

# **CASTE SEGREGATION IN KERALA TEMPLES - A CASE STUDY OF NAMASKARA MANDAPA**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO  
THE MAHARAJA SAYAJIRAO UNIVERSITY OF BARODA  
FOR THE  
DEGREE DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
IN ART HISTORY AND AESTHETICS**

**OCTOBER 2012**

**GUIDING TEACHER**

**(Prof. Deepak Kannal)  
Professor in Art History  
& Aesthetics**

**INVESTIGATOR**

**Jayaram Poduval  
Asst. Professor in Art  
History & Aesthetics**

**HEAD  
DEPARTMENT OF ART HISTORY  
& AESTHETICS**

**(Dr. Shailendra K.S. Kushwaha)**

**DEAN  
FACULTY OF FINE ARTS**

**(Dr. Shailendra K.S. Kushwaha)**

**FACULTY OF FINE ARTS  
THE MAHARAJA SAYAJIRAO UNIVERSITY  
OF BARODA**

## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the Ph.D Thesis entitled CASTE SEGREGATION IN KERALA TEMPLES - A CASE STUDY OF NAMASKARA MANDAPA submitted by Shri.Jayaram Poduval for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Art History and Aesthetics, incorporates the result of independent investigations carried out by the candidate himself.

Guiding Teacher

Investigator

(Prof.Deepak Kannal)  
Professor in Art History  
& Aesthetics

Jayaram Poduval  
Asst.Professor in Art  
History & Aesthetics

October/2012



**PDF**  
Complete

*Your complimentary  
use period has ended.  
Thank you for using  
PDF Complete.*

[Click Here to upgrade to  
Unlimited Pages and Expanded Features](#)

# CASTE SEGREGATION IN KERALA TEMPLES - A CASE STUDY OF *NAMASKARA MANDAPA*



JAYARAM PODUVAL

## PREFACE

### Chapter 1

#### INTRODUCTION - History

- ANCIENT PERIOD
- KERALA DURING CANKAM PERIOD
- CERAS OF VANDI
- MUSAKAS OF KOLAM
- AYS OF VIZHINJAM
- CERAS OF MAHODAYAPURAM
- THE COLA CONQUESTS
- KOLATTIRIS OF KANNUR
- SAMUTIRIS OF KOZHIKKODE
- PERUMBADAPPUS OF KOCHI
- TIRUVITANKURS OF VENATU
- COLONIAL POWERS IN KERALA

### Chapter 2.

#### IDENTIFYING KERALA *DRAVIDA* - *Namaskara Mandapa* as the Unique Feature

- INTRODUCTION
- KERALA *DRAVIDA*, KARNATA *DRAVIDA* AND TAMIL *DRAVIDA*- A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS
- DYNASTIC AFFILIATIONS AND LAYOUT OF ARCHITECTURE
- RELIGIOUS AFFILIATIONS AND LAYOUT OF KERALA ARCHITECTURE
- ARYANIZATION AND SANSKRITIZATION
- IDENTIFYING KERALA *DRAVIDA* - MATERIALS FOR BUILDING
- LAYOUT OF KERALA *DRAVIDA* TEMPLES
- *TANTRIK* ASPECTS IN KERALA TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE

### Chapter 3.

#### CASTE SYSTEM IN KERALA

- INTRODUCTION: *PARAYI PETTA PANTIRU KULAM*
- THE MYTHICAL JUSTIFICATION OF THE BRAHMIN DOMINANCE IN THE CASTE HIERARCHY - *KERALA MAHATMYAM* AND *KERALOLPATTI*

TH INDIA PRIOR TO BRAHMIN MIGRATION TO

- INDIAN CASTE SYSTEM ACCORDING TO MEGASTHENES
- THE POSITION OF CASTES IN KERALA DURING CANKAM PERIOD
- OTHER RELIGIONS IN KERALA AT THE TIME OF BRAHMIN MIGRATION
- COMING OF BRAHMINS AND THEIR DOMINANCE ON CASTE SYSTEM
- ECONOMIC BASE FOR THE CASTE SYSTEM – THE LAND DISTRIBUTION
- KERALA BRAHMINS AND OTHERS - 64 ANACHARAMS
- AMBIGUOUS VARNA SYSTEM
- NAIRS IZHAVA AND OTHER CASTES
- PURITY AS THE PARAMETER FOR THE CASTE HIERARCHY

## **Chapter 4.**

### **SEGREGATION, STRUGGLE, EMANCIPATION AND PERSISTENCE**

- TEMPLE AS THE NUCLEUS OF SOCIAL LIFE
- SEGREGATION AND HIERARCHY
- COMING OF EUROPEAN AND INITIATION TO A NEW ORDER
- DEVELOPMENTS IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION
- WORKS OF SOCIAL REFORMERS
- TEMPLE ENTRY MOVEMENTS
- TEMPLE ENTRY COMMITTEE
- TEMPLE ENTRY PROCLAMATION
- AFTER TEMPLE ENTRY PROCLAMATION
- RETAINING OF CASTE HIERARCHY IN THE DISGUISE OF TANTRIK JUSTIFICATION

Epilogue

Appendix

Bibliography

Glossary



**PDF**  
Complete

*Your complimentary  
use period has ended.  
Thank you for using  
PDF Complete.*

[Click Here to upgrade to  
Unlimited Pages and Expanded Features](#)

# INTRODUCTION

*Eighty eight years back, 30<sup>th</sup> March a group of Satyagraha volunteers dressed neatly in homespun khadi walked towards the police barricade at Vaikom, a provincial town in central Kerala, belonging to the princely state of Tiruvitankur. The barricade was to demarcate the limit of the permissible area where a lower caste man could walk. Beyond the barricade lay the public road leading to Vaikom Mahadeva Temple. The police force of the Princely State of Tiruvitankur was ready for any consequences. Satyagrahis stood just outside the barricade not provoking the police but making their presence felt merely standing outside the barricade.*

*The non-violent struggles against the oppression of the high caste and the state authorities towards the lower castes have begun. Two entities of medieval barbarity of caste hierarchy, segregation, suppression, modern awareness and inspired struggle for modernity stood there face to face.*



To highlight the natural beauty of the region the promotional campaigns of Kerala Tourism call Kerala as “god’s own country”. Another reason may be, though not realized by the strategists of Kerala Tourism campaign, was the sheer number of temples in the state which would make Kerala the “gods’ own country”. Almost all villages, towns in Kerala have temples, with various cultic affiliations and sizes depending on the economic and political importance of the village/town. Even though the informed viewer could discern that many of these temples came into existence in the last few centuries; the local population would be assuring or at times stubbornly insisting that those temples existed since, many *yugas* or at least before Sankaracharya. Legends are in abundance, describing Parasurama the mythical creator of Kerala moving the length and breadth of Kerala establishing temples numbering almost 24000 as the local legend *KERALOLPATTI* would put it. Most of the temples which said to have attributed to Parasurama as the builder are dedicated Siva. Apart from Parasurama there are other usual pot pourri of mythical, legendary and historical figures who established the temples like Pandavas, Sankaracharya, and the Vilvamangalam Swami who seems to have been the main force behind the Krishna/Visnu temples. The locals are not very keen to attribute the temples to any king except in few cases in South Kerala where the concept of kingship was greatly nurtured by the Travancore kings.

Religious structures always played a role in maintaining the social order in all societies and the religious structures become the architectural interpretations of the social fabric. Nold Egenter states thus, “buildings essentially structure human environmental space. This would mean that man – as always- not only perceives, but

...e defined by buildings and reproduces this structure in other context, thinks with it, works with it”<sup>1</sup>. This perpetuation can be the intention and the social function of the architecture. As Paul Frankl observed, “The programme of any building, even those without artistic pretensions, is document of cultural history. There is thus a second, *higher* factor underlying the building programme that approximates what is called the intention. It is the practical and material certainty of purpose that determines the building program and hence the spatial form, but only intention gives to purpose its artistic character”<sup>2</sup>”

The study of the intention of architecture would take the architecture historian to the social sciences like history, economics and sociology. Architecture history has followed different paths in different areas of the world depending on the understanding and development in the pedagogy of the discipline. David Watkin writes in the preface of his book, THE RISE OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY, “It is important at the outset to state the aims of architectural history. These may be summarized under three headings – the practical, the historical and the aesthetic – which ideally should cross-fertilize each other. The first, or practical, task is to establish what was built, when it was built, and the names of the patron and designer. [sic] The second task, the historical, is to discover why the building was built. This may well call for considerable religious, cultural and sociological knowledge, for the precise function of a building may not be as obvious as might at first be imagined. Final task, the aesthetic is to describe and perhaps account for visual or stylistic

---

<sup>1</sup> Egenter Nold Architectural Anthropology - Research Series, vol. 1, THE PRESENT RELEVANCE OF THE PRIMITIVE IN ARCHITECTURE, (edition in 3 languages: English - French - German). Editions Structura Mundi, Lausanne, 1992

<sup>2</sup> Paul Frankl, Principles of Architectural History, Gauting, 1913, Translated by James O’Gorman, 1973, 1986, Massachusetts pp. 161

ling and another [sic]”.<sup>3</sup> The scholars who worked on

Indian architecture predominantly worked on the last task which was aesthetical entering partly into the realm of practical approach. The studies on Kerala architecture were not different from this approach.

Kerala did not appear in the mainstream art history till 1948, when Stella Kramrisch wrote the introductory book on Kerala titled ARTS AND CRAFTS OF TRAVANCORE along with Henri Cousens and R Vasudeva Poduval, the then director of Travancore Archaeology. Historians of Kerala in the pre independence period as William Logan, Padmanabha Menon, Sunkunni Menon and TK Velupilla did not delve into the art and architecture of the region. In the 70's there vigorous scholarly activity in the field of architectural history of Kerala with the reprint and enlarged version of the book by Stella Kramrisch with the renewed title THE ARTS AND CRAFTS OF KERALA [1970]. Kramrisch do not enter much into the understanding Kerala architecture and as a pioneering attempt it is improper to expect too much from it. More over in 1940's she would not have got permission to enter into the Hindu temples of Kerala. The scholars after Kramrisch like KV Soudara Rajan [TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE IN KERALA, 1974], KR Sreenivasan [TEMPLES OF SOUTH INDIA, 1972], H Sarkar [TEMPLES OF KERALA, 1973 and AN ARCHITECTURAL SURVEY OF TEMPLES OF KERALA 1978] and S Jayashanker [TEMPLES OF KERALA, 1997] describes the Kerala temples in detail but never attempt to further reading into the social history. In fact these scholars seldom attempted to read the Kerala architecture in relation with the social structure of Kerala. It may be for the reason that architecture history never entered into the realm of Sociology in India. The social relevance of architecture or

---

<sup>3</sup> David Watkin, The Rise of Architectural History, Architectural Press, London, 1980 pp. vii-viii

tem onto architecture reveals itself, only when one get exposed to the works of the scholars like Thomas Metcalf and Giles Tillotson on their works on Indian architecture.

Kleinbauer spells out the function of art historian thus, “Art historians aspire to analyze and interpret the visual arts by identifying their materials and techniques, makers, time and place of creation, and meaning or function- in short their place in the schema of history”<sup>4</sup>. Though Preziosi would interpret the Schema purely in the lines of Levi-Strauss as chronology<sup>5</sup> it is not purely the chronology only but the process of history which is the reflection of socio-economical progress of the society. In the case of European art this *schema* was already coherent when the pioneers of art history entered the scene. In the case of India, this *schema* seems still missing, due to the lack of the tradition of ‘rational’ history. However we come across in expressions of architecture as demarcations of the schema. Once we perceive the architecture not merely as the milestones of political upheavals and dominance but also as indicators of economic augmentation and dominance of a class the schema would work in favor of the architecture historian who prefers enter into the realm of architecture anthropology and sociology. Kerala temple architecture presents an ideal example for the study of architecture as a product of social structure. The present thesis intends to contextualize the history of Kerala temple architecture into the frame work of Social history of Art mapping the construction of social structure and its repercussions in the architecture of Hindu Temples.

\* \*

---

<sup>4</sup> As quoted by Donald Preziosi, RETHINKING ART HISTORY, MEDITATIONS ON A COY SCIENCE, Yale University Press, London, 1989,pp. 14

<sup>5</sup> Donald Preziosi, RETHINKING ART HISTORY, MEDITATIONS ON A COY SCIENCE, Yale University Press, London, 1989,pp. 14

Kerala temple architecture for the American Institute of Indian studies I had the opportunity to look at least hundred temples in Kerala, covering Malabar, Kochi and Tiruvitankur regions of the state. What struck me first is the distinction of Kerala temples from its Karnataka and Tamil counterparts regarding the elevation and plan. Though I have been visiting the temples in Kerala since my childhood, I could feel the difference only this time due to my experience of researching and teaching about the architecture of other regions of India. The dissimilarity in elevation like the tiled pyramidal roof of Kerala temples, from that of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu specifically as these states share the Dravida architecture, was justified as the climatic conditions of these states differed drastically.

In the layout of the temple I had noticed one feature which quite unique, that was the *namaskara mandapa*. The Hindu temple in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, though belonging to Dravida tradition as the Kerala temples do not have the feature of *Namaskara mandapa*. Many instances there are *nandi mandapas* on the cardinal axes just in front of the sri koil in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. The same space is occupied by the *namaskara mandapa* in Kerala. The absence of *vahana/Nandi mandapa* and the importance given to the namaskara mandapas through high level of decoration urged me to look further on namaskara mandapas as the exclusive feature of architecture in Kerala temples. A query in depth revealed the exclusivity of the usage of namaskara mandapas by Brahmins, or the *nambootiris*.

As any other person from Kerala I was aware of the Vaikom *Satyagraha*, Guruvayoor *Satyagraha* and the ensuing Temple entry Proclamation of 1936 [Travancore] and 1947 [Malabar] which allowed **all** persons of Hindu religion to enter the temple

studies the society of Kerala prior to these proclamations it will reveal the draconian social system existed then. This social system seems to have entered into the canons of architecture and created an elite space for the Brahmins in an already exclusive space of temple premise. This elite space is the *namaskara mandapa*. The scope and relevance of the present study rest in the fact that the scholars on Kerala temple architecture like Stella Kramrisch, KR Srinivasan, Soundara Rajan and H Sarkar do mentions about *Namaskara mandapas* as a special feature of Kerala temples but never probe into the social context of it.

Historians of Kerala as William Logan, Ilam Kulam Kunhan Pilla, Padmanabha Menon, and Sreedhara Menon do mentions about the caste system and the Brahmin dominance in Kerala without referring to the economical factors of this domination and the archeological data of it in the religious space. It was MGS Narayanan who tried to link the Nambutiri domination to the Cola incursion of Kerala and the weakening of Nair community. It does not look merely a coincidence that the *namaskara mandapas* start appearing soon after the Cola incursion. EMS Namboodiripad, PK Balakrishnan and Robin Jeffry are the historians who took note of the economic aspect of the caste domination of the Brahmins. The present study also attempts to contextualize the caste system in Kerala and with the architectural reflection of it as seen in the Kerala temples.

Unlike the untouchables of British India, their Kerala counterparts had, though limited, access to public wells, roads, schools and government jobs. Then why they were protesting and demanding for the entry right to the Hindu temple? The following statement by TK Madhavan, the main force behind the Temple Entry

s, “I think, it is a common perception that the Temple Entry Right and the movement is solely for the right of *avarnas* to enter into the temple and worship the god. Indeed, earning that would be part of the Temple Entry Right, but that is not the prime and only goal of the Temple Entry Right or the movement. Temple Entry Right is the ethical right which has religious and political facets”<sup>6</sup>. The Temple Entry Movement and the Vaikom Satyagraha was not about the “religious right” but a ‘civil right’ of an individual. It was for the ‘individual dignity’ which is the fundamental right of man.

Religions propagate that all human being are equal in front of the god but in Kerala and all over India, some dominant castes were acting as if they are ‘Rousseueian “more equals”’. When modernity made inroads into India mainly due to the education, the liberal ideas of western politics inspired the oppressed in India. They realized that when the whole nation was fighting for the equality and civil liberty the same national power group was denying the fundamental right of civil equality to the majority of the population living under the caste ridden society. The temples retained the remnants of the ‘old regime’ and the last bastions of orthodoxy maintaining the caste segregation based on purity and hierarchy in the guise of ritual and the sanctity of the temple. To build up a welfare society it was necessary to demolish this bastion of orthodoxy that was the contribution of Temple Entry Movement.

---

<sup>6</sup> Speech of TK Madhavan, Ochira, [Kollam District],1929, quoted by Govinda Pillai P [from PK Madhavan, *TK MADHAVANTE JEEVACHARITHRAM*, [Biography of TK Madhavan] Kottayam, 1986,p.79] *KERALA NAVODHANAM, YUGASANTHATHIKAL YUGASILPIKAL*, [Malayalam], [Kerala Renaissance, Children and Builders of the Era], Chinta Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram 2009, Second Edition, 2010. P.145

here, whether the Temple Entry Proclamation of 1936 in Tiruvitankur State and similar declaration in Kochi [1948] and Malabar [1939] subsequently allow **all Hindus** right to access to **all** part of the temple. In fact, the Proclamation did not open the doors to **all** castes to **all** part of the temple but only partial entry into the temples. The fact remain that even after the Temple Entry proclamation the Brahmin caste have reserved a position in the spatial organization of Kerala Temples. The caste hierarchy and exclusivity of the dominant caste was written in fine print as a subtext of the Temple Entry Proclamation which gave Brahmins exclusivity of space, which is *Namaskara Mandapa*. **The *Namaskara Mandapas* remain even today as the vestige of a caste-ridden society and its expression in architecture.**





## Chapter 1

# INTRODUCTION

## History

Before investigating into the main concern of the present thesis that is the relationship between the social structure and components of architecture it is imperative to look briefly into the history of Kerala as the region have gone through drastic social changes which are palpable in the history. If one look at Kerala society in the ancient and medieval periods it would appear as belonging to two different regions. No historians could pin point on the factors constituted to these changes. Some suggest that the migration of Brahmins to Kerala has brought in these transformations. Yet another group points towards the Chola wars as reason. Kerala presents a curious political system where the ruling dynasties did not make much of an impact on the social system. Even architecture does not change according to the shift in the power system as was in the case of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, the neighboring regions of Kerala. In Tamil Nadu, one could distinguish between the Pallava, Chola, Vijayanagara and Nayaka monuments, but in Kerala the Cera, Musaka, Ay, Kolattiri, Samutiri, Perumbadappu and Tiruvitakur temples retains more or less the same pattern with minor regional variations. The Kerala kings did not or could not assert their authority over the social structure and culture of the region as the authority was rested with some other section of the society or the society was structured thus that no authority was accepted. In Cankam literature we come across the lower class poets like *Panas* who are openly criticizing the king and in modern period we have instances of Brahmins publically insulting the kings. The Brahmins of Sangam period, who were mere bangle makers climb up the social ladder and reaches top in the medieval period. Except the Cholas, Nayakas and Mysore under Hyder Ali and Tipu no Karnataka and Tamil Nadu powers seem to have retained the province of

the claim but not supported epigraphically within the region.

The charm of Kerala history itself is this vagueness. Kerala historians has to really struggle to come out of the mist of myth and legends associated with the land, right from the myth of its creation ascribed to Parasurama, an incarnation of Vishnu. Even progressive historian like Padmanabha Menon and Marxian historian as EMS Nambootirippadu had to spent pages after page denying the Parasurama myth. Then come the controversy of the Perumal legend and the Second Cera Empire which none of historians have come to conclusive theory. Kerala had trade connections with Egypt, China, Mesopotamia, Greece and Rome but except few gold coins none of the remnants of these civilizations exist in Kerala. Pliny the elder complained about the draining of gold to Kerala through spice trade but where did all those gold go? Kerala had Judaism and Christianity much before probably Brahmanism knocked on its borders but what one see in the medieval period is brahmanical dominance in the society. Present chapter deals with a brief introduction to the history of Kerala to map the background of the arguments in the chapters to follow.

## **ANCIENT PERIOD**

Kerala, a small strip of land compared to its neighbors in South India had made significant entries into the annals of Ancient Indian history whether through its contacts with Egyptian civilization or through the references in the epics or the epigraphic records of Asoka. However, Kerala history hardly becomes an integral part of the Indian history except in the portions discussing about the trade connections with the west especially with the Romans. The political and cultural history of Kerala

is shrouded in mystery, due to the lack of epigraphical and archaeological evidences. Most of the historians delved into the Parasurama myth or on the rhetoric descriptions of the *Cankam* literature. The historians who wrote in Malayalam based their arguments heavily on Malabar Manuel by Logan, the first modern history written by the Scottish officer posted in North Kerala in 19<sup>th</sup> century. EMS Namboodirippadu who wrote the history of Kerala with a Marxian approach had to spend pages after pages refuting the myths associated with Kerala. Kerala again comes back in the focus of Indian history during the discussion on the arrival of colonial powers, but forgotten soon after as the historians were busy tracking the British, who hardly had a major stake in Kerala politics till they got the Malabar region thanks to the Mysore Wars.

The ancient Indian texts provide ample references to Kerala, *Aitareya Aranyaka* being the first, which mentions the land of Kerala; the reference of *Cherapada* in this text may be referring Kerala<sup>7</sup>. This reference is followed by treatises of Katyayana [C. 4C BC] and Patanjali [C. 2C BC]. *Kishkindha kanda* of *RAMAYANA* mentions about Sugriva sending his army in search for Sita to Kerala [mentioned as *Keralan*] along with countries as Andhra, Pundra, Cola and Pandya thus:

“*Nadim godavari chaiva  
Sarvamevanu pascata  
Tathaivandhram sca Pundram sca  
Colan pandam sca **keralan**”- SARGA 41<sup>8</sup>*

---

<sup>7</sup> PK Gopalakrishnan, *KERALTHINTE SAMSKARIKA CHARITRAM* [Malayalam] [A CULTURAL HISTORY OF KERALA], State Institute of Languages, Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 1974, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2000, pp.65

<sup>8</sup> PK Gopalakrishnan, *KERALTHINTE SAMSKARIKA CHARITRAM* [Malayalam] [A CULTURAL HISTORY OF KERALA], State Institute of Languages, Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 1974, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2000, pp 65

as Sahadeva's visit to Kerala during the *asvamedha* campaign thus:

*tata samudra tirena  
vangan pundran sa **keralan**  
tatra tatra cabhuriti  
mleccha sainyanukesa-* *ASVAMEDHAPARVAM, Chapter 83<sup>9</sup>*

Megasthenes, Greek ambassador to Chandragupta Maurya refers to the Pandyan kingdom of the south and the neighboring population of *Chermoe*, probably a polluted version of the word Cera in his book *INDICA*<sup>10</sup>. Kautilya mentions about the pearls of the River Churni, the ancient name of the River Periyar. The Second rock cut edict of Asoka at Girnar cites *Keralaputras* as bordering the Mauryan Empire in south. The *Keralaputra* mentioned in the edict definitely refers to the Kerala region. Kalidasa, the celebrated poet of Sanskrit who probably lived in 5<sup>th</sup> century AD, writes in his *Raghuvamsa Mahakavya* about the pepper plants and the rising smell of cardamom as Raghu's horses trampling through the Kerala forest.

Pepper and other spices played a great deal in the sequence of Kerala History and culture. The religions, new cultures and nations came knocking on the doors of Kerala through the Spice Route. Black peppercorns were found stuffed in the nostrils of Ramses II, placed there as part of the mummification rituals shortly after his death in 1213 BC, however little else is known about the use of pepper in ancient Egypt, nor how it reached the Nile from India. William Logan traces the trade connection

---

<sup>9</sup> PK Gopalakrishnan, *KERALATHINTE SAMSKARIKA CHARITRAM* [Malayalam] [A CULTURAL HISTORY OF KERALA], State Institute of Languages, Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 1974, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2000, pp64

<sup>10</sup> Arrian "The Indica" in *Anabasis of Alexander*, together with the *Indica*, E. J. Chinnock, tr. (London: Bohn, 1893), ch. 1-16, [http://www.shsu.edu/~his\\_ncp/Indica.html](http://www.shsu.edu/~his_ncp/Indica.html)

thus, “Perhaps as early as the time of Moses, the great Jewish law-giver, this commerce existed, for cinnamon and *cassia* played a part in the temple services of the Jews [Exodus xxx. 23,24] and at any rate the commerce existed in the time of King Solomon [circa. 1000 BC] for the Bible narrative records that “For the King had at sea navy of Tharshish with the navy of Hiram; once in three years came the navy of Tharshish, bringing gold and silver, ivory and apes and peacocks” [I Kings x. 22]. With the exception perhaps of silver, these are all production of the Malabar Coast, and the biblical name for the peacock – *tuki* - is evidently the Tamil/Malayalam – *tokie*, the bird of the tail”<sup>11</sup>.

The Peryplus of the Eritrean Sea [C.1C BC] describes the ports of Kerala thus, “*Tyndis* is of the Kingdom of *Cerobothra*; it is a village in plain sight by the sea. Musiris, of the same kingdom, abounds in ships sent there with cargoes from Arabia, and by the Greeks; it is located on a river, distant from Tyndis by river and sea five hundred stadia, and up the river from the shore twenty stadia. Nelcynda is distant from Musiris by river and sea about five hundred stadia, and is of another Kingdom, the Pandyan”<sup>12</sup>. Apart from Peryplus the other writers who referred to Kerala are Pliny the Elder [C. 1C AD] who states thus “the most advantageous way of sailing to India is to set out from *Cella*; from that port it is a 40 days' voyage, if the *Hippalus* is blowing, to the first trading station in India, Cranganore not a desirable port of call, on account of the neighboring pirates, who occupy a place called *Nitriae*, nor is it specially rich in articles of merchandise; and furthermore the roadstead for shipping is a long way

<sup>11</sup> Logan William, MALABAR MANUEL, 2000 edited version Edited by PJ Cheriyan, Kerala Gazetteers Department, Thiruvananthapuram, 2000, pp.245

<sup>12</sup> Ancient History Sourcebook: The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea: Travel and Trade in the Indian Ocean by a Merchant of the First Century, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/periplus.html>

...ve to be brought in and carried out in boats. The king of Musiris, at the date of publication, was *Caelobothras*<sup>13</sup>. Pliny complains about the flow of Roman gold coins to the east in return to the Pepper. He estimated that India took 55,000,000 sesterces [\$800,000] annually spending on spices, ivory and ‘woven wind like exposing clothes’ [Petronius as quoted by Logan<sup>14</sup>]. Ptolemy [C. 2C AD] refers to the ports of Kerala in his *GEOGRAPHY*. He calls the land as *Dimirike* ruled by the *Kerobotros* and *Ays*. These references were made because of the flourishing trade between Kerala and European nations, especially to Rome. Alaric I [circa 370-410 AD] the Visigoth conqueror asked for a huge ransom of Pepper to free Rome from his siege. The hordes of Roman gold coins discovered in Kerala support the fact that the maritime trade with Kerala and the west was active in the Roman period.

Unfortunately none of these references indicate the political situations of Kerala, except Ptolemy who mentions a ruling dynasty as the *Kerabotros* probably referring to the Ceras ruling from Karoura which Logan identifies as Karur near Coimbatore<sup>15</sup> but later historians like Kesari Balakrishna Pilla consider Karur as Karurpadanna near Kodungallur<sup>16</sup>. Kerala had connections with Arabia from the time of Solomon. Arabs traded with Kerala for gold, ivory, monkeys and peacocks. Arab merchants came to Kerala from Egypt long before the Romans. Pre Quran references to black pepper from India and teak in Arab poetry indicate trade connection to Kerala.

<sup>13</sup> Ancient History Sourcebook: Pliny: Natural History 6.96-111. (On India), <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/pliny-india.html>

<sup>14</sup> Logan, William MALABAR MANUEL, 2000 edited version Edited by PJ Cheriyan, Kerala Gazetteers Department, Thiruvananthapuram, 2000, pp.249

<sup>15</sup> Logan, William MALABAR MANUEL, 2000 edited version Edited by PJ Cheriyan, Kerala Gazetteers Department, Thiruvananthapuram, 2000, pp.251

<sup>16</sup> This town is mentioned earlier as Cranganore, an English version of the Malayalam name Kodungallur.

grapher Strabo, the early Empire sent a fleet of around 120 ships on an annual one-year trip to India and back. Logan also mentions the Indian embassies received by various Roman emperors starting from Augustus who received them in Spain. The other emperors who received the embassies include Trajan [107 AD] Antonious Pius [138-61 AD] Julian [361 AD] and even Justinian [540 AD]. Cosmas Indicopolous, [C 6C AD] a Byzantine monk refers to the Church at *Kalliena* [Kollam] and the local Bishop getting consecrated in Persia. It is said that Alaric the Visigoth and Attila the Hun each demanded from Rome a ransom of more than a ton of pepper when they besieged the city in 5th century. A riddle authored by Saint Aldhelm, a 7th-century Bishop of Sherborne<sup>17</sup>, sheds some light on black pepper's role in England at that time.

Sporadic literary sources from the region are available, referring to the ancient period of Kerala like the *CANKAM/SANGAM* poems and medieval period compilations as the *MUSAKA CARITAM*, *UNNUNEELI SANDESHAM* and *KUVALAYAMALA*. The collection of legends as *KERALA MAHATMYAM* and *KERALOLPATTI* and *EITTIHYAMALA*, talk about the origin and development of the region of Kerala, however none of these texts can be referred to as providing credible historical data.

Among these texts, *SANGAM/ CANKAM* texts illustrate the geography, economic and political structure and culture of Tamilakam [inclusive of presentday states of

---

<sup>17</sup> *I am black on the outside, clad in a wrinkled cover,  
Yet within I bear a burning marrow.  
I season delicacies, the banquets of kings, and the luxuries of the table,  
both the sauces and the tenderized meats of the kitchen.  
But you will find in me no quality of any worth,  
unless your bowels have been rattled by my gleaming marrow.*



late ascribed to the Cankam literature is 2<sup>nd</sup> century of the Christian Era, continuing for almost 150 years. Nilakanta Sastri writes thus about the historical authenticity of CANKAM thus, “Archaeology confirms the evidence of literature. The numerous discoveries throughout south india of gold and silver coins of roman emperors of the first two centuries AD and the evidence recently unearthed of the presence of a ‘Roman factory’ at Arikamedu in the neighbourhood of Pondicherry in the first century go far to confirm the correctness of the date suggested for Sangam age<sup>18</sup>.

## KERALA DURING TO CANKAM PERIOD

The obvious question whether one should bring in the *Cankam* references should be brought to illustrate the early history of Kerala naturally arises as *Cankam* centers all belong to present day Tamil Nadu. Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai put end to these doubts by referring *AKAM* literature where Venkatam, Erumayoor, and Tulu land is considered as the northern boundary of the Tamil land. Among this Venkatam is the present Venkatachalam or Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh and Erumayoor is Mysore [Eruma [*Tam.*] = Mahisha [*Skt.*] = Ur [*Tam.*] = village [*Eng.*]. Subramanian defines the Tamil country as described in the *Cankam* literature thus; “From ancient times Tamil region only knew three rulers as Ceras, Colas and Pandyas. South west portion of the country was under the Ceras, while north east was controlled by the Colas and Pandyas ruled over the south and south east. The region which was under the Colas included the present Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh and Arcot, Chennai,

---

<sup>18</sup> Nilakanta Sastri K A, THE ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF SOUTH INDIA ó From Prehistoric Times to the Fall of Vijayanagar, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2009, Third Impression 2011. p.41

*Tondaimandalam*. The land south of Kaveri River and

east of Anamalai [in Sahya ranges] all the way to the eastern and southern coast was under Pandyas. The present Kerala state comprised the old Cera kingdom”<sup>19</sup>. Interestingly this the political geography which was provided by the non Tamil texts like *MAHABHARATA*, *RAMAYANA* and *ARTHASASTRA* and mentioned by ancient Indian authors as Katyayana, and foreign authors and Strabo and writer of the *Peryplus of Eritrean Sea*. The same authors and *Cankam* poetry mention Vanchi, Kanchi and Madurai as the main cities of Tamilakam. Kanchi and Madurai doubtlessly are the present Kanchipuram and Madurai in the state of Tamil Nadu. Though there is no place in Kerala with the name Vanchi, except Tiruvancikulam near Kodungallur. Most of the scholars identify Kodungallur a port town in central Kerala or the some of its surrounding villages with Vanci. Recent excavations lead by Kerala Centre for Historical Research [KCHR] in a site known as Pattanam near Kodungallur has brought out a port city settlement which can point towards the existence Vanchi in Kerala.

*Cankam* or at times mentioned as the *Tamil Cankam* is the collection of literature from South India. AK Ramanujan writes about *Cankam* literature thus, "In their antiquity and in their contemporaneity, there is not much else in any Indian literature equal to these quite and dramatic Tamil poems. In their values and stances, they represent a mature classical poetry: passion is balanced by courtesy, transparency by ironies and nuances of design, impersonality by vivid detail, austerity of line by richness of implication. These poems are not just the earliest evidence of the Tamil

---

<sup>19</sup> N Subramaniam, *Cankam Polity: THE ADMINISTRATION AND SOCIAL LIFE OF THE CANKAM TAMILS*, Malayalam translation: *SANGHAKALA BHARANA SAMVIDHANAM: SANGHAM TAMIZHARUDE BHARANAVUM SAMOOHIKA JEEVITAVUM*. Indian Council of Historical Research, New Delhi, DC Books, Kottayam, 2003, P. 45

o-Dravidian Jain culture. The Tamil in all their 2,000 years of literary effort wrote nothing better"<sup>20</sup>. The Tamil *Cankams* were legendary assemblies of Tamil scholars and poets that, according to traditional Tamil accounts, occurred in the remote past. "That collage [*Cankam*] of Tamil poets flourished for a time under royal patronage in Madura [Madurai] may well be a fact", writes Nilakantha Sastri, "But, the earliest account of it, which occurs in the introduction to the commentary on the *IRAIYANAR AGAPPORUL* (C. 750 AD), is enveloped in legend"<sup>21</sup>.

Ramanujan states about the reasons for the amnesia about *Cankam* poems for centuries and their discovery in 19<sup>th</sup> century thus, "these classics were not always known to the Tamils themselves. They were dramatically rediscovered in the later decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a period of transition, when both paper and palm leaf were used as writing materials. The great texts of classical Tamil literature, including the eight anthologies and twin epics [*CILAPATKARAM* and *MANIMEKALAI*] were inaccessible to most scholars all through the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, though they were known and had been commented on a commentary earlier. 18<sup>th</sup> century Hindu scholars, devout worshipers of Siva and Vishnu, had tabooed as irreligious all secular and non-Hindu texts, which included the classical Tamil anthologies. They also disallowed the study of Jain and Buddhist texts, which included the Twin Epics"<sup>22</sup>. Ramanujan does acknowledge the efforts of Caminata Aiyar [1855-1942] in bringing light on to these fabulous collections of poems.

---

<sup>20</sup> Ramanujan, A.K., *INTERIOR LANDSCAPE*, 1967, Afterword, p115.

<sup>21</sup> Nilakantha Sastri, *A HISTORY OF SOUTH INDIA, FROM PRE HISTORIC TIMES TO THE FALL OF VIJAYANAGAR*, p. 116, Oxford University Press, Madras, 1955, 1976 [fourth Edition]

<sup>22</sup> Ramanujan AK, *POEMS OF LOVE AND WAR*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1985, pp[xi]

ed, the first *Cankam* (*mutal cankam*) is described as having been held at "the Madurai which was submerged by the sea", lasted a total of 4440 years, and had 549 members, which supposedly included some gods of the Hindu pantheon such as Siva, Kubera and Murugan. A total of 4449 poets are described as having composed songs for this *Cankam*. The second *Cankam* (*idai cankam*) was convened in Kapatapuram. This *Cankam* lasted for 3700 years and had fifty-nine members, with 3700 poets participating. This city was also submerged in sea. The third *Cankam* (*katai cankam*) was purportedly located in the current city of Madurai and lasted for 1850 years under 49 kings. The academy had 49 members, and 449 poets are described as having participated in the *Cankam*<sup>23</sup>. Gopalakrishnan also informs us that all the poems of first and second *Cankam* except *TOLKAPIAUM* of the second *Cankam* are lost. An accurate chronological assessment of literary works has been rendered difficult due to lack of concrete scientific evidence to support conflicting claims. Undue reliance on the *Cankam* legends has thus culminated in controversial opinions or interpretations among scholars, confusion in the dates, names of authors, and doubts of even their existence in some cases. The earliest archaeological evidence connecting Madurai and the *Cankams* is the 10th century Cinnamanur inscription of the Pandyas<sup>24</sup>.

*Cankam* poems include two collections called *PATHINENMĒLKANAKKU* and *PATHINENKILKANAKKU*. *PATHINENMĒLKANAKKU* is the collection of the oldest surviving Tamil Poetry. This Anthology Series contains *ETTUTHOKAI* - the Eight

---

<sup>23</sup> Zvelebil, Kamil, THE SMILE OF MURUGAN: ON TAMIL LITERATURE OF SOUTH INDIA, Leiden: Brill, 1973, p. 47

<sup>24</sup> An inscription of the early tenth century CE mentions the achievements of the early Pandya kings of establishing a *Cankam* in Madurai. See K.A. Nilakantha Sastry, A HISTORY OF SOUTH INDIA, Oxford University Press, Madras, 1955, 1976 (Forth Edition), pp 116

U - the Ten short poems. This anthology contains 2,381 poems including the ten larger works belonging to the *PATTUPATTU* collection. Sixteen of the 473 poets are responsible for 1,177 of the 2,279 poems for which the name of the author is known. This collection also included the famous anthologies namely, *AKANANNURU* [*Akam*] and *PURANANNURU* [*Puram*]. The word *Akam* and *Puram* denotes interior and exterior respectively. *AKANANNURU* is a collection of four hundred poems written by 142 poets dealing with the love life of people, usually the prince and princesses while *Puram* poems, comprising of 399 poems describes the great wars fought by the kings. *PATHINENKILKANAKKU* is a collection of eighteen poetic works. The poems of this collection differ from the earlier works under the *PATHINENMAELKANAKKU* collection, which are the oldest surviving Tamil Poetry. This anthology also includes *THIRUKKURAL* also known as *KURAL* a classic of couplets or *KURALS* (1330 rhyming Tamil couplets) or aphorisms. It was authored by Thiruvalluvar, and is considered to be the first work to focus on ethics, in *Shramana* literature of India. *Kural* is also venerated as *tamilmarai* (Tamil Veda); *poyyamozi* (speech that does not become false); and *teyva nul* or *dheiva nool* (divine text). *Cankam* literature also includes the epic Tamil poems like the *MANIMEKALAI* and *SILAPATIKARAM*.

Though it is a daunting task to date the period and the area of origin of the *Cankam* literature as the authors hardly left any chronological or geographical specificities in their creation, most of the scholars agree on the date of 300 BC to 300 AD as the date of this collection. N Subramanian discusses the reason behind tracing the *Cankam* period to the early Christian era thus “The society described in the *Cankam* poetry, along with epic poems like *SILAPATIKARAM* and *MANIMEKALAI* is very close to the

belonging to the pre or early Christian Era] like Pliny the elder, Ptolemy, Strabo and the author of Peryplus of the Eritrean Sea”<sup>25</sup>. The reference of the Sri Lankan king Gajabahu participating in the worship of Kannaki along with Sengutavan the Cera king can also be taken as a pointer towards the date of Silapatikaram. There are only two Gajabahus mentioned in the Sri Lankan history one lived in the 2nd century AD and the other in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, if one has to connect Gajabahu and Sengutavan it has to be the one who lived in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century and thus placing the text to the same period.

Scholars like Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai strongly believe that the Ceras mentioned in the Cankam literature definitely refer to the dynasty who ruled over Kerala probably due to the reference of Ptolemy who call the rulers of Kerala as Cherabotros and of Pliny who called them as *Caelobothras*. Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai considers that, “Among the Colas and Pandyas only few like Karikala and Netumceliyan have been mentioned in the *Cankam* literature. It will be difficult to trace the history of these dynasties solely through *Cankam* sources. However the Cera genealogy can more or less satisfactorily be understood using the *Cankam* literature, especially *PATITTUPATTU*”<sup>26</sup>. He also states elsewhere that, “*Patittupattu* [Ten chapters of ten poems each] do describe the kings who ruled from Kerala in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century. The first

---

<sup>25</sup> N Subramaniam, *Cankam Polity: The Administration and Social life of the Cankam Tamils*, Malayalam translation : *SANGHAKALA BHARANA SAMVIDHANAM : SANGHAM TAMIZHARUDE BHARANAVUM SAMOOHIKA JEEVITAVUM*. Indian Council of Historical Research, New Delhi, DC Books, Kottayam, 2003, Pp 37

<sup>26</sup> Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, *ELAMKULAM KUNJANPILLAYUDE THIRENJEDUTHA KRITHIKAL 6* Part I, [Malayalam] Ed. N Sam, International Centre for Kerala Studies, University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 2005, pp 41

ing; the rest eulogizes nine Cera kings”<sup>27</sup>. Elamkulam argues that Karurpadanna [Karuvapadna] on the river Periyar north east of Kodungallur was the famous Vanci of *Cankam* literature, as writers like Strabo talk about the capital of the *Cerabotras* in the inner land away from Muchiri, the port city. Muchiri/Muziris is no doubt refers to Kodungallur. Elamkulam referring *PATITTUPATTU* provides the ruling years of the Cera kings thus:

Anthology Number	Name of the Cera King Mentioned	Reign mentioned
First <i>Pattu</i>	Missing	
Second <i>Pattu</i>	Imaya Varamban Netumceralatan	58 yrs
Third <i>Pattu</i>	Palyaneecelkezhukuttuvan	25 yrs
Fourth <i>Pattu</i>	Kalamkaykanni Narmudiceral	25 yrs
Fifth <i>Pattu</i>	Velkelukuttuvan	50 yrs
Sixth <i>Pattu</i>	Atukotu Pattuceralatan	38 yrs
Seventh <i>Pattu</i>	Celvakutunko Valiyatan	20 yrs
Eighth <i>Pattu</i>	Perumceral Irumburai	17 yrs
Ninth <i>Pattu</i>	Ilamceral Irumburai	16 yrs
Tenth <i>Pattu</i>	Missing	

## CERAS OF VANCI

Entering the debate regarding the Ceras, Sreedhara Menon argues that the list provided by Elamkulam may not be authentic as many of the rulers mentioned in the texts were in fact crown princes who never ruled. The well known Cera king Utiyan Ceral was probably the hero of the first *Pattu*. Utiyan Ceral’s son Palyane Cel Kezhu Kuttuvan who ruled along with his brother Netumceralatan becomes the protagonist of the third *Pattu*. The son of Netumceralatan, namely Kalamkaykanni Narmudiceral

<sup>27</sup> Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, *ELAMKULAM KUNJANPILLAYUDE THIRENJEDUTHA KRITHIKAL* – Part I, [Malayalam] Ed. N Sam, International Centre for Kerala Studies, University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 2005. Pp 40



the hero of the fourth *Pattu*, where the reason behind his epithet Kalamkaykanni Narmudi is explained. Unfortunately apart from the scanty reference in the *PATITTUPATTU* we do not have many references specifically about the Ceras and their administrative system except the eulogies of their valor and kindness. Ceras most probably ruled over the central part of Kerala expanding slowly towards the north and southern regions. Netumceralatan seems to have conquered many kings and became the *adhiraja* [Supreme King]. He also known to have fought with *Yavanas* [a word commonly used for western powers specifically to Greeks]<sup>28</sup> Narmudiceral defeated and killed the Nannan of Ezhimala in the battle of Vakaiperumturai and extended the Cera rule to north Kerala. Pushing of the sea back by Vel Kezhu Kuttuvan though sounds like Parasurama myth but may be referring to a naval victory by the Ceras.

The Cera power seems to have waned during 7<sup>th</sup> century thanks to the series of wars with Colas and Pandians and the newly emerging powers like the Calukyans and Pallavas, both claiming that they have defeated the Kerala kings. However one cannot pin point the influence of these dynasties in the Kerala culture. The Brahmanical dominance is one of the possible influences which these dynasties could have forced upon Kerala, which would be dealt in detail in the later chapter of this thesis.

## MUSAKAS OF KOLAM

Musakas of Kolam is another dynasty belonging to the ancient period who ruled from Ezhimala, controlling northern part of Kerala. Nannan of Ezhimala, appearing in

---

<sup>28</sup> A Sreedhara Menon, *KERALA CHARITHRAM* [Malayalam][HISTORY OF KERALA], S.Visvanathan Pvt.Ltd, Madras, 1967, Revised Edition 1995, Reprint 2001, pp. 90



belonged to this dynasty. The mystery over the Musakas initiates from the name of the dynasty itself. Sarkar and many historians consider it as *Musika*, the Sanskrit word for rat and their abode as *Eli mala*, a Malayalam equivalent for “the mountain of the rats”. Chirakkal T Balakrishnan Nair, a descendant of the Kolattiri dynasty and a local historian, explains that the name of the dynasty is derived from the Sanskrit word *Musaka*, denoting a kind of *Sirisa* Tree [*Mimosa Sirisa*]. The hill, according to Balakrishnan Nair, should be pronounced as *Ezhimala*, meaning seven hills. He again suggests that the Kolattiris, the later rulers of the region, must have appropriated the insignia of the Musakas depicting a boat, a bunch of *Musaka* flowers and a sword<sup>29</sup>. Sarkar agrees with KV Subrahmanya Ayer suggesting that the capital of Musakas be at Kolam, which Ayer identifies as Kollam or Pantalayini Kollam, 30 KM north of Kozhikkode, the port city. Ayer however could not comprehend the absence of epigraphic references to Musakas in this region and the existence of the same in Kannur district around the Ezhimala. This confusion is congenital, as the Musakas never held sway over the geographical area suggested by Ayer.

The artists of the folk performance of the region called *Teyyam* refers in their incantations about *Kolaswarupam* the landmass, which would encompass the present day Kannur District. Balakrishnan Nair argues that the Kolam should be considered as the name of the kingdom and not of the capital of Musakas. There are many towns in Kannur District, which can claim the position of erstwhile capital of the Musakas. The word *tali* in north Kerala denote a capital city. We have the example of Tali from Kozhikkode, which was the capital of the Samutiris. A small suburb of

---

<sup>29</sup> Chirakkal T Balakrishnan Nair, *THIRANJEDUTHA PRABANDHANGAL* [Malayalam] [COLLECTED ESSAYS], Kerala Sahitya Akademi, Trissur, 1981, Reprint, 1996 , pp.42

tali [Raman + *Tali*, meaning the capital of Rama] was probably the first capital of Musakas under Ramakuda Musaka [Ramakuda Muvar], the founder of the dynasty according to the legend.

The myth behind the Teyyam performance of a deity called *Kolaswarupantingal Tayi* [the mother of Kolaswarupam] narrates the story of the establishment of Musaka dynasty. According to this myth, after the destruction of Dwaraka and the death of Krishna, one of his wives escaped on a boat [*Kolam* in old Malayalam according to Balakrishnan Nair] and was floated down to Ezhi Mala, the hillock near the village of Ramantali. Her son was Ramakhata Musaka alias Iramakuda Muvar the founder of the dynasty. Through this myth Musakas positioned themselves as the Vrsnis / Yadavas as claimed by Ays, their contemporaries in South Kerala.

Sarkar identifies a reference in Mahakuta inscription [602 AD] of Calukyan Mangalesa to the Musakas and identified it with the Musakas of Kolam. The Musika of Mahakuta inscription can be same as the Musika Nagari of Eastern Maharashtra neighboring Kalinga and Cedi regions as referred in the *Hala Gaha Sapta Sai*<sup>30</sup> a Satavahana period text. Interestingly *gaha Saptasai* and the Mahakuta pillar inscription refer to the same Musika nagari of Eastern Maharashtra and not the Musaka Nagara of Kerala. However there are some historians who believe that that the Calukyans did rule over Kerala, especially northern Kerala for a significant period.

---

<sup>30</sup> SA Jogalekar, *HALA GATHA SAPTA SAHI*, Pune 1956

and Perumtalai Cathanar and many *Akam* and *Puram* poets refer to a ruler called Nannan of Elimala. He is characterized as the master of Konkanam too. Besides Nannan, *Cankam* works refers to *Muvan*, probably a corrupted version of *Muvar*, the epithet most of the Musaka kings used as a suffix to their names. Extensive reference on the Musika or Musakas derived from the Sanskrit poem by Atula titled *MUSAKA VAMSAM*, which Gopinatha Rao inferred as written in 11<sup>th</sup> century because of the reference of Vallabha, a Musaka king joining the Cera king in his battle against the Colas. The *kavya* also mentions the Musakas as the descendants of Musakas of Haihayadesa on the foothills of Vindhya region. King Nandan of Musaka *vamsa* might be the same person as Nannan of *Cankam* period<sup>31</sup>. Apart from Nannan the poem provides the names of few kings of the dynasty as Isana II and his sons Nrparama and Palaka. Palakas's nephew and successor was Validhara followed by Vikrama Rama. The inscription, datable to 928 AD from the Narasimha temple at Narayan Kannur on the western phase of Elimala, mentions Vikrama Rama as the *koil Adhikari* [crown Prince]<sup>32</sup>. *Sarga XIV* of Musaka Vamsa mentions about Ramakhata Jayamani of the Musaka dynasty as deputing his nephew to assist the Kerala king on his war against the Colas. Rajadhiraja in his inscription mentions the defeat of one Iramaguda. The place name Eramam where one of the inscriptions refers to Kandan Karivarman alias Ramakuta Muvar Tiruvadi also must have originated from Iramam denoting the common title of the Musaka kings.

Ibn Batuta, an Arabian traveler, who visited the region in 14<sup>th</sup> Century, mentions to Badphatan, a port town. This town is presently known as Valapattanam [in Kannur

---

<sup>31</sup> MGS Narayanan RE-INTERPRETATIONS IN SOUTH INDIAN HISTORY, Trivandrum, 1977 pp.62

<sup>32</sup> MGS Narayanan RE-INTERPRETATIONS IN SOUTH INDIAN HISTORY, Trivandrum, 1977 pp.

skrit word Vallabha Pattanam, the city of Vallabha the king who has been appearing in many references of his visits to Triccambaram and Talipparambu [both in Kannur District] temples. Srikanthapuram on the east of Talipparambu was probably named after Srikantha, the patron of the author of poem *MUSAKA VAMSA*. Lack of epigraphic records and other source materials create difficulties in reconstructing the genealogy of this dynasty, however it may be reemphasized here that the Kolattiris, later rulers of this area claimed the heredity from the Musakas.

## **AYS OF VIZHINJAM**

Ays are the only ruling dynasty from Kerala mentioned in the western travelogues. Ptolemy refers to the *Aioi* who are probably the same *Ay-Vels* of the *Cankam* literature. The *Cankam* poet Mudamociar refers to Aykkudi as the stronghold of Ays of Potiyil Malai. Poet Parinar in *AKANANNURU* praises Titiyan, a king of the Ay dynasty. Being absent in the historical records for almost four centuries, the Ays make a comeback around 9<sup>th</sup> Century AD as evident from the inscriptions found at Southern part of Kerala. This time their capital city was shifted from Potiyil Malai to the port city of Vizhinjam, evident from the reference of Ay king Vikramaditya Varaguna as *Vilinjabbhartra* in the copper plate from Paliyam datable to 9<sup>th</sup> Century<sup>33</sup>. Kalugumalai inscription of Pandyan ruler Maranjadiyan alias Jatila Parantaka Nedunjadiyan [765-815] refers to the marching of the Pandyan army against the Ay chief, Sadaiyan Karunandan and the destruction of Ariviyurkottai. The Grant of the same ruler now at

---

<sup>33</sup> MGS Narayanan RE-INTERPRETATIONS IN SOUTH INDIAN HISTORY, Trivandrum, 1977 pp.35

the attack of Vizhinjam. These attacks must have been a reply to the Kerala king for joining hands with the Kongus and Pallavas under Nandivarman II against the Pandyans<sup>34</sup>. In the battle to stop the incursion of Pandyans, the Cera kings aided the Ays with a battalion of soldiers referred as *Ceraman Padai*. The successor to the Pandyan throne Srirama Srivallabha [815-62] also continued the imperialist policy of Nedunjadiyan by attacking Vizhinjam as described in the Sinnamanur copper plates<sup>35</sup>.

Two more kings of this line, known through inscriptions, are Karunandadakkan and Vikramaditya Varaguna. Karunandadakkan is mentioned in numerous copper plates and stone inscriptions from the Ay region, in which he assumes the epithet Sri Vallabha. According to Gopinatha Rao, this demonstrates vassal-king relation between the Ays and Pandyans. “Karunandadakkan”, observes Gopinatha Rao, “evidently became the vassal of the Pandyans and as is usual with vassals, he assumed the name Sri Vallabha of his overlord for himself and gave the name Varaguna to his son”.<sup>36</sup> Sri Vallabha started his rule around 855 AD as can be inferred from Huzur Office copper plate [855-8]. This copper plate inscription refers to Ko-Karunandadakkan of the Yadava purchasing a land from *Micirai sabha* and building a temple for Vishnu. The village around the temple was named as Parthivasekharapuram. Sri Vallabha also appears in two rock cut inscription from Tiruvaidaikkodu [Kanyakumari District in Tamil Nadu] issued in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> years of his reign. The stone inscription at the ruined Vishnu Temple at Perumpaladur

<sup>34</sup> KA Neelakantha Sashtri, A HISTORY OF SOUTH INDIA, Madras, 1976 pp.156

<sup>35</sup> MGS Narayanan RE-INTERPRETATIONS IN SOUTH INDIAN HISTORY, Trivandrum, 1977 pp. 29

<sup>36</sup> As quoted by MGS Narayanan RE-INTERPRETATIONS IN SOUTH INDIAN HISTORY, Trivandrum, 1977 pp. 29

arappu, both in Thiruvananthapuram District, mentions Sri Vallabha as the reigning king. The Vaishnava affiliation of the Ays can be fathomed from their claim to the Vrsni/Yadava family and the establishment of Vishnu temples at Parthivasekharapuram and Perumpaladur. Historians including Sarkar suggest that the nucleus of Sri Padmanabha Temple at Thiruvananthapuram might have been an Ay activity.

Vikramaditya Varaguna, son of Sri Vallabha is the last known king from Ay dynasty. As stated above he is mentioned as *Vilinjabhartra* in the Paliyum copperplate. Sarkar suggests that Varaguna ruled for forty-five years from 880 to 925 AD. Paliyum plate refers to the donation of Varaguna to the Buddhist monastery at Sri Mulavasam in the Cera country and appointment of Vira-Kota as the protector of the monument. MGS Narayanan considers this as an expression of the normalization of Ay-Cera relations or the acceptance of the suzerainty of Pandys and their matrimonial kin, the Ceras, through the marriage of Cera princess Vanavan Mahadevi to Pandya ruler Parantaka Viranarayana [885-905].

## **CERAS OF MAHODAYAPURAM**

The medieval period history of Kerala is dominated by the controversial topics like the Ceras of Mahadayapuram [*Makaotai*], Cola incursions into Kerala and the legend of the Perumal rule. When historians like Elamkulam Kujan Pilla, Sreedhara Menon and MGS Narayanan suggest the existence of Second Cera Empire, K Balakrishana considers it as a complete fabrication of the facts by the “Elamkulam School of scholars”. The epigraphical evidences however support “Elamkulam School”.

established by Kulasekhara Varman, also revered as Kulasekhara Alwar the Vaisnavite saint. Kulasekhara ruled central Kerala from 800 to 820 AD with Mahodayapuram as his capital. This Mahodayapuram, according to historians, situated on River Periyar, near the Port town of Musiris, identified with present day Kodungallur in Trissur District. His successor Rajasekhara Varman [AD.820-844] *alias* Ceraman Perumal was a Saiva saint known as Ceraman Perumal Nayanar. He was a contemporary of celebrated Saiva saints Sundaramurti Nayanar and Viralminda Nayanar. The most famous contemporary of Rajasekhara was Sankaracharya, the *advaita* philosopher. Rajasekhara has authored few Sanskrit plays and probably is the originator of the Sanskrit theatre form called *Koodiyattam*. Rajasekhara is responsible for the inscription at Vazhapalli [Kottayam District], the first by a Cera king, which curiously starts with invocation “*namasivaya*” instead of the usual “*Svastisri*” revealing the Saivite preferences of the King. In the inscription the king bears the titles like *Sri Raja*, *Rajadhiraja*, *Paramesvara* and *Bhattaraka*. Issued on the twelfth reigning year of the king, it refers to *dinara* as an existing coinage. Many historians consider this as derived from the flourishing trade with west or as denoting the connection with the Arabian world. Once realized that it was the same Ceraman Perumal who allocated the land to build a mosque to the Muslims next to his capital at Tiruvancikkulam, which till date is called as the Ceraman palli, the reference to *Dinar* will not come as a surprise.

The Cera kings after Ceraman Perumal continued this religious tolerance. This is evident from the Tarisa Palli copper plate grant of Ravivarma Kulasekhara *alias* Stanu Ravi Kulasekhara Varman [AD.844-885] who succeeded Ceraman Perumal. In the grant Stanu Ravi Varman gifted land properties to the Church [*palli*] of Teresa



his Venatu governor Ayyanadigal Tiruvadi. This Cera monarch has been mentioned in the inscriptions at Irinjalakkuda [Trissur District], Tiruvalla [Pattanamtitta District] and Kottayam. The found spots of these records would illustrate the political suzerainty of the Ceras, which covered the lion share of the present day Kerala State. The later Cera kings like Ramavarma Kulasekhara [885-917] and Kodai Ravivarman [917-944] expanded the empire to the shores of River Bharatappuzha in north Kerala as it is evident from the inscription of Kodai Varman from Trippangod in present day Malappuram district.

Ravivarman's rule followed by Indu Kotai Varman [944-962], whose records are found from sites as Trikkakara [Ernakulum District], Moozhikkulam [Trissur District], Tali and Tiruvanmundur [Kottayam District] all in central Kerala. Indu Kotai was succeeded by Bhaskara Ravi Varman [961-1021] who issued the famous Copper plate from Tirunelli [Wynad District] in the year 1021. His reign witnessed significant political turmoil due to the Cola incursions. Though the Cera dynasty continued to rule over Kerala and issue grants, evident through many copper plates and stone inscriptions, most of the historians are of the opinion that the Ceras were ruling as the vassals of Colas. The inscription from Tirumittakkode refers to Rajendra Cola and Cera ruler Iravi Kota [Ravi Varman 1025-1035] along with one Cekkilan Saktimjayan the Cola Muttariyan, the local official of the Colas<sup>37</sup>. MGS Narayanan states thus, "It is evident [from the Tirumittakkode inscription] that following his conquest of Kerala, Rajendra Cola permitted the Cera king Bhaskara Ravi and then his successor Ravi Kota to continue as rulers of Kerala on condition that they

---

<sup>37</sup> MGS Narayanan RE-INTERPRETATIONS IN SOUTH INDIAN HISTORY, Trivandrum, 1977 pp. 44



and pay tribute. They continued to use their own ruling years also in their inscriptions”<sup>38</sup>. The stone inscription from Pullur [Kasargode district] by Bhaskara Ravi Varman II [1035-90] is the northern extend of Cera inscriptions. His successor Ramavarma Kulasekhara [1090-1103] mentioned in the inscription dated to 1103 AD at Ramesvaram Temple [Kollam District] as *Raman Tiruvadi Kulasekhara Koyiladhikari*. Sarkar suggest that Ramavarma could restore the prestige of the Cera lineage and ruled almost independently. Sreedhara Menon gives Ramavarma the credit of shifting the Cera capital from Mahodayapuram to Kollam. The weakening of Cola power during the time of Kulottunga I can be another reason for the confidence of Ramavarma. However, after Ramavarma, the Cera dynasty did not seem to be control of the Kerala affaires. Weakening of Cera and Cola power gave the Pandyan a chance to accede the southern regions of Kerala to their empire. By 13<sup>th</sup> century the dynasties as Tiruvitankur or Sri Pada Swarupam who claimed their ancestry to Ceras took over the Venatu region.

Different historian provides the date and even name of the Cera rulers of Mahodayapuram differently. The below table illustrates the genealogy of Ceras of Mahodayapuram provided by Elamkulam Kunjan Pilla<sup>39</sup>, Sreedhara Menon<sup>40</sup> and MGS Narayanan<sup>41</sup>. Sreedhara Menon follows the chronology prescribed by

<sup>38</sup> MGS Narayanan RE-INTERPRETATIONS IN SOUTH INDIAN HISTORY, Trivandrum, 1977 pp. 44

<sup>39</sup> Elamkulam Kunjan Pilla, *ELAMKULAM KUNJANPILLAYUDE THIRENJEDUTHA KRITHIKAL* 6 Part I, [Malayalam] [COLLECTED ESSAYS OF ELAMKULAM KUNJAN PILLA] Ed. N Sam, International Centre for Kerala Studies, University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 2005. pp 443-444

<sup>40</sup> A Sreedhara Menon, *KERALA CHARITHRAM* [Malayalam], [HISTORY OF KERALA] S.Visvanathan Pvt.Ltd, Madras, 1967, Revised Edition 1995, Reprint 2001, pp. 161-172

<sup>41</sup> A Sreedhara Menon, *KERALA CHARITHRAM* [Malayalam], [HISTORY OF KERALA] S.Visvanathan Pvt.Ltd, Madras, 1967, Revised Edition 1995, Reprint 2001, pp. 180

ls while MGS Narayanan based his arguments on the recent researches.

