

**PRE-MODERN KERALA:
PROBLEMS AND PERSPECTIVES
(HIS1C02)**



STUDY MATERIAL

**I SEMESTER
CORE COURSE**

M.A. HISTORY

(2019 Admission onwards)

**UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT
SCHOOL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION
CALICUT UNIVERSITY P.O.
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MODULE I

**HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN
PRE-MODERN KERALA**

Parasurama Legend.

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

compiled sometime in the 18th or 19th century. Whatever be its historical authenticity, the Parasurama legend embodies some geographical and geological facts pertaining to ancient Kerala. Though geography is, as K.M. Panikkar has observed, “the most permanent and invariable factor of history”, it is an accepted fact that the geographical features of a country do not themselves remain stationary in all ages. The consensus of opinion among scholars is that a substantial portion of Kerala must have been under water in ancient days, the Arabian Sea itself having extended right up to the foot of the Western Ghats. The coastal belt of the Alleppey district is believed to have been submerged under water in the ancient past or at least it might have constituted an extensive swamp interspersed with sand banks and mud banks here and there. The existence of marine fossils including coral reefs at Vazhapallinar Changanacherry is cited as positive evidence in support of the contention that the tract in question might have been at one time under the sea. The land might have been thrown up from the sea as a result of the operation of volcanic or seismological factors. Geologists point out that the numerous rivers which take their source from the Western Ghats might have also brought down in their course large quantities of silt and mud while ocean currents might have deposited immense quantities of sand on the shore. A vast stretch of land area might have thus come into existence by the steady accumulation of silt and sand. Perhaps, the Parasurama legend regarding the creation of Kerala from out of the sea highlights this geographical truth.

Cheraman Legend

The legend relating to the conversion of the last Chera Emperor (Cheraman Perumal) to Islam after partitioning the country comes as a dramatic climax to the fanciful story of the foreign Perumals. The Perumal who left Kerala is said to have landed at a port on the Arabian coast and met Muhammad, the Prophet, at a place called Jeddah. After having been duly canonized by the Prophet, so goes the story, he married the sister of the king of Arabia, lived therein comfort for five years and then undertook a journey to Kerala for the spread of Islam in this country, but before he could accomplish his mission he died and was buried at a place on the Arabian coast. The different versions of the Keralolpathi give the above story with differences in the details which embellish them. The Cheraman legend is not corroborated by any contemporary record or evidence. None of the early or medieval travellers who visited Kerala has referred to it in their records. Thus Sulaiman, Al Biruni, Benjamin of Tudela, Al Kazwini, Marco Polo, Friar Odoric, Friar Jordanus Ibn Batuta, Abdur Razzak, and Nicolo Conti – none of these travelers speaks of the story of the Cheraman Perumal's alleged conversion to Islam. Nevertheless, the legend crept its way into the accounts of the foreign travellers who came to Kerala after the arrival of the Portuguese. Duarte Barbosa and Canter Visscher have alluded to the Cheraman legend. Shaik Zainuddin, the author of the Tuhafat-ul-Mujahidin writing in the 16th century, has spoken of the Cheraman legend as “the common and earliest

tradition regarding the propagation of Muhammadan religion in Malabar”, but the learned historian was not inclined to believe in its historical authenticity. In short, the legend rested solely on oral tradition handed down from generation to generation and it was reproduced by later writers without any critical examination of its details. On careful consideration of all aspects of the question, it would be seen that the Cheraman legend was only the figment of the imagination of some early writers. It is exceedingly doubtful if any Chera emperor ever became a convert to Islam. In fact, there never was a ruler of Kerala by name Cheraman Perumal. As Dr. Gundert has observed, “Surely there has never been a Cheraman Perumal. Cheraman is the name of the dynasty of Chera or Kerala rulers for the two names are the same”. Logan accepted the story of the Perumal’s conversion to Islam as authentic, but he changed the date of the conversion from 345 to 825 A.D. and linked it with the rumoured existence of a tomb stone at Zaffar on the Arabian coast said to be that of the convert Perumal. But this view has been proved to be equally untenable. The Perumal could not have met Muhammad, the Prophet, at Jeddah either in 825 A.D., i.e., two centuries after the death of Muhammad or in 345 A.D. i.e., more than two centuries before his birth. The Cheraman legend is thus beyond doubt an anachronism.

Further, the truth about the existence and contents of the Arabian epitaph referred to by Logan has also since been disproved for want of reliable testimony. While the story of the

Perumal's conversion to Islam is thus liable to rejection in the absence of unimpeachable historical evidence, there is one school of thought, which believes that the religion to which the last of the Perumals became a convert might have been either Buddhism or Jainism. There is still another version according to which the last of the Perumals became a convert to Christianity and then went on a pilgrimage to Mylapore where he died some years later and was buried by the side of the tomb of St. Thomas, the Apostle. There is valid reason to reject the whole story of the Perumal's renunciation of Hinduism and partitioning of the kingdom as unhistorical. It has now been proved that the 9th, 10th and 11th centuries comprised the age of the Second Chera Empire when the Kulasekharas exercised their authority over the whole of Kerala from their capital at Mahodayapuram. It is inconceivable how this would have been possible had the kingdom been partitioned, as alleged. Again, the last Cheraman Perumal was Rama Varma Kulasekhara (1090 – 1102) and there is no evidence to affirm that he renounced Hinduism and embraced some other non-Hindu faith, be it Islam, Buddhism, Jainism or Christianity. The probability is that the last Cheraman Perumal lived and died a Hindu. It would seem that the Cheraman legend had its origin in the wrong identification or mixing up of a local ruler of a later date, perhaps a Zamorin of Calicut, who became a convert to Islam, with an early Chera Emperor.

Tuhafat-ul-Mujahiddin

Tuhafat-ul-Mujahiddin written by Sheik Zainuddin in

the 16th century marks a new stage in the tradition of the historical writing in Kerala. The book, in general depicts the Portuguese atrocities upon the natives of Malabar, especially upon the Muslim community. Following the Arab tradition of historical writing, Zainuddin gives the detailed chronology of the colonial domination of the Portuguese in Malabar during the 15th and 16th centuries. The book was written in Arabic and has been translated into many foreign and Indian languages in the course of time. For very long time it was treated as an honest guide by the foreigners to know about Kerala. The book was completed in 1583. Shaikzainuddin was a native of Ponnani and he belonged to a family of religious scholars. He dedicated the book to the then Bijapur ruler Adil Shah. Tuhafat-ul-Mujahiddin has an introduction and 4 separate parts. In the introduction the author calls the Muslims to fight against the Portuguese. The first part reminds the Muslims that it is their duty to fight against the Portuguese as they were doing all types of atrocities. The relevant verses from the Quran are included in this part in order to substantiate his argument. The second part deals with the growth of Islam in Kerala and has a detailed description about the ports in the western coast. The third part mentions about the tolerant attitude of the Hindu rulers in Kerala towards the Muslims. It further discusses the Hindu customs, caste system, pollution, marriage system, order of succession, polyandry, dress, warfare etc. that had existed in Malabar during those days. In general, this part provides a clear picture of the Kerala culture during the 16th century. The fourth and final part of the book deals with the colonial

domination of the Portuguese in Kerala from 1498 to 1583. This part is pure factual history. According to Zainuddin, the position of the Muslims in Kerala was far better prior to the advent of the Portuguese. They were well treated by the Hindu rulers. He states that due to the Portuguese rivalry the Muslim traders lost their trade dominance in the western coast. Eventually the religious belief and the war spirit of the Muslims declined. He further states that the Zamorin, the ruler of Calicut was very kind to the Muslims. The gradual growth of the Portuguese hegemony in every field of Kerala society is clearly depicted in this work.

Mushaka Vamsa

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

noted that the commonly accepted first historical chronicle of India, Kalhana's 'Rajatarangini' was written during the 12th century only, Mushaka Vamsa was written one century earlier. The work is a blend of legends and facts. The author relies upon legends and traditions for recording the early history of the Mushaka kingdom. But when it comes to the more recent and contemporary periods the description becomes more factual and historical. Atula relates the origin of the dynasty with a traditional myth. According to this, the pregnant queen of Mahishmati escaped to Ezhimala from the massacre of Parasurama. She gave birth to Ramaghata, who eventually became the founder of the Mushaka kingdom. As he was born in a mouse's burrow, he got the name Ramaghata had built a capital called Kolapattanam. According to Atula, Srikanta is the 118th ruler of the Mushaka dynasty. The important kings referred by him are Nandan, Urgan, Vikramarama, Jayamani and Valabha II. It is assumed that the Nandan referred in the Sangam literature may be the same Nandan of the Mushaka Vamsa Kavya. The King Vikramarama is referred in the Narayan-Kannur inscription of 929AD. There is a similarity between Ramaghata Moovan of the Sangam literature and Ramaghata Mushikan of the Mushaka Vamsa Kavya. Nandan is characterized as the one who is involved in worldly pleasures both in Mushaka Vamsa Kavya and Akananuru of Sangam literature. The most important king of the dynasty was Valabha II. He founded the ports of Marahi (Madayi) and Vallabha Pattanam (Valapattanam). He is said to have helped the Cheras

in their fight against the Cholas. *Mushaka Vamsa Kavya* is perhaps the earliest available Mahakavya in Sanskrit. It has more than one thousand poems in fifteen cantos. The work gives information about the penetration of the Cheras into the Ezhimala kingdom. Athula has given the chronology of the Mushaka rulers from Ramaghata to Srikanta. As he was a court poet, he naturally relates the genealogy of his king with the yadavakula. The actual historical importance of his work is yet to be evaluated. The actual import of *Mushaka Vamsa* in forming the tradition of historical writing in Kerala has yet to be analysed. This poem stands almost alone, as there has not been any evidence for a similar composition on the Perumals or any other Naduvali. The Cera kings were also lacking a prasastitradition. Northern do we have a composition in the local language, similar to this work. There is no indication that Athula was influenced by Kalhana's work. Was he influenced by the heroic poetry of the Sangham age and the literature attempting to account for the origin and growth of Colas and Pallavas? The question of the antecedents of Athula's work has to be studied in more detail. However, Athula left no tradition of historical writing in Kerala. His own account was a blend of legend and fact, the latter pertaining only to the immediate predecessors of his own patron, His account of the penetration of the Cera kingdom over Elimala and the roles performed by Mushaka kings both inside their territories and visualist-a-visualist the Ceras, may have been based on actual observation and interpretation.

