomas the Apostle is the work called: 'The Acts of St. Thomas' which dates probably from early 3<sup>rd</sup> Century. It is understood to be an apocryphal work; but serious scholars seem to favour the historical foundation for the main statements made in the work, as for example, the travel of the Apostle to the Indus Valley, reference to names which sound similar to historical potentates of Northern India, e.g. Gondophares. It is known that apocryphal, legendary writings take their origin around certain historical events, which in the course of the development of the work get mixed-up and even lost to some extent amid the highly exaggerated, even fantastic details, stories and narrative embellishments. Even if we set aside these details, we may still consider the main outlines of the work. We may for instance, consider the following extracts from these Acts:

(a) 'When the Apostles had been for a time in Jerusalem, they divided the countries among them in order that each one might preach in the region which fell to him; and India fell to the lot of Judas St. Thomas 'What may be considered here is not so much the fact of the lots being cast as the fact of India being mentioned.

(b) The Acts say that St. Thomas was not willing to accept the same decision and said: 'I am a Hebrew, how can I teach the Indians?' It is perhaps quite unlikely that an Apostle would have refused to go on his mission as soon as it became known to him. For our purpose that is not what we should worry about. What is to be noted is rather the fact that 'Indians' are mentioned in the narrative. We

may say the same with regard to what follows in the Acts narrative. The Apostle says stubbornly, 'Whithersoever Thou wilt, O Lord, send me only to India I will not go.'

### **3. St. Jerome (342-420)**

"He (Christ) dwelt in all places: with St. Thomas in India, Peter at Rome, with Paul in Illyricum".

### **4. St. Gaudentius (Bishop of Brescia, before 427)**

"John at Sebastena, St. Thomas among the Indians, Andrew and Luke at the city of Patras are found to have closed their careers".

### **5. St. Paulinus of Nola (d. 431)**

"Parthia receives Mathew, India St. Thomas, Libya Thaddeus, and Phrygia Philip".

### **6. St. Gregory of Tours (d. 594)**

More about St. Gregory's testimony see characteristic. IV. St. Thomas the Apostle, according to the narrative of his martyrdom is stated to have suffered in India. His holy remains (corpus), after a long interval of time, were removed to the city of Edessa in Syria and there interred. In that part of India where they first rested, stand a monastery and a church of striking dimensions, elaborately adorned and designed. This Theodore, who had been to the place, narrated to us.

### **7. St. Isidore of Seville in Spain (d.c. 630)**

"This St. Thomas preached the Gospel of Christ to the Parthians, the Medes, the Persians, the Hyrcanians and the Bactrians, and to the Indians of the Oriental region and penetrating the innermost regions and sealing his preaching by his passion he died transfixed with a lance at Calamina....a city of India, and there was buried with honour".

### **8. St. Bede the Venerable (c. 673-735)**

"Peter receives Rome, Andrew Achaia; James Spain; St. Thomas India: John Asia...In addition to these there are many breviaries, martyrologies, other

liturgical books and calendars of the Syrian, Alexandrian/Greek, Latin and other Churches belonging to a period before the commencement of the Quilon era, which bears ample testimony to St. Thomas: Indian Apostle.

### **India at that Time**

In the viewpoint of broader understanding the land INDIA can be introduced as follows: "It is certainly not as small as the present political India. As per the ancient historians and travelers, India is the farthest part of the inhabited world towards the east".

### **Political and Commercial context**

From the time of invasion of Alexander the Great in 326 BC crossing the Indus River, India became more open to the countries of the west. He conquered King Poros (the king of present Punjab) historically and broke the great barrier, the empire of Persia which had separated people of western countries including Greece from India and opened a channel for direct communication. **Eminent scholars of those times; Ptolemy, Aristobolus etc'. And others give reference to it.** After the death of Alexander, the great Indian king **Chandraguptha Mourya liberated Punjab** from Greek domination by a friendly alliance with the Seleukos Nikator. Owing to this better atmosphere, many Greek merchants and others were attracted to Indian subcontinent. They and their successors exchanged ambassadors and many other western kingdoms followed it such as Egyptian Ptolomies. Many of them like 'Megasthenes' wrote books and defined boundaries of Indian subcontinent in it. Communication between the western world and India became less frequent preceded to the Christian era due to the **rise of new Parathian Empire.** It was for a short period and Roman empire raised and started developing trade and commerce with the precious goods of east. Again Parathian Empire rose in between and a toll was levied for trade to Rome. **This forced Romans to find a sea route to the east-especially to India.** This created a problem with the Arabs as they were losing the importance. After a lot of conflicts and problems, the incidents favoured Roman

ambition to set sail for India. Hence about 0005 A.D. Strabo could write: 'I found that about 120 ships sail from 'Mykos-Harmos' to India'.

The Indian Kings like '**Pandyan' of Madurai have opened embassies in Rome** and the trade was immense as the western world was a good market for Indian goods. India was in a flourishing stage during that period. This should be the reason that time. **St. Thomas selected India as his mission field**, which was well known to Palastinians, and there was all means of communication which was prevailing at that time. The historic proofs of St. Thomas mission in India are many. Taking into account traditional evidence available in India and abroad. It may be said that the Apostle was approximately **17 years** in India, Viz., about **4 years in Sindh, 6 years at most in Malabar, and 7 years at Mailepuram** or Mailapore. Crosses carved on stone, some of which are attributed to St. Thomas by unbroken tradition, have not been lost to posterity.

Government of India bringing out two stamps in commemoration of the Indian apostolate of St. Thomas, One in 1964 and another in 1973, and the Holy See proclaiming St. Thomas The Apostle of India and in Cardinal Tisserant bringing his bones to India and Kerala in the year 1963.

Historians today believe that St. Thomas planted the seed of the gospel on India soil. This is the general trend of their thinking: During Apostolic times there were well frequented trade routes, by land and/or water, connecting North-West India (today Pakistan), the West Coast and the East Coast, with North Africa and West Asia. **Thus Alexandria, Aden, Socotra, Ormuz, Ctesiphon, Caesarea, Taxila, Broach, Kodungallur (Muziris) and even Rome were inter-linked.** The witnesses of different authors belonging to different places, Churches, cultures, centuries and races (and often speaking different languages) supporting the Apostle's Indian mission provide an almost unassailable bulwark of evidence, along with the South Indian tradition that is woven into a myriad details of folklore, place names, family traditions, social customs, monuments, copper plates, ancient songs, liturgical texts etc.

**King Gondophares**

The apocrypha book “Acts of St. Thomas’ mentions about his connection with the Indian King. Till the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century even the existence of such a king was legendary. However, a large number of coins were discovered in Kabul, Kandahar, and in the western and southern Punjab, bear the name ‘Gondophares’. Ruins of Taxila, Pakistan, where the apostle St. Thomas is said to have begun his missionary work in India. A yearly festival commemorating the coming of St. Thomas attracts up to 60,000 people.

**To go in detail,**

A 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D work in Syriac, many poems by Ephraem (3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> century), many folksongs in South India, a historical narrative committed to writing some five hundred years ago in Kerala, timehonoured traditions prevalent in many parts of India speak of the arrival, travels, and activities of a visitor from around Alexandria in India in the First Century A.D. **The credibility of this ‘St. Thomas legend’, as described in Kerala-Mylapore tradition, in the Song of St. Thomas Rambhan, in the Margam Kali songs etc., and in the Acts of Judas St. Thomas has been vehemently questioned and denied by the vast majority of western scholars during the major part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century** .It has been said and with quite some truth that this vehemence was at least partially due to the fact that many westerners refused to believe that their own present religion, though originally from the East, had arrived in another country, that too a ‘pagan’ and ‘idolatrous’ country like India many centuries before it had come to their own motherlands in Europe. Whatever the truth of this one thing is certain these western scholars left no stone unturned in their attempts to disprove the Indian ‘legend’ about the travels of the Alexandrian visitor St. Thomas.

**Among the strongest arguments used were**

1).that there is no king of the name Gondaphares (as mentioned in the 2<sup>nd</sup> C Acts) in Indian history, none of his coins had ever been discovered, no geneology of Indian kings mentions such a name etc and

2).It is not possible to associate the specific places, routes etc. mentioned in the Acts, traditions, songs and narratives with first century contacts with the west.These are the only two objections we are dealing with here and analyzing in the light of numismatics developments in the subcontinent.

**A most dramatic discovery in the field of numismatics in India effected a magical change in the understanding of this whole story.** This was as a result of the excavations made both to the east and west of the river Indus.Long before any coins or inscriptions of Gondaphares had been discovered, the name of the king was familiar to the western worlds in connection with the visit of St. Thomas in India. In the several texts of these apocryphal books the king's name appears variously as Gudnaphar, Gundafor, Gundaphorus, and Goundaphorus. His Brother Gad's name also is mentioned there.Yet those names were totally unknown to history until large numbers of coins of this King were discovered. On his coins it appear, in Karoshti, as Guduphara or, occasionally, Godapharna, in Greek, as Undopheros, Undopherros or Gondopherros, which apparently represent local pronunciations of the Persian Vindapharna 'The Winner of Glory'.

The Greek rulers of the Pubjab were ultimately overcome by the Saka tribes of central Asia.They established principalities at Mathura, Taxila, and elsewhere. We are here concerned with one of these Persian Princes, known to the Greeks as Gondopharnes who was in 50 A.D. succeeded by Pacores. His kingdom comprised Taxila, Sistan, Sind, Southern and Western Punjab, the NWFP, Southern Afghanistan, and probably part of the Parthian dominions west of Sistan. Hence he could be considered both as an Indian king and as a Parthian.

**Dr. Fleet. One of the scholars concludes:**

'There is an actual basis for the tradition in historical reality' and St. Thomas did visit the courts of two Kings reigning there, of whom one was Gundupphara – the Gondophares of the Takht – i – Bhai inscriptions and the

coins – who was evidently the ruler of ‘an extensive territory which included as a part of it much more of India than simply a portion of the Peshawar District’

### **7 Churches of Malabar (Estd. by St. Thomas)**

1. Cranganore or Maliankara (Present Kodungallur)
2. Palur or Palayur (A place near Thrissur)
3. Paraur or Kottukavu (A Place near Cochin)
4. Kokkamangalam (A place between Allappay and Kottayam)
5. Niranam (A place near Tiruvalla)
6. Chayal or Nilakkal (An interior hill side place near Sabarimala)
7. Quilon or Kollam.

### **Niranam Church**

Niranam, almost midway between Quilon and Kokkamangalam is now in the hands of Jacobites. The church underwent many reconstructions and modifications. At present, the fourth building is in the place of the original Church that was believed to be founded by Apostle St. Thomas. It was consecrated by His grace Vattasseril Geevarghese Deanious. The Malankara Metropolitan on 14 February, 1912 AD. The Apostle and Prince Kepha proceeded from Quilon in a northeasterly direction and arrived at Thrikapaleswaram, near Niranam. Thrikapaleswaram had Hindu temples at that time, and to provide a place of public worship to the Christian community, the Apostle planted a cross a few furlongs away to the west of one of the temples. The non-Christian people in the locality did not like this and they pulled it out and cast it into the nearby river.

This desecration took place sometimes after the Apostle had left the place Chayal or Nilackal. Two Christians from Thrikapaleswaram went there and requested the Apostle to re-visit their place and set matters right. The cross that had been thrown out into the river moved downwards floating on the opposite bank of the river. Here at Niranam a new site for a church was secured. During this second visit the Apostle stayed at Niranam for two months and during this period two hundred persons were baptized by him giving new vigor and strength



to the Christian community. Local tradition is that most of the Nambudiris having been made Christians by St. Thomas left the place after giving the boxes containing the documents relating to their landed properties to a Kymal or Nayar chieftains, who has since been known as Niranam Petti Kymal. Of the various miracles performed by St. Thomas at Niranam, the most remarkable was the restoration of life to a child of a barber put to death by anti-Christian families, who wanted to throw the responsibility for the crime on the Apostle.

### **What the Ramban Song Says?**

The Apostle and Prince Kepha proceeded from Quilon in a northeasterly direction and arrived at Thrikapaleswaram, near Niranam. Thrikapaleswaram had Hindu temples at that time, and to provide a place of public worship to the Christian community, the Apostle planted a cross a few furlongs away to the west of one of the temples. The non-Christian people in the locality did not like this and they pulled it out and cast it into the near by river. The desecration took place sometime after the Apostle had left the place for Chayal or Nilackal. Two Christians from Thrikapaleswaram went there and requested the Apostle to re-visit their place and set matters right. The cross that had been thrown out into the river moved downwards floating on the waters for some distance, and eventually rested on a strip of land on the opposite bank of the river. Here at Niranam a new site for a church was secured. During this second visit, the Apostle stayed at Niranam for two months and during this period two hundred persons were baptized by him giving new vigor and strength to the Christian community. Local tradition is that most of the Nambudiris having been made Christians by St. Thomas left the place after giving the boxes containing the documents relating to their landed properties to a Kymal or Nair chieftain, who has since been known as Niranam Petti Kaymal. Of the various miracles performed by St. Thomas at Niranam, the most remarkable was the restoration of life to a child of a barber put to death by anti-Christian families, who wanted to throw the responsibility for the crime on the Apostle.

### **Palayoor Church**

Palur or Palayur was the stronghold of the Nambudiri Brahmins (The super class people in Indian communities) when St. Thomas arrived from Kodungallur; Isralites had a settlement at Palayur, two thousand years ago. Ruins of an ancient Jewish Synagogue are still seen outside of a Brahmin temple about a furlong away from the Church. Broken pieces of idols, sculptures and remnands of the old temple were lying around the church till short time ago. Two large tanks on the west and east gates are tell-tale relics of the ancient glory of the Hindu temple. During the Portuguese time, an attempt to dismantle the old Church to construct a new one was given up owing to the sentimental objection of the local people later on; however, a new church was built carefully so as to enclose the old one which had wooden walls. Palayur was once the seal of a Biship. This is evident from the Bull of Pope Gregory XII, dated 15<sup>th</sup> March 1580. It admonishes and directs the faithful to be obedient to their prelate Mar Abraham and George of Christ, the Bishop of Palayur. 'Obedite vero in Domino Abrahamo Archiepiscopo, vestro George item Episcopo Palurensi'. Incursions and persecutions by Hyder Ali and Tippu Sultan, the tyrants of Mysore, in the seventeenth century, reduced this flourishing Catholic centre to the state of decadence.

#### **Important Historical Monuments at Palayoor**

- The Boat Jetty (Bottukulam) where St. Thomas landed at Palayoor.
- Thaliyakulam – The pond where St. Thomas baptized the local people.
- The replica of Chinna Malai (of Mylapore-Madras) where St. Thomas attained martyrdom in AD 72.
- The historical remnants of old Aryan Temple.
- Historical Museum.
- 14 granite life size statues of various scenes from the life of St. Thomas installed on the main entrance of the Church.
- The Jubilee Door in front of the entrance of the main hall of the Church, depicting various important Biblical events, carved in Burmese teak.

The beginning of British rule in India (1707-93) saw the slow and steady rise of the present Church **Strangely enough; there is not a single Brahmin house, at present, in the Palayur village.**

### **How to reach Palayur?**

Palayur is a part of Thrissur District and is located on the west Coast of Kerala. By road it takes 28 km. to reach Palayur from Thrissur. It is on Thrissur – Chavakkad route, via Pavaratty. To travel by train catch Thrissur-Guruvayur train (24km). From Guruvayur to Palayur take a bus or a taxi/auto rikshaw (2km.). Nedumbasserry International Airport is only 80 km. from Palayur.

### **Nilackal Church**

All the Churches, save the one at Chayal (Nilakkal), are on the coast or very near it. Chayal is situated very much in the interior on the Sabarimala Hills. The old Church is now in a dilapidated state amidst jungles. When St. Thomas was doing missionary work that he established seven churches and among those church, Nilackal (Chayal) was contained. The Apostle returned from Niranam to Chayal or Nilackal. According to the Ramban song the Apostle worked here for one year and during this period one thousand and one hundred persons were converted to Christianity. There is not any historical evidence about St. Thomas missionary work at Nilackal but it is written in old metal plates, Marthomma charitham. Veeradiyan song and many historians' writings about certain vague assumptions that St. Thomas established a church at Nilakkal.

Many Christian families in Kanjirappally, Ayoor, and other places trace their origin to Nilakkal. There is a Mar St. Thomas Church at Ayroor which is still named Chayal (Nilakkal). Efforts were made recently to rebuild a church at Nilakkal which led to opposition from the Hindu community, even though there are evidences of a Christian Church and a Hindu temple which existed there side by side in olden days, as can be found now in many other places in Kerala. The difficulties were solved by the magnanimous approach from both Hindu friends and Christian leaders, and the help extended by the Kerala Government. Following this a new church has been built under the **joint**

**auspices of all the Christian denominations** at the site agreed upon by all concerned, a little distance away from the earlier site. This church is having historical significances as the first Church built and dedicated by all the denominations together as a symbol of the heritage from St. Thomas.

The history of Kanjirappally in a Nanam Monam language (old dialect of Tamil) reveals the early settlers of Kanjirappally. One of the forefathers of Thommi Periya Veettil (AD. 1320) were a Trustee of Nilackal church. He, his family and friends moved from Nilackal (Chayal) to Kanjirappally because of the attacks from Pandi Nadu robbers given the name by many as wild animals.

### **Kottakkavu Church**

Kottakkavu near Parur was the next center where the Apostle preached the Gospel and founded a church. According to the Ramban song the Apostle succeeded in receiving into the Christian fold one thousand seven hundred and seventy persons at this centre.

### **Kodungallur Church (Maliankara)**

Besides Jews, Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Nairs, and Chettiars were among the earliest converts to Christianity. The first Brahmin convert was a young member of a Niranam Brahmin family that had settled down in Cranganore engaged in some business. His father, who decided to cast him away from the family, did not like the young man's conversion. The Apostle called the young convert and asked him to live with him. The young man, who had received the Apostle's name in baptism agreed to live with him and came to be known as Thomas Maliyakal, in recognition of his Brahmin family name. Subsequently he was raised to priesthood, and after sometime was given the title of Ramban or Archpriest. In course of time a Jewish Synagogue as well as a Hindu temple at Cranganore was transformed into Christian churches. Accompanied by Prince Kepha, who was consecrated as the Bishop of Cranganore and Malabar, St. Thomas left Cranganore to preach the Gospel elsewhere? Kodungallur or Cranganore became the centre of Christianity, the Mother Church of Malabar; it was there that the Apostle established the first bishopric with Xanthipus as Bishop. This

coastal town, situated 40 kms, to South-West of Trichur, Kerala, lies in 10o 100 North latitude and 76o 10o East longitude.

### **Ancient Musiris or Kodungallur where St.Thomas Arrived**

The schematic map of the region around Kodungallur gives only a faint suggestion of the landscapes of the area, which is hardly above sea level and abounding in canals and lagoons and prone to flooding in the rainy season. The landstrip, 5 to 10 Km. broad near the seashore, shows every sign of being newly formed by the sea receding in recent times. **It is now not possible to locate the ancient site** of Musiris harbour, northern that of Mahodayapuram of the Chera Kings precisely at any of the present sites of the environs of Kodungallur. No structure or building existing today in the area can be dated back to more than 6 centuries.

Kodungallur of today is not even a shadow of its glorious secular past. We have sufficient historical testimonies to Muziris as a magnificent harbour and the seat of the Chera Kings under the name of Thiruvanchikulam, which bring us down to about 8<sup>th</sup> century AD but the data are too scanty to enable us to reconstruct a continuous story of the city even upto that period. After that we experience a long period of darkness. We only know that Kodungallur continued to be a city of considerable importance, so that the Portuguese and the Dutch and later the English thought it worthwhile to make it one of their main bastions of power.

**The Hindu compiler of the Travancore State Manual has no doubt about the Malabar tradition:** “There is no doubt as to the tradition that St. Thomas came to Malabar and converted a few families of Nambudiris, some of whom were ordained by him as priests such as those of Sankarapuri and pakalomattam. For, in consonance with this long-standing traditional belief in the minds of the people of the Apostle’s mission and labours among high caste Hindus, we have it before us today the fact that certain Syrian Christian women particularly of a Desam (place) called Kunnamkulam wear clothes as Nambudiri women do, move about screening themselves with huge umbrellas from the gaze of profane eyes

as those women do, and will not marry except perhaps in exceptional cases, and those only recently, but from among dignified families of similar aristocratic descent".Upto the fall of the Chera Kingdom the **St. Thomas Christians** were under the Chera Kings.In the early centuries, Cranganore was the centre of Christians.But the situation changed with the invasion of Arabs.The St. Thomas Christians and the Jews moved to other places. Angamale rose up in importance during this period.

### **Archaeology & Roman Coins in the Area**

The Church of Ollur, Thrissur was founded only in 1718. Before that they used to go for Mass to Pazhuvil church which was founded in 960. Before that, the tradition goes; they used to go to Enammavu founded in 500. The Enammavu church recognizes the unimportant North Pudukad church as its mother church (400 AD.).This church in its turn originated from the Mattam church (Ca. 140 A.D), which traces its origin to the Palayur church founded by St. Thomas.What is important is that the people of all these places unanimously subscribed to the truth of the chronology, although time has brought about great changes in the status of each place, and yet the traditions concerning the origin of each church is recognized by all the churches unanimously.Similarly almost all the churches of Kerala trace their beginnings to one or other of the St. Thomas Churches or to churches which derive from one of those churches.Thus these traditions have no less value than documents written on paper or stone.

Large numbers of Roman coins have been discovered on the Malabar Coast (e.g. from Eyyal between Cranganore and Palayur, and from Kottayam in North Kerala). Just two years back more than a thousand Roman gold coins were found buried in Parur, also not very distant from Cranganore. What is interesting is that the majority of these coins belong to a period of some 80 years from Augustus to Nero (BC. 27 to AD. 68).The Periplus has this remark, "There are imported here (the Malabar Ports), in the first place a great quantity of coin...."**The Kodungallur Connection of St. Thomas (Reason, History and Necessity).**During Apostolic times there were well frequented trade routes, by land and/or water, connecting North-West India (today Pakistan), the West

Coast and the East Coast, with Noroth Africa and West Asia. **Thus Alexandria, Aden, Socotra, Ormuz, Ctesiphon, Caesarea, Taxila, Broach, Kodungallur (Muziris) and even Rome were inter-linked.**

**Kodungallur – The Cradle of Christianity in India:** The growth of Christianity in Kerala along the sea-coast and its geographical dispersion indicate the importance of Kodungallur in the spread of the gospel message in Kerala and India. According to the strong Kerala tradition as found embedded in the Ramban Song and in the collective consciousness of the whole land and people irrespective of creed or denomination Kodungallur (Maliyamkara) was the headquarters of Apostle St. Thomas from where he organized and operated his various mission projects and apostolic journeys to the various mission centres.