## Different views on the Genealogy of the Ceras of Mahodayapuram

[Areas of agreement between the historian shown in bold]

Name	Date <b>Elamkulam Kunjan Pilla</b>	Date <b>Sreedhara Menon</b>	Name	Date <b>MGS Narayanan</b>
Kulasekhara Varma	800-820	800-820	Rama Rajasekhara	800-844
Rajasekhara	820-844	820-844		
<b>Sthanu Ravi</b>	<b>844-885</b>	<b>844-885</b>	<b>Sthanu Ravi Kulasekhara</b>	<b>844-883</b>
Rama Varma	885-917	885-917	Kodai Ravi Vijayaraga	883-913
Kodai Ravi	917-947	917-944	Kodai Kodai Kerala Kesari	913-943
<b>Indu Kodai</b>	<b>944-962</b>	<b>944-962</b>	<b>Indu Kodai</b>	<b>943-962</b>
<b>Bhaskara Ravi I</b>	<b>962-1019</b>	<b>962-1019</b>	<b>Bhaskara Ravi</b>	<b>962-1021</b>
Bhaskara Ravi II	979-1021	979-1021		
Vira Kerala	1021-1028	1021-1028		
<b>Rajasimha</b>	<b>1028-1046</b>	<b>1028-1046</b>	<b>Ravi Kodai Rajasimha</b>	<b>1021-1036</b>
Bhaskara Ravi III	1043-1082	1043-1082	Raja Raja	1036-1089
			Ravi Rama Rajaditya	1036-1089
			Aditya Kodai Ranaditya	1036-1089
Ravi Rama Varma	1082-1090	1082-1090		
<b>Rama Varma Kulasekhara</b>	<b>1089-1102</b>	<b>1090-1102</b>	<b>Rama Kulasekhara</b>	<b>1089-1122</b>

## THE COLA CONQUESTS

Though there are few references in the Pallava and Calukyan records about their conquests of Kerala no inscriptional evidence found of their ascendancy over Kerala. As stated elsewhere in the present thesis the Musaka Nagaram which Mangalesa captured probably belonged to Deccan region rather than Kerala. Come to think of it, Calukyan inscriptions are seldom found even in the coastal regions of Karnataka let alone any temple building activity. Probably Calukyans and Pallavas were busy in their constant feuds they never had the time to look at Kerala. Another reason may be the Western Ghats which discouraged the external powers from entering Kerala. Closeness of the Western Ghats to the sea without a pass made it really impenetrable in the northern part of Kerala. Southern portion of the Ghats in the present day Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu was much open and ideal for military movements. This evident from the historical fact that the only non Kerala political powers which entered Kerala through Mangalore and Wynad respectively were the Baidnur Nayakas and Hyder Ali in 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century respectively. Hyder's son and successor Tipu Sultan preferred to enter through Palakkad. On the other hand, Pandyan of Madurai had few incursions through the southern route. Even the Vijayanagara forces preferred the Tamil Nadu route to enter Kerala.

Coming back to the political powers entering Kerala it was the Colas who were successful in achieving some kind of control over Kerala. Parantaka II [Sundara Cola] [957-73], when he humbled the Pandyan and entered the southwestern part of Tamil Nadu, initiated the Cola incursion into Kerala. The Suchindram temple inscription of

extension to Ay country. Parantaka's successor Uttama Cola [970-85] assumed the title of *Madhurantaka* probably referring to his conquest of Madurai, the capital city of Pandians. Uttama's successors Raja Raja [985-1012] and Rajendra I [1012-44] followed the expansionist policy of Parantaka and included Kerala in their itinerary of conquests. Raja Raja captured Vizhinjam and Kandalur Salai in the Ay country. He changed the names of the cities and the region attaching the names of his kith and kin. TK Velu Pilla writes in Travancore State Manual thus, "The Colas delighted in changing the names of places which came under their sway quite as much as they recorded their conquests in inscriptions set up in tracts which came to their possession. We find Kanyakumari being named as Rajarajeswaram, Suchidram as Sundaracola Chaturvedimangalam, and Kottar as Mammudicolanallur and Vizhinjam as Rajendra Cola Pattanam"<sup>42</sup>. Except Vizhinjam which is around 9 KM from Thiruvananthapuram all the other cities belongs to Tamil Nadu presently.

Raja Raja, named this southernmost extension of his empire as *Raja Raja Pandinad*<sup>43</sup> however, he did not appoint a governor to look after the affairs of Kerala, which lead to a revolt in the region during the reign of Rajendra I. Rajendra I successfully, suppressed the revolt in his 6<sup>th</sup> year of his accession to the throne. Tirumittakkode [Palakkad District] inscription mentions the name of *Colan Parakesari Varman*, which MGS Narayanan has identified as Rajendra I. References to Rajendra I do appear in few inscriptions from Muncirai Tirumalai and Valiya Salai

---

<sup>42</sup> TK Velu Pilla, TRAVANCORE STATE MANUAL, Kerala Gazetteers Department, Govt. of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 1940, Reprint 1996, pp.65

<sup>43</sup> A Sreedhara Menon, *KERALA CHARITHRAM* [Malayalam], [HISTORY OF KERALA] S.Visvanathan Pvt.Ltd, Madras, 1967, Revised Edition 1995, Reprint 2001, pp. 168

t].<sup>44</sup> Rajadhiraja [1018/44- 54] provide a list of three kings from Kerala, excluding the Ays, clearly demonstrating the decline of the dynasty under Cola conquests. This inscription however, talks about the *Villavan* who is identified as Cera ruler Bhaskara Ravi Varman II. The same inscription gives credit to the Musaka ruler as one of the three major rulers of Kerala. Vira Rajendra's [1063-1069] conquest had forced the Cera ruler Bhaskara Ravi Varman III to retreat to north a probability suggested by the historians due to the occurrence of his inscription at Pullur in Kasargode District. The same Bhaskara Ravi Varman has been mentioned in an inscription at Moozhikkulam in Trissur District. It however, seems highly disputable, as it would illustrate that the Ceras under Bhaskara Ravi Varman III held sway over the lion share of the present Kerala State.

The Cola and the Cera conflicts actually paved the way for the breaking of Cera rule in Kerala. As mentioned elsewhere the Cola rulers from the time of Parantaka Cola to later rulers as Virarajendra had been perpetually attacking the borders of Kerala probably through Palakkad, Sengotai passes of western Ghats and the passage through Tirunelveli and Nagarkoil. The contact with the Tamil region, through Pandyan and Cola connection becomes a crucial point in understanding the *Dravida* elements in Kerala temple architecture. More than the Colas the Pandyan connection must have nurtured temple architecture of Kerala as the Vizhinjam rock cut caves are considered to be the pioneering structures of temple architecture in Kerala. More than architecture Cola incursion changed the social scenario of Kerala. The dominance brahmanical religion brought in by the Colas might have resulted in the waning of Buddhism and Jainism in Kerala. Prolonged conflict with the Colas, which some

---

<sup>44</sup> H Sarkar, ARCHITECTURE SURVEY OF KERALA TEMPLES, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, 1978 pp. 18

refers to call as 'Hundred Year War', resulted in the reduction of Nair dominance in Kerala and the resulted rise of Nambutiri Brahmins.

Beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century saw another group of rulers controlling the Kerala affairs, namely Kolattiris of Kannur, Samutiris of Kozhikkode, Perumbadappus of Kochi and Tiruvitankurs of Venatu. All these rulers except Kolattiris claimed their territorial legitimacy to a legendary Perumal who abdicated the throne and divided the empire equally amongst them and left for Mecca. The existence of Perumals, the non *malayali* [non Keralite] ruler invited by the Brahmins to rule over Kerala for 12 year each, is not proved by historical data. Descriptions of the Perumal rule almost sounds too good to be true as the Maveli [Mahabali] myth associated with Onam festival. Probably the rulers of Second Cera Empire were given honorary title as Perumals. Padmanabha Menon refutes the theory that the last Perumal converted to Islam thus, "the conversion story is the mixed version of two conversions which happened in history. First, about the Bana Perumal, who converted into Buddhism and the other regarding one of the Samutiris who converted to Islam"<sup>45</sup>. Local chieftens of Kerala, who came to power in the medieval period, except Kolattiris of Kannur, used the portion of distribution of land by the converted Perumal to claim legitimacy to their rule on the land.

---

<sup>45</sup> As quoted by EMS Namboodirippadu, *KERALAM MALYALIKALUDE MATHRUBHOOMI* [Malayalam], from P Govinda Pillai [Ed], *EMSINTE SAMPOORNA KRITIKAL* [COLLECTED WORKS OF EMS NAMBOODIRIPAD Vol. 9- 1948] [Malayalam] Chinta Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram 2000, p.105

The Kolattiris of Kannur (Cannanore), held sway over the northern extremity of Kerala; from Kasargode on the north to the Korappuzha River on the south, and east into the mountainous hinterland of Kodagu (Coorg). These territories incorporated the vassal principalities of Allada, Arakkal, and Kottayam. The Kolattiris claimed their lineage back to the Musaka dynasty which ruled as the Ezhi [also Ezhil] Kovilakam in the 13th century, as noted by the Italian traveler Marco Polo. The dynasty later split into two parts, the Udayamangalam branch settling in Aduttila, and the Palli branch at various residences, including Chirakkal, where the present descendants live. A few of the Palli branches, such as the Mavelikkara and Putupalli, enjoyed connections with rulers in Venatu, in the extreme south of Kerala.

Prior to the arrival of the Europeans, the Kolattiris had to contend with Vijayanagara viceroys of Mangalore. After the fall of Vijayanagara, the Nayakas of Baidnur claimed legitimate rights over Mangalore, subduing the area north of Allada, and establishing a fortified coastal outpost at Bekal also known as Hosadurg. An offshoot of the Kolattiris, the Arakkals, joined with the Mysore forces in their conquest of the region. But the Kolattiris entered this dispute as collaborators with the British to whom the territory was ceded by Tipu in 1792.

Apart from the above mentioned, several other ruling families exercised influence in northern Kerala during this period. They include the Vazhunnore of Kutyadi, and the lesser kings of Palakkad, Kottayam [region on the east of Tallassery comprising present day Kannur and Wynad Districts], and Mangalapadi. Claimed both by the



These principalities were finally merged into the Madras Presidency of the British Empire.

## **SAMUTIRIS OF KOZHICKODE**

The ancestors of the Samutiris, principal rulers of northern Kerala from the 14th century onwards, were the Eratis of Nediyruppu. The *KERALOLPATTI* relates that after the Eratis received a gift of land from Ceraman Perumal, they moved north to Kozhikkode from where they set about subduing their rivals, the Porlatiris of Polanad in the fertile hinterland to the east. Soon the Eratis could boast of a kingdom extending from the Arabian Sea to the foothills of the Western Ghats, thereby earning the epithet *Kunnalakonatiri*, Lord of the Hills and Waves. (It was the Sanskrit version of this title, *Samutiri*, which was corrupted into Zamorin by the Portuguese.)

The Samutiris established their headquarters at Kozhikkode (Kozhikode or Calicut), which they developed into the greatest emporium of international trade on the Malabar Coast. The growing material progress of their capital enabled the Samutiris to embark upon a career of aggressive conquests and expansion during which the neighboring rajas of Caliyam, Beypur, Parappanad and Vettat, as well as the other chieftains of northern Kerala, were reduced to vassals. The Samutiris then turned their attention to Tirunavaya where the prestigious *Mamankam*<sup>46</sup> took place every twelve years. A war ensued over the control of the town and its festival, ending in a victory for Kozhikkode. The Samutiris then assumed the privileged position of

---

<sup>46</sup> *Maha Magha* festival; last performed in late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Just before the conquest of Mysore under Hyder Ali and Tipu.



of the Mamankam, and exercised their right to wear crowns, mint money, and hold ceremonial umbrellas. In spite of the hegemony that the Samutiris exerted over much of northern Kerala, power remained in the hands of the Nair nobles who maintained armies of their own, providing the Samutiris and other rulers with soldiers in times of war.

Kozhikkode was preeminent among the numerous and active ports of northern Kerala, which, enabled the Samutiris to develop lucrative mercantile connections with the Red Sea, Persia, and Surat. The international reputation of the Samutiris was such that in 1442 a Persian envoy, Abdul Razzaq, arrived in Kozhikkode. His chronicle forms one of the earliest historical records for the era. Cordial and profitable connections with the Middle East were disrupted in 1498 by the arrival of Vasco Da Gama, who landed at Kapat, 30 KM north of Kozhikkode. The history of the Samutiris thereafter was blighted by clashes with the Portuguese, and later with the Dutch, for supremacy of the Arabian Sea trade. The Kolattiris of Kannur and Perumbadappus of Kochi, traditional enemies of the Samutiris, also participated in these conflicts, allying themselves with the Europeans. In spite of the struggles with the Portuguese and Dutch, trading activities continued, and the Samutiri kingdom experienced sustained prosperity. The military ambitions of the Samutiris continued throughout the era, but ended with the attack on Palakkad in 1757. This led to a series of invasions by the Mysore forces, at first under Haidar Ali in 1766, later by his successor, Tipu Sultan. Consequently, the region became an arena of war between the British and Mysore. Malabar region with the lion share of Samutiri controlled are was ceded to the British in the Treaty of Seringapatnam in 1792 and eventually absorbed into the Madras Presidency.

While the Perumbadappus were indisputably the foremost rulers of central Kerala at the turn of the 14th century, no clear list of rulers or their ruling dates is available until the period of European domination. According to tradition, the Perumbadappu *Swarupam* came into existence on the division of Kerala by Ceraman Perumal. The first ruler of this dynasty was the eldest son of Perumbadappu Nambutiri [The family name, Perumbadappu, honors this royal ancestor], and a sister of the last Perumal, therefore, direct heir to the country according to the traditional law of succession. For this reason the Perumbadappus considered themselves as the noblest kings in the whole of Kerala. The name of the first of their line is supposedly Vira Kerala Varma, a name that was to be repeated with only minor variations over more than 300 years.

In spite of their prestigious lineage, the Perumbadappus in the 14th and 15th centuries occupied a position subordinate to their neighbor to the north, the Samutiris of Kozhikkode. Perumbadappu territories extended from Purakkad in the south to Cetuva in the north, but not all dominions within this region accepted the authority of these kings. Nor is it clear where the Perumbadappus had their headquarters, though they seem to have resided for some years at Mahodayapuram and Tiruvancikulam. However, by 1409, when Mahuan, a Chinese Muslim traveler was in Kerala, the Perumbadappus had already settled in Kochi, at the ocean mouth of Vembanad Lake, the great inland waterway of central Kerala. It was at this capital that these kings were established when the Portuguese arrived.

... Cabral, admiral of the Portuguese fleet, at Kochi in December 1500 signaled the beginning of a new era in the fortunes of the Perumbadappus. Over the next two hundred years, the alliance of the Kochi rulers with the Portuguese and later with the Dutch proved a means of achieving economic stability and expanding their political influence. An indication of the increased status of the Perumbadappus at this time was their ability to persuade lesser chiefs of central Kerala, such as the Kaimals of Cheranallur, to repudiate their allegiance to the Samutiris and to accept the suzerainty of Kochi. In an attempt to check the growing powers of the Perumbadappus, the Samutiris invaded central Kerala in 1503. However, the Portuguese came to the rescue, and the Samutiri forces were expelled.

With Kochi as their base, the Portuguese rapidly assumed supremacy of the Arabian Sea trade, bringing prosperity to the Kochi region through direct export of spices, coir, and other products. The economic solvency of the period had its tangible expression in the building and renovation of temples, as the Hindu community pursued its religious affairs relatively unhindered by the European presence. The Kochi court flourished, as did the careers of local nobles and merchants, resulting in a marked efflorescence in cultural affairs, particularly literature and the arts. None of this would have been possible without the friendship and support of the Portuguese. In return, however, the Perumbadappus had to endure external meddling in state affairs.

The Dutch gradually displaced the Portuguese as the most influential European power on the Malabar Coast, capturing Kochi in January 1663, which then became their headquarters in Kerala. This situation meant little substantial change for the

ed to benefit from European protection in return for occasional interference in local affairs. The Kochi Prime Ministers, for instance, were often nominees of the Dutch Company. By the beginning of the 18th century, Dutch influence was on the wane, and the Kochi kingdom once again came under attack from its neighbors. The Samutiris invaded the northern part of the kingdom on several occasions, occupying Trissur (Trichur) and adjoining areas in 1755-57. Martanda Varma of Venatu occupied the lands to the south, his army reaching Kochi in 1750, and then only partly retreating. These conflicts between the different polities of Kerala were brought to an end with the invasion of Kerala by Haidar Ali in 1774. After the departure of Tipu Sultan, Haidar's son and successor, the Kochi rulers were reduced to tributaries of the East India Company which had by this time established itself as the supreme power in South India.

## **TIRUVITANKURS OF VENADU**

Prior to the conquests of Martanda Varma, whose reign lasted from 1729 to 1758, in the middle of the 18th century, the territories of south Kerala, known collectively as Venatu, were under the control of a number of lesser rulers. The most prominent among these were the Tiruvitankur (Travancore) rajas based at Kalkkulam, later known as Padmanabhapuram, in the southern extremity of this zone. The Attingal dynasty, considered the maternal house of the Tiruvitankur rajas, was based at Kollam, while the Tekkunkur family commanded the realms of Kottayam and Pattanamtitta. Among the other chieftains were the rajas of Ambalappuzha and Vanhippuzha. However, with the exception of the Tiruvitankur kings, the early history of these dynasties is shrouded in mystery. Portuguese and Dutch chronicles mention

historical details. Temple legends and documents refer to these kings as *Koil adhikaris*, patrons of shrines, but offer little additional data other than sporadic names.

The arrival of Albuquerque at Kollam in 1503, and the subsequent establishment of a European commercial factory there, signifies the beginning of a new era in Venatu history. In spite of conflicts between Portuguese and local commercial power groups, leading to the siege of Kollam fort in 1519, trade flourished in the region, much to the benefit of the Venatu rajas and their subjects. Sri Vira Ravi Varma, chief king of Venatu at this time, made successful raids into the Tamil country, occupying substantial tracts of the Pandyan territories. These campaigns brought the Venatu forces into direct conflict with Vijayanagara emperors, against whom the Venatu rajas were pitted from 1530 onwards. Among the successors of Sri Vira Ravi Varma was Aditya Varma, who ruled from 1553 to 1567. His inscription of 1565 appears on the eastern *gopuram* of the Padmanabhasvami temple at Thiruvananthapuram (Trivandrum), which housed the preferred tutelary divinity of the Venatu rajas.

The history of Venatu in the 17th century is much bound up with that of the Nayakas of Madurai. Venatu was under the joint sovereignty of Ravi Varma and Unni Kerala Varma in 1634 when Tirumala Nayaka made his first incursion into Venatu, after which war-like conditions prevailed between the two powers. The arrival of the Dutch proved a further obstacle to peace. The Dutch attacked Kollam in 1661, but later settlements guaranteed the sovereignty of queen Umayamma Rani. This agreement however did not guarantee the Dutch a trade monopoly and in 1697, under pressure from the English who had established themselves firmly at Anjengo and Vizhinjam,

their forts at Kodungallur and Kollam. Ravi Varma who reigned from 1684 to 1728, negotiated successfully with the Europeans, but had to pay tribute to Madurai after the invasion of the Nayaka forces in 1694.

The next ruler of consequence, Martanda Varma, was responsible for unifying Venatu which he achieved by subduing subordinate rajas of Kayankulam and Elayedattu, annexing the minor principalities of Kollam and Ambalappuzha, and expelling the Dutch after defeating them at the Battle of Colachel in 1741. The other political decision of Martanda Varma firmly placed Tiruvitankur dynasty as the suzerain rulers of Venatu region even changing the name of the region from Venatu to Tiruvitankur. This was the process of *Truppadi Danam* where Martanda Varma ceded the state of Tiruvitankur to Lord Padmanabha, the deity of Sri Padmanabha Temple at Thiruvananthapuram. The kings of Tiruvitankur since that day continued to rule as the mortal representative of the god Padmanabha assuming the title of '*Sri Padmanabha-dasa*'. It was a shrewd political strategy of accepting the god himself as the titular sovereign and continuing to enjoy the defacto powers as the king, through which he culled out any possibility of rebellion against the god fearing society of Tiruvitankur against the defacto rulers. The greatest of the many projects undertaken by Martanda Varma was the rebuilding of the Padmanabhasvami temple.

Martanda Varma's policies of expansion were continued by his successor, Rama Varma [also known as Dharma Raja], under whose reign [1758 - 1798], Tiruvitankur emerged as the largest and the most prosperous Kerala kingdom, surviving the British Period. The greatest crisis Rama Varma had to go through was the Mysore incursion under Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan. Tiruvitankur accepted the British control after they

ing the Mysore incursion and maintained cordial relationship with them till 1947. Tiruvitankur and Kochi joined the Indian Union in 1947 but retained constitutional monarchy till the formation of Kerala state in 1956.

## COLONIAL POWERS IN KERALA

Kerala had direct connections with west in the ancient times and was on the trade maps of the world through the history. In the medieval period this trade continued through the Arabs. After the disintegration of the Cera Kingdom of Mahodayapuram and the destruction of Muziris due the flood in 14<sup>th</sup> century, the commercial strategic position of Muziris was taken over by Kozhikkode [Calicut] under the patronage of the Samutiris. The local Muslim traders in partnership with the Arab Muslims controlled the spice trade at Kozhikkode. There were other communities too; who participated in the trade like the *vaniyas* [baniyas], Parsis and Borah Muslims of Gujarat, Tamil and Telugu Chettis, Syrian Christians. Chinese too traded with these communities. However, the West bound trade was dominated by the *Mappilas* [Kerala Muslims] along with the Muslim traders of Hurmuz, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. The sea route from Kerala in the pre *Carreira da India*<sup>47</sup> [Cape route] was laborious and expensive as it had to pass through ports and toll points as Hurmuz, Jeddah, Cairo, Alexandria and Venice, as the local informant Gasper Da Gama would explain to Vasco Da Gama<sup>48</sup>. The intention of the Portuguese endeavour was precisely against this Moor-Egyptian and Venetian network.

---

<sup>47</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam. THE CAREER AND LEGEND OF VASCO DA GAMA, New Delhi, 1998.

<sup>48</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam. THE CAREER AND LEGEND OF VASCO DA GAMA, New Delhi, 1998



The discovery of America and that of a Passage to the East Indies by the Cape of Good Hope are the two greatest and most important events recorded in the History of mankind"<sup>49</sup>. Both Gama and Columbus discovered the Indies, one the West and the other the East. If Gama's discovery was significant then, the journey of Columbus was pivotal to the development of the Western World. Both these sailors wished to reach one land; one believed that he did and the other really did land. This was the land as Gasper da Gama<sup>50</sup> would state as the "land from which there originates the spice that is eaten in the west, and in the Levant, and in Portugal and equally so in all provinces of the world". The land where "*the half naked monarchs*" held the monopoly over the "Black Gold" assisted by the Moorish traders who exclaimed to the first Portuguese sailors in Calicut [Kozhikkode], "*Devil take you, what the hell are you doing here*"<sup>51</sup>?"

The early European travellers to the Pepper land include Marco Polo [13th century], John of Monti Corvino [13th century], Friar Jordanus [14th century], and Nicolo Conti [15th century]. MN Pearson summarise the pre-Gama or endeavour of the Europeans to east thus, "For centuries European traders and travellers had adventured through the middle East to the Indian Ocean. We know of several European Visitors to India in the fifteenth century. One of them was Pero de Covilham, sent out by the Portuguese sovereign D. Joao II in 1487 to investigate the

---

<sup>49</sup> Field House. COLONIAL EMPIRES. Though Field House would not completely agree with Adam Smith."Smith was of course, taking a narrowly Eurocentric view. Europe had no monopoly of distant trading or overseas empire. ...[sic].. Hence the importance of the first expansion of Europe lay in its effects on Europe rather than its uniqueness as a world phenomenon.

<sup>50</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam. THE CAREER AND LEGEND OF VASCO DA GAMA, New Delhi, 1998

<sup>51</sup> Livermore, HV. PORTUGAL, A SHORT HISTORY, Edinburgh, 1973



Ocean. He visited Cannanore [Kannur], Calicut [Kozhikkode], Goa, Hurmuz and also East African ports as far south as Sofala"<sup>52</sup>.

The intentions of the first voyage by the Portuguese were quite simple, find a sea route to east and establish commercial links to the East. Vasco Da Gama was not happy with the receptions he got in Kozhikkode as the pressure from the Arab merchants forced the Samutiri of Kozhikkode to act hostile to the Portuguese. The Moorish/Arabian traders did not want any of the European powers enter directly into the spice trade, which in fact was exactly the intention of the Portuguese. The Egyptian rulers who benefited from the spice trade to West even tried to pressurise the Portuguese through Pope himself. The Papal authority at this juncture supported the Portuguese may be reasoning on the religious fervour shared by them. The treatment Gama received from these traders at Kozhikkode was enough to unveil their intentions. "The anonymous account assures us when any Portuguese went ashore, the Muslim merchants would spit on the ground near them, and say "*Portugali, Portugali*" in an insulting fashion; besides, we are told that `from the beginning they sought means to capture us and kill us"<sup>53</sup>. The sole European trading community trusted by the Muslim merchants at Kozhikkode was that of the Venetian and the only language interpreter whom Gama trusted was a non-Muslim. Gama landing on 27<sup>th</sup> of May 1498, lingered in Kozhikkode port without making much progress on the trade agreement. He was growing nervous and annoyed with the treatment of Samutiri and took some drastic steps as capturing few Kozhikkode merchants as hostages to retrieve his people ashore. At last some agreement and a letter of acceptance were

---

<sup>52</sup> M.N.Pearson: The Portuguese in India, THE NEW CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF INDIA, Gen.Ed.Gordon Johnson 1987. Cambridge. pp.11

<sup>53</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam. THE CAREER AND LEGEND OF VASCO DA GAMA, New Delhi, 1998

delay they decided to leave. Portuguese were unhappy that they “could not manage to leave the land in peace and as friends of the people”<sup>54</sup>. These developments at Kozhikkode would bear its impact on the relation of the Portuguese with Kozhikkode all through the history of *Estado da India*<sup>55</sup>.

It may be an amusing fact of history that the discoverer of Brazil [in 1500] was the first Portuguese to reach Kochi. It was Pedro Alvarez de Gouveia, later known as Cabral. Starting his journey from Lisbon he reached Brazil and then travelled on to Malabar Coast through Carreira da India. Cabral was well received at Kozhikkode [Calicut], may be because of the new Samutiri at the helm. The Portuguese did establish a factory at Kozhikkode [Calicut] this time under the factor Aires Correia. Samutiri even asked the help of Cabral to capture a ship from Kochi which allegedly was carrying an elephant, which belonged to Samutiri. But matters turned for worse after the Portuguese captured a Muslim ship leaving for Jeddah. The Muslim merchants retaliated violently and killed around 40 Portuguese including the factor Aires Correia. Cabral retaliated by bombarding Kozhikkode [Calicut] and Pantalayani. To avoid further skirmishes he left for Kochi following the advice of Gaspar da Gama and landed at Kochi on 24<sup>th</sup> December 1500.

Kochi and Cannanore who were the adversaries of the Calicut-Moorish trade in Indian Ocean supported the Portuguese. Portuguese also got the aid of trading communities like the Baniyas of Gujarat, Konkanis and Syrian Christians of Kerala in this tussle. The Syrian Christians who dominated the production and trade of Spices in South Kerala found the shifting of Portuguese to Kochi quite befitting their trade

---

<sup>54</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam. THE CAREER AND LEGEND OF VASCO DA GAMA, New Delhi, 1998

<sup>55</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam. THE CAREER AND LEGEND OF VASCO DA GAMA, New Delhi, 1998

am notes thus about the stand of Kochi King thus, “the Kochi ruler, Unni Goda Varma, appears to have grasped directly the political advantages that would acquire to him by diverting the Portuguese away from Kozhikkode”<sup>56</sup>. Cabral established a factory at Kochi under the factor Goncalo Gil Barbosa, which would remain in the Portuguese hands, despite some interruptions, till 1663.

After Cabral, it was the turn of Joao da Nova to reach Kochi who found the factory at Kochi in bad shape. Vasco da Gama, now elevated in his political and social position returned to Malabar after Nova. The second voyage of Gama was crucial in forging an alliance between the Portuguese and the Kerala Christians. In November 1502 some of the community members of Syrian Christians met Gama and offered an alliance and even presented a ceremonial offering of a red staff with silver bells on it. This network helped the Portuguese to have an access to the Spice trade in South Kerala. But soon after Gama returned Samutiri put pressure on Raja of Kochi to hand over the Portuguese factor at Kochi. The refusal to which ensued in a war between the Kingdoms. In this war of 1503 the King of Kochi Unni Goda Varma had lost his life. The arrival of Alfonso de Albuquerque eased the tension mounting on the Arabian Sea not because of Albuquerque’s diplomatic abilities but his reputation as ruthless conqueror. In 1503 Albuquerque obtained permission to build fortification to the factory. The building materials for the fortifications were mainly stems of Coconut trees bound with iron bands. Within the fort, which was named as *Manuel Kotta* [Fort of Manuel, after the King of Portugal], they also built a Church dedicated St. Bartholomew, another patron saint of India along with St. Thomas. Raja of Cochin

---

<sup>56</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam. THE CAREER AND LEGEND OF VASCO DA GAMA, New Delhi, 1998

Almeida in 1506 permitted the Portuguese to build a new city of mortar and stone. Apart from the fortifications, a new church was built in 1516 and dedicated to St. Anthony. The fortification and the settlement would remain with the Portuguese for all most 150 years, though from the time of Albuquerque itself the focus of *Estado da India*<sup>57</sup> was gradually shifting from Kochi to Goa. It also marked the shift from trade to that of territorial interest.

As the Portuguese were shifting their trade and territorial interests to Goa and Sri Lanka, Dutch East India Company [Estd.1592] filled in the gap by entering into a commercial treaty with Samutiri in 1604. The renewal of the treaty in 1608 allowed the Dutch to start a factory at Kozhikkode. Apart from Samutiri, Dutch East India Company targeted the lesser rulers of Kerala like Purakkad and Kayamkulam who allowed them to start factories in their respective domains by 1643. In 1658 the Dutch captured the Kollam fort from the Portuguese. The major success for the Dutch came in 1663 when they conquered the Portuguese bastion at Kochi which resulted in the gradual waning of Portuguese power in Kerala. When the Dutch entered into a treaty with the Ali Raja of Kannur in 1664, the whole western coast of Kerala came under the control of Dutch, though there were Europeans powers like the French and British keeping minor areas. The second quarter of 18<sup>th</sup> century saw the fortunes of Dutch failing drastically in Kerala. The rise of Tiruvitankur under Martanda Varma [1729-58] and his successor Rama Varma [Dharma Raja] [1758-98], the invasion of Mysore powers under Hyder Ali, emergence of British as a powerful entity in India and the fatal alliance with the French in the Napoleonic Wars lead to their decline in the

---

<sup>57</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam. THE CAREER AND LEGEND OF VASCO DA GAMA, New Delhi, 1998

forces under Martanda Varma comprehensively defeated the Dutch at the Battle of Colachel in 1741. Soon Marthanda Varma took over Purakkad and Kayamkulam, allies of Dutch in South Kerala. Samutiris of Kozhikkode also were successful in recapturing the bastions of Dutch power in Malabar. By the capture of Kochi by the British as part of the Napoleonic wars in 1795, the Dutch in Kerala became a non-entity.

The French story in Kerala history is not as significant as the other colonial powers. They had control of Mahe in north Kerala which they retained till 1947. French as colonial power was concentrating mainly on the Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh coastline where they had control over Pondicherry, Nagapatinam, Madras and Chandan Nagore. The French entity in Kerala is intertwined with that of the fortunes of Mysore, their chief ally in the region. Right from the time of Hyder who attacked Kerala in 1757, French retained their cordial relationship with Mysore.

When Samutiri of Kozhikkode attacked the Palakkad fort as part of his territorial expansion in 1757, Komu Acchan, the Palakkad Raja requested the Mysore forces at Dindigal, under Hyder Ali for military aid which initiated the Mysore incursions into Kerala. Samutiri who was comprehensively defeated in the battle had to pay heavy tax to Mysore. Encouraged by this victory, Hyder Ali, added Kerala in the itinerary of his conquests as soon as he took over the power in Mysore in 1761. Capturing the territories of Baidnur Nayakas Hyder could reach the northern region of Kerala. Making the Ali Raja of Kannur [Arakkal] as his ally, Hyder entered Kerala through north Malabar advancing to Calicut after defeating, Kolattiris, Kottayam Raja and the Kadattanatu Raja. Samutiri, who could not defeat or arrive at any truce with Hyder,

own his palace. When Hyder left for Mysore due to the trouble on the northern areas of his empire, the Nair landlords revolted in Kozhikkode region which was successfully suppressed by Hyder's governor Maddanna. Hyder revisited Kerala in 1773, this time through Coorg, targeting Kochi. The colonial powers in Kerala like the French and British did not do much to stop the Mysore forces thanks to the diplomatic endeavors of Hyder. After the death of Hyder in 1782, his son and successor, Tipu Sultan continued his engagements with Kerala, keeping southern Kerala under the Tiruvitankur kings. Tipu also entered into a marital alliance with Ali Raja, when Tipu's son got married to the daughter of Ali Raja. In 1789, Tipu reached Aluva and camped there. Legend says that there was a flash flood in Periyar River which destroyed much of the ammunitions of Tipu which forced him to withdraw, however the real reason is the beginning of Third Anglo-Mysore war. The war ended in Tipu losing to British and the resultant Treaty of Seringapatnam of 1792 by which Malabar was ceded to British.

Captain Ralph Fitch, who visited Kochi in 1583, was the first British to visit Kerala as part of the search for establishing trade connection with India. It should be noted that it was almost 30 years before Sir Thomas Roe met Mughal emperor Jahangir to get the permission for factory at Surat. In 1615 Captain Keeling reached Kozhikkode and entered into treaty with Samutiri to start a factory at Ponnani [Malappuram District]. Cordial relation with Portuguese in 1630's gave the British access to the ports under the Portuguese control in Kerala. The first British ship laden with pepper left Kochi in 1636. They got the permission of starting a factory at Vizhinjam [1644] and Kozhikkode [1664] from the Tiruvitankur king and Samutiri respectively. Their major center in south Kerala remained at Anchutengu [Anjengo] [Thiruvananthapuram

the Rani of Attingal. Though the revolt of the local people in 1721, when almost 140 British soldiers were killed, created a minor setback, British stayed on in Anjengo till 1947. The treaty with Tiruvitankur in 1723 provided the British a fort at Colachel [Kanyakumari District, Tamil Nadu], 40 KM south of Thiruvananthapuram. The clashes between Tiruvitankur and Dutch and their retrieval from Kerala coast gave British the advantage. Establishment of Tallassery [Telecherry, Kannur District] as a major bastion in north Kerala gave the British total control over the Kerala except minor centre controlled by the French at Mayyazhi [Mahe]. Major part of 18<sup>th</sup> century witnessed some skirmishes between the French and the British depending on the political situation in Europe and the Carnatic Wars in the east coast of India.

The British becomes a major power to reckon in Kerala due to their active involvement in the Mysore Wars. Second Mysore war and the treaty of Seringapatnam literally made the British the sovereigns of Malabar which was incorporated into a province under the Bombay Presidency, while the kingdoms of Kochi and Tiruvitankur were partially controlled by them. Kochi ceded its sovereignty to British through the treaty of 1800. Soon the treaty with Tiruvitankur in 1805 saw that kingdom coming under the “protection” of British. Velu Thampi who was instrumental in the treaty soon revolted against the British. After the suppression of Revolt, the British power demanded the suspension of Tiruvitankur army. So by 1810 all the regions of Kerala came under the direct and indirect control of British. They successfully suppressed any resistance to their authority like that of Velu Thampi Dalawa in Venatu region, Paliyatt Acchan in Kochi and Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja in North Malabar. The next major resistance to the British power in Kerala happened



When the Indian National Congress organized political struggle as part of the Indian Independence Movement.

British who controlled the Kerala affair for almost a century and half brought in many social and economic changes in Kerala for example the abolition of slavery in Malabar region as soon as they got control over Malabar in 1792. The advancement of education of the lower classes especially in Malabar prompted the lower classes to come forward to demand the same in South Kerala. Though British authorities put pressure on the Maharajas to abolish slavery they preferred not to interfere in the existing social system which was predominantly caste oriented and maintained silence regarding the temple entry issue. The missionaries and other agencies had free hand in establishing schools and introducing western education system. The contribution of London Missionary Society [LMS], Church Missionary Society [CMS] and the Catholic Jesuit Missionaries in the field education had far reaching results paving the way for an educated and empowered society. The establishment of infrastructure facilities like the transport and communication by the British gave the impetus to the interaction between regions.

The life story of Dr. T Palpu [1863-1950] is a good example to understand the impact of British in the development of the social sector. Dr. Palpu even after clearing the entrance exam for medicine was not admitted into the Trivandrum Medical collage because he belonged to a lower caste. Palpu then went to Madras Medical Collage which was under the British to study medicine. Though Dr. Palpu became a well known physician in Mysore his native state of Tiruvitankur never invited him to join



**PDF**  
Complete

*Your complimentary  
use period has ended.  
Thank you for using  
PDF Complete.*

[Click Here to upgrade to  
Unlimited Pages and Expanded Features](#)

tish rule in Kerala is dealt separately in detail elsewhere

in the present thesis.

\* \*



## Chapter 2

# IDENTIFYING KERALA *DRAVIDA*

## *Namaskara Mandapa* as the Unique Feature

There are many studies conducted on the architecture of Kerala temples since 1940's. Among them the works of Stella Kramrisch, Soundararajan and H Sarkar stand out as the significant studies. However all these scholars of repute, characterize Kerala architecture as a sub-category or as a style emerged out of the Tamil temple architecture and retain a hazy theory on the origin of Kerala temples. This uncertainty was also due to the lack of accurate records regarding the early history of Kerala. The architecture of Kerala also underwent periodical renovations and kept minimal documentation of their history. It was Stella Kramrisch who initiated the attempts to study the religious architecture of Kerala when the region was divided as Princely states of Tiruvitankur and Kochi along with British Malabar. Stella Kramrisch, though concentrating on Tiruvitankur, as the project was supported by Travancore State Department of Archaeology, envisages the whole Kerala region as a singular cultural entity. Kramrisch considerate of the characteristics of the region introduced the nomenclature of Kerala *Dravida* for Kerala temples.

Stella Kramrisch proposed three types of temples in Kerala with the nomenclatures of *Dravida*, *Kerala* and *Kerala Dravida*. *Dravida* temples according to her are the cave temples seen in the Tiruvitankur region like that of Vizhinjam which are rock cut shrines datable to the 8<sup>th</sup> century. These monoliths are conceived and carved by the Tamil craftsmen during the Pandyan ascendancy of south Kerala is purely a Tamil *Dravida* structure and had no bearing on the architecture tradition of Kerala during that period. But the temples like Pukayila Pandaka Salai Ganapati Temple at Kollam

...[Thiruvananthapuram] [both Kollam District] or the Sri Narayana temple at Sri Narayana Puram [Thiruvananthapuram District] can be considered purely as *Dravida* style architecture in Kerala. *Vimanakara* superstructures of these temples clearly denote their Tamil-*Dravida* ancestry. In fact the *Dravida* terminology used by Stella Kramrisch should be understood as defining Tamil-*Dravida* genre of architecture. Kramrisch explains Kerala with pyramidal roof thus, “The roofs are the main accents of Kerala building. The Kerala idiom is seen typically in their wooden constructions and wood carvings”<sup>58</sup>. It is true that the distinctness of the pattern of roof is salient feature of Kerala which differentiates the architecture of Kerala to that of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. Interestingly the region having similar climatic conditions as the south Kanara region in Karanataka and Kanyakumari district in Tamil Nadu do not follow the similar roof pattern in religious architecture, though the domestic architecture traditions retain the similar roof pattern as that of Kerala.

Another specificity which Kramrisch observes in Kerala architecture is the temple cloisters which she consider as the symptom of adherence by the Kerala architecture to the early *Dravida* tradition of architecture. “Similarly” writes Stella Kramrisch, “the entire site plan of these temples of the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries faithfully follows the prescriptions and practice of earlier centuries. The main building lies on an East-West axis within a rectangular cloister. Although the *sri koil* is not placed in the exact centre, it can be approached from the four directions and its high roof dominates the assemblage of buildings. The cloistered temples are not confined to Malabar. Pallava Temples in Mamallapuram and Kanchipuram, Jain temples in Rajasthan and other parts of India, the temples of Kashmir and those of Mysore are similarly enclosed.

---

<sup>58</sup> Stella Kramrisch, DRAVIDA AND KERALA IN THE ART OF TRAVANCORE, Artibus Asiae Supplementum, Vol II, 1953, [<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1522577>, pp 14

cts is ancient and has its beginnings in the enclosure by which a sacred field was demarcated prior to the building of temple on it. In the early centuries of the present era the Buddhists in Gandhara worshipped in stone built shrines within similarly planned sanctuaries. The corresponding structures in India were built of wood and bricks and have perished”<sup>59</sup>.

Closeness of the Kerala architecture to that of Calukyan monuments like Virupaksha Temple at Pattadakal [Bagalkot District, Karnataka] and Kailashanatha temple at Kanchipuram [Kanchipuram District, Tamil Nadu] cannot be farfetched as far as the layout is concerned. Architectural features such as the *malikai* develop in both these structures which are absent in the early Calukyan and the Pallava monuments like the Megutti Jinalaya [Aihole, Bagalkot district, Karnataka] and the Panca Pandava Rathas at Mahabalipuram [Kanchipuram District, Tamil Nadu]. One can observe a clear distinction with the *malikai* of Kailashanatha temple at Kanchipuram and that of Vaikuntha Perumal temple where in the latter it becomes a circumambulatory path way, as in the case of later Cola temples. Similarly in the Virupaksha temple at Pattadakal the *malikai* does not function as the pathway. In Kerala temples, the *cuttambalams* which can be considered as the counterpart of the Tamil/Karnata *malikai* do not serve the purpose of circumambulation; on the other hand it defines the periphery of the space provided for circumambulation. Disengaging the *mukha mandapa* at Kanchipuram Kailashanatha and considering it as the *namaskara mandapa* would provide us a layout quite analogous to the Kerala temple plan.

---

<sup>59</sup> Stella Kramrisch, DRAVIDA AND KERALA IN THE ART OF TRAVANCORE, Artibus Asiae Supplementum, Vol II, 1953, [<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1522577>], pp 13-14

of the Kerala architecture is the *panca prakara*<sup>60</sup> plan which is missing in the Tamil and Karnata temples. Unlike the *prakaras* of Tamil Nadu which are developed based on the political changes serving the social purpose like the dwelling of the Brahmins, Kerala temples the *panca prakaras* are based on the worshiping rituals of each temple. To expound this further one have to understand the worshiping pattern of the Kerala temple which is elaborated below in the section of the present thesis titled “Layout of Kerala temples”.

In her writing on Kerala architecture, especially on the Kerala type, Kramrisch observes two key points which are crucial to the central argument of this thesis. First, Kramrisch refers to the “sacred field which was demarcated prior to the building of temple on it”, secondly she observes about the possible link of Kerala temple architecture to the Buddhist architecture tradition. I feel that these two aspects are the key features which define the basic characteristics of Kerala temple. The Buddhist past and the *Tantric* layout defined in a Kerala brahmanical temple, which is never shared by the Tamil and the Karnata counterparts of *Dravida* tradition. These points have been dealt in detail in the following sections of the current thesis.

The observations made by Stella Kramrisch, did not get much appreciation from KV Soundararajan who wrote exclusively on Kerala architecture, this time for the Department of Archaeology of unified Kerala state<sup>61</sup>. In his volume *Temple*

---

<sup>60</sup> Kuzhikkatt Maheswaran Bhattatirippad, *KUZHICKATT PACHA [Tantra Grandham]* [Tantrik Text] [Malayalam] Pancankam books, Kunnamkulam, Eighth edition, 1183 Malayalam Era [2008CE], pp.39

<sup>61</sup> Kerala state of the Republic of India was created on 1st November 1956 by joining the Malayalam speaking regions belonging to the princely state of Travancore [Tiruvitankur] Cochin [Kochi] and Malabar province of the erstwhile Madras Presidency of the British Empire.



Soundararajan, do not subscribe the nomenclature suggested by Kramrisch due to his eagerness to link it to the Tamil genre of temple architecture, however he does acknowledge the regional characteristic of Kerala thus, “Within the framework of these constituent elements of its model, mode and traditions, it would be feasible to get a reasonable summation of the Kerala temple entity and to discern its architectural personality and to derive its grass roots. While we might still be left with only passable perception of the ritual integrity of the Kerala temple, we would have reasonably well understood its structural individuality as answerable on entirely rational grounds, enabling it to take its deserved place among various regional styles that had defined the macrocosm that is the Indian Temple architecture”<sup>63</sup>

Kerala architecture for sure shares a lot with its Tamil and Karnata counterparts; however it will be erroneous to fully attribute the parentage of Kerala architecture to Tamil style only, as it has been done so far. The influences of the Karnata Dravida under the Calukyan patronage on Kerala architecture have been completely ignored by the scholars. Another reason may be for the fact that the studies on Kerala architecture mainly concentrated on the central and southern regions of Kerala. Architecture decorative motifs like the *kapota*, *kumbha panjara*, *kuta*, *sala*; etc appears in Kerala temples as they do in the other *Dravida* branches of architecture, but basing the argument concerning the lineage on those motifs will be erroneous as the spatial arrangement in Kerala architecture is clearly differ from its *Dravida* counterparts. For example the *cuttambalam* of the Kerala temples may look akin to

---

<sup>62</sup> KV Soundara Rajan, TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE IN KERALA, General Editor, NG Unnithan, Government of Kerala, Trivandrum [Thiruvananthapuram], 1974

<sup>63</sup> KV Soundara Rajan, TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE IN KERALA, General Editor, NG Unnithan, Government of Kerala, Trivandrum [Thiruvananthapuram], 1974, pp. 2

*Dravida* structure but the function varies drastically in Kerala.

H Sarkar in his magnum opus on Kerala temple architecture accepts the term of ‘*Dravida Kerala*’, thus, “Kramrisch’s survey of temples in the former Tiruvitankur state brings to the fore some of the basic facts of the ‘Kerala style’, which she prefers to distinguish from the *Dravida* of the neighboring Tamil country. Strictly speaking, it is better to call the characteristic temples of Kerala as ‘*Dravida- Kerala*’, because these are fundamentally a regional variation of *Dravida* order, and not a distinct class, but for the sake of convenience and uniformity, the term ‘Kerala’ is also be used to denote this particular regional style of *Dravida* tradition”<sup>64</sup>. The reason for the regional variation to Sarkar was “influenced by various geographical factors like the high precipitation, the availability of laterite formation and dense jungles”<sup>65</sup>. KR Srinivasan too introduces Kerala temples in the lines of Stella Kramrisch when he states that the timber construction of Kerala temples were as part of the tradition prior to the advent of stone *vimanas*.<sup>66</sup> All the above mentioned scholars do mention about the wooden prototypes existed in the period prior to the crystallization of stone *vimanas* in the *Dravida* architecture during the Pallava and Calukyan period.

---

<sup>64</sup> H Sarkar, AN ARCHITECTURAL SURVEY OF TEMPLES OF KERALA, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, 1978, pp. 1-2

<sup>65</sup> H Sarkar, AN ARCHITECTURAL SURVEY OF TEMPLES OF KERALA, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, 1978, pp. 2

<sup>66</sup> KR Srinivasan, TEMPLES OF SOUTH INDIA, National Book Trust, New Delhi, 1972, Fourth Edition 1998, pp.175

## KARNATAKA *DRAVIDA* and TAMIL *DRAVIDA*-

### A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

There are many features which separate Kerala temple architecture to that of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu which share the term *Dravida*, the common denomination for South Indian architecture, along with Kerala. The first wave of the *Dravida* architecture sweeping through the peninsular India surely would have made impact in Kerala too as evident from the architectural decorative motifs as *kudu*, *kapota*, *kumuda* on the *adhisthanas*. The layout of the temples in Kerala however varies drastically from their *Dravida* counterparts. Looking for a parallel in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu would take one to Kailashnatha and Vaikutha Perumal Temples at Kanchipuram [Kanchipuram District, Tamil Nadu] and Virupaksha and Mallikarjuna Temples at Pattadakal [Bagalkot District, Karnataka]. The above mentioned temples are located chronologically to 8<sup>th</sup> century and have no contemporary structure in Kerala except the rock cut shrines of Vizhinjam. The Cola style too did not impact on the structure of architecture but did leave certain features on the decorative elements. Though the Cola rulers were controlling Kerala for a brief period they never seem to have built any structure in Kerala. The style of Vijayanagara architecture did not reach Kerala directly from Karnataka but routed through the Nayakas of Tamil Nadu. The Vijayanagara/Nayaka type *mandapas* replaces the *valiyambalam* in Central and South Kerala, as in Mahadeva Temple at Vaikom [Kottayam District], Janardhana Swami Temple at Varkala and Mahadeva Temple at Valiya Salai [both Thiruvananthapuram District]. These features are seldom seen in Malabar region which point towards the route Vijayanagara architecture took to enter Kerala. The natural route should have been through north where Kerala shares its boundary with Karnataka.

The adherence to the specific mode of elevation in architecture did occur in Kerala primarily because of the climatic condition where half of the year dominated by the monsoon rains, prompting the architects to devise the pyramidal roofs as superstructures. Soundararajan states thus, “The monsoon- ridden region had seemingly furnished its own mascot in the umbrella which is ubiquitous and which had down the ages been consciously adapted as a motif. In much of the same way as the almost sparsely clothed dress habits of Kerala folk had found complimentary fulfillment in the over-attired Kathakali costume, the temple architecture of Kerala also hides beneath its outlandish exterior cloak a true-to-type temple model of simplicity and clarity”<sup>67</sup>. The enveloping of the temple proper is definitely a feature unique to Kerala as observed by Soundararajan but it is extremely difficult check the authenticity as in many instances one do not get an idea of the layout or elevation of the temple from outside. Incidentally, South Karnataka, the region neighboring Kerala on the north, sharing the similar weather conditions, devises similar pyramidal roofs with stone planks.

If the aspect of enveloping the temple in the elevation can be explained through the climatic conditions enveloping the shrine through *panca prakaras* is purely reflecting the social stratification of Kerala society. Even now, almost all Kerala temples have a notice board outside enumerating the rules of entry. The male devotees have to remove their upper garments to enter into the temple. At many places only *dhotti* [*mundu* as it called in Kerala] is allowed as the lower garment. Earlier there were also restrictions based on caste of the devotee, though it is partially relaxed in mid 20<sup>th</sup>

---

<sup>67</sup> Soundara Rajan K V, TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE IN KERALA, Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 1974, pp.1

instances restriction of entry based on gender as in Narasimhamurti Temple at Chengannur no woman is allowed into the temple or the partial entry right for women at Raja Rajesvara Temple at Talipparambu. The following chapters of the present thesis will elaborate further on the issue of entry into Kerala temples based on caste.

## WALL DÉCOR

The wall decoration of almost all temples of Kerala, even if the *adhithana* belong to an earlier age, follows the Tamil style under the Vijayanagara period. The *devakosthas* and *ghanadvaras* on the wall are flanked by split pilasters and crowned by *kuta*, *sala* or *panjara* motifs. The *arpita hara* always appear on the top of the overhanging tiled roof. Many temples of early phase were redecorated with mural paintings, which can be dated to 15- 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. The uniqueness of Kerala temple architecture, which makes it distinct from the Tamil counterparts apart from the building material, is the absence of sculpted icons in the *devakosthas* on the walls. Even the granite structures of the later phase as Ganapati temple at Kollam shy away from the depiction of iconic forms on the devakosthas. However, Siva temple at Kantiyur [Pattanamtitta District], Siva temple at Cattanur [Kollam District] and Krishna Temple Trikkulasekhrapuram [Trissur District] can be considered as exceptions in this case. Here it may be noted that the wooden outer walls at Trikkaviyur Siva Temple at Kaviyur [Pattanamtitta District] and Vazhapalli [Kottayam District] in the early phase and Narasimha Murti Temple at Chengannur [Alappuzha District], Narasimha Murti Temple at Turavur [Alappuzha District] and Siva Temple at Ettumanur [Kottayam District] belonging to the later phase have

outer walls. However, the wooden sculpture tradition fills in the gap left by the lacuna of granite sculptures. The reason for the absence of the figures can be purely based on the climatic conditions as the architecture decorations as *hara*, *vyalamala* and *ganamala* made in stucco all tucked under the protected space created by the overhanging eaves.

## **SUPER STRUCTURES AND THE KERALA-DRAVIDA TRADITION**

Another feature which, differentiate the Kerala-*Dravida* from that of Tamil-*Dravida* is the superstructure of the temples. All the temples in Kerala, leaving apart from few exceptions, have sloping tiled roof supported with wooden rafters quite close to the description of temples in *Cankam* literature as *suduman ongia nedu nilai kottam*<sup>68</sup> meaning the terracotta roofed multi storied structure. The climatic condition of Kerala with two seasons of heavy rain demands such an architecture pattern. The roofs can be tiled with terracotta tiles, or copper sheets depending on the patronage. Often the roofs are built in two *talas* with a *nasika* like projected opening on the cardinal direction called the *kilivasal* or *kilivatil*.

Although maintaining distinctness in the total layout of the temple complex, Kerala architecture adheres to the *Dravida* style of architecture through the *Sri Koils*. Many times the roof differentiates the first and second *talas*. Some of the temples have stucco *vimanas* underneath this timber capping, however a verification of this is nearly impossible due to restriction of entry into the living temples. KR Srinivasan

---

<sup>68</sup> KR Srinivasan, *Encyclopedia of Indian Temple Architecture, Lower Dravida Desa*, AIIS, Delhi.

goes unnoticed is the internal makeup and structural contents of the *Sri Koil*, since by ritual, tradition and convention; the interior of the Kerala temples is totally inaccessible to any except the ordinate priesthood. What one perceives of the *Sri Koil* is in fact an external cell, as it were, of a core *vimana* or *garbhakudya* inside”<sup>69</sup>. Thus, the Kerala style of temple building adheres strongly to the *Dravida* tradition, though, the climatic and material compulsions on the builders made the tradition deviate away from the mainstream *Dravida* style and find its own way. The result was a unique style of architecture with plenteous use of available local material as wood, laterite stone and stucco.

## DYNASTIC AFFILIATIONS AND LAYOUT OF ARCHITECTURE

The dynastic affiliations do not really affect the architecture lay out, elevation and the decor of these temples. Perumbaladur Siva temple [Thiruvananthapuram District] in the south of the region under the Ays and the Narayan Kannur temple [Kannur District] on the north under the Musakas follow a similar pattern of architecture lay out. Historically, Kerala was under the hegemony of the Colas for almost a century but no Cola type temple was built in this period. This clearly demonstrate that the architecture style of Kerala having roots in the local tradition only borrowed acceptable stylistic features from the neighboring region and retained an indigenous tradition which can be defined as the Kerala - *Dravida* style of architecture. Elevation and wall décor of most of the temples, as observed above, have gone under renovation around 16<sup>th</sup> century and thus has consanguinity in style. The Calukyan connection, which Sarkar observes, does not seem to have been potent enough to distinguish the

---

<sup>69</sup> KR Srinivasan, *Temples of South India*, New Delhi, 1972 & Reprint 1998 pp. 178



that of south. The Tamil style, predominantly a granite tradition, makes inroads to south Kerala only after the Vijayanagara occupation of southern Tamil Nadu. Looking at the temples of Kerala KR Srinivasan concludes thus, “Most of the Kerala temples now existing are not very old, the oldest dating from medieval or post medieval times. The oldest ones, because of the perishable fabric of construction, have been lost, but for their adhithanas and sculptures of gods, dvarapalas, etc. These give us the idea of the continuity from at least tenth century AD if not earlier”<sup>70</sup>. One cannot differ with the above statement of Srinivasan, even thirty years after, despite the extensive work by H Sarkar on the subject.

## **RELIGIOUS AFFILIATIONS AND LAYOUT OF KERALA ARCHITECTURE**

Kodungallur Kunhikuttan Tampuran, a local Historian, suggests that the architecture of Kerala temples originated from the Buddhist tradition<sup>71</sup>. Kunhikuttan Tampuran argues that the craftsmen, the *tacchan* and *kamala* community who built the Kerala temples were originally Buddhist and they continued to build the Brahmanical structures in the Buddhist architecture tradition. He further uses this point to explain the distinction between the Kerala architecture and that of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. It is an accepted fact that the Buddhist and Jain religions arrived in Kerala prior to the brahmanical tradition. These religions definitely would have had their monasteries, *stupas* and temples influences of which surely affected the overall layout of temple architecture in Kerala. These traditions must have had many monuments

---

<sup>70</sup> KR Srinivasan, *Temples of South India*, New Delhi, 1972 & Reprint 1998 pp. 177

<sup>71</sup> Kodungallur Kunhikuttan Tampuran, *KERALAM*, Sarga 2, verse 9,10. As quoted by Gopalakrishnan PK, *KERALATHINTE SAMSKARIKA CHARITHRAM* [Malayalam] [A Cultural History of Kerala] 1974, 2000 [6th edition] State Institute of Languages, Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 2000, pp.318

n time. Padmanabha Menon<sup>72</sup> cites *SILAPATIKARAM* and *MANIMEKALAI* which refers to a Buddhist *caitya* and a *nirgrandha matha* [Jain Vihara] along with a Vishnu temple in the city of Vanci, capital of Ceras. Some of the Jain temples of South western Karnataka like the *basatis* of Moodubidri, Karkala and Bhatkal [all in Dakshina Kanara District] have certain resemblance to Kerala temples, more striking probably because the pyramidal roof shared by these *basatis* and Kerala temples. Or the case can be, as agreed by many scholars of Kerala history, some of the Buddhist and Jain shrines might have fully converted into brahmanical shrines during the brahmanical ascendancy coinciding with the waning of Buddhist and Jain religions in Kerala. Most of the historians agree upon the Jain ancestry of the Bharata Temple at Irinjalakkuda [Trissur District] where the deity remained as Bharata but now worshipped as the Bharata, brother of Rama, not as Bharata of Jainism who is the son of Adinatha.

The cultural and historic trends which initiated the Tamil and Karnata style of architecture would have been at work in Kerala too, though the region cannot boast about powerful dynasties like Calukyan and Pallavas. May be that can be a reason where Kerala architecture never used the lithic tradition associated with imperial ambitions of Pallavas and Calukyans. Similar to the other regions of South India, Kerala too had a Buddhist and Jain tradition active prior to the dominance of brahmanical faith. The difference is when these religions failed enthuse the rulers and the public in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, they successfully sustained in Kerala probably till the eradication attempts by the Colas of Thanjavur.

---

<sup>72</sup>KP Padmanabha Menon, *KOCHI RAJYA CHARITHRAM* [1914], Mathrubhumi Edition [1989], [1996] Calicut, 1996 Pp 51

Buddhist and Jain religions to the greater Tamil culture including ancient Kerala cannot be ignored while tracing the origin of religious architecture in the region. The argument put forward by Stella Kramrisch about the consanguinity between the Kerala Temples and the Viharas of Gandhara needs to be taken into consideration. The reference of Elamkulam Kunjan Pilla to a Gandhara inscription brought to notice by Foucher mentioning “*Dakshinapathe Mulavasa Lokanatha*<sup>73</sup>” only strengthen the cultural link between Kerala and Gandhara region through the Buddhist trail. In fact the Sri Lankan Buddhist temples known as *Vatadage* are closer to Kerala temples than the Pallava temples of Tamil Nadu. This closeness to Sri Lankan example is due to the similar climatic conditions, availability of materials and the common adherence to Buddhist cultural tradition. To quote Senake Bandaranayake, “There are, however two areas of Indian subcontinent where climatic conditions led to the development of a sophisticated architectural tradition which followed a very different course from that of the classic *sikhara* temples of India. These consist of Kerala and south Kannada, and the various states of Himalayan foothills such as Kashmir, Chamba, Kulu and Nepal. The distinctive feature of this architecture is its multi-tiered, rectilinear, sloping roofs. Moreover in each area there is an intimate connection between the architectural form, the indigenous building tradition and prevailing climatic conditions.[*Sic.*] The flat roof indigenous to the plains of North India and the Deccan plateau, and the curvilinear towers and domes of the *sikhara* temples are clearly not the most suitable architectural forms for these areas. The same can be said of Ceylon and South East Asia and, in fact, of what lies at the heart of Monsoon Asia. In the course of our analysis of the Anuradhapura

---

<sup>73</sup> Elamkulam Kunjan Pilla, *ELAMKULAM KUNJANPILLAYUDE THIRENJEDUTHA KRITHIKAL 6* Sam, N [Ed], Part I, [Malayalam], International Centre for Kerala Studies, University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 2005, pp. 543

several occasions, drawn attention to the parallel architectural traditions and building forms of this zone and to its ecological and cultural homogeneity.<sup>74</sup>

Apart from the climatic affiliation the Buddhist heritage can be observed in the layout of the plans especially the circular shrines as seen in the Buddhist shrine at Bairat [Rajasthan]. Some of the *Sri Koils* in Kerala have circular outer walls encasing a square *mulasthan* which is similar to the encased stupas in the shrines of Sri Lanka. Senake Bandaranayake in her book *Sinhalese MONASTIC ARCHITECTURE VIHARAS OF ANURADHAPURA* traces the origins of Indian architecture tradition from the wooden architecture examples from the Gandhara region, as depicted in the reliefs found by Foucher<sup>75</sup>. Bandaranayake's observations regarding Saindhava and Maitraka temples of Kathiawar [Sourashtra region in Gujarat State] and their wooden antecedents seem logical enough to accept. More over the trade link between Sri Lanka, Kerala, Gujarat and Afghanistan might have acted as a catalyst in transporting religions and religious architecture from one region to the other.