Granthavaris

Granthavaris were essentially accounts of contemporary events, but it appears that efforts were made to obtain details of past events from earlier records also. This is probably the first case in Kerala where the earlier written evidence is used in a contemporary chronicle. For example, all the documents related to the monetary obligations of the Venad Kings, to Thiruvananthapuram temple were recovered and copied, which were used by the ruler to settle his accounts with the temple around 911 M.E. (1735-6 A.D). With the introduction of land settlement in Tiruvitamkur most of the old land deeds were recovered and copied. Similar recovery, copying and examination of documents were apparently used to prepare the Granthavaris of other rulers and temples. Thus, the Granthavari tradition reflected a shift from dependence on oral tradition to the examination of written evidence. One need not over-estimate the authenticity of pre-modern chronological accounts, as even Granthavaris were not free from a degree of dependence on legend, particularly related to early past. The relative accuracy is limited to contemporary events and those happenings in the immediate past. However, the copying of early documents by Thiruvananthapuram temple at the behest of the ruler, showed that authenticity was sought for incidents taking place in the past, when there was a dispute about land rights or the privileges of a temple functionary. The documents copied in Thiruvananthapuram temple dated back to the 14th century. This effort was more a result of the political and economic requirements of the

times than the result of an infelt need for historical accuracy.

Epigraphical Sources

Numismatics

Along with archaeological sources available, there are references about the availability of exchange patterns and coins in Kerala in the literary records and also in inscriptions. Coins are unavoidable in a surplus production pattern. Roman coins and punch marked silver coins were widely available from different parts of Kerala. But scholars differ in their opinion on the usage of such coins in those times. The widely popular indigenous coins of Kerala are Dinaram and Kashu. Dinaram was popular across south India. Pazhankashu was also popular from 10th century onwards. But such coins were not limited to the Cheras alone. These were widely circulated in other parts of South India. From 12th century onwards, a lot of coins starts appearing in inscriptions like Achu, Pana, Shalakam etc. kalanjhu also became popular during the period. Aanayachu were used for market transactions while Azhakachu were used for market transactions while Azhakachu happens to be used for offering to temples. Other prominent coins include Achu, Kashu, Kambi, Tharam, Thiramam, Panam, Pakam etc. later coins are also available in other low-quality metals too. Foreign travellers have explained the exchange rates of these coins.

Tharisappilly Copper Plates.

These inscriptions attain significance due to several reasons. The prime reason is regarding the content. Differing

from the usual temple inscriptions on offerings or administration, this is regarding the trade grants given to a Jew named Mar Saphir Eso. The inscriptions are done in several copper plates, which makes us guess that it was installed in different periods (regnal years) of the King Stanu Ravi Kulasekharan. Scholars have remarked his time period in the later 9th century, extending from 849-883. These are roughly corresponding dates as there are difference of opinion this too. The first copper plate was inscribed during the fifth regnal year of the King. It says that the Venad naduvazhis, Ayyan Adigal Thiruvadigal, the local administrators and the trade guilds like Anjuvannam and another prominent person referred to as Punnathala pathi etc. together decided to give the grant of several privileges in 'kurakkenikkollam' (Kollam) to Mar Saphir Eso. The privileges include 4 Kudiizhavar, Mannar etc. and tax-free land for housing and to granting rights of cultivation patterns etc. all these privileges granted are hereditary too. The plot is also served with peasants called karalas. The presence of Ramathiruvadi points to the kuruvazcha existing in the matrilineal families. The mention of the Koyiladhikarikal, vijayaragadevan, explains about the administrative hierarchy of the period too. These tharisappalli copper plates are important in several respects regarding the trade, presence of the Jews, privileges to non-brahmins, presence of a naduvazhi beyond the perumal, the kovoladhikarikal as an administrative power, the matriliney and the kuruvazcha mentioned are to be noted and has to be studied in detail.

Ballads.

The Northern Ballads (Vatakkann Pattukal) deal with the exploits of medieval heroes and heroines. They give us interesting glimpses of the social customs and institutions of medieval Kerala. The Thacholivilallads describe the fortunes of Thacholi Othenan while the Puthuram Pattukal narrates the adventures of Aromal Chekavar. Just like that of the Northern Ballads, we have the Southern Ballads. They include the prayers to God and certain historical subjects. The important Southern Ballads are the Anchutampuram Pattu and Iravikutty Pillai Pattu. The former is about the internal problems of the royal family of Travancore during the 16th century and the latter is about the hero Iravikutty Pillai, the minister to the King of Travancore, who had fought heroically against the army of the Madurai Naiksat the time of their attack against Travancore during the 17th century.

Literary Sources

The literary sources are of two kinds—indigenous and foreign. The indigenous sources are chiefly found in Sanskrit, Tamil and Malayalam languages.

Sanskrit Works.

Sanskrit works are of immense help in the reconstruction of the ancient & medieval history of Kerala. The early Sanskrit works like the Aitareya Aranyaka refers to Cherapada. Ramayana mentions Kerala and also Murichipatanam. Mahabharata mentions a Kerala king who

supplied provisions in the Kurukshetra battle. The Sanskrit grammarians Patanjali (2nd C. B.,C.) and Katyayana (4th BC) were familiar with Kerala geography, but not Panini (7th B.C.).Kautilya mentions river Churni. The Puranas and Raghuvamsa make mention of the land of Kerala. For the age of the Perumals and after we have Sanskrit plays and poems yielding historical material. They became source not by themselves, but through the Attaprakarams composed for performance in the temples.Their performance reflected contemporary social values. The dramas of Kulasekhara demonstrate Kerala as a separate political unit during that period. The Sankaranarayaneeyam (869 AD) help us to determine the chronology of Sthanuravi. The Mushakavamsa trows light on the early history of the Mushaka dynasty, besides the Chola raids and also of Srimula vasam The Siva Vilasom mentions the rulers of the Cochin royal house. The grammatical work Lilathilakam refers to the rulers of Venad. The Suka Sandesa and Kokila sandesa mention important pilgrim centres of Kerala. Such works give a glimpse of local tradition and customs of the period. The Chataka Sandesa refers to the shifting of the capital from Padmanabhapuram toTrivandrum. The Balamarthanda Vijayam deals with many historical events connected with the rulers of Travancore.

Tamil Works.

The Tamil literary works of the Sangam Age provide valuable information of the life of the people in the early centuries of the Christian era. They reflect the picture of

a settled society. The sangam anthologies comprises 2381 poems by 473 poets. Of the sangam works, the most valuable for the historian of Kerala are the Pathittupattu, Akananuru, Purananuru and Nattinai, besides the two epics Cillappadikaram and Manimekhalai. The Pathittupattu is a group of 10 poems each in praise of a Chera king by a poet. It is the most valuable work for the reconstruction of the political history of early Kerala as each decade of the work eulogises the achievements of a Chera king. Akananuru is a collection of 400 poems on love and romance dealing with matters Akam(Heart).Purananuru is another collection of 100 poems dealing with Puram (external)matters like war and diplomacy.The Kuruntokai and Nattinai also yield some historical information. The Muthollayiram refers to the Chera capital Vanchi. Of the post Sangam works Silappadikaram deals with the exploits of Chera Chenkuttavan. Besides being the story of Kovilan and Kannaki, this work of Elanko Adikal, (the Chera crown prince) is considered as the Bible of the Kannaki cult. It mentions Kunavayirkottam, the Jain centre and corroborates the evidences from Roman writings. Manimekhalai of Sathanar continues the story of the early epic, as its heroine is the daughter of Madhavi. The celebrated songs of Auvaiyar, Parinar and Kapilar deal with Kerala life and society. The hymns of Nayanars and Alvars mentions some of the holy shrines of Kerala. The Perumal-Thirumozhi of Kulasekhara Allwar gives information of the Chera kingdom, besides the spread of Vaishnavism.The Thiruvaimozhi of

Nammalavar gives details of the Vaishnava shrines of Kerala. The PeriyaPuranam of Sekkilar describes the story of Cheraman Perumal.

Malayalam works.

Literary works in Malayalam are available from the 12th century. They may be classified as Sandesa Kavyas, Manipravalam works, Ballads or Pattukal. Manipravalam is a mixture of Malayalam and Sanskrit. This form of literature was the predominant trend during the medieval period (9th -15th C. Among the numerous types of Manipravalam works, those written as eulogies to Devadasis are historically valuable. Among them the Unniachicharitam and Unnichirutevi charitam contain detailed accounts of the Devadasis and throw light on the political and social life of Kerala. The latter is of particular significance as it describes Kurumatsaram, the struggle of the two Brahmin villages. The Unniacharitham describes the early history of the Cochin royal family. The celebrated Unnunilandesam is the most important from the historical points of view. It is written in the form of a message from Aditya Varma the prince to his sweet heart Unnunili. The work draws a lively sketch of medieval Kerala and also the wars and achievements of Venad rulers. Anantapuram varnanam also gives a glimpse of local traditions and customs, besides giving a description of Trivandrum and Kantalur Salai. Chandrotsavom throws light on the social and cultural life of the age. It portrays the life style of the upper classes, besides several customs and ceremonies. The Sandesa Kavyas in

general give geographical features of Kerala and portrays the life of the people. The pattu form of literature is the genuine literary form in Malayalam. To this category belongs the works of Ezhutachan (Kilipattu), Cherusseri (Krishnagatha),Puntanam (Janappana), Vatakkann Pattukal, *Thullal* works of Kunchan Nampiyar, themoplah songs of the Muslims, Kalyana pattukal of the Jews etc. The Patappattu (War Songs) describes the conflict between the Zamorin and the Cochin Raja and the intrigues of the Portuguese and the Dutch. They corroborate the official records. The Mamankam Kilipattu describes the events during the reign of Manavikrama and also a description of the Mamankam festival. The Chaver Songs like the Kandan Menon Pattu and the Ramacha Panikker pattu deals with the exploits of Valluvanad hero. There are also ballads describing the exploits of Kerala Varma Pazhasi Raja, Marthanda Varma, Raja Kesavadas, Kunjali Marakkar and Tipu Sulthan, which corrects British records. The *Thullal* Works of Kunchan Nambiar allude to several social customs prevalent in the 18th C. They reflect the changes that were taking place in contemporary society. The structural aspect of Kerala society including caste, occupation, economic activities, polity and the cultural impact of the Europeans are all well portrayed in the *Thullal* songs. The Margam Kilippattu, Kalliana pattukal, Palli pattukal of the Syrian Christians, the Moplah songs of the Malabar Muslims and the Jewish wedding songs also yield historical and sociological material. The Margam Kilippattu reflects the St. Thomas tradition. The Thiruvarangul kilippattu mentions Thomas of

Canas. Folk songs constitute another major untapped source. The songs associated with Theyyam, Thiruvand other local art forms are a mine of information for social history.