**Kodungallur – Mission Headquarters:** There were a number of factors that must have prompted the saint to make Kodungallur his mission headquarters. For example he himself had first landed in the land of Kerala in Chera country and our India at Kodungallur. Even if he had gone to the land of King Gondophares earlier, as far as present day India is concerned it was Kodungallur that first came into contact with the Apostle and his message. And the possibility that the Apostle might have first come to Kodungallur itself, the port most accessible to foreign ships, and primum emporium Indiae, before embarking for Taxila or Gandhara along the coastal route could not be totally rejected.

**In fact something quite similar happens in the Song of St. Thomas Ramban:**

“St. St. Thomas, my namesake, the great teacher of the religion of grace.

(He) in company with Avan, the agent of King Cholan.

Embarked in Arabia and arrived at Maliyamkara

.....

Thereafter he made haste and soon reached Mylapore”

We see him constantly running to and fro between Kodungallur and his far flung mission stations. Perhaps he had to come to the great port city to get information, instructions and/ or funds from abroad via the captains of the many ships that arrived at Kodungallur. (Both in the writings of foreign travelers and historians and in the Sangham literature there are innumerable references to the flourishing international trade that went on at Kodungallur and about the thriving flow of aliens into the land.). Even as late as 849 A.D. “the Pahlavi, Kufic, and Hebrew signatures at the end of the second set of the Tharisapalli Christian copper plates show that merchants of different races and nationalities were members of the trade-centre. These three sets of signatures represent the Persian, Arabic, and Israelite groups respectively and it is possible that they included Jews, Christians, and even Muslims (?) as indicated by the personal names”.

“In one month’s time he comes back to the Kerala country.

The nephew of the King of Tiruvanchikkulam in that land (the Cholan’s land.

And kissing his blessed foot entreated they voyaged in a ship

And, undoubtedly, came to Maiamkara....”

**Kodungallur – Mission Successful:** Another reason why the Apostle constantly harks back to Kodungallur was that his missionary efforts in that cosmopolitan Gateway City of India had proved highly rewarding from the very beginning... During his very first week in India.

“There (in Kodungallur) by his miraculous deeds, in eight days he established the religion”.

Returning there from Mylapore of the invitation of the king from Kodungallur in the company of the King’s newpew.

“Together with the King’s family three thousand heathensunbelievers

As well as forty Jews who had settled in the country

Received baptism in a year and a half”



Thus the Capital of the Chera Empire receives the Apostle and his message with an open heart and thereafter becomes the fountainhead of faith for the whole countries therefore.

“There for worship (St. St. Thomas) erected a church and a cross”.

Not only that Now that the King of Tiruvanchikkulam and the whole royal family had accepted the message St. Thomas forthwith consecrates the King's nephew a bishop:

“Grace to become priests and Bishops of the religion

And knowledge of the mysteries of it (the religion) he gave in public

The reigning King Anthrayos (Andrew's)

Nephew Keppa (Cephas) He consecrated a Bishop “

And now with Bishop Keppa, the King's nephew he start his journies to various parts of the kingdom and is very successful in mission all over the Kingdom.

After successfully preaching the Gospel in Quilon, Trikkapeleswaram, Chayal Gokkamangalam and Kottakkayal.

“Travelling south words he arrived at Maliankara,

And was glad to find everything in proper order there”

After another trip to Mylapur he is in Kodungallur again on his way to parue from Palayur and Malayatoor

“His first disciple Keppa (Cephas)[the King of Thiruvanchikkulam's nephew]

Who never had parted from him?

He dressed (him) in his garment and on his head he placed his hand

As the governess of his believers he entrusted to him

He quickly enjoined on them to accept (Cephas) as they (accepted) him.

Thus as in many other places and continents, it was royal patronage that made things easy for the spread of the Christian religion in Kerala. This would

also explain how the Christians in Kerala came to enjoy all those royal privileges and rights like the seventy two privileges mentioned in the various copper-plate grants and other trading rights granted by the “Tazhekkattu Sasanam’ etc.It was there that the Apostle established the first bishopric with Xanthipus as Bishop.In remembrance of the ancient tradition of Cranganore, His Holiness Leo XIII allowed in 1886, the Bishop of Damao (the now extinct diocese in the Bombay Presidency) the use of the title )Archbishop of Cranganore’.

### **Kokkamangalam Church**

Kokkamangalam, far to the north of Quilon, Niranam and Nilackal, was the next centre of the missionaory activities of St. Thomas.The Ramban song says that the Apostle spent one year at Kokka-mangalam and baptized one thousand and six hundred persons to Christianity.Kokkamangalam is about 20 miles south of Parur.After planting a cross and opening a church there the Apostle left the place.During the absence of the Apostle unknown hands removed the cross from its site and threw it into the nearby backwater lagoon. The cross moved with the water current and reached Pallipuram.The believers at Pallipuram installed the cross solemnly at a suitable place and a church was opened there.

### **Kollam Church**

Quilong was the next scene of the labors of the Apostle.Quilon (Kollam), still a big town, almost the second capital of the Travancore State, is one of the most ancient Episcopal Sees in India. It was erected by Pope John XXII in 1330.The Church built by St. Thomas in Kollam, one of the great Catholic centres of India (in later stage), is believed to have existed for upwards of a thousand years, when it was swept away by the sea.The majority of the people of Quilon belonged to the Chettiar caste, the recognized trading caste of the time.A good many of them accepted the Gospel attracted by the preaching of the Apostle and the miracles performed by him. Many inhabitants of Quilon hated the new religion and migrated from Quilon to Vanjinad to keep them away from the influence of the new religion. After erecting a cross for the worship of the

converts who numbered about one thousand and four hundred, the Apostle left Quilon.

### **Martyrdom of St. Thomas**

After escaping from the shelter at Littlemount St. Thomas came to a near by hill which was very difficult to access but was frequently visited by during his stay in Mylapore. One day his murderers sought him there and were on the point of seizing him. Unbroken tradition maintains that while the Apostle was praying before the cross carved by him on a stone, an assassin suborned by King Mahadevan's priest and ministers, crept up stealthily and pierced him with a lance from behind. The Apostle was reported to have fallen on the stone cross and embraced it, his blood crimsoned the stone cross and the space around.

**Specification:** A hill very steep on the eastern side, the mount slopes gradually towards the west and stretches over 75 Acres. It was a dense forestland and now only a thick undergrowth of shrubs are seen except few straggling trees around the neck.

**Archaeological Details:** This credit too goes to Portuguese as they revived the Catholic life here, cleared the ruins and built a sanctuary in 1545.

**Location:** Eight miles from Fort St. George, Six Miles from South west of Santhome-de-Maliyapore (Burial Place of St. Thomas), Two miles from Little Mount, 300 Ft. above sea level.

**Local Name:** Parangi Malai (In Tamil)

**Importance:** This is one of the three places on the Coromandal coast actively associated with the mission of St. Thomas.

### **Tomb of St. Thomas**

**Specification:** The context of the excavation in 1523 which was noted by 'Marignolli' in 1349 who made written statements. The process of excavation is contained in a document which has the form of a statement, made under oath, by a Portuguese, Diego Fernandes' an old man of good conduct and it is found in the archives of the society of Jesus in Rome among the Goa manuscripts. This

Church stands in the position of the Church built by Apostle St. Thomas himself. It had gone through many alterations and re-constructions through centuries and you learn that stages as you go along with the chain of burial place excavation. It cannot be stated exactly with historical certitude the year when the Saint's remains were taken from milapore but we have situations that match with the records to assume the approximate time.

### **The story of excavations begins here...**

To add reliability, let us hear to St. George of Tours (539-593 AD) He states in his book (in Latin) "Liber de miraculis S. St. Thomase"

### **Excavation I**

**Circumstance of opening:** The son of King Mahadevan fell ill and he said afflicted "I will open the grave of the Apostle and take a relic from his remains to hang it on my boy's neck so that he will live". It said that he had a vision of the Apostle on the way to grave. His another son 'Vizayan' who was a baptized Christian and the Bishop Paul Sitaraman opened the grave of Apostle and gave some earth soaked with the blood of Martyr Apostle to the King. This seems now to have been the first opening of the tomb – says: **cf Zaleski in his 'Apostle St. Thomas in India pp.90, 92,186-87**

### **Excavation II**

It was when the remains of the Apostle were transferred to Edessa St. Gregory of Tours records that it happened many years after the Apostles death. We can conclude it is before 373 A.D because in this year St. Ephraim passed away and in his records he speaks about the relics of St. Thomas preserved in Edessa, Asia Minor. Some historians say it happened during the reign of King Abgar IX in Edessa who was converted to Christianity and made it the 'State Religion'. The Christians of India was under the Jurisdiction of the Bishop of Edessa during the period, which made things easier. On august 22, 394 AD, the casket containing the relics was transferred to the new Church in Edessa.

**says cf. Medlycott in his 'India and Apostle St. Thomas, p. 279 and Zaleski pg 86-87.**

In about AD 1144, when the places which the crusaders had conquered in Asia fell back into the hands of Turks, the relics were recovered from the ruined Church, and removed to the Island of 'Chios', in the Meditteranian, to prevent from desecration. The relics remained in 'Chios' till AD 1258 and then transferred to Ortona, on the Adriatic Coast on 6<sup>th</sup> September 1258 in a ship called 'Leo Acciaiuoli'. After the opening of the tomb to bring the relics to Edessa, the tomb was not opened until the arrival of Portuguese in July 1523 AD, after more than 1300 years. These many years the tomb and surrounding was kept sacred with identification of the sports since the Edessa transfer was not complete but left back few of the relics.

### **The Portuguese excavation is interesting**

#### **Excavation III**

The context of the excavation in 1523 was based on the notes of 'Bishop Marignolli' in 1349 that made written statements in this regard. The process of excavation is contained in a document which has the form of a statement, made under oath, by a Portuguese. Diego Fernandes' an old man of good conduct and it is found in the archives of the Society of Jesus in Rome among the Goa manuscripts. The details of manuscript in short, Diego Fernandus said that he has arrived at Sanskrit Thome at Mailapur in March 1517 and invited to see the tomb. He found the ruined body of a Church with the monument and a Moor (whose ancestors were Christians) entrusted to light the house of Apostle. He also showed some signs of the Apostle and shared his testimony of getting the eyesight through the Apostle. After decision to dig the monument with the knowledge of Fr. Antonio Gil and first found the bones of the first King converted by St. Thomas. All the authority and reputed people including the Captain made their confession and began to open the grave at one O'clock past midday on a Saturday of July 152.

#### **THE PROCESS**

They first dug 10 spans deep and found plastered walls well made with bricks, embedded in mortar and lime. On removing the earth again 2 spans of mortar. This also cleared but came upon a similar layer. After that they found 3 spans of loose earth. Under that one more mortar layer for two spans again 2 spans further there were 2 stone slabs with no inscription on them. On removing it again they found loose earth. It was midnight and the work was stopped for the day. Digging was resumed on Sunday early from the morning. Four spans of loose earth were scooped up. At this stage the tomb was 16 spans deep. There upon was sand and quicklime. On clearing this, they came upon 'Some bones of the skull' then some of the spine... at the foot of the tomb, there was an earthen vessel with a capacity of six gallon filled with full of earth. Further a spearhead entirely of 'Malabar iron' having the shape of an olive leaf and stuck on a portion of a wooden shaft were discovered in the tomb at the place of corresponding to the thigh.

Fr. Antonio sent for the captain Manuel different Faria and later the priests put the bones in the smaller receptacle of the coffer and after a solemn procession, close it with a lock. Captain Manuel different Fria took the keys with him to hand over to the viceroy of Goa. Till 1558-59, things remained calm, in between Francis Xavior came here in 1545 and took a piece of bone. Then, during the Vijayanagara Invasion, Relics were taken to Chandragiri and he returned it back to Santhome. Later, the Viceroy of Goa planned to shift the Relics into the proposed big Basilica in Goa, eventually the plan was cancelled and the Bishop of Cochin 'Dom Frey Jorge de Themudo' became the custodian and **it was kept in the Cochin cathedral till 1600 AD.** His successor testifies in his reports of 1600 AD 'recorded as "This April of 1601 AD. I sent these Relics and the iron (tip of the lance) to Santhome and they are already there with the other ones" and it proves that the one half of the relics were there in Santhome. Then the King of Golconda invaded and took possession of Santhome for 11 years till they were ousted by the French in 1672. Before the Golconda entry, to avoid disecration, the Portuguese placed the Relics in a 'Martban Jar' and buried it in the Chapel of the Sepulchre, later removed and

kept in secrecy with a resident of madras '**Antonio Coelho**' and again brought to the Church custody when the situation was normal.

#### **Excavation IV**

In April 1729 Ad, the tomb was re-opened in order to distribute earth to the pilgrims. Now the upper part of the place within the Chapel towards the east where an altar had formerly been erected, was opened.

#### **Conclusion**

The last reference to the Reliquary is the pasytoral Visit to the Cathedral by His Excellency Dom Reed da Silva, Bishop of Mylapore after he took charge in 1887. The Monstrance was opened and examined after breaking the seals. "It was found to contain the among other Relics, the piece of spear, a small piece of the Apostle's bone. This is all that the Cathedral possess"

#### **"ORTONA, THE POSSOSSOR OF MYLAPORE TREASURE"**

In return to this treasure, the Arch Bishop of Cathedral Chapter, Clergvand Faithful have send to the Faithful of the Archdiocese of Madras and mylapore an important Relic from the hand that touched the wound of Jesus Christ on 13<sup>th</sup> December 1953.

#### **The position of the St. Thomas Books**

The books of St. Thomas and the books on St. Thomas are the most important historical source for knowledge of the contemporary life of Jesus Christ that exists outside of the Bible. **Some of them are the most significant manuscripts ever found for the history of earliest Christianity.** They also show light into the regional diversification history of Early Christianity in specific parts of the world. And they tell us the customs and truths of the early Christian life with historic significance. However, we cannot deny the chance of purposeful misrepresentation with idiotic interests when it interlaces with fancy traditions and legends while passing through ages which contradicts with the root purpose of Salvation through Jesus Christ, not through any of the Apostle or saints. Hence, let these books be historic references and imprints of great

Christianity in the early centuries, written down with good intention to serve the same purpose for generations. **We respect these books and authors but they don't fall into the category of Holy Books.**

### **Gospel of Thomas**

The Gospel of St. Thomas is extant in three Greek fragments and one Coptic manuscript. The Greek fragments are P. Oxy. 654, which corresponds to the prologue and sayings 1-7 of the Gospel of St. Thomas; P. Oxy 1, which corresponds to the Gospel of St. Thomas 26-30, 77,2, 31-33, and P. Oxy 655, which corresponds to the Gospel of St. Thomas 24 and 36-39. It is the most significant manuscript ever found for the history of earliest Christianity.

### **When was the Gospel of St. Thomas written?**

This is a question hotly debated by scholars. Many scholars say that it was written at about the same time, even perhaps somewhat before, the gospels in the bible. Their argument is that most of the saying in St. Thomas show no signs of having any dependence on, or knowledge of, the Biblical gospels and so St. Thomas' sayings derive from oral tradition and not from written Biblical texts. This doesn't seem to have been possible after the end of the first century when the Biblical texts began to be authoritative in Christianity. Other scholars find bits of evidence that indicate that St. Thomas was indeed dependent, in part, on Biblical texts, and surmise that the author of St. Thomas must have edited out almost all indications of the particular styles and ideas of the Biblical authors. Those scholars date St. Thomas in the mid 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD.

### **Who wrote the Gospel of St. Thomas?**

No one knows. The four canonical gospels and St. Thomas and other gospels such as the Gospel of Philip (found at Nag Hammadi) were given their names some time in the second century. Scholars of the New Testament generally agree that none of the gospels were written by people who had ever met Jesus of Nazareth during his lifetime. But at a later date names were assigned to them



that were associated with famous individuals in the earliest church. The name of the person who supposedly wrote the Gospel of St. Thomas is given in the first lines of the text as “didymos Judas St. Thomas”. The word ‘didymos’ is Greek for twin and the word “St. Thomas” is Aramaic for twin. The individual’s name was Judas, and his nickname “the twin” is given in two languages. The canonical gospels mention a man named St. Thomas and John calls him didymos St. Thomas. There are also several individuals named Judas mentioned in the canonical gospels in addition to Judas called Iscariot. The bottom line is that we do not know who wrote the Gospel of St. Thomas and we cannot be sure which Judas mentioned in the New Testament also was nicknamed St. Thomas.

### **Where was the Gospel of St. Thomas found?**

Portions of Greek versions of the Gospel of St. Thomas were found in Oxyrhynchus Egypt about one hundred years ago and these can be dated to about 140 AD. Or somewhat before. A complete version in Coptic (the native Egyptian language written in an alphabet derived from the Greek alphabet) was found in Nag Hammadi Egypt in 1945. That version can be dated to about 340 AD. The Coptic version is a translation of the Greek version. Thus most, if not all, of the Gospel of St. Thomas was written prior to 140 AD.

### **Is the Gospel of St. Thomas Gnostic?**

It all depends on what you mean by Gnostic. If you mean by Gnostic the belief that people have a divine capacity within themselves and that they can come to understand that the Kingdom of God is already upon the earth if they can come to perceive the world that way then St. Thomas is Gnostic. But if you mean by Gnostic the religion upon which the Nag Hammadi texts are based, a religion that differentiates the god of this world (who is the Jewish god) from a higher more abstract God, a religion that regards this world as the creation of a series of evil archons/powers who wish to keep the human soul trapped in an evil physical body then no, St. Thomas is not Gnostic. This differentiation is very

important, because some scholars reason that if St. Thomas is Gnostic (in the first sense) then it is Gnostic (in the second sense) and, as they believe, Gnosticism (in the second sense) is a second or third century heresy, they conclude that the Gospel of St. Thomas is heretical, late in date, and without very much historical value in regard to Jesus of Nazareth.

### **What is the basic perspective of the Gospel of St. Thomas?**

It is the Kingdom of God is spread out upon the earth now, if people can just come to see it, and that there is divine light within all people, a light that can enable them to see the Kingdom of God upon the earth. Further, the perspective St. Thomas is that the image of God in the beginning (Genesis chapter One) still exists and people can assume that identity, and identity that is neither male nor female. The image of God is differentiated from the fallen Adam of Genesis chapter Two. Gospel of St. Thomas advocates that people should restore their identities as the image of God now, and see the Kingdom of God on earth now. St. Thomas reads the first two chapters of Genesis in a straightforward way, there were two separate creations of mankind; the first is perfect, the second flawed. Rather than waiting for a future end-time Kingdom to come, St. Thomas urges people to return to the perfect Kingdom conditions of Genesis chapter one. For St. Thomas Endzeit (the final culmination of things) already existed in the urzeit (the primordial creative time of the past).

### **Does the Gospel of St. Thomas reflect the views of Jesus?**

May be. There was once a **Q gospel** and a **Mark gospel**. These were revised and combined into a **Methew gospel** and a **Luke gospel**. So there were four interrelated texts that testify to a single view of Jesus; that he was a man who predicted the early end of this world and its violent replacement by a future Kingdom of God. If these texts have it right, then St. Thomas is divergent from Jesus' own perspectives. But there is also a **John gospel** testifying to the present reality of God's Kingdom and the presence of the divine in the world. John's gospel, like St. Thomas' gospel, focuses on the actuality of the divine in the present. So one must decide for oneself whether the John/St. Thomas

perspective reflects Jesus' own ideas or whether Q/Mark and then subsequently the revised versions called Mathew and Luke do so.

### **What is Q and what does it have to do with St. Thomas?**

If you realize that Mathew and Luke are revised versions of Mark you will see that an extended set of sayings are in Mathew and Luke that do not occur in Mark. Those sayings, it is generally agreed in scholarship, were taken by both Mathew and Luke from a mid-first century document that consisted of a list of Jesus' sayings. That document, which German scholars called "Quelle", has come to be known as Q. It does not exist any longer, but it can be recovered by analysis of Mathew and Luke (simply put, Q was the written list of saying that we find both in Mathew and Luke but not in Mark). Q was nothing more than a list of sayings, The Gospel of St. Thomas is also nothing more than a list of sayings, many of the sayings are the same, but most of the sayings in St. Thomas are not in A. St. Thomas is the same sort of thing as Q was St. Thomas is not Q. Probably St. Thomas and Q circulated separately in the middle or the later part of the first century. Their points of view are quite different. St. Thomas stresses the presence of the Kingdom of God now. Q insists that the Kingdom of God will arrive at some future time.

### **How many of the Sayings in the Gospel of St. Thomas come from Jesus?**

Who knows for sure? If you take the set of saying that are in St. Thomas and that are also in the gospels of Mark or Mathew or Luke (no sayings in St. Thomas are also in John) then you have a set of sayings that rather reliably come from Jesus. Scholars commonly are so influenced by Biblical texts that they assume that any sayings in St. Thomas that don't sound like sayings in Mathew/Mark/Luke are therefore not sayings of Jesus. However, it is quite possible that St. Thomas retains sayings that the biblical gospels don't retain and, indeed, that St. Thomas is more reliable as a guide to the sort of thing Jesus said than the biblical gospels are. Mathew/Mark/Luke gives by and large the same point of view regarding Jesus as a teacher. St. Thomas (and to some

extent John) gives a somewhat different point of view. Perhaps St. Thomas' point of view derives from Jesus himself. Or, perhaps, not.

### **Why isn't the Gospel of St. Thomas in the Bible?**

We don't know how the texts in the bible were chosen. Whatever happened occurred principally in the middle of the second century. However, the choices were made, it could well have been that St. Thomas was unknown to those who made them. Or there might have been elements of St. Thomas that were distasteful to them. Or, given a preference for narrative biographical gospels. St. Thomas might have been thought irrelevant. We know hardly anything about the process of canonical gospel choice.

### **Will the Gospel of St. Thomas be added to the Bible?**

**No. The biblical canon is not open for debate, it is a closed entity.** A church that adds St. Thomas to its collection of scriptures would move outside the margins of orthodox Christianity and no well-known denomination has the slightest intention of adding St. Thomas to its scriptures.