As it happened in Tamil Nadu the growth of Bhakti movement must have acted as a medium for the introduction of Brahmanical religion as well as architecture in Kerala. Kesavan Veluthat observes thus, "One of the more important aspects of the religious history of early medieval South India is the emergence of the temple dedicated to one of the Agamic deities, whether Saiva or Vaisnava. The origin of the worship of these deities, traceable to Northern India, is itself the result of a lot of syncretism through

<sup>74</sup> Senake Bandaraayake, *SINHALESE MONASTIC ARCHITECTURE VIHARAS OF ANURADHAPURA*, Brill Publishers, 1974, pp 372

<sup>75</sup> Senake Bandaraayake, *SINHALESE MONASTIC ARCHITECTURE VIHARAS OF ANURADHAPURA*, Brill Publishers, 1974, pp 376

ults and practices were incorporated into the classical traditions of Vedic-Hindu religion. In the earliest historical period in South India, documented elaborately in what is known as the *Cankam* literature, one does not come across a society in which this religious system had gained acceptance”<sup>76</sup>. Though *Cankam* literature speaks extensively on the life style of the populace of Kerala and Tamil Nadu, describing the minutest details, they are silent about the gods like Siva, Vishnu or Devi and the worshiping centers presided by these deities.

The Bhakti movement worked as the vehicle for the development of brahmanical faith with the gradual withdrawal of Buddhist and Jain religions. Bhakti poems continued the spirit of *Cankam* literature but dealt entirely with propitiation of brahmanical deities. Surely the establishment of Calukyan and Pallava dynasties in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu had given the right impetus for the development of architecture in the respective regions. Their contemporaries in Kerala, Ceras and Ays too might have made efforts in this direction. Two of the Cera rulers themselves were celebrated Bhakti saints namely Ceraman Perumal Nayanar and Kulasekhara Alwar who are considered to be the contemporaries of famous Bhakti saint of Tamil Nadu, Virala Minda Nayanar. Both these saints, have played a consequential part in the introduction of *Agamic/ Puranic* system of worship in Kerala. The construction of Siva Temple at Tiruvancikkulam and the Krishna temple at Trikkulasekharapuram [both near Kodungallur in Trissur District] were accredited to these rulers. Among these Trikkulasekharapuram, probably named after its patron Kulasekhara Alwar, display lot many features of an early construction like the stone sculptures in the *devakosthas* on the *bhitti* of sanctum proper, however, this tradition never seems to

---

<sup>76</sup> Kesavan Veluthat, *Source Religious Symbols in Political Legitimation: The Case of Early Medieval South India* Social Scientist, Vol. 21, No. 1/2 (Jan. - Feb., 1993), pp. 23

Kerala and Trikkulasekharapuram becomes a unique example in this regard. Another potent influence on the development of brahmanical system as well as the architecture appears to be the presence of Sankaracharya, who seems to have structured the social and religious behavior of the Brahmins in Kerala. Many temple myths in Kerala attribute Sankaracharya as the founding person of the respective temples.

## ARYANIZATION AND SANSKRITIZATION

The socio-cultural process which usually comes up in the discussion on the arrival of brahmanical system in Kerala is the process of Aryanization and Sanskritization. Though these words are not entirely accepted by the scholarly circles, it can be discussed considering its meaning as the arrival of *Vedic/Puranic* tradition in South India. The absence of the brahmanical system of society in the *Cankam* period as corroborated by the *Cankam* literature prompts us to look into the so called Aryanization and Sanskritization. While the word Sanskritization has sociological implications as discussed in detail by MN Srinivas<sup>77</sup>, which is the acceptance of elite culture by the lower strata of society. In the case of Kerala the word can be used in the context of the change which the whole society undergone during the shift from the *Cankam* society to that of a structured brahmanical system. The examples like the mother goddess Kuratti, a tribal deity getting an aura as the manifestation Parvati, the

---

<sup>77</sup> Sanskritization is the process by which a low Hindu caste, or tribal or other group, changes its customs, rituals, ideology and way of life in a direction of a high and frequently, twice-born caste. MN Srinivas, *SOCIAL CHANGE IN MODERN INDIA*, University of California Press, Berkley, 1966, Orient Longman, Hyderabad, 1972, Second Edition 1995, Reprint 2004.

am goddess Kottavai becoming Kali points towards the process of Sanskritization.

Aryanization was used specifically to South India where the Vedic practices are accepted by a society which was predominantly non Vedic. Many scholars of Kerala history like Sreedhara Menon ascribe the development of brahmanical faith and the augmentation of temple architecture to the Aryanization process datable to 5<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> centuries. MGS Narayanan considers the Kalabhra or Kadamba suzerainty in around 6<sup>th</sup> century as the reason of the Aryanization of South India.<sup>78</sup> The concentration of Brahmin settlements in Kerala, acknowledged by legends as *KERALOLPATTI*, has lead to the sanskritization of culture and distinction of Kerala from other regions of South India. As part of the Aryanization / Sanskritization process Brahmin villages [*grama*] with temple as the centre were established. The texts like *KERALA MAHATMYAM* suggest that Parasurama established Siva, Vishnu, Bhagavati and Sasta temples in Kerala. Sharma quotes from *KERALA MAHATMYAM* thus,

*uttaradin dvijan atra godavaryupasevitan /  
kalpayamasa devanam pujartham bhryugusattama //  
tantrino dvadasa shreshtan pratishtartham akalpayat /  
caturvimsasahasram ca devalayam akalpayat //*<sup>79</sup>

Parasurama also established great temples [*dvadasa* (12)] and 24000 minor temples [*caturvimsasahasram*] the priests were invited to officiate the worship in these temples from Godavari region.

Whoever was responsible for the establishment of temples, it is quite obvious that there was an organized process of temple building activity that happened in Kerala in

<sup>78</sup> MGS Narayanan *Re-interpretations in South Indian History*, Trivandrum, 1977 pp. 7.

<sup>79</sup> *Kerala Mahatmyam*, quoted by N. P. Unni, *Tantrasamuccaya*, p. 6, cited from S.A.S Sharma *The Eclectic Paddhatis of Kerala*, INDOLOGICA TAURINENSIA, 35 (2009)



along with the activities of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

The difference however was on the material chosen for the constructions which lead to the ambiguity on the origin of Temple architecture as the wooden prototypes were completely lost unlike the examples of temples of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, built in stone. One of the key factors in the difference between these regional architectural styles can be observed in the distinction of materials.

## **IDENTIFYING KERALA *DRAVIDA* - MATERIALS FOR BUILDING**

Usually the material used for the architecture will be the most commonly available stone in the region, though there are exceptions to this rule like the famous Taj Mahal or Victoria Memorial of Kolkata, where marble, the prime material for these buildings, have been transported from faraway quarries. The preference of marble had political determinism behind the selection of the material. There were similar instances in ancient period too like the attachment Mauryans had with Chunnar Sandstone. Certain ruling powers had tried to identify their building activities with a preferred material like the Rashtrakutas building with sandstone at Hampi among the granite stone crop. In many cases the sacred architecture was distinguished from that of domestic architecture through the selection and attribution of the material to each of them. For example the royalty of ancient India like the Mauryans, Vakatakas and Hoysalas built the sacred structures in stone but preferred to stay in brick and wooden palaces. This distinction however is completely absent in Kerala where the domestic architecture like the *nalukettus* [houses of landlords] and the temples are built with a stone commonly available in Kerala known as the laterite stone.



## LATERITE

Laterite is the red colored porous stone which is cut out from the quarries. The material is abundantly found in Kerala especially the north and central parts. Northern part of Kerala has the maximum concentration of temples built in laterite. Interestingly the first geological report on laterite was written in Kerala by Francis Buchanan-Hamilton looking at the rock formations in Kerala in 1807.<sup>80</sup> He named it laterite from the Latin word *later*, which means a brick; this rock can easily be cut into brick-shaped blocks for building. Geological Survey of India has put up a plaque in Kerala in commemoration of this event. Laterite stone is a tropical rock; in India we see it mainly in coastal Maharashtra, Karnataka and Kerala. Unlike granite stone, the laterite needs to be polished and plastered. If the polishing and plastering of the stone is not done properly, the stone can decay quickly in the humid climatic conditions, as in Kerala, forcing periodical renovations of the structures. However, laterite is preferred by the Kerala builders due to the availability of this material and the craftsmen. H Sarkar observes thus, “All the cave temples and their sculptural art followed the granite tradition, which was virtually relegated to the subordinate position soon after eighth century, the main phase of rock-architecture in Kerala. Evidently, the deep-rooted laterite tradition asserted itself with the building of structural temples, because as a building stone, it is available easily and also of tractable nature”<sup>81</sup>.

---

<sup>80</sup> Francis Buchanan-Hamilton first described and named a laterite formation in southern India in 1807.

<sup>81</sup> H Sarkar, AN ARCHITECTURAL SURVEY OF TEMPLES OF KERALA, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, 1978, pp.15

as laterite also leads to the mystification of historical understanding of the temples of Kerala. For instance if a temple undergoes renovation, the *adhishtanas* made of granite stone were retained while the *bhitti* made of laterite and the superstructure with wood and metal or terracotta tiles were removed completely including the structural and decorative woodwork. Many temples in Kerala have an inscribed *adhisthana* ascribing the date of the temple to an earlier phase while the wall decorations would point a later date. The temples like Sri Rama Temple at Trippayar [Trissur District], which Sarkar places in the 9<sup>th</sup> century on basis of the inscription on the *adhisthana*, have 16<sup>th</sup> century murals on the walls. Bordering the murals are the carved *kudya sthambhas* with *pushpa potikas* which cannot be ascribed to the date provided by Sarkar. Siva temple at Kantiyur though Sarkar places it in 9<sup>th</sup> century cannot boast of a wall of the same date, as the sculptures appear as belonging to the post - Vijayanagara period. The motifs as *puspa potikas*, *kumbha panjaras* and *kudya sthambhas* of these structures cannot be pushed back to the early phase.

## GRANITE STONE

Granite stones are used in certain areas in Kerala though the dressed laterite stone, in many cases un-plastered, becomes the prime material for the temple construction, although with occasional use of bricks. The Siva temple at Kantiyur [Pattanamtitta District] can be considered as an exception in early phase of Kerala temple architecture as far as the construction material is concerned. This temple, built entirely in stone with decorative sculptural panels on the *Sri Koil* wall. The Pukayila Pantaka Sala Ganapati Temple at Kollam [Kollam District], Narasimha Temple at Pattanapuram [Kollam District] and Sri Narayana Temple at Sri Narayana Puram

...t] are fully built with granite stone. The Pukayila Pantaka Sala Ganapati Temple at Kollam and Sri Narayana Temple at Sri Narayana Puram built keeping the Nayaka temples of Tamil Nadu as the role model adhering to the Tamil *Dravida* genre of architecture; however the rest follows truly the Kerala type. Some of the temples in south Kerala especially under the patronage of the Tiruvitankur dynasty like the Sri Padmanabha Temple at Thiruvananthapuram and Kesava Temple at Tiruvattar [Kanyakumari District, Tamil Nadu] are built completely in granite stone with exception of the sri koil and the Krishna shrine at Sri Padmanabha Temple. Granite becomes crucial in the later phase of Kerala temple architecture, especially in south Kerala, with the expansion of the *valiyambalams* with clustered columns as seen in Mahadeva Temple at Valiya Sala [Thiruvananthapuram District] Janardhana Swami Temple at Varkala [Thiruvananthapuram District] and Mahadeva Temple at Vaikom [Kottayam District]. At Vaikom and Varkala massive granite images were also carved displaying the consanguinity to Nayaka sculptures.

However, granite stone was used throughout Kerala for the construction of *adhithana*. Other areas where granite was used are the architecture members which would bear the elaborate designs like *balipithas*, *pranalas*, *phalakas* of the balustrade and doorframes as the desired intricacy cannot be realized in laterite stone due to the cavities. Granite columns, plain and decorated are occasionally used in *mukha mandapas*, *namaskara mandapas* and corridors of the *cuttambalams*.

## WOOD

The central zone of Kerala consisting of Kottayam, Pattanamtitta and Alappuzha districts have maximum number of temples built exclusively in wood like the

engannur [Alappuzha District], Trikkaviyur Mahadeva temple at Kaviyur [Pattanamtitta District], Narasimha Temple at Turavur [Alappuzha District] and Siva temple at Ettumanur and Siva Temple at Vazhappalli [Both Kottayam District]. In these temples the *adhithana* is made of granite stone and the *bahya bhitti* is made exclusively with wood. The prime woods used for the construction are of the teak and jack fruit trees. Due to the climatic conditions and the geographical layout of Kerala, these trees are seen in abundance. Teak wood is found in the forest areas in the mountain ranges on the eastern side of the state, jack fruit tree on the other hand grows in the plains and the coastal region. Almost every household, at least few decades back, have had a jack fruit tree in their land, which is used profusely for its fruit, which cooked as a raw vegetable, eaten as fruit when it is ripe and to make sweet dishes. Even the leaves of the jack fruit tree are used as spoons and containers in making sweet dishes in the traditional Kerala cooking. The less fibrous wood of jack fruit tree is ideal for creating sculptures. Many images worshiped in Kerala temples are made of jack fruit tree examples of which can be seen at Sri Kurumba Devi temple at Kodungallur [Trissur District] and Bhagavati Temple at Tirumandhankunnu [Malappuram District]. Jack fruit tree because of its thick stem becomes ideal wood for creating panels in the architectural space, teak wood however used for areas like the wood work on the roofs and pillars. Both these trees were used for domestic architecture too.

## LAYOUT OF KERALA *DRAVIDA* TEMPLES

“In its entity” writes Jayashanker<sup>82</sup>, “the temple complex of Kerala fall under the *panca prakara* scheme of temple architecture. *Prakara* means enclosure or limit and

---

<sup>82</sup> Jayashanker S, TEMPLES OF KERALA, Directorate of Census Operations, Kerala, 1997

notes five enclosures around the *Sri Koil* or principal shrine. As mentioned earlier, this *panca prakara* layout can be considered as the unique feature which differentiates Kerala *Dravida* with that of Tamil and Karnata *Dravida*. Unlike Tamil Nadu and Karnataka where the prakaras are constructed structures, Kerala architecture has imagined or ritualistic *prakaras* duly demarcated by certain symbols. For example there are no constructed structure between the *sri koil* and the outer circumambulatory path except the placement of few stones symbolically representing the *dikpalas* and *parivara devatas*. The devotees are not allowed to enter inside this imaginary wall doing which s/he will be trespassing into another *prakara*. Similarly in Siva temples nobody is allowed to cross the *pranala* and have to do an anti clockwise circumambulation back to the main entrance. Nowadays there are mobile barriers and signage kept to remind the devotee of the imaginary wall but earlier the devotees were aware of this symbolic barrier.

The *panca prakaras* appear more as a ritualistic space rather than architecture space. The architectural canons of Kerala like *Tantrasamuccayam* and *Kuzhikkatt Paccha*, which eloquent more about the tantric/ritualistic space more than the design and construction of architecture. Among these texts, *Kuzhikkatt Paccha*<sup>83</sup>, defines *Panca prakaras* thus:

---

<sup>83</sup> Kuzhikkatt Maheswaran Bhattatirippad, *KUZHICKATT PACHA [Tantra Grandham]* [Tantrik Text] [Malayalam] Pancankam books, Kunnamkulam, Eighth edition, 1183 Malayalam Era [2008CE], pp.39

Prakara	Name	Space defining Element	Structure/Space included
1	<i>Antar mandala/ akatte Balivattam</i>	<i>balikkals</i>	<i>Sri koil [garbhagriha], mukha mandapa</i>
2	<i>Antar hara</i>	<i>nalambalam</i>	<i>Antar mandala + Namaskara mandapa</i>
3	<i>Madhya hara</i>	<i>vilakkumadam</i>	<i>Antar hara + Valiyambalam</i>
4	<i>Bahya hara/ puratte Balivattam</i>	<i>sivelippura</i>	<i>Madhya hara + Vilakkumadam</i>
5	<i>Kshetram/ Maryada</i>	<i>outer wall + Gopuram</i>	<i>Bahya hara+ sivelippura</i>

### ***Antar mandala/ Akatte-Balivattam:***

*Antar mandala/ Akatte-Balivattam* or the inner sacrificial area encompasses (a) *Sri Koil (mula-prasada)*: which includes [1] *Garbhagriha* also known as *mulasthanam* where the cardinal image is installed surrounded by an [2] *Antarala* or *madhyani*. [3] *Mukha mandapa* or the axial hall comes next. The flight of steps called [4] *Sopana* comes in front of the *mukha mandapa*. [5] *Pranala* or the water sprout is also included in the *akatte balivattam*. Only the priest of the temple has access to these areas except to the *pranala* which is approached from outside. In Shiva Temples nobody is allowed to cross the *pranala*.

### ***SRI KOIL***

As far as *Sri Koil* is concerned Kerala architecture adheres to the *Dravida* architecture tradition Kerala temples following the tri-fold approach of *Sri Koil* shapes, the *caturasra*, *Vrttakara* and *gajaprastakara*. The shrine of Mahadeva temple at Vaikom

to 16<sup>th</sup> Century has the unique vruttayata [elliptical] form. The layouts of the *Sri Koils* are comparable to the *Sri Koils* of Pallava and Chalukyan temples, with the central *Garbhagrha* and a *pradakshina patha* or *Madhya nadi* around it though the latter two is not a must for all. Compared to other regions of the *Dravida desa*, Kerala has the maximum concentration of *Vrttakara* and *gajaprstakara Sri Koils*. Many multiple temple complexes as Tiruvallam [Thiruvananthapuram District], Mahadeva Temple at Tiruvegappuram [Malappuram District] and Valiya sala [Thiruvananthapuram District], [have retained all the three shapes in the *Sri Koils*. *Vrttakara Sri Koils* are usually preferred for Siva while Vishnu shrines retain the *caturasra* forms. Deities as Sankaranarayana or Kartikeya at many instances are enshrined in *gajaprstakara Sri Koils*. It may be also mentioned here that the exterior shape of the *Sri Koil* can be different to that of the *garbhagrha* as the circular *Sri Koils* in Trikkaviyur Mahadeva Temple at Kaviyur [Pattanamtitta District], Mahadeva Temple at Ettumanur [Kottayam District] and Bhagavati Temple at Tiruvalattur [Palakkad District] with square *garbhagrha*.

Kerala temple architecture disregarding the regional and dynastic distinctions followed the common *Dravida* style of ground plan that is based on the *caturasra* plan of the *Sri Koil*. Except the circular Vishnu temple at Perumpaladur [Thiruvananthapuram District], all the temples ascribed to Ay dynasty are built with *caturasra Sri Koil*. Early temples of the Musaka country as Eramam Chalappurattu Siva Temple [Kannur District] and Annapoornesvari Temple at Kannapuram [Kannur District] also follow the *caturasra* plan with no *mukha mandapas* and *madhyanadis*. Siva temple at Netirimangalam [Palakkad District] can also be placed in this group.



Trikkulasekharapuram [Kanyakumari District, Tamil Nadu] Kazhakuttam [Thiruvananthapuram District], Panniyur [Palakkad District], Kaitali, Tiruvancikkulam, Vadakkunnatha [all in Trissur District], Triccambaram [Kannur District], Pullur and Anantapuram [Kasargode District] all have *caturasra* plan of the *Sri Koil* with a square *madhyanadi*. The *gudhamandapa* abutting the *Sri Koil* appears in all the examples except that of Pullur. The Parthasarathi Temple, at Parthivasekharapuram is dated to 857 AD on the basis of the inscription mentioning the Ay king Karunandadakkan, has *caturasra Sri Koil* with a square *garbhagrha* and square *madhyanadi*. The *Mukha mandapa* has openings on the north and south apart from the cardinal entrance on the east. The existing structure, as Sarkar observed, must have undergone renovation. Mahadeva temple at Kazhakuttam [Thiruvananthapuram District] follows similar pattern of architecture though the open *mandapa* abutting the *Sri Koil* in the latter structure seems to be a later addition. Ceras also follows the layout of the Ay temples at Trikkulasekharapuram, Tiruvancikkulam and Kaitali temples [all in Trissur district] dedicated to Krishna and Siva respectively.

Another variation of the *caturasra* type can be observed in the Mahadeva Temple at Kantiyur, [Pattanamtitta District], Krishna Temple at Trikkulasekharapuram [Trissur District] and Rajarajeswara Temple at Talipparambu [Kannur District] temples. These temples built in large scale have two *madhyanadis*. All of them, like the examples mentioned above, have openings into the outer *madhyanadis*. At Talipparambu these openings enter into the inner *madhyanadi*, while Kantiyur keeps three openings on the north and one on the south sides of the inner *madhyanadi*. Similar principles of *madhyanadi* and *bahya bhitti* works in the *vrttakara* structures



seen in the Vishnu Temple at Perumpaladur [Thiruvananthapuram District] and Siva temples at Kaviyur [Pattanamtitta District] . The *garbhagrha* in these examples are of *caturasra* shape. A special feature of distinction of the shape between the *antara bhitti* and the *bahya bhitti* can be observed in Kaviyur. The *garbhagrha* at Kaviyur has a *vrttakara bahya bhitti* and a *caturasra antara bhitti*. This pattern is followed in the later structures as the Sankaranarayana shrine in the Vadakkunnatha temple complex [Trissur District]. *Gajaprstakara* structures are rare in the early phase except the temples in the northern regions as in Siva Temple at Tiruvannur [Kozhikkode District], and Siva Temple at Trikkandiyur [Malappuram District], retaining the *gajaprstakara* for the *garbhagrha*.

### **MADHYANADIS**

The *Sri Koils* have *madhyanadis*, though at present, no one uses it for circumambulation nor it has any usage in the ritual context of the temple. KR Srinivasan observes that the function of the *madhyanadis* as to shield the *garbhagrha* from the extreme hot and humid climatic conditions. However this explanation seems too simplistic to accept. Another possibility is that the *Sri koil* architecture of Kerala temples are borrowed from the Tamil and Kannada *Dravida* where the *madhyanadis* are infact used for circumambulation of the devotees but with Kerala system it became obsolete. The Siva temples at Kazhakuttam, [Thiruvananthapuram District], Mahadeva Temple at Talipparambu [Kannur District] and Sri Rama Temple at Tiruvangad [Tallassery in Kannur District] and Siva Temple at Kaitali [Palakkad District] have doorways opening into the *madhyanadi*; however these doorways too were never put into use.

Many temples in the Ay-Cera region have *mukha mandapas* abutting the *Sri Koil* on the cardinal axis. The total lay out of the *Sri Koil* and smaller *mukha mandapa* reminding the Pallava and Pandya traditions. Sarkar observes thus, “Idea of diminutive shrine fronted by a larger *mukha mandapa* is totally absent in Kerala”<sup>84</sup> The *mukha mandapas* of Parthivasekharapuram [Thiruvananthapuram District], Kaitali [Palakkad District] and Tiruvancikkulam [Trissur District]; temples have lateral entrances which are redundant in the current ritual function. The introduction of *namaskara mandapas* might have reduced the function of *mukha mandapas*; if originally, it was created to accommodate the Brahmin devotees. The *mukha mandapas* do not seem to be popular in the Musaka region except in the Krishna temple at Triccambaram [Kannur District] and the Anantapadmanabha temple at Anantapuram [Kasargode District]. At Kazhakuttam Mahadeva Temple [Thiruvananthapuram District] the *mukha mandapa* is an open platform with serving the alternative for the otherwise absent *namaskara mandapa*. The *mukha mandapa* in other examples of this group have columns inside them like that of Tiruvancikkulam, Vadakkunnatha [both in Trissur District], Anantapuram and Triccambaram [Kannur and Kasargode Districts respectively]. All the *gajaprastakara* structures of this phase as the Siva Temples at Tiruvannur and Trikkandiyur [Kozhikkode and Malappuram Districts], have built in *mukha mandapas* with no lateral entrances. *Vrttakara* Siva temples at Kaviyur and Vazhapalli [Pattanamtitta and Kottayam Districts], have open verandahs on the eastern side serving the purpose of the *mukha mandapa*. In other *vrttakara* shrines, this feature is missing.

---

<sup>84</sup> H Sarkar, *Architecture Survey of Kerala Temples*, New Delhi, 1978 pp. 64

The space immediately surrounding the *Sri Koil* is also included in the *antar-mandala/ akatte balivattam*, defined by a series of sacrificial stones called *balikkals* each representing a deity including the *ashta dikpalas* like [1] Indra, [2] Agni, [3]Yama, [4] Nirti, [5] Varuna, [6] Vaayu, [7] Soma, [8] Isaana along with Ananta and Brahma. A single *balipitha* having 9 *Devatas* [Sapta-matrikas] with Ganapati and Veerabhadra is placed on the northern side of the *sri koil*. Other deities who are represented through the *balikkals* are Sastha, Durga, Subramanya [Kartikeya] and Kubera. These deities are represented regardless of the affiliation of the cardinal deity of the temple. This feature is quite unique in Kerala temples as this feature is seldom seen in other *Dravida* versions in Karnataka or Tamil Nadu. Every day after the worship of the cardinal deity known as *usha puja*, these *parivara devatas* are worshiped by the chief priest with *akshatam* [cooked rice and *tulsi* leaves] accompanied by musicians playing *timila* [a type of drum] in a ritual known as *sri bhoota bali* or *siveli*. This system is probably is part of the tantric ritual practices affiliated to the Kerala temples.

### **NAMASKARA MANDAPA**

*Namaskara- mandapa* and the *vahana* comes next as part of the *akatte-balivattam* but placed outside the *antar-mandala*. The *vahana* of the cardinal deity is placed in the *namaskara mandapa* but the real function of the *namaskara mandapas* is providing special space for the Brahmins to do the prostration [*namaskara*]. The *vahana* of the cardinal deity is moved towards the rear end of the *namaskara mandapa* to give ample space for the prostration. There are attempts to place the *namaskara mandapa* in the ritual structure of the temples as Jayashanker have done

-mandapa, as the very name indicates, is the place for prostration by the priests. It is considered as the *gala* (neck or throat) of the gross (*sthoola*) body of the deity of the temple where all *kalasa pujas* and chanting of the *mantras* are done”<sup>85</sup>. Except in the festival period when special *pujas* are performed, *namaskara mandapa* remains purely serving its prime function that is to provide the space for prostration by the priestly caste. Mahadeva Temple at Ettumanur [Kottayam District] has a Yakshi image under worship in the *namaskara mandapa* and few other examples where *Nandi* is kept. Except these examples no icons are kept in the *namaskara mandapa*. Another instance where sacredness is ascribed to the *namaskara mandapa* comes from Rajarajeswara Temple at Talipparambu [Kannur District] where even Brahmins are not allowed to use it as it has been said to have been used by Lord Sri Rama himself.

Interestingly *namaskara mandapa* remains the most decorated portion of the temple in Kerala temple architecture. Apart from sharing an equally decorated *adhisthana* with the *Sri Koil*, *namaskara mandapas* are ornate with exquisitely carved pillars supporting the intricate the ceiling. The rafter ends are usually occupied by the *naga* figures. The decorated tiers of the ceiling many times narrate the story of Ramayana or Krishnalila themes. The central portion is usually occupied by the *dikpalas* [Indra, Agni, Yama, Niruti, Varuna, Vayu, Soma and Isana] with Brahma in the centre or *Navagrahas* [Budha, Sukra, Soma, Kuja [Mangal], Rahu, Sani, Ketu and Bruhaspati] with Surya in the centre<sup>86</sup>.

---

<sup>85</sup> Jayashanker S, TEMPLES OF KERALA, Directorate of Census Operations, Kerala, 1997, pp.91

<sup>86</sup> Jayashanker S, TEMPLES OF KERALA, Directorate of Census Operations, Kerala, 1997, pp .88

da structures do not have any provisions comparable to the *Namaskara mandapa* thus making Namaskara Mandapas a unique feature in the architecture of Kerala temples. The *Nandi mandapas* or *Vahana mandapas* are placed outside the *Mukha mandapas* and *dvara mandapas* [portals] as seen in Kailashnatha Temple at Kanchipuram, Virupaksha Temple at Pattadakal and Bruhadesvara temple at Thanjavur. Kerala architecture seemed to have aversion for the *vahana mandapas* as they are seldom seen in Kerala, the *Garuda mandapa* at Tiruvalla [Pattanamtitta District] being a major exception.

### **CUTTAMBALAM & VALIYAMBALAM**

*Antara-hara* or *Cuttambalam* or *Nalambalam* consists of components like *Tidappalli*, *Valiyambalam* (*Mahasala* or *Dvara-gopuram*) and *Balikkalppura*. This area has the functional purposes where the everyday affairs of the temple handled. The activity of the *antarala jati* or *ambalavasi* community like Warriors, Marars, Poduvals are usually done here. *Valiyambalam* is also used for keeping the musical instruments, making garlands and sandal paste and storage. *Tidappalli* is the place where the *prasadam*s [food used for worship] are cooked, usually by the Brahmins assisted by female members of the *ambalavasi* caste. *Antara hara* also includes *balikkalppura* the enclosure where the main *balikkal* [Sacrificial stone] is kept. Every day during the *sri bhuta bali*<sup>87</sup> [*siveli*] the *balikkal* is worshipped. *Madhya-hara* or *Vilakkumadam* is the outer most of inner enclosure of the temples. This is the structure first seen while entering into the *prakara* wall of a Kerala Temple. In major temple complexes of Kerala like the Vadakkunnatha Temple at Trissur, the *vilakkumadam* will be made of wood and separated from the outer wall of the

---

<sup>87</sup> The worship system of Kerala temples are explained below

ted thus is not used for any ritualistic purpose in the temple. The space between the *nalambalam* and *vilakkumadam* is most elaborate in the case of Bhagavati Temple at Tiruvalatur [Palakkad District].

### ***PURATTE BALIVATTAM***

*Bahya-hara* or *Puratte-balivattam* or *Sivelippura* is the massive space around the core of the temple. Often the *Valiya-balikkal* [the cardinal sacrificial stone] which can be of the height from 3 to 10 depending on the importance of the complex is placed in the *Sivelippura* rather than in the *balikkalppura* as in Subrahmanyaswami Temple at Payyanur and Rajarajeswara Temple at Talipparambu [Kannur District]. This does not seem to be a north Kerala tradition as one can see the placement of *Valiya balikkals* in the *Sivelippura* of Vadakkunnatha Temple at Trissur [Trissur District] and in Mahadeva Temples at Vaikom [Kottayam District] and *Valiya Salai* [Thiruvananthapuram District]. If it is a *mahakshetra* with more than one deity as Vadakkunnatha Temple at Trissur [Trissur District] or Tiruvegappura [Malappuram District] where Shiva, Sankaranarayana and Sri Rama are worshipped, there will be more than one *valiya-balikkals*. There are many minor *balipithas* dedicated to *parivara devatas* and *dikpalas* as in the inner enclosure of the temple is repeated on the *puratte balivattam* placed on the pathway around the *vilakkumadam*.

*Dhvaja-stambha* or the flag post is placed on the cardinal axis of the temple. *Dhvaja-stambha* is usually are made of wood then covered with brass sheets. The *Dhvaja-stambha* is raised on stone pedestals with exquisite carvings. The *Dhvaja-stambha* at Sri Vallbha temple at Tiruvalla [Pattanamtitta District] is the most elaborate *dhvaja-sthambha* in Kerala where a separate structure is dedicated to it called the *Garuda*

nbhas will have the image of the vehicle of the cardinal deity on top, as in for Vishnu temples it will Garuda, Nandi for Siva, tiger or horse for Ayyapa and rooster or tiger for Bhagavati. Another element placed on the *puratte balivattam* is the *deepa-sthambha* [lamp pillar] though this feature seems to be popular in south Kerala. *Puratte-balivattam* can also have added structures like the *Sri Koils* of parivara devatas or any deity who is not a parivara devata of the cardinal deity based purely on the popularity, like the shrine for Hanuman in Siva temple or an Ayyappa shrine in a Vishnu temple. The secular structures as *Koottambalam* [performance hall] *Oottupura* [dining hall] are placed in the *puratte balivattam*.

## **MARYADA**

*Maryada* or *Puram-Matil* (Outer-Wall) is the outermost wall of the temple complex. The cardinal axis would have *gopuram* or *padippura*. The grandeur of the *gopuram* will depend on the importance of the temple and the patronage it receives from local rulers. *Gopuram* is not an absolute requirement for Kerala temples, but at least one *padippura* is a must. The *gopuram* in Kerala are very different to that of the Tamil or Karnata *Dravida* structures. The Kerala *gopuram* will have the pyramidal roofs akin to the temple proper with decorated wall with *ghanadvaras* supporting an *arpita hara*.

It is interesting to note that this area is called as '*maryada*' because in Malayalam language the word *maryada* means discipline. So does this structure get its name based on the fact that it was used to keep the discipline of the society? Prime function of the *maryada* [or *prakara*] was to keep out the impurities outside including the impure castes. Till 1936 in Tiruvitankur region the outcastes were not even allowed



aryada of the temple. This point is further explained in the following chapters of the present thesis.

## **TANTRIK ASPECTS IN KERALA TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE**

If one has to pick up the most characteristic feature of *Kerala Dravida* which distinguishes it from that of *Karnata* and *Tamil Dravida* traditions, it will be the *tantrik* practices in the worshiping systems and its expression in the architectural layout. To begin the discussion I would like to bring in proceedings of the legal suite between Vishnu Narayanan Nambutiri vs. Travancore Devasvam Board [Judgement on 9/11/2001 in the Kerala High Court] in which the complaint of the complainants is as follows:

“There is no competent *Melsanthi* in Sree Vallabha Maha Temple, who is capable of performing "*Pancharaatra School of Vaisnava Puja*" in the Temple. The conduct of *pujas* in the *Devasvam* Temples is devised mainly as per the principles contained in *Tantrik* Texts. The authority in this field could be traced to the text "*Tantrasamuccayam*" written by Brahmasree Chennas Manackal Narayanan Namboodirippadu in the year 1427. According to the *Tantri*, various *pujas* conducted in Sree Vallabha Maha Temple are unique and rare. The *pujas* are conducted according to the "*Yajana vali* Text" on the basis of *Pancharaatra* System contained in *Sree Durvasa Samhita*"<sup>88</sup>.

---

<sup>88</sup> JUDGMENT, KERALA HIGH COURT BENCH: S Sankarasubban, A Lekshmikutty, Legal suit between Vishnu Narayanan Nambutiri vs. Travancore Devaswom Board on 9/11/2001, from <http://www.indiankanoon.org/doc/890599/>



complaint, each temple had a designated *Tantri* and a prescribed text to follow. In Kerala the temple rituals are systematised by certain textual injunctions based on tantrik texts like *Tantrasamuccayam* [by Chennas Narayanan Namboodirippadu], *Sesha Samuchayam* [by Sankaran Namboodirippadu, son of Chennas Narayanan Namboodirippadu] and *Kuzhikkatt Paccha* [by Kuzhikkatt Maheswaran Bhattathiripad]. These texts clearly designate the process of temple building and everyday ritual of the temples, though lion share of the texts are dedicated to latter aspect. There are more than twenty Nambutiri families in Kerala who has the hereditary right to be the *tantris* of temples.

Many scholars attribute the prevalence of *Tantra* in Kerala temples to the popularity of Buddhism and Jainism in Kerala prior to the arrival of brahmanical religion in Kerala. “The integration of elements of Jainism”, writes N.M.Namboodiri, “into the temple culture during this period also should be noted. It is highly possible that the growth of typical Kerala rituals was the result of this effort at integration. Major rituals like installing of idols in a temple and festivals in Kerala are not based on the prescriptions in other parts of India. The opinion of various scholars that Kerala followed the Vedic-tantrik ritual order of Southern Recension indicates this integration”<sup>89</sup>. It can be also due to the influence of Vajrayana Buddhism which existed in Kerala. There is gradual merger of Buddhist/ Jain systems into brahmanical system of religion. Otherwise it is difficult explain the scant number of Jains and Buddhists at present in Kerala, whistle both these religions had great influence on the society of ancient Kerala. “The Kerala Brahmanas have preserved the

---

<sup>89</sup> N.M.Namboodiri, *Cultural Traditions in Medieval Kerala* , P.J.Churian ( Ed ), PERSPECTIVES ON KERALA HISTORY- The Second Millennium, KCHR, Thiruvananthapuram, 1999

the Vedic-sacrificial (Yajna) culture. Sixteen formal pujas, including their histrionic element, should be studied from this point of view. It can be generally stated that there emerged the Tantrik culture that combined the elements of Yajna culture, Puranic culture, various components that helped to attract and ensure the subordination of the regional society, and parts of the culture of the Jains and other sets of people<sup>90</sup>” writes NM Nambutiri.

There has been potential Buddhist and Jain schools of philosophy existed in Kerala prior to the works of Sankaracharya who initiated the systematized brahmanical worshipping system. Kesari Balakrishna Pilla<sup>91</sup> argues that the *mimamsa* school of thought of Kumarilabhatta was quite popular in Kerala. There are many *agamic* and *tantrik* texts written in Kerala between 8<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. Interestingly this was also the period when the Temple architecture of Kerala developed. Kerala temples may display their consanguinity with Tamil *Dravida* in elevation but the architecture lay out is purely indigenous adhering to the *Tantrik* system. Here I am not intending to go deep into the definition of Tantra as it would shift us away from the focus of the present thesis, however the definition given by Winternitz seems to be more appropriate in the context of Kerala which reads, “Strictly speaking, the *samhitas* are sacred books of the Vaisnavas, the agamas those of Shaivas, and *Tantras* those of

---

<sup>90</sup> Dr.N.M.Namboodiri, *Cultural Traditions in Medieval Kerala* , P.J.Churian ( Ed ), PERSPECTIVES ON KERALA HISTORY- The Second Millennium, KCHR, Thiruvananthapuram, 1999

<sup>91</sup> Kesari A Balakrishna Pilla, *CHARITRATTINTE ATIVERUKAL* [Malayalam] [Eng. Roots of History] Chapter 3 *Parayi Petta Pantirukulam*, Kerala Sahitya Akademi, Trissur, 1984, Reprint.1995, pp.103

to clear line of demarcation between terms and the expression *Tantra* is frequently used as a general term for this class of works”<sup>92</sup>.

Legends attribute the initiation of *Tantra* system to Parasurama himself as *KERALAMAHATMYA* states that Parasurama after establishing twelve Great Temples and twenty four thousand other temples brought Brahmins to Kerala to do the worship in these temples. The word used for worship in the text of *KERALAMAHATMYA* is *tantrin*, meaning one who is conversant with *Tantra* practices of worship. However the reference from *KERALAMAHATMYA* should not be taken on the face value as an ancient text as it is written around 14 century when the *Tantrik* system was very much in action in Kerala temples. Sankaracharya, a historical figure, is also attributed as the initiator of the *Tantrik* system through the text erroneously attributed to him called *Sankara Smruti*. “The earlier tantrik preceptors in the Kerala mode of worship”, writes Jayashanker, “were Narayanattu Bhuranthan, Sankaracharya (8<sup>th</sup> century), Isanasiva Gurudeva (12<sup>th</sup> century), Putayur Vasudevan Namboodirippadu (14<sup>th</sup> century), Chennas Narayanan Namboodirippadu (15<sup>th</sup> century), Chennas Sankaran Namboodirippadu (15<sup>th</sup> century) and Kuzhikkal Maheswaran Bhattathiripad (19<sup>th</sup> century). Of late the contributions of Kakkad Narayanan Nambutiri (author of *SA PARIVARAM PUJAKAL*) and Mangalappady Sankaran Namboodirippadu (author of *TANTRA DARPANAM*) deserve special mention. The contributions of Kanippayyur Sankaran Namboodirippadu in editing

---

<sup>92</sup> Winternitz, HISTORY OF INDIAN LITERATURE, pp.587, as quoted by NV Mallaya, STUDIES IN SANSKRIT TEXTS ON TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE, With Special reference to *Tantrasamuccaya*, Annamalai University, 1949, pp. 99

l texts are noteworthy. Their contributions are still remembered and followed by the priests of Kerala”<sup>93</sup>.

SAS Sharma in his article titled *The Eclectic Paddhatis of Kerala*<sup>94</sup> enumerates the *Tantrik* texts starting from the treatise by one Bhavatrata, greatly acknowledged as an author in the *PRAYOGAMANJARI* of Ravi<sup>95</sup> who claims the lineage of Bhavatrata. *Prayogamanjari* also known as *SAIVAGAMASIDDHANTASARA* by Ravi<sup>96</sup> is the other major text on the tantrik practices. The date of the text is assigned to 10<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> centuries by scholars. The author of *PRAYOGAMANJARI* acknowledges the existence many tantrik texts and points towards the need of compilation which he attempts in the text<sup>97</sup>. *SAIVAGAMANIBANDHANA* by one Muraridatta is another not so well known text on the temple rituals specifically to Shiva worship.

*ISANAGURUDEVAPADDHATI*, also known as the *TANTRAPADDHATI*, is the first text to combine both the Shaiva and Vaisnava systems of worship. Written by Isanagurudeva, its references to *PRAYOGAMANJARI*, *NARAYANIYAM* of Melpattur Narayana Bhattatitri and a musical instrument called *timila*, which is unique to Kerala, proves that the author belonged to Kerala. Most popular text among the

<sup>93</sup> Jayashanker S, *TEMPLES OF KERALA*, Directorate of Census Operations, Kerala, 1997, pp.166

<sup>94</sup> SAS Sharma, *The Eclectic Paddhatis of Kerala*, INDOLOGICA TAURINENSIA, 35 Turin (2009)

<sup>95</sup> *prathitabhavatratakula* as quoted by SAS Sharma, *The Eclectic Paddhatis of Kerala*, INDOLOGICA TAURINENSIA, 35 Turin (2009)

<sup>96</sup> *ravinā harapādābjabhrungena racitā krtih /*

*prayogamañjari nāma samkshesusumojjvalā* // 21:95 // as quoted by SAS Sharma, *The Eclectic Paddhatis of Kerala*, INDOLOGICA TAURINENSIA, 35 Turin (2009)

<sup>97</sup> *durjñeyāni bahuni mandamatibhis tantrāni gauroepater*

*udgirnani mukhāmbujād avikalās tv ekatra tesham kriyāh /*

*noktās tena sivāgamāms ca sakalān udvikshya tās tāh kriyāh*

*sam kshipya pravādāmi yās ca vihitā lingapratishtha vidhau* // 1:6 // as quoted by SAS Sharma, *The Eclectic Paddhatis of Kerala*, INDOLOGICA TAURINENSIA, 35 Turin (2009)

is the *TANTRASAMUCCAYAM* written by Chennas Narayanan Namboodirippadu in 15<sup>th</sup> century which structured the *tantrik* system of Kerala temples. Most of the scholars working on the Kerala temple architecture base their data on this text. More than architecture the text deals with the ritual practice of Kerala temple. As the title of the text denotes it is the compilation of all Tantrik practices in Kerala temples. The importance of *TANTRASAMUCCAYAM* is based on the fact that it is combined all the hagiographical compilations as *Agamas*, *Samhitas*, *Tantra* and the canonical texts like *MAYAMATA* and *AJITAGAMA* written prior its execution.

*Tantra* inherently has three aspects within it, called *Mantra*, *Tantra* and *Yantra*. *Mantra* denotes the chant, or ‘knowledge’ which will be sutras based on *agamas* or *Samhitas*. Nambutiris do *pujas* in temples based on *Tantra Vidhi*. *Tantra Vidhi* clearly describes the *Mula* (Basic) *mantra* of the gods and goddesses and their form, and weapons they hold on their arms etc. It begins with chanting of *Punyaha Mantra* which is in the *Samhita* part of Vedas. Many *Mantras* from *TAITERIYA SAMHITA* of *YAJUR VEDA*, *RIG VEDA* and *SAMA VEDA* *mantras* are used in special *pujas* and *Kalasam*, *Panchagavyam*, *Sribhutabali* and *Navakam* rituals done by Nambutiris in Temples<sup>98</sup>. *Tantra* denotes ritual actions. The ritual actions also involve materials of propitiation based on *pachabhuta*. *Tantrasamuccayam* states thus,

***“Tatra pruthveva gandha, akasa eva pushpam  
Vayureva dhupa, teja eva dipa  
Apa eva jalam nivedyam ca. Iti vibhaga”***<sup>99</sup>

---

<sup>98</sup> <http://www.namboothiri.com>

<sup>99</sup> *Tantrasamuccaya* with the commentary *vimarsini*, Vol.I, p.2 (TSS Edition) as quoted by NV Mallaya, *STUDIES IN SANSKRIT TEXTS ON TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE*, With Special reference to *Tantrasamuccaya*, Annamalai University, 1949, pp. 79

utras with the materials of offering used in the Kerala temples. The following table will explain it further.

<b><i>Pancabhuta</i> [Elements of Nature]</b>	<b>[English Translation]</b>	<b><i>Nivedyam</i> [Material offered]</b>	<b>[English Translation]</b>
<i>Pruthvi</i>	Earth	<i>Gandha</i>	Fragrance [Sandal paste etc]
<i>Akasa</i>	Ether	<i>Pushpa</i>	Flowers
<i>Vayu</i>	Air	<i>Dhupa</i>	Incense
<i>Tejah</i>	Light	<i>Dipa</i>	Light
<i>Apa</i>	Water	<i>Jala</i>	Water

Sankara in the *vimarsini* or commentary on *TANTRASAMUCCAYAM* states that the devotee offering the substances representing the *pancabhutas* are in fact offering their body itself which is made of the five elements<sup>100</sup>.

*Samaradhanam samicina puja/  
Pujaya samyaktam namatmadraavyadevatanamaikyam//*

Along with chanting of mantras and offering substances the Kerala temple rituals also involve *mudra* which is quite different from the worshipping system of other areas. *Mudras* are basically hand gestures signifying any object or a person as it is used in dance performances like Kathakali or Bharatanatyam. The Nambutiri Brahmins of Kerala use the *mudra* for *kriyas* [act of propitiation] and *devatas* [signifying a deity]. For example the fingers folded like the fist with the vertically opened thumb would represent Siva *Linga*. Similarly the fist kept parallel to the ground with the opened

<sup>100</sup> *Tantrasamuccaya* with the commentary *vimarsini*, Vol.I, p.1 (TSS Edition) as quoted by NV Mallaya, STUDIES IN SANSKRIT TEXTS ON TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE, With Special reference to *Tantrasamuccaya*, Annamalai University, 1949, pp. 80

The thumb inserted next to the middle finger would represent Ganapati. There are *mudras* where both hands used in unison. While worshipping the god either in the *Sri Koil* or on the *balipitha* the priests would use the *mudra* along with the *mula mantras*. This process can be translated as *Tantra* practice in Kerala temples.

*Yantra* denotes the means for *Tantra* practise and at the present context it becomes the architecture layout of a temple. *TANTRASAMUCCAYAM* deals predominantly with the *tantrik* layout of Kerala temples. In the context of Kerala the *Yantra* is the temple itself with its grid of *balikkals*. As the *mantra* and *Tantra* represents the god or rather the universal soul with its/his manifestations *Yantra* signifies the *purusa* himself. *VISWAKARMEEYAM* a canonical text supposed to have written none but the god *Viswakarma* himself and used popularly by the *Viswakarma* [builders /architects / wood workers] community in Kerala states thus,

*Garbhagruham siraproktam antaram mukham tata*  
*Sukhasanam galameaiva bahuscaivardhamandapam/*  
*Mahamandapam kuksisyat prakaram janujhanghayoh*  
*Gopuram devapadamasyat yadyeta laksanam subham/*<sup>101</sup>

Jayashanker translates the verse thus “Accordingly the *garbhagrha* corresponds to the head of the deity, the *antar mandala* is his face, the *sukhasanam* [*namaskara mandapa*] is his throat, the inner *pradakshina patha* and *nalambalam* his hands, *Vilakkumadam* and the outer *balivattam* [circle sacrificial stones] his belly, the

---

<sup>101</sup> Jayashanker S, TEMPLES OF KERALA, Directorate of Census Operations, Kerala, 1997, pp.105



er wall] his feet”<sup>102</sup>. I am not willing to argue that the concept of the temple as the divine body is a Kerala speciality as the concept of *vastupurusa* is common in other areas too. Even an ancient text like *SKANDHOPANISAD* states that the body of the devotee is the temple or the body of the temple is the god himself [“*deho devalaya*”<sup>103</sup>]. However pertinent point to note is that the, *Yantra* of the *tantrik* system, the temple symbolizes the *purusa* himself. The *purusasukta* of the Vedas states that various *varnas* originated from various parts of the *purusa* thus,

**yat purusham vyadadhuh | katidha vyakalpayan |  
mukham kimasya kau bahoo | kavooroo pada ucye | | Verse 11**

Translation: When they had divided him up, into what forms did they cast Him? And what of his mouth, His arms, his thighs, His feet? What did they make them?

**brahmano asya mukhamaseet | bahoo rajanya: krta: |  
ooru tadasya yad vaishya | padbhyam shoodro ajayata | |<sup>104</sup> Verse 12**

Translation: From his mouth came forth the men of learning [*Brahmins*] And of his arms were warriors [*Rajanya, Kshatriya* ] made, From his thighs came the trading people [*Vaishya*] And his feet gave Birth to servants [*Sudras*].

Interesting aspect which manifests here is that the entry level for various castes into the temples of Kerala are coinciding with the area which represents the body part of

<sup>102</sup> Jayashanker S TEMPLES OF KERALA, Directorate of Census Operations, Kerala, 1997, pp.105

<sup>103</sup> *Skandhopanisad*, as quoted by NV Mallaya, STUDIES IN SANSKRIT TEXTS ON TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE, With Special reference to *Tantrasamuccaya*, Annamalai University, 1949, pp. 4

<sup>104</sup> <http://www.ramanuja.org/purusha/sukta-4.html>



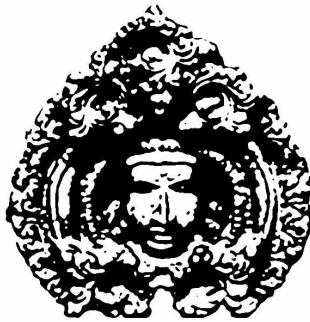
iginated from that limb. I would like to illustrate this

point further with a table below,

<b>Body part of Purusa according to Purusasukta</b>	<b>Varna originated from the body part of Purusa</b>	<b>Corresponding part of the Kerala temple</b>	<b>Varna /caste permitted to enter the region</b>
<i>Mukha</i> [Face]	Brahmin	<i>Sri Koil, Antar mandala</i> including <i>namaskara mandapa</i>	Brahmin [Nambutiris & Embratiris]
<i>Bahu</i> [arms]	Kshatriya	<i>Cuttambalam, Valiyambalam</i>	<i>Antarala jatis Kshatriya</i> [Nair]
<i>Ooru /jangha</i> [Thighs]	Vaisya	Exterior of <i>Nalambalam</i>	<i>Chakkala Nair, Vanian</i>
<i>Pada</i> [feet]	Sudra	Exterior of <i>Maryada</i>	Sudra

In conclusion one can state that the brahmanical system of worship in Kerala not only brought in the Vedic system of worship but also structured the temple architecture based on the social hierarchies which are substantiated and canonised by texts like *ISANAGURUDEVAPADDHATI* and *TANTRASAMUCCAYAM*. These social changes and the canonisations happened simultaneously in the medieval period probably after the Cola wars.

\* \*



## CHAPTER 3

# CASTE SYSTEM IN KERALA

ty is quite natural. But the unnatural thing about these  
sub-questions is that they have lost the open-door character of the class system and  
have become self-enclosed units called castes. The question is: were they compelled  
to close their doors and become endogamous, or did they close them of their own  
accord? I submit that there is a double line of answer: **Some closed the door:  
Others found it closed against them**".

**BR Ambedkar**

## **INTRODUCTION: *PARAYI PETTA PANTIRU KULAM***

To deliberate further into the central theme of the present thesis it is critical to understand the history and the persistence of caste system in Kerala. There is an interesting legend from Kerala called the *Parayi Petta Pantirukulam*<sup>105</sup> [in Malayalam] extensively dealing with the caste structure of Kerala. The literal translation of '*Parayi Petta Pantirukulam*' will be 'the twelve castes born of Parayi'. The *Paraya* [Male members Parayan and female members Parayi] community is the lowest in the hierarchy of caste in Kerala. The legend does not deal with establishment and institutionalization of the castes but on the existence of castes and the related hierarchy in Kerala.

The legend narrates the story of Vararuci, a Brahmin and a well reputed Sanskrit scholar in the court of Raja Bhoja<sup>106</sup>, getting married to a *Paraya* because it was written in his fate. Vararuci was aware of his fate and tried to avoid as much as he can, but nothing can be done against what the fate has in store him. The story has an

---

<sup>105</sup> Kottarathil Sankunni, *EITHIHYAMAALA* [Malayalam], First Published (8 Volumes) in 1909-1934, 18<sup>th</sup> Special edition, November 2004, Current Books, Kottayam, Kerala

<sup>106</sup> The story does not delve into the details of Raja Bhoja or his domain.

erably loses in the game of fate and gets married to the lower caste girl. After their 'profane' marital relation the couple decides to go for the pilgrimage and they happened to travel through Kerala. Through this travel Vararuci's wife, the Parayi gave birth to twelve children. Vararuci, who is now an ardent follower of Fatalism instructs his wife to abandon the children stating that as the god has given them mouth their destiny would provide them food. These abandoned children were later picked up by various castes starting from Brahmin to Paraya.

The legend is all about their divine actions, many times challenging the caste system and brahmanical system of worship itself. The crucial point which comes through the legend is that caste is not determined by the birth but by upbringing. The mother born in the lower caste becomes a Brahmin through upbringing and her children born to a Brahmin and Parayi by birth get into different caste through the people who adopted them. Most of the castes in Kerala have been represented in the legend as,

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Caste</b>	
1	Melattur Agnihotri	Brahmin	Brahmin
2	Naranattu Bhrantan	Ilayatu	Ambalavasi/ Antarala Jati
3	Karakkyal Mata	Kshatriya	Kshatriya
4	Vatutala Nair	Nair	Kshatriya / Sudra [?]
5	Akavoor Chattan	Nair	Kshatriya / Sudra [?]
6	Uliyannur Perumtaccan	Taccan	Sudra / Craftsmen/ Christian?
7	Rajakan	Veluttedan	Sudra / Craftsmen
8	Vallon	Pulaya	Sudra/ Distressed Class
9	Pananar	Panan	Sudra/ Distressed Class
10	Pakkanar	Parayan	Sudra/ Distressed Class
11	Uppukoottan	Muslim	
12	Vayilla Kunnilappan <sup>107</sup>		

<sup>107</sup> Vayilla Kunnilappan is a deity himself states the author Kottarathil Sankunni. Kottarathil Sankunni, *EITHIHYAMAALA* [Malayalam], First Published (8 Volumes) in 1909-1934, 18<sup>th</sup> Special edition, November 2004, Current Books, Kottayam, Kerala.

red completely propagating the hierarchy of the castes in Kerala. On the contrary the lower caste representations like Pakkanar [a *Paraya* by caste] and Perumtacchan [a carpenter] never miss an opportunity to give a dig at the Brahmins. The story of Pakkanar and Azhvancheri Tambrakkal is especially makes a comment on the *Vedic* practices of presenting a golden calf as *dakshina* [alms] to the Brahmin. In the legend, Pakkanar claims the stake on the golden calf because it is inanimate object and thus dead, thus belongs to the lower caste *Paraya* and not to Brahmins. Of course the story also gives the credit back to the Brahmins as Azhvancheri Tambrakkal, through his magical powers makes the golden calf walk behind him. The story of Akavoor Chattan expounds that even a lower caste person could get to see the '*parabrahma*', the eternal soul, through great devotion. Here too the legend prefer not hurt the sentiments of the upper castes and allows Akavoor Chattan to see the *parabrahma* manifestation only in the form of a Buffalo.

Nobody knows when these legends were created, but the compilation of the legends was done by Kottarattil Sankunni, published as articles in Malayala Manorama and Bhashaposhini in late 19<sup>th</sup> century to early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Later these articles were compiled into a book titled *EITHIHYAMAALA* [meaning the 'Garland of Legends'] in 1909. Thanks to the popularity the book, it had more than sixty editions. The characters of this legend are quite popular in Kerala and they seem to have lived in an area covering Malappuram District in north Kerala to Kollam District in south. Melattur Agnihotri, the eldest son of the Parayi was a Brahmin from Malappuram District and the legends of Naranattu *Bhrantan* [The madman of Naranattu] are popular in the South Malabar region. Naranattu Bhrantan seems to have authored

There are many temples in Central Kerala attributed to have been built by Perumthacchan. Elamkulam<sup>109</sup> states that Perumthacchan is worshiped by the wood carvers of central Kerala. One of the twelve sons of *Parayi* known as Akavoor Chattan said to have died at a place called Ochira in Kollam district in South Kerala.

Kesari Balakrishna Pillai argues that the legend of *Parayi Petta Pantirukulam* is a rhetoric interpretation of the philosophical school of Kumarilabhatta and his disciples<sup>110</sup>. He identifies three other scholars who have been given the title Vararuci living in north India during the Mauryan, Kusana and Gupta periods. The Vararuci of *Parayi Petta Pantirukulam* according to Kesari is none other than Kumarilabhatta [c.610 – 682 AD] who was born in Tirumalpuram of Tamil Nadu. Kesari states that among the 12 proposed children of Vararuci, according to the legend, eight people belonged to Hindu religion [Melattur Agnihotri, Rajakan, Vayilla Kunnilappan, Vatutala Nair, Panan, Pakkanar, Akavoor Chattan and Naranattu Bhrantan] two are Christians [Perumthacchan and Uppukoottan] one Buddhist [Vallon] and one Jain through Karaykkal Mata. Kesari also identifies certain scholars among the 12 children of Vararuci like Mandana Misra [the author of *SPHOTA SIDDHI* and *BHAVANA VIVEKAM*] as Melattur Agnihotri and Prabhakara Misra the author of *Purva mimamsa* literature like *BRUHATI*, *LAKHVI*. Kesari considers Naranattu *Bhrantan* as Haridatta, the author of Astrological treatises like *GRAHACHARA NIBANDHANA*,

---

<sup>108</sup> Jayashanker S, *TEMPLES OF KERALA*, Directorate of Census Operations, Kerala, 1997, pp.166

<sup>109</sup> Kesari A Balakrishna Pillai, *CHARITRATTINTE ATIVERUKAL* [Malayalam] [Eng. Roots of History] Chapter 3 *Parayi Petta Pantirukulam*, Kerala Sahitya Akademi, Thrissur, 1984, Reprint.1995, p.103

<sup>110</sup> Kesari A Balakrishna Pillai, *CHARITRATTINTE ATIVERUKAL* [Malayalam] [Eng. Roots of History] Chapter 3 *Parayi Petta Pantirukulam*, Kerala Sahitya Akademi, Thrissur, 1984, Reprint.1995, p.103

Buddhist scholar Dharmakirti is Valluvan. Kesari argues that Thomas Knai who lead the migration of Christians from Central Asia to Kerala as Perumtacchan and Vayilla Kunnilappan as one of Hindu *Sastries* named Bhattanarayana who was brought to Kerala by Brahmins to debate with Buddhist philosophers. To Kesari Balakrishna Pillai the legend of *Parayi Petta Pantirukulam* is nothing but legendary congregation of the *nyaya* and *mimamsa* scholars who worked in Kerala prior to Sankaracharya, the famed *advaita* scholar, who led the philosophical resistance of brahmanical system against Buddhism. Another noteworthy aspect of *Parayi Petta Pantirukulam* legend is that the children of the Parayi are equally distributed among major castes and religion of Kerala which existed in medieval period, though the exception of Izhava and Christians<sup>111</sup> is quite curious.