Foreign Accounts and Chronicles

The description of any country and its people by foreign observers is always valuable as they corroborate and supplement the indigenous sources. The accounts of foreign travellers on Kerala may be classified as those of classical Greek and Roman, Chinese and Arab and European. The celebrated classical writers of Greece and Rome who make mention of Kerala are Megasthenes, Pliny, Strabo, Ptolemy and the anonymous author of the Periplus. The Greek ambassador Megasthenes (4th century B.C.) refers to the Chera kingdom and also to the port of Tropina in his work *Indica*. Pliny (1st C). In his *Natural History* refers to the ruler of Kerala as Calobotras while Periplus mentions him as Kerobotras. Ptolemy's (1st A.D) geography mentions Karoura as the capital of the Cheras. These writers give detailed information about the thriving trade between Kerala and the Roman Empire. The Peutinger Tables (225–250 A.D), a set of maps copied from the frescoes of Rome reveal a prosperous Roman settlement at Muziris. The Lazuntine map *Cosmos Indico-pleustis* (6th A.D) had the earliest reference to Kollam and the Christians (*Topographia Indica*). The Roman geographers supplement the Sangam literature.

Chinese accounts.

The Chinese accounts of Wang Ta Yuan and Ma Huan yield historical information. Hsien Tsang the

Chinese pilgrim seems to have referred to Malabar as Molokuch, the land of hills. Wang Ta Yuan provides eye witness account Ezhimala and Calicut (description of the barbarian of the Isles) Ma Huan a Chinese Muslim merchant (15th century. A.D) gives in interesting description of the port and town of Calicut and its people. He is the first foreign traveller to mention Kochi—its rulers and people.

Arab and Persian writing.

The Arab travellers and geographers give us valuable information of Kerala society from 9th C onwards. The first notable Arab writer is Sulaiman, the merchant who gives a description of the Kollam as the most important port in India touched by the Chinese ships. Ibn Khurdabbeh, another Muslim writer mention Malabar coast as a centre of export of rice. The Arab writers of the 10th century like Ibnul Faquib, Ibn Rusta, Abu Zaid and dMasudi repeat the statements of Sulaiman. Alberunian, illustrations Muslim traveller of the medieval period is the earliest writer to call our country as Malabar. Idrisi gives information of the coastal towns of Malabar .Other travellers like Al Kazwim and Rashiuddin refer to Kollam, Kolathunad and Mt. Eli respectively. Ibn Batuta who visited Calicut more than seven times gives us valuable accounts of Calicut, its King, people and port. He mentions Kollam as one of the finest cities of Malabar. The most objectives of al lthe Arab writers, Batuta's account is more reliable than of his predecessors.

European Travellers

The European Travellers began to visit the country from the 13th century. Benjamin of Tudela, a Jewish traveller from Spain gives information of Kollam. The first major traveller was the Italian Marco Polo (Venice) who travelled through Kerala to China (1294A.D). He gives picturesque details of the country, its people and natural resources. His description of Mt .Eli is of particular interest. John of Monte Corvino, the first Roman Catholic missionary to China records the Commercial predominance of the Muslims of Kollam. Friar Jordanus (1324) also gives useful account of the land and its people. In his work 'Mirabilia Descriptia', Friar Jordanus mentions the extensive trade in spices, the prosperous Christian community and the policy of religious toleration of the Malabar rulers. He was the first foreign account of Marumakkathayam. Nicolo Conti, an Italian traveller (1440 A.D) mentioned the flourishing trade in ginger, pepper and Cinnammon at the port of Kollam. He was one of the earliest writers to mention Kochi. Abdur Razzack a notable non-European writer has testified to the predominance of Malabar trade with the Arabs. Athanasius Nikitin (1468-74) the Russian traveller describes Calicut. Foreign literary sources speedily increase as we come to the Portuguese period. For the Portuguese period we have the commentaries of Albuquerque, the book of Barbosa, travels of Varthama and Pyarde Laval. They throw light on the life of the people, trade activities in the ports and related matters and also of the state of affairs in the kingdom.

The letters of the Portuguese missionaries of Kerala, *historia de Malabar* by Gon Salves, the full text of the Synod of Diamper are other Dependable sources. For the Dutch period we have the memories of the Dutch administrators of Kerala like Van Rheede, Nieuhoff, and the letters from Malabar by Visscher, accounts of Tavernier, Foster and above all *Hortus Malabaricus* giving information on the Flora of the Malabar Coast. For the British period we have the Tellicherry consultations (26 vols.)The report of the joint commissioners of Malabar, Buchanan's 'journey' and the land of the Perumal's by Francis Day and the notes of Mateer.

Literary sources became abundant when we come to the modern period. With the publication of a number of contemporary accounts, biographies novels, plays. The publication of periodicals and journals ushered in an era of exhaustive study. The archival collections provide and the Valuable sources. The reports of the Archaeology Dept are also available. The compilation of such works as the Travancore Archaeological series (1910-39) (TAS), Rama Varma Research Institute bulletin (RVRIB) annual reports of Epigraphy, Kerala society papers (1928-33),annual reports of the Archaeological survey of India(ASI) are useful for the reconstruction of the history of Kerala.

Place Names.

The study of place names help us to know the history of a particular area.Geographical unities are given names on the basis of geographical peculiarities

like presence of rivers, lakes and mountains, forts, places and markets. Thus we have a number of place names ending with Kad (Palakkad, Mannarkkad, Chavakkad) Kulam (Ernakulam, Kunnankulam) alluding to the existence of forests and ponds. The existence in a region is indicated by reference to Kode (Kozhikode, Azhikode) similarly Angadi and Chantaindicates market place (Parappangadi, Meenchanta). The elevated regions are indicated by such words as Poyil, Meethas and Medu and elevated garden lands by Parambu. Habitation centres are indicated by Cheri and Ur. Existence of custom centres are shown by Petta and Chungam. Place indicated Pally denotes Church or Buddhist educational centre. A careful study of place names of a region could indicate the type of habitation, economic activities, political importance, social and cultural features of a region.

MODULE II

KERALA AS A REGION AND SOCIAL FORMATION PROCESS

Kerala has had the distinction of being an independent geographical and political entity from the early days. Its unique geographical position and peculiar physical features have invested Kerala with a distinct individuality. The land of Kerala comprises the narrow coastal strip bounded by the Western Ghats on the east and the Arabian Sea on the west in the southern part of the Indian Peninsula. Paradoxical as it might seem, this geographical position has helped to ensure, to some extent, its political and cultural isolation from the rest of the country and also facilitated its extensive and active contacts with the countries of the outside world. A study of the geographical factor in relation to Kerala history assumes special significance. Here we are going to know the more important physical or geographical features of the land like mountains, rivers, backwaters, wind and climate. We shall also try to find out the influence exerted by each of these factors on our history and culture.

Geographical Factors: The geographical factors that have influenced and moulded Kerala culture may be classified into the following: 1. Position, location and shape of the state 2. Mountains, Hills and Passes. 3. Rivers, backwaters and the sea. 4. Climate, Fauna and Flora.

1. Position, Location and Shape.

Kerala is situated in the extreme south west corner of the Indian sub-Continent. The land of Kerala comprises the narrow coastal strip surrounded by the Western Ghats in the East and the Arabian Sea in the West. Kerala comprises three natural divisions. They are:

- A. The High land–The Western Ghats constitute this region
- B. The Low land–it stretches along the coastal plain in the West
- C. Mid land–in between the High land and the Low land. It is rich in agricultural products.

Now, let us see how this peculiar position and division influenced our History. Kerala was free from invasions, which shook North India through centuries because of her insular position. This enabled the growth of peculiar social institutions like the Marumakkathayam in Kerala. It was a hindrance for friendly contacts with the North. It took longer time for north Indian religions to penetrate in to Kerala than foreign ones. It enabled Kerala to evolve its own styles of art, architecture and sculpture like Kathakali and Kudiyyattam. However, this did not prevent intellectuals like Sankaracharya to propagate his philosophy outside Kerala. It was not a hindrance to the Chola, Vijaya Nagar, Mysore and other South Indian powers to raid the Kerala territory. It did not prevent Tamil, Kannada and Tulu languages to influence our dialect and writing languages.

2. Mountains, Hills and Passes.

The Sahya Mountains which form part of the Western

Ghats is the main mountain range in Kerala. It influenced our History in more ways than one. It provides the 'body' to the state of Kerala. It protected the state from political invasions that hit South India till the 18th century. It guards the eastern frontier. In this sense, Sahya range may be called as the Great Sentinel of the East. It safeguarded the territorial integrity of the land. It was the source of most of the rivers of Kerala. It provided mountain passes for traffic between Kerala and neighbouring states of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. The forest in the Ghat is a source of wealth to the state. Some of the peaks important from the political and religious points of view are situated in the Western Ghats. The Anamudi peak (8841) in the Ghat represents the highest point in India-south of the Himalayas. The Agastyakutam, the southernmost peak in the Western Ghats figures in the popular legend of Agastya. The Hills are so many in Kerala. From Ezhimala in the north to Mahendragiri in the South, we have innumerable hills. Among the hills, mention may be made of Vavvimala, Vatamala, Puralimala, KalladiKotan, Nelliampathy, Pothundi, Anamala, Elamala, Peerumedu, Sabarimala, Ponmudi, Agastykutam and Aruvamozhi. These hills have influenced our history in more ways than one. Ezhimala was the seat of a flourishing kingdom during the early centuries of the Christian era. As it is jutting in to the sea, it was a well known land mark for ancient mariners. The Puralimala was the headquarters of Pazhassi Raja for a long time and is hailed as the 'Aravallis of Malabar'. The Brahmagiri in Wayanad is important as Thirunelli temple is located here. The Sabari hills are famous

for the Sastha shrine, one of the most important centers of Hindu pilgrimage in the state. The Malayattur hills is famous as a centre of Christian pilgrimage associated with St. Thomas.

3. Passes/Gaps.

As you know, the mountains provide a number of passes/gaps to facilitate contacts. There are a number of mountain passes in Kerala which influence our History. The Palakkad Gaps perhaps the major one with its enormous width of 36KMs. Through it, the South West winds bring pleasant moist air and grateful showers to the thirsty plains of Coimbatore. Through it, many a stream from the higher mountains find their way to the Arabian Sea. The gap is of great economic value to Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The Tamarasseri and Perambadi gaps promote contacts between Kerala and Karnataka. They have also served as routes of invasion. The Perambadi gives access to Coorg while Tamarasseri provide access from Wayanad to Mysore. The Bodinaykannur pass in the Travancore area (Central Kerala) connects Madurai with the High Ranges. Through the Kamban pass was transacted most of the trade from central Kerala. (Todupuzha). The Aryankavu pass gives easy access to Tirunelveli. The Tamils used this route for most of their raids and trade to South Kerala. The Arambadi pass (Aruvamozi), though presently situated outside Kerala is crucial. Early man with his microliths entered Kerala through this gap; This route had been the highway of traffic between Kerala and its eastern neighbours. Many raids and invasions, the last being that of Chanda Saheb in 1740 had taken place

through the Arambadi. Numberless battles had been fought in this region. The Arambadi–Kottar region is rightly called the cockpit of Kerala. 4. The Sea, Rivers, and Backwaters. The Arabian Sea has been a permanent geographical factor in our History. In fact Kerala has been the gift of the Arabian Sea. Kerala depended for its prosperity on the sea and the sea borne trade. The Jews, Christian, Muslims and Parsees came here following a sea route and first landed here. The Europeans anchored at Kerala coast. The Portuguese were the first in this endeavour followed by the Dutch. French and the English, all followed a sea route to reach Kerala and landed on the Kerala coast and built their settlements here. The Arabian sea had been the field of activity for the Kunjalis, the Admirals of the Calicut fleet. The imperialists first set their foot here and met with their first rebuff here. The commercial and cultural contacts that Kerala has had in the past immensely benefited the princes and peoples of Kerala. The extensive sea coast of Kerala has provided a number of harbours both in the ancient and modern times. In ancient times we have such ports as Muziris, Tyndis, Barace and Nelcynda. In medieval times we have Kollam, Kozhikode and Kodungallur, and in modern times we have Kochi, Alapuzha and Ezhimala. If Kerala was isolated from the rest of India by the mountains, she was opened to the rest of the world by the sea.