### **The Gospel of St. Thomas the Apostle (Thomas Sleeha)**

#### **Introduction**

The Gospel of St. Thomas is a collection of traditional Sayings (logia) of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is attributed to Didymos Judas Thomas, the "Doubting Thomas" of the canonical Gospels, and according to many early traditions, the twin brother of Jesus ("didymos" means "twin" in Greek). We have two versions of the Gospel of St. Thomas. The first was discovered in the late 1800's among the "Oxythynchus Papyri", and consists of fragments of a Greek version, which has been dated to CE. 200. The second is a complete version, in Coptic; from Codex II of the Nag Hammadi. These are the secret sayings from Lord Jesus spoke and which Didymos Judas Thomas wrote down **Gospel of St. Thomas.**

#### **Acts of Thomas**

Regarding the apostolate of St. Thomas in the Malabar Coast of India (Present Kerala) we have a very ancient narrative from a manuscript preserved

by an old family at Palayur. It treats extensively about the journeys of St. Thomas on the Malabar Coast. It is best for the interested people to go through this narrative as a whole to have an idea of the tradition which is rife in Kerala. Acts of Thomas is an apocryphal book, written in Syriac, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. It is the most ancient document on the missionary activities of St. Thomas in India although the description of the Apostle's activities are limited in outlook and nature. The book is also, considered as one of the "oldest and most idiomatic monuments of Syriac literature". The original manuscripts are found in the British Museum. This book gives a detailed account of Apostle Thomas labors in nine parts. After the ascension of Jesus Christ, the Apostles met in Jerusalem and portioned all the countries of the world among themselves. India which at that time included all Middle East to the present India fell to the lot of St. Thomas.

A certain merchant by name Habban – the Raja Vaidehika of Indian King Gundnaphor came to Jerusalem looking for a carpenter to take home to the King. Christ appeared to Habban and asked him whether he was there for a carpenter. He said yes... Jesus introduced himself as Jesus the Carpenter from Nazareth and sold his slave Thomas to Habban for twenty pieces of silver and pointed Thomas to him. Habban asked Thomas whether Jesus was his master. Thomas answered. Yes, he is my Lord. Habban told Thomas. He has sold you to me outright. Thomas was dumb founded. In the morning, Thomas prayed. Lord, Let thy will be done and went with Habban. He took with him nothing except the twenty pieces of silver which Jesus gave him. They took the sea route to India and landed in a port called Sandruk Mahosa. Here Habban was received by the local King. They attended the wedding of the King's daughter and St. Thomas demonstrated his ability of miracle healing on the troubled daughter of the King by the laying on of hands. There after they continued their journey in India. They reached the Kingdom of Gundaphorus and Thomas was commissioned to build a palace for the King in the shores of the River. However St. Thomas out of his pity gave away the money to the poor and could not build the palace. He was put in the prison. However that night the King's brother Gad

died and he was told the beautiful palace beside the river in the heavens was his brothers. He came back from the dead and told the story to the King. They were later converted to the Christian way.

After ordaining one Xantippus (Xenophon) as deacon to the churches in North India St. Thomas traveled throughout India and converted many to Christianity. Among them are the names of King of Mazdai, a noble lady by name Mygdonia, Tertius the queen of Mazdai. He was martyred outside the city on a mountain at the hands of four soldiers. There is then another succession of writers who say that he went to Parthia: We find that Clement, Origen, Eusebius and others who assign Parthia to St. Thomas all must have written before the Christian leaders had an opportunity to come together and evaluate the spread of the Gospel in various parts of the world. But once the representatives of the different Churches came together at Nicaea for the first Ecumenical Council in 325 and exchanged notes we find almost all the testimonies recorded thereafter unanimously speaking of India as the field of Apostle St. Thomas and we hear less and less about Parthia, although it is true, some later authorities appear to attempt a reconciliation of the two traditions.

In spite of what has been written about the differences between the Syriac and Greek texts of the Acts, Gondapheres according to most scholars outside Kerala, is the King to whose court the Apostle came in the company of Habban the merchant. Writers in contact with Edessa and Mesopotamia, which had considerable and constant contacts with India, generally give India, as the field of St. Thomas. The so-called Alexandrian witnesses speak of Parthia, basing their evidence perhaps on a tradition that originated not in Alexandria itself but Caesarea Maritima, the great port of Herod with which Clement, Origen, Eusebius, etc had intimate contacts (see biographical notes above). But as these authorities were also connected with the School of Alexandria many call this today the Alexandrian tradition. It is quite possible and probable that St. Thomas was recruited by the royal representative from Caesarea. Caesarea was perhaps the one port where the latest architectural technologies were being effectively utilized, and it is natural that one who wanted to have some new form of

construction would turn to that place. Was St. Thomas in reality working in Caesarea as a carpenter and architect? The western tradition and the Indian East Coast tradition, thus definitely point to the Apostle's Indian Apostolate.

### **The Songs of Thomas**

The Songs of Thomas is handed down through generations and written down in 1601. By tradition these songs were written by Thomas Ramban the first Brahmin convert to Christianity. The first of the Apostle's visit lasted for eight days. During this short stay the Apostle had made several conversions. He then proceeded to Taxila and later traveled all through the land of India and China. The song tells that Prince Peter or Kepha of Muziris (actually means Egyptians. This word is even today is used to denote foreigners from Middle East) who was one of the Apostle's first converts visited St. Thomas in the Pandya Kingdom (Andhra Pradesh) and requested him to return to Malabar. Apostle came back to Coromandal coast. The request was granted and the Apostle accompanied Prince Kepha to Kerala, where headed by the other members of the Cranganore royal family three thousand non-Christians received the faith and were baptized in the course of eighteen months. Among these converts there were forty members of the Jewish community including Rabbi Paul of the Cranganore Synagogue where every Saturday the Apostle used to go and read and explain the Old Testament for the Jewish congregation. Though Rabbi Paul received baptism and became a Christian, a good number of the Cranganore Jewish community continued to stick fast to their ancestral religion and gave the Christians the name "Nazaranis", meaning followers of the man from Nazareth i.e.; Jesus Christ.

### **The "Foreign Perumals"**

In the background of the history of the Kulasekhara Empire sketched above, we may examine the traditional story of the rule of Kerala by foreign Perumals embodied in the Keralolpathi and repeated by writers of the orthodox school over and over again. The story goes that Parasurama who founded Kerala divided the land into 64 Brahmin gramams and prescribed for the land an

oligarchical form of government in which all these gramams were represented. The system worked satisfactorily for some time but before long the gramakkar failed to work in unison as ordained by the Rishi. Under such circumstances representative authority was conferred on four select villages viz., Payyannur, Peruchellur, Parappur and Chengannur, to act on behalf of the community as a whole. During this period of British ascendancy there broke out many disputes which disturbed the peace of the land and caused untold miseries to the people. Consequently, Rakshapurushas or Protectors were appointed to hold office for periods of three years and four Kazhakams or Advisory Boards, each under an officer called the Taliatiri, were also set up to assist the former in the work of administration. This system too failed in its objective and thereupon, the Brahmins assembled themselves at Tirunavai and resolved to bring alien kings (Perumals) to rule over the country. Each Perumal ruled for a period of 12 years and on the termination of his term he retired from public life. The Keralolpathi gives an imposing list of 24 such foreign Perumals who are alleged to have ruled over the country and the last of them was Cheraman Perumal who is said to have embraced Islam, partitioned his country among his friends and relatives and left on a pilgrimage to Mecca. The period of Perumal rule is assigned in the Keralolpathi to the period from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D. and that of Cheraman Perumal's pilgrimage to Mecca to 345 A.D.!

The story of the imported Perumals was for long accepted by scholars without question and it got itself interwoven into the main fabric of Kerala history. This has misled even learned scholars both inside and outside Kerala and made them give distorted versions of early Kerala history. It is thus suggested in A History of South India that Kulasekhara Alwar was possibly one of the Perumals imported into Kerala from neighbouring countries. Significantly enough historians who have accepted the Keralolpathi story of the foreign Perumals as authentic have not till this day cited any positive evidence obtained either from Kerala or outside to prove that persons were selected from the Tamil or Tulu or Telugu country every twelve years to rule over Kerala. The discovery of any such evidence might have helped to clinch the issue. As it is, the theory of



the importation of the Perumals from outside would be found to be a fiction on a careful appraisal of its details. Apart from the unreliability of the Keralolpathi itself as a source of history, it may be pointed out that even the very suggestion that rulers were brought from outside Kerala 25 times to rule over the land and that each of them ruled for a fixed period of 12 years lacks credibility.

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

### **Cheraman Legend**

The legend relating to the conversion of the last Chera Emperor (Cheraman Perumal) to Islam after partitioning the country comes as a dramatic climax to the fanciful story of the foreign Perumals. The Perumal who left Kerala is said to have landed at a port on the Arabian coast and met Muhammad, the Prophet, at a place called Jeddah. After having been duly canonized by the Prophet, so goes the story, he married the sister of the king of Arabia, lived there in comfort for five years and then undertook a journey to Kerala for the spread of Islam in this country, but before he could accomplish his mission he died and was buried at a place on the Arabian coast. The different versions of the

Keralolpathi give the above story with differences in the details which embellish them.

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

On careful consideration of all aspects of the question, it would be seen that the Cheraman legend was only the figment of the imagination of some early writers. It is exceedingly doubtful if any Chera emperor ever became a convert to Islam. In fact, there never was a ruler of Kerala by name Cheraman Perumal. As Dr. Gundert has observed, “Surely there has never been a Cheraman Perumal. Cheraman is the name of the dynasty of Chera or Kerala rulers for the two names are the same”. Logan accepted the story of the Perumal's conversion to Islam as authentic, but he changed the date of the conversion from 345 to 825 A.D. and linked it with the rumoured existence of a tomb stone at Zaffar on the Arabian coast said to be that of the convert Perumal. But this view has been proved to be equally untenable. The Perumal could not have met Muhammad, the Prophet, at Jeddah either in 825 A.D., i.e., two centuries after the death of Muhammad or in 345 A.D. i.e., more than two centuries before his birth. The Cheraman legend is thus beyond doubt an anachronism. Further, the truth

about the existence and contents of the Arabian epitaph referred to by Logan has also since been disproved for want of reliable testimony. While the story of the Perumal's conversion to Islam is thus liable to rejection in the absence of unimpeachable historical evidence, there is one school of thought, which believes that the religion to which the last of the Perumals became a convert might have been either Buddhism or Jainism. There is still another version according to which the last of the Perumals became a convert to Christianity and then went on a pilgrimage to Mylapore where he died some years later and was buried by the side of the tomb of St. Thomas, the Apostle.

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

### **Travel Accounts/Classical Accounts**

The accounts of foreign travelers supplement the indigenous sources in the reconstruction of Kerala history. The accounts of the classical writers of Greece and Rome contain references to ancient Kerala. The Greek Ambassador Megasthenes (4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.) refers to the Chera Kingdom in his account of ancient India. Pliny (1<sup>st</sup> century A.D.), the anonymous author of the Periplus of the Erythraean Sea (1<sup>st</sup> century A.D.) and Ptolemy (2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D.) are the most celebrated of the classical geographers whose accounts have been of great help in recapturing the outlines of early Kerala history. Pliny refers to the ruler of

Kerala as Calobotras. The Periplus refers to the ruler as Keprobotras and the land he ruled over as Limurike. Ptolemy mentions Karoura as the capital of Limurike where Kerobotras lived. All these writers give detailed information about the thriving trade between the Kerala coast and the Roman Empire through the ports of Muziris, Tyndis, Barace, etc. The Peutingerian Tables, a set of maps said to have been copied from the fresco paintings in Rome about 226 A.D. are cited as evidence of the alleged existence of a temple of Augustus near Muziris and of a regular Roman army being stationed in the town for the protection of Roman commerce, but the authenticity of this evidence is denied by several writers. The most important classical writer after Ptolemy is the Byzantine monk, Cosmas Indicopleustus (6<sup>th</sup> century A.D.). His *Topographia Indika Christiana* contains perhaps one of the earliest references to the town of Quilon (Male?) and the first indisputable evidence of Christian activity in Kerala.

### **Chinese Accounts**

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

### **Arab Sources**

The accounts of Arab travelers and geographers form an important source for the history of Kerala from the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. onwards. One of the earliest Arab writers on Kerala was the Arab merchant Sulaiman. He is believed to have visited the coast in 851 A.D., though there is also a view that Sulaiman did not actually visit Kerala and that he wrote his account only on the basis of second-hand information. He has observed that Quilon was “the most considerable port in South India at the time” and that it was the only port in India touched by the huge Chinese ships on their homeward voyage from Persia. Ibn Khurdadbeh, another Muslim writer, refers to the Malabar Coast and the export of rice to Sarandwip (Ceylon) from Bahattan (Baliapattam). Ibnul Faquih (902), Ibn Rusta (903), Abu Zaid (915) and Masudi are the other Arab writers who have made references to Kerala in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, but of these Masudi alone actually visited Kerala. Most of these writers only repeat the statements of Sulaiman and do not furnish any fresh information. Albiruni was another illustrious Muslim traveller of the middle ages, but he has very little information to give about Kerala. Idrisi (1154 A.D) and Yaqut give information on the coastal towns and customs of Kerala. Rashiduddin is another Arab traveller whose account is particularly valuable for the information it gives on the conditions in Kolathunad in North Malabar. Al Kazwini, an Arab geographer, who compiled his account of India from the works of others, gives information about Quilon. Dimishqi (1325 A.D) and Abdul Fida, are two other Muslim writers on Malabar whose accounts are useful as source material for the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. Of all the places mentioned by them Mount Eli deserves special notice, for their impressions are confirmed by the accounts of Ibn Batuta, the African globe-trotter who followed them. Ibn Batuta visited Calicut no less than six times and has left us an interesting account of the port of Calicut, its king and people. He also visited Quilon which he describes as “one of the finest cities in Malabar with magnificent markets and wealthy merchants”. He refers particularly to the pepper trade and the huge Chinese junks he found at the Port. Of all the Arab writers Ibn Batuta is the most objective and his account of Kerala is therefore more reliable and accurate than those of the writers who preceded him. It may be mentioned here that most of the Arab writers refer to several incredible

customs of Kerala from hearsay and their accounts have therefore to be used with great care.

### **European Travellers**

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

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

to the view that the patrilineal system must have been in vogue in Kerala in the earlier period.

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

As we come to the Portuguese period, the sources of historical information become more copious. Among the major sources are the writings of Ludovico De Varthema and Duarte Barbosa. The former, an Italian writer, traveled in India during the years 1502 – 1508 and has left valuable record of his impressions. His account of Calicut, its government and people is particularly interesting. Duarte Barbosa was a Portuguese subject who served his government in Malabar from 1500 to 1516. He was well versed in the Malayalam language and as such he got opportunities of studying the life of the people intimately. The account he has

written of Kerala is a treasure house of information. Ceasar Frederick, a merchant of Venice, who undertook a voyage to the East Indies during the period 1563 – 1581 also visited Malabar. His account of Cochin conveys a good impression of the commercial importance of that port and the special privileges enjoyed by the Portuguese there. Master Ralph Fitch, the first Englishman to visit Cochin (1583), gives a description of the port and the people of Cochin. Having lived at Cochin for several months, he had ample opportunities to study the life of the people at close quarters. Passing through Quilon he also refers to the pepper trade of the place. Another writer of the Portuguese period was Pyrard de Laval; a Frenchman who visited Calicut early in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (1607). He was impressed by the religious freedom enjoyed by all classes of people in the city as well as by the brisk trade at the port. He is all praise for the efficiency of the system of judicial administration prevailing in Calicut. Pietro Delle Velle, a distinguished Roman, visited Calicut and Mangalore in a Portuguese ship in 1623. His letters throw light on the life of the people of Calicut and also on the state of affairs in the kingdom of the Ikkeri Nayaks who were to exercise sway over the kasargod-Hosdurg area of North Kerala in the latter half of the 17<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Apart from the accounts of foreign travelers mentioned above, there are also other sources of information for the history of the Portuguese period. The letters written by the Jesuit missionaries who laboured in Kerala contain valuable references to political events and personages of the period. They throw light particularly on the affairs in the Purakkad kingdom and the principalities (Muthedath and Iledath) of the Karappuram Kaimals which now form part of the Alleppey district. A notable work of the period which furnishes some historical information is the *Historia Do Malavar* (History of Malabar) written by Diogo Gonsalves of the Society of Jesus, who worked as a missionary in the Kerala coast and was at Arathunkal in 1610. In this work written in 1615 A.D. the author throws light on the political and social conditions of the age. The full text of the Synod of Diamper (1599) is also available as a source of information for one of the momentous epochs in the history of the Kerala church. A well-written



Latin copy of the same bound with the coat of arms of Pope Clement VIII is still kept in the Roman archives of the Jesuits. The accounts of Linschoten who came to India as Secretary to the Archbishop of Goa are also useful. Sir Thomas Herbert who came to Cochin on the eve of its capture by the Dutch (1663) also gives interesting glimpses of the place.

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

The sources of information for the history of the rise of British power are numerous. The Tellicherry Consultations throw light on the transactions of the Zamorin of Calicut with the English East India Company from 1725 to 1751.

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

## **CHAPTER-II**

### **SEARCH FOR PRIMARY SOURCES**

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOURCES**

Archaeological sources constitute the main source materials for the reconstruction of the ancient period in Kerala History. The relics of tools, weapons, burial sites, monuments, buildings, arts and crafts, coins etc. are studied by the archaeologists for the reconstruction of the ancient history. The archaeological excavations are widely carried on in different parts of India, especially in the post-independence period; but they are very limited in the case of Kerala. The historical relics excavated from Kerala show a change in their nature with that of the common pattern seen in other parts of the country, to a certain extent. Though it took more time for the common cultural trend of the other parts of India to reach Kerala because of its geographical peculiarities, Kerala accepted them in due course and made it as a part of its life-style. The influence of the Sanskrit language on Malayalam when compared with that of other south Indian languages can be considered as an example for this.

Archaeological excavations have brought out the relics of both Pre-historic and Historic periods. The remains are mainly related with the Megalithic Age. So the history of Kerala starts with the Megalithic culture. Megalithic remains have been received from different parts of Kerala. The peculiarity of the Megalithic culture is the big stones related with the burial sites. Therefore some historians call this period of culture as Burial Culture. In the ancient times dead bodies were buried at specific places along with food items, tools, ornaments etc. Megalithic remains are found all over south India and Kerala is an extension of this. The common megalithic remains found in south India like, Dolmens, Cists; Urn burials, Menhirs etc. are found in Kerala also. But Hat stones, Umbrella stones, and Rock-cut caves connected with the megalithic culture are found in Kerala only. Vertically fixed big stones are mainly seen in Kerala. Big stones kept like that of an umbrella and hats called as stone tables are also seen in different parts of Kerala. Archaeological survey and excavations were started in Kerala by Ward and Conor during 1819 and 1820 followed by Babington in 1823. The excavations conducted at Wayanad by Faucett in 1896 advanced the

archaeological studies in Kerala to a great extent. A. Ayyappan had published a report on the rock-cut caves found at Feroke in Calicut. This was followed by L.A. Krishna Iyer who surveyed the Megalithic monuments of Kerala. The rock-cut caves belonging to the Megalithic period was excavated in detail by V.D. Krishnaswamy at Pulimath near Trivandrum in 1946. This site extended to two furiongs with many dolmens built by bricks. The cists discovered at Marayur in Devikulam Taluk have more than one room. Many number of Urn burials have been excavated from different parts of south Kerala which resembles with that of the Urns discovered at the southern districts of Tamil Nadu. Eraniyil in Trivandrum district is such a site where many number of urn burials are discovered. Black and Red ware pottery (BRW) and implements made of iron have been found there. Panchappalli in Irinjalakuda is another site of the same type.

Systematic and scientific survey was conducted by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) in Kerala for the first time at Porkalam near Trichur. The urns discovered from this site have more than three feet height. Black and Red ware pottery and iron implements are also found at Porkalam. The relics of caves built by bricks are found mostly in Cochin and Malabar. These are seen constructed generally at six feet height from the ground level. These caves have one or more rooms with many implements and pottery. The site at Eyyal near Trichur has multi-roomed caves with a Pillar at the centre and stone made benches on the sides. Following the excavations conducted by Mortimer Wheeler at Areecamedu, Anujan Achan conducted detailed excavations at Cheraman Parambu at Kodungallur in 1946. Though the findings of Achan have been proved false in the later period, no doubt the method of it is excavations was scientific. The period calculated by him for the relics discovered at Cheraman Parambu was of a much later date. He considered tloe relics received from there belonged to the period after the Periyar flood of 1341.

The Archaeological Survey of India and the Kerala Archaeological Department jointly conducted a detailed excavation process at Cheraman Parambu, Trikkulasekhara Puram, Tiruvanjikulam, Matilakam and Kaurppadanna during 1969-70. As a result of this the date of the material

remains found at Cheraman Parambu was calculated to a much earlier period. It was calculated that the period of the local made Red pottery as Seventh and Eighth centuries and the imported Chinese pottery belonged to the Tenth century. Al-biruni and Marco Polo had recorded that the Chinese had exported their pottery to India and Ceylon in the tenth century. The same type Chinese wares have been found at Areekamedu and Kaveripattanam. The date of the material remains found at Trikkulasekhara Puram and Tiruvanchikulam has been roughly ascribed to 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries. The inscriptions found at Trikkulasekhara Puram temple also establish the above datings and relates it with the kingdom of Mahodayapuram. The relics received from the Matilakam site near Kodungallur dates to 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries. The copper coins found at this, site belongs to the period of Rajendra Chola who ruled during the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Other sources have proved that the extension of Chola domination in Kerala occurred during the same period. The remains of a temple also have been excavated at the Matilakam site. An inscription of this place refers to a Jaina temple belonging to the same period.

Extensive excavations have been conducted at various places in Malabar like Feroke, Chevayur and Chathan Paramba. However, the most important excavation site related with the ancient period of Kerala History in Malabar is the Edakkal caves in Wayanad. An article published by Faucett relating to the historical importance of the Edakkal caves in 1901 became the fore-runner of all future excavations and explorations. In the later period many scholars like, Panchanan Mitra, Beck, Plenderlith, Camide etc. have conducted extensive surveys in Wayanad and produced informations of great value for the study of the pre-historic and historic periods of Kerala history. The material remains and the cave paintings of Edakkal belong to different periods of pre-historic and historic times. Menhirs and Cists of the Megalithic period, Stone axe of the Neolithic period, microliths and iron plough share together with iron objects have been found at various sites in Wayanad iron objects have been discovered at Kuppakolli in Wayanad in the recent times. Archaeological excavations have also been conducted at Punnol near Mahe, Sendurini near Quilon, Tenmala,

Anchanad valley in Idukki, Naduvil near Taliparamba, and the river beds of Palakkad etc. resulting in the production of new informations. Remains of different objects made of stone, copper, bronze, silver, old, and iron have been found at various places in Kerala. The archaeologists and historians are of different opinion regarding the dating of these material remains.