Even if the legend is all about the Kumarilabhattacharya school of thought it clearly features the caste hierarchy, at times questioning it, analogous to the *chandala* who questions to Sankaracharya on the distinction between the untouchable *chandala* and the Brahmin. The *chandala* asks Sankaracharya, “*Viproyam Shvapachoyam ityapi mahan koyam vibhedabrahma*”<sup>112</sup> [What is this confusing distinction between a Brahmin and an untouchable. Is the body which is considered untouchable by the society or the soul which is same] Similar question is raised by a *Pottan Teyyam*<sup>113</sup> performance in north Kerala performed by the *Malayan* Community in front of the

<sup>111</sup> If one discards the argument of Kesari Balakrishna Pillai who considers Perumtacchan as Christian

<sup>112</sup> As quoted by M V Nadkarni, *Is Caste System Intrinsic To Hinduism-Demolishing A Myth*, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL WEEKLY, November 8, 2003, pp 4787

<sup>113</sup> *Teyyam* is the folk performance of in north Kerala, popular in Kannur and Kasargode districts of Kerala. Performer impersonate the local gods and goddesses.



question that what the difference between me and you is  
as we have the same color blood oozing out when injured.

I am referring to the myth and legends of caste hierarchy here for the reason that it is through this myths and legends the castes find their identity as well as raise the question against the system. The myths and legends preserve the state of affairs and the popular perception of the historical juncture. For example Kottarattil Sankunni furnishing the devotion [*Bhakti*] of Col. Munroe as the reason for the complete trust demonstrated by Rani Gouri Lakshmi of Tiruvitankur to give the control of Devasvam affairs in Venatu<sup>114</sup>. Sanjay Subramanyam categorizes these legends as lying between fiction and history<sup>115</sup>. The legends often act as the popular justification. The Parasurama myth of Kerala expounded through the texts like *KERALA MAHATMYAM* and *KERALOLPATTI*<sup>116</sup> by the Brahmins is good example where the myth of Parasurama is used to strengthen the legitimacy of land holding rights of the Brahmins. Another myth worth mentioning is creation myth of the Izhavas of Kerala, again propagated by the Brahmins, where the Izhavas are created by lord Siva primarily for the 'vocation' of toddy collection from the coconut tree. Here the myth justifies the traditional vocation of the Izhavas. The myth also reemphasizes Izhavas' position in the caste hierarchy through mythically attaching them to toddy, which is banned in the brahmanical injunctions as *SANKARASMRUTI*.

---

<sup>114</sup> *Oru Europeante Swami Bhakti* [Devotion of a European] Kottarathil Sankunni, *EITHIHYAMAALA* [Malayalam], First Published (8 Volumes) in 1909-1934, 18<sup>th</sup> Special edition, November 2004, Current Books, Kottayam, Kerala. p. 576

<sup>115</sup> Sanjay Subramanyam, *THE PORTUGUESE EMPIRE IN ASIA 1500-1700 ó A Political and Economic History*, 1993, Longman, London & New York, p.8

<sup>116</sup> Detailed study of these texts is in the following section

lated atrocities are very much part of the Kerala history.

The travelers who visited Kerala were appalled by the sight of the practice of the caste system. Duarte Barbosa, the Portuguese traveler wrote in 1516, “When [the Nairs] walk along a street or road, they shout to low caste folk to get out of their way, this they do, and if one will not, the Nair may kill him without punishment; even if he is a youth of good [high caste] family but poor and worthless, and he finds in his way a man of low caste who is rich and respected and in favor with the king, yet he makes him clear the way for him as if he were a king”<sup>117</sup>. Robin Jeffrey cites an English writer of late 19<sup>th</sup> century thus; “a Nair may approach but not touch a Nambutiri Brahmin; a Chogan [Irava/Izhava] must remain thirty-six paces off, and a Pulayan slave ninety-six steps distant. A *Chogan* must remain twelve steps away from a Nair, and a Pulayan sixty-six steps off, and a Pariar [Paraya] some distance farther still”<sup>118</sup>.

The statement made by Swami Vivekananda, who visited Kerala in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, summaries all the other observations. “In Malabar” writes Vivekananda, “the lower caste was not allowed to walk on the same road which is used by the upper caste. But if he becomes a Muslim or Christian he can go move anywhere. This is happening in a country ruled by a Hindu Raja. This is quite ridiculous”<sup>119</sup>. TK Madhavan, one of the reformist leaders who fought against the caste hierarchy and caste atrocities remembers his childhood thus, “When I go to the school I see many Nair men and women. My first memory of childhood is that of giving way for them. I

<sup>117</sup> Robin Jeffrey, *Temple-Entry Movement in Travancore*, 1860-1940, SOCIAL SCIENTIST, Vol.4, No.8, [March,1976] , p. 5

<sup>118</sup> Robin Jeffrey, THE DECLINE OF NAIR DOMINANCE, Society and Politics in Travancore, 1847-1908, Manohar, New Delhi, 1976, Second Edition, 1994. p. 9

<sup>119</sup> Vivekananda Sahitya Sarvasvam, 3rd Volume, pp 373. As quoted by Bhaskaranunny, *KERALAM IRUPATHUM NOOTANTINDE ARAMBHATTHIL* [Malayalam] [Kerala in the beginning of 20th century], Kerala Sahithya Akademi, Thrissur, 2005 p.15

just be on safe side as I was afraid that Nairs will beat me up if I violate the system”<sup>120</sup>. Bhaskaranunny, who dedicated an entire book titled *KERALAM IRUPATHAM NOOTTANTINDE ARAMBHATHIL* [Kerala in the beginning of 20th century] on the Caste atrocities in Kerala refers to a news item reported in the Malayala Manorama<sup>121</sup> of June 1898 where the residents of Anjengo [Presently Anju Tengu in Kollam District] pleading to the British officers that Anjengo should not be seeded to Tiruvitankur because the people are happy with the British administration which provided them with opportunities without the consideration of caste hierarchy<sup>122</sup>.

The works of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century reformers like Sri Narayana Guru, Dr. Palpu, Ayyankali, TK Madhavan, Kelappan and AK Gopalan have not gone wasted as Kerala can boast of equality among its population as far as education, health, and social welfare. However the caste hierarchy is retained in the religious practices with the pretence of sanctity and purity of the temple. Probably Kerala is the only state [may be Puri temple in Orissa an exception] where non-Hindus are not allowed to visit the Hindu temples.

It should also be emphasized here that, ‘**all Hindus are not allowed to enter all parts**’ of the temples **even now**. This presents a challenge to the study of Kerala temples as the researchers are not permitted into certain areas of the temple. This

---

<sup>120</sup> Life History of TK Madhavan, 1936 pp10, As quoted by Bhaskaranunny, *KERALAM IRUPATHUM NOOTTANTINDE ARAMBHATHIL* [Malayalam] [Kerala in the beginning of 20th century], Kerala Sahithya Akademi, Thrissur, 2005. p.155

<sup>121</sup> Daily news paper in Malayalam still in circulation.

<sup>122</sup> As quoted by Bhaskaranunny, *KERALAM IRUPATHUM NOOTTANTINDE ARAMBHATHIL* [Malayalam] [Kerala in the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century], Kerala Sahithya Akademi, Thrissur, 2005 p. 215

the ground plan drawings of Siva Temple at Kaviyur published by Soundararajan and H Sarkar in their books TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE IN KERALA <sup>123</sup> [Published by State Archaeology, Kerala] and H Sarkar AN ARCHITECTURAL SURVEY OF KERALA TEMPLES <sup>124</sup> [Published by Archaeological Survey of India] respectively.

In the ground plan drawing published by Soundara Rajan, the temple has a circular shrine with a circular *Madhyanadi* around square *mulasthan*a and the intermediate circular colonnade has ten columns. The additional *mulasthan*a dedicated to Parvati is shown attached at the rear of the cardinal *mulasthan*a. The ground plan of the same temple looks very different in Sarkar's book. The *mulasthan*a is circular with eight pillared colonnade and the additional *mulasthan*a dedicated to Parvati is mysteriously missing. Here I am not blaming the scholars for not scrutinizing it objectively. Even if these distinguished scholars had visited this site it would have been impossible for them to check it out personally as the interior of the *Sri Koil* is not accessible to anybody **except** the priest who is conducting the *puja* on that particular day. While making the ground plans for the Encyclopedia of Indian Temple Architecture<sup>125</sup> with the team from American Institute of Indian Studies, New Delhi [AIIS] I had to rely on the information provided by the *pujaris* [designated priests] on the shape and measurements of the inner *Sri Koil* as me or anyone in our documentation team were not allowed to enter into the *Sri Koil* area as in Kerala temples only the designated priest who is a Brahmin is allowed to enter the *Sri Koil*.

<sup>123</sup> K V Soundara Rajan, TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE IN KERALA, Government of Kerala, 1974, Thiruvananthapuram, Fig. 9

<sup>124</sup> H Sarkar, AN ARCHITECTURAL SURVEY OF KERALA TEMPLES, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, 1978, Fig. 30

<sup>125</sup> ENCYCLOPEDIA OF INDIAN TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE, Volume 4, Lower Dravida Desa, Edited by George Michell and MA Dhaky, American Institute of Indian Studies {AIIS}, New Delhi

Unlike the temples in Karnataka or Tamil Nadu, the temple architecture in Kerala determines the behavioral pattern of the devotee and more importantly his/her caste position. When devotees are allowed to move around the *mulasthanam* through the circumambulatory path in the temples of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, the same space is never used even by the Brahmins in Kerala temple. It is probably the dominance of caste system and the hierarchy and segregation in the society being reflected in the architecture layout of the Kerala temples where the dominant caste has been given all the freedom and the lower castes in the hierarchy is kept at a distance. The architecture members like the *namaskara mandapa* which do not feature in the Tamil Nadu and Karnataka temples are introduced in Kerala temple just to underline the preference given to the dominant caste.

The dominance of the higher caste in the society is in fact self - proclaimed through canonical texts along with mythic justifications. This journey of the dominant caste was also nurtured by the political and economic changes in history. It is an interesting passage where the bangle maker of the *Cankam* society rises to become the *Janmi* [landlord] in the medieval period. The rise of the dominant caste and the social scenario is the main focus of the present chapter.

### **THE MYTHICAL JUSTIFICATION OF THE BRAHMIN DOMINANCE IN THE CASTE HIERARCHY - KERALA MAHATMYAM AND KERALOLPATTI**

The legend of *Parayi Petta Pantirukulam* cannot be seen as a myth created by a particular caste to glorify their position in the society. In fact no other castes in Kerala

a creation myth except the Brahmins. The texts like *KERALA MAHATMYAM* and *KERALOLPATTI*, in Sanskrit and Malayalam languages respectively, seem to be serving the purpose of a *jati Mahatmyam* [glorification of the caste]. They are very similar to the *Gaurava Gathas*<sup>126</sup> of Uttar Pradesh. Interestingly, *KERALA MAHATMYAM* and *KERALOLPATTI* pretend to be a historical document where the myths and legends play more crucial role rather than historical facts. In *KOCHI RAJYA CHARITRAM*, Padmanabha Menon writes about *KERALA MAHATMYAM* and *KERALOLPATTI* thus, “*KERALA MAHATMYAM* is smaller portion from *Agni Purana*. Except certain statements on the dominance of Brahmins this text has no historical value. *KERALOLPATTI* which is a composition in Malayalam has full of incongruous facts but certain historical data can be inferred from it. Both these texts are of a recent origin; however we have no clue about the authors of these texts”<sup>127</sup>. *KERALA MAHATMYAM* and *KERALOLPATTI* attribute the genesis of Kerala to Parasurama, sixth incarnation of Vishnu, who said to exterminated 21 generation of the Kshatriyas. The texts claim that as repentance to the human slaughter Parasurama decided to give some land grants to the Brahmins but as belong to the priestly caste himself he did not possess any land. Parasurama then claimed a new land by throwing axe [*parasu*] across the sea. The land emerged thus, Kerala, was given as *dana* [alms] to the Brahmins.

---

<sup>126</sup> Badri Narayan explains the concept of *Gaurava Gathas* among the Pasi community of Uttar Pradesh where they believe that Pasi community originated from the sweat of Parasurama. Badri Narayan, *Dalit Mobilisation and the Nationalist Past*, Gupta Dipankar [Ed], CASTE IN QUESTION 6 IDENTITY OR HIERARCHY, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2004, p.193-220

<sup>127</sup> Padmanabha, Menon KP, *KOCHIRAJYACHARITHRAM* [Malayalam], [History of Kochi] [1914], Mathrubhumi Edition [1989], [1996] Calicut, 1996

ence between stating that an existing land given to the Brahmins and asserting that the land was in fact specially created for the Brahmins. According to *KERALA MAHATMYAM* Parasurama made Kerala **for** the Brahmins and the rest, the lower caste people were **brought** in **to serve** them. *KERALA MAHATMYAM* says thus:

*uttaradin dvijan atra godavaryupasevitan /  
kalpayamasa devanam pujartham bhryugusattama //  
tantrino dvadasa shreshtan pratishtartham akalpayat /  
caturvimsasahasram ca devalayam akalpayat* <sup>128</sup>

Translation: Parasurama also established great temples [*dvadasa* (12)] and 24000 minor temples [*caturvimsasahasram*] the priest were invited to officiate the worship in these temples.

William Logan narrates the migration of Brahmins to Kerala as described in *KERALA MAHATMYAM* thus: “To people this land, Parasu Rama is said to have first of brought a poor Brahman from the shores of Krishna River. This man had eight sons and the eldest was made head of all the Brahmins of Kerala. Other Brahmins are next brought and located in sixty-four *gramas* or villages. Ships with seeds of and animals next came, also eighteen *samantas* [sons of Brahmins and *kshatriya* women] also *vaishyas* and *Sudras* and the lower castes”<sup>129</sup>.

These texts and the local temple myths are eloquent about the role of Parasurama in creating the land and establishment of the temples in large scale, though, there is not

---

<sup>128</sup> *Kerala Mahatmyam*, quoted by N. P. Unni, *Tantrasamuccaya*, p. 6, cited from S.A.S Sharma *The Eclectic Paddhaties of Kerala*, *INDOLOGICA TAURINENSIA*, 35 (2009)

<sup>129</sup> William Logan, *MALABAR MANUEL*, 2000 edited version Edited by PJ Cheriyan, Kerala Gazetteers Department, Thiruvananthapuram, p. 221



icated to Parasurama. The folk festivals like *Onam* and *Vishu* which are Kerala specific festivals hardly acknowledge Parasurama. *Onam*, the main festival of Kerala commemorates Bali, the antagonist of the Vamana myth, as the legendary king of Kerala. May be for this reason, there are hardly any Trivikrama image under worship in Kerala. EMS Namboodiripad ridiculing the Parasurama myth using the same tool of myth states that in the *Dasavatara* myth Vamana and Bali comes before Parasurama so how can Parasurama create a land from the land which was ruled 'judiciously' by Bali? Both traditional and modern Kerala calendars, fail to even mention Parasurama *Jayanti*. Ironically Parasurama *Jayanti* is an official holiday in Gujarat and not in Kerala. In 20<sup>th</sup> century only organizations who seem to have remembered the Parasurama connection to Kerala were the Indian railway with a train running from north to south of Kerala called as Parasuram Express [from Mangalore in north to Thiruvananthapuram in south] and the management of Kerala Museum in Kochi [now closed] who installed a image of Parasurama outside the museum.

The scholars of early 20<sup>th</sup> century showing allegiance to brahmanical way of knowledge like Kunhikuttan Tampuran do mention the Parasurama myth. But, most of the historians like Padmanabha Menon of Kerala actually rubbished the Parasurama myth but tried to find some justifications of the myth in the geological nature of Kerala and argued that it a rhetoric description of the fact that the major land mass of Kerala emerged from the sea. The interest of the present thesis on the Parasurama myth is the reference of the migration of Brahmins and their territorial claim justified by the myth.

...IATMYAM and *KERALOLPATTI*, along with many temples Parasurama established as many as 64 Brahmin settlements called the *gramas* of which 32 belong to Kerala proper. The other 32 which are in Tulu Nadu [Udupi and Dakshin Kanara districts of Karnataka State] having no Nambutiri population. Unlike the Nambutiri Brahmins, the Tulu Brahmins do not claim the ownership of the land. Logan quotes from *KERALOLPATTI* thus, “Thus Parasurama created the land of Malabar [Kerala] and bestowed the same upon the Brahmins of the sixty-four *gramas* as a poured out gift”<sup>130</sup>.

The table below would explain the name of the 32 *gramas* as mentioned in the *KERALOLPATTI*<sup>131</sup>, present name of the *grama* and the current location of these *gramas*.

No.	Name of the <i>grama</i>	Present Name
1-32	<div>IN TULU NADU</div> <div>[Udupi and Dakshin Kanara Districts of Karnataka State]</div>	
KANNUR DISTRICT		
33	Payyanur	Payyanur
34	Perinchallur	Talipparambu
MALAPPURAM DISTRICT		
35	Karikkattu	Karikkadu
36	Alattur	Alattur [?] Nr. Tirur
37	Karintolam	Karantur [?] Nr. Manjeri
38	Chovaram/Chokiram/ Sukapuram	Sukapuram
39	Isanamangalam	Isanamangalam / Nedukanatu region

<sup>130</sup> William Logan, MALABAR MANUEL, 2000 edited version Edited by PJ Cheriyan, Kerala Gazetteers Department, Thiruvananthapuram, p. 223

<sup>131</sup> Based on the description provided by William Logan, MALABAR MANUEL, 2000 edited version Edited by PJ Cheriyan, Kerala Gazetteers Department, Thiruvananthapuram, p. 222

PALAKKAD DISTRICT		
		Panniyur
TRISSUR DISTRICT		
41	Trisivaperur	Trissur
42	Eiranikulam	Eiranikulam
43	Mushikkulam	Moozhikkulam
44	Iringatikotu	Irinjalakkuda [?]
45	Atappur	Atavur
46	Chamundha	Chemmanta
47	Avattiputtur	Avattipputtur/ Avittathur
ERANAKULAM DISTRICT		
48	Parappur	Paravaur
49	Cenganotu	Chengamanad
50	Uliyannur	Uliyannur
KOTTAYAM DISTRICT		
51	Ilibhyam	Ilibhyam
52	Katukaruka	Katamuri [?]
53	Karanallur	Karanallur
54	Ettunaliyur	Ettumanur [?]
55	Tiruvallayi	Tiruvalla
ALAPPUZHA DISTRICT		
56	Chenganiyur	Chengannur
PATTANAMTITTA DISTRICT		
57	Kitangur	Kidangur
58	Kaviyur	Kaviyur
60	Anmalam	Aranmula [?]
KOLLAM DISTRICT		
61	Anmani	Venmani [?]
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM DISTRICT		
62	Nilmanna	Niramankara
UNIDENTIFIED		
63	Kalutunadu	??
64	Kalachchur	??

As clearly evident from the above table the south Kerala region known as Venatu [including present day Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pattanamtitta, Alappuzha and Kottayam Districts] has most of the Brahmin settlements though the settlements are equally distributed through Kerala. The list given here is based on the traditional

but the reality is that many of these settlements faded off by the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century as the 1901 Census report reveals. The Nambutiri web site<sup>132</sup> cites an article by Mathur Vasudevan Namboodiripad which reads thus, “The 1901 Census Report says that there are 19,279 Nambutiris in British Malabar, 5,290 in Cochin State and 5,326 in Travancore State. It shows that the net Kerala Nambutiri population is 29,895, a mere 0.47% of the population of Kerala”<sup>133</sup>.

*KERALOLPATTI* justifies the land ownership of Brahmins in a way similar to the Divine Right theory of European monarchy. To quote Achuta Menon, “According to the traditionary account preserved in the *KERALOLPATTI*, a comparatively recent work, Parasurama, an incarnation of Vishnu, created the land of Kerala and gave it as a gift to the Brahmans, whom he invited from north and settled in sixty-four gramas. The gift, made with flower and water for their enjoyment is called the *janmam*<sup>134</sup>. Parasurama then sent for Sudras from various countries and settled them in the land as the *Adiyans* and *Kudiyans*, or the slaves and tenants of the Brahmans”<sup>135</sup>. Here *KERALOLPATTI* is assuming the role of a *Gourava Gatha* of the *Malayali* Brahmins as it serves the purpose of boosting the identity of the caste. Seneviratne observes that in the *Gaurava Gathas*, “the facts of the past interspersed with myth and fantasy to create a new perception of a past that is glorious, pure and exclusive. This in turn is

<sup>132</sup> <http://www.namboothiri.com>

<sup>133</sup> Mathur Vasudevan Nambudiripad "Malayaala Braahmanar" in "Namboothirimaarö edited by Paarayil Raman Namboodiri, Mangalodayam Company, 1917, Thrissur. As quoted by <http://www.namboothiri.com/articles/1901-census.htm>

<sup>134</sup> From this originate the word Janmi and the whole system of janmi system, the Kerala version of feudalism. This issue is discussed in detail in the later part of this thesis.

<sup>135</sup> Menon, Achyuta C, COCHIN STATE MANUEL, 1911, Reprint Kerala Gazetteers, Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 1995

and imagined to have existed from time immemorial”<sup>136</sup>.

The 1931 Senses of Travancore reveal the fact that each Brahmins or the Brahmins household had in their possession average 28 acres of land. To quote P Sivanandan, “The pattern of land-holding seems to be an important factor around which the caste-class relations develop. Available data for the Tiruvitankur region show that during the 1930s the dominant caste Hindu sections controlled the largest share of the landed property in this region of Kerala”<sup>137</sup>. The case in the Kochi and Malabar regions of the state was similar or worst than Tiruvitankur as sixty percent of the *gramas* mythically established by Parasurama belonged to the Kochi-Malabar regions of Kerala.

Apart from the land, by their own birthright as the head of the *gramas* which is called the *Brahmasvam* land, Brahmins also controlled the landed property of the temples namely the *Devasvam* land. Further discussion on this aspect will be done later in this thesis. Coming back to the ‘legitimacy’ of landed property as provided them in *KERALA MAHATMYAM* and *KERALOLPATTI*, it should be noted that the control over the land as *janmis* or landlords in reality enabled the Brahmins to dominate of the social hierarchy. Miller observes in the context of Kochi thus, “About one percent of Hindus are Nambutiri Brahmins, the highest caste. Until recently their influence

---

<sup>136</sup> Seneviratne, *IDENTITY, CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE PAST*, oxford University Press, 1997, p.5, cited by Badri Narayan, *Dalit Mobilisation and the Nationalist Past*, Gupta Dipankar [Ed], *CASTE IN QUESTION ó IDENTITY OR HIERARCHY*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2004, p.195

<sup>137</sup> P Sivanandan, *Caste, Class And Economic Opportunity In Kerala, An Empirical Analysis*, *ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL WEEKLY*, February 1979, p. 475

their number. Besides being the Hindu religious heads, many were wealthy landlords with numerous lower-caste retainers”<sup>138</sup>.

*KERALA MAHATMYAM* further states that it were the Brahmins who brought the Perumal [the appointed king to rule the land with 12 year term which end with a *Mamankam* festival] to rule the land. The last Perumal known as the Pallibana Perumal divided the land among his kith and kin like Kolattiris [north Malabar - Kannur District], Valluvakonatiri [East Malabar – Malappuram District], Samutiri [South Malabar], Chonatiri [Kochi], Tiruvitankur [Venatu – South Kerala]. This reference itself shows that the texts are written in the late medieval period probably after the Cola Wars aftermath of which is identified as the period of brahmanical dominance in Kerala history. The text has clearly display the specific agenda of the propagation of the Brahmin dominance in the social and economic sectors of Kerala. EMS Namboodiripad states thus, “this legend used even today by certain people as a document to justify the feudal land system prevalent in Kerala”<sup>139</sup>. Even Logan was using this legend with the understanding that the text is “full of the usual inflated Brahmanical legends, and is not worthy of serious analysis as it’s more popular, the *KERALOLPATTI*”<sup>140</sup> Whether or not caused by Parasurama or not there is one factor emerge from the legends that the element of migration of communities to which is acceptable to many historians. *KERALA MAHATMYAM* and *KERALOLPATTI* further complicate the muddled history of Kerala. One of the reasons for this haziness of

<sup>138</sup> Eric J Miller, CASTE AND TERRITORY IN MALABAR, *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 56, No.3 [June, 1954], p.411

<sup>139</sup> EMS Namboodiripad *KERALAM MALYALIKALUDE MATHRUBHOOMI* [Malayalam], from P Govinda Pillai [Ed], *EMSINTE SAMPOORNA KRITIKAL* [COLLECTED WORKS OF EMS NAMBOODIRIPAD Vol 9- 1948] [Malayalam] Chinta Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram 2000 p. 68

<sup>140</sup> William Logan, *MALABAR MAUEL*, 2000 edited version Edited by PJ Cheriyan, Kerala Gazetteers Department, Thiruvananthapuram, p. 221

documents resulted probably because of the absence of stone temples and the stone inscriptions. Absolute localization of power structure, unlike Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, through feudal system and establishment of caste based governing system can be another cause.

As expounded by the 'brahmanical' texts like *KERALA MAHATMYAM* and *KERALOLPATTI* for a specific social agenda of the migration of Brahmins to Kerala is a historical fact as the early literal references especially *Cankam* literature do not specifically mention Brahmins as the dominant caste. Before we delve into the history of this migration in Kerala context it will be necessary to look into the caste system in north India prior to the Brahmin migration to Kerala.

### **CASTE SYSTEM IN NORTH INDIA PRIOR TO BRAHMIN MIGRATION TO KERALA.**

“Caste in India means an artificial chopping off of the population into fixed and definitive units, each one prevented from fusing into another through the custom of endogamy. Thus the conclusion is inevitable that *endogamy is the only characteristic that is peculiar to caste*, and if we succeed in showing how endogamy is maintained, we shall practically have proved the genesis and also the mechanism of caste” wrote Ambedkar<sup>141</sup>. As far as the caste hierarchy he maintains that “This sub-division of a society [based on endogamy] is quite natural. But the unnatural thing about these sub-divisions is that they have lost the open-door character of the class system and

---

<sup>141</sup> B R Ambedkar, THE ESSENTIAL WRITINGS OF B.R.AMBEDKAR, Ed. Valerian Rodrigues, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2002, Paperback edition, 2004, p. 245



ts called castes. The question is: were they compelled to close their doors and become endogamous, or did they close them of their own accord? I submit that there is a double line of answer: *Some closed the door: Others found it closed against them.* The one is a psychological interpretation and the other is mechanistic, but they are complementary and both are necessary to explain the phenomena of caste-formation in its entirety<sup>142</sup>.

When did exactly this stratification of the society in India happen? Is it specially made to order social system for India? Ambedkar disagree on this by quoting Geiger<sup>143</sup> “The Romans had two classes. The Egyptians thought, three were enough. The Indo-Iranians also had no more than three classes: (1) The *Athravans* (priests) (2) *Rathaeshtar* (warriors) and (3) the *Vastrya-fshuyat* (peasantry).”

The intriguing fact is that while in those societies the system become irrelevant, may be due the arrival of religions as Christianity and Islam, India clung on to the structure more than it deserved to be. This is also due to the fact that it was made a religious law rather than social structure. Ambedkar statement is apt in this context too which reads, “Though the existence of classes is the *de facto* condition of every society, nevertheless no society has converted this *de facto* state of affairs into a *de jure* connotation of an ideal society. The scheme of the *Purusa Sukta* is the only instance in which the real is elevated to the dignity of an ideal. This is the first unique feature of the scheme set forth in the *Purusa Sukta*. Secondly, no community has given the *de facto* state of class composition a legal effect by accepting it as a *de jure*

---

<sup>142</sup> [http://www.ambedkar.org/ambcd/Caste in India.html](http://www.ambedkar.org/ambcd/Caste%20in%20India.html)

<sup>143</sup> Geiger : Civilization of the Eastern Iranians in Ancient Times, Vol. II, P.64 as quoted by Ambedkar, Ambedkar, Part II, Chapter I, WHO WERE THE SHUDRAS ? <http://www.ambedkar.org/>

ty. The *Purusa Sukta* is the only instance in which an attempt was made to give reality to the ideal by invoking the sanction of law”<sup>144</sup>.

Here Ambedkar is referring to the verse from *Purusa Sukta* of *Rig Veda* [X 90] considered by the scholars as the prime evidence of the established caste/ *Varna* system in Vedic period which reads,

*yat purusam vyadadhuh | katidha vyakalpayan |*  
*mukham kimasya kau bahoo | kavooroo pada ucyete |* | Verse 11

Translation: When they had divided him up, into what forms did they cast him, and what of his mouth, his arms, his thighs, his feet? What did they make them?

*brahmano asya mukhamaseet | bahoo rajanya: krta: |*  
*ooru tadasya yad vaishya | padbhyam shoodro ajayata |* | Verse 12<sup>145</sup>

Translation: From his mouth came forth the men of learning [Brahmins] and of his arms were warriors [*Rajanya*, *Kshatriya*] made. From his thighs came the trading people [*Vaisya*] And his feet gave Birth to servants [*Sudras*].

Many scholars suggest that this verse in fact is an interpolation. MV Nadkarni argues thus, “It is essentially a metaphor taking the society to be an organic whole, of which the four *varnas* based on division of labor are intrinsic parts. There is nothing to indicate that they ought to castes or *jatis* as presently understood. The reference is evidently to occupations or work of respective *varnas*, which need not be based on birth”<sup>146</sup>. To illustrate his view further Nadkarni cites the verse from *BHAGAVAT*

<sup>144</sup> Ambedkar, Part II, Chapter I, WHO WERE THE SHUDRAS ? <http://www.ambedkar.org/ml>.

<sup>145</sup> <http://www.ramanuja.org/purusha/sukta-4.html>

<sup>146</sup> MV Nadkarni, *Is Caste System Intrinsic To Hinduism- Demolishing A Myth*, ECONOMICAL AND POLITICAL WEEKLY, November, 2003, p. 4786

] where the God himself takes the responsibility of the stratification of the society thus,

“*Caturvarnyam maya srushtam gunakarmavibhagasa*”<sup>147</sup>

Translation: “Four Varnas were created by me on the basis of character and occupation”

Nadkarni argues that the *BHAGAVAT GITA* reference clearly illustrate that the *varnas* are not based on birth but on occupation. A distinguished Sanskrit scholar like PV Kane observes thus, “if Krishna wanted to make birth as the basis of his division of labor, he could easily have said ‘*jati-karma-vibhagashah*’ or ‘*janma-karma- vibhagashah*’ instead of ‘*guna-karma- vibhagashah*’ as actually stated”<sup>148</sup>.

Nadkarni in his article on *Is Caste System Intrinsic to Hinduism- Demolishing a Myth*, states that even Ambedkar did agree on the theory that the Purusa Sukta in fact is an interpolation. Interestingly this is not the impression I got while reading ‘*Who were the Sudras?*’ Ambedkar did accept the interpolation theory for the sake of argument. To quote Ambedkar, “There are some scholars who maintain that the Varna system did not exist in the age of the Rig Veda. This statement is based on the view that the *Purusa Sukta* is an interpolation which has taken place long after the *Rig Veda* was closed. Even accepting that the *Purusa Sukta* is a later interpolation, it

---

<sup>147</sup> <http://sanskritdocuments.org>

<sup>148</sup> Kane PV, HISTORY OF DHARMASASTRAS [ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL RELIGIONS AND CIVIL LAW IN INDIA], Vol. I to V, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune, 1990, First 1930, p.1635-36, as quoted by MV Nadkarni, *Is Caste System Intrinsic To Hinduism- Demolishing A Myth*, ECONOMICAL AND POLITICAL WEEKLY, November, 2003, p. 4786

statement that the Varna system did not exist in the time of the *Rig Veda*. Such a system is in open conflict with the text of the *Rig Veda*. For, the *Rig Veda*, apart from the *Purusa Sukta*, does mention *Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas* and *Vaishyas* not once but many times. The Brahmins are mentioned as a separate *Varna* fifteen times, *Kshatriyas* nine times. What is important is that the *Rig Veda* does not mention *Sudra* as a separate *Varna*<sup>149</sup>.

Ambedkar clearly noted the difference between the Vedic and that of *Purusa Sukta* approaches thus starting with *Rig Veda*, [i.113.6] which says, "That some may go in pursuit of power, some in pursuit of fame, some in pursuit of wealth, some in pursuit of work, *Usas* has awakened people so that each may go in pursuit of his special and different way of earning his livelihood." "This is as far as the *Rig Veda* had gone" observes Ambedkar, "The *Purusa Sukta* goes beyond. It follows up the notion of division of labor and converts the scheme of division of work into a scheme of division of workers into fixed and permanent occupational categories. Why does the *Purusa Sukta* commit itself to such a perversity? In propounding the doctrine of *Chaturvarnya*, the *Purusa Sukta* plays a double game. It proceeds first to raise the real, namely, the existence of the four classes in the Indo-Aryan Society, to the status of an ideal. This is a deception because the ideal is in no way different from facts as they exist. After raising the real to the status of the ideal, it proceeds to make a show of giving effect to what it regards as an ideal. This again is a deception because the ideal already exists in fact"<sup>150</sup>.

---

<sup>149</sup> Ambedkar, Part I, Chapter I, WHO WERE THE SHUDRAS ? <http://www.ambedkar.org/>

<sup>150</sup> Ambedkar, Part I, Chapter I, WHO WERE THE SHUDRAS ? <http://www.ambedkar.org/>

not state it, the other texts propagate the hierarchy of

this stratification. *TAITTARIYA BRAHMAN* [i.2.6.7] says that the “The *Brahman* caste is sprung from the gods; the *Sudras* from the Asuras”<sup>151</sup>. *MANUSMRITI* makes a statement clearly defining the hierarchy of the Varnas thus “Of Brahmins, superiority (is) by knowledge, but of *Kshatriyas* by valor, of *Vaishyas* by reason of property (and) wealth, and of *Sudras* by age”<sup>152</sup>.

While Scholars like Nadkarni could bring many references on the ‘equality’ of *varnas* quoting from *MAHABHARATA* like the verse from *Udyoga Parva*, [Ch.34. v.41] which reads:

*Na Kulam vrittahinasya  
Pramanamiti me matihi  
Anteshwapi jatanam  
Vrittameva vishishyate*

Translation: High birth can be no certificate for a person of no character. But persons with good character can distinguish themselves irrespective of low birth.

On the other hand the texts like *MANUSMRITI* strives to establish the Brahmin superiority through making dictums like "He who can claim to be a Brahmin merely on account of his birth, or he who only calls himself a Brahmin, may be, if desired, the declarer of law for the king, but a *Sudra* never. If a king looks on while a *Sudra* gives a judicial decision, his realm sinks into misfortune, like a cow in a quagmire”<sup>153</sup>. When

---

<sup>151</sup> Ambedkar, Part I, Chapter I, WHO WERE THE SHUDRAS ? <http://www.ambedkar.org/>

<sup>152</sup> Ambedkar, Part I, Chapter I, WHO WERE THE SHUDRAS ? <http://www.ambedkar.org/>

<sup>153</sup> Ambedkar, Part I, Chapter I, WHO WERE THE SHUDRAS ? <http://www.ambedkar.org/>

he king the status of the lower *varnas* cannot be very similar to the ideal equality which Nadkarni proposes.

Later texts like the *PURANAS* and *SMRUTIS* and *SUTRAS* do cut a sorry picture of the social system. The upper strata of the *Varna* system seem to have got control of the society and they did make changes in the religious texts suiting their own social positions like the indicted interpolation in *Rig Veda* through the *Purusa Suktas*. “Some critics have gone to the length of saying” writes Ambedkar, “that the *Purusa Sukta* is a forgery by the Brahmins to bolster up their claim to superiority. Priests are known to have committed many forgeries. The Donations of Constantine and Pseudo-Isidore Decretals are well known forgeries in the history of the Papacy. The Brahmins of India were not free from such machinations. How they changed the original word ‘*Agre*’ into ‘*Agne*’ to make *Rig Veda* give support to the burning of widows has been pointed out by no less an authority than Prof. Max Muller. It is well-known how in the time of the East India Company a whole *Smruti* was fabricated to support the case of a plaintiff. There is, therefore, nothing surprising if the Brahmins did forge the *Purusa Sukta*, if not the whole, at least the two versus 11 and 12, at some later stage, long after the fourth *Varna* had come into being, with a view to give the system of *Chaturvarnya* the sanction of the *Veda*”.<sup>154</sup>

In the Upanishad period the caste hierarchy seems to have been under attack from the progressive philosopher who even dared to picture a procession of white dogs to that

---

<sup>154</sup> Ambedkar, Part I, Chapter 5, WHO WERE THE SHUDRAS ? <http://www.ambedkar.org/>

<sup>155</sup>. In the time of *DHARMA SUTRAS* the brahmanical hierarchies become more structured. Though *BHAGAVAT GITA* tries to paint a picture of equality of castes and *Varnas*, it is very clear that the *Chaturvarnya* was already established as a social structure in India during period in which Buddha lived. The social stratification has been given religious sanctions through the establishment of taboos, especially on the mixing of the *varnas* through exogamy. “According to Manu,” writes SM Michael<sup>156</sup>, “untouchability is the punishment for miscegenation between a member of a high caste and that of a low caste or an outcaste”. Ambedkar finds endogamy as the mechanism of keeping the purity of the castes and that remains even now greatest criteria regarding the castes. Ambedkar hits the right nail when he consider endogamy as the basis of caste system thus “As for myself I do not feel puzzled by the Origin of Caste in India for, as I have established before, endogamy is the only characteristic of Caste and when I say *Origin of Caste* I mean *The Origin of the Mechanism for Endogamy*”<sup>157</sup>. The recent row over the caste *Panchayat* in Haryana which was planning a demonstration against the Supreme court of India to change the Hindu Marriage Act which do not recognizes the system of endogamy is a good example illustrating the caste system and endogamy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However it is not clear that when the Vedic system of *Varna* hierarchy did translates into the caste system. Megasthenes in his book *Indica* mentions seven different strata of society which divided based on the occupation.

---

<sup>155</sup> *Chandyoga Upanishad*, as quoted by Shrirama, *Untouchability and Stratification of Indian Civilization*, in *DALITS IN MODERN INDIA ó VISION AND VALUES*, Ed. SM Michael, Sage Publication, New Delhi, 2007 [Second Edition], p 63

<sup>156</sup> SM Michael, *DALITS IN MODERN INDIA ó VISION AND VALUES*, Ed. SM Michael, Sage Publication, New Delhi, 2007 [Second Edition], pp 17

<sup>157</sup> <http://www.ambedkar.org/ambcd/ CASTE IN INDIA.html>



## I ACCORDING TO MEGASTHENES

Megasthenes mentions at length about the caste hierarchy existed in India. He observed that the “Indians have been divided into seven castes”<sup>158</sup>. Morton Klass<sup>159</sup> provides us with the full text;

- 1) **“The Sophists”**: To this class the knowledge of divination among the Indians is exclusively restricted and none but a sophist is allowed to practice that art. . .
- 2) **“The tillers of the soil”**: They form the most numerous class of the population. They cultivate the soil and pay tribute to the kings and the independent cities.
- 3) **“Herdsmen, both shepherds and neatherds”**: These people neither live in cities nor in villages, but they are nomadic and live on the hills.
- 4) **“Handicraftsmen and retail-dealers.”**
- 5) **“Warriors”**
- 6) **“Superintendents.”** They spy out what goes on in country and town.
- 7) **“Councilors of state”**: Advisers of the king, or the magistrates of self-governed cities, in the management of public affairs. In point of numbers this is a small class.

A group of people whom he mentions as ‘wise men’, with most esteemed in reputation and dignity must be the Brahmins as they did not do any bodily labor except to offer sacrifices to the gods on behalf of the people. Megasthenes later in description confuses the Brahmins with *sanyasins* whom he says “pass their lives naked; in the winter in the sun under the open sky, but in the summer, when the sun holds sway,

---

<sup>158</sup> Excerpted from Arrian, "The Indica" in *Anabasis of Alexander, together with the Indica*, E. J. Chinnock, tr. (London: Bohn, 1893), ch. 1-16, [http://www.shsu.edu/~his\\_ncp/Indica.html](http://www.shsu.edu/~his_ncp/Indica.html)

<sup>159</sup> Majumdar, *The Classical Accounts of India*, Calcutta, 1960, p.224-26 as quoted by Morton Klass, *CASTES & The emergence of the South Asian Social System*, Manohar Publications, Delhi, 1980, p.23

and in the marshes under great trees”<sup>160</sup>. Megasthenes makes observations about the caste hierarchy thus, “it is not lawful for anyone to marry a woman from another caste; for example, for herdsmen to marry from the class of artisans or the reverse. It is not lawful for the same man to exercise two trades, or to exchange from one caste into another”<sup>161</sup>.

However in the same period the situation was entirely different in South India. Many historians have observed the continuation of the tribal or even prehistoric system of society existing in South India while monarchic system already being established in North India under the Magadha rulers. Even Buddha’s observation about the political situation during his life as “*Kincit ganadhina kincit rajadhina*” [some under the tribes and some under monarchs] pictures the situation in north India. The Maski inscription of Asoka and the Megalithic dolmens of Rajankollur, Karnataka in fact are on the same level, and thus belong to the same date. Interestingly, the earlier literature from the region, the *Cankam* collection do mention about the castes but mentions no caste hierarchy as many *Cankam* poets themselves hailed from the castes which will be later categorized as lower.

---

<sup>160</sup> Arrian, "The Indica" in *Anabasis of Alexander, together with the Indica*, E. J. Chinnock, tr. (London: Bohn, 1893), ch. 1-16, [http://www.shsu.edu/~his\\_ncp/Indica.html](http://www.shsu.edu/~his_ncp/Indica.html)

<sup>161</sup> Arrian, "The Indica" in *Anabasis of Alexander, together with the Indica*, E. J. Chinnock, tr. (London: Bohn, 1893), ch. 1-16, [http://www.shsu.edu/~his\\_ncp/Indica.html](http://www.shsu.edu/~his_ncp/Indica.html)

## TES IN KERALA DURING CANKAM

*Cankam* literature categorically mentions the ruling power under the Ceras or Villons in Kerala. I am not intending to enter into the political situation of *Cankam* period as it is being briefly described elsewhere in the current thesis. However, the social system of *Cankam* needs further investigation as the *Cankam* period witnesses the arrival and development of brahmanical system of worship and socio-religious structuring of the society. The references to *Aintinai* will be pertinent in understanding the socio- religious mapping of the population in *Cankam* literature.

### **AIN TINAI [FIVE TYPES OF LAND]**

*Cankam* literature clearly distinguishes the landscape into five types, called as *Aintinai*. The names of each *tinai* [type of land] are based on the trees and flowers seen in abundance in those areas. The five *tinai*s are *Kurinji*, *Pala*, *Mulla*, *Marutam* and *Neytal*. Elamkulam explains the landscape thus, “The region with hills and mountains is called *Kurinji*. After *Kurinji* region appears a land devoid of rain which is named as *Palai*. *Mullai* region is lush green with steppes and shrub forest while the paddy fields crisscrossed with rivers and streams is called the *Marutam* land. The coastal region is *Neytal*”<sup>162</sup>. *Kurinji* region is named after a beautiful blue flower seen only in the mountain region of South India whose botanical name is (*Strobilanthes*

---

<sup>162</sup> Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, *ELAMKULAM KUNJANPILLAYUDE THIRENJEDUTHA KRITHIKAL* – Part I, [Malayalam] Ed. N Sam, International Centre for Kerala Studies, University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 2005, pp 9

named after the *Palai* flower (*Wrightia tinctoria*)<sup>164</sup>.

*Mullai* is the jasmine flower (*Jasminum sambac var*)<sup>165</sup> and *Neytal* stands for White water Lily (*Nymphaea Alba*)<sup>166</sup>. *Marutam* [Tamil] (*Terminalia elliptica*) is a tree found in the south Asian region otherwise known as Asan, Saj in Hindi and: Satada, Shardul in Marathi

Each *tinai* was inhabited by people depending on the products of the land for their livelihood. The people living in the *Kurinji* region were *Kuravas*. They were also referred as *Punavar*, *Atavar* and *Kanavar*. They are called as *Punavar* because the *Punam* cultivation where the forest land is cleared to do the cultivation of millets. *Kanavar* denotes the forest region they belong to while *Atavar* [Dancers] denotes the dance performances they are known for. They were three *Cankam* female poets who belonged to *Kurava* community as *Ilaveyini*, *Vennikkayatti*, *Kuramakal Kuri Aiyini* and probably some of the Kings who ruled over Nanjinadu prior to 12<sup>th</sup> century like *Konankikkuravan*, *Nancikuravan* and *Bommaccha kuravan*<sup>167</sup>. *Kurava* community still exists in Kerala who are considered to be snake charmers and soothsayers. In north Malabar *Kuratti* [females of *Kurava* community] is worshipped as a deity. *Kurava* community is presently categorized as belonging to the scheduled tribes of

<sup>163</sup> Neelakurinji (*Strobilanthes Kunthiana*) is a bush with several branches. The species name *Kunthiana* has been derived from the River Kunthi which flows through the rich expanse of the renowned Silent Valley National Park in Kerala. It means that the plant has been first described from the vicinity of this river. The plant grows profusely Shola grasslands and mountain slopes of the mighty Western Ghats and Nilgiris in India. Neelakurinji blooms in a clustered manner on typical inflorescence stocks once in every 12 years. From <http://www.neelakurinji.net/>

<sup>164</sup> *Kapar*, *Dudhi* in Hindi. *Kala Kuda* in Marathi. From <http://www.flowersofindia.in/catalogue>

<sup>165</sup> *Madan mogra* in Hindi. From <http://www.flowersofindia.in/catalogue>

<sup>166</sup> *Nilofar* in Urdu, also known as the European White Water Lily. From <http://www.flowersofindia.in/catalogue>

<sup>167</sup> Nellikkal Muraleedharan, *KERALA JATI VIAVARANAM*, [Encyclopedia of Caste System] Rainbow Book Publishers, Cengannur, Kerala, 2008, pp110

ited by the dreaded hunters and robbers called the *Maravas*. As the landscape was predominantly barren they resorted to looting of the merchants who traveled through the land<sup>168</sup>. Due to their skills with bow and arrow the kings recruited them in the army. “Martanda Varma King of Travancore in 18<sup>th</sup> century had a mercenary battalion of *Marava* soldiers”, says Nellikkal Muraleedharan<sup>169</sup>. *Mullai* area was occupied by the *Itaya* or *Ayans* community whose prime occupation was breeding of cattle while the *Ulavars* as the name suggests did the tilling of the land in the *marutam* region. The inhabitation of the coastal *Neytal* was known as *Valayar* due to the fishing net [*vala*] which is crucial to their profession.

The people of each *Tinai*s also had their own gods/goddesses and individual worshipping system. For instance the ferocious *Maravas* had mother Korravai as their main deity, while the peaceful communities like the *itayas* of *Mullai* and *Ulavars* of *Marutam* had *Mayon* and *Ventan* as their deities. *Mayon* preferred only milk and milk products. *Kuravas* of *Kurinji* land had *Cheyon* [primitive form of Kartikeya] as their main god. Apart from the offering of food the worship was conducted through dance and oracles. No references have been made concerning image worship or permanent structures for worship except in the later phase.

The distinction between the communities living in the *tinai*s cannot be considered as caste distinction on the contrary as Elamkulam states, “Even we mentions them as

<sup>168</sup> Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, *ELAMKULAM KUNJANPILLAYUDE THIRENJEDUTHA KRITHIKAL* 6 Part I, [Malayalam] Ed. N Sam, International Centre for Kerala Studies, University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 2005. pp 11

<sup>169</sup> Nellikkal Muraleedharan, *KERALA JATI VIVARANAM*, [Encyclopedia of Caste System] Rainbow Book Publishers, Cengannur, Kerala, 2008, pp302

s it should not taken as castes which exists today. If a Kurava or a Marava [hunter] settles in Mullai region and follow the cattle breeding he will be considered as Itaya [shepherd]. This was the situation till 10<sup>th</sup> century”<sup>170</sup>. “Caste segregation”, says SK Vasanthan “was not that popular in Cankam period. Panas, Kuravas, Vedas and Maravas enjoyed high positions in the society. The Cankam poets like Paranar and Kapilar were Panas”<sup>171</sup>.

Tolkappiyam of the Cankam period mentions Antanar, Arasar, Vaisyar and Velalar as the four castes<sup>172</sup>. Antanar who had ‘karaka’ [pot of sacred water] and yajnopavita [sacred thread] were definitely Brahmins. Arasars were the kings and thus fit in as the Kshatriyas of the Varna system. Vaishyas were probably the trading class and the producers of agrarian artifacts as the symbols of the caste like the flower on the head and garland do not specify any occupational tools. Interestingly the Velalars were given weapons of war but they do not get the position of Kshatriyas. Subramanian traces the influence of north Indian Varna system on the author of Tolkappiyam<sup>173</sup>.

## REFERENCE OF BRAHMINS IN CANKAM LITERATURE

Though Nilakantha Sastri proposes the existence of Brahmins in the pre Cankam period in Tamil Nadu, many a scholars have reservation about the Vedic practices in

<sup>170</sup> Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, *ELAMKULAM KUNJANPILLAYUDE THIRENJEDUTHA KRITHIKAL* 6 Part I, [Malayalam] Ed. N Sam, International Centre for Kerala Studies, University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 2005. Pp 13

<sup>171</sup> SK Vasanthan, *NAMMAL NADANNA VAZHIKAL* [The Path We Took] , [Malayalam], Cultural History of Kerala, Malayalam Research Center, Trissur, Kerala, 2006, Pp31

<sup>172</sup> N Subramanian, *SANGHKALA BHARANA SAMVIDHANAM: SANGHAM TAMIZHARUDE BHARANAVUM SAMOOHIKA JEEVITAVUM* [Malayalam] [Translation of *CANKAM POLITY: THE ADMINISTRATION AND SOCIAL LIFE OF THE CANKAM TAMILS*, Madras, 1966.] ICHR and DC Books, Kottayam, 2003. p.242

<sup>173</sup> N Subramanian, *SANGHKALA BHARANA SAMVIDHANAM: SANGHAM TAMIZHARUDE BHARANAVUM SAMOOHIKA JEEVITAVUM* [Malayalam] [Translation of *CANKAM POLITY: THE ADMINISTRATION AND SOCIAL LIFE OF THE CANKAM TAMILS*, Madras, 1966.] ICHR and DC Books, Kottayam, 2003. p.246

era. Ironically Nilakantha Sastri himself quotes the *Cankam* text *PURANANNURU* to state that “there only four castes [*kudi*], viz., *Tudiyar*, *Panan*, *Paraiyar*, and *Kadamban*.<sup>174</sup> In fact the *Cankam* texts like *Adam* do mentions Brahmins not as a *jati* but as community of people migrated to South India as the early Brahmins were not in the profession related to religion. Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai cites a verse from *Akam*, thus;

**“*velapparppan valarantumitta Valai kalaintu olinta koluntin anna*”<sup>175</sup>**

Translation: *Velaparppan* (Brahmin who do not do *yajna* sacrifice) was making bangles out of conch shells.

The other group of Brahmins who arrived in south India was addressed as *Parppan* and *Marayor*. *Parppans* were listed among the castes who can act as mediators in the love fights along with *Panan*, *Koottar* etc. It will be interesting to note that *Koottars* were the *Kuruvas* of *Kurinji* region who in the later caste hierarchy could not even see a Brahmin with his eyes. Another word for Brahmins is *antanar* although many historians feel that it was generic term used for any virtuous person including the *acaryas* of Buddhism and Jainism<sup>176</sup>. *TOLKAPPIYUM* mentions the six duties of *antanars* like learning, teaching, sacrifice, receiving alms, giving alms and good

---

<sup>174</sup> Nilakantha Sastri KA, A HISTORY OF SOUTH INDIA, Oxford University Press, Madras, 1976, P.131

<sup>175</sup> *Akam* 24. As quoted by Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, ELAMKULAM KUNJANPILLAYUDE *THIRENJEDUTHA KRITHIKAL* ó Part I, [Malayalam] Ed. N Sam, International Centre for Kerala Studies, University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 2005. Pp 240

<sup>176</sup> PK Gopalakrishnan, *KERALATHINTE SAMSKARIKA CHARITHRAM* [A CULTURAL HISTORY OF KERLA] [Malayalam] 1974, 2000 [6<sup>th</sup> edition] State Institute of Languages, Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 2000, p.163



acknowledges the *antanars* as virtuous<sup>177</sup>. *PURANANNRU* cites an incident here the Brahmin who came for the alms was duly rewarded by the Cera king Mavenco with golden flowers and money.<sup>178</sup> “The very strong presence” says Veluthatt Kesavan, “of the Brahman, with his Vedic sacrifices and even Agamic ideas, is hard to miss there; but sprawling Brahman settlements with vast areas of agricultural land under their command and the temple as the pivot around which they functioned had not yet taken shape in that period. Perhaps it was he who introduced these elements into this part of the country in the period that followed immediately”<sup>179</sup>.

This complexity and chaotic of *Varna* system can be seen in the later or say existing caste system in Kerala. The present system is quite clear about the top and bottom of the *Varna* system as the Brahmins on the top and the *avarnas* at the bottom. In between space of *Kshatriyas* and *Vaishyas* are occupied by a hoard of castes who claims themselves as *Nairs* who do the occupations of *Vaishyas* and *Kshatriyas*. For example the *vilakkittala* Nair is a barber, while *Chakkala* Nair of south Kerala who had the profession of making of oil is called *Vaniyas* in north Kerala similar to the merchant class of north India designated as *Baniyas*. Many historians attribute this confusion of *Varna* to the late arrival of Brahmins to the already established

---

<sup>177</sup> PK Gopalakrishnan, *KERALATHINTE SAMSKARIKA CHARITHRAM* [A CULTURAL HISTORY OF KERLA] [Malayalam] 1974, 2000 [6<sup>th</sup> edition] State Institute of Languages, Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 2000, p.163

<sup>178</sup> *Puram*. 367, As quoted by PK Gopalakrishnan, *KERALATHINTE SAMSKARIKA CHARITHRAM* [A CULTURAL HISTORY OF KERLA] [Malayalam] 1974, 2000 [6<sup>th</sup> edition] State Institute of Languages, Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 2000, p.185

<sup>179</sup> Kesavan Veluthat, *Religious Symbols in Political Legitimation: The Case of Early Medieval South India*, SOCIAL SCIENTIST, Vol. 21, Nos. 1-2, January-February 1993, p.23-24

am<sup>180</sup> talks about the distinction between the *enor* or *uyandor* [for the elite class] and the *adiyor* or *vinainjar* [the lower class]. In conclusion one could say that in the *Cankam* period there existed religions like Jainism, Buddhism and early brahmanical system but they did not make any changes in the social hierarchy. Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai summarizes the *Cankam* social system thus “The life of *Dravida*<sup>181</sup> culture was the casteless of its society, [sic] *Panan*, *Parppan* and *Koottan* [all belonging to the lower castes in the later system] had access to the king as equals”<sup>182</sup>. Many historians attribute the establishment of caste system to the coming of Brahmins and the brahmanical system of worship. It will be interesting to understand the chronological placement of the arrival of major religions to Kerala as the region has a complex history of religious expansion.

## OTHER RELIGIONS IN KERALA AT THE TIME OF BRAHMIN MIGRATION

### Jainism

One of the first religions to arrive in Kerala and the Tamil region was Jainism as we get certain reference to Jainism in the *Cankam* literature. The author of *TOLKAPPIYUM* seems to be a follower of Jainism as the preface of *TOLKAPPIYUM* calls its author as ‘*Padimaiyon*’. The person who prepares himself to be a Jain monk

<sup>180</sup> PK Gopalakrishnan, *KERALATHINTE SAMSKARIKA CHARITHRAM* [A CULTURAL HISTORY OF KERLA] [Malayalam] 1974, 2000 [6<sup>th</sup> edition] State Institute of Languages, Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 2000, p.163

<sup>181</sup> Here Elamkulam uses the word *Dravida* meaning Tamil/South India

<sup>182</sup> *ELAMKULAM KUNJANPILLAYUDE THIRENJEDUTHA KRITHIKAL* 6 Part I, [Malayalam] Ed. N Sam, International Centre for Kerala Studies, University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 2005, pp 241

The Tamil epic *SILAPATIKARAM* was authored by Ilamkovadikal a Jain by faith<sup>184</sup>. “In the story of *MANIMEKALAI*, for instance, we find the heroine advised to study in Kanchi the philosophical systems of the *Veda*, *Siva*, *Vishnu*, *Ajivika*, *Jaina* and of *Sankhya*, *Vaisheshika* and *Lokyayata*. But soon a great change came – particularly in the Tamil country – and the people began to entertain fears of the whole land going over to Buddhism and Jainism”<sup>185</sup>. Huet Sang who visited city of Kanchi in the seventh century mentions the Jain centers in the city. Subramaniam illustrates the example from Tamil literature about the Jain temple at Uraiyur the capital of early Colas. This was also called the *Nikanthapalli*<sup>186</sup>. The word *Nikantha* comes from the Sanskrit word *Nirgrandha* which is used to refer to the Jains. It should be remembered that Mahavira was called Nikantha Nathaputta in the Buddhist texts. The Cera capital Vanci too had a *nikantha matha*, states *SILAPATIKARAM*<sup>187</sup>.

Historians attribute the spread of Jainism to the migration of Bhadrabahu and Chandra Gupta Maurya to Sravana Balgola in Karnataka. MS Ramaswami Ayyangar cites the Jain text *Rajavali Katha* to explain the missionary attempts of Jainism

<sup>183</sup> PK Gopalakrishnan, *KERALATHINTE SAMSKARIKA CHARITHRAM* [A CULTURAL HISTORY OF KERLA] [Malayalam] 1974, 2000 [6<sup>th</sup> edition] State Institute of Languages, Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 2000, p.85

<sup>184</sup> SK Vasanthan, *NAMMAL NADANNA VAZHICAL* [The Path We Took] , [Malayalam], Cultural History of Kerala, Malayalam Research Center, Trissur, Kerala, 2006, Pp36

<sup>185</sup> Nilakantha Sastri, *A History of South India, From Pre Historic times to the Fall of Vijayanagara*, pp 116, Oxford University Press, Madras, 1955, 1976 [fourth Edition] P. 423

<sup>186</sup> N Subramanian, *SANGHKALA BHARANA SAMVIDHANAM: SANGHAM TAMIZHARUDE BHARANAVUM SAMOOHIKA JEEVITAVUM* [Malayalam] [Translation of *CANKAM POLITY: THE ADMINISTRATION AND SOCIAL LIFE OF THE CANKAM TAMILS*, Madras, 1966.] ICHR and DC Books, Kottayam, 2003. p.336

<sup>187</sup> KP Padmanabha Menon, *KOCHIRAJYACHARITHRAM* [1914], Mathrubhumi Edition [1989], [1996] Calicut, 1996 Pp 51

akha who travelled to Cola and Pandyan regions<sup>188</sup>. The horde of Mauryan coins found in Kerala [Trissur and Kottayam Districts] and the reference about Kerala by Megasthenes and Chanakya who mentions about the pearls of *Curni* River further expounds the Mauryan connection to Kerala. Naturally the expansion of Jainism and Buddhism under the Mauryans would have reached Kerala too. Gopalakrishnan observes that the *vadakkirikkal* ritual mentioned in *Cankam* literature where the defeated king starves himself to death is quite close to the *Sallekhana* practiced in Jainism. Historians also find Jainism as the reason for the popularity of mother goddess cult in Kerala as most of the *Bhagavati* temples were the erstwhile temples dedicated to Padmavati, the attendant *yakshi* of Parsvanatha.

## Buddhism

Asoka who mentions Kerala in his Girnar edict would have definitely sent his missionaries to this region; however the route which Buddhism took Kerala may not have been through the land but through the sea from Sri Lanka. “Buddhism arrived in Kerala through south. Netum Ceralatan built a Buddhist Vihara following the advice of a Buddhist monk from Sri Lanka”, writes Gopalakrishnan<sup>189</sup>. The Cera King Utiyan Cheralatan of the *Cankam* had an epithet of *Vanavaramban*, which is usually translated as one who has sky as the border [*Vana* = Sky, *Varamban*=Border] of his kingdom, however SK Vasanthan<sup>190</sup> translate the name as [*Vanavar* = gods, *amban* =

<sup>188</sup> As referred by PK Gopalakrishnan, *KERALATHINTE SAMSKARIKA CHARITHRAM* [A CULTURAL HISTORY OF KERLA] [Malayalam] 1974, 2000 [6<sup>th</sup> edition] State Institute of Languages, Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 2000, p.186

<sup>189</sup> PK Gopalakrishnan, *KERALATHINTE SAMSKARIKA CHARITHRAM* [A CULTURAL HISTORY OF KERLA] [Malayalam] 1974, 2000 [6<sup>th</sup> edition] State Institute of Languages, Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 2000, p.187

<sup>190</sup> SK Vasanthan, *NAMMAL NADANNA VAZHICAL* [The Path We Took] , [Malayalam], Cultural History of Kerala, Malayalam Research Center, Trissur, Kerala, 2006, Pp 38

who is dear to the gods which in fact will be Tamil

equivalent to *devanampriyadarsi* the celebrated epithet of Asoka. Vasanthan stops one step away from identifying Utiyan as a Buddhist ruler. Padmanabha Menon<sup>191</sup> cites *SILAPATIKARAM* and *MANIMEKALAI* which refers to a Buddhist *caitya* and a *nirgrandha matha* [Jain Vihara] along with a Vishnu temple in the city of Vanci. Nilakantha Sastri states the relation of some of the inscriptions of Kerala having a clear connection to some of the Buddhist inscriptions of Andhra. He also mentions some of the terms like *Atittanam* [*Adhithana*] and *Tamma* [*Dharma*] found in the inscriptions of rock cut caves of Kerala.