Rivers of Kerala.

There are 44 rivers in the state—41 west flowing and 3 (Kabini, Bhavani and Pampar) east flowing. The state

is rich in water potential, but no long rivers. The major rivers are Nila (Bharata puzha or Perar), Periyar and Pampa; Kunthipuzha, Chandragiripuzha, Korapuzha and Chaliyar. The rivers perform a two-fold function. They provide uninterrupted water transport through the length and breadth of the state. They add to the land area forming backwaters and ports. They make the land fertile and the country prosperous. Inland trade has been mainly through the rivers. They are arteries of trade and communication. The harbours at the mouth of the rivers provide safe anchorage to ships. Kerala Rivers have been the cradles of early civilisations. 24 out of the 32 Brahmin settlements are on the banks of rivers. A number of historic and religious temples and churches are situated on the banks of rivers. Most of the literary and artistic forms originated on the river valleys.

The rivers have influenced our political and military history. The Periyar flood of 1341 made Muziris useless for trade and brought into existence the Vaipin Island. The flood of 1789 in the same river forced Tippu Sultan to abandon his further conquest of Thiruvitamkur. Several places of historical and cultural importance are located on the river banks. We have Chittur, Palakkad, Thiruvillamala, Pattambi, Thirunavaya and Chamravattam on the banks of Bharatapuzha. Ayiramalai, Malayattur, Kaladi, Aluva and Kodungallur on the banks of Periyar; Aanmala, Sabarimala, Chengannur, Maramon, Edathwa on the banks of Pampa. It was on the rivers that major hydro-electric and

irrigation projects were constructed in modern times. The hydro-electric projects like Pallivasal, Sengulam, Peringal kuthu and Sabarigiri have quickened the industrialization of Kerala. The irrigation project like Peechi, Malampuzha, Periyar Valley became, to adapt the words of Pandit Nehru, centre of modern pilgrimage.

Settlement Pattern.

The physical features of Kerala have contributed to settlement patterns. Kerala is a thickly populated state. Kerala has had a continuous settlement pattern with each settlement bordering up on the next settlement. Forest areas, waste lands, water reservoirs and streams form part of the settlement. The charter grant testifies to this pattern. Houses are built in the centre of the plot and not in clusters as seen in other parts of India. Thus a village consists of a number of house sites around which there are gardens and food crop areas (Elas or Patasekharams) held by the villagers. River valleys were the cradle of these settlements. Most of the Brahmin settlements in Kerala are found on the banks of rivers like Churni, Nila, Korapuzha and Pampa. The settlements were called Ur and Cheri, the former belonging to the Brahmins and the latter of the common man. There was no separation or demarcation between the settlements of the upper and low castes. Brahmin and non Brahmin. The fisherman community has however their settlement in the coastal region. (Tura) while the tribesmen had their settlements in the highlands; the artisans lived near the temple (Teruv). The Christians and Muslims lived as part of the

village settlement and had their churches and mosques in the villages.

Distribution of archaeological Sites

Archaeology is the handmaid of history. It is often a reliable guide to the historian. The archaeological sources of Kerala history may be classified into three divisions- Monuments, Epigraphy, and Numismatics. Monuments relate to pre-historic and historic periods. Archaeological relics and monuments found in Kerala are of inestimable value for a study of the history of Kerala. The pre-history of Kerala comprises the various stone ages when man was nomadic hunter. Kerala, as such, has no Palaeolithic period. It is excluded from the palaeolithic map of India because of two reasons The state has not yet yielded any palaeolithic. Though palaeoliths are absent in Kerala, the availability of trap rocks suggests that Kerala became the abode of man in the Neolithic period. Any Artefacts found in the riverbeds of Palakkad by the team from the Deccan College, Pune reveal the existence of a palaeolithic settlement in the area. The chief monuments are the megalithic monuments of pre-historic times and Archaeological monuments of the historic period such as temples, churches mosques, Synagogues, palaces, forts and historical sites.

Temples are of two types—rock cut cave temples and structural temples.

(a). The rock-cut temples of Vizhinjam, Kaviyur, Kallil Trikkur, Irunilamkode and Thiruvegappura are the earliest

temples of Kerala. Scholars describe Buddhist or Jain origin to these temples. While the Kaviyur temple shows traces of Chera carvings, vizhinjam shows traces of Pallava style. The Kallil temple is one of the finest Jain monuments in Kerala while those at Ambalapuzha (Karumadi) shows Buddhist leanings. These temples might have originated a little later than the early Pallava Temples. (b).The Structural Temple began to emerge from the ninth century onwards. The temples of historic importance in this category are those situated at Thirunavaya (Nava Mukunda), Thrissur (Vadakkumnathan), Thiruvanchikulam (Siva), Thiruvananthapuram (Padmanabha), Tirunelli (Perumal). The Trivandrum, Thiruvallam and Vizhinjam temples represent Dravidian style. The temples famous for their mural paintings and wood carvings are those of Guruvayur, Trissur. Ettumanur Harippad and Thiruvalla. The normal structural temples with Srikovil and Mantapa became widespread by the 11th Century.

Indigenous Kavus or shrines demonstrate the local tradition, art and culture. eg. Valliyurkavu (Wayanad district). The churches, Mosques and synagogues are also important from the historical and artistic points of view. The churches of Udayamperur and Kanjur bear evidences of indigenous and foreign styles of architecture. Udayamperur was the venue of the historic synod while Kanjur church has a lamp donated by Shakthan Thampuran and also a mural painting. The churches of Mulanthurathi and Chepad have mural paintings. The Catholic churches on the Kerala

coast show traces of Portuguese style. Vasco-da-gama was buried at the St. Francis church, fort Cochin. The Mosques at Matayi, Kasargod and Kodungallur are of great historical interest. The Muchuntipalli at Calicut and the Cheraman Masjid at Kodungallur are the most ancient and shows the influence of indigenous architecture. Of the eight synagogues in Kerala, the white Jews synagogue of Mattanchery has the rare distinction of possessing the Jewish copper plates other synagogues are situated at Mala, Parur and Chennamangalam. The Palaces and forts are of later origin than the temples. The Palaces of Makotai and Kollam are things of the past. Among the existing historical palaces of Kerala, the most notable are the Dutch palace (not built by the Dutch, but by the Portuguese) at Mattancherry, the Krishnapuram palace at Kayamkulam and the Padmanabhapuram palace at Thucklay (Tamil Nadu). They are best specimens of Kerala style of architecture and have mural paintings of inestimable value. The Kovilakams of Pazhassi Raja, Kadathanad Raja, Nilambur Raja and the Samutiri are also of importance. The houses of the Nair & Nambatri Chieftains like Kavalappara, Desamangalam, Kollenkode, Pumulli are also notable. The important forts are built by the Europeans and a few others by the local Rajas. The Portuguese built the Pallippuram fort (Aykotta) in 1503, St. Angelo in Kannur, Fort manual at Kochi and Kottappuram at Kodungallur. Aykotta is the oldest surviving European structure in India. The Bednore Naiks built the forts at Bekal, hosdurg, Kumble and Kalnad; (Chandragiri). Haidar Ali built the Palakkad fort in 1766. The English built the

Tellicherry fort. The remnants of the Vattakotta, of Marthanda Varma, (the Nedumkotta). Travancore Lines of Dharmaraja, Udayagiri fort of D'Lannoy, the Chaliyan fort of the zamorins etc are also seen.

Historical Sites.

A few historical sites which are of interest are the Cheraman Parambu (Kodugallur), Thrikkanar Mathilakam (Kodungallur), Karikode (Ernakulam), Kottaparambu (Kozhikode), Kappad, Mananthavady, (pazhassi) in Wayanad, Kottakkal (Kunjali Markkar) and Lokanarkave in Badagara. The first two are associated with the Cheras, the second with the Zamorin, third with Vasco-da-gama.

Distribution of Inscriptions

Epigraphy is the study of inscriptions. It is the most precise and reliable sources of Kerala history. Compared to the Tamil country, Kerala can boast of a very limited number of inscriptions. For the early period, we have to rely chiefly upon Tamil Brahmi inscriptions. The Pallava-Pandya-Chola inscriptions of the 7th-8th centuries mention the Cheras. Inscriptions are found in abundance from the 9th century.

Important Inscriptions.

The historically important Inscriptions of Kerala are associated with the Ay kings, Cheras of Mahodayapuram, Rulers of Venad, Kochin and Kozhikode. Besides a few temples, churches, mosques and synagogues have their inscriptions of historical value. A few of such inscription are the following: -

1. Terisappally copperplate-Ayyan Atikal-Venad 849 AD
2. Paliyam copperplate-Vikramadithya Varaguna-Ay 885.AD
3. Parthivapuram inscription-Karunandadakkan-Ay 866.AD
4. Mampilly copper plate Vallabhakotha-cheras 973 AD
5. Jewish copperplate Bhaskararavi-2nd chera 1000 AD
6. Syrian copper plate-Viraraghava-cochin 1225 AD

Chera Inscriptions.

The vazhapalli inscription of Rajasekhara (820-44) is the earliest graphical record of a Chera king to be discovered from Kerala. The Chokur inscription of Kodaravi (917-947) contains the earliest. The Avittethur inscription refers to the Kadamkottu Kacham. The Jewish copper plate of Bhaskara Ravi Varma (1000AD) was issued to Joseph Rubban, the leader of the Jews. It records the grant of 72 proprietary rights to Joseph Rubban the leader of Jews. It included the right to Anchuvannam and Manigramam. The inscription bears evidence of the policy of religious toleration followed by the rules of Kerala. The Thazhakkad church inscription of Rajasekhara records the grant of certain trading rights and privileges to ten Christian merchants-Chathan Vatukan and Iravichathan of Manigramam. The Ramaswarath Koil inscription (1102 A.D.) mention the shifting of the capital from Mahodayapuram to Kollam by Rama Varma Kulasekhara.

Inscriptions of the Ays.