Archaeology which is called “the handmaid of history” is often a reliable guide to the historian. The archaeological sources of Kerala history may be broadly classified into three sections, viz., (1) Monuments, (2) Coins and (3) Inscriptions.

### **MONUMENTS.**

In the first category may be included the megaliths stone images, temples, churches, mosques, synagogues, palaces, forts and historical sites. The megalithic monuments such as dolmens, menhirs, porthole cists, kudakallus or umbrella stones, topikallus or hat stones and rock-cut caves discovered from places like the Anjanad Valley, Trichur, Porkalam, Eyyal, Cheramanangad, Kattakampal, Taliparamba, Edakkal, etc., help to throw light on the pre-historic culture of Kerala. The earliest of the temples of Kerala are the rock-cut temples seen at Kallil, Kottukal, Vizhinjam, Madavurpara, Trikkakudi, Trikkur, Irunilamcode and Tiruvegapura. Some writers ascribe a Buddhist or Jaina origin to these temples. They have been assigned to the period from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The stone sculptures in the Trikkakudi temples near Kaviyur are reckoned among the “earliest Chera carvings” and they represent a local branch of the Pallava school. The figure of a bearded Rishi carved out in stone at Trikkakudi resembles the Rishi in the “Descent of the Ganges” at Mamallapuram. The rock-cut reliefs at Vizhinjam show traces of the influence of the later Pallava style. The rock-cut temple at Kottukal contains a sculptural representation the like of which is not seen anywhere else in India. The Nandi-Monkey episode of the Puranas is represented here. A monkey with a trident or Trishul is carved on the niche on the outer wall of the left cell of the Garbagriha and just in front of it is a monolithic Nandi suggesting the recollection by Ravana at the time of the Lanka Dahana of the curse that was imposed upon

him earlier at Kailas by Nandikeswara that his kingdom would be destroyed by a monkey. The rock-cut cave at Kallil near Perumbavoor which contains images of Parswanath, Mahavira and Padmavathi Devi is one of the few Jain monuments met with in Kerala and it throws light on the early period of Kerala history when Jainism prospered in the land. There are also two old Jain bastis at Bangra Manjeswar in the northernmost part of the State. The stone images of the Buddha discovered from such places as Bharanikavu, Karumadi, Mavelikkara, Maruturkulangara and pallikkal are considered to be fine examples of the sculpture of the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries and they remind us of the “Buddhist Period” in Kerala history. They also bear resemblance to the Buddhist images discovered from Ceylon during the period.

The origin of the structural temples in Kerala may be traced to the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. A study of the stylistic evidences revealed by them helps to throw considerable light on the evolution of Kerala art, architecture and sculpture. The vast majority of the Kerala temples have been built in the Kerala style with its characteristic Sri Kovil and predominance of wood architecture, but there are also a few which represent the Dravidian style. The Bhagavathi temple at Vizhinjam is the earliest specimen of the Dravidian style of temple architecture. It is built in the style of early Chola temples and has been assigned to the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The Sri Padmanabhaswami temple, Trivandrum, is also a major specimen of the Dravidian style, but it shows traces of the indigenous style as well. The Parasurama shrine at Tiruvallam near Trivandrum is another notable example of the Dravidian style. Among the most important temples built in Kerala style those of Irinjalakuda, Tiruvanvandur, Trikkodithanam, Trikkakara, Trichur (Vadakkunnathan), Tiruvanchikulam, Triprayar, Tripunithura, etc., deserve mention. The temples of Kerala are also famous for their wood carving and mural paintings. Wood carvings of exquisite charm representing Puranic themes and personages may be seen at Chathankulangara, Vettikulangara, Tirukoratti, Turavur, Pazhur, Onakkur, Guruva yur, Tiruvangad, and adiyankulam. Mural paintings have been found in the

temples of Aranmula, Panayanarkavu, Pazhur, Udayanapuram, Vaikam, Ettumanur, Trichur, Thiruvanchikulam, Guruvayur, Chemmanthatta, Todikalam and Tirumittacode. There are also certain unique structures of archaeological interest in the Kerala temples such as the Kuthambalam in the Haripad temple and the Garudamandapam at Sri Vallabha temple, Tiruvalla.

Some of the churches and mosques of Kerala are also of historical and archaeological interest. According to tradition prevalent in Kerala the churches at Kottakkavu, Palayur, Pallipuram, etc., are among the seven ancient churches founded by St. Thomas. The Kerala churches bear evidences of the influence of the indigenous as well as foreign architectural styles. The Orthodox Syrian church at Mulanthuruthi built about 1225 A.D. contains mural paintings depicting Biblical scenes. The Syrian Catholic church at Udayamperur was the venue of the historic Synod of Diamper (1599). The Syrian Catholic church at kanjur is associated in history with Sakthan Tampuran. An attractive oil lamp in bronze donated by the Tampuran is one of its cherished possessions. It also contains a unique mural painting on its outer walls depicting the scene of the battle fought between the forces of Tipu Sultan on the one side and the combined forces of the English and the local rulers on the other. The Orthodox Syrian church at Cheppad contains some old mural paintings which depict the Great Apostles and the scenes from the life of Jesus Christ. The Orthodox Syrian church at Kothamangalam built in the Basilican model, has a Sassanian conical arch employed by Persian or West Asian architects. The Latin Catholic churches on the Kerala coast show traces of the influence of the Portuguese style. The St. Francis church in Fort Cochin where the Portuguese statesman, Vasco da Gama, was buried with all pomp and pageantry evokes even today memories of the historic past. There are also several ancient mosques in Kerala which are of great historical interest, e.g., the mosques at Cranganore, Madayi, Srikantapuram, Kasargod, etc. Among the synagogues of which there are eight in Kerala, three in Mattancherri, two in Ernakulam and one each in Chennamangalam, Mala and Parur, the White Jews' synagogue in Mattancherri built in or about 1567 is the most important.



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

### **PALACES.**

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

## **FORTS.**

The most important of the forts are situated in Anjengo, Pallipuram (Vaipin Island), Kottapuram, Palghat, Tellicherry, Cannanore, Bekal, Kalnad, Hosdurg and Kumbla. The Anjengo fort, a square structure, built by the English in 1695 may be seen in a fairly good state even today. The Pallipuram fort which is hexagonal in shape and is known also as Ayakotta or Azhikotta is perhaps the oldest European structure extant in India. Built by the Portuguese in 1503, it is preserved as a protected monument by the archaeology Department of the State. The Kottapuram fort was built by the Portuguese in 1523 when they thought of making Cranganore the seat of their chief power in Malabar. It is now in ruins, but the remnants of a portion of the old wall and a few barracks are still seen there and they are preserved by the Archaeology Department. The Palghat fort built in 1766 by Haider Ali is square in shape with thick walls and strong bastions at the four corners and in the centre and it is still in a good state of preservation. The Tellicherry fort built by the English in the 18<sup>th</sup> century is also a square structure built of laterite and is distinguished by its massive and lofty loop-holed walls and strong flanking bastions. The fort St. Angelo in Cannanore town built by the Portuguese early in the 16<sup>th</sup> century is a massive triangular structure built of laterite. It is now practically deserted, half of its buildings having tumbled down. The Bekal fort believed to have been built by Sivappa Nayak of Bednore in the 17<sup>th</sup> century is the largest and best preserved in the whole State. The forts at Hosdurg, Kumbla and Chandragiri (Kalnad) were also built by the Bednore Nayaks, though large portions of them are now in ruins. The ruins of several minor forts and redoubts belonging to various epochs of Kerala history may be seen scattered all over the State. The ruins of the Nedumcotta or the "Travancore Lines" built by the Dharma Raja to ward off Tipu's attacks may be seen at Kottamuri, about a mile to the interior to the east of the Chalakudi-Anjal Road. Ruins of old forts may be seen at Chettuvai, Trichur, Chaliyam, Badagara, Kottakkal, Mullurkara, Enamakkal, Kuthuparamba and Karikode. The ruins of the famous Vaipicotta Seminary and Jesuit College at Pallipuram may also be seen even today. There are also a few

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

## **NUMISMATICS**

The study of coins is called Numismatics. A study of the coins is of some value in the reconstruction of the history of Kerala. The coins contain dates, symbols and legends which furnish valuable clues to the historian. A large number of coins, foreign and indigenous, have been in circulation in Kerala from very early days. The earliest of the foreign coins discovered are the Roman coins. In 1851 a find of Roman coins was made at Cannanore and not less than 5 headloads were unearthed on that occasion. Roman coins have been discovered from Eyyal in the Trichur district and from some other parts of the State. The

Eyyal collection contained 13 gold coins and 71 Roman dinarius covering a period of 240 years of Roman history from 117 B.C. 50 123 A.D. The Vazhapalli inscription of Rajasekhara (820 – 844) makes specific mention of the dinarius. On the basis of available evidence it may be safely assumed that Roman coins were in wide circulation in Kerala in the ancient period. Arabic and Ceylonese coins have also been current here at various periods. Four gold coins which formed part of a find in the Kothamangalam village came into the hands of the State Archaeology Department in 1960 – 61 and they have been identified as the coins issued by the Ommayad Caliph rulers (661 – 750 A.D). Another foreign coin in circulation in Kerala in the early period was a Ceylonese coin called Ezhakasu. In the days of the Portuguese and the Dutch the Venetian sequins, the Moorish ducats and Spanish reals were in vogue.

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

The coins minted by the local rulers have been in circulation in Kerala from very early days. Rasi, the gold coin alleged to have been introduced by Parasurama, is said to be the oldest indigenous coin current in Kerala. The coin

next in age was the Kaliyugarajan or Kalyugarayan Panom. W. Elliot has expressed the view that it was at one time current all over Kerala. Such coins as Pon. Achu, Panam, Kasu, Azhakachu, Tiramam, etc., were current in Kerala during the period from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. A collection of 31 silver coins bearing the name of a Kerala king called Vira Kerala was discovered from Vaigaikulam village in the Sankarankoil taluk of Tirunelveli in 1944. It contains the symbol of an elephant-goad on one side and a legend: Sri Gandiramkusasy”(Elephant-goad to the heroes) on the other. The identification of Vira Kerala of these coins has not been done conclusively, but a writer in the Journal of the Numismatic Society of India identifies him with the Venad King Vira Kerala of the Cholapuram Inscription (1127 A.D).

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

Dutch copper coins, several species of Varahans (e.g., Parangi Varahan, Ikkeri Varahan, etc.), the Ikkeri Honnu the Elephant Cash (Mysore coins of the pre-Muslim era), the Sultan Cash (Tipu's coins), the Mahe Panam, the English Surat Rupee, the Company Rupee, etc, were among the other coins which were in circulation in different parts of the State in the modern period. Of these the

Mahe Panam was one of the most interesting coins in circulation in the Malabar coast. It was a thin silver coin issued for the French Settlement at Mahe. Silver coins issued by the English East India Company from its mint at Tellicherry in 1799 and 1805 were the commonest coins in circulation in the coast in the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They bore the letter "T" to indicate the initial letter of mint. The coins issued in 1799 also bore the figures "99". It may be noted that at the time of the achievement of Indian Independence only the State of Travancore had its own independent coinage. The Travancore coins ceased to be legal tender from April 1950. In Cochin, British Indian coins had been issued as the sole currency on 1<sup>st</sup> Mithunam 1075 (14<sup>th</sup> June 1900).

### **EPIGRAPHY.**

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

The history of the Second Chera Empire (800 – 1102) has been reconstructed from the inscriptions of the age. The Vazhapalli Inscription of Rajasekhara Varman (820 – 844) is the earliest epigraphical record of a Chera king to be discovered from Kerala. An inscription dated the 11<sup>th</sup> regnal year of

Sthanu Ravi (844 – 885 A.D) obtained from Kudalmanikkam temple, Irinjalakuda, records an agreement regarding temple affairs which sought to reduce the powers of the Uralar. The inscriptions of king Goda Ravi Varma (917 – 947) discovered from such temples as at Avittathur, Tripunithura, Udayamperur, Nedumpuratali, Chokkur, Triprangode, etc., help us to determine the period of the reign of this ruler and the extent of his empire. His Chokkur inscription (923 A.D) contains the earliest reference to the Devadasis in Kerala while the Avittathur epigraph mentions the Kadamkattu Kacham under which the Uralar came to be strictly controlled as in the case of the historic Muzhikkulam Kacham mentioned in many records of the age. Several records bearing the name of Bhaskara Ravi Varman have been discovered from such different parts of Kerala as Tirunelli, Trikkakara, Trikkodithanam and Perunna. The scattered distribution of these records shows the extent of themselves empire while the astronomical evidence furnished by them also helps to prove that there were three different rulers who bore the name of Bhaskara Ravi Varman. The Trikkodithanam record also establishes the triple synchronism between Bhaskara Ravi Varman I Sri Vallabhan Kotha and govardhana Marthanda. One of the most epoch-making records is the copper plate issued to the Jews in 1000 A.D. by Bhaskara Ravi Varman I (962 – 1019) from the capital city of Mahodayapuram. It records the royal gift to the Jewish Chief, Joseph Rabban, of the rights of the Anchuvannam along with 72 proprietary rights including the collection of tolls and other revenue and the perpetual right to use a palanquin for himself and his successors. The Jewish deed bears evidence of the tolerant outlook of the rulers of Kerala in their relations with such a foreign minority community as the Jews in that remote period of Kerala history. The Tazhakad church near Irinjalakuda contains an inscription of the Chera Emperor Rajasimha (1028 – 1043 A.D.), which records the grant of certain rights and privileges to two Christian merchants, Chathan Vadukan and Iravi Chathan, who were member of the Manigramam. The Rameswarathukoil inscription of Quilon dated Kollam era 278 (1102 A.D) shows one Ramar Tiruvati as staying at Panamkavil palace during the year. The identification of Ramar Tiruvati with Rama Varma Kulasekhara (1090 – 1102), the last of the Chera

Emperors, has been helpful in recapturing the history of the last days of the Kulasekhara Empire. On the evidence of this inscription it is inferred that Rama Varma Kulasekhara shifted his capital from Mahodayapuram to Quilon, the headquarters of the old Venad rulers, during the period of the epic fight against the Chola army.

The later Ay kings of South Kerala who were contemporaries of the Kulasekharas of Mahodayapuram have a few important inscriptions to their credit. The earliest inscription in South India which is found dated in the Kali era specifying the number of days is the Huzur Office Plate of the Ay King Karunandadakkan (875 – 885 A.D.). The number of days given here is 1,449,087 which work out to 7<sup>th</sup> July 866 A.D. The record throws light on the working of the ancient Salais or Vedic colleges. The Paliyam Copper Plate of Vikramaditya Varaguna (885 – 925 A.D.) records the grant of an extensive landed property in the south to the celebrated Buddhist temple of Sri mulavasam (Tirumulapadam) and also alludes to the aggression of Parantaka Chola against Kerala territory. The document bears testimony to the tolerant outlook of this Ay ruler in his relations with the Buddhists.

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



testifies to the enlightened policy of religious toleration followed by the rulers of ancient Kerala.

The Mampalli Plate of Sri Vallabhan Kotha of Venad (974 A.D.) is the first available record dated in the Kollam era (149). It is also the earliest record in which the Panamkavil palace of the Venad kings is specifically referred to. It also helps in determining the dates of Indukotha (944 – 962), Bhaskara Ravi I (962 – 1019), etc., the rulers of Mahodayapuram. The Cholapuram and Suchindram inscriptions of Kotha Kerala Varma (1125 – 1155 A.D). The Kilimanur records of Aditya Varma (1165 – 1175 A.D) and other king of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the Vellayani inscription of Vira Ravi Varma (1195 – 1205 A.D), the Manalikara inscription of Ravi Kerala Varma (1215 – 1240 A.D) etc., are some of the other inscriptions of the early Venad rulers which help in the reconstruction of Venad history. The Kandiur inscription of 1218 is important in so far as it mentions Ravi Kerala Varma (1215 – 1240 A.D.) and his wife Unniachi and the renovation of the Kandiur temple by the Odanad king Kotha Varma at the instance of the Venad king. An inscription of Ravi Varma Kulasekhara (1299 – 1314 A.D) is found in the Siva Temple at Salaigramam in Trivandrum. It enumerates the Birudas of Ravi Varma. It is written in Grandha characters and all the birudas are in Sanskrit language but the last six lines are in Tamil. The inscriptions of Ravi Varma discovered from Kanchipuram, Tiruvati, Srirangam and Poonamallee in Madras State also throw light on his conquests and achievements. An important Sanskrit inscription of Aditya Varma Sarvanganatha of Venad found in the Krishnaswami shrine of the Sri Padmanabhaswami temple at Trivandrum is in Grandha characters and it records the repair of the shrine by this illustrious king. The Trikkanamkudi Bell inscription of Aditya Varma is an important record. Several records of Bhutala Vira Udaya Marthanda Varma discovered from Kanyakumari and Tirunelveli districts show his solicitude for other religionists like the Jains and the Christians. The inscriptions of Marthanda Varma found in the Sri Padmanabhaswami temples are in Sanskrit and they record the story of the reconstruction of the temple by Marthanda Varma in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

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

There are a few temple records of general interest to the student of Kerala epigraphy. Among them the Tiruvalla Copper Plates, the Vadakkunnathan temple records and the Pattazhi Copper Scroll deserve notice. The Tiruvalla Copper Plates form a voluminous document and they have been assigned to the 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The record mentions several institutions, customs, etc., of Kerala which are of sociological interest. Three inscriptions are found in the Vadakkunnathan temple at Trichur and they have been roughly assigned to the 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Their historical value lies in the fact that they mention the Kottuvayiraveli Kacham which testifies to the ascendancy of the Nambudiri Brahmins who framed regulations in regard to the rights of the tenants, menials, etc., who were subordinate to the Vadakkunnathan temple. This is the only Kacham which contains provisions for controlling the rights of the tenants in Kerala. The pattazhi Copper Scroll dated Kollam era 971 (1796 A.D) received from the Bhagavathi temple at Pattazhi in the Kottarakkara taluk relates to the Prayaschitta or expiation in the form of a monetary fine of hundred Rasis which

the Karakkar connected with the Bhagavathi temple were forced to pay at the instance of the Nambudiripad of Akavur for having defied the authority of the Kampithan who was in sole charge of the administration of the temple properties. The inscription throws light on the relations between the Uralar and Karalar in regard to matters of temple administration in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The churches, mosques and synagogues of Kerala have also been found to contain inscriptions of historical value. One of the most interesting inscriptions is the Pahlavi Cross inscription discovered from the Orthodox Syrian church at Kadamattam. It is engraved on a tablet measuring 13" x 20" and resembles the St Thomas Mount Cross. The Valiapally in Thazhathangadi, Kottayam, belonging to the Knanaya Orthodox Syrians which was set up 1550 in the days of the Thekkumkur Rajas is also famous for its Persian Cross and the Pahlavi inscription on it. Several churches such as those of Udayamperur, Kandanad, Kothamangalam, Ankamali, Parur, Varapuzha, etc., contain epigraphs of historical value. Among the epigraphical records obtained from mosques, special mention may be made of the Arabic inscription in the Madayi or Pazhayangadi mosque which commemorates its erection in Hijra 580 (1124 A.D). The White Jews' Synagogue at Mattancherri has preserved even today the famous Jesich Copper Plate grant of Bhaskara Ravi Varman dated 1000 A.D., referred to earlier. The Synagogue at Chennamangalam has a Hebrew record dated 1269 A.D. A Hebrew inscription has been found in the Synagogue at Parur. It records the year 5376 Anno Mundi (1615 A.D.) as the date of the erection of the Synagogue.

In addition to the inscriptions enumerated above, which have been discovered from within Kerala, there are also a number of epigraphical records of non-Kerala powers obtained from inside and outside the State which also throw light on the early history of Kerala. The earliest epigraphical record in which reference is made to Kerala belongs to the reign of Asoka (274 – 237 B.C). The 2<sup>nd</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Edicts of Asoka refer to the ruler of Kerala as "Keralaputra" and his country as one of the lands bordering his empire. An important Brahmi Tamil inscription of the Sangam age discovered from Aranattarmalai near Pugalur in

Karur Taluk in 1965 mentions three Chera rulers, viz., Atan Cheral Irumporai, his son Perumkadumko and his son Ilamkadumko. It provides valuable epigraphic evidence in support of Chera Genealogy as gleaned from Sangam works. The inscriptions of the Chalukyan kings of the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries refer to the defeat of several Kerala rulers by the Chalukyas and the subjugation of the Kerala kingdom. A Sanskrit inscription in Kannada Script which has been ascribed by scholars to the Western Chalukya king Kirtivarma II has been obtained from an ancient Siva temple at Adur in Kasargod taluk and this testifies to the Chalukya hegemony over the area. The inscriptions of the Pandya and Chola rulers discovered from various part of the Tamil Nadu throw much light on the history of the Pandyan and Chola aggression in Kerala. The Chola inscriptions discovered from the temples at Cholapuram, Cape Comorin, Darsanamcopu, Tirunandikara, Suchindram, etc., bear witness to the Chola Conquest in South Kerala. The undated Tillaisthanam record shows the friendly relations between Aditya Chola and Sthanu Ravi. The Tiruvalangadu plate of Rajendra Chola which mentions the Chola conquest of Vizhinjam and the Cholapuram record of Kulottunga Chola which refer to his retreat, to Kottar are also important Chola records. Thus a study of the inscriptions would show that they are of inestimable value in reconstructing the history of Kerala, particularly of the Pre-Portuguese Period.

## **CHAPTER-III**

### **TRADITIONAL WRITING OF DIFFERENT TYPES**

“Ancient India”, it is said, “Produced no Herodotus or Thucydides, no Livy or Tacitus”. This oft quoted statement is true of ancient Kerala as well. None of the scholars of ancient Kerala took pains to compile genuine historical narratives or accounts recording the events and developments of each epoch of

history in regular chronological order. The earliest historical treatise compiled in Kerala by a native scholar is the Tuhafat-ul-Mujahidin of Shaik Zainuddin, the great Arabic scholar, who lived and worked at Ponnani in the 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

Kerala produced some works of historical importance during the period between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The work of Joseph Kathanar of 16<sup>th</sup> century explains this history and customs of the then Christians in Kerala. Joseph Kathanar was a native Christian priest from Kodungallur, who had visited Rome and he produced an account of the Kerala Christians. It was mainly meant for the Europeans. It is not a historical work, but historical inferences can be drawn from it to study the Kerala society during the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

**Digo Gonzalves**, a Portuguese priest from Quilon wrote the work, 'Historia Da Malabar' in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It was an attempt to assess the position of the Christians in Kerala from the background of the medieval social order. He tried to analyse the caste structure, social groups, their customs, manners and other aspects. Both the works of Joseph Kathanar and Gonzalves centralized the Christian community in Kerala and gave no importance to the political conditions of the periods in which they had prepared their works.