The most popular among the Buddhist shrine in Kerala was Sri Mulavasam. One of the Buddhist image found in Gandhara region has a caption which reads '*dakshinapathe mulavase lokanatha*'<sup>192</sup>. Though there are dispute about the exact location of Sri Mulavasam as Elamkulam staunchly believes that is in central Kerala as one of the Ay King does a renovation attempt to protect the monument from submerging in the sea while a north Kerala historian like Chirakkal T Balakrishnan Nair<sup>193</sup> would place the monument somewhere in the north Kerala due to the fact one of the Kolattiri kings Vallabha had been recorded as visiting the shrine. Even the popular deity in Kerala like Ayyappa seems to be a mixture of Buddhism and the folk form of Ayyanar. The use of the epithet *Dharma Sasta* for Ayyappa reveals the Buddhist connection<sup>194</sup>

<sup>191</sup> KP Padmanabha Menon, *KOCHIRAJYACHARITHRAM* [1914], Mathrubhumi Edition [1989], [1996] Calicut, 1996 Pp 51

<sup>192</sup> *ELAMKULAM KUNJANPILLAYUDE THIRENJEDUTHA KRITHIKAL* ó Part I, [Malayalam] Ed. N Sam, International Centre for Kerala Studies, University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 2005. Pp 311

<sup>193</sup> Chirakkal T Balakrishnan Nair, *Collected Essays* [Malayalam] Kottayam, 1982

<sup>194</sup> "*munindra Srighana Sasta muni sakyamunistuya Sasakyasimha sarvarthasiddha soudhodaniscasa*" ó *Amarakosa*

l *saranam* used by the devotees. The folk cult of Ayyapa/Ayyanar might have got appropriated by the Buddhist as a mode of expansion.

Scholars of Kerala history also acknowledge that the Buddhist settlement in Kerala propagated education, medicine in the region. The term *palli*, which denotes the non-Hindu places of worship [like Church and Mosque, which are still known as] originally used for Buddhist or Jain centers. The term used for school in Malayalam is *pallikootam* probably reminding us about its Buddhist past. Kunhikuttan Tampuran attributes the introduction of Kerala architecture to the Buddhists and identify the *tacchan* and *kamala* community originally Buddhists<sup>195</sup>.

## Christianity

It will be a surprise for anybody in India to know that Christianity did exist in Kerala prior to the arrival of Brahmins to Kerala. If one does not get stuck to Parasurama myth he/she will find it is quite convincing due to the trade connection to Kerala with the west. Prior to Christians, it was the Jews who migrated to Kerala and got involved with maritime trade on the western sea. The Kerala Christians or Suriyani [Syrian] Christians of the pre- colonial period had no similarity to the European Christians. Firstly they believed that nobody can be converted into Christianity and to be Christian you have to be born to Christian parents. It should be noted here that even now nobody can convert to become a Syrian Christian. When confronted with Malabari/Suriyani Christians, the Portuguese did not know what to do with them.

---

<sup>195</sup> PK Gopalakrishnan, *KERALATHINTE SAMSKARIKA CHARITHRAM* [A CULTURAL HISTORY OF KERLA] [Malayalam] 1974, 2000 [6<sup>th</sup> edition] State Institute of Languages, Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 2000, p.318

se bearded characters who call themselves as Christians, the Portuguese tried to convert them into Christianity, again! It is for sure that though the Portuguese was happy to see Christians in India, but they were least pleased to realise that these Christians believed in what the Roman Church considered as heresy. For the Portuguese and the Jesuits the true Christian was the one who accepted a True incarnation for Christ, the term “*theotokos*” for the Virgin Mother and who used the Roman doctrine of the mass; not to mention the authority of the Pope. The Syrian Christians did none of these, but they had wedding ceremony very close to the Hindus, churches looking like temples, priests were happily married, and they used Suriyani [Aramaic] language for their services.

The legend of St. Thomas maintains that the Apostle landed near Musiris in 52 AD and converted few families and established seven churches. To quote Nicol Macnicol,<sup>196</sup> "If it were possible to accept as historical the legend that is recorded in the apocryphal Acts of Judas Thomas (dated by Harnack in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century AD), the Christian religion was first preached in India by the Apostle Thomas about 50 AD. Similarly the Tradition preserved by the Syrian Christian Church in Travancore claims St. Thomas as its founder and dates arrival in India in the year 52 AD". However, this legend is acceptable to only few believers and historians. When one consider the trade connection with East and West that might have passed through Jerusalem, it is not impossible for an Apostle or Evangelist to travel to East. St. Jerome who wrote in 4<sup>th</sup> Century observes “The Son of God was present to all

---

<sup>196</sup> Nicol Macnicol. THE LIVING RELIGIONS OF THE INDIAN PEOPLE [WILDE LECTURES, OXFORD, 1932-34]. p.269



with Peter in Rome, with Paul in Illyria..."<sup>197</sup> Another

literary reference from Briton points towards the acceptance of St. Thomas as the Apostle of India. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle reads thus. "The Year 883, in the same year Singhlem and Athelstan conveyed to Rome the alms, which the King [King Alfred] had vowed to send hither, and also to India to St. Thomas and St. Bartholomew, when they sat down against the [Danish] army at London: and there, God be thanked, their prayer was very successful after that vow"<sup>198</sup>. Andrian Fortescue provide us with further information about these alms as, "He [King Alfred] sent Singhelm, the Bishop of Shireburn with gifts. Singhelm came to Rome and then went on to the Malabar Coast. He made his offerings here and brought back from his long journey jewels and spices; strange to see an English Bishop in India in 883!!"<sup>199</sup>

It is still a mystery whether the Apostle Thomas himself or the descendants of the Church he established in the city of Edessa had come to India. Another tradition proposes that 400 Christians belonging to seven clans from Baghdad, Nineveh and Jerusalem migrated to Kerala in 345 AD to escape the persecution of the Sassanid Emperor of Persia. "A merchant called Thomas Cannaneo or Thomas of Jerusalem drew the attention of the Edessan Church to this neglected outpost and caused to succour to be sent to it in the year 345"<sup>200</sup>. In 522 AD a Byzantine Monk, namely Cosmos Indicopleustes mentions about a Christian Church in the port town of Kollam

---

<sup>197</sup> As quoted by P.Thomas. CHRISTIANS AND CHRISTIANITY IN INDIA AND PAKISTAN.London.1954.pp19

<sup>198</sup> As quoted by J.N.Ogilvie in THE APOSTLES OF INDIA,1915

<sup>199</sup> As quoted by Nicol Macnicol. LIVING RELIGIONS OF THE INDIAN PEOPLE. London

<sup>200</sup> Nicol Macnicol. LIVING RELIGIONS OF THE INDIAN PEOPLE. London

Manu Ravi Varma of the Second Cera Dynasty [12th Century AD] was ruling, a local chieftain Ayyanadigal Thiruvadigal issues the copper plate of Tarisa Palli giving concessions to the Christian merchant of Kollam.

The Kerala Christians were quite helpful to the Portuguese, not because of their Christian fraternity but for the common commercial interest as Syrian Christians were traders of spices. Pedro Álvares Cabral on his journey back to Europe in January 1501 took three Indians on board. Two of them were from the service of the King of Kochi namely Idikkela Menon and Parangodan Menon. The third was a Christian called Joseph of Cranganore. Joseph belonging to the Syrian Church was no novice in foreign travel as we were informed as he had travelled to Antioch in connection with the appointment of the Bishop of Malabar. Joseph travelled further from Lisbon to Rome and seems to have met the Pope.

## **COMING OF BRAHMINS AND THEIR DOMINANCE ON CASTE SYSTEM**

If one accepts the Brahmin migration to Kerala then the question arises on when exactly that did take place. The reference of the migration of Brahmins comes from the myth of *KERALOLPATTI* which mention Parasurama who created Kerala to give land grants to the Brahmins as repentance for his human slaughter. The story says that he created the land and divided it into 64 *gramas* [villages] to be distributed among the Brahmins. There is no doubt that this myth is propagated by the Brahmins

---

<sup>201</sup> òLikewise in Male, where the pepper grows, and in the town of Kalleina there is also Bishop consecrated in Persiaö. Logan, William , MALABAR MANUEL, 2000 edited version Edited by PJ Cheriyan, Kerala Gazetteers Department, Thiruvananthapuram, 2000, p.203

ownership but there are enough references to believe that Brahmins did migrate to Kerala. Padmanabha Menon<sup>202</sup> believes that the Brahmin migration happened in 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC. Logan in his *Malabar Manuel* argues that Brahmin migration happened as late as 8<sup>th</sup> century AD. One of the inscriptions found in Irinjalakkuda dated to 855 AD shows that the priest group related to this temple might have settled in Irinjalakkuda by this time<sup>203</sup>. Fleet mentions an inscription of Mayura Varma of Kadamba country where it is mentioned the translocation of 18 Brahmins from Ahicchatra to Kuntala region. Logan too refers to the similar translocation done by Chandrangad, the son of Mayura Varma this time from Ahicchatra to Kerala, Tuluva, and Konkan regions. Logan goes further to establish Parasurama as the contemporary of Mayura Varma. *GRAMAPADHATTI* a work in Telugu language testifies that the Brahmins had come to Kerala from Ahicchatra in Karnataka, most probably Aihole, as observed Gangadharan TK<sup>204</sup>. KR Pisharoty quotes a *kali*<sup>205</sup> word '*yajna sthanam samrakshyam*' to state that it refers to the *yajna* [sacrifice] done by a Brahmin called as the Melattur Agnihotri in 4<sup>th</sup> century AD. Chattambi Swamikal<sup>206</sup> finds the reference of Brahmin migration in *SKANDHA PURANA* where it seems to have mentioned that Parasurama converted some

---

<sup>202</sup> Padmanabha Menon, HISTORY OF KERLA, Vol.1

<sup>203</sup> Kesavan Veluthat, BRAHMIN SETTLEMENTS IN KERALA: HISTORICAL STUDIES, Sandhya Publications, Calicut, 1978 as quoted by SAS Sharma, *The Eclectic Paddhatis of Kerala*, INDOLOGICA TAURINENSIA, 35 (2009)

<sup>204</sup> Gangadharan TK, EVOLUTION KERALA HISTORY AND CULTURE, Calicut University Central Cooperative Stores, Calicut, p.92

<sup>205</sup> Kali Vakya or Kali word is probably used in the inscriptions and texts where it denotes the year of its creation. This system is referred many a times by Kerala Historians though I am not aware of whether it can be used in any other regions. It needs further research but as it does not come in the current work I am not going into the details of it.

<sup>206</sup> As quoted by PK Gopalakrishnan, *KERALATHINTE SAMSKARIKA CHARITHRAM* [A CULTURAL HISTORY OF KERLA] [Malayalam] 1974, 2000 [6<sup>th</sup> edition] State Institute of Languages, Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 2000, p.284

As Brahmins and sent them to Kerala. Kunhikuttan Tampuran attributes the Brahmin dominance in Kerala to the conversion of Buddhists<sup>207</sup>. Whatever chaotic reference are available about the Brahmin migration to Kerala there appears a shimmer of historical fact the Brahmins did migrate to Kerala from north India. As mentioned earlier in the present chapter, some of the *Cankam* texts mention them as northerners.

Brahmins who migrated from the north or elsewhere brought with them some of the unconstructive aspects of Brahmanical religion as the *Varna* and *jati* system. To quote Logan, “The final organization of castes in Malabar probably took place about 8<sup>th</sup> century simultaneously with the rise of the Nambutiri Brahmins to power and influence. The Aryan Jains who had preceded the latter [Nambutiris] had probably already organized the community in the Aryan fashion into corporate guilds and it only needed the idea of caste as a religious institution to be imported into the country by the Vedic Brahmins to bring about the crystallization to the various caste elements”<sup>208</sup>. A question may naturally arise on why one should attribute the introduction of *Varna-jati* to the Brahmins only. The reasons for this conjunction are many, like the existence of *Varna-jati* system in north India and Deccan, and the absence of caste hierarchy in the *Cankam* period as mentioned in the *Cankam*.

As the caste system provided Brahmin the highest position in the hierarchy it is logical to conclude that the system was in fact propagated by the Brahmins

---

<sup>207</sup> As quoted by PK Gopalakrishnan, *KERALATHINTE SAMSKARIKA CHARITHRAM* [A CULTURAL HISTORY OF KERLA] [Malayalam] 1974, 2000 [6<sup>th</sup> edition] State Institute of Languages, Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 2000, p.284

<sup>208</sup> William Logan, *MALABAR MAUEL*, 2000 edited version Edited by PJ Cheriyan, Kerala Gazetteers Department, Thiruvananthapuram p. 116

views about the Brahmin centric caste system thus, "Caste" is, and remains essentially social rank, and the central position of the Brahmins in Hinduism rests primarily upon the fact that social rank is determined with references to Brahmins".<sup>209</sup> It may look absolutely incongruous in approving that a community, small in number, entering into a region and starts controlling the affairs of society with ease and the majority of the population submits to them without resistance, but when we look into the history of Kerala or elsewhere in India and study the dominance of British over India in one century, it may not appear a wrong hypothesis at all. What did the Europeans possess which the locals did not have? Is it the mastery over arms and ammunitions which the 'natives' did not have? In the Battle of Kolachel, Martanda Varma's army defeated the Dutch convincingly, but what did he do after the victory? He appointed two Dutch officers to train his army. The truth is that the elite class of India submitted meekly to 'a system' brought by the colonialists.

Karl Marx observed in his letter to *New-York Daily Tribune* thus, "England has to fulfill a double mission in India: one destructive, the other regenerating, the annihilation of old Asiatic society, and the laying the material foundations of Western society in Asia".<sup>210</sup> The Brahmins migrated to Kerala seem to have done a similar process of destruction and regeneration in the Kerala society. In this process they were assisted by the dominant class of Kerala existed at that time. If we envisage Nairs and the Izhavas on equal level with rest of the population subservient to them

---

<sup>209</sup> Max Weber, *THE RELIGIONS OF INDIA: THE SOCIOLOGY OF HINDUISM AND BUDDHISM*, Glencoe, Ill. : Free Press, 1958, p.30, quoted by Klass, Morton CASTES óThe emergence of the South Asian Social Systemø Manohar Publications, Delhi, 1980, p.74

<sup>210</sup> Karl Marx, *The Future Results of British Rule in India*, 1853, Letters of Karl Marx, First published in *New-York Daily Tribune*, August 8, 1853, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1853/07/22.htm>

scene, we could logically conclude that the Nairs did align with the Brahmins against the others in Kerala. The result of this struggle is the stratification of the society into *savarnas* and *avarnas* where the *savarnas* divided the land between them leaving the *avarnas* landless workers.<sup>211</sup>

Unlike the British who believed in power through controlling the ruling class, Brahmins concentrated on the land acquisition and through it indirectly controlling the society. The question however remains on how did they manage to grab the land? Was it through introducing new tools of production as suggested by TK Gangadharan? Was it through introduction and expansion of religious beliefs? Arguments of EMS regarding the issue regarding the arrival of Brahmins and their dominance on the land through the establishment of *Janmi*<sup>212</sup> system appear to be the most acceptable. The main points of his hypothesis can be summarized thus<sup>213</sup>;

1. Individual ownership system of property did not exist before the arrival of Brahmins in Kerala.

---

<sup>211</sup> Namboodiripad, EMS *KERALAM MALYALIKALUDE MATHRUBHOOMI* [Malayalam], from P Govinda Pillai [Ed], *EMSINTE SAMPOORNA KRITIKAL* [COLLECTED WORKS OF EMS NAMBOODIRIPAD Vol. 9- 1948] [Malayalam] Chinta Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram 2000, p.97

<sup>212</sup> A simple translation of *Janmi* system can be Feudal system. However the *Janmi* system is specific to Kerala and needs further explanation. It is purely based on the rent [*Kanam* or *Pattam*] system, creating the owner [*Janmi*], overseer [*Karanma*] and farm worker [*Paniyal*]. The person in charge of *karanma* [usually a Nair] would cultivate land with help of *Paniyal* [usually Pulaya/Cheruma caste] and the yield will be shared as wages [for *Paniyal*] and *Kanam* [to the *Janmi*]. Till the Mysore occupation in Malabar the *Janmis* did not had to pay land tax. The word *janmi* /*janmam* comes from the word *jan* [meaning birth] showing that the *janmi* right was hereditary.

<sup>213</sup> Namboodiripad, EMS *KERALAM MALYALIKALUDE MATHRUBHOOMI* [Malayalam], from P Govinda Pillai [Ed], *EMSINTE SAMPOORNA KRITIKAL* [COLLECTED WORKS OF EMS NAMBOODIRIPAD Vol. 9- 1948] [Malayalam] Chinta Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram 2000, p.86-87

the *jati* system Brahmins could change the occupations stratification of the *jatis*. Each *jati* got their share from the yields of the land including the *jati* who are entrusted the job of cultivation.

[When observe that the surplus product extraction system which was well established in North India much before the Brahmins migrated to Kerala it is quite logical to attribute the introduction of that system in Kerala to the community which through their legends claim their ancestry to North India, as the Nambutiri Brahmins. Regarding the land ownership and shareholders of the yields, Irfan Habib<sup>214</sup> writes thus, "According to Megasthenes, the peasants paid to the king a 'land-tribute' as well as a fourth of the crop (by another version, three-fourths).<sup>215</sup> Kautilya indeed stressed that settlements in the royal lands should consist overwhelmingly of *sudra-karsakas* (Sudra cultivators/peasants) and other lower classes, they being more amenable to exploitation<sup>216</sup>. The large land-holders with their own cattle and laborers as also the ruler's labor-tilled lands, significant still in the *ARTHASASTRA*, could not easily survive the new conditions. Even where ownership continued with the 'lord' or master (*svamin*), it was obviously becoming more convenient for him to lease out the land to *karsakas* rather than till it under his own direct

---

<sup>214</sup> IRFAN HABIB, *The Peasant in Indian History*, SOCIAL SCIENTIST. v 11, no. 118 (March 1983), p. 31-32 [All footnotes as referred by Irfan Habib]

<sup>215</sup> See accounts of Diodorus Siculus and Strabo, translations in RC Majumdar (ed.), *The Classical Accounts of India*, Calcutta, 1960, pp 237, 264, 287 (note 20). It is possible that the 'land-tribute' represents the king's traditional levy of one-sixth of the produce also laid down by Kautilya.

<sup>216</sup> R S Sharma. *Sudras in Ancient India*, Delhi, 1958. pp 146-149. Cf Kosambi, Introduction..., pp 219-220. Sibesh Bhattacharya (IESHR. XVI (1), pp 85-96) is right in pointing out that Kautilya does not recommend peasant ownership but Sharma, whom he criticizes on this score, seems quite well aware of the distinction between peasant cultivation and peasant ownership and also of the rather vague connotation of *karsaka*, which may mean peasant as well as agricultural laborer. But the *Arthashastra* in the present case uses the term clearly enough in the sense of peasant-cultivators



would certainly remain some exceptions: even after the Mauryan period, we encounter in Patanjali (2nd century B C) a land-holder supervising ploughing by five laborers”<sup>218</sup>.]

3. Equal portion of the yield was shared between the *jatis* for their services to the society like the Brahmins for religious services, Samanta caste for administration, Ambalavasis for their temple services, Nairs for the military and managerial services and so on for rest of the castes<sup>219</sup>.
4. As the Brahmins and Samantas consolidated their position at the top of the caste hierarchy the demand of their portion of the yield increased. Moreover the sharing of the yield became compulsory and a situation arrived where it became impossible to produce in the land without the consent of Brahmins or Samantas. The Brahmins and Samantas acted as the virtual owners of the land. This lead to the creation of a small group of major shareholders [*janmis*] and the majority of population who are small shareholders [*kudiyans*].

---

<sup>217</sup> CF Sharma, Sudras..., pp 230-31; also Journal of Bihar Research Society, LXIV, iii & iv, 1958, p 8.

<sup>218</sup> CF Sharma, Sudras..., pp 230-31; also Journal of Bihar Research Society, LXIV, iii & iv, 1958, p 178

<sup>219</sup> This system still continues in the villages of Kerala. I remember that in my childhood, seeing the Malayans and Vannans, who are performers of Teyyam, collecting rice from houses soon after the harvest season.

ges, the religious system established by the Brahmins got popularity. People started dedicating their lands to the temples<sup>220</sup> which in turn was controlled by the Brahmin families.

The above mentioned hypothesis of EMS unmistakably analyzes the process leading to the creation of *Devasvam* and *Brahmasvam* land properties. The land controlled by the Samantas came to known as *Cherikkal* or *Pandaram* lands. The land properties like *Brahmasvam* and *Devasvam* is dealt separately in the following portion of the thesis.

## **ECONOMIC BASE FOR THE CASTE SYSTEM – THE LAND DISTRIBUTION**

### ***Devasvam to Brahmasvam***

Dipankar Gupta in reference to the *Vaishyas* of North India states thus, “Among these castes, it is not the notions of purity that mark out hierarchical positions (howsoever contentiously), but pure and simple wealth. The Oswals place themselves above the Shrimalis and the Porvals because they are easily the most affluent among the Baniya caste”<sup>221</sup>. Looking at the land properties of the upper castes in Kerala and the landlessness of the lower castes, one can make similar analysis where it would appear

---

<sup>220</sup> The dedication of the whole *Venadu Swarupam* [Travancore] to Sri Padmanabha [the deity of Sri Padmanabha Temple at Thiruvananthapuram] by Marthanda Varma called *Trippadi Danam* in 18<sup>th</sup> century is close to the *Janmi* system where the God Padmanabha [Vishnu] becomes the *Janmi* and the king his *Kanakkaran*. This process collapsed the *Devasvam* and *Pandaram* lands.

<sup>221</sup> Gupta Dipankar Editorial Introduction in CASTE IN QUESTION 6 IDENTITY OR HIERARCHY, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2004, pp xv.

land is the key factor which separates the *savarnas* from the *avarnas*. For the Brahmins who migrated to Kerala, whenever that was, their prime task must have been the land accusation. How they manage to do that remains still a mystery. TK Gangadharan's argument that the Brahmins brought sharper instruments made of iron which aided in clearing the land and establishing fields and thus gained the control of the land, cannot be taken seriously for the reason that in *Cankam* literature we have enough evidence of peasant communities. In fact the Brahmins were able to grab the land from this farming community. One of the possibilities is that the Brahmins introduced the new system of cultivation or new system of property. If the Brahmins migrated from Andhra region as many scholars believe they might have brought in new techniques of rice cultivation. Or they might have used their skills in astrology and natural sciences [here I am assuming here that they were better in *sastras*] to control the production cycles of the cultivation. Whatever it may be, it is quite definite that the Brahmins used their 'connection' or 'proximity' to the gods in their rise from the position of an immigrant to the *de facto* ruler of the land. Like they have Kshatriyas as the allies in North India for this process, in Kerala they found their partner for eternity, the Nairs of Kerala.

The acceptance in the society achieved by the Brahmins after they reached through the establishment of brahmanical system of worship and probable alliance with ruling class got further strengthened and structured in the medieval period as the probable consequence of the Cola wars. Cola wars fought for a prolonged period between the rules of Parantaka to Kulotunga the great grandson of Raja Raja. The skirmishes started because of support the Kerala rulers extended to the Pandyan and Sri Lankan rulers in their battle against the Colas. Many historians suggest that the Cola army

...y of Mahodayapuram, the capital of Ceras [Second Cera Empire]. These Ceras should not be confused with early Ceras appearing in the *Cankam* literature. Colas, if they did enter Kerala would have tried as they did in Sri Lanka to convert the Buddhist structures into brahmanical temples and even establishing Brahmin villages. More over they also might have tried to restructure the society with Brahmin as the head of the social structure. Gopalakrishnan proposes another theory to explain the dominance of brahmanical system and the dominance of Brahmins over the land rights of Kerala. “In 11<sup>th</sup> century”, writes Gopalakrishnan, “when the Cola incursions were at its climax, lot of peasants to protect themselves, gave their land properties to the temples and Brahmins. Another reason for this was the increase of land tax<sup>222</sup> which also prompted the farmers to give away the land to *Devasvam* and *Brahmasvam*. Altogether, by 12<sup>th</sup> century we can observe that most of the land was either under the Temples, Brahmins or *Naduvazhis* [local rulers]”

In the ensuing period we witness the rise of Brahmins achieving the land ownership in the majority of Kerala. The feudal system with its Kerala incarnation which can be called as *Janmi- Naduvazhi- Medhavitvam*<sup>223</sup> [means the domination of the upper castes, the *janmis* and the local chieftains] got established in this period. The Nairs and the royalty who were busy fighting as well as routed by the Colas could not stop the ascendancy of Brahmins. Brahmins was already started acquiring the land through the route of *Devasvam* to *Brahmasvam* transferring of lands. *Devasvam*

---

<sup>222</sup> This observation is contrary to the commonly accepted fact that there was no land revenue system existed in Kerala prior to Mysore occupation and the British period. Here Gopalakrishnan probably intended to refer to the *paatam* [rent] which might have increased due to the invasion of Colas.

<sup>223</sup> EMS Namboodiripad, *Once Again on Castes and Classes*, SOCIAL SCIENTIST, Vol. 9, No. 12(Dec., 1981), p. 18

to the up keeping of the temple expenses by the kings or donors or even the local people.

The *Devasvam* lands were primarily given to the temples for the general upkeep and salaries of the employees. However, for this purpose the temples needed only a portion of the income generated from the land. Rest was obviously enjoyed by the *uranmas* and this lead to financial misappropriation and squabbles among the *uranmas*. A look at the accounts given by Velupilla on the yield from the Devasvam land will give us the picture in Tiruvitankur. Col. Manro, the British resident Tiruvitankur ordered to access 348 Major temples and 1171 minor temples under the government control. "By the assumption of Devasvam the state took over 62,000 gardens [Plantations] and 5, 48,000 *paras*<sup>224</sup> of rice land. The gardens yielded a rental of Rs. 50,000<sup>225</sup> annually, while the wet lands Rs. 3,50,000 , thus aggregating Rs. 4,00,000. Besides these there were other sources of income of a fluctuating character which flowed into the treasury. These were fourfold. Firstly, offering received in money and things, the latter in shape of silk, silver, images etc; secondly, money put into the *Vanchi*<sup>226</sup>; thirdly the proceeds from the sale of boiled rice; and fourthly, succession fee on Pagoda offices such as that of *Santhi* or officiating priest, which varies according to the income. The gold and ornaments taken from the temples found their way into the government treasury and were used to mint coins for the benefit of the state"<sup>227</sup>. An interesting aspect to be noted here is that the Tiruvitankur rulers could well afford to do this as the titular sovereign of Tiruvitankur

<sup>224</sup> Measuring system based on the yield of the crop; approximately closer to an acre.

<sup>225</sup> This was when the salary of a top government official was given a salary of Rs. 200 per month.

<sup>226</sup> Offering box

<sup>227</sup> Sadasyatilaka TK Velupilla, THE TRAVANCORE STATE MANUEL, Volume II, History, 1940, First reprint, Government of Kerala, Kerala Gazetteers, Thiruvananthapuram, 1996, p.520

abha himself so the extension of *Devasvam* land to the state legally remain as *Devasvam* land.

Elsewhere the *Devasvam* lands gradually came under the control of the Brahmins who are usually the *uralas* [controllers of the temple affairs] of the temples. The land thus came under the control of the Brahmins are called *Brahmasvam* lands. EMS Namboodiripad critically analyzes the shift from *Devasvam* to *Brahmasvam* ownership thus, “Each caste assembly [in Kerala] had its own temple, the deity of which constituted the reflection and representative of the collective body of the entire caste. And it was in the name of the temple and its deity that the wealth accumulated through generations was held. Gradually, however, the control of the temple and therefore, of its property narrowed down, first from the entire caste assembly to the collective body and the heads of families [*uranma*] and then to the head of one family”<sup>228</sup>. These *Uranmas*, usually Brahmins, as they were not the cultivators of the land, leased them to the Nairs who manages these lands as *Karanma*. The rent they were supposed to pay back to the Janmi /temple is known as the as the *Kanam*. TK Gangadharan elucidates this system thus, “The land received in the temples through various sources was given for lease to the Karalar by the temple proprietors called *Uralar*. The *Karalar* then employed the *Paniyalar* in agricultural work and gave a fixed portion of the product to the *Uralar* or the temple. During those days most of the cultivable land in Kerala was *Devasvam* land. Hence the rent received in the temple in the form of paddy and other products was much more than what was

---

<sup>228</sup> EMS Namboodiripad, *Once Again on Castes and Classes*, SOCIAL SCIENTIST, Vol. 9, No. 12(Dec., 1981), p. 19

ple”<sup>229</sup>. Needless to say that the *Uralars* were the Nambutiri Brahmins; Nairs the *Karalars* and the *Paniyalar* will be of lower caste, many times Izhavas. Here clearly one could observe the landlord castes and landless castes, alternately the upper castes and the lower caste Hindus. Economically upper class of the society became the upper castes in stratification of castes.

The following table based on the census of 1931<sup>230</sup> would illustrate this point further:

	<b>Land owned per owner in Acres [1931]</b>	<b>Renters of land Malabar [1921]</b>	<b>Cultivators</b>	<b>Agriculture laborers</b>
<b>Nambutiris</b>	<b>28.89</b>	<b>41.2</b>	9.0	-
<b>Nairs</b>	4.66	5.9	<b>50.4</b>	17.2
<b>Izhavas</b>	3.60	-	20.9	<b>44.4</b>
<b>Other Lower Castes</b>	2.46	-	0.5	<b>91.2</b>

If we juxtapose the above table to the following table it will reveal the reality that economic power did impact on the hierarchical positions of the castes in relation to the pollution in the social system as well as religious spaces.

	<b>Distance kept from the Nambutiris</b>	<b>Accessibility into temple in 1935 [in Tiruvitankur]</b>
<b>Nambutiris</b>	0	Full Entry
<b>Nairs</b>	6 Steps	Partial
<b>Izhavas</b>	36 Steps	Nil
<b>Other Lower Castes</b>	96 Steps	Nil

<sup>229</sup> Gangadharan TK EVOLUTION KERALA HISTORY AND CULTURE, Calicut University Central Cooperative Stores, Calicut, p.135

<sup>230</sup> Based on the study by Sivanandan, P *Caste, Class And Economic Opportunity In Kerala, An Empirical Analysis*, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL WEEKLY, February 1979



quote EMS Namboodiripad which reads, “Class division, however took the form of caste division; those who were in a position to accumulate the greater amounts of wealth came to be considered the highest caste; the next in point of the accumulation of wealth became next highest caste, and so on, till we reach the class that is in a position to accumulate no wealth at all which became the lowest caste”<sup>231</sup>.

## **DISTINCTION BETWEEN KERALA BRAHMINS AND OTHER BRAHMINS - 64 ANACHARAMS**

Kerala Brahmins known as Nambutiris kept strict customs very distinct from that of the other Brahmins of south India. These customs are based on the dictum called 64 *anacharams* allegedly written by Sankaracharya in a treatise called *Sankara Smruti*. Some scholars attribute the 64 *anacharams* to Parasurama himself who constituted it as a deterrent against counter-migration of the Kerala Brahmins. Many rules of caste segregation were dictated by this *anacharams*. Here I would like to refer to some of those dictums.

- You must bath if you touch a Sudra
- You must bath if you happen to be near a Chandala
- You must bath if you touch polluted wells or tanks
- You must not accept funeral gifts from Sudras
- Sudras and others are not to touch an idol.
- Kshatriyas should avoid worshipping lingam

*Anacharams* surely states the social position of the Brahmins and their dominance of the populace through a master servant relation when it says

---

<sup>231</sup> EMS Namboodiripad, *Once Again on Castes and Classes*, SOCIAL SCIENTIST, Vol. 9, No. 12(Dec., 1981), p. 19

spin cotton  
wash their own cloths

- Brahmin must not go out unless accompanied by women servants
- Brahmins should not bow to any other.

The dominance of the Nambutiri Brahmins is obviously felt by the British officers who endeavored to study them as a community. Fred Fawcett starts his on article on Nambutiris thus, “It is by no means easy to obtain information which is accurate respecting that exclusive caste of Brahmans of the Malabar Coast known as Nambutiris. Unlike the Brahmans of the remainder of the [Madras] Presidency, who engage in trade and in one may say every profitable profession and business, Nambutiris hold almost entirely aloof from what Poet Gray calls, ‘the busy world’s ignorable strife,’ and more than any class of Brahmans retain their sacerdotal position, which is of course the highest. They are for the most part landholders. A very large portion of Malabar is owned by the Nambutiris”.

Brahmins are called ‘*Bhudevas*’ as to mean the representatives of gods on earth, but in the case of Nambutiri Brahmins it can be used as the lords of the earth [Landlords]. TK Gangadharan did not seem to be having any hesitation to credit Brahmans with origination of organized agriculture in Kerala and thus their landownership when he is writing thus, “They came with better iron equipments than that of the tools of the indigenous people. They could clear the forest more easily and start cultivation. The spread of agriculture naturally paved way for their settlements”<sup>232</sup>. Gangadharan is completely forgetting here the *Aintinai* of *Cankam* literature where there are descriptions of beautiful maidens sharpening their sickles on tortoises by mistake and

---

<sup>232</sup> Gangadharan TK, EVOLUTION KERALA HISTORY AND CULTURE, Calicut University Central Cooperative Stores, Calicut, p.93

forest products in exchange of rice from the people of the plain land. More over an excavation in north Kerala in the last decade has brought out the possibility of iron equipments in Kerala even before the *Cankam* period.

However, Gangadharan's view that the Brahmins migrated to Kerala not exclusively as the religious people but in different capacities is worth a thought. Brahmins too might have migrated into Kerala due to some social/economic/political pressure in their motherland, wherever it may be. Like the Jews migrating to Kerala due to political/religious upheaval in Judea or Farsis migrating to India after the fall of Sassanid Empire, Brahmins also might have gone through some traumatic social situations which lead to their exodus. Kerala was great land of opportunity thanks to its isolation and opportunities of agriculture and trade. Gangadharan's observation about the Brahmins settlements in the most fertile lands in Kerala also need to be studied properly.

However the question remains whether they 'grabbed' and sanctified and structured the land through the religious/social system or did they acquire the landed property through the religious/social structure. The answer to the question depends on the situation of the Kerala society at the time of the arrival of Brahmins. Looking at the *mimamsa* literature tradition of Kerala prior to Sankaracharya it is quite obvious that the brahmanical system along with Brahmins have already arrived in Kerala in the early centuries of the Christian era. They cannot be coming in at the time of Pallavas and Chalukyans for the reason that these dynasties were contemporaries of Sankaracharya himself.

is a milestone for few reasons. First reason is that he is indisputably a Kerala Brahmin. Secondly there is a philosophical maturity in Sankaracharya was thanks to the corpus of studies happened earlier to him in Kerala. Lastly, the caste system was already been flourished in his time as it is evident from his composition called the *Manishapanchakam*. Moreover the text *Jati Nirnaya* is attributed to Sankaracharya reads thus,

*Ashtou hi vipra dou nyunau*  
*Duadasaivantaralikhah*  
*Ashtadasasya sudrashshaal*  
*Silpinah patita dasa*  
*Nica pruthakecatuara-*  
*Scatushshashtih jatayah*<sup>233</sup>

Translation: Brahmana Varna has 8 *jatis* and 2 are inferior. *Antarala jati* [workers at the temple] has 12. There are 18 *jatis* of *Sudras* and 8 *Silpa jatis* [craftsman castes] are there. There are also 10 *Patita* [Lower castes] *jatis* and *neeca* or the lowermost has 8 *jatis* in them. Altogether the *jatis* are 64.

EMS writes on the contribution of Sankaracharya to the caste system of Kerala thus, “In the first sight it may look ridiculous to consider the author of *Sankara Smruti* and the compilation of the erroneous 64 *anacharams* is the same Sankaracharya who through his *advaita* and philosophical expertise attracted the intellectual attention of whole India. But it may not look incongruous if accept the fact that through his *advaita* Sankaracharya has defeated the Buddhist system, which was a popular movement which stood against the brahmanical system of social stratification, beyond the point of no comeback. In the context of Kerala defeat of Buddhism and

---

<sup>233</sup> As cited by Padmanabha Menon KP , *KOCHIRAJYACHARITHRAM* [Malayalam], [1914], Mathrubhumi Edition [1989], [1996] Calicut, 1996, p.79

the defeat of ancient Kerala system and the triumph of caste and feudal systems”<sup>234</sup>.

Brahmins who migrated Kerala completely forsaken their cultural behavior of their mother land and adopted a new system of existence and structured it through the 64 *anacharams*. This surely happened due to their contact with the existing communities in Kerala when they arrived in. The social situation of Kerala seem to be a fluid one when the Brahmins arrived in the land as it can be sensed from the ambiguous *Varna* system in Kerala.

## **AMBIGUOUS VARNA SYSTEM**

One of the interesting aspects of the caste system in Kerala is its inherent ambiguity of the *Varna* system. The Brahmins who came into Kerala when the *Varna* system well established in North India could not enforce that in Kerala. It is a fact that in the case of Kerala the *Varna* system does not work as perfect as elsewhere in India. The Nair community is named as belonging to *Kshatriya*, *Vaisya* and *Sudra* in many instances. Nairs are called the “Malayali Sudras” in the 1875 census<sup>235</sup>. The *Ambalavasis* or the *antarala* group of castes is not sure where they really belong to in the *Varna* system. In short, the castes in Kerala other than the Brahmins are sure of only the fact that they are not Brahmins. This point leads us to the hypothesis that the caste system already existed in Kerala before the arrival of Brahmins. Probably the already established social hierarchy got further structures in the *Varna* hierarchy proposed by

<sup>234</sup> EMS Namboodiripad *KERALAM MALYALIKALUDE MATHRUBHOOMI* [Malayalam], from P Govinda Pillai [Ed], *EMSINTE SAMPOORNA KRITIKAL [COLLECTED WORKS OF EMS NAMBOODIRIPAD Vol. 9- 1948]* [Malayalam] Chinta Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram 2000 , p.93

<sup>235</sup> Jeffrey Robin, *Temple-Entry Movement in Travancore, 1860-1940*, *SOCIAL SCIENTIST*, Vol.4, No.8, [March, 1976], p.6

argues that “The *Varna* system which was prevalent in all other Indian village societies had never been in existence in Kerala in the same pattern. There are no such groups of people in Kerala which include themselves perfectly in the four-fold division of *Brahmana*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaisya* and *Sudra*. If there is any section of people in Kerala which fully satisfies the concepts of *Varna* division, it is Brahmins. Originally there is not separate section of people in Kerala which practiced the *Varna-dharma* of *Kshatriya* and *Sudras*. The gaps of these two *varnas* came to be filled by the *Nair* castes. A section that functioned as the third caste *Vaisya* is totally absent in Kerala. How did this disagreement between theory and practice happen in Kerala? The only clear answer which is irresistible in this background is that in the pre-Aryan primitive tribes in Kerala the division of labor had not reached such an advanced stage as to divide itself to be fit in the four-fold division of *Varna* system”.<sup>236</sup>

When Brahmanism defined the caste system in Kerala they permitted the Nair to be ambiguous about the *Varna* they choose. In a society dominated by the agrarian system and maritime commerce, Nairs prefer to be land owners and agriculture producers and occasional soldiers while they left the commercial activities to the Christians<sup>237</sup> and Jews who were settled/ converted much before the Brahmins

---

<sup>236</sup> B. Rajeevan , Cultural Formation of Kerala, ESSAYS ON THE CULTURAL FORMATION OF KERALA - LITERATURE, ART, ARCHITECTURE, MUSIC, THEATRE, CINEMA P.J.Churian ( Ed ), Kerala Council of Historical Research, Thiruvananthapuram, 1999, [http://www.keralahistory.ac.in/cul\\_kerala.html](http://www.keralahistory.ac.in/cul_kerala.html)

<sup>237</sup> Some of the historians believe that Christianity came to Kerala way back in 52 AD when St.Thomas came to Kerala. Yet another tradition suggests that the Christians from Syria came to Kerala under the leadership of Thomas of Knai in 345 AD. During the 5th year of Cera king Sthanu Ravivarma’s reign [9th Century AD], Ayyanadigal Tiruvadigal of Venadu region gives a land grad to the Teresa Church at Kollam. Jews seem to have migrated to Kerala in the pre Christian era itself. They probably controlled the trade of spices to Europe.

Christians,” says EMS Namboodiripad “like Jews and

Muslims in the earlier and later periods, carved for themselves a high and honorable place in Kerala society because of the useful social function they discharged, namely trade”<sup>238</sup>. The above statement by EMS can be a perfect explanation to the observation of Rajeevan which reads thus, “the absence of a trader caste in the Kerala model *Varna* system is highly significant against the background of the minute division of castes and sub-castes for each minor occupation”<sup>239</sup>.

EMS Namboodiripad suspects that the Nairs of Kerala had already achieved a position in the social hierarchy to dictate terms with the Brahmins when the latter entered Kerala. “If the Nairs could retain their social customs even after they came into the contact of Brahmins, it is quite clear that they possessed a culture equal to the Brahmins. Elsewhere the tribes were completely surrendered to the brahmanical culture or pushed away to the fringes of society as *avarnas*”<sup>240</sup> says EMS Namboodiripad. There are many instances which prove that the Nambutiri Brahmins adopted the customs and practices of the original inhabitants of Kerala. To quote Govindan Namboodiri “The attitude and approach of Nambutiris towards the Non-Brahmins had been essentially different from those of Brahmins of other parts of India. In other parts like Karnataka and Tamil Nadu they, with their own tradition and culture, almost kept apart themselves from the non- Brahmins. In Kerala

<sup>238</sup> EMS Namboodiripad, *Economic Backwardness of Harijan In Kerala*, SOCIAL SCIENTIST, Vol. 4, No.12 (Jul., 1976), p. 63

<sup>239</sup> B. Rajeevan , Cultural Formation of Kerala, ESSAYS ON THE CULTURAL FORMATION OF KERALA - LITERATURE, ART, ARCHITECTURE, MUSIC, THEATRE, CINEMA P.J.Chcrian ( Ed ), Kerala Council of Historical Research, Thiruvananthapuram, 1999, [http://www.keralahistory.ac.in/cul\\_kerala.htm](http://www.keralahistory.ac.in/cul_kerala.htm)

<sup>240</sup> EMS Namboodiripad *KERALAM MALYALIKALUDE MATHRUBHOOMI* [Malayalam], from P Govinda Pillai [Ed], *EMSINTE SAMPOORNA KRITIKAL* [COLLECTED WORKS OF EMS NAMBOODIRIPAD Vol. 9- 1948] [Malayalam] Chinta Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram 2000 ,p.78



them at different levels. This fact had far-reaching consequences in the cultural and social set up of Kerala. A Nambutiri would take a plunge in water after touching his own son born to Kshatriya or Nair wife. But he would teach him Sanskrit and allied subjects except those directly connected with Vedas like *Vedanta* and *Mimamsa*. Their only aim seems to be to keep the Vedic tradition intact which determined their identity as a sect from Non-Brahmins<sup>241</sup>. Even in the way of dressing Kerala Brahmins followed the same system of the Nairs but during the ritual performance they wear the *dhotis* in the way other Brahmins do.

Another aspect of *Malayala* Brahmins which distinguishes them from the other Brahmins is the property right within the patrilineal system they follow. It may be also noted here that not all the Kerala Brahmins follow the patrilineal system. The Brahmins of Payyanur<sup>242</sup> [the northern most settlement of the Brahmins in Kerala] follow the matrilineal system of inheritance adopting the local customs. The legends says that Parasurama instructed the Brahmins to follow the system of the local people and merge with them but the majority of the Brahmins refused to do so. Back to the inheritance system *Malayala* Brahmins follow a very distinct system where only the eldest son of the family is given the legal right to inherit the property and the hereditary rights [like the customary positions] from his father. The eldest son of the family also retained the right to marry the girls from the Brahmin caste. The rest of the sons were free to enter into marital relation with any castes, preferably from the *antarala jatis* or *Kshatriyas*. The other castes have found it convenient to have

---

<sup>241</sup> Namboodiri Govidan V, *SRAUTA SACRIFICE IN KERALA*, Calicut University Sanskrit Series 6 13, University of Calicut, 2002

<sup>242</sup> In 2010 Payyanur Brahmins collectively made a decision to change into patrilineal system. There were elaborate rituals and celebrations to mark the occasion.

the *Sambandham*<sup>243</sup> system. Here is a section society

which adheres to the strict rules of endogamy in one case and prescribing the exogamy on the other. Why did the Brahmins accept exogamy? The answer is the possibility of equal powerful system existed in Kerala when they arrived.

EMS visualizes a clash of cultures where each culture trying to retain its identity and making certain changes to avoid direct conflicts. Even in the present times one can see the coexistence of these cultures. For example the marriage custom of Kerala Brahmins is based on the *gruhyasuutras* with sacrificial rituals but the Nair or Izhava weddings even now do not need a Brahmin priest or sacrificial rituals. There are many temples which are called *Kavus* in south Kerala and *Aras* in north Kerala which are managed by the Nairs and Izhavas which do not follow the worshiping system of the Brahmins. Many of these shrines use the items like toddy [intoxicative drink tapped from the coconut or palm tree] and meat which are tabooed against in brahmanical shrines.

## OTHER CASTES

### Nairs

Can we consider Nairs and Izhavas as the original inhabitants of Kerala? Many historians deny the possibility of them being the aborigines of Kerala. Theorization about immigration of communities seems to be in vogue among the Kerala historians. The legend of *KERALA MAHATMYAM* which narrates that the first batch of Brahmins fled away from Kerala because they were harassed by the Nagas. Based on

---

<sup>243</sup> In this system a non Brahmin lady can enter into marriage contract with a Brahmin. The husband in this system is merely a progenitor, having no responsibility or right over his off springs.

ans claims that the Nagas mentioned in legend are none but the Nairs of Kerala and the conflict referred was the first Nair –Brahmin confrontation. A person who has visited Kerala would know that the tropical climatic condition of Kerala is ideal for venomous snakes to breed. Definitely there is popularity of naga worship in Kerala where each family would have a grove or Kavu attached to it. Each of the temples in Kerala will have a tree underneath which one can see the carved images of nagas placed. I am not sure whether it will be right to link the Naga cult of north India to that of Kerala; moreover there hardly any evidence to link the Nagas to Nairs. Taking this route some of the historians claims that Nairs migrated from North India [some say Chotta Nagpur!!!] or Nepal due to the closeness of Nairs with Newar community of Nepal who follow the matrilineal system like the Nairs. Fortunately nobody has claimed the Indian State of Nagaland as the original home of the Nairs. Padmanabha Menon concludes the discussion on Nairs thus, “The origin of Nairs as stated by each one historian and other are contradictory. Some of the historians claim that they were the aborigines of Kerala, but the opinion that they were migrants from North India who entered Kerala in ancient times seems to be more acceptable”.<sup>244</sup>

### **Izhava / Tiya**

Similar theories also floated on the Izhava / Tiya community. For a change they appear to have come into Kerala from South. Many historians consider them as migrated from Sri Lanka carrying along with them Buddhism as well mascot of Kerala, the coconut tree. Indeed there are much historical evidences to prove the

---

<sup>244</sup> KP Padmanabha Menon, *KERALA CHARITRAM*, as cited by EMS Namboodiripad *KERALAM MALYALIKALUDE MATHRUBHOOMI* [Malayalam], from P Govinda Pillai [Ed], *EMSINTE SAMPOORNA KRITIKAL* [COLLECTED WORKS OF EMS NAMBOODIRIPAD Vol. 9- 1948] [Malayalam] Chinta Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram 2000, p.76

and Sri Lanka in the way of food habits<sup>245</sup> and dynastical relations, but considering the whole population of Izhavas as migrants seems too far fetched. Another reason why some scholars consider them as migrants from Sri Lanka is due to the word Izhava, interpreted as the person from *Ilam* [meaning island]. Linking the whole community with coconut is also based on the vocation castes theory quite akin to the myth of the creation Izhavas. The myth states that, to stop Shiva drinking toddy, Parvati increased the height of the coconut tree. Shiva then created Izhava to climb the tree and bring him the toddy.

Izhavas definitely had some connection to Buddhism as evident from their involvement with medicinal practices. There are important Izhava families who practice ayurveda. The collaboration between Itti Achutan Vaidyar, a Izhava traditional medical practitioner and Hendrik van Rheede, the Governor of the Dutch administration in Kochi, in compiling the *Hortus Malabaricus* (meaning Garden of Malabar) an encyclopedia of medicinal flora of Kerala [compiled between 1674 and 1693, and published between 1678 and 1693] is quite well known. Itty Achutan Vaidyar belonged to the family traditional doctors namely Kollatt family of Kadakkarapally, near Cherthala town, in Alappuzha district of Kerala. In north Kerala the Izhava [known as the Tiya in Malabar] community practices *tarka* known as *Maruttu Kali* during the festivals of their *Kavus*. Here is a community who did not have the right education reciting Sanskrit verses. The hand gestures of the arguers called as Panikkers are quite similar to the present day Buddhist monks practicing *Tarka*. The knowledge of Sanskrit and ayurveda did not come from their proximity to Brahmins but from some other sources, mostly Buddhist. There are other non

---

<sup>245</sup> There is a food item called "*Puttu*" shared by Keralites and Sri Lankans

the trades which are entirely brahmanical, for example astrology. The Kaniyan community of South Kerala and Poduval of North Kerala practices astrology based on Sanskrit texts like *HORA SASTRA*.

Whether the Nairs and Izhavas were the original inhabitants of Kerala still remain a point of contention, however it is quite clear that they were very well settled in Kerala when the Brahmins arrived. The society was already structured with certain social norms accepted by both communities. The Brahmins affiliated one of the group and upgraded their position to the higher strata of the caste hierarchy while the other who probably aligned with Buddhism fighting the Brahmin dominance were pushed to lower level. This social stratification got its religious sanction through the temples and economic support through the *Janmi* system based on the *Devasvam*, *Brahmasvam*, and *Pandaram* division of land.

### **Other Castes**

Apart from Brahmins, Samantas, *antarala jatis*, Nairs and Izhavas there lot many caste in Kerala who constitute the lower portion of the caste hierarchy. Among them the Pulayan or Cherumas and Parayas do constitute the majority of the population. Interestingly these castes are spread all over Kerala without concentrating on any particular locality. Needless to state that their economical and social position remained distressed throughout Kerala. They definitely had an augmented social position before the *jati* system got established in Kerala. In north Malabar, the region where I belong to, it is the Pulayas, who announce the arrival of the season of festivals

ishna Aiyer<sup>246</sup> states that the word Pulayan comes from the root word ‘pula’ [Pollution]. This does not seem right as the interpretation of relating them to ‘Pulam’ meaning land/ paddy field appear more convincing<sup>247</sup>. Pulayas were definitely related to the land and this attachment with the land later became a legal bondage till they were released from this bondage in Tiruvitankur on 24<sup>th</sup> June, 1855<sup>248</sup> and in 1862 in the regions of Malabar and Kochi. Though slavery lost its legality it continued as custom even in 20<sup>th</sup> century, at least in the first quarter of it. S. Subbarama Aiyer<sup>249</sup> writes in his article, *Economic Life in a Malabar Village* [1925], “One peculiar feature of agricultural labor in Malabar is the existence of a class of semi-slaves. From time immemorial they were slaves under law as well as in fact. They are even now agricultural serfs attached to their masters’ soil and actually transferred to the buyer of land to which they are attached. They are often lent out for services to another for a small *pattam*, or rent by the master. This is however legally prohibited, but persists in certain cut of the way places. They are mere agricultural workers and have no sort of proprietorship in the land. They regard themselves as their masters’ property. They behave well, are obedient, honest and loyal to their masters, very earnest about their work, but are completely illiterate.” When the Munro Island in Tiruvitankur was granted to the Church Missionary Society [CMS] around 100 Pulayas also were transferred with the land. After certain altercation with

<sup>246</sup> Nellikkal, Muraleedharan, *KERALA JATI VIAVARANAM*, [Malayalam], [Encyclopedia of Caste System] Rainbow Book Publishers, Cengannur, Kerala, 2008, p. 260

<sup>247</sup> Nellikkal, Muraleedharan, *KERALA JATI VIAVARANAM*, [Malayalam], [Encyclopedia of Caste System] Rainbow Book Publishers, Cengannur, Kerala, 2008, p. 260

<sup>248</sup> Velupilla, TK Sadasyatilaka, *THE TRAVANCORE STATE MANUEL*, Volume II, History, 1940, First reprint, Government of Kerala, Kerala Gazetteers, Thiruvananthapuram, 1996, p.568

<sup>249</sup> As quoted by Hunt WS, Rev. *Slavery in Kerala*, in Tankappan, KK [Ed], *KERALA SOCIETY PAPERS*, Volume. I and II [1928 ó 33] Reprint, Government of Kerala, Kerala Gazetteers, Thiruvananthapuram, 1997, p.277

aries were able to release the slaves, as the letter from

Rev. Joseph Peet<sup>250</sup> states;

“We the undersigned, acting as trustees of Munro Island, do hereby declare that.....who has hitherto been the slave of the soil, is from this time liberated by us and made a free man, and that his wife and offspring are wholly and forever free and are regarded by us only as hired servants, and that no one has any right to bring them into servitude again.”

There are many slave–sale deeds which brought out by the earlier editors of Kerala Society Papers like TK Joseph which states that the person who is sold [the Pulaya woman] “and the children to be born of her are sold so as to sold again, bound, put in stocks or killed if necessary”<sup>251</sup>.

Other distressed castes like Parayas, Channars, Nayadis and many others had gone through the phase where they being the target of the *savarna* atrocities. The Paraya community’s main occupation was scavenging and thus considered to be polluting by the brahmanical system. The special privileges like the *Pulappedi*, *Mannappedi* and *Parappedi*, through which on a particular day these castes can claim a girl from the *savarna* castes by just touching them, or even throwing a stone at them from a distance and shouting “*Kande Kande* [I saw, I saw]” did not give these communities any relief on the contrary it increased the animosity between the *savarnas* and *avarnas*. By the coming of Christianity either through Portuguese, especially through

<sup>250</sup> As quoted by Hunt WS, Rev. *Slavery in Kerala*, in Tankappan, KK [Ed], KERALA SOCIETY PAPERS, Volume. I and II [1928 ó 33] Reprint, Government of Kerala, Kerala Gazetteers, Thiruvananthapuram, 1997, p.277

<sup>251</sup> TK Joseph, Appendix I, for the article of Rev. Hunt, *Slavery in Kerala*, in Tankappan, KK [Ed], KERALA SOCIETY PAPERS, Volume. I and II [1928 ó 33] Reprint, Government of Kerala, Kerala Gazetteers, Thiruvananthapuram, 1997, p.280



er or through the missionary organizations like London Missionary Society [LMS] or Church Mission Society [CMS] especially in Tiruvitankur most of these castes preferred to convert to Christianity which offered them better economical, social and pedagogical opportunities.

There are more than seventy *jatis* in Kerala and it should be noted that among them the number of *savarna jatis* are less than twenty who controlled the economy, social system, education and culture of the land. The cultural manifestations of Kerala like *Kathakali*, *Mohiniyattam*, *Koottu*, *Koodiyattam*, the temple architecture, exquisitely carved wooden panels of the temples, murals on the palace walls of Kerala, great Puram festivals [like Trissur] were banned for them, they were aliens in their own land. By early 20<sup>th</sup> century slowly this iron curtain based on the purity [*suddham*] and impurity [*asuddham* or *ayittam*] between the *savarnas* and *avarnas* starts fading thanks to the awareness of modernity and nationalist sentiments nurtured by visionaries and social activists.

## **PURITY AS THE PARAMETER FOR CASTE HIERARCHY**

The caste system in Kerala and elsewhere followed certain customs and taboos to retain the social structure. The system of caste hierarchy aimed at the division of the society and created its own devices of segregation, namely endogamy, laws of inheritance, the laws of sharing the food and the most potent and worst of all, the untouchability. The word for untouchability in Malayalam language is *ayittam* and *Tindal*. *Ayittam* probably came from the Sanskrit word '*asuddha*' meaning 'impure', stands for the whole system of caste hierarchy and segregation based on the purity

the practice of *ayittam*. The word *Tindal* originated from the Malayalam word *todu*, meaning touch. Even now visiting the Kerala temples one can get a glimpse of the *Tindal* when the *santhikkaran* gives you the *prasadam* or offering, he drops it into the receiver's hand leaving the distance of at least one feet between the devotee and himself. Here he is keeping the distance of *Tindal*. As mentioned elsewhere in the present thesis, in 19<sup>th</sup> century, a Nambutiri Brahmin has to take bath to purify, if touches his own son, through a Nair woman. At times even the economic empowerment did not help the lower castes who had to follow *ayittam* as a social behavior. To quote TK Madhavan, "My companion on my daily trip to and from school was a Nair boy ... whose poor mother was a dependant of ours. He could go straight along the roads, whereas I, in spite of being economically better off, had to leave the road every now and then [to avoid polluting caste – Hindus]"<sup>252</sup>.

First reference about the *Tindal* comes from Sankaracharya himself in his *MANISHAPANCHAKAM*<sup>253</sup>. The legend says that Sankaracharya was walking in one of the by lanes of Banaras when he was confronted by a *Chandala*. Seeing untouchable, Sankaracharya's disciples were warning the *chandala* shouting 'go away, go away'. Instead of going away, Chandala stood on his ground and asked Sankaracharya thus,

*Annamayadannamayamathava caitanyameva caitanyat/  
Yativara durikartum vanecasi kim bruhi gacca gacceti//*

---

<sup>252</sup> Quoted in A Aiyappan, "*Travas and Culture Changeö*, Madras Government Museum Bulletin, V, 1, 1943, pp 45-6. Cited here from Jeffrey Robin, *Temple-Entry Movement in Travancore*, 1860-1940, SOCIAL SCIENTIST, Vol.4, No.8, [March, 1976], p.12

<sup>253</sup> [http://sanskritdocuments.org/all\\_pdf/manishhaa5.pdf](http://sanskritdocuments.org/all_pdf/manishhaa5.pdf)

ascetic! Tell me. Do you want me to keep a distance from  
away' 'go away' taking me to be an outcaste? Is it  
addressed from one body made of food to another body made of food?

The *Sankarasmruti* a text erroneously attributed to Sankaracharya mentions the dictums based on untouchability like “You must bath if you touch a Sudra” and “You must bath if you happen to be near a Chandala”<sup>254</sup> among the 64 anacharams. The text also prescribes the distance each caste has to keep from *auapasangni* the sacrificial fire. The table below would illustrate this;

<b>Caste</b>	<b>Minimum distance from sacrificial fire</b>	<b>Minimum distance from Brahmin</b>
Sacchudra / Samanta/ antarala	3 feet	3 feet
Sudra / ‘Malayali Sudra’/ Nair	6 feet	6 feet
Rajaka / Washerman	6 feet	6 feet
Sutika/ Tailor	18 feet	18 feet
Carpenter, Black smith, Goldsmith, Brass metal worker	48 feet	48 feet
Toddy tapper, Svapaca, Pulkasa, Vyadha	64 feet	64 feet

“These rules were framed first for keeping the fire unpolluted from the polluted persons”, writes Govindan Namboodiri, “the pollution being caused by impurity or caste. Gradually these were applied to Brahmins who represents the Fire, the Fire being the representative symbol of Vedic tradition. When these rules were applied to Brahmins in case of the people of lower castes, it became an unchallengeable social custom called *Tintal*. It became a glaring symbol of their supremacy. This custom

<sup>254</sup> Fred Fawcett , NAMBUTIRIS-Notes on Some of the People of Malabar, Madras Government Museum, Bulletin, Vol.III, NO. 1, 1900, [Reprint] Asian Education Services, New Delhi, 2001

relatively. This relative distance of inapproachability became a measure of relative status of each caste”<sup>255</sup>.

Ambedkar wrote in 1943, “Most parts of the world have had their type of what Ward calls the lowly. The Romans had their slaves, the Spartans their helots, the British their villeins, the Americans their Negroes and the Germans their Jews. So the Hindus have their Untouchables. But none of these can be said to have been called upon to face a fate which is worse than the fate which pursues the Untouchables. Slavery, serfdom, villeinage have all vanished. But Untouchability still exists and bids fair to last as long as Hinduism will last”<sup>256</sup>. The situation in Kerala is far better now regarding the vise of untouchability, thanks to the movements of social reforms enthused by education system starting from the fag end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, however the opening of public roads and government institutions to the the lower caste happened only in the first quarter of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Eventually these movements were succussful in breaking the pillars of orxodoxy and opening the Temples, through temple entry proclamations. The Temple entry procalmation however left certian spaces exclusively for the Brahmins - that is the ***Namaskara Mandapa*** which still remain as the vestige of a caste society.