The Huzur of Karunanthadakkan (857-885) of the earliest inscription in South India found dated in the Kali era.

It throws light on the working of ancient salais or Vedic colleges. The Paliyam Copper plate of Vikramaditya Varasuna(885-925) records the grant of an extensive landed property to the Buddhist of Srimulavasa Vihara by the ruler. It also alludes the Chera raid on Kerala by Parantaka Chola. The Parthivapuram grant gives information about the building of the temple. It is important as it mentions for the first time Kanthalur Salai.

Venad Inscriptions.

The Teresappally Copper plate of Ayyan Atikal Tiruvatikal, the Venad ruler is the first dated inscription (849AD) of Kerala epigraphy. It describes the gift of a plot of land to Teresappally and also trading rights over Kollam Nagaram by the Venad governor. The grant was received by Mar Sapir Iso. It was given in the presence of the representatives of the state and the guilds. It mentions Manigramam and Anchuvannam. The inscription points to the subordinate status of Venad as a feudatory of the Perumals. It also shows the commercial importance of Kollam. It throws light on the provincial administration as it mentions the local assemblies like the Arunuttavar. It points the system of taxation prevailed in the kingdom. Moreover the grant reveals the policy of religious toleration followed by the chieftains of Kerala. It is the most important royal gift to a religious institution recorded in our history The Mampalli plate of Vallabha Kotha (974 AD) of Venad is the first available record dated in the Kollam era. It helps to determine the chronology of the Kerala kings. The other important

inscriptions relating to the Venad rulers are Cholapuram and Suchindram inscriptions of Kotha Kerala Varma, Kilimanur records of Aditya Varma. Villayani inscription of Vira Ravi Varma and the Manalikkara inscription of Ravi Kerala Varma.

Inscriptions of the Cochin Rajas.

The Perumpadappu Swarupam (Cochin royal family) had a few inscriptions of historical value. The Syrian Copper plate (Viraraghava Pattayam) of 1225 issued by Viraraghava, a ruler of Perumpadappu royal house is the most important one. It confers on the Christians of Kodungallur a number of privileges and rights. The Christian merchant Iravi Kortanan was conferred the title 'Loka Perumchetti' (The great trader) and also the over lordship of Manigramam. The Paliyam Copper Plates records the agreement between the Cochin Raja and the Dutch. E. India Company. It was dated in the Puthuvaipu era.

Inscriptions from Tempels, Churches, Mosques etc.

The temples, churches, mosques, synagogues of Kerala have inscriptions of historical value. Temple records: The important temple records of a general nature are the Thiruvilla copper plates. Vadakkumnathan temple records and Kumaranallur temple records. The temple records of Guruvayur, Kozhikode Tali temple are also of historical value. The Thiruvalla copper Scrolls mention several institutions and customs of Kerala. The Thrissur Temple records testifies to the ascendancy of the Namputiris. The Pattazhi copper scroll(1796 A.D.) throws light on the temple administration in the 18th century.

Church & Other Inscriptions:

Of the Church inscriptions, mention may be made of the Pallavi cross inscription from the Kadamattam Church & Kottayam Valiyapalli. From Kerala mosques, we have such inscriptions as the Arabic inscription from Matayi mosque. The synagogues too have yielded epigraphic evidence. The Jewish copperplate record of Bhaskararavivarma (1000AD) from the white Jew synagogue at Mattancherry and the Chennamangalam record in Hebrew dated 1265 AD are the most important in this category. Inscriptions from outside the State. There are number of stone inscriptions and copper plates relating to Kerala found from outside the state. They are

1. Asoka's Rock Edict II (GIRNAR) is the earliest epigraphical record found from outside Kerala. It mentions the ruler of Kerala as Keralaputta.
2. The Aranattumalai inscription from Karur in Tamil Brahmi character mentions three Chera kings and provides valuable clue to Chera genealogy.
3. The Chalukya inscriptions of the 6th and 7th century. refer to the subjugation of Kerala by the Chalukyas.
4. Similarly the Chola and Pandya inscriptions (Anamalai) throw light on the Chola raids. The Thiruvilangadu plates of Rajendra Chola refer to the Chola raids on Vizhinjam.
5. A number of records have been found from Kanchi, Srirangam and Poonamala relating to the exploits of Ravi Varma Kulasekhara.

Thus inscriptions are of inestimable value for the reconstruction of the history of Kerala. Palm Leaf. When the stone records began to disappear by the 15th century, Palm leaf and Cadjan documents replaced them. Temples, palaces and Tharavadus began to yield a number of records (As Kavalappara, Desamangalam). Most of the records are land deeds Karanams.

Paper records.

The Paper records are also of great value to the historian. The factory records. Tellichery Consultation, Pazhassi records etc are valuable. The records and diaries of fort St. George, the Dutch records and the memories, correspondence and travelogues of the British are also valuable as source materials for the re-construction of history.

Kacchams

Kacchams were a series of administrative and cultural regulations formulated by the landed classes to ensure the mobilisation and redistribution of the produce of the land to different layers of the society. In temple centres, these regulations had an orderly structure based on the unanimous decisions of the temple authorities. Kancham prescribes the nature of procurement of Pattam, expenses to be incurred out of the produce, type of judicial control to be exercised and fines to be realised, duties and obligations of temple functionaries and such other related matters. Several such Vyavastai existed.

Muzhikkalam Kaccham was the model Kaccham that was used all over Kerala. Muzhikkalam was one of the major Gramam (village) in Kerala. It was the Methali, one of the

majors of the 4 Talis or Brahmin advisory bodies to the Perumal. Muzhikkalam was also one of the Divyadesams praised by the Bhakti saints. Hence it was natural that the regulations prepared at Muzhikkalam was accepted by the Brahmin villages and came to be accepted as the basic document all over Kerala.

The Muzhikkalam Kaccham was widely referred to in inscriptions. The Chokur inscription (898) makes the earliest reference to this Kaccham. The Kaviyur and Tripayar inscriptions provide details of the regulations on the basis of this Kaccham. Temple inscription of Thiruvalla, Kaviyur Thrukkakkara, Tirunandikkara and Tirunelli contain references to Muzhikkalam regulations. It was also mentioned in the inscriptions of Alanallur, Kumaranallur and Thirumittakode. The Thirumittakode document provides the last mention of this Kaccham.

However information is lacking as regards the details of Muzhikkalam Kaccham and also as to why this Kaccham attained such prominence. The available information shows that it was issued at the end of the 9th Century. It was prepared at the place of Muzhikkalam. It was attended by the Koyil Adhikarikal, the king's representatives and besides various Naduvazhis and Uralars. It was prepared to regulate both the temple and village administration. In course of time, it was accepted as the basic and authentic document for such regulations all over Kerala.

Although the original full text of Muzhikkalam Kaccham could not be traced out, a few details are available. The Kaccham declares punishments to uralars for the misappropriation of temple funds. It declares punishments to

those tenants who fails to remit rent to the temple. The punishments included eviction from temple property, loss of membership from the Ur fines, ex communication and loss of property and other forms of wealth. The Kaccham was prepared at a time when the temples had amassed large extent of landed property and its main aim was to prevent the misappropriation of the temple resources by the Uralar and to extract rent from the tenanis regularly.

There were four other Kaccham-Kadangattu, Thavanur, Sankaramangalam and Kaithavaram.They did not have the widespread significance of Muzhikkalam.Kadangattu Kacham involves the regulations introduced while transferring a Cherikkal land to Avittattur temple during the time of Kotaravi (903 AD).The Tavanur Kacham prescribes that the Uralar should not prevent the cultivation and sale of paddy, should not rob wealth. This Kacham is being mentioned in the Tripangode and Sukapuram.Temple inscriptions Sankaramangalathu Kaccham appears in Tiruvalla copper plates.The Uralar was suppose to receive Rakshabhogam and protect the land.Kaithavaram Kaccham is mentioned in connection with the merger of Ayranikkulam and Tiruvalla villages. It describes the regulations to be followed by the Ur and Potuval of the merged village.

The introduction of Kaccams shows the existence of effective legal procedures with regard to temple lands and expenses. Most of these regulations appear with transfer of lands. Violations of such decisions incurred strict and severe punishment. It included excommunication, deprivation of the means of livelihood, confiscation of property etc.

MODULE III

FORMS OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL POWER

Polity of Nattudayavars

There were several natus small and big, all over Kerala, ruled by chieftains (natuvalis). Venatu, Kilumalainatu, Purakilanatu, Kalkkarainatu, Valluvanatu, Eralnatu, Kurumporainatu, Nanrulainatu, Kolattunatu, Nedumpurayurnatu, Vempalanatu and Munjinatu were prominent natus during this period. Natus are naturally-evolved settlements, socio-culturally integrated and consolidated over centuries. Each natu was a manifestation of local-level economic and socio-cultural development over a long period. Natu, as a term, either derived from the root 'natu', (plant) or 'nata' (to walk in) means an agrarian settlement. 'Natu' has a historical background of natural evolution from below, although it is often forgotten under the general presumption that territorial units are administrative units created from above.

Every natu had its own ruler addressed as nattudayavar (owner of the natu) and its own warrior contingent in units of hundred (nurruvakuttam). The natuvali of Nanrulainatu had munnuruvar (the three hundred), Venattu had arunurruvar (the six hundred), Kilumalainatu had elunurruvar (the seven hundred) and so on. The warrior strength was determined by factors such as the extent of wealth, cultural strength, and leadership which were invariably uneven. As part of the power game, the Perumal, the most resourceful in terms of all this,

especially the cultural power acquired through their alliance with the brahmans, had domination over them with his warrior contingent, the ayiravar (the Thousand). This is continuation of an early practice mentioned in the Arhasasthra by mulaparrisha (the intimate body guards or the companions of honour) translated as utankuttam (the intimate body guards).

A few natus like Venatu and Kilumalainatu were wealthy and powerful. Venatu was prosperous in agriculture and trade. It appears that natus had to pay their attaikol to the Perumal. Among the natus Venatu seems to have been relatively prominent. However, it is not possible to trace a complete list of rulers of Venatu in chronological order. A ruler mentioned for the first time in the Tarisappalli copper plates, dated to the fifth regnal year of Sthanu Ravi (c. 849 A.D.), is Ayyanatikal, the donor of the grant. It is clear from the inscription that he enjoyed the power to grant land, to exempt from paying taxes and to alienate his juridical power over his subjects, indeed only with the knowledge of the Perumal. Functionaries like atikarar (authority), prakrti (clients), pati (lord) and ainnurruvar mentioned the record indicate that the ruler commanded a whole system of local official infrastructure. Mampilli copper plate, the earliest record discovered so far in the Kollam Era, refers to another ruler of Venatu named Vallabhan kota (tenth century). Govarrdha Marthanda was the successor of Vallabham Kota. In the Jewish copper plate of Bhaskara ravi, he appears to be one of the witnesses. The Trikkatithanam inscription also makes a reference to him.