**Granthavaris** were the descriptive accounts maintained by the major ruling families and temples in Kerala during the medieval period. They were prepared mainly for reference to the management of land and political affairs. Several 'devaswams' and families had prepared their respective Granthavaris. The tradition of preparing Granthavaris continued upto the British period in Kerala. The Granthavaris give information about the political events that took place in the contemporary period and the recent past. But they were looked upon from the point of view of the institutions that prepared the Granthavaris. At times they tried to describe the past history also to provide a connecting link to the contemporary political events. While they relied upon legends and traditional sources for recording the history of the ancient period, they were more historical and accurate in dealing with the contemporary and recent periods. The 'kshetrtakaryam curuna' and Rajyakaryam Curuna' of the Sri Padmanabha temple record the events related with the temple and the political events that

were taking place outside the temple. The Granthavaris are useful for the study of the history of the medieval period in Kerala history.

### **Traditional Sources**

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

### **LITERATURE**

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

#### **Tamil Literature**

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

Some of the Tamil works composed in the post-Sangam period also supply information on Chera history. The Muthollayiram composed about 800 A.D. makes references to the Cheras and their capital Vanchi. The hymns of other Saiva Nayanars and the Vaishnava Alvars contain references to some of the holy shrines of Kerala. The Perumal Tirumozhi by Kulasekhara Alwar (early 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D), the great Vaishnava saint and founder of the Second Chera Empire, provides some historical information. The Vaishnava Saint Nammalvar

(Sathakopa) who flourished towards the close of the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. has sung songs in praise of the famous Vaishnava Shrines of Kerala including that of Sri Padmanabha at Trivandrum. His Tiruvaimozhi may be particularly mentioned in this context. The Periyapuram of Sekkilar (12<sup>th</sup> century A.D) narrates the story of Cheraman Perumal Nayanar who was himself one of the Chera rulers. The work refers to the Chera capital of Tiruvanchikulam and the joint pilgrimages of Cheraman Perumal Nayanar and Sundaramurthi Nayanar. Ottakuthan, a Tamil poet of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, refers in his Takkayagapparani to the transfer of the capital of the Cheras from Vanchi to Makotai and the reference provides a valuable clue to the identification of Vanchimutur, the original capital of the first Chera Empire in Kerala rather than in Tamil Nadu.

### **Sanskrit Works**

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

Sanskrit works composed in Kerala have helped in the elucidation of some of the complex problems in Kerala History. The Tapatisamvarana and Subhadradhananjaya, two dramas written by the royal dramatist Kulasekhara



(probably Kulasekhara Alwar himself), are among the earliest works of historical value in Sanskrit. These works make it clear that their author was an emperor of Kerala who had his capital at Mahodayapuram. A Sanskrit manuscript available in the Tekke Madham, Trichur, which gives details of the career of Padmapada, the disciple of Sankaracharya, mentions a Kulasekhara as the contemporary ruler of Mahodayapuram while the Sivanandalahari of Sankaracharya mentions a king by name Rajasekhara. On the evidence of both these works it is possible to infer that Sankaracharya was a contemporary of both Kulasekhara Alwar and Rajasekhara Varman. The Sankaranarayana written in 869 A.D. by Sankaranarayana, the astronomer who lived in the court of Sthanu Ravi (844-885) is of great value in determining the chronology of this Chera Emperor. It is made clear in this work that it was written in the 25<sup>th</sup> regnal year of Sthanu Ravi. On the basis of this evidence the date of accession of Sthanu Ravi to the Chera throne has been fixed at 844 A.D. The Yamaka Kavyas of Vasudeva Bhattatiri who was patronized by a Kulasekhara are also of some historical value. The Mushakavamsa written in the 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D. by Atula, the court poet of the Mushaka king Srikantha of Kolathunad, is the most important historical Mahakavya in Sanskrit. Only the first 15 cantos of this poem are available. While the earlier cantos contain mainly legendary material relating to the origin and early history of the Mushaka kings of Kolathunad, the later ones furnish reliable historical information. The poem contains references to the expedition of Kulottunga Chola to Kerala and to the patronage of the Buddhist Vihara at Sri Mulavasam by the Mushaka king. The Syanandura purana Samuchaya written in 1168 A.D. is of much value in so far as it makes clear that the Venad kings were still following the patrilineal (Makkathayam) system.

The Pradyumnabhyudayam of Ravi Varma Kulasekhara, one of the celebrated dramas in Sanskrit literature written for the specific purpose of being enacted in the Sri Padmanabhaswami temple in connection with the annual festival, gives us interesting glimpses of the intellectual attainments of its royal author. Samudrabandha, a court poet of this ruler, has written a valuable commentary on the Alankarasarvaswa and it contains a long description of

Quilon besides giving details about Ravi Var himself. The Sukasandesa of Lakshmidasa compiled in the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century is also of some importance. It describes the story of a message sent through a parrot by a lover from Rameswaram to Trikanamatilakam. Such places as Trivandrum, Quilon, Tiruvalla, Kaduthuruthi, Tripunithura, Trikariyur, Mahodayapuram and Trikanamatilakam are described in the work. The poem also contains a description of the river Periyar and the pastimes of the ladies of Mahodayapuram. The Vitanidrabhana and Sivavilasam compiled towards the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century also mention some of the rulers of Perumpadappu swarupam. The former contains reference to a prince by name Rama Varma who ruled over this kingdom before the shifting of its capital from Mahodayapuram to Cochin. The Sivavilasam is a Mahakavya written by the famous poet Demodara under the patronage of Kerala Varma, a ruler of Odanad, which had at this time its capital at Kandiur (Mavelikara taluk) and its theme is the choice of Yuvaraja Rama Varma of Perumpadappu Swarupam as her husband by Unniati, the daughter of the Odanad Raja. The Lilatilakam the great work on grammar and rhetoric written in Sanskrit, is also of historical value. On the basis of its internal evidence the work has been assigned to the period 1385 – 1400 A.D. It contains references to Chera Udaya Marthanda Varma, the ruler of Venad and Ravi Varma who was its Yuvaraja at the time and also to the defeat of Vikrama Pandya at the hands of the latter. The Kokilasandesa of Uddanda Sastrikal who was patronized by Manavikrama the Great, the Zamorin of Calicut, contains references to some of the most important pilgrim centres of North Kerala such as Tirunelli, Taliparamba, Trichambaram, Triprangode and Tirunavai. It also describes the ships lying in the Calicut harbour and testifies to the flourishing commerce of the Zamorin's kingdom. The Mamamkam festival held at Tirunavai on the banks of the Bharatapuzha is also mentioned. The Mayuraduta of Udaya and Subhagasandesa of Narayana are two other works which give some historical and topographical information about the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Kamasandesa of Matrudatta refers to the abolition of tolls in Cochin in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The Vyavaharamala is also a work of this period and it embodies the code of civil and criminal laws.

The Ramavarma Vilasom and Ratnaketudaya two Sanskrit dramas by Balakavi are of some use in reconstructing the medieval history of Cochin. The former describes in five Acts the story of Kesava Rama Varma (, the most celebrated king of Cochin in the Portuguese period. The works of Melpattur Narayana Bhattatiri also transmit valuable historical information. In the introductory portion of his grammatical work Prakriyasarvaswa he describes the great qualities of his royal patron Devanarayana of Ambalapuzha. The various Prasastis written by Narayana Bhattatiri are also useful. The Devanarayana Prasasti and Manavikrama Prasasti were written by him in praise of Devanarayana of Ambalapuzha and Manavikrama, the Zamorin of Calicut, respectively. The Gosrinagara Varnana and the Vira Kerala Prasasti contain descriptions of the town of Cochin and Vira Kerala, the Cochin ruler. The Bramarasandesha compiled early in the 17<sup>th</sup> century by Vasudeva is another Sanskrit Kavya which furnishes useful historical and geographical information. The theme of the poem is the message sent through a bee by a lover from Trivandrum to his sweet heart at Swetadurga (Kottakkal) in Malabar. Such places as Trivandrum, Quilon, Tiruvalla, Kumaranellur, Ambalapuzha, Vaikam, Tripunithura, Tiruvanchikulam, Irinjalakuda, Trichur, Guruvayur and Tirunavai are mentioned as places on route. The famous Mamamkam festival is also described in this work. The Balamarthandavijaya of Devaraja is a historical drama in five Acts, which deals with Marthanda Varma's (1729 – 1758) dedication of his kingdom to Sri Padmanabha and many other historical events of the reign. The Sri Padmanabha Charita of Krishna Sarma, a court poet of Marthanda Varma, also contains many references to Marthanda var and his achievements.

The Balaramabharata of the Dharma Raja contains a beautiful description of Trivandrum. The Ramavarmayasobhushana written by Sadasiva Dikshitar is a poem composed in praise of the Dharma Raja. The Vanchimaharajastava of Aswati Tirunal is also a penegyric of the Dharma Raja by his nephew. The Alankarabhushana, a work on poetics by Kalyana Subramanya, contains verses in praise of the Dharma Raja and his family deity Sri Padmanabha. The

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

### **Malayalam Works**

Malayalam emerged as a language distinct from Tamil in the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D., but literary works of historical value in this language are available only from the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century. Many of these works were composed under the patronage of the rulers of local dynasties exercising sway in the different parts of Kerala and hence they have to be used with considerable caution. Their direct contribution to historical knowledge is very little but their indirect value to the historian is considerable. The Unniachicharitam and Unnichirutevi-charitam composed in the latter half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century A.D. are among the earliest Malayalam works of value to the historian. They are devoted to detailed accounts of the Devadasis who had attained fame in those days, but they also throw light on certain aspects of the political and social life of North Kerala in the 13<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The Anantapuravamana written in the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century contains a good description of Trivandrum of the time. Another important Malayalam source is the celebrated Unnunilisesam, written in the latter half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century by an anonymous author. The date of its composition has

been assigned to 1350 – 1365 A.D. The Unnunilandesam throws light on the achievements of the Venad rulers Iravi Iravi Varman and Aditya Varma Sarvanganatha in the realms of war and peace. It narrates the story of a message sent by a lover from Trivandrum to his ladylove at Kaduthuruthi, the messenger himself being Aditya Varma Sarvanganatha, the brother of Iravi Iravi Varman. The work contains valuable information regarding the political geography of the region from Trivandrum to Kaduthuruthi. Its references to the local kingdoms of Venad, Odanad, Tekkumkur and Vadakkumkur enrich our historical knowledge. The Unniaticharitam composed by the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century throws light on the early history of the Perumpadappu Swarupam and its relations with the kingdom of Odanad. The Kokasandesam composed about 1400 A.D. also furnishes useful historical material. Its reference to the swan passing through Kunaka (Trikanamatilakam) and Vanchi before it reaches Tiruvanchikulam (Tiruanchikalam) provides a valuable piece of evidence in identifying Vanchimutur, the original capital of the first Chera Empire. The Chandrolsavam, a Malayalam poem of exquisite charm composed by a Nambudiri scholar in the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century has for its scene of action Chittilappalli in Trichur district and it throws light on the social and cultural life of age.

Some of the Malayalam Champus like Rajaratnavaliyam (16<sup>th</sup> century) throw light on certain aspects of the history of Cochin. The Rajaratnavaliyam was written by Narayana, the most famous of the Mahishamangalam poets, in praise of Kesava Rama Varma. The Kandiyur-Mattam Patapattu written by Nilakanta of Cheppad towards the close of the 16<sup>th</sup> century contains references to Manigramam, Onathailu, the Chiravai family, the Venad ruler, etc. The Putapattu (war song) written by anonymous author during the Dutch period describes the political developments in the Perumpadappu Swarupam from 1646 to 1670 A.D. The Mamamkam Kilipattu written by Katancherri Nambudiri, a courtier of Bharani Tirunal Manavikrama, the great Zamorin, is one of the most important sources of the later history of Calicut. It describes some of the Zamorins of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and gives detailed descriptions of the Thai Puyam

celebration of 1693 and the two Mamamkams of 1694 and 1695 A.D. In addition, there was several Chaver poems like Kandar Menon Pattu (1683), Ramacha Panikkar Pattu (17<sup>th</sup> century), etc., dealing with the exploits of heroes who died in the periodical Mamamkam fights. The Kuchelavritam and Bhashashtapadi of Ramapurathu Warriar and Marthandamahatmyam by an anonymous author written in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century are useful for the reconstruction of the history of the reign of Marthanda Varma. The Tullal works of Kunjan Nambiar allude to several customs prevalent in Kerala in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

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

The local ballads which suffer from the same defect as the Sthala-puranas are also not unimpeachable sources of history. Nevertheless, they also yield some useful historical information. One of the important historical ballads is the Iravikutti Pillai Pattu which describes the exploits of Iravikutti Pillai who fought valiantly against the forces of Tirumala Nayak and met with heroic death in the battle of Kaniyakulam (1634 A.D.). The Putuvatapattu about Kottayam Kerala Varma, the Valia Tampi Kunchu Tampi Katha about the conflict between Marthanda Varma and his cousins and the Diwanvetti about Raja Kesavadas are some other ballads of historical value. The Vadakkan Pattukal or Northern

Ballads are the most valuable of the local ballads. Composed mainly in the 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century they deal with the exploits of medieval heroes or heroines. The Tacholi Ballads describes the fortunes of Tacholi Meppayil Kunji Otenan, the celebrated Nair hero of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The group of songs known as the Puthuram Pattukal relate to the family of Aromal Chevakar, the famous Tiyya hero assigned to the 17<sup>th</sup> century A.D. There are also ballads which describe the exploits of the Kunjali Marakkars, the rebellion of Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja and the events connected with Tipu's invasions. The Northern Ballads give us interesting glimpses of the social customs and institutions of North Kerala during the period prior to the establishment of British supremacy. The Margam Kalipattu, Kalyana Pattukal, Pallipattukal, etc., of the Syrian Christians and the Mappila Pattukal of the Malabar Muslims will also yield much historical material, if studied properly.

Then there are the Granthavaris, which are mainly cadjan leaf documents or chronicles preserved in the archives of the various palaces. Many of them deal with dynastic history and the Political, events of the states over which the dynasties exercised sway. The Matilakam Granthavari at Trivandrum and the Granthavari of the Zamorins of Calicut deserve special mention in this context. As the Granthavaris were invariably compiled by panegyrists or Prasasti writers employed in the service of the rulers they too contain several exaggerated statements and have therefore to be utilized with great care. The records preserved by some private families are also valuable as source material. The manuscripts preserved by the Peruvittu Mudaliar (Mudaliar Manuscripts) are among the earliest records to prove the invasion of South Travancore by Tirumala Nayak (1634). The archives of the Paliyam family at Chennamangalam have also supplied similar records of historical value.

### **FOLK TRADITIONS AND PLACE NAMES**

The historical writing has undergone great many changes in the modern period. The earlier method of writing political and dynastic history has given way to socio-economic and cultural history in the recent times. Most of the earlier official sources deal only with the ruling classes and had completely neglected

the history of the common man. In this background, it has become a tedious task for the historian of the modern period to write the real history of the earlier society for want of enough and authentic source materials. Two new types of sources came into the lime light of historical writing in the modern period are folk traditions and place names which reflect the social consciousness of the people in a given society and in a given period, Kerala is no exception.

The folk tradition of Kerala reflects the historical and social consciousness of the common mass in the earlier period. As the major part of the folk songs and stories is the product of imagination. One must be very cautious in approaching them as sources for historical writing. Further, each generation naturally include their own additions to the existing folk literature as they are not recorded, instead passed over by one generation to the other orally. The recording of the folk literature in Kerala has been started only in the recent times. So it is the task and duty of the historian to find out the facts from folk literature and arrange them in a chronological order. Though the folk songs of Kerala depict the ideological hegemony of the elite class, the desire, anxiety and protest of the common man are also interwoven. It is not possible to consider the folk literature of Kerala as the product of a particular period as they are interpolated at different times. Still inferences can be drawn about the family relations; relations between different classes, the status of men and women, social and economic conditions of the medieval society of Kerala. The common tendency of the folk literature is to justify the social system existed at the time of its production.

Folk materials are available in Kerala in plenty. The majority of them are the heroic poetry like, 'Vadakkan Pattukal' (Northern Ballads) and 'Thekkan Pattukal' (Southern Ballads). The various songs related with the rituals and customs in north Malabar are also widely popular. 'Payyannur Pattukal' of 13<sup>th</sup> century provides informations about the trading activities of north Malabar. 'Iravikutty Pillai Pattu' is prepared in the background of the 'Kaniyamkulam war' between the Vanad ruler and Tirumalai Nayak in 1634. The fight between Marthanda Varma and the Thampis is depicted in the 'Valiya Thampi Kunju



Thampi Katha'.The Northern Ballads are very popular folk songs of north Kerala.The two divisions of the northern Ballads are 'Puthuram Pattukal' and 'Thacholi Pattukal.Thacholi Pattukal reflects the society of north Kerala during the 16<sup>th</sup> century, while the Puthuram Pattukal' relates with the 17<sup>th</sup> century. 'Margam Kali Pattu' of the Syrian Christian and 'Mappila Pattu' of the Muslims throw light upon the social and cultural life of the two important communities of Kerala.The studies about the usefulness of the folk literature as a source material for the reconstruction of Kerala history of the medieval period have not yet been completed.

Like the folk literature, the study of place names as an important source material for the reconstruction of history is yet to be developed.The linguistic analysis of the place names together with the help of geography, anthropology and sociology provide informations about the division of labour, settlement pattern, complexities of the caste system, trade guilds etc. of Kerala.The peculiarity of the settlement pattern of Kerala can be more explicitly studied from the place names of the particular areas.This lead to know about the social formations in Kerala in the earlier periods.The place names are related with the structural characteristic of the medieval Kerala villages.The small geographical units in Kerala were given separate names based on the nature of fauna and flore, presence of rivers, tanks, palaces, forts etc, and the caste of the people who lived in that particular area. The various place names in Kerala show the importance of the specific areas like the existence of a tank or reservoir in the areas having the place names ending in 'kulam' (Kunnamkulam, Ernakulam), the existence of a forest in the area having the place names ending with 'kad' (Chavakkad, Palakkad), the existence of a market or bazaar in the area having the place names ending with 'angadi' (Parappanangadi, Tirurangadi) and chanta' (Meenchanta, Puthan Chanta).The habitation places like 'Ur' and 'Cheri' can be noticed from several place names ending with ur and cheri like Balussery, Thalassery, Ayanchery and Pappinissery and Payyannur, Kannur and Mattannur.

Some place names reflect the geographical peculiarity of certain areas. The elevated region is commonly known with the place name ending with 'medu' and the garden lands with 'paramba'. The names ending with 'palli' denote the existence of educational centres in the particular area. Those place names ending with the word 'chungam' are connected with check posts of the earlier period. The name of the pieces of land or 'paramba' in Kerala will show the nature of caste wise habitation of the people in the earlier period. The salt producing centres of the ancient period have left no evidences to know their exact location. The only way to know their location is to analyse the respective place names. Some of the place names have helped the historians to find out the exact location of the salt producing centres of the ancient period. The study of place names as a source material for the reconstruction of the earlier Kerala history is getting more and more importance now a day.

## **CHAPTER- IV**

### **NEW WRITING**

Although there have been numerous works on the history of Kerala, very little attempt has been made to evaluate these writings and discuss the trends in historiography. This is probably due to a sense of complacency that has prevailed among the historians themselves on the importance of analyzing critically their

own antecedents, the trends that have given shape to their own vision and method. A few attempts have been made recently, but they are mainly concerned with extolling or debunking the historical writings of the past rather than evaluating them. This situation is unfortunate, as it has prevented the students of history from forming an objective and critical judgement of the historical studies done in the past and suggesting possible directions for the future of historical research in Kerala. The ordinary reader is also unable to form an opinion about the value of historical writings. Value judgement and opinion formed by historians from time to time, on the basis of the available evidence and the accepted methods of historical enquiry prevalent at the time of their study, have been paraded as 'facts'. Such 'facts' have contributed to the popular conceptions about Kerala's past. Some of these facts and judgements are uncritically accepted by the students and researchers, which has come in the way of an objective analysis of the work of the historians themselves. A serious effort at a detailed historiographical study is essential in these circumstances. The present module is only intended to delineate some of the major features of history writing in Kerala and the current problems of writing the history of Kerala.

**Mushaka Vamsa** by Athula during the 11<sup>th</sup> century is one of the rare historical works of the early period. The work belongs to the Kavya tradition of historical studies. Athula, the court poet of the Mushaka (Elimala in Northern Kerala) ruler Srikantha, was basing himself on legends and courtly tradition regarding the foundation and growth of Elimala Kingdom. This poem is structurally similar to Raghuvamsa by Kalidasa, but in the presentation of historical detail, the poem is similar to Rajatarangini by Kalhana, a history of the kings of Kashmir composed during the 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D. A similarity between the two poems is striking, considering the distance that separated their composition. It is generally considered as the first historical chronicle of Kerala. It is a unique work since no other work of this type belonging to the earlier period has been found so far. It has to be noted that the commonly accepted first

historical chronicle of India, Kalhana's 'Rajatarangini' was written during the 12<sup>th</sup> century only, Mushaka Vamsa was written one century earlier.

The work is a blend of legends and facts. The author relies upon legends and traditions for recording the early history of the Mushaka kingdom. But when it comes to the more recent and contemporary periods the description becomes more factual and historical. Atula relates the origin of the dynasty with a traditional myth. According to this, the pregnant queen of Mahishmati escaped to Ezhimala from the massacre of Parasurama. She gave birth to Ramaghata, who eventually became the founder of the Mushaka kingdom. As he was born in a mouse's burrow, he got the name Ramaghata. He had built a capital called Kolapattanam. According to Atula, Srikanta is the 118<sup>th</sup> ruler of the Mushaka dynasty. The important kings referred by him are Nandan, Urgan, Vikramarama, Jayamani and Valabha II. It is assumed that the Nandan referred in the Sangam literature may be the same Nandan of the Mushaka Vamsa Kavya. The King Vikramarama is referred in the Narayan-Kannur inscription of 929 AD. There is a similarity between Ramaghata Moovan of the Sangam literature and Ramaghata Mushikan of the Mushaka Vamsa Kavya. Nandan is characterized as the one who is involved in worldly pleasures both in Mushaka Vamsa Kavya and Akananuru of Sangam literature. The most important king of the dynasty was Valabha II. He founded the ports of Marahi (Madayi) and Vallabha Pattanam (Valapattanam). He is said to have helped the Cheras in their fight against the Cholas.