---

<sup>255</sup> Namboodiri Govidan V, *SRAUTA SACRIFICE IN KERALA*, Calicut University Sanskrit Series 6 13, University of Calicut, 2002

<sup>256</sup> Ambedkar BR, *Mr. Gandhi and the Emancipation of the Untouchables* from <http://www.ambedkar.org/ambcd/.htm>



## CHAPTER 4

# SEGREGATION, STRUGGLE, EMANCIPATION AND PERSISTENCE

*“Freedom is acquired by conquest, not by gift. It must be pursued constantly and responsibly. Freedom is not an ideal located outside of man; nor is it an idea which becomes myth. It is rather the indispensable condition for the quest for human completion”.*

**Paulo Freire**, Pedagogy of the Oppressed

The caste system which was the foundation of the social behavior of Kerala in the period prior to 20<sup>th</sup> century started shaking as soon as the century began. Educational augmentation of the distressed classes through the secular establishments initiated by the colonial institutions and the works of social, religious and political activists and reformers gave a new direction to the progressive thinking and positive change towards social equity. However the Temples stood as the vestiges of the old system keeping the caste system in the guise of retaining the tradition. Unlike other structures temples architecturally defined the caste system. The social activists like TK Madhavan understood the importance of breaking this last bastion of caste society in each village of Kerala. The present chapter maps the movements which lead to the opening of temples to the masses and establishing a casteless society in Kerala.

## TEMPLE AS THE NUCLEUS OF THE SOCIAL LIFE

Since my childhood I had been travelling through length and breadth of Kerala and have noticed something unique of the region. The factor that, standing anywhere in Kerala you are never far away from a temple, mosque or a church. Kerala can actually boast about more or equal number of temples as the number of villages in the state. Most of the villages and towns in Kerala like Vaikom [Kottayam District], Kodungallur [Trissur District], Ambalappuzha [Alappuzha District] and Talipparambu [Kannur District] are built around the temple. One of the major junctions in Thiruvananthapuram, called Palayam, short distance from the Kerala legislative assembly, illustrates this fact. This junction has church, mosque and temple, along with Central library, a stadium, an art college and a University in its vicinity. The Census report of 2001<sup>257</sup> would provide interesting fact related to the present discussion as illustrated in the table below,

### Buildings in Kerala 2001 census<sup>258</sup>

	Use	Rural	%	Urban	%	Total	%
1	Residence	4,870,794	76.3	1,619,786	72.3	6,490,580	75.3
2	Industry	91,922	1.4	59,770	2.7	151,692	1.8
3	<b>Religion</b>	<b>81,402</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>19,738</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>101,140</b>	<b>1.2</b>
4	Education	51,838	0.8	18,597	0.8	70,435	0.8
5	Hospitality	21,712	0.3	20,317	0.9	42,029	0.5
6	Medical	19,321	0.3	10,244	0.5	29,565	0.3

<sup>257</sup> I have used the 2001 Census report as the 2011 report was not released by Census India.

<sup>258</sup> Source: Table H-1 India : Census of India 2001,

[http://www.censusindia.gov.in/Census\\_Data\\_2001/States\\_at\\_glance](http://www.censusindia.gov.in/Census_Data_2001/States_at_glance)



there are 1364 villages in Kerala along with more than fifty Municipalities and five Municipal corporations sharing 101,140 places of worship along with 29,565 Hospitals and 70,435 Educational institutions. This is not the number of places of worship used by the Hindus only but includes the Mosques and Churches belonging to various Christian sects. The number of the places of worship in Kerala is almost 3.5 times higher than the hospitals [29,565]. As far as religious structures per 1000 persons, Kerala comes on the fourth place after the states of Himachal Pradesh, Goa, Karnataka and Assam as indicated in the chart below [Chart No.1]. Neighboring state of Tamil Nadu is much below than Kerala regarding the ratio of population and religious structures. Gujarat usually accused as “orthodox” is 4 positions below Kerala. Gujarat which has more villages compared to Kerala but has only 142,135 buildings categorized as places of worship. Kerala has more places of worship in the urban region [0.9 %] than Gujarat [0.8%] and Maharashtra [0.5%]. While in rural areas Kerala [1.3%] has equal number [1.3%] with that of Maharashtra and lesser number compared to Gujarat [1.7%]. As far as hospitals are considered Kerala achieves 3<sup>rd</sup> position after Himachal Pradesh and Goa [refer Chart No.3]. 100% literate Kerala is in the position closer after Himachal Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Orissa and Assam [refer Chart No. 2] regarding Education institutions.

An interesting aspect revealed through the analysis of the data provided by 2001 Census of India is that Kerala is in the fifth position as far as density of Religious structures coming after Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Goa and Assam. In Kerala 1000 people share 3.1 Religious structures while in Himachal Pradesh it is the highest 4.3; Delhi has the least with 0.5 [Chart No. 4]. If one inverse the data we get an observation that every 315 people in Kerala has one religious structure much higher

ana]. The balance which is achieved in the health and

education sector is quite a recent phenomenon manifested only in the 19<sup>th</sup> century due to the western influence and the resultant social and education movements. In other words in the pre modern period the ratio between the religious structures and health and education buildings would have been much more contrasting.

The development in the social sector during medieval period in Kerala was akin to that of Tamil Nadu. In Kerala the village economy and social fabric was woven in and around the places of worship, majority among them are temples. Even the legend like *KERALA MAHATMYAM* and *KERALOLPATTI* attempts build the social structure keeping the temple as the centre. The Cola and Vijayanagara models too successfully put the same structure in practice. Development of cities around the temples like Kumbhakonam, Thanjavur, and Gangai Konda Cholapuram under the Colas and Hampi and Tirumala under the Vijayanagara rule are excellent illustrations of this theory. The best example from Kerala, where the cities developing around the temple can be Thiruvananthapuram, the capital city of Kerala, which developed around the Temple of Padmanabhaswami Temple after Martanda Varma, dedicated the land of Tiruvitankur to the cardinal deity of the temple through his *Trippadi Danam*<sup>259</sup> in 1749. Another example from Kerala is the city of Trissur which is literally built around the Vadakkunnatha temple. The circular road around the temple *maidan* constitutes the prime market street of Trissur town. Developed during the rule Saktan Tampuran in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century Trissur became the centre for the *Pooram* festival, where all the gods of the neighboring shrines would congregate at Trissur to pay respect to

<sup>259</sup> *Trippadi Danam* is the ritual through which Marthanada Varma, the Raja of Tiruvitankur surrendered the whole Venadu [Tiruvitankur] to Lord Sri Padmanabha [Vishnu] of Thiruvananthapuram. Ever since *Trippadi Danam*, the Travancore kings ruled the country as a servant/representative of Sri Padmanabha. Their records always mentioned the king as *Sri Padmanabha dasa*.

dakkunnatha Temple. It is worth mentioning here that the *Pooram* at Trissur was introduced by Saktan Tampuran, ruler of Nediyrippu Svaroopam of Kochi to assert his authority amongst the small *Naduvazhis* around. At Payyanur in North Kerala the principle deity, Subramanya/Kartikeya is considered as the ruler of the region. He is called as 'Perumal' the name for the rulers of Kerala [for example Kulasekhara Perumal for Ravi Varma Kulasekhara]. The local myths state that some of the gods and goddesses had to seek permission of Payyanur Perumal [Subramanya/Kartikeya of Payyanur Temple] for 'residing' in the Payyanur region. Interestingly the *Uranmas* of Payyanur temple are not Brahmins but Poduvals who are the land holding caste of Payyanur region, also given the position of 'brothers of Kartikeya' through local legends.

One distinct feature of South Indian history is the orderly stitching of the socio-cultural structure, keeping the temple as the center, with that of the *Janmi – Jati* system. The expansion of the brahmanical *Bhakti* movement has finally culminated in the established temple system, greatly nurtured by the rulers like Chalukyans, Pallavas, Pandyan and Ceras. During Cola period the temple also achieved the position of being the hub of Urban and rural administrative system. As David Ludden observes, "Temples became the focal point for social life and creativity as deities received gifts from pious donors. Material gifts supported ceremonies. Honors distributed in ceremonies denoted human worth in relation to divine beings and to people in society. In worship, people sought solutions to problems in health, marital, and other concerns; the simultaneously defined their position in the moral universe and their

leaders constituted their leadership in society patronizing temple worship as well as Brahmin, learned men and priests”<sup>260</sup>.

### **Empowering of the Castes Attached to the Temple**

Empowering of the temple, politically also lead to the amplification of the economic, social status of the castes attached to it. Along with the caste based social structure came the economic structure of the society too constructed based on the relation to the temples though *Uranma*, *Karanma* system. The land was partitioned between the *Pandaram*<sup>261</sup> [treasury/royal land], *Devasvam* [temple] and *Brahmasvam* land. The stratification thus, provided the *savarnas* with full or partial ownership of the land through *Uranma* or *Karanma* rights. The landless communities belonging to the lower and lowest strata of the caste hierarchy, who were not the partners of the above stratification, were to cultivate the land and thus called as *Paniyalar* [workers or servants]. The process might have started in the beginning of Medieval itself as noted by EMS Namboodiripad<sup>262</sup> as, “At the time of or even before the Cera empire ... class division had started making its appearance ... class division, however took the form of caste division; those who were in a position to accumulate the greatest wealth came to be considered the highest caste; the next in point of the accumulation of wealth became the next highest caste, and so on, till we reach the class that is in a position to accumulate no wealth at all which became the lowest caste”

<sup>260</sup> Ludden David, *EARLY CAPITALISM AND LOCAL HISTORY IN SOUTH INDIA*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi., 1985, Second Edition 2005, pp. 30-32

<sup>261</sup> Originated from the Sanskrit word Bhandar, means treasury

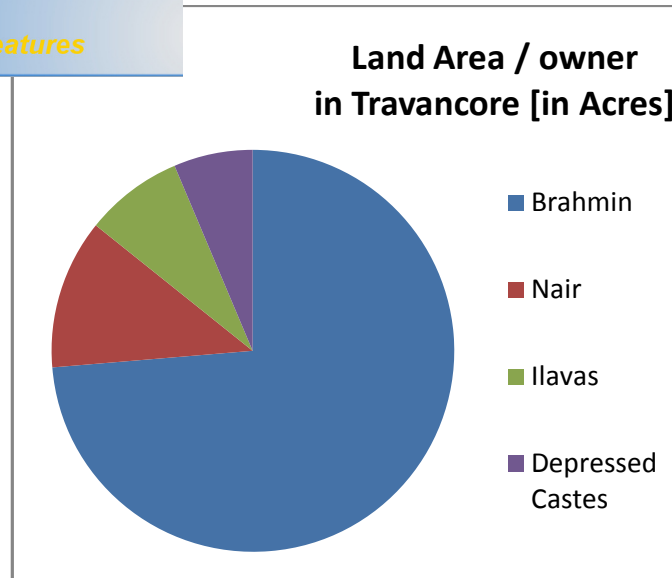
<sup>262</sup> EMS Namboodiripad, *Kerala Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, Calcutta, National Book Agency, 1967, p 47 As quoted by EMS Namboodiripad in *Once Again on Castes and Classes*, Social Scientist, vol.9, No.12, (Dec.,1981), p.12-25, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3517131>

g and monetary accumulation was emphasized through legends and myths. Brahmins kept the control of the society through aligning with the ruling class, obviously with a superior position as well wishers of the country and its rulers. Temples became the power centers defining the function of the society with *sastras* as the books of law. Gangadharan TK observes thus, “By that time the Brahmins in Kerala had acquired dominance in the society and this dominance was spread over the administration of the temple also. They utilized the Vedic tradition to make the temples the centre of the society. The rituals and worship in the temples were related with the production process in the agrarian society. The agrarian society of Kerala gradually became close with the temples. As the rulers gave so much of importance to the ideological background provided by Brahmins for maintaining their power, they extended their whole hearted help to the Brahmanical temples. This help provided by ruling class was mainly material. Thus Kerala became a temple oriented society”<sup>263</sup>.

The *Savarnas* or the upper strata of the caste system were the caste which had connected to the temple through land rights or trade. Here by the word trade I mean the occupational engagement with the temples which are specifically conducted by the *Ambalavasi/ Antarala Jati* community like the Varriors, Nambiars [except North Kerala], Marars, Poduvals [except Payyanur] etc. There were Brahmins who are related to the temple through the land like the Uranmas or through employment like the designated priest of the temple [*Santikkaran*] or *Tantri* [chief priest]. Others who do not have a role in the temple hierarchy were left out of the civil society too. Thus the temples in Kerala mapped out a stratification of the Kerala society.

---

<sup>263</sup> Gangadharan TK, *EVOLUTION KERALA HISTORY AND CULTURE*, Calicut University Central Cooperative Stores, Calicut, p.134



The chart above based on the 1931 Census<sup>264</sup> shows the land [wet and dry] ownership of the land held by Hindus in Tiruvitankur. The dominant caste, the Brahmins held 74% of the land, while the rest of the area [26%] was shared by the castes like Nairs [12%], Ilavas [8%] and other depressed castes [6%]. In the chart above we see that in 1931 the majority of the land was held by the Brahmins [*Brahmasvam* lands and *Devasvam* land through *Uranma* rights], *Ambalavasis* and Nairs [through *Karanma* rights]. This is very close to the land rights which existed in Tamil Nadu in the pre-colonial period. Nicholas Dirks<sup>265</sup> explains the Tamil Nadu scenario thus, “At the risk of some simplification, I will suggest here that the two terms used for property in Tamil suggest the somewhat different but interdependent nature of these social and political relations. *Panku*, a term meaning share and often used to characterize the

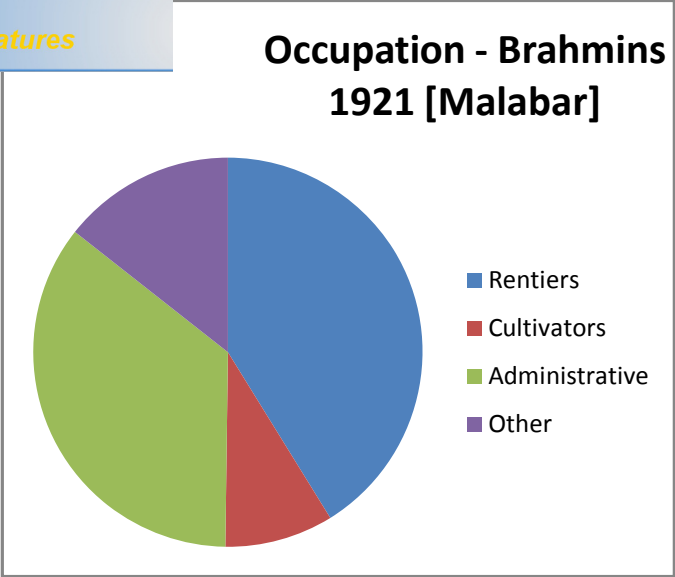
<sup>264</sup> As cited by P Sivanandan, Caste, Class and Economic Opportunity in Kerala- An Empirical Analysis, *ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL WEEKLY*, Annual Number February 1979, p 475

<sup>265</sup> Nicholas B. Dirks, *From Little King to Landlord: Property, Law and The Gift Under The Permanent Settlement*, *HUMANITIES WORKING PAPER* 84, California Institute of Technology, June 1983, <http://authors.library.caltech.edu/15966/1/HumsWP-0084.pdf>

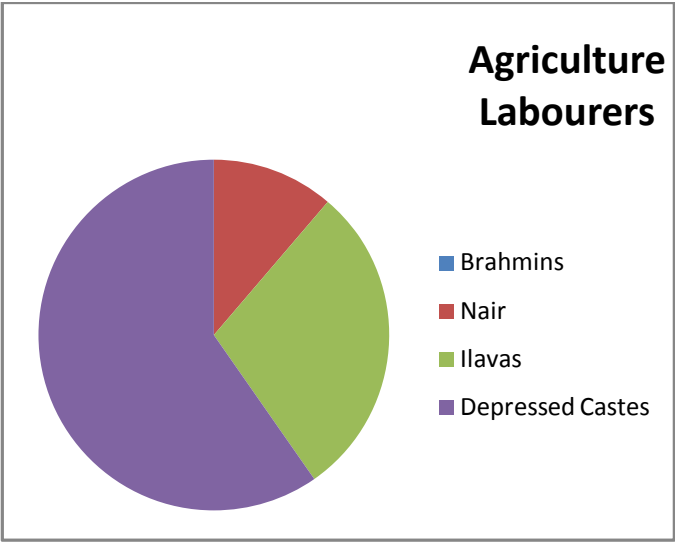
ct as well as hereditability of land, is fundamentally a horizontal term. Shares of land were shares among a group, of family members, holders of *miraci* right, of Brahmans all granted lands together under the terms of a single *brahmadeyam* grant, and even in more extended senses of members of an entire village. These *pankus* were sometimes related to particular plots of land and sometimes to a particular proportion of a larger unit of land, proportions which would be redistributed and reallocated periodically. *Pankus* in land were related to *pankus* in a variety of other contexts: shares in local temple festivals, and shares in kinship units (in which, for example, members of the same lineage were called *pankalis*). The second term is *kani*. Meaning a hereditary right, the term suggests a vertical relation, since entitlement to a share was usually seen to have been granted by a superior agent. This agent was often a king, or the agent of a king, although in certain cases it could have been the chief of a previously resident dominant caste group. To have this entitlement, or *kani*, was to have *kaniyacci*, which was related both to control over land and to participation in the village/lineage assembly and also, as was the case with *panku*, with rights to a share in local temple honors”.

In case of Kerala the *Uranma* right is parallel to the *Panku* right of Tamil Nadu and *Kani* right of Tamil Nadu will be similar to *Karanma* of Kerala. Though Ambalavasis and Nair held 53 percent of the land the ownership through Janmi right was either with the *Brahmasvam* or *Devasvam*, thus in actuality Brahmins controlled 96 percent of the land. They also enjoyed the maximum profit from agriculture despite being an inactive member of the chain. 1921 Census of Malabar provides similar data but in a different context.



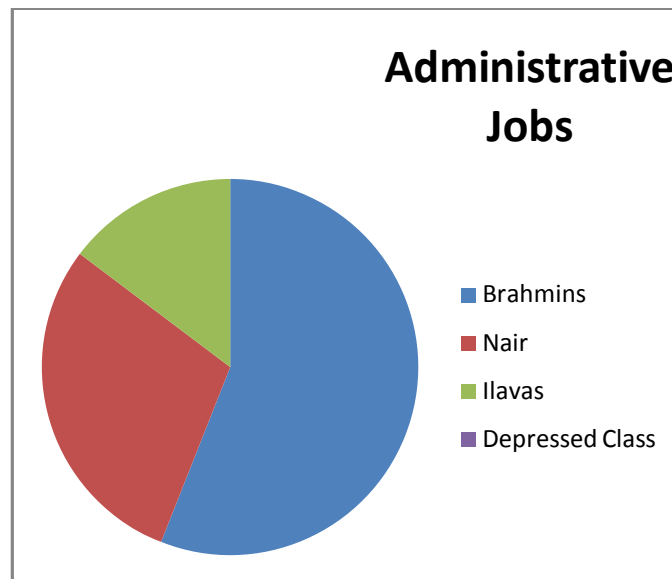


The charts above show the occupation of different castes in Malabar. Here 41% of Brahmins among the 50% related to agriculture are merely renters of the land. The categories like the agriculture labor are nonexistent. The same Census<sup>266</sup> report prides the detail about the agriculture laborers thus,

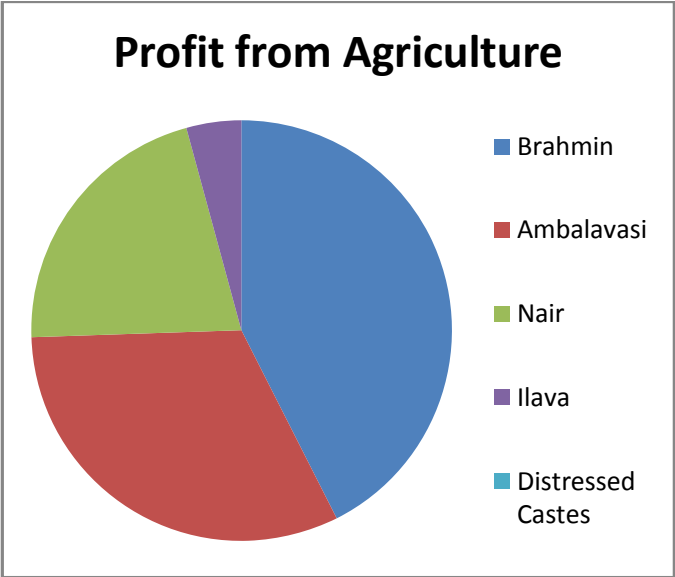
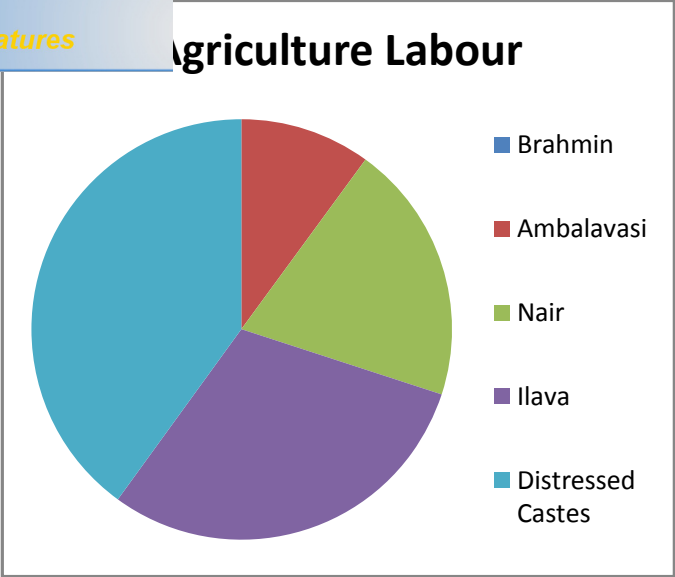


<sup>266</sup> As cited by P Sivanandan, Caste, Class and Economic Opportunity in Kerala- An Empirical Analysis, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL WEEKLY, Annual Number February 1979, p 476

Brahmins who hold the 50% land does not even open their account in the agriculture labor on the other hand the Depressed Class, mainly Cheruma community who works as agriculture laborers does not own even inch of land. Similar scenario is repeated in the Administrative Services<sup>267</sup> [see Chart below] where again the literate Brahmin and Nair hold 85% share of the total jobs.

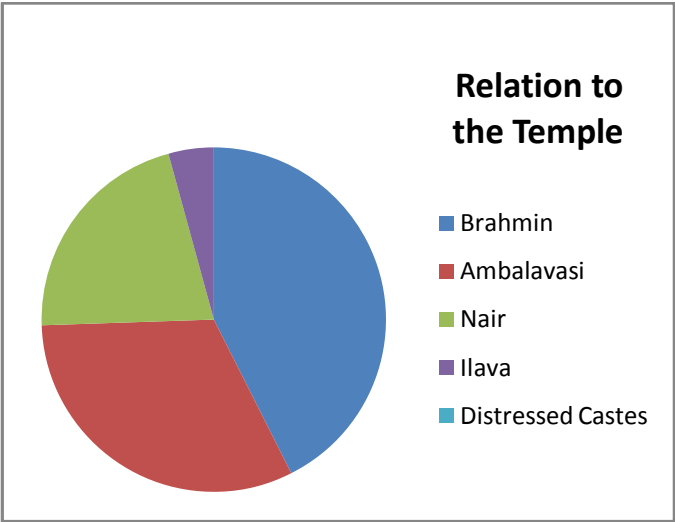


<sup>267</sup> As cited by P Sivanandan, Caste, Class and Economic Opportunity in Kerala- An Empirical Analysis, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL WEEKLY, Annual Number February 1979, p 476



Above charts gives a depressing economic scenario prevailed in Kerala till early 20th century, where 70% agriculture labor is done by a majority of population belonging to lower castes but 96% of the profit is enjoyed by the minority who belonged to the upper castes through *janmam* [share of the profit belonging to the landlord (*Janmi*)] and *kanam* [share of the profit belonging to the leaser of the land [*Karanma*]].

emacy the dominant castes dictated the terms in social hierarchy like the *Varna* system keeping out the non land holding castes away from the social fabric neatly woven around the temple. The castes that are related to the temple or the divine industry were kept together excluding the other from the society. The following charts titled Relation to the temple by various castes would further illustrate this point.



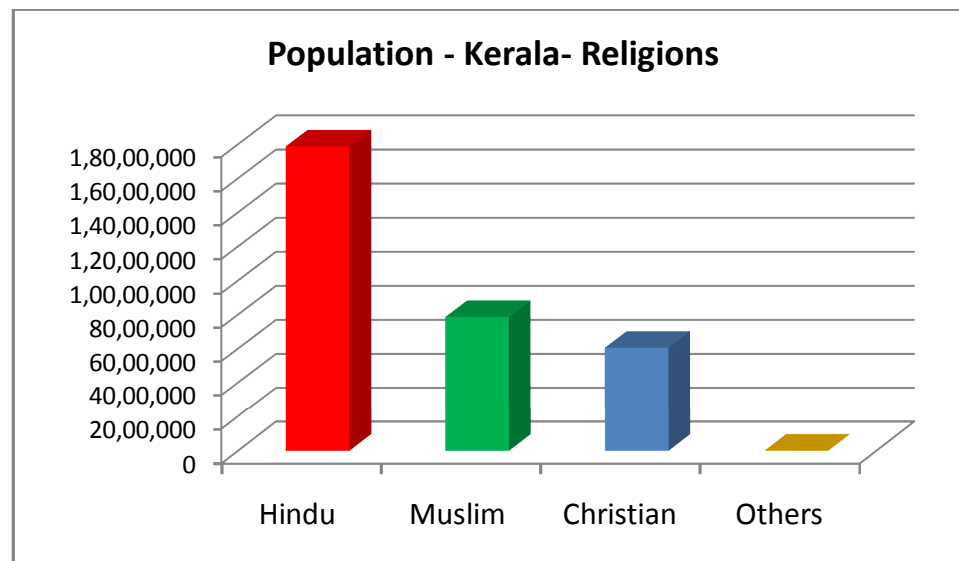
The table below elucidate further the position of the castes regarding nature of the ownership of the Land, nature of profit from agriculture, relation to the Temple through trade and profession and authority, untouchablity in relation to the upper most caste [Brahmin] and Entry right into the Temple in 19th Century. The lower portion of the table is highlighted to emphasize the position of *avarnas* [untouchable castes].

SAVARNAS					
	Land ownership	Profit from Agriculture	Relation to the Temple	Untouchability to Brahmin	Entry into the Temple [19 <sup>th</sup> C.]
Brahmin	Owners	Receiver	Closest	NA	Full
Ambalavasi	Holders	Partial	Close	Moderate	Partial
Nair	Holders	Partial	Moderate	Moderate	Partial
AVARNAS					
Izhava	Landless Tenants	Minimal	Farther	Farther	Farther
Other Lower	Landless workers	NIL	Farthest	Farthest	Farthest

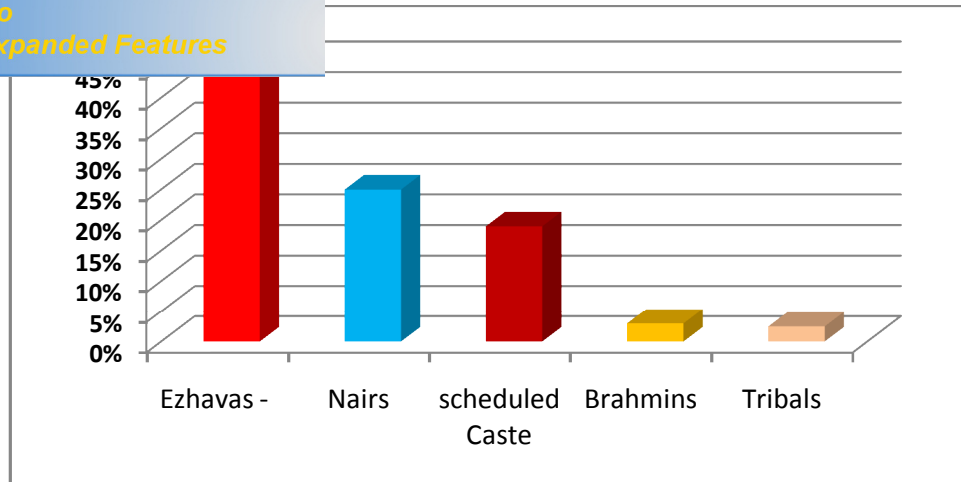
If we summaries the above data and earlier charts into the category of *savarna* and *avarna*, the pie in the chart would give a pathetic picture. The segregation of the *avarnas* from the society is clear in their omission from the “purest” edifice of temples.

I have kept the five segments of castes in the Table, placed in the descending order in the caste hierarchy starting from Nambutiri Brahmin to other castes which include most of the Depressed Castes. The Ilavas along with the other castes constitutes the

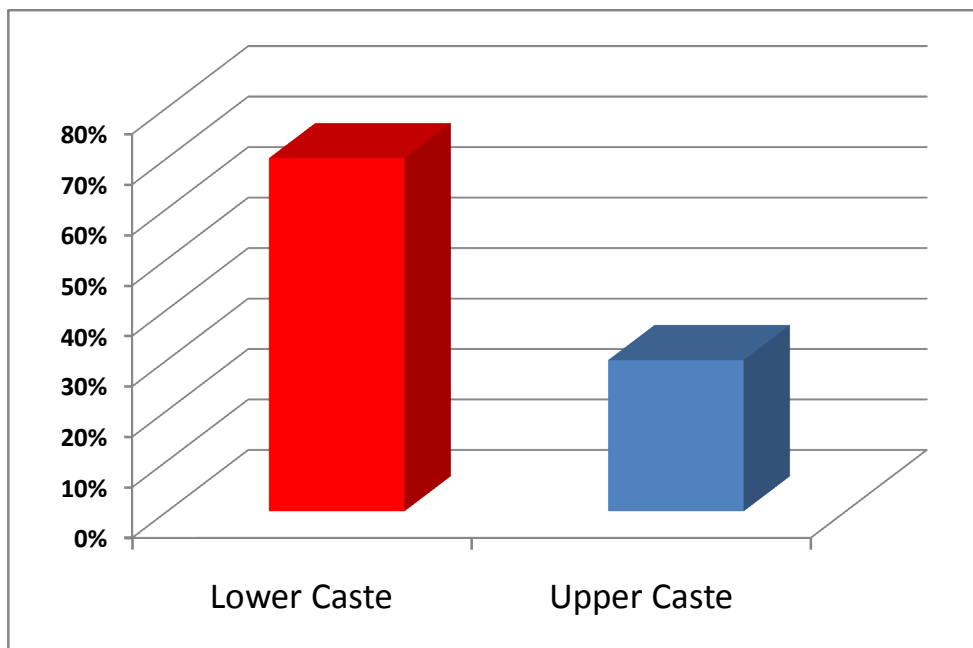
known as Caste – Hindus or *savarnas*. Interestingly the *avarnas* comprise highest percent of Hindus in the state of Kerala. The Charts below based on the 2001 Census would explain this factor further.



According to the 2001 Census Kerala had a population of 3,08,68,964 out of which number of Hindus were 17,883,449 [56.4%]. Among which as the following chart would show 44% were Ilavas and Scheduled castes were 19% and Tribes constituted 3%.

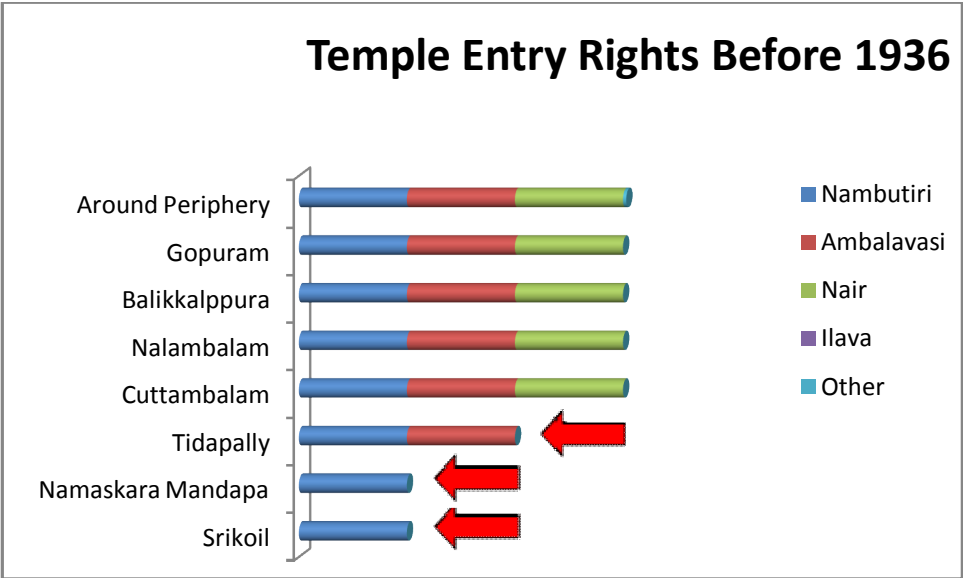


The Ezhavas, Depressed Castes [Scheduled Castes] and Tribals together constituted 70% of the Hindu population in Kerala. [See Chart below]





...ping was enjoyed only 30% of the population. Among the upper castes too, the full utilization of temple architecture was the privilege of the upper most cast [See the chart below].



Here the vertical axes define the area of the Hindu temples in Kerala where *Sri Koil* is the centre of the whole complex. The *namaskara mandapa* comes immediately after the *Sri Koil* on the cardinal axis. *Tidappalli*, usually on the right corner of the *Cuttambalam* is where the offerings are cooked. *Cuttambalam* is the columned verandah like space around the shrine. *Nalambalam* including the *Valiyambalam* on the cardinal axis is walled space encompassing the *cuttambalam*. *Balikkalppura* is placed outside the *nalambalam* on the cardinal axes. *Gopuram/padippura* is the entrance gate to the whole complex.

The red arrows highlight the fact that the areas like *Sri Koil*, *Namaskara Mandapa*, and *Tidappalli* is reserved for the Brahmins and Ambalavasis. *Sri Koil* has restricted

*anthikkaran* [officiating priest] is allowed. Ambalavasis are allowed in the Tidappalli region for professional reason. Ambalavasis are also known as *antarala jatis* who are appointed in the temple to look after the daily work of the temples. This segment includes castes like Nambiar, Poduval, Marar, Varrier etc. It should also be noted that some of the castes belong to the *ambalavasi* or *antarala* castes are considered part of the Nairs in certain regions. For example the Poduvals of Payyanur [north Malabar] are not *ambalavasis* but in rest of Kerala they are drummers in the temples and thus Ambalavasis. In north Malabar the temple drummers belong to Marar caste while in South Malabar the Marars do certain other duties as cleaning of the premise etc. Likewise the north Malabar Nambiar are not Ambalavasis and would come under the category as Nairs. It is needless to mention here again that the entry rights into the temple depend on this categorization. For example a Payyanur Poduval is not supposed to enter the *Tidappalli* while a Poduval from south Malabar is allowed to enter; same in the case of Nambiar of north Malabar. The shift in this position may due to the traditional occupations of these castes as both Nambiar and Poduvals of north Kerala are land owners and farmers.

Namaskara mandapa on the other hand is entirely reserved for the Brahmins. Here it should also mentioned that only Malayala Brahmins [Nambutiris] are allowed on to the namaskara mandapa. There are exceptions for this rule too in certain cases. For example, even the Nambutiri Brahmins are not allowed to enter the namaskara mandapa of Raja Rajesvara Temple at Talipparambu [Kannur District]. The reason cited for which is the usage of the said Namaskara Mandapa by the god Rama himself. **In rest of the temples Namaskara mandapa stand a reminder of the**

who are the prime custodians of the structure,  
exclusive and segregated.

## SEGREGATION AND HIERARCHY

The discrimination of the caste system was based on tenets of purity. Imagine four people walking together in 19<sup>th</sup> century without knowing each other [which is unlikely in 19<sup>th</sup> Century] and if they confront a Brahmin. In that scenario, each one of them will retain a specific distance from the Brahmin depending on the caste they belongs to. Similarly each would also stop at specific distances from the temple. This system was called '*Tindal*' and the distance maintained by them is called the *tindappad*. MN Srinivas defines *Tindal* system thus, "The structural distance between various castes is defined in terms of pollution and purity. A higher caste is always status it should abstain from certain forms of contact with the lower. It may not ordinarily eat food cooked by them, or marry or have sex relations with them. Where one of the castes is very high and the other very low, there is a ban on touching or even getting very close to one another. A breach of rules renders the higher caste member impure, and purity can only be restored by the performance of a purification rite and, frequently, also by undergoing such punishment as the caste council decides upon"<sup>268</sup>.

The lower caste people never used the main roads and even if they used it by chance they had to shout "*Eh.. Eh*". The attendants of Brahmins [they always did have an attendant] would shout "*Yahe.. Yahe*", hearing which the people would keep the distance according to their position in the caste hierarchy. "Varthema, who drifted

---

<sup>268</sup> Srinivas, MN SOCIAL CHANGE IN MODERN INDIA, First Published 1966, University of California, Orient Longman Edition, New Delhi, 1995, Reprint 2004, pp. 127

ev. Hunt<sup>269</sup> “described how the slave people never used the highways, but slunk slang through marsh and bush, shouting to warn caste-people of their presence -as they still do in some out-of-the-way parts. “Should they not be crying out” writes Varthema, “and any Nayar [Nair] be going that way and see their footprints or meet any of them, these Nayars [Nairs] may kill them without punishment”<sup>270</sup>.

Even after the *avarnas* like the Ilavas or Channars converted into Christianity they were continued to be seen as polluting castes by the *savarnas*. Robin Jeffrey cites the case of the Mr.Cheriyan, an Izhava convert to Christianity who used the road around Tiruvalla temple on the virtue of being a Christian. When the case is referred to the Dewan of Tiruvitankur, Krishna Rao, he wrote back, “but though an Izhava becomes a Christian, he must never cease to be an Izhava, therefore you must not allow Cheriyan and other converts to the Christian religion to pass through public highway by the temple, but must compel them to go round through the fields”<sup>271</sup>. In Palakkad, North Kerala, some of the Izhavas converted to Christianity and to celebrate this new freedom they entered the settlements of the Tamil Brahmins called the *agaraharams* in Kalpatti which ended in social friction<sup>272</sup>. MN Srinivas observes about the converts thus, “Indian servants of the British, for instance, probably wielded some influence among their kin groups and local caste groups but not among others. They generally

<sup>269</sup> Rev Hunt, WS. Slavery in Kerala, KERALA SOCIETY PAPERS, Volume. I and II [1928 ó 33] Reprint, Government of Kerala, Kerala Gazetteers, Thiruvananthapuram, 1997

<sup>270</sup> As quoted by Rev. Hunt, WS, Slavery in Kerala, KERALA SOCIETY PAPERS, Volume. I and II [1928 ó 33] Reprint, Government of Kerala, Kerala Gazetteers, Thiruvananthapuram, 1997

<sup>271</sup> Jeffrey Robin THE DECLINE OF NAIR DOMINANCE, Society and Politics in Travancore, 1847-1908, Manohar, New Delhi, 1976, Second Edition, 1994, pp.43

<sup>272</sup> Govinda Pillai P, KERALA NAVODHANAM ORU MARXIST VEEKSHANAM, [Malayalam], [Kerala Renaissance, a Marxist View Point, Chinta Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram 2003, Second Edition, 2004, pp.132

their Westernization was of a superficial kind, and the upper castes made fun of their Pidgin English, their absurd admiration for their employers, and their airs they gave themselves. Similarly, converts to Christianity from Hinduism did not exercise much influence in Indian society as a whole because, first, these also generally came from the low castes, and second, the act of conversion alienated them from the majority community of Hindus. Finally, conversion to Christianity often only changed the faith but not the customs, the general culture or the standing of the converts in society”<sup>273</sup>.

C Achyuta Menon in his *Cochin State Manual* provides the preposterous state of Kerala society drenched caste hierarchy and segregation in 19<sup>th</sup> century. “There are some points of etiquette peculiar to Malabar” Achyuta Menon writes, “In the presence of a man’s elders in the family and superiors in social position, he should remove his upper cloth and remain bare to the waste. Formerly, it is said, women also had to do the same, but that practice has long ceased to exist. When speaking to or of a Namboori [Nambutiri] or a Raja, Ambalavasis and Nairs and the inferior castes have to use terms of respect which are as numerous as they are unique. Everyone connected with a Namboori’s or Raja’s person has to be referred to as **blessed**, [*tiru* in Malayalam] his head, his eyes, his nose, his face, his arms, his legs, his feet. Most of his actions and belongings, such as his sleep, bed-chamber, bed, boat, carriage, palanquin, study, hunt, sword, etc., are **worshipful** [*palli* in Malayalam]. His food is **ambrosia** [*Amrudeth* in Malayalam], his walk is a **procession** [*Ezhunnallath* in Malayalam] and so on. In contrast to them a Nair has to use terms of deprecation when speaking of himself to a Namboori or Raja. He has to refer to himself as a

---

<sup>273</sup> Srinivas, MN *SOCIAL CHANGE IN MODERN INDIA*, First Published 1966, University of California, , Orient Longman Edition, New Delhi, 1995, Reprint 2004, pp. 62

, his house as a **dirty hut** [*Cetta pura* in Malayalam], his food as **black gruel** [*karikkadi* in Malayalam], his mother as an **ancient dame** [*Talla* in Malayalam], his son as a **slave boy**, his sleep as **reclining on the floor**, his work as **defect of hand** [*kaippizha* in Malayalam], his death as **desertion from duty** etc. Similar terms of respect and deprecation have to be used by the polluting castes when addressing the Nairs and the higher castes”<sup>274</sup>. Achyuta Menon is referring here to Nairs who are *savarnas* and comparatively closer to Nambutiri Brahmins. One should not imagine the plight of *avarnas* as they were not even allowed to talk to the Brahmins.

The Ramesvaram temple at Kollam has a 12<sup>th</sup> century inscription where it mentions about the penalty a king had to pay for the disrespect he showed to the Brahmins. The story of *Othikkon* [Vedic instructor] and his students rescuing the Maharaja of Kochi, when his palace was encircled by the Samutiri’s army, is quite popular among the Kerala historians especially Padmanabha Menon. Balakrishnan refers to another episode where a Nambutiri talking rather disrespectfully to Sankunni Menon, the Dewan of Kochi, and getting away with it. Kottarattil Sankunni’s *Eithihya Mala* in which a pious Brahmin is usually the protagonist, is an outpour of the author’s respect and worship of the Brahmins. Reading *Eithihya Mala* make one wish to reincarnate as a Nambutiri in that period, where free food, entertainment and sex was considered the birth right of the Brahmins.

---

<sup>274</sup> Menon Achyuta C, COCHIN STATE MANUEL, 1911, Reprint Kerala Gazatteers, Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 1995, pp .275-76

## COMING OF EUROPEAN AND INITIATION TO A NEW ORDER

Adam Smith states thus, "The discovery of America and that of a Passage to the East Indies by the Cape of Good Hope are the two greatest and most important events recorded in the History of mankind"<sup>275</sup>. Even if one denies the global significance of this discovery it has definitely changed the history of Kerala especially in the economic and social structure. Both Gama and Columbus discovered the Indies, one the West and the other the East. If Gama's discovery was significant then, the journey of Columbus was pivotal to the development of the Western World. This was the land as Gaspar da Gama would state as the "land from which there originates the spice that is eaten in the west, and in the Levant, and in Portugal and equally so in all provinces of the world"<sup>276</sup>. The land where "the half naked monarchs" held the monopoly over the "Black Gold" assisted by the Moorish traders who exclaimed to the first Portuguese sailors in Calicut, "Devil take you, what the hell are you doing here?"<sup>277</sup>

The connection of Kerala with that of western countries dates back even to pre Christian era as I have discussed in preceding portion of this thesis however the coming of Europeans directly on the shores of Kerala broke the existing economic

---

<sup>275</sup> Field House. COLONIAL EMPIRES A COMPARATIVE SURVEY FROM THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY. London : Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1966

Though Field House would not completely agree with Adam Smith; "Smith was of course, taking a narrowly Eurocentric view. Europe had no monopoly of distant trading or overseas empire. ..[sic].. Hence the importance of the first expansion of Europe lay in its effects on Europe rather than its uniqueness as a world phenomenon.

<sup>276</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam. THE CARRER AND LEGEND OF VASCO DA GAMA, New Delhi, 1998.

<sup>277</sup> Livermore, Harold Victor, PORTUGAL, A SHORT HISTORY, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1973



system, significantly disregarding the social hierarchy.

“They [Portuguese] started a process of change which was soon to transform many traditional features of polity, economy, society, and culture of Kerala. The internal production mechanism had become stereotyped and the overarching influence of caste system had kept the society and economy in a prolonged state of stupor. The stimuli to change now came from outside with the arrival of the Portuguese<sup>278</sup>.

The Dutch and English who followed the Portuguese to the Indian shores definitely got surprised with social system existing in Kerala as Duarte Barbosa would note, “When [the Nairs] walk along a street or road they shout to the low caste folk to get out of their way; this they do and if one will not, the Nair may kill him without punishment; even if he is a youth of good [high caste] family but poor and worthless, and he finds on his way a man of low caste who is rich and respected and in favor with the king, yet he makes him clear the way for him as if he were a king”<sup>279</sup>. Robin Jeffrey adds that, “Two features of traditional society [in Kerala] had struck European visitors since sixteen century. The first was the matrilineal system of family and inheritance. [Sic] The second feature was the rigidity, refinement and ruthlessness of system caste”<sup>280</sup>. Soon under the influence of western powers this system would fade away. There are many reasons for the collapse of the old order. The key factor for this shift is the new economic opportunity brought by the trade and organized agriculture initiated by the coming of European powers to Kerala. As stated by KM Panicker

---

<sup>278</sup> Sudhakaran PP, Portuguese Relations of the Chiefs of Kerala, Cherian P.J. (Ed) PERSPECTIVES ON KERALA HISTORY- The Second Millennium, KCHR, Thiruvananthapuram, 1999

<sup>279</sup> Duarte Barbosa, THE BOOK OF DUARTE BARBOSA, Translated by ML Dames, Haklyut Society, London, 1921, II, pp. 49, as cited by Jeffrey Robin *Temple-Entry Movement in Travancore, 1860-1940*, SOCIAL SCIENTIST, Vol.4, No.8, [March, 1976], pp. 5

<sup>280</sup> Jeffrey Robin *Temple-Entry Movement in Travancore, 1860-1940*, SOCIAL SCIENTIST, Vol.4, No.8, [March, 1976], pp. 5

spices available in the market. The Portuguese on the other hand was eager to produce maximum [in the suitable climate of Kerala]. They even pressurized the kings and feudal chieftains for encouragement of Pepper and Ginger cultivation”<sup>281</sup>.

Balakrishnan argues that even the coconut cultivation, which was not that popular in Kerala prior to the arrival of the Portuguese, was initiated by the European powers. His argument is based on the description of traveler’s notes both from European and Middle Eastern sources. Ibn Batuta who visited Kerala in the 14<sup>th</sup> century spends a lot of time discussing pepper but hardly mentions about coconut. However it will be erroneous to state that the coconut was not there in Kerala. It was very much there but not as a cash crop like pepper and ginger. The western trade was dominated by Pepper, Ginger and other spices. The demand which pepper in west is well put forward by Stephen Neill who wrote “In a world which as yet knew neither the potato nor the turnip, the winter diet of salt meat and hard bread must have been almost unendurable, unless eastern spices were available to disguise in some measure the unpleasant flavour of what without them would have been almost uneatable”<sup>282</sup>.

Coconut could not achieve such a position in the European cuisine, but its bi-product the coir could attract the European market thanks to its utility in maritime activities. When Achuta Menon was writing his *Cochin State Manuel* Coconut and its bi-

---

<sup>281</sup> KM Panicker, A HISTORY OF KERALA, pp.179, as quoted by PK Balakrishnan, *JATHIVYAVASTHITHIYUM KERALACHARITHRAVUM*, [Malayalam] [Caste System and History of Kerala], Sahitya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society and National Book Stall, Kottayam, 1983, Reprint, 1978, pp.405

<sup>282</sup> Stephen Neill. COLONIALISM AND CHRISTIAN MISSIONS. Lutterworth Press, 1966. London. pp.35

the export market as evident from the following passage from his book which reads thus; “The manufactured products of the coconut tree form about three-fourths of the exports from Cochin – coconut oil (101.4 lakhs), coir manufactured and unmanufactured (74.4 lakhs), Copra (35.3 lakhs) and Oil-cake (12.6 lakhs). Coconut oil is exported chiefly to the United Kingdom, America, Germany, Belgium, Burma, Calcutta, and Bombay, coir to the United Kingdom, Germany and America, Copra to Germany, France and Belgium and oil-cake to Germany and Bombay. Though the major portion of the produce is exported to these countries, Cochin may be said to have customers in all parts of the world”<sup>283</sup>.

The popularity of coir and coconut lead large scale plantations under the supervision of the Europeans giving further job opportunity and economic uplift to the caste who are traditionally attached to the coconut industry. More over newly introduced cash crops like the Cashew nut and Rubber gave alternate income to the cultivators. They could now not only afford to give the land tax to the *Janmi*, which was based on the rice, but save from the sale of the cash crops. To quote Robin Jeffrey, “At the same time, communications developed rapidly. It became easier for a lower caste man to escape to towns like Aleppey [Alappuzha] or Quilon [Kollam] where the expansion of the coir and copra industries was beginning to bring cash to Izhava families”<sup>284</sup>. EMS Namboodiripad agrees with this statement observing the rise of lower caste as

---

<sup>283</sup> Menon, Achyuta C, COCHIN STATE MANUEL, 1911, Reprint Kerala Gazetteers, Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 1995, pp 351

<sup>284</sup> Jeffrey Robin , Temple-Entry Movement in Travancore, 1860-1940, SOCIAL SCIENTIST, Vol.4, No.8 (Mar., 1976), pp.8

the cashew nut factory owners in Travancore were

Ilavas”<sup>285</sup>.

The organized agriculture production and the processing units which was initiated by the Europeans especially the Dutch resulted in creation of new class of people who are now saw the Europeans as the top most ‘caste’, who displayed no displeasure to the proximity of the lower caste. *Mitavadi* Magazine would report an episode where the people of Anjengo, which was under the direct control of the British, pleaded to the resident governor not to merge Anjengo with the Tiruvitankur state citing caste atrocities in the state of Tiruvitankur<sup>286</sup>. It will be better to say that the Europeans dealt with all the Keralites from the Brahmins to Pulayas as lower to them, kind of *avarnas*. On the other hand the Brahmins and the other savarnas considered all Europeans as “mlecchas and hunas and thus untouchables whose proximity would break the *Tindal* law”<sup>287</sup>. Sankunni Menon also informs us that the Tiruvitankur Maharajas after meeting the British officers like the Resident, used go through the rituals of purification.

The new capitalists, thanks to the new agriculture cultivation and export or establishment of processing units and the Malayalis in the service of the European forces became the new elite or *savarnas*. In the forts owned by the Companies did not follow the caste system and everybody was allowed to do walk around freely and as

---

<sup>285</sup> Namboodiripad E.M.S, *KERALA CHARITRAM MARXIST VIKSHANATHIL*, [Malayalam], [History of Kerala Through Marxist View Point] Chinta Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram 1990, pp.158

<sup>286</sup> Bhaskaranunni, *KERALAM IRUPATHAM NOOTANTINDE ARAMBHATTHIL* [Malayalam] [Kerala in the beginning of 20th century], Kerala Sahithya Akademi, Trissur, 2005

<sup>287</sup> Menon, Sankunni P, *TIRUVITANKUR CHARITHRAM*, [Malayalam], [original in English, A HISTORY OF TRAVANCORE FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES] Translation by CK Kareem, Kerala Bhasha Institute, Thiruvananthapuram, [First Edition 1973], Fourth Edition 1994, 307

present thesis, even the slaves who were living in the company area were freed. This 'kind of equality' prompted Sri Narayana Guru to commend during the first world war in a lighter vein thus, "we should pray for the British victory because they are our Gurus who gave us the initiation to renunciation [*sanyasa*]"<sup>288</sup>. Listening to this, a disciple asked, "Swami, initiation to renunciation [*sanyasa*] is through the mantras, how come then the British be our Gurus"? To this Sri Narayana Guru answered, "Even at the time of Sri Rama the Sudras were not allowed to do *sanyas*. But now the British is allowing anyone to do *sanyasa*, so aren't they the real Gurus"<sup>288</sup>. On a more serious note, EMS writes thus, "(British dominance) . . . destroyed the *jati* - feudal culture and life which enslaved the majority of *Malayalis*. The British culture was in fact shown Europe the democratic system through the English revolution along with two centuries old Parliamentary system and struggles. The Industrial Revolution changed the global outlook upside down and initiated a new culture, where blind faith replaced by science; democracy in place of autocracy and feudalism replaced by nationalism. This is the culture which was brought by the British here. The new system opened the possibility that a capable person can study and get job and fame, which destroyed the earlier order, where occupations were based on *jati*. The introduction of printing press opened up hoards of knowledge to the public. When journalism and publications became a lucrative employment the relevance of the royal courts ceased to be the sponsors of literature"<sup>289</sup>. MN Srinivas who says, "Implicit in Westernization are certain value preferences. A most important value, which in turn subsumes several other values, is

---

<sup>288</sup> Kottukkoyikkal Velayudhan, *SREE NARAYANA GURU*, [Malayalam], Biography, Current Books, Kottayam, 1975, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2007, 2<sup>nd</sup> Impression, 2009, pp.247

<sup>289</sup> Namboodiripad, EMS *KERALAM MALYALIKALUDE MATHRUBHOOMI* [Malayalam], from P Govinda Pillai [Ed], *EMSINTE SAMPOORNA KRITIKAL* [COLLECTED WORKS OF EMS NAMBOODIRIPAD Vol. 9- 1948] [Malayalam] Chinta Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram 2000, pp.184

characterized as humanitarianism, by which is meant an active concern for the welfare of all human beings irrespective of caste, economic position, religion, age and sex. Equalitarianism and secularization are both included in humanitarianism”<sup>290</sup>, shares the thought of EMS regarding the contribution of westernization.

A word of caution should be added here that though the European Powers including the British has initiated a kind ‘renaissance’ in Kerala it was not purely to upgrade the downtrodden castes of Kerala but to achieve goals to their own advantage. The traditional system of education and occupation structure prevalent in Kerala deprived them of the work force. Moreover the feudal system extant in Kerala was not compatible to their capitalist ideals. They only undertook the historical process of transforming the ‘medieval feudal societies’ to ‘modern capital societies’. Karl Marx and Engels<sup>291</sup> observe in *Manifesto of the Communist Party* that “the bourgeoisie, historically, has played a most revolutionary part. The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his “natural superiors”, and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous “cash payment”. It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation. It has resolved personal worth into exchange value,

<sup>290</sup> Srinivas, MN *SOCIAL CHANGE IN MODERN INDIA*, First Published 1966, University of California, , Orient Longman Edition, New Delhi, 1995, Reprint 2004, pp. 51

<sup>291</sup> Karl Marx and Engels, *Bourgeois and Proletarian,s* Chapter I, *MANIFESTO OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY*, Written, Late 1847, First Published: February 1848; Source: Marx/Engels Selected Works, Vol. One, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1969, pp. 98-137; Translated: Samuel Moore in cooperation with Frederick Engels, 1888; from <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/>

indefeasible chartered freedoms, has set up that single, unconscionable freedom — Free Trade. In one word, for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation”.

## REGULATIONS FOR SOCIAL EQUALITY

By the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century British or the English East Indian company had firmly established themselves as suzerain power all over Kerala. The Portuguese had long left for their better abodes in Goa or Malacca region with the Dutch following their path. French had nominal control over Mahe, but never a threat. The Mysore Wars with Hyder and Tipu Sultan’s forces politically gave the acceptance to the English in Kerala as they positioned themselves as the saviors of Kerala from the Mysore domination. The Naduvazhis of Malabar and Kochi abandoned their subjects and land and taken shelter<sup>292</sup> in Tiruvitankur literally leaving the land to Tipu and later the English. The Treaty of Seringapatnam in 1792 made the English company the position of *de-facto* ruler of Malabar, with many Naduvazhis under their control. English now organized the newly acquired land with new judicial and revenue regulations, significantly, without providing much of concessions to the upper caste. It was the British administration in Malabar who first struck the blow against Slavery in Kerala. In 1792 itself, through a proclamation the British government abolished the

---

<sup>292</sup> Velu Pillai lists the name of the rulers who got political asylum in Travancore thus, “Among the princes who had taken shelter in Travancore at the time were the Zamorin [Samutiri] of Calicut, Rajas of Cochin [Kochi], Chirakkal [Kolathiri Rajas] Kottayam [North Kerala], Palghat [Palakkad], and [many] Chiefs .. [sic]ö, Velupilla, TK Sadasyatilaka, THE TRAVANCORE STATE MANUEL, Volume II, History, 1940, First reprint, Government of Kerala, Kerala Gazetteers, Thiruvananthapuram, 1996, pp.431



followed by another proclamation in 1793 by William Farmer, the supervisor of the Malabar province<sup>293</sup>.

Tiruvitankur who were the ally of the British in the Mysore Wars were now falling in line, realizing the potential of their senior partner in the battle. The Governors of Madras and Bombay presidencies looked into the matters of Malabar, Kochi and Tiruvitankur with keen interest. The acceptance of the missionary activities by the British authorities in the areas in their direct and indirect control and the appointment of Col. Munro as the Resident of Tiruvitankur provided a condition conducive to the social reforms. The revolt Velu Thampi Dalwa [1808-09] brought the rulers of Tiruvitankur close to the British as the newly appointed Regent Gauri Lakshmi Bai [1811- 15] would state in her installation ceremony. Velu Pillai's quotes from the speech would reflect the relation between Tiruvitankur and the British. "The Rani frankly acknowledged" writes Velu Pillai, "that, being a young female quite unprepared and unqualified for such a high and responsible position, she could not do better than place herself under the guidance and support of the Honorable East India Company whose bosom had been asylum for the protection of an infant like Travancore [Tiruvitankur]"<sup>294</sup>. Rani entrusted most of the administrative decisions to English Resident, Col. Munro. She also supported the missionary activities of London Missionary Society [LMS] and Church Missionary Society [CMS] who worked predominantly among the distressed castes like Shannars in the southern extreme of Tiruvitankur. Urged by Munro and the missionaries, Rani Lakshmi Bai took the first

---

<sup>293</sup> Nellikkal, Muraleedharan, KERALA JATI VIAVARANAM, [Malayalam], [Encyclopaedia of Caste System] Rainbow Book Publishers, Cengannur, Kerala, 2008, pp. 24

<sup>294</sup> Velupilla, TK Sadasyatilaka, THE TRAVANCORE STATE MANUEL, Volume II, History, 1940, First reprint, Government of Kerala, Kerala Gazetteers, Thiruvananthapuram, 1996, pp.503

y in Tiruvitankur. Another legislative initiative which Rani Lakshmi Bai took which curtailed the economic dominance of the upper castes in Tiruvitankur and gave the fatal blow to the social hierarchy was the extension of the *Devasvam* lands to the *Pandaram* lands. Rani Lakshmi Bai's reform activities continued even during her successor Rani Gauri Parvati Bai's [1815 - 1829] rule may be due to the presence of Munro in Tiruvitankur.

Another attempt to bring in social equality happened in much later during the reign of Swati Tirunal [1829- 1847] who had strained relationship with British Resident Cullen. Based on the Act passed by the British Government in 1843 preventing "any decree or demand of rent or revenue by sale of slaves<sup>295</sup>", some of the Missionary societies working in Tiruvitankur petitioned to the Maharaja to abolish slavery in his kingdom. Dewan of Tiruvitankur replied on behalf of the Maharaja and stated that, "Emancipation [of the slaves], His Highness considers to be too important a question to be considered at present, especially as no such measure has yet been introduced even in the Honorable Company's territories, but the amelioration of the condition of the unfortunate class of the population, is a subject which will never fail to engage His Highness's consideration"<sup>296</sup>. As evident from the statement it was merely a letter of refusal sweetened with official jargon. But pressure of the missionaries through the British official mounted on the Maharaja and after one year, in 1853 a decree was issued freeing the future children of all slaves under the administration. With further convincing from the Resident Munro himself, Uthram Thirunal Martanda Varma

---

<sup>295</sup> Velupilla, TK Sadasyatilaka, THE TRAVANCORE STATE MANUEL, Volume II, History, 1940, First reprint, Government of Kerala, Kerala Gazetteers, Thiruvananthapuram, 1996, pp.567

<sup>296</sup> Velupilla, TK Sadasyatilaka, THE TRAVANCORE STATE MANUEL, Volume II, History, 1940, First reprint, Government of Kerala, Kerala Gazetteers, Thiruvananthapuram, 1996, pp.567-568

and slavery in Tiruvitankur on 24<sup>th</sup> June 1855. The system of transferring the land laborer along with land was also done away. The large scale conversion of the Pulaya community to Christianity especially in South Tiruvitankur forced the upper caste Hindus to review their policy towards the depressed classes which aided the efforts of the legislative efforts by the Maharaja of Tiruvitankur.