Nattutayavar's power was regulated by the kuru system of inheritance and method of sharing the political rights and privileges. Literally, the kuru system means sharing of property and power through sthanams or positions of power in the order of seniority. This enabled the existence of several centres of power in one and the same territory. In the Tarisappali record, the junior prince (ilankuru) was present when the deed was executed by Ayyanattikal, the ruler or muttakuru (the elder). In the northern parts of Kerala too the kuru system of inheritance was followed. A record of Bhasakara Ravi (dated.1000) C.E mentions five nattudayavaar as signatories in the charter issued to the Jewish merchant leader, Joseph Rabban. They are the nattudayavr of Venatu, Vempolinatu, Eralnatu, Valluvanatu and Netumpuraiyurnatu. It is evident that these natus were the historically-evolved localities of production and distribution. Their rulers were chieftains of very old lineages.

Over lordship of Chera Perumals- nature of chera power debate-evidences and theories

The political structure of the Perumal rule was of monarchy, as indicated by certain expressions in contemporary inscriptions. In the Valapalli copper plates he is addressed as raja raja, rajadhiraja, indicating the imposition of over lordship (koima) on local rulers, i.e., the nattudayavar whose authority was hereditary. There are other inscriptional mentions of overlord ship in usages such as konmai kontan and konoinmai kontan (both literally meaning, 'having assumed overlordship). In the Tarisappali copper plate and the Jewish copper plate ,

the Perumal's royal qualifications like marukutalai cirantatipattattala (having subdued the enemy) and palanurayirattanatu cenkol natattiyala (having wielded the sceptre for several hundreds of years) clearly show the sovereign power over the local chieftains .we come across few instances of the Perumal interfering with the inheritance of the natuvali and appointing the personage of his choice as the ruler . it is known from the inscription that the Perumal had exacted attaikol even from far-off areas like Pullurr Kotavalam near Kanhangad. Inscriptional references show that the natuvalis were not entitled to take major decisions such as the de-facto transfer of resources or execution of contracts. Ayyanatikal, the natuvali of Venatu, grants land and service personnel in the presence of the Koiladhikarkal (the junior prince). It is significant that the mention of the main sanction relating to the land grant with special rights and privileges is made jointly by the koyiladhikari and the natuvali.

Nevertheless, these monarchical powers were under the influence of the prominent brahmana landlords. The four most prominent Brhamna settlements- Mulikkalam, airanikkalam, Paravur and Irinjalakuda- constituted the core of the Perumals's power structure. Authorities of these settlements constituted the royal council called nalutali (four temples). Temple, being the headquarters of the brahmana settlement, the term tali (temple) is symbolic of the personnel of authority over the temple (taliadhikarikal), which meant the most prominent brahmana landlord. Prominent natuvalis along with the nalutali seem to have constituted the larger council of the King.

Perumals enjoyed overlordship over the ruler (chieftain) of every natu. There is at least one instance of the appointment of the ruler of a natu over another natu, as mentioned in one of the Trikkadithanam inscriptions. It mentions the act of Bhaskara ravi Perumal making Govardhan Marthandan of Venatu the ruler of Nanrukainatu also. This is exercise of supreme authority by the Perumal over the chief of a natu.

It is significant to discuss the patronage given to the merchant bodies against the context of the Perumal's power structure. The Tarisappali copper plates show that manigramam, the foreign merchant body, was powerful enough to secure a grant for a community settlement-cum-market town. Similarly, the Jewish copper plate charter (1000 C.E.) issued by Bhaskara Ravi Varman Perumal granting aristocratic privileges much more directly to Joseph Rabban, the merchant leader of ancuvannam, the most prominent overseas trading organisation of the period, shows the political significance of the patronage. Overseas merchants would be powerful in the sea with vessels. M.G.S opines that conferring princely status upon the leader of an overseas trading group and granting him control over the port town close to Muyirikode, the site of the Perumal's palace, has an added political significance against the context of the threat of naval attack by the Cholas.

Of all the powers, the most decisive were the oligarchic corporations of the nalutali –centred brahmana settlements in and the surrounds of Mahodayapuram, the headquarters of the

Perumal. These constituted the nuclei of contemporary power structure. They represented the rest of the traditional 32 temple-centred brahmana settlements and their corporate bodies. In course of time, the Perumal's sovereign control which prevailed during the initial phase gradually declined and phased out completely by the time of Ramavarman Kulasekhara, who had to abdicate his throne and go into exile.

Most of the references on the *nadu* in the studies of Kerala are connected with the second Chera kingdom (9th A.D-12th century A.D) and with the important medieval principalities called *Naduvali Swarupam* of post Chera period like *Perumpadappu Swarupam*, *Kolaswarupam*, *Venad/Trippappur Swarupam*, *Nediyirruppu Swarupam* etc. all these studies are emphasized on the administrative aspects of the *nadu*. Four kinds of attempts have already been done to study the nature of *nadu*. 1. The *nadu* as an administrative unit 2. The *nadu* as an agrarian unit 3. The *nadu* as an autonomous segment of the ritual sovereign 4. The *nadu* as chiefdom unit in the South Indian feudalism.

The pioneer studies on the *nadus* have considered it as the administrative units of three major kingdoms like Chola, Pandya, and Chera. K. A Nilakanta Sastri in his studies *Pandyan Kingdom, A History of South India*, The Cholas has described *nadu* as the administrative division of the Pandya and Chola Kingdoms of South India respectively. According to Sastri, the *nadu* had a crucial role in the land revenue administration of the Chola kingdom. The *Ur*, *Sabha* and *Nagaram* have also been referred to as part of the larger

administrative divisions of the centralised kingdom. Similar position was taken by C. Meenakshi, in her *Administrative and Social Life under Pallavas of Kanchi*, and according to her the nadus were administrative divisions which further got subdivided into villages. T. V. Mahalingam, in his *South Indian Polity*, argued that Ur, Sabha and Nadu were the organisations of the villages and were agrarian units. According to him, the nadu was an independent unit earlier, which became the subordinate units after the conquest of the kings.

In the case of Chera studies, Elamkulam P.N. Kunjan Pillai, through his number of studies, delineated the political features of the Kulasekhara Empire and argued that the nadus were the local kingdoms under the administrative control of the local vassals of the Kulasekharas. The representative assembly known as Nattukoottangal had a crucial role in the administration of nadu. Each nadu was further divided into desam under the chiefs called vazhkai/vazhi/desavazhis and it was controlled by desakkootams. The desam were subdivided into Karaor village and they were administered by the representative of the people of the village. In the lights of available epigraphs, M.G.S. Narayanan has cross-examined the features of Chera kingdom and argued that the nadus were the districts of the kingdom and they were under the governors of the Cherman Perumal called Natu Utaiyavar or Natuvalumavar. According to him, it was the Tamil counter part of the Sanskrit term Rashtra found in North India and Deccan. He also argued that the nadus were the feudatories of

the Cheraman Perumal. However, all these studies have referred to nadu as part of the centralised administration of the kingdom and it functioned as institutions to accumulate the surplus from various regional units.

A major shift in the aforementioned position appeared in the study of Y. Subbarayalu in 1970. In his political Geography of the Chola country, Subbarayalu pointed out the nadu was the agricultural region formed by the grouping of agricultural settlements. The nadu comprised of Vellanvagai villages (the non-Brahmin Villages), which functioned collectively under the nattar assembly which had involved in the productive activity within the locality. The nadu naturally happened to be the administrative units and was not a state made political division. According to him, most of the functions of nadu were locality-based and were self-sufficient without state interference. Thus, Subbarayalu questioned the centralised bureaucratic and Byzantine Monarchy theory of the pioneer studies. Subbarayalu 's position has been widely discussed in later studies and the scholars like Burton Stein, who took a different stand on the nature of nadu in the Chola territory, has also used Subbarayalu's theory to substantiate the resourcefulness of the nadu, which provided the economic stability and then corresponded to the development of autonomous territorial unit. Similarly, Nobru Karashima has done a detailed survey of the Chola inscriptions and unravelled the characteristics village settlements of peasants in the Chola country. He has suggested that the Vellanvagai villages comprised of habitations sites, cremation grounds, fresh water

sources, irrigation channels, cultivated channels, cultivated lands, pasture lands etc.

In the Kerala studies, scholars like, Rajan Gurukkal, K. N. Ganesh and Raghava Varier have taken a similar position of Subrayalu. Rajan Gurukkal argues in the light of his research on Pandya region that the nadus were spontaneous grouping off agricultural settlements. K.N. Ganesh's Malayalam work *Keralathinte Innalekal* has analysed different stages of the formation of nadu as the grouping of agrarian settlements. Accordingly, the nadu developed as the result of the growth of human interaction with the environment and the grouping of such spaces. According to him, the traces of the early occupation of the human beings can be traced from the prehistoric times and their settlements were distributed in the hillocks and its slopes. These settlements units were depended on the hunting and food gathering and the early Tamil texts did not refer to such settlement as nadu.

According to him, the nadus were the groupings of food crop cultivating units which were developed in the marutam and mullai lands. He says that in Kerala, the nadu developed as production region, starting from food crops, particularly paddy cultivation and later expanded to the garden land, cash crop areas and forest. Rajan Gurukkal and Raghava Varier in their co-authored edited Malayalam work *Keralachithram* argues that nadu was the spontaneous grouping of agrarian settlements and it comprised of several ur, the basic agrarian settlements. Kesavan veluthatt, in his *The political structure of Early Medieval South India*, says that the nadu

groups are seen as pre-existing groupings of peasant settlements, which spontaneously came together and the ur, the agrarian village, is the smallest identifiable peasant community in South India.

Burton Stein in his *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India* considers nadu as a micro regional unit in which an assembly with same name functioned. He rejected the centralised monarchic character and the Byzantine monarchy theory of K. A. Nilakanta Sastri and introduced the Segmentary State theory in the Chola studies. He says nadus were the real centers of power and the Chola king functioned as the ritual sovereign.

Recently, M.G.S Naryanan has re-interpreted his earlier position on the nature nadu. Now he argues that nadus were the autonomous political unit and the Perumal did not possess direct authority over any considerable part of territory outside the capital city of Makotai or Mahodayapuram. With contrast to his earlier position, he argued that the second Chera kingdom was under the sway of the Brahmin oligarchy and they used the Perumal as ritual sovereign.

However, all these studies have discussed the features of nadu as part of the larger political system like Chera, Chola and Pandya. As nadu was the grouping of agrarian settlements, more comprehensive and separate study of nadu is required disentangle the process of the formation. There will not be uniform pattern on the formation of the nadu.