Mushaka Vamsa Kavya is perhaps the earliest available Mahakavya in Sanskrit. It has more than one thousand poems in fifteen cantos. The work gives information about the penetration of the Cheras into the Ezhimala kingdom. Atula has given the chronology of the Mushaka rulers from Ramaghata to Srikanta. As he was a court poet, he naturally relates the genealogy of his king with the Yadavakula. The actual historical importance of his work is yet to be evaluated. The actual import of Mushaka Vamsa in forming the tradition of historical writing in Kerala has yet to be analysed. This poem stands almost alone, as there has not been any evidence for a similar composition on the

Perumals or any other Naduvali. The Cera kings were also lacking a prasasti tradition. Northern do we have a composition in the local language, similar to this work. There is no indication that Athula was influenced by Kalhana's work. Was he influenced by the heroic poetry of the Sangham age and the literature attempting to account for the origin and growth of Colas and Pallavas? The question of the antecedents of Athula's work has to be studied in more detail. However; Athula left no tradition of historical writing in Kerala. His own account was a blend of legend and fact, the latter pertaining only to the immediate predecessors of his own patron. His account of the penetration of the Cera kingdom over Elimala and the roles performed by Mushaka kings both inside their territories and visualist-a-visualist the Ceras, may have been based on actual observation and interpretation.

Medieval accounts of Kerala, both indigenous and foreign, incorporated the accounts of the past also. More systematic work in this respect began from the 16<sup>th</sup> century. **Joseph Kattanar**, a native Christian priest from Kodungallur who visited Rome during the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century gave an account of Kerala for the benefit of his European audience. The actual concern of Joseph Kattanar evident throughout his writings. Joseph explains the history and customs of Kerala Christians in terms of the history and customs prevalent in the land. During the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Diogo Gonsalves, a Portuguese priest resident at Kollam, wrote an account called **Historia Da Malabar**. Other writing by the Portuguese and the Dutch incorporated historical accounts in various forms. These works, probably, cannot be called 'histories' in the modern sense of the term, as they were not concerned with a rigorous examination of the past of Kerala. They were mainly descriptions of the conditions of Kerala at the time of their writing and the period immediately preceding it, with references to the distant past limited to broad allusions. Their objectives in writing such accounts were also different. Joseph Kattanar was primarily concerned with a report on the conditions of Christians in Kerala to the Church of Rome, in which he had to include a "historical" account of the Christian. This effort could only

be done in the background of the social conditions and practices in Malabar. Hence, his account takes the form of a historico-anthropological form of enquiry.

**Tuhafat-ul-Mujahiddin** written by Sheik Zainuddin in the 16<sup>th</sup> century marks a new stage in the tradition of the historical writing in Kerala. The book, in general depicts the Portuguese atrocities upon the natives of Malabar, especially upon the Muslim community. Following the Arab tradition of historical writing, Zainuddin gives the detailed chronology of the colonial domination of the Portuguese in Malabar during the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. The book was written in Arabic and has been translated into many foreign and Indian languages in the course of time. For very long time it was treated as an honest guide by the foreigners to know about Kerala. The book was completed in 1583. Shaik zainuddin was a native of Ponnani and he belonged to a family of religious scholars. He dedicated the book the then Bijapur ruler Adil Shah!. Tuhafat-ul-Mujahiddin has an introduction and 4 separate parts. In the introduction the author calls the Muslims to fight against the Portuguese.

The first part reminds the Muslims that it is their duty to fight against the Portuguese as they were doing all types of atrocities. The relevant verses from the Quran are included in this part in order to substantiate his argument. The second part deals with the growth of Islam in Kerala and have a detailed description about the ports in the western coast. The third part mentions about the tolerant attitude of the Hindu rulers in Kerala towards the Muslims. It further discusses the Hindu customs, caste system, pollution, marriage system, order of succession, polyandry, dress, warfare etc. that had existed in Malabar during those days. In general, this part provides a clear picture of the Kerala culture during the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The fourth and final part of the book deals with the colonial domination of the Portuguese in Kerala from 1498 to 1583. This part is pure factual history. According to Zainuddin, the position of the Muslims in Kerala was far better prior to the advent of the Portuguese. They were well treated by the Hindu rulers. He states that due to the Portuguese rivalry the Muslim traders lost their trade dominance in the western coast. Eventually the religious belief and the war spirit of the Muslims declined. He further states that

the Zamorin, the ruler of Calicut was very kind to the Muslims. The gradual growth of the Portuguese hegemony in every field of Kerala society is clearly depicted in this work.

**Diogo Gonsalves'** work takes a different vein. He was a priest who came to Kerala before the Synod of Diamper in 1599 and lived through the period of change in the Christianity of Kerala. His major concern was to assess the position of Christians from the background of the medieval social order. This led him to a detailed analysis of the caste structure, various social groups, customs and manners and their origins. Here also the writer was concerned with explaining the reality that he witnessed, which took him to a historical account. Information regarding the origin and growth of the belief systems of the Kerala people, including Christians was important for the proselytization work, as well as for European domination.

Their accounts also showed their limitations as historians. Their account is consistent with what they observed or could directly gather information from, but otherwise they had to depend on the oral tradition. Kerala did apparently have a rich oral tradition which dealt with the coming of Christianity (St. Thomas legend), Islam (Malik Ibn Dinar legend), Brahmanism (parasurama legend) and the origin of the Naduvalis. Lacking a distinct method they chose to accept this tradition without questioning and passed on to future generations. Thus, in their case, their "histories" function more as source books for traditional lore and contemporary observations rather than authentic studies.

However, "historical writings" on the oral tradition and written information had begun to take shape during the period from 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Oral tradition of Brahmanas is compiled in the versions of Keralolpatti that have been discovered from various places. The oral tradition of the local communities could be seen in the Vatakkann Pattukal, story of Chengannur Adi and others. The normal features of oral traditions including their inconsistency and mixing fact with fiction could be seen in these works also. The pre-dispositions of the oral chronicler is also important. Despite all these, the various versions of the

Keralolpatti show remarkable consistency in some of the details, viz, the founding of the Brahmana gramas, the role of the Perumals, and the origin of the Naduvali chiefs. Comparative studies on Keralolpatti and their correlation with available evidence show that the oral tradition of the Keralolpatti was based on a strong foundation of facts. Works on the non-brahmanical traditions might also show a similar basis.

The sense of history reflected in oral tradition might be the result of the growth of customary politico-economic rights illustrated by the Janmam tenure. Legitimisation of customary authority could only be done appeal to the origin of the custom in itself and in the case of land rights this could be done only by appeal to superhuman authority that enable the Janmi to gain his rights. The frequent allusions to Parasurama legend might be the result of this need. Customary rights of the Naduvalis also had a similar legendary origin in the division of the land by the Perumals. The historicity of these traditions depended on the extend and nature of customary authority, whose legitimacy depended on the relative factual accuracy of the account itself. This blending of legend with fact was attempted in the Keralolpatti traditions.

Appeal to oral tradition alone would not legitimize the customary authority. Intense political conflict was witnessed during the period from the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18 centuries. Accurate accounting and management systems were developing, and these two developments resulted in the maintenance of accounts and records of major events. Periods of crisis would have to be documented in great detail, as it would become valuable reference for management, land control and political affairs. The Granthavaris maintained by major ruling families and temples originated from this need. Granthavaris written in periods of crisis could provide more or less accurate information of the events that took place from the point of view of the institution maintaining the Granthavari. The Kshetrakaryam Curuna and Rajyakaryam Curuna maintained in Padmanabha temple, Thiruvananthapuram, are excellent records of events. The chronicler was not only recording the events in relation to the temple but also recording and gathering information on political events happening outside.



**Granthavaris** were essentially accounts of contemporary events, but it appears that efforts were made to obtain details of past events from earlier records also. This is probably the first case in Kerala where the earlier written evidence is used in a contemporary chronicle. For example, all the documents related to the monetary obligations of the Venad Kings, to Thiruvananthapuram temple were recovered and copied, which were used by the ruler to settle his accounts with the temple around 911 M.E. (1735-6 A.D). With the introduction of land settlement in Tiruvitamkur most of the old land deeds were recovered and copied. Similar recovery, copying and examination of documents were apparently used to prepare the Granthavaris of other rulers and temples. Thus the Granthavari tradition reflected a shift from dependence on oral tradition to the examination of written evidence.

One need not over-estimate the authenticity of pre-modern chronological accounts, as even Granthavaris were not free from a degree of dependence on legend, particularly related to early past. The relative accuracy is limited to contemporary events and those happenings in the immediate past. However, the copying of early documents by Thiruvananthapuram temple at the behest of the ruler, showed that authenticity was sought for incidents taking place in the past, when there was a dispute about land rights or the privileges of a temple functionary. The documents copied in Thiruvananthapuram temple dated back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century. This effort was more a result of the political and economic requirements of the times than the result of an infelt need for historical accuracy.

### **MODERN HISTORICAL WRITINGS**

The growth of colonialism and the introduction of the modern education, in a way helped for the emergence and growth of modern historical writing in Kerala. The English education helped the educated Keralites to get in touch with new ideas and disciplines. Simultaneously, history became a subject taught in the educational institutions. As elsewhere, the 19<sup>th</sup> century Kerala also witnessed the emergence and growth of historical literature. Most of the works written during the early phase were mere descriptive and the scholars did not go deep

into the causes of the events. While they wrote factual history of the modern period, they relied more upon traditional sources and legends for the history of the earlier periods.

The historical writing in Kerala had a humble beginning. It was started by **Vaikathu Pachu Muthathu** who published a small book in Malayalam 'Tiruvitamkur Charitram' (History of Travancore) in 1867. This was the first book published in Kerala with the title 'history'. He recorded the achievements of some of the rulers of Travancore with the help of various sources, in chronological order. Muthathu was a Sanskrit scholar lived in the Travancore court. So his history was in all praise for the kings of Travancore. He mixed up legends, fables and facts to write the book. It can be seen that there is no differentiation between fables and facts in his book.

Drawing inspiration from Pachy Muthathu, **P. Shangunny Menon** wrote. 'A History of Travancore from the Earliest Times' and was published in 1878. The book was written in English. He was an employee of the king of Travancore. He had started his official career as a clerk and reached up to the level of the acting Diwan of Travancore. By enjoying the highest position in the kingdom, Menon had access to all official records and personal contacts with the king. He could use all the available sources for writing the book. Further he was encouraged by the then ruler of Travancore to write the book. The intention of Shangoonny Menon was to write the history of Travancore and thereby highlight the glory of the kingdom and the rulers. Naturally the book turned out to be a typical court history. The book covers the dynastic history of Travancore up to 1860. The ancient history of Travancore is written with the help of legends, oral traditions and fables. He did not go in to the objectivity of this traditional stories. But the history from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards becomes more factual. However, no analytical interpretation is being attempted by the author anywhere in the book. Instead it is mere eulogisation of the kings.

He was familiar by and large with the new material that was accumulating and with the growing methodology of historical writing. He had at the same time access to the existing sources including Granthavaris and other

records. However, he was unable to analyse the growing evidence on ancient history, but used them to glorify the ancient past of Travancore. His account upto about 18<sup>th</sup> century is mixed with oral traditions, legends, and a few records arranged in such a way as to paint the deeds of Travancore Kings in glorious colours. From 18<sup>th</sup> century his narrative however lacked an analytical presentation. This lack of analysis was probably the result of the priorities that the historian had set for his work and who was more interested in presenting a “Court History” of Travancore than studying the political and economic implications of its transformation into a princely state. This was unfortunate because the implications were becoming clear during his lifetime itself. The social protest movements were gathering strength and the clamour for reform was rising from various corners. Shangoonny Menon wanted to eulogise the past glory of Travancore, which by his period had gone under grip of colonialism. He considers the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries as the progressive period in the history of Travancore. He did not make any attempt to deviate from the traditional method of historical writing. But with all the discrepancies, the book stands as an important one in the historiographical studies of Kerala.

The British colonialists were not primarily interested in the history of Kerala. The liberal tradition that encouraged James Mill to write his History of India could not be said to have influenced the majority of British administrators. They came to India as conquerors, and in order to consolidate their conquest, the British had to study and understand the vicissitudes of the society over which they were exercising control. This was particularly important in revenue administration where the traditional land system had to be studied. Since the land rights had a politico-economic basis and the variations involved in the topographical features also, the polity, economy and geography of the area had to be surveyed and studied. This initial effort is clearly visible in the studies conducted by **Buchanan, Ward & Conner**, and the administration in charge of studying the land system for revenue purposes. However, these investigations led to a study of the immediate past. For example, the study of land system by the Joint Commissioners of Malabar (1702-3) led them to survey the immediate

past, i.e., domination by the Mysore rulers and also to consider the evolution of traditional rights. The present could not be discussed without some reference to the past, and hence, a sketch of the past had also to be brought into the exercises by the British administrators.

None of these efforts comprised a 'history'. They were nothing more than collection of oral evidence and the examination of contemporary records. They accepted the claims to land-ownership by the customary landlords based on the oral traditions without subjecting them to careful scrutiny. Similarly the reform by Mysore rulers were not seen as an aspect of the changing land relations, but only as a problem that should be tackled to consolidate the relations with local landowners. It is clear that the then contemporary priorities and their own value judgements weighed high in their attitude to historical data.

This situation continued until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Meanwhile concrete evidence that shed light on the history of Kerala was accumulating. Megalithic burials were unearthed from various parts of Malabar. Copper plates and inscriptions were discovered from different parts of Tiruvitamkur, including "Kottayam Copper plates" and "Syrian Copper Plates" and the names of a few Kerala rulers like Sthanu Ravi, Bhaskara Ravi and Viraraghava Chakravarti were known. Inscriptions mentioning a Kerala ruler, Ravi Varma Kulasekhara, was reported from various places in Tamil Nadu, like Kanchipuram, Sreerangam and Poonamallee. Discovery of Asokan Edicts brought to light the references to 'Satyaputas' and 'Keralaputas'. With Mc Crindle's publication of ancient travel accounts, the references to coastal towns in Kerala by Ptolemy and the unknown writer of the Periplus of the Erythrean Sea were also known. However, these evidences were displayed as showpieces showing Kerala's very ancient past, probably accounting for the origin of some of the modern kingdoms. For example, Viraraghava and Bhaskara Ravi were made 'Cochin rulers' and the inscriptions from southern Kerala were thought to be referring to ancient rulers of Tiruvitamkur. Moreover, facilities and often the necessary technology for serious and systematic examination of the new evidence were lacking.

#### **MANUALS AND OTHER WORKS.**

The British authorities, along with their colonial domination of Kerala during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, prepared district Manuals to gather historical information about the people and land which they were ruling. The British authorities entrusted the work of preparing separate manuals for each district, with their trusted officers. Accordingly, separate Manuals were prepared. However, the most important among these Manuals is the 'Malabar Manual' prepared by the then Malabar Collector, **William Logan** in 1887. Logan had worked for about twenty years in Malabar in various positions like that of the Magistrate, Judge, special Commissioner and district Collector. Though he was asked by the authorities to prepare a reference book or a handbook in the form of Manual, Logan painstakingly prepared a valuable historical work. He was the product of the progressive intellectual community of the 19<sup>th</sup> century England.

The Malabar Manual is divided into four chapters, apart from the copies of the documents and other records. The first chapter deals with the geographical peculiarities of Malabar and its flora and fauna. In this part he includes the ports and the roads in Malabar. The second part is about the religion, caste, customs, population, density of population, cities, social order, Language, literature, village administration and organization, education etc. that had existed in the then Malabar. The third chapter is about the early history of Malabar, the Portuguese period, the Mysorean invasion and the growth of British domination up to 1885. The fourth chapter deals with the revenue administration and the tenancy rights and system. Logan used all the then available sources for writing the history of Malabar. He was the first to use the inscriptions, monuments and coins in Kerala to gather historical information. He noted the importance of the megalithic burials found in the different parts of Malabar. Apart from the British official documents, Logan drew endurances from the traditional sources like 'Keralolpathi', folk literature, accounts of the foreign travelers and oral traditions. He distinguished between traditional history and factual history. He tried to verify the authenticity of the traditional sources before accepting them as historical material.

The Malabar Manual was prepared as an official administrative report and so naturally no criticism against the government could be accepted in it. Still Logan had criticized the weaknesses of the British administration in Malabar. For example, against the official view, he stated that the basic cause for the Moppila outrages of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Malabar was agrarian discontent and religious fanaticism was only its outward exposition. His accounts of the political events in Malabar of the British period are well supported by documentary evidences. Logan initiated a new scientific method in the tradition of historical writing in Kerala.

A more analytical use of history was in fact, made by a British administrator historian, **William Logan** who in his 'Malabar Manual' attempted to present a detailed historical account of the Malabar district. The differences in method from Shangoonny Menon's account are clear from this work. First, he was able to see the district features of Megalithic burials and their importance in reconstructing the very ancient past, although he could see them only as 'cultural' phenomena. Second, he was able to distinguish between traditional history and history from other sources, whereby a definite effort was made to separate the oral and legendary information from the information being gathered from the new evidence, ie, inscriptions, monuments, coins, etc. This effort in the case of Kerala history was unprecedented and provided the basis for a scientific examination of objective material evidence. This was totally different from Shangoonny Menon, who tried to 'fix' the newly accumulating evidence into his oral legendary framework for ancient history. Third, he was able, to the extent possible, to eliminate the incorporation of unsubstantiated oral tradition into the history of the period for which more definite evidence is available as in his treatment of history from the Portuguese period. This is again distinct from Shangoonny Menon, who incorporated such oral traditions into material evidence to build up a tainted picture of the origins of Modern Tiruvitamkur State. Probably the most important is Logan's treatment of the British period itself. He tried to build a factual account of the political events, at the same time attempted a more analytical explanation of the implications of British policies

which has even now been deemed a major contribution. This was not even attempted by Shangoonny Menon.

This difference in approach and method was not the result of historical training or differences in access to the sources, but was determined once again, by the predispositions of the two administrators and the immediate demands on them. The British administration in Malabar was seriously concerned with the spreading Mappila revolts during the second half of the 19th century, and the fact that the revenue administration was not able to function effectively. This necessitated a serious re-examination of the impact of British policies in Malabar, which was undertaken by Logan. This examination led him to the origins and growth of the land system in Malabar and the traditional politico-economic rights and privileges of the landholders over which the British imposed their revenue assessment. The approach and method used by Logan in his Malabar Manual grew from this effort. Logan was able to point out the lacunae in the earlier judgements of British administrators regarding this problem, on the basis of the material evidence that he had collected. His suggestions in favour of the tenant cultivators were rejected by the British administration, but the method he used to arrive at his conclusions has remained valid to this day.

In contrast with Logan, Shangoonny Menon was the proponent of a princely state that had been going through a “progressive phase” through the reforms of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Antithetical relations between the British and the princely state also did not exist. Hence his role was essentially to document the circumstances, which brought Tiruvitamkur to this position, and hence, he was not constrained by knotty problems of sources and evidence in his narrative. Northern was there any compulsion to look for alternate models that necessitated a radical break with traditional history.

However, **both Logan and Menon** were primarily administrators, and their commitment to history was in so far as it served their administrative needs. Historical thinking and analysis had not been produced as the result of a social need, a process that developed only in the subsequent period. This was consonant with looking for more evidence and accumulating source materials,

analyzing and interpreting traditional sources, and looking for a consistent methodology in the presentation of facts.

Like the Malabar Manual, separate Manuals were prepared in Travancore and Cochin. The Travancore state manual was prepared by V. Nagam Aiyya. An earlier work called 'The Early sovereigns of Travancore' by the Tamil scholar and poet Sundaram Pillai had highly influenced the preparation of the Travancore State Manual. The 'Cochin State Manual' was prepared by C. Achutha Menon. Both these works are descriptive and so historically less important.

The importance of the growing corpus of inscriptions was being recognized by the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was felt that a detailed study of the inscriptions would be able to throw light on the early period of Kerala history which was a mixture of legend and fact. Such an exercise was undertaken **by P. Sundaram Pillai**, a Tamil poet and scholar in the heterodox tradition who studied the available inscriptions with references to Travancore rulers. His series of articles called "The Early Sovereigns of Travancore" brought to light not only the political details but also interesting aspects of society and culture. V. Nagam Aiyya incorporated the studies of Sundaram Pillai into his Travancore State Manual, which tried to present a more objective picture of the early Travancore history than Shangoonny Menon.

The result of the growing interest in the inscriptions and monuments was the constitution of an Archaeology Department for Tiruvitamkur State, which published regular Archaeological Reports and the decision to publish the numerous inscriptions that lay scattered all over the State. As expertise in collecting, deciphering and transcribing the early inscriptions was lacking in the State itself, scholars had to be brought from outside. Thus scholars like T.A. Gopinatha Rao, K.V. Subramonia Iyer and A.S. Ramanatha Iyer were brought from outside to head the Archaeology Department. The collection of inscriptions began to be published as Travancore Archaeological Series from 1916 which continued upto 1939. Efforts were made to recruit the vanishing section of period who could read the scripts of Vatteluttu, Koleluttu and early Malayalam, and new personnel were trained in reading them. Hundreds of inscriptions were



collected, deciphered and published and this corpus of inscriptions has provided the basis for the historical writings upto this day.

The spirit of collection and documentation was not limited to inscriptions alone. A large number of cadjan and palm leaf documents were collected and efforts were made to transcribe them. This form of collection was not considered a Government activity alone. S. Desivayagam Pillai, a social reformer and scholar of Kanyakumari District collected a large amount of material pertaining to Nancinadu. T.K. Joseph was able to collect a large amount of church documents in various languages. The activities of the Kerala Society which functioned from 1928 to 1933 showed the tremendous enthusiasm and enterprise in the collection, and interpretation of records.

The beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the emergence of a new English educated middle class intelligentsia in Kerala also, as elsewhere in India. This new middle class had a more progressive out-look in the social and political conditions. **K.P. Padmanabha Menon** was the representative of this newly emerged middle class intelligentsia in Kerala. He is often considered as the first modern historian of Kerala. He was the son of the historian P. Shangoonny Menon.

He took his law degree from Madras and he was appointed as the member of the Legislative Committee in Madras. Later he returned to Kerala and started his legal career at Ernakulam and then shifted to Trivandrum. While practicing as a Lawyer at Trivandrum, he was appointed as a member of the Marumakkatayam Committee of Travancore. The committee submitted its report in 1908. As a member of the Marumakkatayam Committee, Padmanabha Menon made a detailed study of the peculiar system of matriliney in Kerala. According to Padmanabha Menon the matrilineal system originated in Kerala in the 14<sup>th</sup> century only. He argued that if it had existed before the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the foreign travelers visited this place would have referred about it, but none had referred. Where as all the travelers who had visited Kerala after 14<sup>th</sup> century have mentioned about it. He recommended basic reforms in the system so that the Kerala society would transform into a patriarchal one. The

Marumakkatayam report remains as a basic document for the study of this system.