## **DEVELOPMENTS IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION**

Apart from the initiation in the economic growth as well as ideas of social liberty European Powers and the missionaries who came along with them contributed immensely to the education initiatives of Kerala. They brought an abrupt shift to the education system in Kerala. Before entering into the contribution of European Powers in education it would be imperative look into the education system existed in Kerala at the time of the arrival of Europeans. Achuta Menon describes the ‘traditional’ system of education thus, “Prior to administration of Colonel Munro the Government of Cochin did not at any time directly itself in the education of the people. The State did not maintain or aid any schools, but left the people to make their own arrangements for the education of their children. There were – most of them are still in existence – several *matthas* where Nambutiri youths received their board and education free. They were taught the rudiments of knowledge in their own homes till the ceremony of *Upanayana*, or investiture with the holy thread, after which they resorted to one or another of these *matthas* for their further studies. In these institutions all of them were taught to recite the Vedas, while those who had the inclination for it were also instructed in Sanskrit literature and science. The teachers were learned Nambutiris, who generally resided in the *matthas* and received no

except free board and lodging. As members of other castes were not admitted to these institutions, higher education in Sanskrit was practically monopolized by the Brahmins<sup>297</sup>. The other classes, however, especially the *Amabalavasis* and Nairs, were not left without education. Most of the well-to-do families had their family tutors, whose occupation was generally hereditary, and the children of the poorer families in the neighborhood were sent to them for such instruction as they stood in need of and for which they had to pay next to nothing. In the rural parts every village had its own *Ezhuttachan*<sup>298</sup>, or hereditary school master, who received the pupils in his own house and accepted such payments as the means of their parents, admitted of. These teachers taught the children reading the writing, the multiplication table and the recitation of Sanskrit hymns and in some rare instances, Sanskrit poetry, drama and rhetoric were also taught<sup>299</sup>. As children of all standards were taught promiscuously by a single teacher, their progress was necessarily slow: five to ten years were required for the acquisition of these rudiments of knowledge<sup>300</sup>. The education in the traditional system was purely on the basis of the traditional occupation of the castes. For instance, a person belonging to the Kaniyan caste or Poduval [from Payyanur] will be taught texts on Astrology and the Izhavas in South Kerala will be taught *Ayurveda*. In north Kerala the Izhava [known as the Tiya

---

<sup>297</sup> Emphasis by the present author

<sup>298</sup> Both Nairs and Izhavas. There is surname prevalent in South Kerala which belongs to the Ilava caste.

<sup>299</sup> Even Sanskrit texts on Medicine, Astrology, Puranas were taught to non Brahmins but never Vedas and philosophy, which were exclusive to Brahmins.

<sup>300</sup> Menon, Achyuta C, COCHIN STATE MANUEL, 1911, Reprint Kerala, Gazetteers, Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 1995, pp. 373-374

practice the occupation as Panikkar<sup>301</sup> of the community is taught *tarka sastras*.

Coming of the European powers gave the education an abrupt change where a completely new curriculum was introduced, of course suiting the newer occupations. The concept of equality in the civil and social sector reflected on education too. Robin Jeffrey writes about late 19<sup>th</sup> century Kerala thus, “European Missionaries, more numerous in Travancore than in any comparable area of India, intensified their educational and proselytizing work among *avarna* Hindus”<sup>302</sup>. Apart from establishing elementary level schools even small towns, missionaries like Scottish Mission, Basel Mission, Society of Jesus [Jesuits] and London Mission Society founded institutions of higher education. Madras Christian Collage at Chennai [1837], Victoria Collage at Palakkad [1888] and Malabar Christian Collage at Kozhikkode [1909] are famed examples of these educational initiatives. Brennen College at Tallassery [Kannur] established in 1862 was a private initiative of an English gentleman who made Tallassery his home. Similarly the enthusiasm of Swati Tirunal, Maharaja of Tiruvitankur, resulted in the establishment of a western style of school at Thiruvananthapuram in 1834 which grew into a college in 1866 under the Madras University. These educational institutions shunned away from traditional subjects and initiated the teaching of Science and Humanities. More over these institutions did not segregate students based on castes. The results were quite encouraging as evident

---

<sup>301</sup> In North Kerala Panikkar is an honorary title given to a person who does the ritualistic textual argument for the mother goddess shrine of a locality. Similar title is conferred on to Malaya community for a person excelling in the ritual dance practice called Teyyam. However it is an honorary title given to Nair caste in South Kerala.

<sup>302</sup> Jeffrey Robin , Temple-Entry Movement in Travancore, 1860-1940, SOCIAL SCIENTIST, Vol.4, No.8 (March., 1976), pp.5

Robin Jeffrey which reads, “The 1875 census put male literacy among Ilavas at 3.15%; by the 1891 census it had risen to 12.10%”<sup>303</sup>. In 1921 when there were 73082 lawyers, doctors and teachers, the number of Ilavas in the profession was 2326 while Nairs stood at 10568<sup>304</sup>. Though 3% may look insignificant, it is a great leap considering the deprived position Izhavas were in two decades back. MN Srinivasan explains the eagerness with which the lower castes embraced the western education system thus, “As far as the lower castes were concerned, Westernization became doubly desirable – it subsumed not only things valuable in themselves but something which the high castes had and they did not. To catch up with the high castes, mere Sanskritization was not enough. Thus they became more determined to obtain Western education and the fruits that only it could yield. High-caste dominance in education and in the new occupations thus provided the *raison d’être* for the Backward Classes Movement. It is no accident that the Movement was stronger in peninsular India where only one caste (in the *Varna* sense), the Brahmins, enjoyed a preponderance in higher education, the professions and government employment. It is also an area where a wide social and cultural gulf obtained between the Brahmins and others”<sup>305</sup>.

Another driving force in education was the establishment of schools and collages by the organizations as SNDP *yogam* [Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam]. Sri Narayana Guru, as discussed in detail elsewhere in this chapter, had understood the value of education for the development of the society and specifically the lower castes.

<sup>303</sup> Jeffrey Robin , Temple-Entry Movement in Travancore, 1860-1940, SOCIAL SCIENTIST, Vol.4, No.8 (March., 1976), pp.8

<sup>304</sup> Jeffrey Robin , Temple-Entry Movement in Travancore, 1860-1940, SOCIAL SCIENTIST, Vol.4, No.8 (March., 1976), pp.10

<sup>305</sup> Srinivas, MN SOCIAL CHANGE IN MODERN INDIA, First Published 1966, University of California, , Orient Longman Edition, New Delhi, 1995, Reprint 2004, pp. 97

li Memorial only underlined the reality that in an oppressive system as it existed in Kerala. Ninety years of missionary efforts since 1812 produced only 11.14 percent literates in Kerala and the women's share was only 3.15 percent. On the other hand, between the establishment of SNDP Yogam in 1903, the flagship organization started by Sri Narayana Guru for modernization of Hindus, and his *Samadhi* (death) in 1928, that is of twenty-six years effort of Sri Narayana Guru, the literacy rate of Kerala rose to 21.34 percent and its women share was 11.99 percent. The lower caste in Kochi and Malabar had similar development of education.

## WORKS OF SOCIAL REFORMERS

“The caste system that had stratified communities on the basis of inequality was part and parcel of economic pattern of Hindu society in the past. The system gradually began to disintegrate under the impact of new forces and there was a shift of the economic balance established between community and community for the realization of social equality”<sup>306</sup> writes PKK Menon. The new forces mentioned in the above quote is the economic development and the rise of “new capitalists”<sup>307</sup> thanks to the trade and industrial revolution introduced by the western powers, mainly British in Kerala. The colonial powers also demonstrated a kind of social equality, though conditional, as they viewed Nambutiri and Pulayan equally, subservient to them. Educationally and economically empowered common man started to view the caste system in Kerala with disgust. “Apart from the malice of caste system” writes AKG [AK Gopalan], “in

<sup>306</sup> PKK Menon, HISTORY OF FREEDOM MOVEMENT IN KERALA, Vol.II, [1885-1938], 1972, Reprint by Department of Cultural Publication, Government of Kerala, 2001 p.538

<sup>307</sup> Namboodiripad, EMS *KERALA CHARITRAM MARXIST VIKSHANATHIL*, [Malayalam], [History of Kerala through Marxist View Point] Chinta Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram 1990



by its own system and rituals. So each community or caste now opted for the eradication of the biases within the caste for the common social equality”<sup>308</sup>.

Kerala too was fortunate to have witnessed the work of social and religious reformers in 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>309</sup> who relentlessly worked for the development of the depressed castes like Ayya Vaikuntha Svami [1809 - 1851], working among the Shannars, Sri Narayana Guru [1856- 1928] who worked for the Izhavas and Ayyankali [1864-1941] among the Pulayas of Tiruvitankur. Caste-Hindus like the Nairs were becoming sympathetic to the cause of the untouchables, due to the benevolent influence of Chattampi Swamikal [1853- 1924]. Similar reforms were happening in Malabar under the leadership of Brahmananda Sivayogi [1852- 1929]. The religious reform movements were not only affecting Hinduism but had its own share in Islam under Vakkam Mohammed Abdul Khadir Molwi [1873-1932] known

<sup>308</sup> AK Gopalan, KERALAM INNALE INNU [Malayalam], [Kerala ó Past Present] Chinta Publishers, 2002, Second Edition, 2004 p.34-35

<sup>309</sup> Braj Ranjan Mani writes thus, “The late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century ó a period of spectacular rise of cultural nationalism and movement for transfer of power- witnessed widespread awakening of political consciousness among the lower caste and communities all over the country. Their egalitarian aspirations produced several streams of movement against the stronghold of ascriptive hierarchy, slavery and caste-fuedal exploitation. These struggles threw up a determined lot of leaders who were unrelenting critics of caste and its consequences. These anti-caste campaigners confronted the hypocritical nationalist leadership for keeping pro-equality social movements out of the national agenda. Phule, Shahu Maharaj and Ambedkar inMaharastra; Iyothee Thass and Periyar EV Ramaswami Naicker in Tamil Nadu; Narayana Guru, Dr.Palpu, Kumaran Asan, K.Ayyappan and Ayyankali in Kerala; Bhagyareddy Varma in Andhra; Mangoo Ram and Chhotu Ram in Punjab; Acchutanand and Ram Charan in Uttar Pradesh; Hari Chanda Thakur, Guru Chanda and Jogendranath Mandal in Bengal; Sonadhar Senapathy in Assam; and many lesser known social crusaders all moked the patriotic pretensions of indigenous elite, and attacked the system of exploitation at every levelö. Braj Ranjan Mani, DEBRAHMANISING HISTORY- DOMINANCE AND RESISTANCE IN INDIAN SOCIETY, Manohar, 2005, New Delhi. Reprint 2008, pp. 299

Poykail Kumara Gurudevan [1878-1938] worked to eradicate the caste segregation among the “*savarna*” Christians against the “*avarna*” Christians, i.e. the depressed castes of Hindus converted to Christianity.

Among these great reformers Ayya Vaikuntha Svami can be considered as the pioneer of social reforms in Kerala. Born in a Shannar family in 1809 as Mutisootum Perumal, Ayya Vaikuntha Swami worked in the southern extreme of Kerala mainly among the Shannars and Nadars. While there were large scale conversions from these castes to Christianity as a result of the missionary activity by the London Missionary Society [LMS] Ayya Vaikuntha preferred to stay within the periphery of Hinduism but proposed to worship not an image but a mirror. Ayya Vaikuntha Swami also organized public feasts where people belonging each every caste sat together, which was quite unknown in that period. Ayya Vaikutha Svami is also the pioneer in creating a brotherhood for the development of the community, which later would be followed by social reformers like Sri Narayana Guru and Ayyankali.

Among the Socio/religious reformers Sri Narayana Guru [Fig. ] holds a supreme position, entering the domain of Socio-religious reformation with the tool of Advaita, with which Sankaracharya established the brahmanical dominance in Kerala. Sri Narayana Guru born in a humble Izhava family worked for the educational and social development of his community and the whole society, propagating the principle of *advaita*. He revolted against the brahmanical religious practices through installing an “Izhava Siva” at Aruvippuram. The orthodox raised the question: “How could a non-Brahmin consecrate an image?” To which, the Guru replied, with characteristic

Izhava Siva”<sup>310</sup>. He also installed mirrors instead of

images in the temples specially built for the *avarnas*. Guru concentrated on the reform of Religion, Morality, Education and Industry and Occupation of the Izhava community. He told his followers to,

*“Become enlightened, through education  
Become strengthened, through organization  
Become prosperous, through hard work”*<sup>311</sup>

He urged the lower castes, going through the worst oppression, being banned from worshipping the great deities of Hinduism, not to desert the religion but to fight the oppressions working within the religion. He established temples for the brotherhood of man as the entrance gate of Sivagiri Temple which reads,

*“Jati bhedom mata dwesham, Etum illaathe sarvarum  
Sodaratuena vazhunna, Matrka sthanam aanithu”*

Translation: Free of the prejudice of caste, and religion, everyone here, Lives like brothers in this exemplary abode.

To work towards the development of the society Sri Narayana Guru established Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam [SNDP] in the year 1903 at Aruvippuram [Thiruvananthapuram District][Fig. ]. Intellectuals like poet Kumaranasan and Dr.Palpu were members of SNDP. In 1904 *Vivekodayam* Magazine [Malayalam], edited by Kumaranasan was released, which dealt with aspirations and voices of the downtrodden community. Narayana Guru’s social reforms were well acknowledged by

---

<sup>310</sup> Braj Ranjan Mani, DEBRAHMANISING HISTORY- DOMINANCE AND RESISTANCE IN INDIAN SOCIETY, Manohar, 2005, New Delhi. Reprint 2008, pp. 302

<sup>311</sup> As quoted by J. Indira and Rajeev Srinivasan, <http://www.parrakar.org/misc/Narayanaguru.pdf>

bindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi who visited Guru's ashram in 1922 and 1925 respectively. Reform movements lead by Sri Narayana Guru provided the spiritual stimulation to social reform movements like the Izhava Memorial and the Temple Entry movements. Sri Narayana Guru had a *padayatra* [on foot journey] all the way from Varkala in southern Kerala to Vaikom in central Kerala to give blessings to the Satyagrahis of Vaikom Satyagraha.

Issac CI summarizes the work of Sri Narayana Guru thus, "In the first five decades of the last century Kerala witnessed a Hindu renaissance. The spirit of reawakening continued over this land for over a period of half a century and cleansed the societal sin of a millennium without much pain. Behind this wonderful social transformation lay the hegemonic role of Sri Narayana Guru. He ably introduced a multifaceted strategy for the modification of the rusted Malayali psyche. The average Malayali for a thousand years was stunned before the nectar of *Advaitam*, monism, was presented by Adi Sankara (788 – 820 CE). For more than a millennium, the doctrine of non-duality remained in the psyche of average Malayalis as an indigestive one. At this critical juncture of Malayali social life, Sri Narayana Guru played the role of an incarnation and brought Sankara's philosophy of monism from its lofty ivory towers and presented it before the multitudes in an easily digestible form. He presented the glory and synchronization of Sankara's view of oneness/non-dualism in a more popular catchphrase of "one *jati*, one religion and one god for man." Through this exposition he was able to dictate the oneness of humanity, the sum and substance of Sri Sankara's philosophy, to all levels/strata of society"<sup>312</sup>.

---

<sup>312</sup> Issac CI, Sree Narayana Guru: Founder of an Intellectual Religion, November 1 2009 , Sourced from <http://www.vijayvaani.com/FrmPublicDisplayArticle.aspx?id=901>

Narayana Guru followed his path of Advaita, as many of them propagated the atheist approach like Sahodaran Ayyappan who wished to change Guru's teaching of, "one *jati*, one religion and one god for man" to "No *jati*, no religion and no god for man"<sup>313</sup>. The other atheist thinkers include, MC Joseph, Kuttippuzha Krishna Pilla and TK Madhavan. Among them the latter two entered into socialist and Marxist political movements<sup>314</sup>. Another socio-religious reformer who propagated atheism was Karat Govinda Menon, popularly known as Brahmananda Siva Yogi, working mainly in the Malabar region of Kerala.

Contemporaries of Sri Narayana Guru like Chattampi Swamikal and Ayyankali worked among the Nair and Pulaya communities respectively. Ayyankali [Fig. ] following the model of SNDP established the Sadhujana Paripalana Sangham at Thiruvananthapuram in 1907 for the protection of the right of the depressed classes and equal opportunities to Pulayas in education and government jobs. Under the auspices of Sadhujana Paripalana Sangham a magazine in Malayalam called the *Velakkaran* [meaning servant in Malayalam] was released edited by Velappan.

Other caste Associations which followed the SNDP model were Keraliya Nayar Samajam [1907] formed by Mannath Krishnan Nair and Yogakshema Sabha, [1908] based in Aluva [Eranakulam District] who worked for the progressive development of Nambutiri community. Its prominent members were Desamangalam Sankaran Namboodiripad, VT Bhattathiripad and EMS Namboodiripad, who later became the

<sup>313</sup> As quoted by Govinda Pillai P, *KERALA NAVODHANAM ORU MARXIST VEEKSHANAM*, [Malayalam], [Kerala Renaissance, a Marxist View Point], Chinta Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram 2003, Second Edition, 2004, p.153

<sup>314</sup> Govinda Pillai P, *KERALA NAVODHANAM ORU MARXIST VEEKSHANAM*, [Malayalam], [Kerala Renaissance, a Marxist View Point], Chinta Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram 2003, Second Edition, 2004, p.153

akshema Sabha also brought out a magazine know as Unni Nambutiri. In 1912, the Araya [fisherman Community] leader Pandit Karuppan staged the play titled *Balakalesam*, on the birthday of the king of Kochi, dealing with caste atrocities. KP Vallon of Kochi established Harijan Hostel which offered free lodging, food and tuition fee for the dalit student perusing education at Kochi.

Though the leaders of the distressed classes like Sri Narayana Guru did not opt for conversion to other religions as the path towards the rebellion against Hinduism, revolutionaries like TK Madhavan threatened to convert the whole Izhava communities to Buddhism. The final blow to Hindu religious system came when Krushnati Asan, a prominent Pulaya leader from Kochi converted to Christianity in 1919. Perhaps this and similar threats of conversion to other religions by the Hindu destitute castes, opened the eyes of authorities forcing them to open the temples to all Hindus. Ambedkar mentions about such a warning thus, "... in 1936 there was held in Travancore a conference of the Yezawa [Izhava] community to consider the issue of conversion which was raised by me at Yeola in 1935"<sup>315</sup>.

Apart from the above mentioned socio-religious movements and educational reform movements, the civil right movements like the Malayali Memorial 1891, submitted the grievances of the educated Keralite for more representations in the government jobs. Starting from the Izhava Young Men's Service Union near Mararikkulam [presently in Alappuzha District, Kerala] in 1891 were the first voices for equality and dignity raised by the lower strata of the stringent caste hierarchy. The Malayali Memorial, a memorandum bearing the signatures of over 10,000 people, including a sprinkling of

---

<sup>315</sup> As quoted by Sheshrao Chavan, *GANDHI AND AMBEDKAR, SAVIORS OF UNTOUCHABLES*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mumbai, 2001, p.180

ms, was submitted to the Maharaja of Tiruvitankur in 1891. It was really a Nair plea for privileges and positions. This was soon followed by an Izhava Memorial (1896), submitted with over 13,000 signatures pleading for extension of civic rights, Government jobs, etc. to the lower castes. Both the memoranda came to naught and the lower caste continued to bear the brunt of caste atrocities. The Dewan of Tiruvitankur T.Ramarao would write in 1897 to an educated lower caste person, “according to the law he cannot be appointed to the government service”<sup>316</sup>. The civil right movement initiated by the Malayali Memorial gave ample inspirations to the temple entry movements later.

---

<sup>316</sup> As quoted by P Bhaskaranunni, *Keralam Irupatam Noottantinte Aarambhattil* [Kerala in the beginning of 20th Century] [Malayalam], Kerala Sahitya Akademi, Thrissur, 2005 from Dr.Palpu [Biography] [Malayalam] by TK Madhavan, [date not provided]



## TEMPLE ENTRY MOVEMENTS

*“I think, it is a common perception that the Temple Entry Right and the movement is solely for the right of avarnas to enter into the temple and worship the god. Indeed, earning that would be part of the Temple Entry Right, but that is not the prime and only goal of the Temple Entry Right or the movement. Temple Entry Right is the ethical right which has religious and political facets”.*

TK Madhavan<sup>317</sup>

The stories of atrocities against the *avarnas* inflicted by the upper castes and the princely state government in Kerala are many. One among them as quoted in the web site of Sri Narayana Mission Center, Washington; is quite gruesome, citing the massacre of 200 Izhava youth who tried to enter the Vaikom temple around two hundred years ago<sup>318</sup>. Due to the public awareness created thanks to the educational, social and religious reform movements in the latter half of 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Izhava and other backward castes demanded the civil equality including the temple entry. TK Madhavan [Fig. ], who can be considered as the main force behind the Temple Entry Movement gave a speech in the Sri Moolam Praja Sabha in 1904 [though he was only

---

<sup>317</sup> Speech of TK Madhavan, Ochira, [Kollam District], 1929, quoted by Govinda Pillai P [from PK Madhavan, *TK MADHAVANTE JEEVACHARITHRAM*, [Biography of TK Madhavan] Kottayam, 1986, p.79] *KERALA NAVODHANAM, YUGASANTHATHIKAL YUGASILPIKAL*, [Malayalam], [Kerala Renaissance, Children and Builders of the Era], Chinta Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram 2009, Second Edition, 2010. P.145

<sup>318</sup> <http://www.narayanaguru.org/Main.asp?xx=Biographies.html>

ies of untouchability. In 1915 he founded the newspaper

*Deshabhimani*<sup>319</sup> to publicize Izhava grievances and achievements<sup>320</sup>.

TK Madhavan should be given the due credit of linking the socio-religious movement of the Izhavas initiated by Sri Narayana Guru, a civic and political movement. He was the first one to raise the issue of temple entry in the public domain through the editorial of *Deshabhimani* in 1917<sup>321</sup>. The SNDP Yogam in its annual meeting held on May 1920 passed a resolution saying that, “All public temples belonging to the Government should be open to all Hindus regardless of Caste”. In the same meeting TK Madhavan moved the resolution that if the Hindu temples are not thrown open to all the Hindus regardless of their caste, they would embrace Christianity *en masse*<sup>322</sup>. He was also successful in linking the issue of untouchability with that of national movement of freedom and equality. He met Gandhi at Tirunelveli in 1921 and informed him about the disabilities of the Izhava community, and sought his advice on the proposed temple entry movement and the support of congress party. Robin Jeffrey quotes from *COLLECTED WORKS OF MAHATMA GANDHI*<sup>323</sup> about the details of the interview with Madhavan thus, “I would ask you,” Gandhi began, “to

---

<sup>319</sup> There is a newspaper currently published from Kerala with the same name which has a different history linked with the Left Movement in Kerala.

<sup>320</sup> KR Narayanan, *Ti Ke Madhavan*, [in SNDP YOGAM GOLDEN JUBILEE SOUVENIR, Vignanaposhini Press, Quilon 1953, p.45-46], as quoted by Jeffrey, Robin, *Temple-Entry Movement in Travancore, 1860-1940*, SOCIAL SCIENTIST, Vol.4, No.8, [March, 1976], p.13 [JSTOR]

<sup>321</sup> Jeffrey, Robin, *Temple-Entry Movement in Travancore, 1860-1940*, SOCIAL SCIENTIST, Vol.4, No.8, [March, 1976], p.13 [JSTOR]

<sup>322</sup> AM Ayrookuzhiel Abraham, Swami Anand Tirth, p.20 as quoted by RK Kshirsagar, *DALIT MOVEMENT IN INDIA AND ITS LEADERS*, MD Publications, New Delhi, 1994, p.389 [Sourced through Google Books]

<sup>323</sup> *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, XXI, p.185-8 quoted by Jeffrey, Robin, *Temple-Entry Movement in Travancore, 1860-1940*, SOCIAL SCIENTIST, Vol.4, No.8, [March, 1976], p.14 [JSTOR]

begin with public wells. Then you may go to public schools.” Madhavan quickly corrected him: “You seem to mistake our position in society for something analogous to that of the *Panchamas* in British India. Except half a dozen schools... all public schools in the state are open to us.” Gandhi replied: “You are ripe for temple entry then.” Gandhi also added that the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee [KPCC] should take up the issue<sup>324</sup>. Robin Jeffrey adds that, “The interest and approval of Gandhi was a powerful weapon for Madhavan to use, not only among his castemen but among educated caste- Hindus.”<sup>325</sup>

Soon Madhavan returned to Gandhi with KP Kesava Menon, Secretary Travancore Congress Committee, at the Kakinada Congress Session in 1923. A resolution was passed at this congress session inaugurating a National campaign against the untouchability. K Kelappan, a Malabar Nair, worked in Tiruvitankur was chosen by KPCC to be the convener of the Anti-Untouchability Committee. The timing of the resolution was crucial as Kerala could join the pan Indian movement against caste atrocities and the quest for caste identity like the “Ad-Dharm movement in the Punjab (1926); the movement under Ambedkar in Maharashtra mainly based among Mahars which had its organizational beginnings in 1924; the Nama - Sudra movement in Bengal; the Adi - *Dravida* movement in Tamil Nadu; the Adi-Andhra movement in Andhra which had its first conference in 1917; the Adi-Karnataka movement; the Adi-Hindu movement mainly centered around Kanpur in UP”<sup>326</sup> . More than a caste based

<sup>324</sup> Radhakrishnan P, INDIA, THE PERFDIES OF POWER - A SOCIAL CRITIQUE, PRK Publications, Chennai. p. 144-45 [Sourced through Google Books]

<sup>325</sup> Jeffrey, Robin, *Temple-Entry Movement in Travancore, 1860-1940*, SOCIAL SCIENTIST, Vol.4, No.8, [March, 1976], p.14 [JSTOR]

<sup>326</sup> Bharat Patankar and Gail Omvedt, *The Dalit Liberation Movement in Colonial Period*, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 14, No. 7/8, Annual Number: Class and Caste in India (Feb., 1979), pp. 409-411+413+415+417+419-421+423-424, [Sourced through jstor]

movement shaped into a nationalist movement for civil rights. It was a strategically taken decision by leaders like TK Madhavan as it will clearly stated by him in a meeting at Ochira [Kollam District] in 1930, which reads thus, “I think, it is a common perception that the Temple Entry Right and the movement is solely for the right of avarnas to enter into the temple and worship the god. Indeed, earning that would be part of the Temple Entry Right, but that is not the prime and only goal of the Temple Entry Right or the movement. Temple Entry Right is the ethical right which has religious and political facets”<sup>327</sup>.

The Indian National congress which was leading the freedom movement had to address the issue of untouchability seriously as the support of the lower caste was being tilted towards the ‘good’ governance of the British in areas like Anjengo and Malabar. As mentioned elsewhere in the present thesis, the lower caste did not find the racial discrimination of the British any different from the prevalent caste segregation. Congress under the leadership of personalities like KP Kesava Menon, K Kelappan, and Mannath Padmanabhan took up the issue of caste system and untouchability. Congress took this opportunity to gather the support of the lower castes in Kerala and bring them together to the nationalist movement which was hitherto considered as an upper caste struggle for power. To quote Robin Jeffrey, “The rebellion against the ideology of old Kerala society gained legitimacy from the adoption by the Indian National Congress of M.K. Gandhi's programs of social reform. Although many Malayalis blamed the Congress for having provoked the

---

<sup>327</sup> Speech of TK Madhavan, Ochira, [Kollam District], 1929, quoted by Govinda Pillai P [from PK Madhavan, *TK MADHAVANTE JEEVACHARITHRAM*, [Biography of TK Madhavan] Kottayam, 1986, p.79] *KERALA NAVODHANAM, YUGASANTHATHIKAL YUGASILPIKAL*, [Malayalam], [Kerala Renaissance, Children and Builders of the Era], Chinta Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram 2009, Second Edition, 2010. P.145

the Gandhian Congress retained a hold on the imaginations of the young. This was reinforced by its leadership of the Vaikom satyagraha in north Travancore in 1924-25 for the right of low castes to use roads near a temple”<sup>328</sup>.

Vaikom Satyagraha movement of 1924-25 [Fig. ], started on 30<sup>th</sup> of March 1924 had active support from all over the country. The Akalis offered to start *langar* [community kitchen] for the Satyagrahis. Malayali Diaspora living Malaya and Singapore offered monetary support. The *Savarnas* too joined the struggle organizing *savarna jathas* [rallies] and boycotting the temples. Radical thinkers like EV Ramaswami Naikar [Periyar] [Fig. ] came to Vaikom to support the Satyagraha. Sri Narayana Guru offered the Vellor Matha at Vaikom for the agitation; he even visited the Satyagrahis at Vaikom.

Vaikom Satyagraha had far reaching results. One it gave confidence to the lower castes to demand for their rights from the authorities which was controlled by the Hindu orthodoxy thus inspiring the later movements like Suchindram Satyagraha [1926–1930] Guruvayur Satyagraha [1931-32], , Kalpatti Satyagraha, and Paliyem Satyagraha [1948] to get access to the temples in Malabar and Princely state of Kochi. It also brought in the lower castes into the mainstream of national movement as observed by Patankar and thus, “in contrast to the ambivalence of the dalits' relations with caste-Hindu- based anti-caste movements, their relationship to the national movement was, even worse, an antagonistic one. The fact was that, with the notable exception of Kerala where the Congress leaders themselves undertook anti-caste

---

<sup>328</sup> Robin Jeffrey, *Matriliny, Marxism, and the Birth of the Communist Party in Kerala, 1930-1940*, The Journal of Asian Studies, Vol. 38, No. 1 (Nov., 1978), pp. 84 [Sourced through jstor]

...e the Congress leadership was in the hands of upper-caste social conservatives who were often not simply indifferent to dalit demands but actively resisted them"<sup>329</sup>

Vaikom Satyagraha and the other Temple Entry Movements saw the temples under the public administration opening for all Hindus regardless of the caste they belong to. But it was not done immediately but had wait for decade before Maharaja of Tiruvitankur gave the historic Temple Entry Proclamation.

## TEMPLE ENTRY COMMITTEE

Prior to the proclamation of Temple Entry in 1936, the Tiruvitankur government, which did not wanted the wrath of caste Hindus, appointed a high level committee<sup>330</sup> to look into the possibilities of opening the temples to lower castes. The committee had its first sitting 1932 which secured replies from 3122 persons of whom 2867 were *savarnas*. All the *avarnas* who sent replies were of the opinion that worship was more efficacious within than outside the temple premises so far as the sight of the image was necessary for full benefit to be derived. Of the *Savarnas* who answered the

---

<sup>329</sup> Bharat Patankar and Gail Omvedt, *The Dalit Liberation Movement in Colonial Period*, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 14, No. 7/8, Annual Number: Class and Caste in India (Feb., 1979), p 415-416 [Sourced through jstor]

<sup>330</sup> The members of the committee were Mr K. Parameswaran Pillai (High Court Judge) K. Anantanarayan Iyer (Retired Land Revenue Commissioner), M. Govindan (Retired Dewan Peishkar), T.K. Velu Pillai (Advocate, High Court), T. Kesavan Shastri, a nominee of Tarananallur Nambudiripad and Chingan Narayanan Bhattatiripad of Tiruvalla. Mr. Nambudiripad nominated Mr. Punnesseri Nambi Nilkanta Sarma, Principal, Sanskrit College, Pattambi who joined duty on in 1932. On Mr. K. Anantanarayana Iyer's death on 28 May 1933, the Government appointed in his place Mr. S.K. Mahadeva Iyer, Retired Dewan Peishkar. From Menon, PKK [Ed] THE HISTORY OF FREEDOM MOVEMENT IN KERALA, Vol. II (1885-1938), 1972, Reprint, Department of Cultural Publication, Government of Kerala, 2001, p.360, foot note number 20.

ere against temple entry while 468 persons opined that it would very much enhance the dignity of the temple. Of the 325 *savarnas* witnesses orally examined, 238 favored temple entry. The Committee was convinced that there was a strong feeling among the *savarnas* in favor of temple entry though the opposition also was not negligible<sup>331</sup>.

**The recommendation of the committee is quite pertinent in the context of the current thesis as the committee recommends the entry right of Hindus based on the architecture feature of the temple and the segregation based on caste hierarchy.** The committee in its report identifies the ‘important’ parts of the temple as “*Garbhagrha* or *sanctum sanctorum*; the *Mandapa* in front of it in the inner *Ankana*; the Kitchen; the *Balimandapa* and the *Koottambalam* or dancing hall; the last one alone is outside the *Nalambalam*”.<sup>332</sup> Entry right to the *Garbhagrha* is reserved only for the Brahmin directly engaged in the services to the icon. Other Brahmins and Kshatriyas can enter into the *Namaskara mandapa* and go up to the *Sopana* or the steps of *garbhagrha*. Vaishyas and Sudras can go up to the *Sopana* but not on *namaskara mandapa*. Castes lower than Sudras are to be kept outside the *nalambalam*. Castes lower than Sudras had no access into the outer precinct of the temple.

---

<sup>331</sup> Menon, PKK [Ed] THE HISTORY OF FREEDOM MOVEMENT IN KERALA, Vol. II (1885-1938), 1972, Reprint, Department of Cultural Publication, Government of Kerala, 2001, p.360, foot note number 21

<sup>332</sup> Menon, PKK [Ed] THE HISTORY OF FREEDOM MOVEMENT IN KERALA, Vol. II (1885-1938), 1972, Reprint, Department of Cultural Publication, Government of Kerala, 2001, p.360, foot note number 22



much in comparison to the demands of the lower castes and the temple entry activists. The justification given by the committee is that as follows, “a Hindu temple was not a public school or road and that worship in the temple should be regulated by usage which, in the absence of documentary evidence as to the original intention of the foundation, might be taken as showing that intention. Though the temples were intended for the benefit of all Hindus, they were subject to the restrictions imposed by usage as to the places up to which the various communities could go for worship”<sup>333</sup>.

In other words, the committee could not get any *sastrik* reference regarding the segregation of the temple premise based on caste hierarchy. This is precisely the reason behind the refusal by the caste Hindus to participate in the *sastrik* arbitration suggested by Gandhi during Vaikom Satyagraha. The texts like *TANTRASAMUCCAYAM* are silent on this issue. Here I am not suggesting that the canons were in favor of the entry of *all Hindus*. The silence of the texts only proves that the caste Hindu society was not even thought about a possibility of worshipping in the temple standing next to a lower caste person, who is shooed away from the public road.

Tiruvitankur Government did not proceed on the recommendation of the committee till there was another wave of popular sentiment and organized protest for the Temple Entry Right. An All Kerala Temple Entry Conference was held at Thiruvananthapuram in May 1936 under the auspices of the Kerala Provincial Board

---

<sup>333</sup> Menon, PKK [Ed] THE HISTORY OF FREEDOM MOVEMENT IN KERALA, Vol. II (1885-1938), 1972, Reprint, Department of Cultural Publication, Government of Kerala, 2001, p.361, foot note number 23

[originally known as All India Anti- Untouchability

League formed in Bombay on 30th September 1932]. A deputation appointed by the Harijan Sevak Sangh travelled all over Tiruvitankur state to create awareness and collect signatures in favor of the temple entry. Apart from this, series of events in 1935-36 also resulted in pressurizing the Tiruvitankur Government for opening up of the temples to all Hindus. The Izhava leaders were contemplating as TK Madhavan threatened earlier for *en-masse* migration non Hindu religions. SNDP in fact resolved to do so in 1935<sup>334</sup>. CV Kunjuraman, a prominent Izhava leader, advocating mass conversion to Christianity had discussions with Anglican Bishop of Kottayam while C Krishnan and K Ayyappan preferred Buddhism. Among these, C Krishnan did convert to Buddhism in 1935. C Kuttan and friends migrated to Sikhism. Threatened by the prospects of large numbers of Izhavas suddenly becoming Christians thus creating dangerous imbalance in the population pattern of the state ruled by a Hindu king, the [Travancore] government suddenly decided to pay heed to the demands of the demonstrators<sup>335</sup>. Ambedkar analyses the change of mind by Dewan CP Ramaswamy thus, “It may be recalled that in 1936, there was held in Travancore a Conference of the Yezawa [Izhava] Community. The Yezawas are an Untouchable community spread over Malabar. It is an educated community and economically quite strong. It is also a vocal community and has been carrying on agitation in the State against social and religious disabilities. The Conference was held to consider whether the Yezawas should not abandon the Hindu Religion in favor of some other religion (This was in

---

<sup>334</sup> Cyriac K Pullapilly, *The Izhavas of Kerala and Their Historic Struggle for Acceptance in the Hindu Society*, in Bardwell L. Smith [Ed.], RELIGION AND SOCIAL CONFLICT IN SOUTH ASIA, EJ Brill, Leiden, 1976, p.41

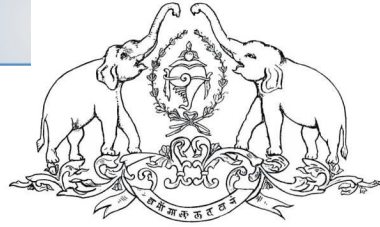
<sup>335</sup> Cyriac K Pullapilly, *The Izhavas of Kerala and Their Historic Struggle for Acceptance in the Hindu Society*, in Bardwell L. Smith [Ed.], RELIGION AND SOCIAL CONFLICT IN SOUTH ASIA, EJ Brill, Leiden, 1976, p.42

...ken at Yeola in 1935 under my chairmanship). The Yezawas form a very large community. The cessation of so large a community would be death-knell to the Hindus and the Conference had made the danger real. It may not be farfetched to say that the Proclamation was issued to forestall this danger”<sup>336</sup>. CP Ramaswamy the Dewan of Tiruvitankur sensing the mass uprising against the government as well the mass conversion might have urged the Maharaja for a solution<sup>337</sup>. The result was the Temple Entry Proclamation by Maharaja Chittira Tirunal Balarama Varma of Tiruvitankur [Fig. ] on his 25<sup>th</sup> birthday, which was on 12<sup>th</sup> November 1936.

---

<sup>336</sup> Ambedkar BR *Temple Entry In Travancore* APPENDIX V,  
[http://www.ambedkar.org/ambcd/41M03.Appendix\\_What Congress and Gandhi have done.htm](http://www.ambedkar.org/ambcd/41M03.Appendix_What Congress and Gandhi have done.htm)

<sup>337</sup> “The Christian threat to the character of a Hindu state could, in Ramaswami Aiyer’s view, be overcome by uniting all Hindus into single, devout community without distinction of caste. Throwing open the government temples at the right moment could be a vital step in this process of consolidation”. See Jeffrey, Robin, , *Temple-Entry Movement in Travancore, 1860-1940*, SOCIAL SCIENTIST, Vol.4, No.8, [March, 1976], p.20 [JSTOR]



## TEMPLE ENTRY PROCLAMATION

BY

CHITTIRA TIRUNAL BALARAMA VARMA, MAHARAJA OF TIRUVITANKUR

12<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 1936

*"Profoundly convinced of the truth and validity of our religion, believing that it is based on divine guidance and on all-comprehending toleration, knowing that in its practice it has throughout the centuries, adapted itself to the needs of changing times, solicitous that none of our Hindu subjects should, by reason of birth or caste or community, be denied the consolation and the solace of the Hindu faith, we have decided and hereby declare, ordain and command that, subject to such rules and conditions as may be laid down and imposed by us for preserving their proper atmosphere and maintaining their rituals and observances, there should henceforth be no restriction placed on any Hindu by birth or religion on entering or worshipping at temples controlled by us and our Government."*<sup>338</sup>

---

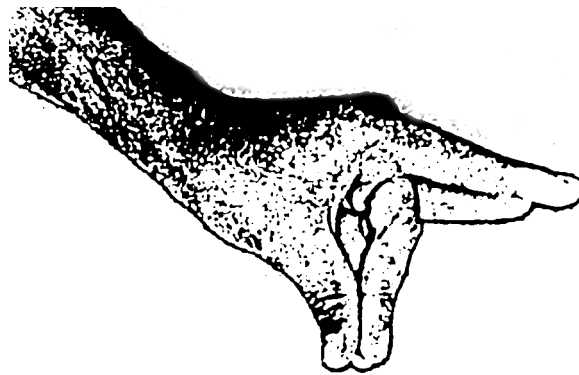
<sup>338</sup> Chavan, Sheshrao, GANDHI AND AMBEDKAR, SAVIORS OF UNTOUCHABLES, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mumbai, 2001, p.192



**PDF**  
Complete

*Your complimentary  
use period has ended.  
Thank you for using  
PDF Complete.*

[Click Here to upgrade to  
Unlimited Pages and Expanded Features](#)



## EPILOGUE

RETAINING OF CASTE HIERARCHY IN THE DISGUISE OF *TANTRIK*  
JUSTIFICATION AFTER TEMPLE ENTRY PROCLAMATION

has been recorded in the history of Kerala and the nationalist movement of India. “The [Temple Entry] Proclamation”, wrote Mahatma Gandhi, “is an act of God through his servant, the present Maharaja [of Tiruvitankur]. Whatever may be the cause, the fact of proclamation being given effect to by an overwhelming number of *savarnas* and being freely availed of by *avarnas* stands out as miracle”<sup>339</sup>. Chittira Tirunal Balarama Varma, Maharaja of Tiruvitankur and the Diwan, Sir CP Ramaswamy, got instant fame and ‘dearly loved publicity’<sup>340</sup> as the reformist rulers of the reformist state of Tiruvitankur. However, not everyone believed that a mere proclamation by the Maharaja would drastically alter the social fabric of a region in a jiffy. In fact Sir T Paneerselvam in discussion in Madras Assembly had made statement as follows, “One of the arguments advanced by the Premier in support of the measure was that temples in Travancore had been thrown open to the 'Untouchables.' A Maharaja vested with autocratic powers did so by an order. But how was it working there? From representations received, he was led to believe that after the first flush of enthusiasm, Harijans had left off going to temples, and people who used to worship previously before Harijans were allowed to enter the temples, had stopped worshipping in temples”<sup>341</sup>. Ambedkar reacts to Pannirselvams observation in his piece on *Temple Entry in Travancore* thus, “How far did this Proclamation change facts and how far it has remained a show? It is not possible to get real facts as they exist in Travancore. In the course of the discussion on the Malabar Temple Entry Bill in the Madras Legislative Assembly, certain facts relating

---

<sup>339</sup> Chavan, Sheshrao, GANDHI AND AMBEDKAR, SAVIORS OF UNTOUCHABLES, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mumbai, 2001, p.191

<sup>340</sup> Jeffrey, Robin, , Temple-Entry Movement in Travancore, 1860-1940, SOCIAL SCIENTIST, Vol.4, No.8, [March, 1976], p.22 [JSTOR]

<sup>341</sup> Ambedkar BR *Temple Entry In Travancore* APPENDIX V, [http://www.ambedkar.org/ambcd/41M03.Appendix\\_What Congress and Gandhi have done.htm](http://www.ambedkar.org/ambcd/41M03.Appendix_What Congress and Gandhi have done.htm)

l by Sir T. Pannirselvam which, if true, would show that the whole thing is hollow”<sup>342</sup>. Ambedkar also quotes a letter from Mr.Narayanaswami where the writer has complained to Ambedkar stating that except the permission to enter into the temples, the life of the Harijans in Tiruvitankur has not changed much<sup>343</sup>. Based on these facts Ambedkar questions thus, “Is the temple entry to be the final goal of the advancement in the social status of the depressed classes in the Hindu fold? Or is it only the first step and if it is first step, what is the ultimate goal?”<sup>344</sup>

The Proclamation and the Temple Entry Right to the depressed classes in Kerala should be seen solely as the first constructive step towards the development of the depressed class. It was in fact, merely a symbolic step for towards the liberation of the depressed classes. Through the proclamation, the king of Tiruvitankur took away the religious and political authenticity of the system of casteism and untouchability. The ‘protectors’ of the temple who pretended to be the maintainers of the law and order of the state; like the drunken ‘*savarna*’ who forced the Pulaya leader Ayyankali to alight from his bullock cart and walk on the circular road avoiding the Vaikom Temple but willingly permitted the bullocks to continue on the temple road or the obstinate Nambutiri who made Mahatma Gandhi to sit outside his house while he himself sat inside because Gandhi sat with the lower castes in the Vaikom Satyagraha pandal, lost their self claimed position as the protectors of the civic society.

---

<sup>342</sup> Ambedkar BR *Temple Entry In Travancore* APPENDIX V,  
[http://www.ambedkar.org/ambcd/41M03.Appendix\\_What Congress and Gandhi have done.htm](http://www.ambedkar.org/ambcd/41M03.Appendix_What Congress and Gandhi have done.htm)

<sup>343</sup> Ambedkar BR *Temple Entry In Travancore* APPENDIX V,  
[http://www.ambedkar.org/ambcd/41M03.Appendix\\_What Congress and Gandhi have done.htm](http://www.ambedkar.org/ambcd/41M03.Appendix_What Congress and Gandhi have done.htm)

<sup>344</sup> Chavan, Sheshrao, GANDHI AND AMBEDKAR, SAVIORS OF UNTOUCHABLES, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mumbai, 2001, p.192

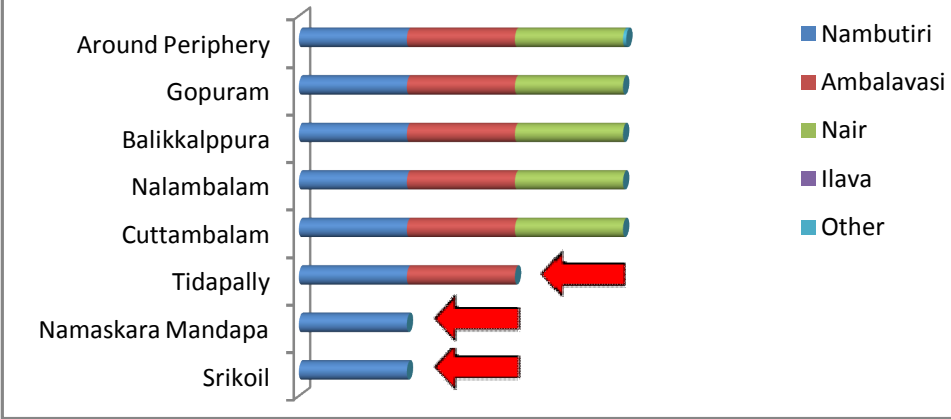


Proclamation merely as a symbolic gesture as the sub-text of the Proclamation in accordance with the Temple Entry Committee recommendations did not infringe into the space or right of the *savarnas* in the temple, especially the Brahmins. The area where the Brahmin had exclusive right of entry has retained that exclusivity. Here I am referring to **the *namaskara mandapas* which still remain as a reserved space** for the Brahmins.

The prevalence of caste hierarchy is still tangible in the rituals and practices of Kerala temples. The maintainable distance between the Brahmins and castes lower to them considerably reduced from 60 feet of the olden days to mere 6 inches, however the concept of distance remains as it is. A Brahmin boy would sit shoulder to shoulder with an *avarna* in the school, a tea shop, but in the premise of the temple the Brahmin have to keep a distance with his *avarna* schoolmate. In the temple only the Brahmin boy would be allowed to enter the *namaskara mandapa* solely for the reason that he is born a Brahmin.

A question may arise naturally here, whether the Temple Entry Proclamation of 1936 in Tiruvitankur State and similar declaration in Kochi [1948] and Malabar [1939] subsequently allow **all Hindus** right to access to **all part of the temple**. The answer is that the declaration only allowed the partial entry into the temples to the lower castes. The following chart would explain this further.

## Temple Entry Rights Before 1936



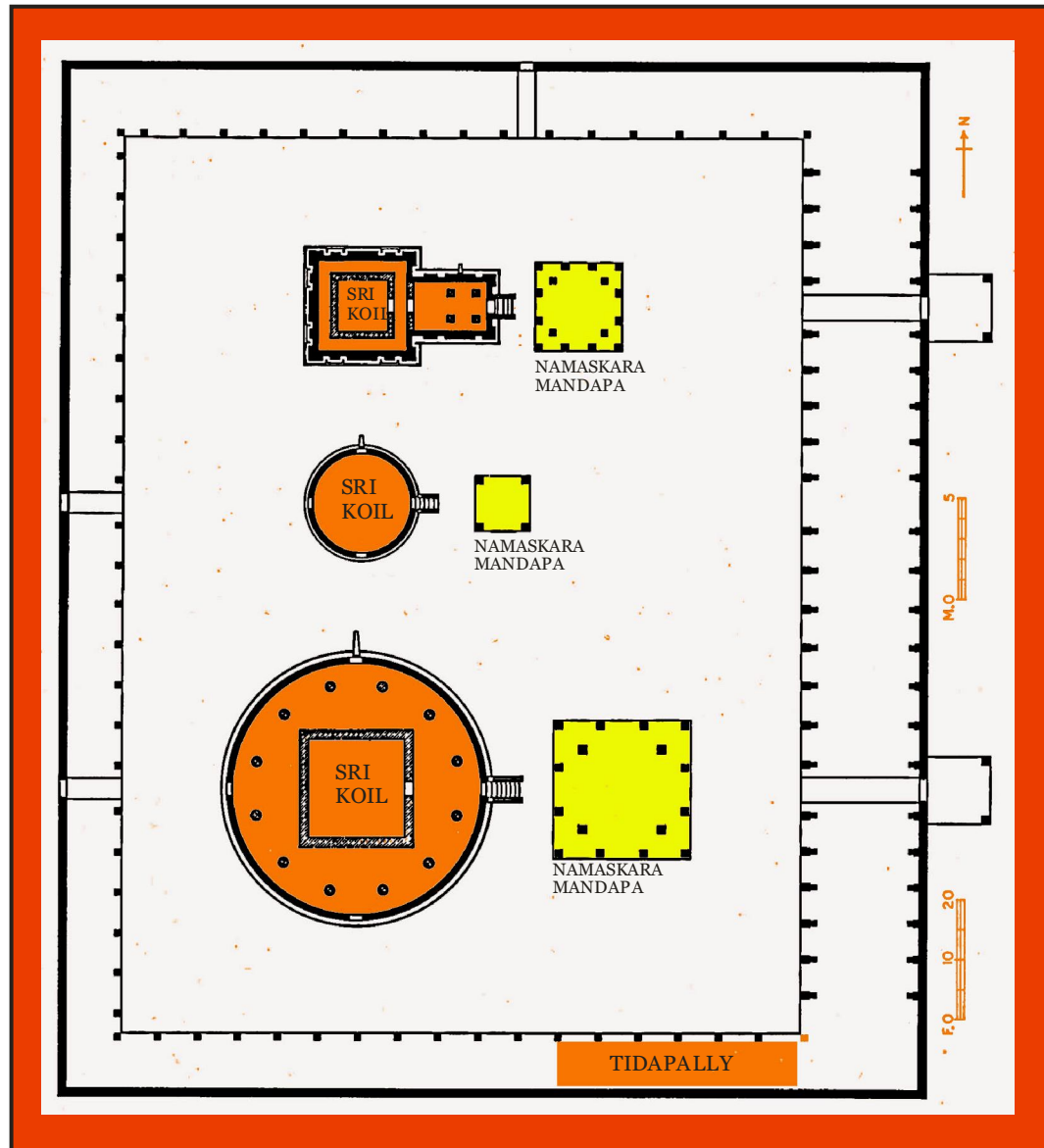
In the above given chart I have identified the spatial organization of the Kerala Hindu Temple. Each of these spaces is separated with architecture members like walls and roofed areas. The outer most shell of temple is the *prakara* wall or the peripheral wall. Gopuram is the cardinal entrance to a temple, often called as the *padippura* in Kerala temples. Balikkalppura is the entry into the *nalambalam* area with balikkal [sacrificial stone dedicated to the main deity]. The core of the temple complex is the *nalambalam* with Cuttambalam, *Tidappalli*, *Namaskara mandapa* and *Sri Koil*. The chart also has separate color codes to the castes. In the scenario before the Temple Entry Proclamation of Travancore [1936] Nambutiri or Malayala Brahmins had complete access to the temple and the Nairs and Ambalavasis had partial access. The lower castes who are considered to be untouchables are kept outside the peripheral wall not even allowing in certain cases to use the public roads around the boundary



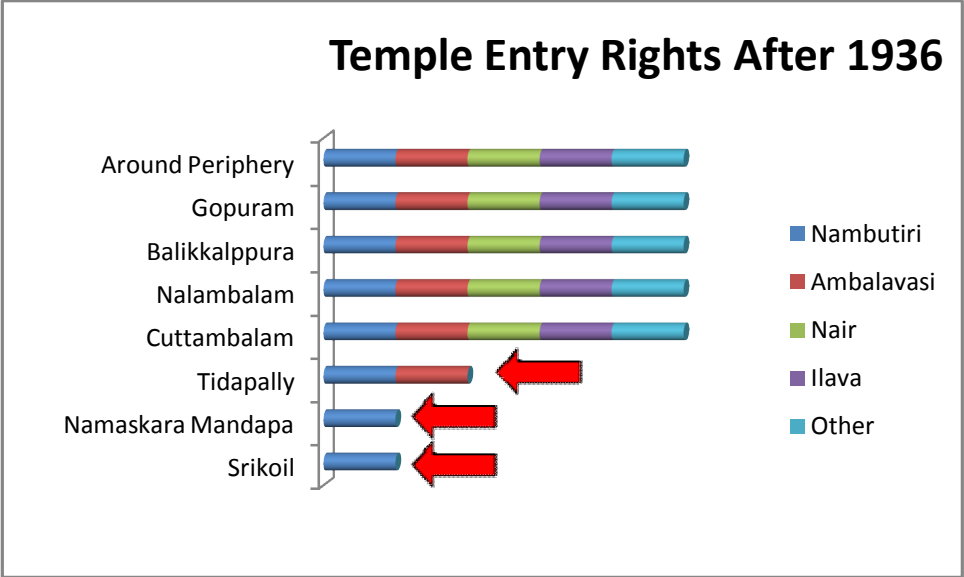
**PDF**  
Complete

Your complimentary  
use period has ended.  
Thank you for using  
PDF Complete.

[Click Here to upgrade to  
Unlimited Pages and Expanded Features](#)



s denote the areas which were exclusively reserved for  
 Brahmins and the Ambalavasi caste.



The chart above explains the entry rights of the castes in the post Temple Entry Proclamation scenario. Note the purple and blue bars representing Izhavas and other Destressed added to the list of castes that are given permission to enter into the temple complex, however the areas of exclusivity pointed by the red arrow remain the same in both the diagrams. In fact the Proclamation **did not open** the doors to all castes **to all part** of the temple. To quote Jayashanker<sup>345</sup>, “the net result of all these agitations was that all places of Hindu worship were opened to all Hindu believers without disturbing the *sanctity*<sup>346</sup> of the temples i.e. all were permitted to enter all

<sup>345</sup> Jayashanker, Temples of Kerala, Censes dept, pp 241

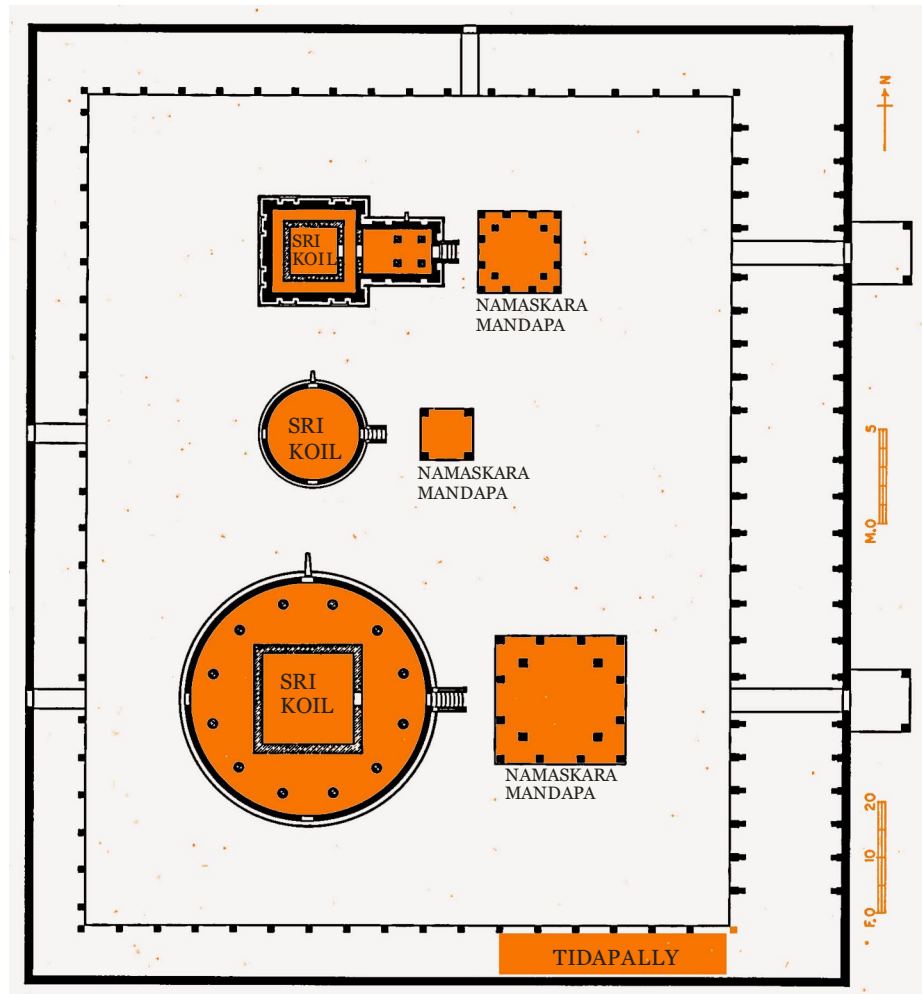
<sup>346</sup> The italics are purposefully added, as the sanctity becomes the weapon for the caste segregation in Kerala temples.



**PDF**  
Complete

Your complimentary  
use period has ended.  
Thank you for using  
PDF Complete.

[Click Here to upgrade to  
Unlimited Pages and Expanded Features](#)

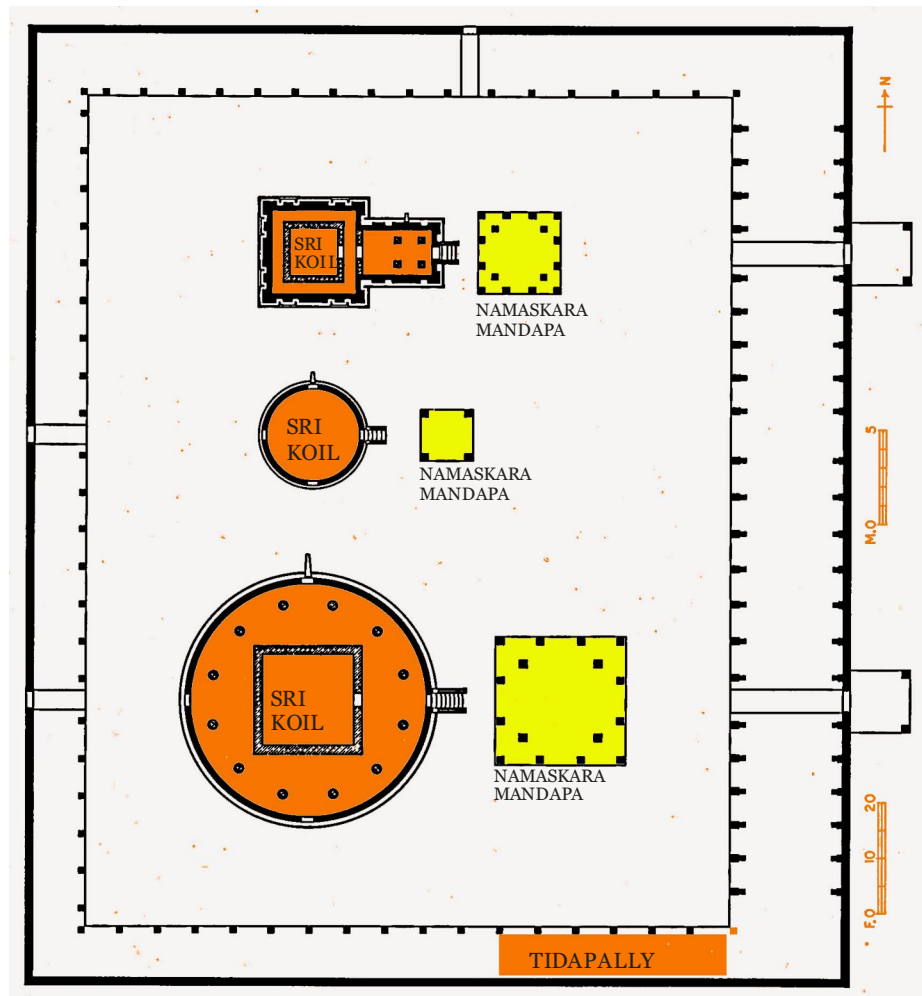




**PDF**  
Complete

Your complimentary  
use period has ended.  
Thank you for using  
PDF Complete.