MODULE IV

POST PERUMAL POLITY AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC POWER STRUCTURE

Post Perumal Polity

The decline of perumal period led to the emergence of local naduvazhi system in Kerala. When the political power of perumal declined it also led to the disappearance of other institutions like Muzhikkulam kaccam. Kaccams were not mentioned in the post perumal inscriptions. Apart from kaccams the institutions like Nalu tali , Trade organisations like Anjuvannam and Manigramam were also declined. Decline of perumal period also led the structural changes in the Natus .Chief natus like Venatu. Eralnatu , Valluvanatu, and Kurumpranatu became independent .Elimala Chiefdom which was absorbed by the perumal evolved to become Kolattunatu. Some natus disappeared.

The emergence of fragmented polity was accompanied by the further changes in political and social structure of natus. The localised rulers of different Nadus and their original families known as Swarupams became powerful.

Swarupams.

Age of Swarupams an Naduvazhis comprising the middle ages in Kerala (1100–1800. Swarupams were ruling houses that control the Nadus. The origin of swarupam is unclear. The term swarupam does not appear in the

inscriptions of perumal period. Swarupams were large joint families. Which can be called a household. Members of household resided in several kovilakams. Their political authority was organised on the basis of Kurvalcha. Kurvalcha means a gradation of rights and privileges within the ruling houses with the muttakur (seniority). Swarupams had a seniority order called (Muppumura). The Chera inscriptions allude to the existence of Kuruvazhcha. As big landlords, the swarupams received dues from their land, and tolls from trading centres.

All the swarupams established or patronised temples and brahmanas. Temples had become an ideological power centres of swarupam. During the post perumal period growth of temples was associated with the nadus and mainly with the swarupam. The legitimisation of the authority of the swarupam was also ensured by the ritual authority of the Brahmins. Rituals like Ariyituuvazhcha performed by the Zamorins and the ceremony called Hiranyagarbham performed by the rulers of Travancore were the examples of such legitimisation. The Swarupams ruled the Nadus. In course of time new Swarupams developed and they brought in to being new Nadus (Eg Desinganadu, Vettathunad). The important Swarupams, however were Thrippappur (Venad), Perumpadappu (Kochi), Nediyruppu (Kozhikode), Kolam (Kolathunad) and Arangoth (Valluvanad). The rule of the Naduvazhis marked the end of Kerala as a politically unified state. The Naduvazhis and Swarupams exerted a powerful influence in the newly emerged polity. The Age also

witnessed the emergence of the Janmi system the ascendancy of the priestly class. Politically sterile and culturally unfruitful, the Naduvazhi era witnessed the swansong of the old order, pushing Kerala to the lime light of modern history. Kolathunad was an extensive kingdom in the northern part of Kerala. It extended from River Nethravathi in the North to Korapuzha in the South and from Kudak hills in the east to Arabian Sea in the west. The territories included in Kolathunadu were Kumbbla, Nileswaram, Kottayam and Kadathanadu. We get information about the kingdom chiefly from the Mushaka Vamsa Kavya of Atula; we also get information from Keralolpathi and Keralamahatmyam. The accounts of foreign travellers like Marco Polo, Ibn Batuta, and Alberuni corroborate indigenous evidence. A few inscriptions- Eramom records- throws light on Kolathunad. The origin of Kolathunad is attributed to Cheraman Perumal by Logan. The Ezhimala kingdom of the Sangam period may be considered as the base of Kolathunad. The Kolathiri dynasty is known to Mushaka Vamsa Kavya. Prof. Elamkulam doubts whether the Kolathunad was a part of the second Chera kingdom as they had accepted the supremacy of the Perumals. Kolathiris were the rulers of Kolathunad. They were the descendants of the Mushaka kings. They became powerful in the 13th Century. When Thiruvitamkur proposed an adoption from that family, Kolathiris had the audacity to refuse it. This refusal denotes their growing influence in Malabar politics. Macro Polo records: "Kolathunad was tributary to nobody. The king is very rich in

treasure, but not very strong in arms. The approach to his kingdom is so strong by nature that no one can attack him. So he is afraid of nobody”. The Venetian traveller refers in particular to the custom of seizure of goods from foreign ships that entered the kingdom.

Raghava who patronised Raghavananda and Divakara. Rama Varma who composed Bharata Sangraha and Chandrika Kalpa. Udayavarma, the patron of Cherusseri the author of Krishnagatha. And Ravi Varma. The capital of the kingdom is at Ezhimala. Alberuni called it as Hili; Macro Polo described it as ‘Eli’. Ibn Batuta has stated that Kolathunad amassed much wealth through trade at the harbour city of Ezhimala. Other important ports in the kingdom were Matayi, Valapattanam and Dharmadam. Kolathunad had accepted the suzerainty of the Zamorins and when the Portuguese landed in Kerala Kolathunad was under the spheres of influence of the Zamorins

Janmam Kanam Mariyadai system

Agrarian society in Kerala had consolidated by the beginning of 16th c. Organised agriculture both in grain field and gardenlands created surplus production. These agrarian expansions became the basis for the establishment of various chiefdoms and swarupams.

Studies in the pre-colonial Kerala history tried to understand the traditional land rights. the major systematic account about the traditional land rights has been given by historians like Elamkulam Kunjan pillai but his studies mostly

concentrated on the period from 9th to 13th century. Eminent Historian K. N. Ganesh studied the land relations from 16th to 18th century. He analysed the structure of land rights in medieval Kerala and its process and continuity and change

The traditional land system in Kerala has been called Janmi Kudiyan Sampradayam or Janmam kanam Mariyadai. These terms generally denote landlord tenant relationship. The term Janmam indicates a hereditary right or birth right. The Janmam right over the land does not imply any services or dues that has to pay to a overlord for maintaining the right. In this sense the right over the land is autonomous. The janmi loses his rights if he transfers or sells his land and the new owner has to pay rent or dues because he does not come to own the land as a birth right. However, Janmi could offer service to overlord, the temple chief as an act of homage for political and economic reasons. The growth of janmam rights has been traced to the formation of a stratified agrarian society between 9th and 12th century .

A grarian settlement grew up in the river valley region and the brahmins who received this land established it as hereditary rights. Naduvazhies and chiefs who made land grants and other allotment as permanent rights to temple and brahmins. Land held by the landowners but cultivated by large and small tenants. 12th century Kerala witnessed the gradation of land rights. A pyramidal hierarchy was formed in the land rights

Naduvazhi (Top of the hierarchy granted lands to temples and brahmins)

Uralar (Land owners and temple trustees- mostly Brahmins)

Karalar (Tenets and Intermediary holders- Nair community)

Kudiyar (Settled tenant Cultivator – From Nair and Ezhava groups)

Adiyar (Bonded Service classes – Pulayar and other backward sections)

Legal codes were called *Kaccams* were evolved that helped to sustain the authority of the land owners over the tenants and other servile classes. During the beginning of 16th c the basic organisation of landrights were divided into three categories Temples and Brahmans alongwith Naduvazhi chiefs were consolidating their position indifferent parts of Kerala. Such lands were called Dewaswam , Brahmaswam and Cherikkal land respectively .These lands were cultivated by settled cultivators who paid a share of the production to janmi. The rights of the janmi over the land was expressed as Kiliyakkam and the obligations of the tenants were determined as *Mariyadai* (custom). Unlike the *Kaccams* in the medieval Kerala *mariyadai* had no standardized form applicable throughout Kerala. The use of the term *mariyadai* shows that its application was localised form of the privilages and rights exercised by the janmi and the obligation of the tenants were also becoming localized. The localisation of the conditions regarding land rights and obligations could be seen in the use of the term *Kilmariyadai*, *nattumariyadai*, *desamariyadai*, *sanketamariyadai*. Even the brahmins have to follow the local *maryadai* to exercise control over the landrights

The localised tradition of these rights emerged with the decentralisation of politico-economic power after the decline of the second Chera state and the emergence of regional swarupams. The customary authority that came to be established by the beginning of 16th century was not a static entity. The growth of garden cultivation along with wetland cultivation in the 14th and 15th century led to the development of cash economy, this made changes customary rights and land ownership. The growth of cash economy led to the growth of Land mortgages. This Mortgages to be called as *kanam or Otti*. This system was already existed during later Chera period but came to be increased in the 15th and 16th century. Evidence suggests that lands were being mortgaged from one to 12 years on payment of a certain amount in cash or kind as *artham*, on the condition that the interest on the artham would be deducted from the rent paid. If the mortgaged land brought under paddy cultivation or a new tree planted, the land would be treated as *kulikkanam*.

The expansion of kanam and kulikkanam lands showed the impetus of the growing overseas trade in agriculture produce and by-products after the coming of the Europeans. The nature of the kanam tenure and its identification with the circulation of money and extension of cultivation reflects a new phase in the growth of land rights in Kerala. The Growth of Kanam tenure led to the rise of new intermediary land holding class who had access to wealth. They were temple servants, Militia and person in the royal service who can dictate more favourable terms and conditions with janmi than the ordinary cultivators. Gradually the Temples, Brahmins and the local ruling chiefs who controlled the actual ownership of the land

but the kanam holders or new landlords came to acquire the actual controlling rights . The growth of a powerful intermediary Non brahmin kanakkar can be seen in the swarupams of Travancore kochi and Malabar. This kanakkars mostly belongs to the Nair community.

The ownership – control dichotomy that developed with customary relations resulted in the formation of a new landholding class that occupied the intermediary position in the politico-economic order.

State Formation in Travancore and Cochin

State formation in premodern Kerala has generated interest among the historians. Political social and economic factors contributed to the state formation of Travancore.

Rise of Venad (Travancore)

Venad is a narrow strip of land lying between the wester ghats and the Arabian sea, in Southern Kerala. Venad was one of the most powerful kingdoms that arose following the disintegration of the Chera kingdom of Makotai. Venad means the land of Vel Chieftains. They controlled the agrarian tracts from Kollam to Nanchinadu. During the early Sangam age, Venad was part of the Ay kingdom. In the Perumal age, Venad had the status of a feudatory power. It got an independent status only after the 12th Century. During this period, they shifted their power from Kiliperur to Thripparappu. They shifted that centre with the object of controlling the resources of Thripparappu which was already a mercantile town. They have also acquired control over the economically important temple of Padmanabha at Thiruanantapuram.

Ayyan Atikal Tiruvatikal was the first prominent ruler of Venad. The Teresappally copper plate (849 AD) had immortalised his name in History. Sri Vallabhakotha, another Venad ruler is associated with the Mampalli copper plate (974 AD). The Thrikkodithanam temple inscription and the Jewish copper plate (1000 AD) mention Govardhana Marthanda as the third ruler of Venad. Venad passed through a period of stress and strain during the Chera-Chola conflict.

Rama Varma Kulasekhara, the last of the Perumals of Mahodayapuram was the first ruler of the Venad royal house. He shifted his headquarters from Kudangallur to Kollam. His successors Vira Kerala Varma and Kotharavi conquered Kottar and Nanjinad from the Pandyas and established the supremacy of Venad. Their successors Vira Ravi Varma and Aditya Varma introduced a good system of government. The inscriptions of the time – Kilimanur, Manalikkara and Vellayani – mention the name of the successors. By their time the Pandyas established their supremacy over Venad. It was left to Ravi Varma Kulasekhara to set his house in order and to assert his authority over adversaries.