Padmanabha Menon published his 'Kochi Rajya Charitram' (History of Cochin) in Malayalam in two volumes during 1912 and 1914. The first volume has two parts. The first part deals with the society of Cochin, which includes the details about the early settlers, the advent of Ezhavas, Nairs, Nambudiris, Christians, Jews and Muslims; the history of Perumpadappu Swarupam, Kalari system, Nair militia, weapons, methods of warfare, origin of temples, growth of devaswams etc. The second part is about the history of the Portuguese in Kerala, especially Cochin and their activities. According to him the main aims of the Portuguese in Kerala was to dominate the sea trade, to conquer territories and to spread Christian religion among the natives. The second volume also has two parts. The first part is about the domination of the Dutch in Kochi and the second part deals with the growth of British colonialism in Kerala.

Padmanabha Menon divides the people of Kerala into two categories – the early settlers and the outsiders. According to him, the Cherumar, Pulayar and the Tribal people were the early settlers of Kerala and the Ezhavas, Nairs, Nambudiris, Jews, Christians and the Muslims all came from outside and settled in Kerala in the course of time. He used the traditional source, Keralolpathi for recording the ancient history, but doubted its reliability. He denounces the Parasurama legend and the conversion of the Cheraman Perumal to Islam. Though the title is about Cochi, the book deals the history of Cochi in a wider perspective of Kerala as a whole. He views history as a whole and so gives due consideration to social, religious and cultural aspects also apart from political aspects.

Padmanabha Menon's 'History of Kerala' in four volumes was publishing posthumously during the period between 1924 and 1937. He had prepared these bulky volumes on the basis of the letters of Canter Vizcher, the Dutch chaplain of Cochi. Menon's interpretations and explanations to these letters comprise the book. He had understood the difficulty of writing an integrated and comprehensive history of Kerala with the then available source materials. In his

interpretations, the author highlights the customs and religious practices of different communities in Kerala, the role of temples, geographical peculiarities, natural resources, dress, habits, the advent of the Brahmins, minor principalities, trade revenue etc. As it was written as explanations to the letters he could not stick on to a regular chronology in the book. The book has its own weaknesses. It is not a comprehensive history of Kerala. At best it can be regarded as a gazetteer. The title of the book is in a sense misleading. However, it was Padmanabha Menon who had taken a different path from the traditional historical writing in Kerala. He inaugurated a new scientific approach, like Logan, in writing the history of Kerala. The study and writing of history received a new impetus in Kerala after the publication of the works of Padmanabha Menon. The spread of the colonial knowledge and struggle against the colonial political domination hastened this new impetus. The study and writing of history were acquiring new dimensions at the national level; also during this period. In the meanwhile, archaeological, epigraphic and numismatic evidences were being gathered from the different parts of Kerala. However, the scholars in history were reluctant to make use of these newly acquired primary sources to have a scientific interpretation for the ancient period. They were still beating around the traditional sources. But this was not the case with the history written of the colonial period. The history after the Portuguese advent was being written in a more objective way.

Padmanabha Menon was a researcher who had published papers and articles on the history of Kerala, and was able to make better use of the available sources than his father. He collected meticulously all the foreign notices and references on Kerala and also the available indigenous records and accounts. This effort enabled him to analyse the oral traditions and legends more objectively and try to compare them with the evidence from non-traditional sources. However, Menon was unable to make the best use of inscriptional and other forms of evidence in order to throw light on the antecedents and origins of the kingdom of Kochi. Hence, although he was not constrained by the value judgements of his predecessors, Menon was unable to achieve anything more

than a systematic presentation of the available information mainly from secondary sources. This feature was more manifest in his notes on Canter Visscher's Letters from Malabar, which was published under the misleading title "History of Kerala". It does not appear to have been Menon's intention to write a systematic history of Kerala. He was only trying to collate all the available information on the numerous allusions and references by Visscher. It is possible that he was trying to arrive at a method of historical interpretation by bringing together such an amount of information. He was unable to develop this method, but the indications are that he was thinking in terms of objective analysis of evidence rather than working by pre-dispositions. It is also clear that Menon was trying to break from the practice of depending on oral traditions and legends. Although he states these legends, he was also thinking in terms of a method of testing and verifying these legends.

Padmanabha Menon's effort was limited by his lack of access and inability to use the existing archaeological, epigraphical and other forms of evidence. The work on this front began in right earnest after him. Several enthusiasts like K.R. Pisharady, V.K.R. Menon, V.N.D. Nambiar and Anujan Achan were collecting inscriptional evidence, with Anujan Achan conducting archaeological excavations around Kodungallur. Rama Varma Research Institute Bulletin which was being published during 1920s became a forum for these scholars.

In Malabar there were no local initiatives in collecting and collating the existing evidence. But some progress was made in the accumulation of evidence by the Imperial Archaeology and Epigraphy departments, which included the discovery of evidence in Edakal Cave, discovery of further Megalithic burials in Wayanad and a few inscriptions in various parts of Malabar.

Although archaeological, epigraphic and numismatic evidence was being gathered, the methodology for analyzing them and bringing them into logical structure was not developed. Most of the work was limited to describing the data and drawing inferences based on that piece of evidence, rather than interpreting the data on the basis of common and acceptable parameters. The only general parameter that existed for the pre-Portuguese period was the traditional

framework based on Keralolpatti. But the discrepancies between that framework and the accumulating evidence was obvious.

The situation was somewhat different for those who dealt with the Portuguese period and afterwards. A number of European accounts were available on the relation between the Europeans and Kerala rulers and the local Granthavaris provided more clear and precise information for this period than the previous period. Although oral traditions intervened in some of the cases, it was always possible to examine them and incorporate them into a credible political narrative. The period after the Europeans' arrival also aroused considerable interest particularly in the wake of the existing reality of colonial rule and growing sentiment against it. Thus narrative histories were composed on the Portuguese and Dutch periods by **K.M. Panikkar**, and later by O.K. Nambiar. Nambiar's accounts on the Portuguese "Pirates" and Indian 'seamen' and his account of the Kunjalis was more clearly loaded in nationalistic colours. **P.K.S. Raja's** 'Medieval Kerala' which sought to provide a comprehensive survey of the entire medieval period, drew upon both traditional sources and Europeans accounts.

During this period educational institutions were emerging, and history was being taught as a subject in colleges. Textbooks and writings in history, composed in the schematic form of political, administrative, "economic" and "social" institutions and "religion" had become common. The writers looking for a method of organizing their subject matter immediately caught on to this mode of presentation. They were also aware of the limitations and uncertainties of oral traditions and the scattered nature of evidence on the pre-Portuguese period. Hence, oral available evidence on the pre-Portuguese period, was stated as a kind of preamble to their further narration and then, a detailed political narrative was attempted from the Portuguese period with chapters on "administration" "Social and economic conditions" "cultural", etc., much in the textbook fashion. This form of empirical narrative is seen in **K.V. Krishna Iyer's Zamorins of Calicut**. Krishna Iyer was able to relate indigenous information with the available European narratives to present a credible historical work.

Krishna Iyer had access to original sources, particularly palace documents, pertaining to the Samutiri. But he did not attempt systematic interpretative analysis of the documents to which he had access. His empirical method and acceptance of the prevalent eclectic form of history writing prevented him from undertaking such an analysis. A step beyond these limitations was achieved by **T.I. Poonen**, in his study of the Dutch in Kerala. Poonen managed to master the Dutch language, which enabled him to consult the documents in their original and was able to present a deeper analysis of the Dutch period. Northern was he influenced by the eclecticism of the prevalent historical writings and was able to view the historical events as part of a process, with their inevitable transitional phases. However, Poonen was unable to proceed beyond the narrative structure of histories dealing with Europeans relations, and was therefore unable to place these transactions within the wider politico-economic context. Northern was he able to analyse the impact of these transactions on the social conditions of Kerala.

### **Post Independence Period: Attempts of Interpretation**

The developments in the British colonial period established history as a separate discipline and a mode of enquiry. The material evidence for Kerala history was accumulating so that it was possible not only to develop a non-traditional framework for Kerala history but also to analyse and interpret the traditional framework in the light of new evidence. The search for such a framework continued but still proved to be elusive. Several reasons can be found for this impasse. The first is the institutional reason. History taught in colleges was basically construed in the colonial mould and failed to change with the needs of the post independence era. The view of history as an “assemblage of facts” could be more objective with more emphasis on administrative and political ‘events’. This view was conjoined with a near total neglect of regional histories, conditions of the people, etc. Hence, the curriculum and syllabus adopted for teaching of history failed to evoke any genuine enthusiasm for the study of history, a feature that persists even now. The total imperturbability of the history syllabus was such that a subject as “History of Kerala” began to be

accepted in the syllabus only very recently. Hence, the enquiry into the past of Kerala became the work of a few enthusiasts, working either outside the institutional framework of the universities or by those who could get the facilities for doing research. However, these efforts were sporadic and unsupported by official institutions even to the extent that such studies received before independence. Historical evidence continued to be accumulated and individual articles and features continued to be published.

An effort at explanation of historical evidence was growing among those working outside the institutionalized framework. These efforts can be divided into two, one by those who were active in various social protest movements, who attempted an enquiry into the historical forces that laid the basis of their contemporary position in society. Thus several 'caste histories', were constructed on Nayars, Nambudiris, Ilavas. These "historians" had no understanding of the historical method northern had any access to sources and took recourse to oral tradition, and catchy, popular pieces of non-traditional evidence. These writers tried to stretch the antiquity of each caste as far back as possible and extol, even overstate the contributions of each caste to Kerala culture. Pracheena Malayalam by Cattambi Swamikal (Primarily a linguistic work), attempts to write a historical account of temple Nayars by the leaders of the Nair Service Society, writings of Kanippayyur Sankaran Nambudiripad on the Nambudiris, N.R. Krishnan's Izhavar Annum Innum and the articles by C.V. Kunjuraman on the subject, are examples. This form of history writing had its impact on the two volumes Keralacaritram produced by the Kerala History Association in 1972. Another trend was the effort at historical analysis by those influenced by progressive and socialist ideas who tried to use the tools of historical materialism. However, they also did not try to interpret the historical trends by using the accumulating evidence in archaeology, epigraphy, coins, records, etc., but chose to depend on their personal experience, oral tradition, and secondary works. At best, they used the analysis presented by the Manual writers and K.P. Padmanabha Menon, ignoring the fact that a large amount of primary evidence was made available after these historians produced their works. Writings of E.M.S. Nambudiripad on

Kerala history, and K. Damodaran's unfinished Keralacaritram provide penetrating observations on the basis of a historical materialist understanding, but fail to make use of the then existing sources. However, their attempts generated an important discussion on the viability of the materialist interpretation in the context of Kerala history which stimulated enquiry and research.

However, writings on Kerala history still lacked a proper framework which incorporated the accumulating evidence and emerging methods of analysis, which would integrate the numerous strands of observations, and hypotheses that were being advanced. Interestingly, such an effort came not from practicing history teachers and writers, but a professor of Malayalam who strayed into historical research **Professor P.N. Elamkulam Kunhan Pillai**. Elamkulam was one of the first to scientifically analyse the accumulating inscriptional evidence and realize the significance of the Megalithic burials in terms of social and political history. He could also integrate evidence from Literature and Arts with information from other sources and subject the oral traditions to careful scrutiny. The conclusions of these efforts were published in the form of several articles that were compiled into volumes, and provide the largest corpus of interpretative material on Kerala history available in Malayalam.

The scientific interpretation of the inscriptional and other sources for reconstructing the early history of Kerala was successfully undertaken by Prof. P.K. Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai. He was not a practicing historian and his basic interest was in linguistics. Prof. Elamkulam studied all the available inscriptions and with the help of the Tamil classical works and tried to provide a scientific framework for the study of the ancient period of Kerala history. He succeeded to a certain extent to free the ancient period of Kerala history from the clutches of fables and legends and provide a rational and scientific outlook. He wrote several articles which threw fresh light upon many dark areas of the early period of Kerala history.

Many numbers of articles on Kerala history written by Prof. Elamkulam are compiled into several books in Malayalam like, 'Bhashayum Sahityavum'



(Language and literature), 'Kerala Charitrathile Irulatanja Etukal' (The Dark Pages of Kerala history), and 'Chila Kerala Charitra Prasnangal' (Some Problems of Kerala History). 'Jenmi Sampradayam Keralathil' (Jenmi System in Kerala, 'Chera Samrajyam Onpathum Pathum Nuttandukalil' (Chera Empire in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Centuries) etc. Some of these articles were translated into English and published with the title, 'Studies in Kerala History'. His findings were elaborated and compiled in an organized manner by A. Sreedhara Menon in his 'Survey of Kerala History'. Elamkulam's narration and interpretations were widely accepted as the only authoritative explanation of Kerala history till recently. With the influx of newly found source materials and usage of new methodology, some of the conclusions of Elamkulam have been proved incorrect or revised. Still his works remain as the pioneering ones in the study of the early history of Kerala.

It is not necessary to enter into the major arguments advanced by Elamkulam as they could be found in any work on Kerala history, and has been succinctly elaborated by A. Sreedhara Menon in his "Survey of Kerala History". Elamkulam's major achievement was to integrate the scattered pieces of evidence and the number of inscriptions that had been discovered into a co-ordinated hypothesis to uncover the existence of the Cera or "Kulasekhara" kingdom from the 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. He was also able to trace the growth of land management and control by the Brahmanas which evolved into the Janmi system and was able to provide an explanation for the growth of the medieval Naduvalis, the authority of the temple and the prevalence of the matrilineal system of inheritance. For the first time, a non-traditional framework that claimed to incorporate all available information relating to pre-modern emerged with Elamkulam.

Elamkulam was also basing himself on the work done by his predecessors. The information that led to his conclusions were already available for several decades, but never properly used. This was not because the traditional framework was still popular among the students of history, but because they were unable to come out of their pre-occupation with the histories of local kingdoms and dynasties. It is possible that the movement for the

unification of Kerala, with its plea for enduring cultural and social unity had its impact on Elamkulam, the extent of which is difficult to gauge. It is also possible that his pre-occupation with language and culture, helped him to transcend the pre-occupation with parcellised political entities, which characterized orthodox historiography. Pre-occupation with language and culture helped to recognize the importance of a time frame in their growth, the common features and differences that exist within each time frame with its social and political import. Inscriptions became the tools for him to break the mystification that surrounded the pre-Portuguese period and help understand the features of language, culture and socio-economic relations.

The use of the inscriptions helped him to recognize the crucial importance of material sources for the writing of history. He, as a strong empiricist rejected the oral traditions including Parasurama and the Perumal legends. The same commitment to material evidence made him argue that Sangam period extended from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> centuries, contrary to the standard chronology. However this argumentation was extended further by postulating a prolonged Chera-Cola war (first termed as a “hundred years war”, a coinage which was later given up) that transformed the entire society and economy and ushered in the Janmi system, matrilineal inheritance, militarisation and political fragmentation as well as the growth of a brahmana-controlled social order in medieval Kerala.

Although many of these pronouncements have acquired canonical value in history textbooks, later historical research has amended them considerably. Ellamkulam developed a methodology through which one could view the apparently unconnected events and fragments of evidence, but he lacked a clear conceptual framework regarding the process of history as such. For example, while he was able to glean the importance of megalithic burials he was not able to weave together the literary evidence from Sangam works and archaeological evidence. This problem of frame work comes out clearly in the discussion historical transition. He was unable to explain why Kulasekhara Kingdom (which he chose to call an empire) arose and why it declined. Its rise remained mysterious, and the cause of its decline was located in an external factor, the

Cola invasion. Despite his emphasis on the salient features of Kerala society on which he did considerable amount of work, the major agent of change was always the political factor. Even social and economic features were couched in political and administrative terminology, e.g, Uralar as temple trustees and managers, Munnurruvar, arunnurruvar, etc as administrative institutions. Even the conception of the Perumal as the sovereign power, was not based on the concepts of the historical process, but on the preoccupation with the political factor. This aspect of his framework rendered him incapable of fully comprehending and analyzing the dynamics of social change through centuries, in terms of the social forces that were being eclipsed and those that were coming to the fore.

Despite these limitations, Elamkulam's work threw up a number of questions which have been the focus of attention by students of history ever since. The problems of the role of the Brahmanas and temples, matrilineal system, landlord-tenant relations, political fragmentation, and caste-relations that were raised by Elamkulam have provoked considerable interest and has generated research. The studies of Prof. Elamkulam, the unearthing of the new source materials, the social and cultural movements, the ideological and methodological innovations and the radical political movements have aroused new interest in the study of Kerala history both by the indigenous and foreign scholars in the recent years. The attention of the foreign scholars were mainly centered around the modern period of Kerala history. The most important contribution to the study of the ancient and early medieval periods of Kerala history in the recent years, from among the indigenous scholars came from Dr. M.G.S. Narayanan.

The most important works so far published by **Dr. M.G.S. Narayanan** is his doctoral, 'Perumals of Kerala'. It analyses the political, social and economic aspects that moulded the early medieval Kerala society between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. The extensive use of sources, especially inscriptional evidences helped him to reconstruct the history of the later Cheras or the Perumals, in a more scientific way than that of the predecessors. He could formulate a more

reasonable chronology for the Perumals than that of Prof. Elamkulam through empirical analysis. The traditional interpretations about the concepts of 'empire' and 'absolute monarchy' are questioned and revised. The influence of the Brahmin land-lords on the Chera kings is well established. The temple oriented society of early medieval Kerala is critically analysed. Highlighting of the external attacks as the only one reason for the decline of the Perumals is also questioned. He argued that the decline was mainly due to the inherent socio-economic crisis that developed during the course of time within the Chera state.

Dr.M.G.S. in his work, 'Cultural Symbiosis' analyses the integration process of the various cultural aspects that had formulated the pre-modern Kerala society. His 'Kerala Charithrathinte Adisthanasilakal' (Malayalam) is comprised of several articles related with the various aspects of medieval Kerala history. They are mainly based upon the reading and re-reading of the epigraphically sources. Here he examines the regnal years of some of the Perumal rulers with the help of new inscriptional evidences, the influence of the Pallava-Chalukya architectural styles upon the early Kerala temples, the grant given by the Hindu ruler of Calicut to the Muslim mosque during the 13<sup>th</sup> century etc. His yet another work is the 'Re-interpretation of South Indian History'. Many of his research articles are yet to be published.

### **Modern trends**

Several trends are visible in the area of historical writing during the past two decades. Considerable attention has been drawn to the social change and the growth of radical political movements in Kerala, a feature that became manifest after the formation of communist ministry in Kerala in 1956. This interest soon led to the study of land reforms, caste structure, and the traditional social order. This also saw a number of foreign scholars making their contributions. Professional historical research grew in Kerala, mainly concentrated in the University campuses, and a number of theses on various aspects of Kerala History, particularly modern history have been published. Elamkulams work also generated a renewed interest in the collection and interpretation of sources, particularly inscriptions, coins and archaeological

remains. Three trends can be delineated in the recent historical research in Kerala. The first trend was to understand the changes taking place in Kerala society in terms of the methodology of modern social sciences, particularly using sociological–anthropological categories. The second trend is more eclectic, giving importance to facts and events rather than processes, the third trend attempts to approach the problems from a broadly materialist perspective but based on concrete empirical research.

The first trend was apparently triggered by two diverse interests. First, a social and anthropological interest in the features of caste order and matrilineal kinship and its transformation. This was a modified and sophisticated continuation of the colonial stress on the communal and caste configuration of India. Second, the general argument advanced by several western scholars on importance caste pressure groups and elites in the newly emerging social structure. Thus the elements of traditional social order were seen to play a new role under the social change that was taking place. Hence it is important to look into the genesis and functions of these pressure groups in order to understand processes of social transformation in Modern Kerala. Thus emphasis was given to the studies of Nambutiri Brahmanas, Nayars, Ilavas and groups like the Mappilas of Malabar, and modern Kerala was analysed in terms of their respective roles. Aspects of religion and culture, pre-dispositions and outlook of these social groups was considered to be the crucial factor in the shaping of modern Kerala society and politics. It is easy to characterize these studies as reflecting imperial interest. Such studies indeed showed the imperialist predilection, but in a most refined manner. The more important factor was the methods used for their study, which was either based on the methodology developed by western sociologists and anthropologists (Mayer, Miller, Jeffrey,) or on psycho-historical approaches by American historians (Dale). It is not that methods had no value. Definitely, they helped to clarify the processes that shaped the events of this period. However, what was lacking was an integral approach that would explain the transition from the traditional land system to the modern, which would imply not only an examination of group interests but

also the basis of the growth of these interests in terms of the organization of material life, that of the social relations of production, distribution and consumption.

This weakness is clearly reflected in the studies of the growth of radical political movements, which is explained in terms of interest groups, like llavas, visualist-a-visualist the domination of Nayars and Nambutiris. Of course, social protest movements, like that of the llavas, played a significant role in the radicalization of politics but they have to be studied in the context of the overall changes in the socio-economic and political structures in Kerala. However, these changes were sought to be reduced to the interests of a particular caste group or groups. This form of reductionism is similar to the conceptions regarding the growth of nationalist activity in India as stemming from the interests of 'middle class' pressure groups. This form of explanation only helps to gloss over the complex undercurrents that shaped a political or social movement.

Dilip M. Menon's seminal contribution, 'Houses by the Sea', also analyzes the character of the 'state' in pre-colonial Malabar. Chirakkal T. Balakrishnan's Malayalam work Teranjedutta Prabandangal and M.P. Kumaran's Kolathupazhama throw light on some specific issues pertaining mainly to the pre-colonial history of this region. However, neither of them proposed a broader analytical structure for understanding the history of the Kolathunadu region. The Islamic community in Kolathunadu has also received some attention from scholars. The Ali Rajas of Cannanore, written by K.K.N. Kurup, is particularly important among those works dealing with the history of the regional Islamic communities. Yet, this short monograph describing the long history of the Ali Rajas, rarely uses documents dating from the pre-colonial period and hardly takes into consideration the wider aspect of socio-political changes in the region. Against Lord and State: Religion and Peasant Uprisings in Malabar (1836-1921) – an excellent study on the Mappila peasant resistance to the colonial regime by K.N. Panikkar – concentrates on a later period. All these three scholars have chosen the Mappila peasantry in the paddy-growing wet-land in

South Malabar as their main subject matter of study, but overlook the case of the Mappila trading communities.