[Click Here to upgrade to  
Unlimited Pages and Expanded Features](#)



parts of the temples, except the sanctum sanctorum, *Namaskara Mandapa*, and *Tidappalli*. In these places only **permitted persons**<sup>347</sup> can enter”.

*Sri Koil* or main shrine is where the image is placed and thus only entered by the priest, who conducts the rituals. Even other persons from the priestly class or Brahmins are not allowed inside. *Tidappalli* is where the *naivedya* (ritual food) is prepared by the priest himself, thus has restricted entry. The third part where only “permitted persons” can enter is the *Namaskara Mandapa*. *Namaskara Mandapa* serves no role in the routine ritual of a temple and unlike *Tidappalli* and *Sri Koil* the permitted person is not an individual employ of the temple but the entire community of Brahmins. **The fact remain that even after the Temple Entry proclamation the Brahmin caste have reserved a position in the spatial organization of Kerala Temples.** Even the members of *ambalavasi* [temple employees] castes like Varriers, Nambiars, Marars and Poduvals or the *koil adhi kari* [the patron / employer of the temples, usually from the *Naduvazhi* [royal] family were not entitled to enter into the space reserved **solely** for the Brahmin caste. The lower castes were given permission to enter into the first five areas which were used only by the Nairs apart from the Ambalavasis and Nambutiris. Last three areas as the *Tidappalli*; *Namaskara Mandapa* and *Sri Koil* remain exclusively for the Nambutiris and Ambalavasis. Here it should be mentioned that the Ambalavasis are allowed in the *Tidappalli* region primarily on the vocational convenience not because of the hierarchy of the caste. As late as 1993, more than 57 years after the temple entry proclamation I was asked about my caste before entering into the *Tidappalli* of Vaikom Mahadeva Temple. It is not surprising that the caste system still holds sway

---

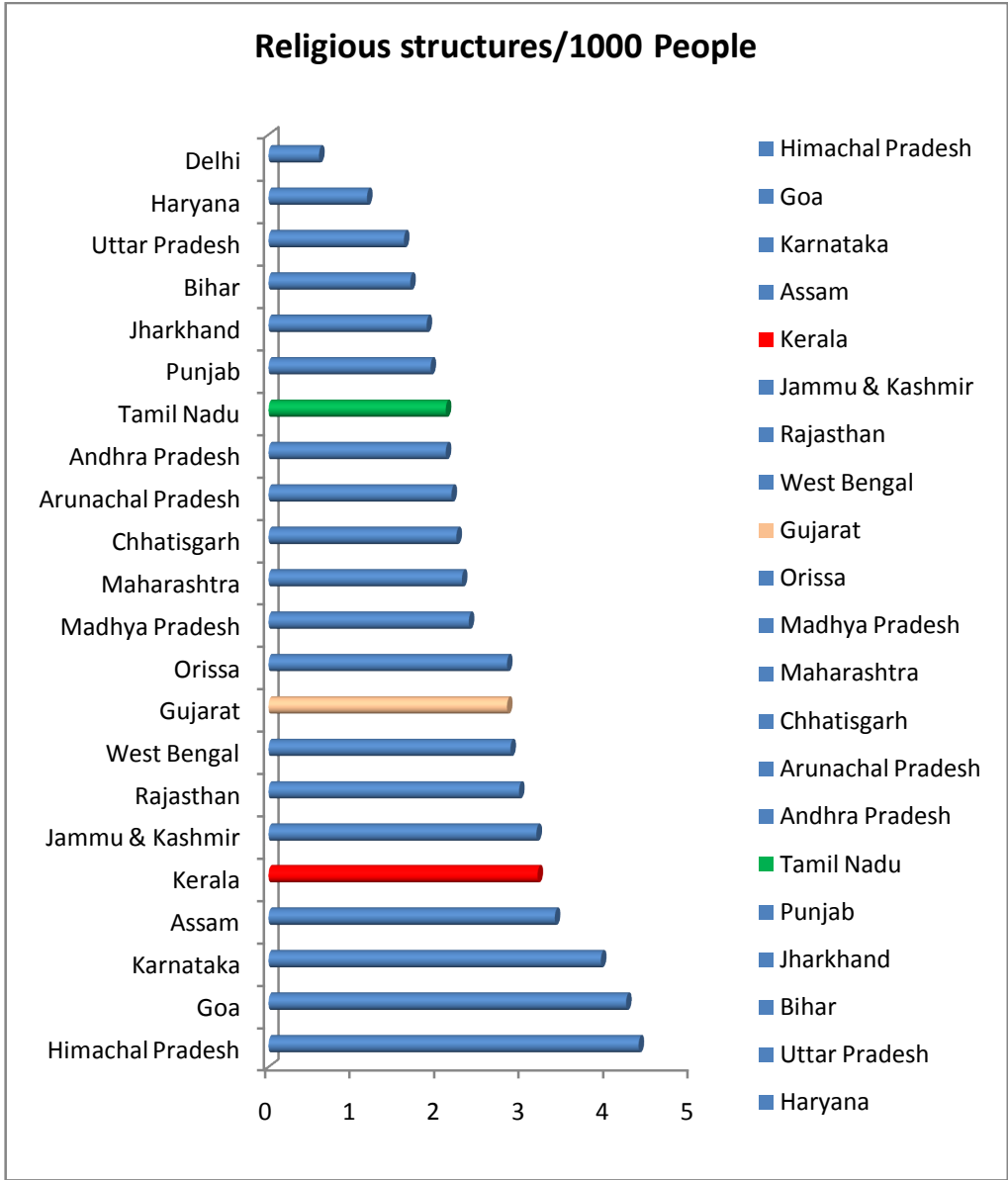
<sup>347</sup> Bold by the present author

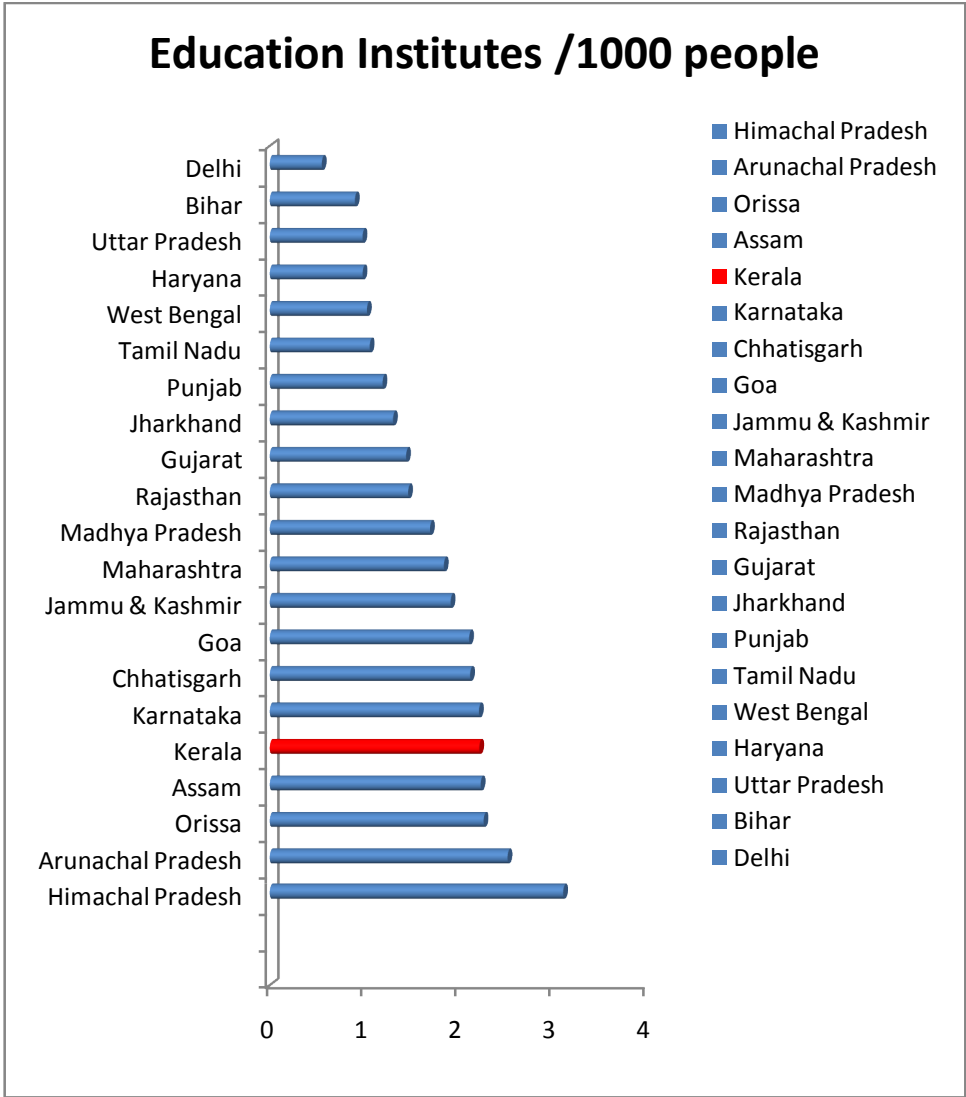


system in Kerala as caste system has made deep roots in the minds of the people and retained in institutions like the temples.

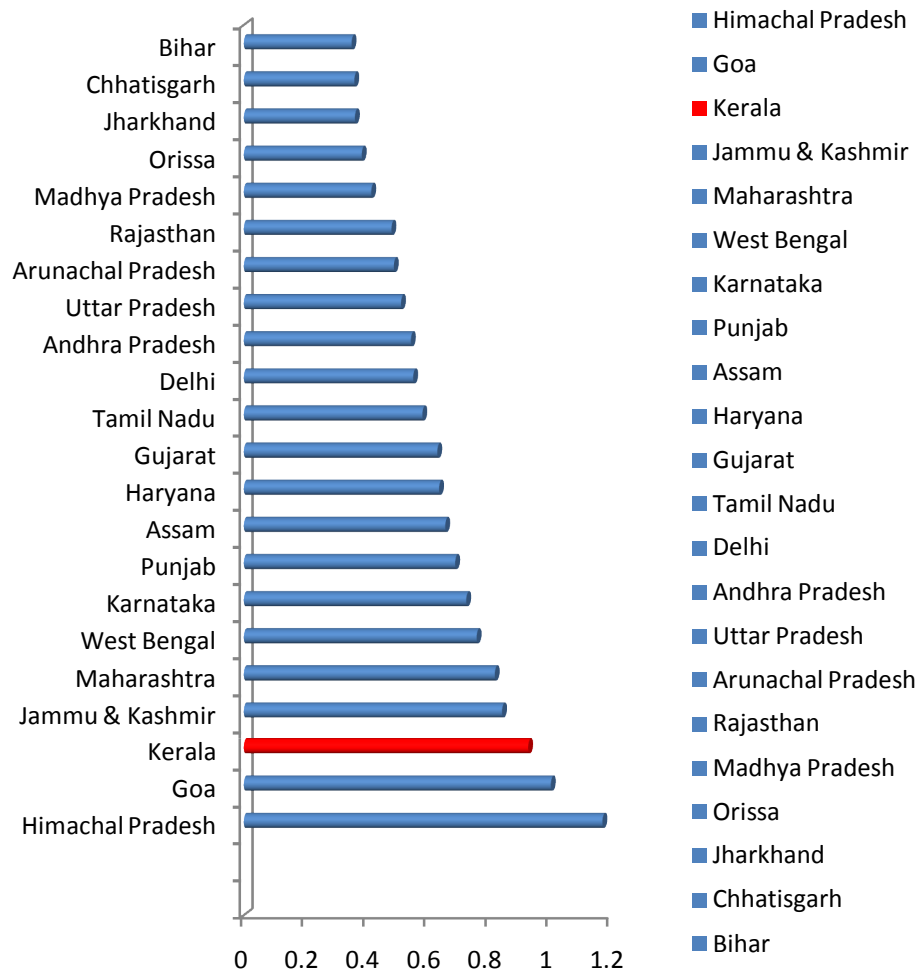
The Temple Entry proclamation and the legislations around it and the ensuing change in the civil society in fact proved that the temples did play the role model for the society for its caste discrimination. The social reformation movements like the Vaikom Satyagraha were not fought because of the *avarnas*' eagerness to worship the god in the temple but to abolish the discrimination in the society including the temple as the temples remained as the pillars of orthodoxy, which the Temple Entry Movement targeted. However the truth is that the Temple Entry proclamation in fact only allowed the devotees from the lower castes to enter into the **space excluding** that **reserved** for the dominant caste, the Brahmins. The caste hierarchy and exclusivity of the dominant caste was written in fine print as a subtext which gave Brahmins exclusivity of space, which is Namaskara Mandapa which remain as the vestige of a caste-ridden society and its expression in architecture, a sacred justification of the draconian reality.

CHART 1

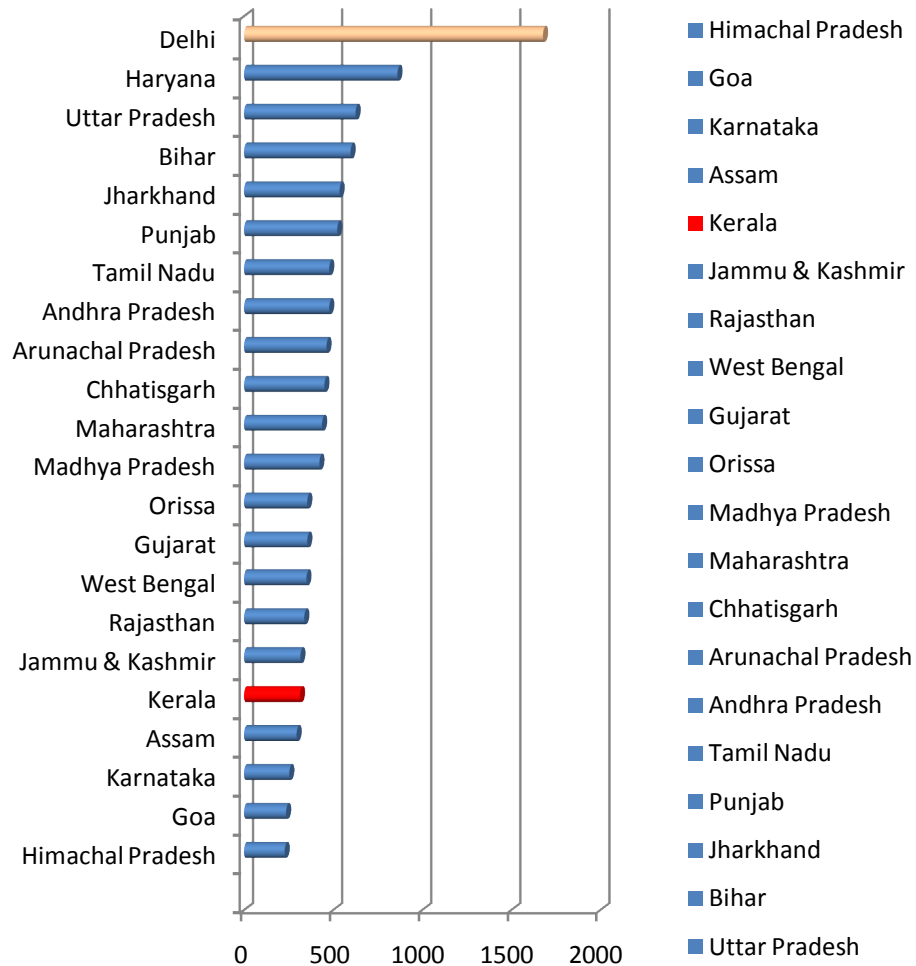




## Hospital/ 1000 people



## Persons sharing one Religious Structure



**TABLE 1**

**SOCIAL REFORM MOVEMENTS IN KERALA**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Events</b>	<b>Personalities</b>	<b>Aim</b>
1792	Abolition of sale of Slaves in Malabar		
1793	Another rule for Abolition of sale of Slaves in Malabar		
1809	Birth of Ayya Vaikuntha Svami [1809-1851]	Ayya Vaikuntha Svami	Work against untouchability. Resurgence of Channar Community
1812	First attempt to abolish slavery	Rani Gouri Lakshmi Bai, Col.Munro	
1821	Abolition of sale of Slaves in Kochi	Nanchappayya [Diwan of Kochi]	
1852	Birth of Brahmananda Sivayogi. [1852-1929]	Brahmananda Sivayogi	Atheism
1853	Birth of Chattambi Swamikal [1853-1924]	Chattambi Swamikal	Reform movement amongst Nair Community
1855	Abolition of Slavery in Tiruvitankur	Col. Munro, London Mission Society, Church Misssionary Society, Rani Gouri Lakshmi Bai	
1856	Birth of Sri Narayana Guru [1856-1928]	Sri Narayana Guru	Reform movement amongst Izhava Community. Work against untouchability.
1877	Social Union Established Later became Malayali Sabha, Tiruvitankur	C Krishna Pillai	
1886	Malayali magazine, Thiruvananthapuram	CV Raman Pillai [Editor]	
1888	Sri Narayana Guru installs the "Izhava Siva", Aruvippuram, Thiruvananthapuram	Sri Narayana Guru	Establishing anti brahmanical religious practice



		GP Pillai, Dr. T Palpu, Nidhiri Vakil [Christian] KP Sankara Menon [first signatory]	Equal opportunities to Malayalis in govt Jobs and Education
1892	Indian Penal Code		
1903	SNDP established, Aruvippuram, Thiruvananthapuram	Sri Narayana Guru, Palpu, Kumaran Asan, CV Kunhu Raman	Equal opportunities to Ilavas in govt Jobs and Education
1907	Sadhujana Paripalana Sangham, Thiruvananthapuram	Ayyankali	Equal opportunities to pulayas in govt Jobs and Education
1907	Keraliya Nayar Samajam	Mannath Krishnan Nair	
1908	Yogakshema Sabha, Aluva  Later Unni Nambutiri magazine	Desamangal am Sankaran Namboodirippadu [president] later VT Bhattatitippad, EMS	Social reformation among nambutiris
1912	Passing of Nair regulation		Breaking of taravadu system, breaking of matrilineal system
1912	Balakalesam Play, Kochi on the birthday of the king	Pandit Karuppan [Araya leader, Kochi]	Against caste system
1913	Samstha Kochi Pulaya Mahasabha	Krushnati Asan, PC Chanchan	Equal opportunities to Pulayas in govt Jobs and Education
1913	Harijan Hostel, Kochi	Vallon KP	Free Stay, food and tuition fee for Dalit students
1914	Bruthya Jana Saghama		
1914	Srimulam Praja Sabha		
1915	Nair Service Society [NSS]	Mannath Padmanabhan [Sec] K Kelappan [Pres.]	
1919	Krushnati Asan converts to Christianity	Krushnati Asan	
1924-25	Vaikom Satyagraha	TK Madhavan, Mannath Padmanabhan, Kunhappi, Bahuleyan,	





	Anthyodharana Sagham	Govinda Panikkar	
	Later known as Adi Keralotharana Sangham	P Krishnan [President] K Kelappan [Sec.]	Development of dalits opportunity for education etc
		Gandhi in the chair for the formation meeting	
1931- 32	Guruvayur Satyagraham	Kelappan, AKG, Subramanyam Tirumumb	
1926 - 1930	Suchindram Satyagraham	Dr. Naidu	Court settlement to open the gates of the temple
	Kalpatti Satyagraham		
1936	Temple Entry Proclamation [Tiruvitankur]	Chittira Tirunal Balarama Varma	Opening of Temples under the state to all Hindus
1946	Temple Entry Proclamation [Malabar]		Opening of Temples in the British Malabar Province to all Hindus. Even the temples under Samutiris
1948	Paliyum Satyagraham	PK Chattan Master	
1949	Temple Entry Proclamation [Kochi]		Opening of Temples in the Kochi Province to all Hindus.

## Books [English]

Bayly, Susan	<i>Caste, Society and Politics in India from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to Modern Age</i> , THE NEW CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF INDIA IV-3, Cambridge University press India Edition-2000, reprint-2005, Replica press, India
Bernier, R	TEMPLE ARTS OF KERALA: A SOUTH INDIAN TRADITION, New York 1982, reprinted.
Braj Ranjan Mani	DEBRAHMANISING HISTORY- DOMINANCE AND RESISTANCE IN INDIAN SOCIETY, Manohar, 2005, New Delhi. Reprint 2008
Chavan, Sheshrao	GANDHI AND AMBEDKAR, SAVIORS OF UNTOUCHABLES, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mumbai, 2001
Dhaky, MA and Meister Michael, [Ed]	ENCYCLOPEDIA OF INDIAN TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE, Volume 1, Lower <i>Dravida Des</i> , Edited by and, American Institute of Indian Studies {AIIS}, New Delhi
Field House, H	COLONIAL EMPIRES A COMPARATIVE SURVEY FROM THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1966
Frankl, Paul	PRINCIPLES OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY, Gauting, 1913, Translated by James O'Gorman, 1973, 1986, Massachusetts
Fred, Fawcett	NAMBUTIRIS -Notes on Some of the People of Malabar, Madras Government Museum, Bulletin, Vol.III, NO. 1, 1900, [Reprint] Asian Education Services, New Delhi, 2001
Gangadharan, TK	EVOLUTION KERALA HISTORY AND CULTURE, Calicut University Central Cooperative Stores, Calicut. [no publication date given]

Jayashanker, S	CASTE IN QUESTION – IDENTITY OR HIERARCHY, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2004
Jeffrey, Robin	TEMPLES OF KERALA, Directorate of Census Operations, Kerala, 1997
Kane, PV	THE DECLINE OF NAIR DOMINANCE, Society and Politics in Travancore, 1847-1908, Manohar, New Delhi, 1976, Second Edition, 1994.
Klass, Morton	HISTORY OF DHARMASASTRAS [ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL RELIGIONS AND CIVIL LAW IN INDIA], Vol. I to V, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune, 1990
Kramrisch, Stella, Cousins H and Poduval RV	CASTES –The emergence of the South Asian Social System', Manohar Publications, Delhi, 1980
Krishna, Ayyar K V	THE ARTS AND CRAFTS OF KERALA, Madras 1970.
Livermore, Harold Victor	THE ZAMORINS OF CALICUT, Calicut, 1938
Logan, William	PORTUGAL, A SHORT HISTORY, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1973
Ludden ,David	MALABAR MANUEL, 2000 edited version Edited by PJ Cheriyan, Kerala Gazetteers Department, Thiruvananthapuram, 2000
Mallaya, NV	EARLY CAPITALISM AND LOCAL HISTORY IN SOUTH INDIA, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1985, Second Edition 2005
Menon, Achyuta C	STUDIES IN SANSKRIT TEXTS ON TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE, With Special reference to <i>Tantrasamuccaya</i> , Annamalai University, 1949
Menon, Padmanabha KP	COCHIN STATE MANUEL, 1911, Reprint Kerala Gazetteers, Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 1995
	HISTORY OF KERALA, Vol. II, Ernakulam 1929.

Menon, Sreedhara A	THE HISTORY OF FREEDOM MOVEMENT IN KERALA, Vol. II (1885-1938), 1972, Reprint, Department of Cultural Publication, Government of Kerala, 2001
Menon, Sreedhara A	KERALA DISTRICT GAZETTERS: <i>Trissur</i> , Trivandrum 1962.
Menon, Sreedhara A	KERALA DISTRICT GAZETTERS: <i>Trivandrum</i> , Trivandrum 1962.
Menon, Sreedhara A	KERALA DISTRICT GAZETTEERS: <i>Kozhikode</i> , Trivandrum 1962.
Michael, SM [Ed]	DALITS IN MODERN INDIA – VISION AND VALUES, Sage Publication, New Delhi, 2007 [Second Edition]
Michell, George [Ed]	LIVING WOOD: SCULPTURAL TRADITIONS OF SOUTHERN INDIA. Marg Publications, Bombay 1992.
Michell, George	ARCHITECTURE AND ART OF SOUTHERN INDIA. – The new Cambridge History of India, Cambridge University Press, 1995
Michell, George and Dhaky ,MA [Ed]	ENCYCLOPEDIA OF INDIAN TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE, Volume 4, Lower <i>Dravida</i> Desa, Edited by and, American Institute of Indian Studies {AIIS}, New Delhi
Nagam, Aiya V	THE TRAVANCORE STATE MANUAL. vol. I, Trivandrum 1906.
Namboodiri, Govidan V	SRAUTA SACRIFICE IN KERALA, Calicut University Sanskrit Series – 13, University of Calicut, 2002
Narayanan, MGS	RE-INTERPRETATIONS IN SOUTH INDIAN HISTORY, Trivandrum, 1977
Neill, Stephen	COLONIALISM AND CHRISTIAN MISSIONS. Lutterworth Press, London 1966.
Nilakantha ,Sastri KA	A HISTORY OF SOUTH INDIA, From Pre Historic times to the Fall of Vijayanagara, Oxford University Press, Madras, 1955, 1976 [fourth Edition]

Preziosi, Donald	A HISTORY OF KERALA, Annamalai 1960.
Raja, PKS	RETHINKING ART HISTORY, MEDITATIONS ON A COY SCIENCE, Yale University Press, London, 1989
Ramanujan, AK	MEDIEVAL KERALA, Annamalai University Historical Series, 11, Annamalai 1953.
Ramanujan, AK	INTERIOR LANDSCAPE, LOVE POEMS FROM A CLASSICAL TAMIL ANTHOLOGY, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967
Ramanujan, AK	POEMS OF LOVE AND WAR, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1985
Sarkar, H	AN ARCHITECTURAL SURVEY OF TEMPLES OF KERALA, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, 1978
Sarkar, H	MONUMENTS OF KERALA, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, 1973, Third Edition 1992
Sharma, KL [Ed]	SOCIAL INEQUALITY IN INDIA, PROFILES OF CASTE, CLASS, POWER AND SOCIAL MOBILITY, Rawat Publication, Jaipur
Smith Bardwell L [Ed]	RELIGION AND SOCIAL CONFLICT IN SOUTH ASIA, EJ Brill, Leiden, 1976
Soundara, Rajan KV	TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE IN KERALA, Government of Kerala, 1974, Thiruvananthapuram,
Srinivas, MN	SOCIAL CHANGE IN MODERN INDIA, First Published 1966, University of California, , Orient Longman Edition, Hyderabad, 1972, Second Edition 1995, Reprint 2004
Srinivasan, KR	TEMPLES OF SOUTH INDIA, New Delhi, 1972 & Reprint 1998
Subrahmanyam, Sanjay	THE CARRER AND LEGEND OF VASCO DA GAMA, Foundation Books, New Delhi, 1998.

Valerian, Rodrigues [Ed]

KERALA SOCIETY PAPERS, Volume. I and II  
[1928 – 33] Reprint, Government of Kerala,  
Kerala Gazetteers, Thiruvananthapuram, 1997

Velupilla, TK *Sadasyatilaka*

THE ESSENTIAL WRITINGS OF  
B.R.AMBEDKAR, Oxford University Press, New  
Delhi, 2002, Paperback edition, 2004

Watkin, David

THE TRAVANCORE STATE MANUEL, Volume  
II, History, 1940, First reprint, Government of  
Kerala, Kerala Gazetteers, Thiruvananthapuram,  
1996

Zvelebil, Kamil,

THE RISE OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY,  
Architectural Press, London, 1980

THE SMILE OF MURUGAN: ON TAMIL  
LITERATURE OF SOUTH INDIA, Leiden: Brill,  
1973

### **Books Sourced from Web Sites**

Ambedkar, BR

CASTES IN INDIA, <http://www.ambedkar.org/>

Ambedkar, BR

WHO WERE THE SUDRAS,  
<http://www.ambedkar.org/>

Cherian, PJ(Ed)

PERSPECTIVES ON KERALA HISTORY- The  
Second Millennium, KCHR,  
Thiruvananthapuram, 1999  
[http://www.keralahistory.ac.in/cul\\_kerala.htm](http://www.keralahistory.ac.in/cul_kerala.htm)

Cherian ,PJ (Ed)

ESSAYS ON THE CULTURAL FORMATION OF  
KERALA - LITERATURE, ART,  
ARCHITECTURE, MUSIC, THEATRE,  
CINEMA, Kerala Council of Historical Research,  
Thiruvananthapuram, 1999,  
[http://www.keralahistory.ac.in/cul\\_kerala.htm](http://www.keralahistory.ac.in/cul_kerala.htm)

Freire, Paulo

PEDAGOGY OF THE OPPRESSED,  
<http://marxists.anu.edu.au/subject/education/freire/pedagogy/>

Indira . J and Rajeev Srinivasan

*Sri Narayana Guru: A short biography*  
Published in Malayalam by the Language  
Institute of Kerala, October 2003 [Sourced  
through Google Books]



**PDF**  
Complete

*Your complimentary  
use period has ended.  
Thank you for using  
PDF Complete.*

[Click Here to upgrade to  
Unlimited Pages and Expanded Features](#)

Marx Karl and Fredrick Engels

DALIT MOVEMENT IN INDIA AND ITS  
LEADERS, MD Publications, New Delhi, 1994,  
p.389 [Sourced through Google Books]

THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO, Written, Late  
1847, First Published: February 1848; Source:  
Marx/Engels Selected Works, Vol. One, Progress  
Publishers, Moscow, 1969, pp. 98-137;  
Translated: Samuel Moore in cooperation with  
Frederick Engels, 1888; from  
<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto>

Radhakrishnan P

INDIA, THE PERFIDIES OF POWER - A  
SOCIAL CRITIQUE, PRK Publications, Chennai.  
[Sourced through Google Books]



## Books [Malayalam]

AKG [AK Gopalan]

*KERALAM INNALE INNU* [Malayalam], [Kerala – Past Present] Chinta Publishers, 2002, Second Edition, 2004

Asvati Tirunal, Gouri Lakshmi Bayi

*SRI PADMANABHA SWAMI KSETHRAM* [Malayalam] [Sree Padmanabha Swami Temple], Translation from English by Sankaran Namboodiri and Jayakumar K, Kerala Bhasha Institute, Thiruvananthapuram, 1998

Asvati Tirunal, Gouri Lakshmi Bayi

*THULASIHARAM - THIRUVITANKOORILE KSHETRANGAL* [Malayalam] [Tulasi Garland-The Temples of Travancore], Translation from English by Sadasivan MP, DC Books, Kottayam, 1999, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 2001

Balakrishnan, PK

*JATHIVYAVASTHITHIYUM KERALACHARITHRAVUM*, [Malayalam] [Caste System and History of Kerala], Sahitya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society and National Book Stall, Kottayam, 1983, Reprint, 1978

Bhattatirippadu, Kunnattoor

*TANTARASAMUCCAYAM* [of Chennas Narayanan Namboodiripad] [Interpretation in Malayalam], Panchangam Book Stall, Kunnamkulam, 1992, Second Edition 1999

Bhattatirippadu, Kuzhikkattu Maheshvaran

*KUZHICKATTU PACCHA [TANTRA GRANDHAM]* [Malayalam] [Kuzhikkattu Paccha , Tantrik Text], Panchangam Book Stall, Kunnamkulam, Eighth Edition, 2008

Bhaskaranunny

*KERALAM IRUPATHAM NOOTANTINDE ARAMBHATTHIL* [Malayalam] [Kerala in the beginning of 20th century], Kerala Sahithya Akademi, Trissur, 2005

Gopalakrishnan PK

*KERALATHINTE SAMSKARIKA CHARITHRAM* [Malayalam] [A Cultural History of Kerala] 1974, 2000 [6<sup>th</sup> edition] State Institute of Languages, Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 2000

Govinda Pillai P

*EMSINTE SAMPOORNA KRITIKAL*  
[Malayalam] [Collected Works of EMS  
Namboodiripad], [Vol. 9- 1948] Chinta  
Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram 2000.

*KERALA NAVODHANAM ORU MARXIST  
VEEKSHANAM*, [Malayalam], [Kerala  
Renaissance, a Marxist View Point], Chinta  
Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram 2003, Second  
Edition, 2004.

Govinda Pillai P

*KERALA NAVODHANAM,  
YUGASANTHATHIKAL YUGASILPIKAL*,  
[Malayalam], [Kerala Renaissance, Children and  
Builders of the Era], Chinta Publishers,  
Thiruvananthapuram 2009, Second Edition,  
2010.

Karanma, Venugopal

*KERALATTINTE  
KSHETRAPARAMPARYAVUM  
SAMSKARAVUM* [Malayalam] [The Temple  
Tradition and Culture of Kerala], Devi Book  
Stall, Kodungallur, 2004

Kottarathil, Sankunni

*EITHIHYAMAALA* [Malayalam], First  
Published (8 Volumes) in 1909-1934, 18<sup>th</sup>  
Special edition, November 2004, Current Books,  
Kottayam, Kerala.

Menon, Padmanabha KP

*KOCHIRAJYACHARITHRAM* [Malayalam],  
[History of Kochi], [1914], Mathrubhumi Edition  
[1989], [1996] Calicut, 1996

Menon, Sankunni P

*TIRUVITANKUR CHARITHRAM*, [Malayalam],  
[original in English, A HISTORY OF  
TRAVANCORE FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES]  
Translation by CK Kareem, Kerala Bhasha  
Institute, Thiruvananthapuram, [First Edition  
1973], Fourth Edition 1994

Nair, Balakrishnan Chirakkal T

*COLLECTED ESSAYS* [Malayalam] Sahitya  
Pravarthaka Co-operative Society and National  
Book Stall, Kottayam, Kottayam, 1982

Nair, Sivasankaran K

*ANANTHAPURI NOOTTANTUKALILLODE*,  
[Malayalam] [*Ananthapuri* through Centuries]  
Current Books, Kottayam, 2004, Second Edition,  
2006

Namboodiripad, EMS

*KERALA CHARITRAM MARXIST  
VIKSHANATHIL*, [Malayalam], [History of  
Kerala through Marxist View Point] Chinta  
Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram 1990

*KERALAM MALYALIKALUDE  
MATHRUBHOOMI* [Malayalam], from P  
Govinda Pillai [Ed], *EMSINTE SAMPOORNA  
KRITIKAL* [COLLECTED WORKS OF EMS  
NAMBOODIRIPAD Vol. 9- 1948] [Malayalam]  
Chinta Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram 2000

Nellikkal, Muraleedharan

*KERALA JATI VIAVARANAM*, [Malayalam],  
[Encyclopedia of Caste System] Rainbow Book  
Publishers, Cengannur, Kerala, 2008

Panikkar, KN

*MALABAR KALAPAM PRABHUTWATHINUM  
RAJAVAZHCHAKKUMETHIRE*, [Malayalam]  
Translation from the English book titled,  
[Against Lord and State], Translated by Abi  
Koshi, DC Books, Kottayam, 2004

Panikkassery, Velayudhan

*KERALACHARITHRAPATANANGAL*  
[Malayalam] [Studies in Kerala History],  
Current Books, Kottayam, 1980, CB Edition,  
1998

Panikkassery, Velayudhan

*KERALAM PATHINACHUM PATHINARUM  
NOOTTANDUKALIL* [Malayalam] [Kerala in  
15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Centuries], Current Books,  
Kottayam, 1963, CB Edition, 1997

Panikkassery, Velayudhan

*MARCO POLO INDIAYIL* [Malayalam] [Marco  
Polo in India], Current Books, Kottayam, 1967,  
CB Edition, 2002

Panikkassery, Velayudhan

*PORTUGUESE – DUTCH ADHIPATHYAM  
KERALATHIL*, [Malayalam] [Portuguese –  
Dutch Domination in Kerala], Current Books,  
Kottayam, 2004

Pillai, Balakrishna Kesari

*CHARITHRATHINTE ADIVERUKAL*,  
[Malayalam], [Roots of History] Kerala Sahitya  
Akademi, Trissur, 1984, Reprint 1990 and 1995

Pillai, Raman K [Ed.]

*KERALA RASHTREEYATTHINTE ANTHAR  
DHARAKAL*, [Malayalam] [Under Currents of  
Kerala Politics], Kerala Bhasha Institute,  
Thiruvananthapuram, 2000

Subramanian, N

*ELAMKULAM KUNJANPILLAYUDE  
THIRENJEDUTHA KRITHIKAL – Part I,*  
[Malayalam], International Centre for Kerala  
Studies, University of Kerala,  
Thiruvananthapuram, 2005.

*SANGHKALA BHARANA SAMVIDHANAM:  
SANGHAM TAMIZHARUDE BHARANAVUM  
SAMOOHIKA JEEVITAVUM* [Malayalam]  
[Translation of Sangam Polity: The  
Administration and Social Life of the Sangam  
Tamils, Madras, 1966.] ICHR and DC Books,  
Kottayam, 2003.

Valath, VVK

*KERALATHILE STHALA CHARITHRANGAL –  
THRISSUR JILLA* [Malayalam] [Local History  
of Kerala – Thrissur District], Kerala Sahitya  
Akademi, Trissur, 1981, 2003

Valath, VVK

*KERALATHILE STHALA CHARITHRANGAL –  
THIRUVANTHAPURAM JILLA* [Malayalam]  
[Local History of Kerala – Thiruvananthapuram  
District], Kerala Sahitya Akademi, Trissur, 1998

Vasanthan, SK

*NAMMAL NADANNA VAZHIKAL* [The Path We  
Took], [Malayalam], Cultural History of Kerala,  
Malayalam Research Center, Trissur, Kerala,  
2006

Velayudhan Kottukkoyikkal

*SREE NARAYANA GURU*, Biography, Current  
Books, Kottayam, 1975, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2007, 2<sup>nd</sup>  
Impression, 2009

Alexander K. C

*Changing Status of Pulaya Harijans of Kerala*, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL WEEKLY, Vol. 3, No. 26/28, Special Number (Jul., 1968), pp.1071-1074 [JSTOR]

Arrian

"The Indica" in *Anabasis of Alexander, together with the Indica*, E. J. Chinnock, tr. (London: Bohn, 1893), ch. 1-16,  
[http://www.shsu.edu/~his\\_ncp/Indica.html](http://www.shsu.edu/~his_ncp/Indica.html)

Burghart, Richard

*Hierarchical Models of Hindu Social System*, MAN, New Series, Vol.13, No. 4(Dec., 1978), pp. 519-536, Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland [JSTOR]

Chopra, Suneet

*The Approach of Karl Marx to the Study of Indian Society*, SOCIAL SCIENTIST, Vol.II, No.118, (March 1983), Through  
<http://dsal.uchicago.edu/socialscientist/>

Cyriac K Pullapilly

*The Izhavas of Kerala and Their Historic Struggle for Acceptance in the Hindu Society*, in Bardwell L. Smith [Ed.], RELIGION AND SOCIAL CONFLICT IN SOUTH ASIA, EJ Brill, Leiden, 1976 [Google Books]

Eric, Miller J

*Caste and Territory in Malabar*, AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGIST, New Series, Vol. 56, No.3 [June, 1954] [JSTOR]

Gupta, Dipankar

*Caste, Infrastructure and Superstructure A Critique*, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL WEEKLY, December 19, 1981, [JSTOR]

Gupta, Dipankar

*Continuous Hierarchies and Discrete Castes, part I (November 17), Part II (November 24), part III (December 1)*, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL WEEKLY, Vol. XIX No 46, 1984, [JSTOR]

Habib, Irfan

*The Peasant in Indian History*, SOCIAL SCIENTIST, Vol.II, No.118, (March 1983), Through  
<http://dsal.uchicago.edu/socialscientist/>

- Caste: *Fission and Fusion*, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL WEEKLY, Vol. 3, No. 26/28, Special Number (Jul., 1968), [JSTOR]
- Houtart, Francois and Lemercinier *Socio-Religious Movements in Kerala: A Reaction to the Capitalist Mode of Production: Part One*, SOCIAL SCIENTIST, Vol. 6, No. 11(Jun., 1978), [JSTOR]
- Houtart, Francois and Lemercinier *Socio-Religious Movements in Kerala: A Reaction to the Capitalist Mode of Production: Part Two*, SOCIAL SCIENTIST, Vol. 6, No. 12(Jun., 1978), [JSTOR]
- Hunt, WS Rev. *Slavery in Kerala*, KERALA SOCIETY PAPERS, Volume. I and II [1928 – 33] Reprint, Government of Kerala, Kerala Gazetteers, Thiruvananthapuram, 1997
- Issac, C I *Sree Narayana Guru: Founder of an Intellectual Religion*, November 1 2009, <http://www.vijayvaani.com/FrmPublicDisplayArticle.aspx?id=901>
- Isaac, T. M. Thomas *The National Movement and the Communist Party in Kerala*, SOCIAL SCIENTIST, Vol. 14, No. 8/9 (Aug. - Sep., 1986), pp. 59-80, [JSTOR]
- Isaac, T. M. Thomas *From Caste Consciousness to Class Consciousness Alleppey Coir Workers during Inter-War Period* ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL WEEKLY, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Jan. 26, 1985), pp. PE 5-PE 18 [JSTOR]
- Jaiswal, Suvira *Caste, Gender and Ideology in the Making of India*, SOCIAL SCIENTIST, Vol.36, No.1/2(Jan.-Feb., 2008), [JSTOR]
- Jaiswal, Suvira *Varna Ideology and Social Change*, SOCIAL SCIENTIST, Vol. 19, No. 3/4 (Mar. – Apr., 1991), [JSTOR]
- Jeffrey, Robin *Temple-Entry Movement in Travancore, 1860-1940*, SOCIAL SCIENTIST, Vol.4, No.8, [March, 1976], [JSTOR]
- Jeffrey,Robin *Matriliny, Marxism, and the Birth of the Communist Party in Kerala, 1930-1940*, THE



Kavoori, Purnendu S

JOURNAL OF ASIAN STUDIES, Vol. 38, No. 1  
(Nov., 1978), pp. 84 [JSTOR]

*The Varna Trophic System: An Ecological  
Theory of Caste Formation*, ECONOMICAL  
AND POLITICAL WEEKLY, Vol.37, No. 12(Mar.  
13-29, 2002), [JSTOR]

Lemercinier, Genevieve &  
Houtart, Francois

*Social Functions of Religion in Pre-Capitalist  
Societies: The Case of Kerala*, SOCIAL  
SCIENTIST, Vol. 23, No. 1/3 (Jan. - Mar., 1995),  
pp. 91-108, [JSTOR]

Michell, George

“Carvings in Kerala Temples”, in LIVING  
WOOD: SCULPTURAL TRADITIONS OF  
SOUTHERN INDIA. Marg Publications, Bombay  
1992.

Miller, Eric J

*Caste and Territory in Malabar*, AMERICAN  
ANTHROPOLOGIST, New Series, Vol. 56, No.  
3(Jun., 1954), pp. 410-420, Blackwell Publishing  
on behalf of the American Anthropological  
Association, [JSTOR]

Mukerjee, Radhakamal

*Caste and Social Change in India*, THE  
AMERICAN JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY,  
Vol.43, No. 3(Nov., 1937), pp. 377-390, The  
University of Chicago Press, [JSTOR]

Nadkarni, MV

*Is Caste System Intrinsic to Hinduism? :*  
*Demolishing a Myth*, ECONOMIC AND  
POLITICAL WEEKLY, November 8, 2003,  
[JSTOR]

Nadkarni, MV

*Is Caste System Intrinsic To Hinduism-*  
*Demolishing A Myth*, ECONOMICAL AND  
POLITICAL WEEKLY, November, 2003,  
[JSTOR]

Namboodiri, NM

*Cultural Traditions in Medieval Kerala*,  
P.J.Churian (Ed), PERSPECTIVES ON KERALA  
HISTORY- The Second Millennium, KCHR,  
Thiruvananthapuram, 1999

Namboodiripad, EMS

*Economic Backwardness of Harijan in Kerala*,  
SOCIAL SCIENTIST, Vol. 4, No.12 (Jul., 1976),  
[JSTOR]



Namboodiripad, EMS	<i>Caste Conflicts vs. Growing Unity of Popular Democratic Forces</i> , ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL WEEKLY, Vol. 14, No. 7/8, Annual Number: Class and Caste in India(Feb., 1979), [JSTOR]
Namboodiripad, EMS	<i>Once Again on Castes and Classes</i> , SOCIAL SCIENTIST, Vol. 9, No. 12(Dec., 1981), [JSTOR]
Namboodiripad, EMS	<i>Adi Sankara and His Philosophy: A Marxist View</i> , SOCIAL SCIENTIST, Vol. 17, No. (Jan-Feb., 1989), [JSTOR]
Namboodiripad, EM S	<i>The Struggle for Proletarian Hegemony: A Short Note on Freedom Struggle in Kerala</i> , SOCIAL SCIENTIST, Vol. 12, No. 9 (Sep., 1984), pp. 33-44 [JSTOR]
Noble, William A	<i>The Architecture and Organization of Kerala Style Hindu Temples</i> , ANTHROPOS, Bd. 76, H. 1./2. (1981), pp. 1-24, [JSTOR]
Nold Egenter	<i>The Present Relevance of The Primitive in Architecture</i> , ARCHITECTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY - Research Series, vol. 1, (edition in 3 languages: English - French - German). Editions Structural Mundi, Lausanne, 1992
Patankar Bharat and Omvedt Gail	<i>The Dalit Liberation Movement in Colonial Period</i> , ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL WEEKLY, Vol. 14, No. 7/8, Annual Number: Class and Caste in India (Feb., 1979), p 415-416 [JSTOR]
Pearson, MN	<i>The Portuguese in India</i> , THE NEW CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF INDIA, General Editor: Gordon Johnson 1987. Cambridge
Poduval, Jayaram	<i>Samutiris of Kolikkod and Kolattiris of Kannur</i> , ENCYCLOPEDIA OF INDIAN TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE , Ed.George Michell & Dhaky MA, American Institute of Indian Studies, New Delhi , 2001
Poduval, Jayaram	<i>Perumpadappus of Kochi</i> , ENCYCLOPEDIA OF INDIAN TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE , Ed.George Michell & Dhaky MA, American Institute of Indian Studies, New Delhi , 2001

- Poduval, Jayaram
- Tiruvitankurs of Venadu* , ENCYCLOPEDIA OF INDIAN TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE , Ed.George Michell & Dhaky MA, American Institute of Indian Studies, New Delhi , 2001
- Rajeevan ,B
- Kochi, Gateway to Baroque, India & Portugal*, Cultural Interactions, Ed. Jose Periera & Pratapaditya Pal, Marg Publications, Bombay , 2001
- Sharma, SAS
- Cultural Formation of Kerala*, ESSAYS ON THE CULTURAL FORMATION OF KERALA - LITERATURE, ART, ARCHITECTURE, MUSIC, THEATRE, CINEMA P.J.Churian (Ed), Kerala Council of Historical Research, Thiruvananthapuram, 1999,  
[http://www.keralahistory.ac.in/cul\\_kerala.htm](http://www.keralahistory.ac.in/cul_kerala.htm)
- Shrirama, Indradeva
- The Eclectic Paddhatis of Kerala*, INDOLOGICA TAURINENSIA, 35 Turin (2009)
- Shrirama
- Shaping of the Traditional Pattern of Stratification in India* , in SOCIAL INEQUALITY IN INDIA, PROFILES OF CASTE, CLASS ,POWER AND SOCIAL MOBILITY, Ed. KL Sharma, Rawat Publication, Jaipur,
- Sivanandan, P
- Untouchability and Stratification of Indian Civilization*, in DALITS IN MODERN INDIA – VISION AND VALUES, Ed. SM Michael, Sage Publication, New Delhi, 2007 [Second Edition]
- Sivanandan, P
- Economic Backwardness of Harijans in Kerala*, SOCIAL SCIENTIST, Vol. 4, No. 10(May, 1976), [JSTOR]
- Sivanandan, P
- Caste, Class and Economic Opportunity in Kerala: An Empirical Analysis, Report on Socio-Economic Survey on Caste/Communities in Kerala*, 1968, Bureau of Economic and Statistic, Trivandrum, 1969, [JSTOR]
- Sivanandan, P
- Caste, Class and Economic Opportunity In Kerala, An Empirical Analysis*, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL WEEKLY, February 1979, [JSTOR]
- Smith, Brian K
- Canonical Authority and Social Classification: Veda and “Varna” in Ancient Indian Texts*,

HISTORY OF RELIGION, Vol.32, No.2 (Nov., 1992), pp. 103-125, The University of Chicago Press, [JSTOR]

Spencer , George W

*Religious Networks and Royal Influence in Eleventh Century South India*, JOURNAL OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE ORIENT, Vol.12, No. 1(Jan., 1969), pp. 42-56, Brill, [JSTOR]

Spencer, George W

*The Politics of Plunder: The Cholas in Eleventh-Century Ceylon*, THE JOURNAL OF ASIAN STUDIES, Vol. 35, No. 3(May, 1976), pp. 405-419 Association for Asian Studies, [JSTOR]

Srinivasan, KR

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF INDIAN TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE, LOWER DRAVIDA DESA, Ed.MA DHAKY & Michael Meister, American Institute of Indian Studies, [AIIS], New Delhi.

Trautmann, Thomas R

*On the Translation of the Term Varna*, JOURNAL OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE ORIENT, Vol.7, No.2 (Jul., 1964), pp.196-201, Brill, [JSTOR]

Varma, Ravi LA

*Castes of Malabar*, KERALA SOCIETY PAPERS, Volume. I and II [1928 – 33] Reprint, Government of Kerala, Kerala Gazetteers, Thiruvananthapuram, 1997

Veluthat, Kesavan

*Religious Symbols in Political Legitimation: The Case of Early Medieval South India*, SOCIAL SCIENTIST, Vol. 21, Nos. 1-2, January-February 1993

## Web sites

<http://www.ambedkar.org>


<http://www.censusindia.gov.in>

<http://dsal.uchicago.edu>

<http://www.google.co.in/books>

<http://www.indiankanoon.org>

<http://www.jstor.org>



**PDF**  
Complete

*Your complimentary  
use period has ended.  
Thank you for using  
PDF Complete.*

[Click Here to upgrade to  
Unlimited Pages and Expanded Features](#)

<http://www.namobootini.com>

<http://www.ramanuja.org>

<https://sanskritdocuments.org>

<http://www.shsu.edu>

<http://www.fordham.edu>

<http://www.parrikar.org>

## Reference Glossary

<b><i>adhithana</i></b>	molded base
<b><i>adho-kampa</i></b>	lower 'kampa' (lower fillet)
<b><i>agrahara</i></b>	settlement of Brahmins
<b><i>agrasala</i></b>	kitchen
<b><i>alpa-vimana</i></b>	single-storeyed vimana
<b><i>alpanasi</i></b>	see <b><i>nasi</i></b>
<b><i>amalaka</i></b>	crowning circular ribbed member of <b><i>Nagara</i></b> spire
<b><i>antarala</i></b>	vestibule
<b><i>antarabhitti</i></b>	inner wall
<b><i>antarapattra</i></b>	recessed band
<b><i>anurathas</i></b>	wall-projection neighboring to the <b><i>kona</i></b> (angle)
<b><i>ardhakudya (stambha)</i></b>	"split" pilaster
<b><i>ardhamandapa</i></b>	frontal hail leading to a <b><i>vimana</i></b>
<b><i>Balikkal</i></b> (Malayalam)	altar,
<b><i>balikkalpura</i></b> (Malayalam)	Screened structure with <b><i>balikkal</i></b>
<b><i>balipitha</i></b>	altar
<b><i>basti/basadi</i></b>	Jaina temple
<b><i>bhadra</i></b>	central wall projection
<b><i>bharavahaka</i></b>	supporting dwarf
<b><i>bhitti</i></b>	wall
<b><i>bhoga-mandapa</i></b>	offering hall
<b><i>bhuta</i></b>	dwarf
<b><i>bhutamala</i></b>	frieze showing dwarfs
<b><i>brahmacchanda</i></b>	square sikhara type



	column type
<b>camara</b>	flywhisk
<b>caturasra</b>	square
<b>caturmukha</b>	four-faced; with four doorway openings
<b>citrakhanda</b>	square column type
<b>cuttambalam</b> (Malayalam)	colonnade around a courtyard
<b>devakostha</b>	wall niche
<b>dharavrtta</b>	fluted
<b>dhvajastambha</b>	flag pole
<b>dikpala</b>	directional guardian deity
<b>dipalaksmi</b>	lamp-bearing maiden
<b>dipamala</b>	row of lamps
<b>dipastambha</b>	lamp post
<b>Dravida</b>	South Indian temple mode
<b>dvara</b>	door
<b>dvarapala</b>	door guardian
<b>dvitala</b>	two storeys
<b>gaja</b>	elephant
<b>gajahasta</b>	elephant trunk
<b>gajamala</b>	elephant frieze
<b>gajamukha</b>	elephant head
<b>gajaprsthakara</b>	apsidal-ended
<b>gajavyala</b>	elephant-vyala conjoined
<b>gala</b>	recessed molding in <b>adhithana</b>
<b>galapada</b>	gala block-projection
<b>gana</b>	dwarf goblin
<b>ganamala</b>	frieze of dwarfs
<b>gandharva</b>	celestial minstrel
<b>garbhagha</b>	sanctuary



	'false" door
<b><i>gopura</i></b>	gateway with sala superstructure
<b><i>grasamukha</i></b>	gorgonoid head-mask
<b><i>griva</i></b>	recess beneath capping sikhara of a tower
<b><i>Hamsa</i></b>	goose
<b><i>hamsamala</i></b>	frieze of geese
<b><i>hara</i></b>	parapet
<b><i>harantara</i></b>	<b><i>hara</i></b> section,
<b><i>hastihasta</i></b>	banister
<b><i>Indrakanta</i></b>	sixteen-sided column
<b><i>Jagati</i></b>	vertical molding at the base of <b><i>adhithana</i></b>
<b><i>jala (jalaka)</i></b>	grille; grille-pattern
<b><i>jangha</i></b>	wall-section
<b><i>kaksasana</i></b>	seat back
<b><i>kalasa</i></b>	pot
<b><i>kalpalata</i></b>	wish-fulfilling vine
<b><i>kalyana-mandapa</i></b>	marriage hall
<b><i>kampa</i></b>	rectangular fillet
<b><i>kandhara</i></b>	broad recess
<b><i>kantha</i></b>	recess in adhithana or <b><i>upapitha</i></b>
<b><i>kapota</i></b>	curved cornice of basement or walls
<b><i>kapotabandha</i></b>	adhithana type topped by <b><i>kapota</i></b>
<b><i>karna</i></b>	corner projection
<b><i>kattu</i></b> (Tamil)	multi-faceted or polygonal section
<b><i>kicaka</i></b>	dwarf atlantan figure
<b><i>kicakamala</i></b>	frieze of dwarfs; see <b><i>bhutamala</i></b> and <b><i>ganamala</i></b>
<b><i>kilivasala</i></b> (Tamil)	roof gable
<b><i>kirttimukha</i></b>	demon head
<b><i>kodikkuruku/</i></b>	





	foliation on a <b>kapota</b>
<b>kona</b>	corner; <b>karna</b>
<b>kudu</b> (Tamill),	blind chaitya arch
<b>kuksi-nasi</b>	lateral <b>nasi</b>
<b>kumbha</b>	pot motif
<b>kumbhaka</b>	pot motif on jagati
<b>kumbhapanjara</b>	pilaster with pot at base and <b>panjara</b> motif on top
<b>kumbhastambha</b>	pilaster with pot motif
<b>kumuda</b>	minor torus in <b>adhithana</b>
<b>kurma</b>	tortoise
<b>kuta</b>	square-domed aedicule
<b>kutakara-alpa</b>	single-storeyed <b>vimana</b>
<b>kuttambalam</b> (Malayalam)	hall for theatre performances ( <b>kudiyattam</b> )
<b>lalata</b>	lintel-block
<b>lata</b>	central jala section
<b>latina</b>	mono-spire Nagara superstructure
<b>linga</b>	phallus; Siva's aniconic symbol
<b>Madhya-nadi</b> (Malayalam)	space around sanctuary
<b>mahadvara</b>	entrance structure
<b>mahamandapa</b>	outer large mandapa, usually open
<b>mahanasi</b>	large <b>nasi</b> , cardinal <b>nasi</b>
<b>mahapatti</b>	projecting topmost band of adhithana
<b>makara</b>	aquatic monster: dolphin
<b>makara-torana</b>	arch with makaras at the sides
<b>makaramukha</b>	<b>makara</b> head
<b>malasthana</b>	upper part of column or pilaster with floral design
<b>malika</b>	colonnade
<b>mancabandha</b>	<b>adhithana</b> type without <b>kumuda</b>



	adhisthana type without kumuda
<b>mandapa</b>	columnar hall
<b>matha</b>	monastery
<b>mayura</b>	peacock
<b>mukhacatuski</b>	porch
<b>mukhamandapa</b>	front hail
<b>mulasthana</b>	sanctuary
<b>naga</b>	cobra
<b>nagabandha</b>	cobra ornament
<b>nagara</b>	North Indian temple mode
<b>nagini</b>	female cobra
<b>nalambalam</b> (Malayalam)	wall around the <b>cuttambalam</b>
<b>namaskara-mandapa</b> (Malayalam)	detached mandapa
<b>nasi</b>	horseshoe-shaped window motif on <b>kapota</b> , <b>kuta</b> , or <b>sala</b>
<b>nidhi</b>	personified wealth
<b>nirandhara</b>	without circumambulatory path
<b>padabandha</b>	<b>adhisthana</b> type
<b>padippura</b> (Malayalam)	entrance-structure
<b>padma</b>	lotus rpotif
<b>padmabandha</b>	<b>adhisthana</b> type
<b>padmaka</b>	<b>adhisthana</b> type
<b>padmapatra</b>	lotus petal
<b>padmapitha</b>	lotus pedestal
<b>padmopdana</b>	lotus-shaped upana
<b>paduka</b>	base
<b>panjara</b>	horseshoe-shaped aedicule
<b>pattika</b>	broad rectangular fillet



	rectilinear fillet
<b>phalaka</b>	pillar part above the capital
<b>phamsana</b>	tiered pyramidal superstructure
<b>pitha</b>	pedestal
<b>potika</b>	bracket
<b>pradakshinapatha</b>	ambulatory passageway
<b>prakara</b>	enclosure wall
<b>pranala</b>	water sprout
<b>prastara</b>	entablature
<b>pratibandha</b>	<b>adhithana</b> type
<b>pratiratha</b>	wall-recess intermediately after <b>bhadra</b>
<b>purnaghata</b>	vase-of-plenty motif
<b>puspa</b>	floral motif
<b>puspamala</b>	floral frieze
<b>puspapatra</b>	floral petal
<b>puspapotika</b>	bracket with emanating floral projection
<b>puspavalli</b>	floral creeper
<b>rangamandapa</b>	hall for theatric/dancing purpose
<b>ratna</b>	jewel motif
<b>ratnamala</b>	jewel frieze
<b>raya-gopura</b>	royal gopura
<b>rudracchanda</b>	circular <b>sikhara</b> type
<b>rudrakanta</b>	circular column type
<b>sakha</b>	door jamb
<b>sala</b>	rectangular barrel-vaulted aedicule
<b>samatala-vitana</b>	flat ceiling
<b>sandhara</b>	with ambulatory
<b>sardula</b>	tiger
<b>sarvatobhadra</b>	four-faced; having four openings



	crowning cupola-like roof of superstructure
<b>simhavyala</b>	lion-vyala motif
<b>simhamukha</b>	lion head
<b>sopana</b>	flight of steps
<b>Sri Koil</b> (Malayalam / Tamil)	sanctuary
<b>stupi</b>	vase finial
<b>stupika</b>	vase finial
<b>sucika</b>	pyramidal roof
<b>sukanasa</b>	antefix of superstructure
<b>sundu</b>	water spout
<b>tala</b>	floor, storey
<b>taranga</b>	wave; roll bracket's wavy pattern
<b>tirukuttu -mandapa</b> (Malayalam)	square colonnade
<b>torana</b>	decorative auspicious arch
<b>tripatta</b>	tri-faced
<b>tripatta-kumuda</b>	tri-faced torus
<b>upana</b>	bottom adhisthana molding
<b>upapitha</b>	platform or plinth beneath <b>adhisthana</b>
<b>urdhva-kampa</b>	upper fillet
<b>uttara</b>	architrave of the entablature; lintel, beam
<b>uttaranga</b>	door lintel
<b>uttupura</b> (Malayalam)	dining hail
<b>vahana</b>	animal or bird mount
<b>vajana</b>	projecting upper band in adhisthana
<b>valabhi</b>	rafter end
<b>valiyambalam</b> (Malayalam)	frontal part of <b>nalambalam</b>
<b>vedi</b>	wall moldings above <b>adhisthana</b>



(Malayalam)	peripheral screen wall with lamps
<b><i>vimana</i></b>	shrine
<b><i>visnukanta</i></b>	octagonal column type
<b><i>vitana</i></b>	ceiling
<b><i>vrsa</i></b>	bull figure on roof corner
<b><i>vrta</i></b>	circular
<b><i>vrta-kumuda</i></b>	circular kumuda
<b><i>rttakara</i></b>	circular
<b><i>rttayata</i></b>	elliptical
<b><i>vyala</i></b>	griffinic monster
<b><i>vyalamala</i></b>	vyla frieze
<b><i>vyalamukha</i></b>	vyala head
<b><i>vyalavali</i></b>	vyala frieze
<b><i>yaksa</i></b>	male nature spirit
<b><i>yaksamala</i></b>	yaksa frieze
<b><i>yaksi</i></b>	female nature spirit