The use of social anthropological approaches and recent trends in historical methods has brought the study of Kerala history into a much higher analytical plane and triggered a healthy debate which has raised numerous points that can be further investigated. An example in this regard is the question raised several scholars like Jeffrey on modern Travancore, which generated a discussion on the process of modernization in a traditional regional economy as in Travancore. Another example is the debate centred around the Malabar Rebellion on 1921, delineating the religious, economic and political factors that gave rise to the rebellion, a debate in which several scholars participated from varying points-of-view, including Stephen Dale, Conrad Wood and K.N. Panikkar. Studies on Agrarian change and land reforms including those of T.C. Varghese, P. Radhakrishnan, Ronald Herring and others form a multi-disciplinary perspective have also generated debate. These debates and discussions have stimulated considerable research interest on Kerala, both at home and abroad.

The second trend is mainly visible in the historical research in the Universities and Research Institutions in Kerala as well as a few Universities and Institutes in other parts of India. The research done in these Universities are eclectic and empirical narratives with no attempt to develop an analytical perspective. Often research is centred on specific events or personalities like Shanar Rebellion, Velu Thambi, Marthanda Varma, Rama Varma, Abstention Movement, and Temple Entry Proclamation and so on, where effort is made to develop a narrative which merely presents the facts without going into the historical context in which the event takes place or the personalities do their work. If at all the historical context is examined they are reduced to certain water-tight factors like political, social, economic, etc and their inter-relationships are hardly discussed. Sometimes, the social bias of the historian is also manifested in presenting the facts. Although some of the works may provide useful information, they fail to break new ground in terms of analysis of framework.

The third trend should be treated as the logical continuation of the interest in the accumulation and interpretation of evidence that culminated in the work of Elamkulam Kunchan Pillai. This path of research involved direct collection of further material evidence on pre-modern Kerala and subjecting them to careful empirical analysis, which resulted in the clarification and reinterpretation of a number of Elamkulam's formulations. The chronology of Later Ceras was modified to accommodate new information and the character of the Ceras was modified to accommodate new information and the character of the Cera State was subjected to further scrutiny on the basis of new evidence. The concept of absolute monarchy attributed to Ceras was replaced by the concept of Perumal rule legitimized by the Brahmanas. The theory of decline of the Ceras was reformulated and it was shown that indigenous socio-economic processes, rather of medieval Naduvalis. The antecedents of the Ceras was also examined and a number of ideas by Elamkulam including the date of the Sangam age were reformulated.

This form of research, although having a strong empirical bias, did try to evolve a framework on the formation and growth of medieval society in Kerala. The concepts of feudal polity and economy were applied to the Kerala context. However, the level of conceptualization has not proceeded beyond the basis level, and the complexities and variations in Kerala society including the matrilineal system, the growth and transformation of the Janmi system and the political formations, changes in the society during period of European interventions, etc have not been adequately studied and conceptualized. However, the work on the early medieval period has stimulated the links between the pre-modern phase and the transformation of society in the modern period. Thus, the process of developing a scientific and objective framework that helps explain the accumulating information on Kerala history is already on.



## **CHAPTER- V**

### **EMERGING AREAS**

The recent trends in historical writing in Kerala concentrate on the histories of the deprived and marginalized, and also family history and local history. Some of these trends can be briefly summarized.

#### **Women's History**

In the standard history writing, women's history has occupied marginal space, limited to the presence of a few 'important' women (such as the queens of Travancore) and their marginal presence in the national movement. The important discussion was on matrilineal system, which was never addressed from a women's perspective. This underwent a radical change in recent years and

a number of studies on Kerala women have appeared in the past decade. The broad trends are the following:

- a). Attempts to locate women in the political processes of the national Movement and the working class and peasant movement; (Meera Velayudhan)
- b). Attempt to relocate the various features of Kerala's social change as a process forming a new gender order, with en-gendering individuals; (J. Devika)
- c). Attempts to locate women's writing and social presence as constituting a redefinition of sexuality (K.M. Sheeba)
- d). Attempts to look at changes from matriliney to patriliney and the institutions of patriarchy from a gender perspective (K. Saradamani, G. Arunima)
- e). Attempts to study changes in gender relations using existing social science paradigms (Praveena Kodoth, Anandi)
- f). Attempts to study questions of movement and women's participation in the labour process.

More categories can be identified.

### **History of the Dalits and the marginalized**

Dalit histories have been attempted by a number of dalit activists and intellectuals. This includes various biographical histories of Ayyankali, histories of the various dalit organizations and more general Kerala histories from a dalit perspective. An important work that has broken new ground is the study of Pratyaksaraksha daiva sabha, an organization built by Poykayil Yohannan, by Sanal Mohan. There have been several studies of the Adivasis, such as those by K. Panoor, O.K. Johny and Mundakkayam Gopi, but they can be considered only attempts by enthusiasts. Recently, researches have been undertaken on the study of the artisans, weavers, fishermen and other groups, and also on issues of popular culture, concentrating on the cultural practices of the marginalized.

### **Family Histories**

Family History is a new area, which emerged in the beginning with the efforts by a number of families, who were landlords and trading groups to

chronicle their pedigree, and now the effort has spread to a number of groups and is supported by organizations like the Kerala Council of Historical Research.

### **Local Histories**

Local histories are one of the interesting trends probably not replicated elsewhere in India. The practice of collecting local history began with the Period's Planning campaign in 1997, when the panchayats started implementing projects to compile histories of their panchayats, and some of the first histories to be compiled and brought out in a book form were the histories of Avanisseri (trissur), Valayanchirangara (Ernakulam) and Vaniyamkulam (Palghat). Afterwards, numerous other histories have appeared such as madikkai (Kasargod), Ajanur (Kasargod), Payyannur (Kannur) apart from individual attempts such as the history of Chenganasseri (Kottayam). Efforts to compile the local histories of several other places are going on.

A general assessment of the recent trends:

- a). The new trends have attempted to use a vast variety of sources other than the conventional historical sources, which included the oral sources and also used social science methods such as participant objectivation and qualitative analysis, including geographical, environmental and cultural analysis
- b). They have steered away the elitist connections and have tried to incorporate the testimony of the common people.
- c). They have adopted interdisciplinary format of analysis, which have enabled them to acquire more flexibility in their methodology.
- d). They have not often been free from subjective and emotional biases and tended to glorify or sentimentalise their subjects, whether they be communities, localities or families.
- e). They have also not often been careful to disengage myth from history and as a result, have only succeeded in building fragmentary narratives or 'stories'.

### **WOMEN'S HISTORIOGRAPHY**

“Women’s Historiography”, T.K. Anandi assures, is not “history written by women”, but “history about women”. In a very interesting and rather “New-Historisque” reading of certain historical events in Kerala such as the widow remarriage, she ascertains how history views the historical incidents as authored by men to change the lives of women. She exhorts the women’s historiography to “establish equality in historical enterprises”. Women’s historiography does not imply history written by women. It is the history about women. It is not the life history of the acclaimed. The intention of this historiography is to reveal the extent of participation of women in the fights for reforms in life. It is evident that those who frowned at women’s writing cannot tolerate these enterprises as well. Nevertheless only healthy discussions and criticisms can bring such studies to the mainstream.

In the social science discipline, there is no division of opinion regarding the fact that society is subject to change. People themselves are the creators of the change. Women are not included in this term “people”. Historical studies do not heed their activities to bring about this change. Therefore what is usually seen is a tendency to hide women from history. The recognition of feminist studies as a part of social sciences is a change that has come about in the course of the last two or three decades. Subjects like Economics and Anthropology do conduct studies about the low wages of women, sexual division of labour, the beginning of division of labour, and the social involvement of women in the days of yore. However, here too women shrink to a stature of statistical aggregates. While speaking about labour conflicts, social science studies display a tendency to connect them only to labour and wages and neglect factors like standard of living, productivity and sexual status in the productivity process. All these have a methodology which condone the patriarchal system. (It is not overlooked that people like E.P. Thompson are exceptions to this).

Social historiography is an area which can assist in women’s historiography. Social history possesses the implements that help in studying socialization of men and women, how division in terms of sex come about, the

changes that occur in day-to-day life, the family structure, marriage, health, culture and leisure. But it can be said that women's history has not been written. Man had already established supremacy in the government, the landlord tradition, war, trade, centers of authority, religion and growth of technology. Women had not taken leadership in any of these sections. Woman, poised in a passive position, came to be made invisible from history. The life of a common man/woman and their contribution to economic – social development has never enjoyed a pivotal position in historical studies. Traditional historic studies use birth-death statistics, assembly records and details from the archives as sources. These again are preserved in centers of authority. The “yesterdays” of history are reduced to records stored in these centers. The statistical details needed to create woman's history are not available here today. Proofs and records of their areas of activity, their common areas, family systems and such other aspects have not been collected or compiled. Efforts to find them are also insufficient.

There are a few rare women who have been recorded in history. These are the ones who have forced themselves into social spaces using their name and authority. They have not succeeded in creating a common sphere for women – That is why the majority of women had to stand outside history. The methodology of traditional historiography itself does not facilitate the study of women's spaces in society. According to that methodology man stands in the active position, the position of the doer in history. Women are mere subjects in a patriarchal society. Their problems are only light matters in this total canvas. Conquering the public front, the patriarchs indulge in a wild dance, which would undoubtedly wipe out the subjects. Or else they will remain inactive. This precisely is the position of women in the patriarchal historiography. Even in the areas where their social status is evidently seen, they are either studied in comparison with men or portrayed as images of men – this is the tendency seen in patriarchal historiography.

We have been acquainted with numerous historical men via the history of the national movement. History teaches us the life stories of cultural activists,

working in relation to the reform movements, who have set apart their lives for solving the problems of women. Those who fought against Sati and child marriage, those who endeavoured to change the miserable position of women, were all men. Interestingly, the lessons of Jhansi Rani and Joan of Arc seem to send out the message that to fight for one's country, one should wear men's clothes. Gandhiji, Ambedkar, and Jyothibaphule were the ones who brought women to the national protest movement. Such contributions made by men for the nation are not belittled. Neither is it suggested that these should be neglected. However, the tendency of establishing the symbols of strong men throughout history and putting across the message that the shortcut to freedom for women is through men and by effectively imitating men is wrong.

The situation in Kerala is not different. Recently our media are in the effort to make V.T. Bhattathirippad – who tried to comprehend the problems of widows and give them another lease of life, who tirelessly worked to 'make their lives blossom' – superhuman. His effort to help and change, especially to eradicate the hellish pain experienced behind the marakkuta – the palm-leaf umbrella carried by Nambudiri women – is not forgotten. On the other hand, the fact that he personally never made such claims reveals his grace. In his autobiography *Karmavipakam*, the chapter "A widow's life blossoms" has to be subjected to a re-reading. His wife's sister's willingness to marry M.R.B. is decided in the conversation between Sridevi and Nangema. "The depression of the mind will shatter health. That depression has to be necessarily leveled through new experience. A painting is never complete without drawing and erasing. Nangema should prepare for a new step after comprehending the consequences. When I say this, I do not imply re-marriage".

It is a historical truth that though V.T. has told thus clearly and forcefully, widow re-marriage has been affected through V.T. That Sridevi and Nangema were instrumental in sowing the seeds for this idea is another truth. But what traditional historiography does is, neglect the idea of widow remarriage, neglect the mental strength of the Nambudiri woman Nangema, and make the performer of the marriage its hero. Therefore it does not become the

remarriage of Nangema, but a widow remarriage that is conducted by the good will of M.R.B.

Studies about all social activities discuss the changes brought about in the mental attitudes of women. These studies do not examine the extent to which the changes that have come in the mental attitude of women have influenced social activity. The miserable state of woman as visualized by man is that which appears in history. That the activities carried out by men has brought about changes in women. But what makes women in the effort to change is woman's own awareness of her state. It is not that men are lifting them up and leading them. An essential aspect of historiography, namely the consideration that partners in a common enterprise have to be given equal status, is very often forgotten. The primary aim of woman's historiography is to establish equality in historical enterprises.

The historical research prevalent today is centred in statistical data. A historical fact is proved by the number of documentary evidence on which it is based. Besides, observations and premises on the basis of statistical details is quite common. The material proofs for these are day-to-day newspaper reports, assembly records, diary notes, police records, autobiographies, family history and so on. The nature of these records is to display solely the ultimate performers of any occurrence. In a police record about a strike, details regarding the people arrested in the strike, those who were partners in decision-making, those who were leaders and such other information can be seen. However, no information can be obtained regarding those who had been partners in organizing the strike or those who had given necessary assistance to help maintain it. Women do appear in these situations. The weaver women who worked in the province of Fauborg Saint Antoin played the most important part in the People's Front which was part of the French Revolution. They were the ones who gave leadership to the food riots responsible for the revolution. The February Revolution of Russia was initiated by the strike of the women labourers. But history has not even recorded who they were.

In the Salt Satyagraha held at Kozhikode, seven or eight dictators were women. Among them, leaving aside A.V. Kuttimalu Amma, none became leaders and therefore went unnoticed. Moreover women who enter the public sector ought to have more awareness and put in more toil than those men who are engaged in it. Quality wise therefore, partnership of women is more exalted than that of men. History often neglects this.

Since women very rarely obtain position and honour, the official records show a lesser number of women. But the welcome change that occurs in a woman newly acquiring power and honour is greater than that occurring in men who constantly achieve these. In the patriarchal system, even those who gain power and position are silenced. So their voice is not heard. Their role in opinion formation also does not come out. The duty of newspapers then and now has not changed very much and so they also maintain silence regarding the role played by women. Autobiographies of women are very limited in number. Even the few written have been done with extreme care, without causing pain or displeasure to husband, father, siblings and other family members. Due to women's lack of time, discipline in life and the aura society has given them; diary notes made by women never came out. Therefore woman is invisible in the history written using traditional documentary details.

But today the manner of historiography is changing. The numerous documentary material which were considered irrelevant before, are being popularly used now. For instance, the utilization of the diary notes written by Kulin Brahmin girls turned prostitutes and those by women belonging to the Dasi tradition in the Bengal Renaissance as against the patriarchal interpretations – interpretations centred on Rajaram Mohan Roy and Vidya Sagar – can be taken as an example. Nowadays re-readings of traditional historiography are quite common. Tanika Sarkar, Kumkum Samkari, Uma Chakravorty, Kumkum Roy, Lathamony and S. Anandi have revealed the unscientific nature of patriarchal methods of conventional historiography through such re-readings. The writings of these women historians introduce a new methodology for women's historiography.



The tremendous upheavals appearing in different corners of history are not the sole reason for social change. The fact that the oppressed populace are engaged in constant wars with the oppressors, forms the foundation stone of this methodology. The weaker sections do not always wield weapons. They reveal their existence through fruitful rebellions. Records of these protests lay spread out from the landlord's threshing floor and the factories to the inner yards of the kitchen. These need not necessarily appear in the official records. These lie scattered in proverbs, legends, songs, hearsay, old stories, grandma's stories and traditions. The documentary methods of comprehensive historiography are of little assistance to them. Only the methodology of local historiography can be of any assistance here. For example the smarthavicaram (religious trial of Nambudiri woman suspected of adultery) of Kuriyedath Thathri is well known. The question whether her revelations formed part of a kind of protest has not yet died down. The change that had come about in the mentality of Nambudiri women of this period is what is suggested through this smarthavicaram. An exact history can be obtained only by recording the oral narration of the Nambudiri women who still carry those memories. Oral history is a mode of historiography, which is yet not popular in India and Kerala.

"The usage 'I' is comparatively less in narratives by women. Personal activities are very often viewed as inferior. Discourses will be self-criticizing. Personal authority is never eulogized' – G. Etter Louis remarks while speaking about the methodology of oral history. Similarly the French oral historiographer Paul Thomson remarks that in his study, while men used "I" women used "we". Such a response is a consequence of identifying themselves with their families, as the historiographer Geiger S. observes. Women usually respond, linking social incidents with family areas. Such an incident has occurred in the experience of this writer too. When the husband says that it was after the wedding that she first started wearing a blouse, the responses "it was Unni's first birthday" or "that was the day when Ittannuli delivered," seem to lead women from "I" to "We, our family".

Agricultural revolts, with the partnership of women are seen from the medieval period itself. Vanjeri Granthavari refers to Sitamma, a woman who burnt down the landlord's haystack. Those who write the history of Kayyur revolt support the revolutionaries and forget Kamala, the woman who stood as their inspiration. Memories of women who voluntarily participated in protests like Paliyam satyagraha and such others are also important. Memories are a historical construct. These are created by factors such as the circumstances of growing up, political ideology, cultural standing and so on. Historiography succeeds because it can visualize the religious, caste, race, gender variants. The following aspects should be included in the methodology using memories, oral statements, folk tales, legends and fictitious stories:

1. A feminist re-reading of traditional historical material.
2. Historical study of the given statistics and inclusion of narratives showing quality changes.
3. Local collection of data regarding invisible women.
4. Discovering and studying forms which may be used as weapons of the weak.
5. A comprehensive study of oral narratives and ceremonial traditions.

These are only the beginnings of the new efforts to promote women's historiography. Feminist reading/writing implies narratives showing how women as spectators and partners view each historical incident and change. This does not intend to insist that "this is how to view it" or interpret it according to prevalent political philosophy. New methods and implements are to be utilized to find out the mental occupation and activities of women.

### **Problems and Prospects of the new trends.**

The study of Kerala History has clearly been going through a process of change during recent decades. The process of change has generated new problems or brought to sharp focus earlier problems, that tended to be ignored or glossed over. These problems are fundamental and present immediate challenges to overcome. The first is the problem of evidence. The trend that

dominated the historiography of Kerala until recently is the collection and interpretation of individual source materials (a trend that is reflected even now in the publication of 'appendices' in research works with 'original documents'). This meant that collection and preservation of sources that did not immediately attract the interest of the historian tended to be ignored. Collection of sources became the major casualty when histories revolved around personalities, as a large number of documents including land deeds, family documents, etc might not mention them. This also applied to inscriptions and archaeological evidence. After the spurt of activity in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, interest or expertise in the study of archaeological evidence or inscriptions also waned.

Research work in Archaeology and Epigraphy and the actual work of collecting new evidence were restricted to the individual enthusiasts. However, as the emphasis is shifting towards tackling problems of description and interpretation, the problems of evidence has become very important. Archaeological evidence, inscriptions, coins, family records, literary sources and the like are urgently required by historians. However; facilities for acquiring, preserving and processing them for use by interested students have been faulty and backward with numerous important documents becoming irretrievably lost. Moreover, numerous records and documents kept in royal palaces, houses of landlords; temples, etc have become extinct, or are at the point of extinction. This grave weakness has seriously affected the empirical foundations of historical studies. The first such debate is basically on how to interpret the available evidence on pre-modern Kerala. The scattered, fragmentary nature of evidence has posed problems of interpretation, particularly in presenting a consistent chronological framework for ruling families and categorizing social and economic relations. However, Elamkulam and the recent researchers did an excellent work in integrating the available evidence to develop the picture of an evolving agrarian order, where overseas trade also played a crucial role. Certain commentators have rejected the whole model as being based on flimsy foundations. Others have questioned the conceptual framework developed by more recent researchers, particularly the characterization of medieval society as

feudal. However, these objections are based on negative predispositions towards interpretations rather than on objective evidence.

However, there is another level of debate which has been more constructive, on the question of applying various formulations on the available evidence. In what way was the Kerala society feudal, what were the specific features that provided the commonality variations visualist-a-visualist the classical 'feudal model? How did the feudal agrarian order come into being? How the society being transformed and what was were the implications of this transformation? These questions have necessitated the use of socio-anthropological approaches in the analysis of evidence. The frames of evidence on ancient society in Kerala are such that extrapolations become unavoidable, on the assumption that further researches will substantiate or reject the formulations proposed. At the same time adventurous hypotheses based on inadequate evidence has been advanced, for example, with reference to the antiquity of stone tools discovered from various parts of Kerala. This tendency will have to be rejected. Further, categorization of 'political' 'social' and economic histories become a tenuous exercise within the context of regional of Kerala, where historical process will have to be looked at from several angles, including geo climate and biological factors. As the material evidence accumulates, the problem of emphasis and priorities in the mode of enquiry also become pertinent, and has been attracting the attention of historians recently.

The question of priorities also becomes important in analyzing modern history and in understanding the processes of continuity and change in modern society. Which factors do we give primacy to, the objective material conditions like changes in agriculture, industry and the services, political structure, etc or subjective factors including literacy, social consciousness, sectional interests, health, etc. This is pertinent, because Kerala has achieved considerable advance in the subjective, but has remained back ward in the objective factors. Hence there is an inadvertent tendency among the historians of modern Kerala to express in terms of the subjective factors. The interpretative framework by some western scholars have also helped to augment this process. This has resulted in

the type of history writing which viewed the outbreak of rebellions such as Mappila Revolts in terms of culture 'consciousness' rather than probing into the objective conditions in which this consciousness emerged. No doubt subjective factors have played often a dominant role in social transformation but to isolate them from the historical process and viewing them as autonomous factors is not a valid exercise. Often the problem appears to be that a proper link has not been established between the historical processes of pre-modern and modern Kerala.

The third problem is the institutional framework. Historical method develops as a result of active discourse, the conditions of which are missing in our academic circles. The institutional framework that exists at present, including Government Departments of Archives, Archaeology, University Departments, college level history teaching and the popular understanding of history, have been based on stereotyped patterns and ossified models. Active discourse does not exist there. Discussions and debates therefore get restricted to occasionally sponsored seminars and the post-dinner sessions among a few enthusiasts. The ossified structure not only prevents new insights and arguments being discussed, but forces the students to accept outmoded notions as 'history'. At the popular levels, the traditional oral-legendary framework of history still persists, with facts being used as convenient launching stations for revivalist elements. The myths regarding St. Thomas, Ayyappa Swami, and Adi Sankara have become such inviolable facts that any attempt to question them would turn the wrath of the believer-revivalist on to the student of History. Another recent trend is the complacent comments on new historical formulations by certain established writers who do not take the trouble to consult the sources on which the formulation is drawn up. Free, objective enquiry into the growth and role of religious communities and even the activities of a ruler like Tipu Sultan is virtually impossible in a context where ossified models that cater to various forms of revivalism already exist.

However, all this does not mean that gloomy prospects exist for history writing in Kerala. Access to new evidences, to research work giving new insights

and interpretations, and to new ideas and methodological debates have enthused a new generation of history students to take up research on various problems. Moreover, numerous problems facing Kerala Society also have contributed to the growing realization that historical approach is essential for understanding and finding an answer to these problems. The research institutions all over India bear testimony to this new spirit. It is to be hoped that this new spirit will gather momentum, in Kerala as well. This compilation is a small step in that direction.

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