During the post perumal period Swarupams became the power centres of natus. Venatu was controlled by Kilperur swarupam a hamlet near kilimanur in Triavdrum district. The chief family had another residence in Trippappur Swarupams near Trivandrum and Desinganatu Swarupam emerged by the end of the 13thc. From the 13th century there is reference at Attingal, which was under a women chief. and was regarded as the mother house for the entire Venad family. Venad chief

exercised hereditary authority over their territory from c. 1000 onwards. Information on the succession of Venad rulers from the 14th c reveal the complex nature of political authority. Authority was wielded by extended joint families called Swarupams. Later the Muppan of the Trippapur, Desinganad and ciravay swarupams could lay claim to be the ruler of venad.

Vira Udaya mathanda varma was the first ruler of venad who ascended the throne according to the matrilineal system of succession. There after number of rulers came to power among them prominent one was Ravi varma Kulaskhara

Ravi Varma Kulasekhara (1299 – 1314)

Ravi Varma Kulasekhara is the most outstanding king of Venad. His reign is remarkable for innumerable conquests, settled administration, economic prosperity religious development and cultural ethos. The inscriptions of his reign found scattered in such places as Trivandrum, Kanchi, Poonamalle and Srirangam give us information about his achievements. Ravi Varma ascended the throne at a time when the Pandyas were dominating South Indian politics and Malik kafur was attempting the first Muslim inroads in to South India. Ravi Varma began his conquests by attacking the Pandyas and ascending as the emperor of South India at Kanchi (1312). Ravi Varma undertook the South Indian conquests mainly to prevent a repetition of the Muslim invasions of South India. In effecting his conquests, he played the role of Defender of the Hindu Faith against Islam, a role that the Hoysala Ballalas and Vijayanagar Rayas played later.

He was not only firm in battle (Sangramadhira), but also a patron of scholars and poets. He patronized the authors of Unnunilandesam and Lilathilakam. He is called “Dakshina Bhoja”, Samudrabandhu and Kavibhushana attended his court. A devout Hindu, he patronised temples. Venad attained economic prosperity under him and also social progress. Kollam became the premier port of trade on the West Coast. In short, both in war and peace, Ravi Varma proved his mettle. He shoots across the political horizon of South India like a flashing meteor and he had a lasting place among the most illustrious rulers of Venad.

We get a glimpse of the political, social and religious conditions of Venad from the accounts of foreign travellers and also from inscriptions. The king had vast powers, but restricted by local assemblies and customs. He had a cavalry force and minted coins as is testified to by Ma Huan. Venad rulers held a vast area from Tovala to Kallada and beyond, to Tamil areas. Marco Polo (13th C) had testified to the economic prosperity of the land. Sulaiman the merchant describes Kollam as the most preferred port in South India as it traded in spices like pepper and ginger. It was an age of Brahmin domination and temples and Salais speak of the religious atmosphere in the kingdom. Thus, Venad enjoyed benefits of liberal administration, social progress, material prosperity and religious harmony Venad was one of the most powerful kingdoms that arose following the disintegration of the Chera kingdom of Makotai.

The Complex nature of relation among the various

lineages (swarupams) segments in venad created Quarrels and conflicts. Along with this the developments new intermediary forces from 16th c to 18th c threatened to disrupt the customary political authority of the ruling family. This issue was finally settled down by Marthanda varma under who a modern Travancore state was formed during 18thC.

Rise of Kochi (Perumpadappu Swarupam)

Kochi was another important Nadu that became independent after the disintegration of the perumal kingdom. The Cochin royal house is known as Perumpadappu Swarupam as they had their original headquarters at Chithrakutam in the Perumpadappu village in Vanneri. When the Zamorin invaded Valluvanad in the 13th century, the Perumpadappu family abandoned the Vanneri Palace and migrated to Kodungallur from where in 1405AD they shifted to Kochi. The aggressive raids of the Zamorin and the Periyar floods might have prompted them to shift the capital. The transfer of the trading activities from Mahodayapuram to the newly formed (Kochazhi) Kochi also promoted this shifting.

Kochi came to political limelight only by the 13th Century. According to tradition, Kochi was given to the nephew of the last Perumal when he partitioned the kingdom. However they were subordinate to the Perumal's authority. The territorial boundary of the kingdom extended from Ponnani in the North to Shertallai in the south and from Chittur in the east to Kochi in the West. Kochi rulers are being mentioned in inscriptions and in early literary works. Viraraghava associated with the Syrian Copper plates is a

Cochin ruler. RamaVarma, another ruler of Cochin is mentioned in Siva Vilasam. Sukasandesam and Unniati Charitam allude to the unique position held by the ruler of Kochi among the Naduvazhis of Kerala. The Brahmins recognised them as Kshatriyas, an honour granted not even to the Zamorins. The Perumpadappu Muppil (chief) exercised jurisdiction over a large number of temples in Kerala. This moral and religious authority exercised by him had given him a place of pride among the Naduvazhis of Kerala.

Veeraraghava was the most important ruler of Kochi—before the advent of the Portuguese. He is associated with Veeraraghava Pattayam, or Syrian Christians copperplates of 1225 AD. This inscription is about the granting of the Manigramam rights and certain other privileges to Iravi Kortanan, leader of the Syrian Christians. It grants 72 proprietary rights to Iravi Kortanan, to have elephants, Silk umbrella, slaves, palanquins etc. The inscription is important as it suggests the position of the Cochin royal family as the successors of the Perumal. The local chieftains of Sukapuram, Panniyur and Eranad and Valluvanad were present as signatories and witnesses of this grant certain other privileges to Iravi Kortanan, leader of the Syrian Christians. It grants 72 proprietary rights to Iravi Kortanan, to have elephants, Silk umbrella, slaves, palanquins etc. The inscription is important as it suggests the position of the Cochin royal family as the successors of the Perumal. The local chieftains of Sukapuram, Panniyur and Eranad and Valluvanad were present as signatories and witnesses of this grant.

The prolonged conflict between Cochin and Kozhikode for the political supremacy of central Kerala brought new dimensions to Kochi. It was the Cochin Raja who gave facilities for trade to the Portuguese when they landed in Kerala. The Dutch palace was presented as a present to the Cochin ruler by the Portuguese. The Kochi ruler also welcomed the Jews and the Konkani's to the Malabar Coast. When the Dutch came, the Kochi Raja's became subservient to them. Their intervention in the prolonged conflict with Kozhikode ended in 1717 and the Raja got back all his ancestral territories. The period witnessed the rebellions of Paliath Achan, Anchikaimal and Chazhur Tampan. It also saw the formation of the northern confederacy, Zamorin's invasions and Cochin's alliance with Travancore. When Mysorean intervention had taken place, Kochi became a tributary to that power and later made an alliance with the English.

Rise of Kozhikode under Samutiri

The kingdom of Calicut was an important principality of Kerala in the Middle Ages. It became independent after the fall of Perumal kingdom. The ruler of Calicut is known as Samudiri or the Zamorin. He was the central figure in Kerala history in the middle Ages. His rise and fall synchronise with the beginning and end of the Middle Ages. But for the arrival of foreigners like the Portuguese and the Dutch the Zamorins could have been able to unite the whole of Kerala under one sceptre.

The Jewish copperplate refers to Zamorinas Eralnad

Utayavan. Ibn Batuta was the earliest writer to call the ruler as Samutiri. The word Samudiri is a truncated form of Swami Tirumulpad. As he was the chief of Eralnad, he was called Erlathiri. The rulinghouse of Samutiri is known by the name Nediyrrippu Swarupamafter the original house of the Eratis at Nediyrrippu in Eralnad. Therefore, he is referred to as Nediyrrippu Muppan. He was called Punturakkon after calicut, which became a puntura, a great port of trade. As the Zamorin's authority extended over both hill and sea, he is called as Kunnalakonathiri, the lord of hills and waves in Malayalam and Shailabhadhiswaran and Samudragiriraja in Sanskrit. Barbosa refers to him as Samudiri, lord of the Ocean. As he belonged to Eralnad, the Zamorin is also known as Erati.

The origin and early history of the Zamorins are enveloped in mystery. Keralolpathi ascribe their origin to Manikkan and Vikkiran, the two Erati brothers, who received from the Perumal a small Desam where the cock crows, a thorny jungle and an injunction to 'die, kill and annex'. They also received the broken sword (Otinja Val), the broken Conch (utanja Sankh) and the land that was still left after partition (Ullanad) and a faithful (Panikkar) commendant. Barbosa, Shaik zain-Ud-dhin and the Mamankom Kilippatturepeat the legend with minor variations.

The Jewish Copper plate of Bhaskera Ravi and the Kottayam copper plate of Viraraghava (Syrian Christian copper plates) mention the Zamorin. Keralamahathmyam refersto him as a feudatory prince. The Dutch wrtieer Visschier and Muens and the Cochin Grantha Vari also

mention the Zamorin. The ancestors of the Zamorins came and settled in Eralnad with headquarters at Nediyiruppu in the 3rd century AD says Krishna Aiyar, the historian of the Zamorins.

The rise of Calicut may be assigned to the period after the 13th Century. By the 11th Century, the Eranad Utaivar came to be known as Nediyiruppu Muppan. It remained as a regional Nadu throughout under the Perumals. When Perumal's authority disintegrated, Nediyiruppu Swarupam declared its independence. It became a necessity to North Swarupam to extend its boundaries for economic existence. The Nediyiruppu ruler was in a dire need of a port city for over-sea trade. Hence he tried to acquire Calicut, which was under the domain of Porlathiri. The Eratis were landlocked in their domain and they wanted to get an outlet to the sea through Polanad. The Polanad chief turned down their request for the Chullikkad at the mouth of the Kallayi River and the adjoining Kozhikode hill. There upon the Eratis attacked Polanad and through treachery and bribery acquired Kozhikode and made it their capital. The city around the Siva temple came to be known as Koil Kotta (fortified palace) which in course of time became as Calicut. The exact date for its foundation is not known. Calicut is unknown to writers before Batuta. Calicut had become a busy city by the time of Batuta. The city was founded in 1042AD, says a Sanskrit chronogram. Ma Huan and Abdul Razack suggest a date around 1050AD. In course of time Calicut became the greatest and the most famous port on the Kerala Coast. Its rise

and prosperity were due to its position as the capital city of an expanding empire and as the waterway that gave access to the upper country. It was also due to the character and policy of the Zamorins, which induced the Arab and Chinese merchants to flock to this port of trade. Calicut soon became the Chief emporium of trade. It was the brisk trade carried through Calicut port that filled the coffers of the Zamorin and fired him with the political ambition to be the overlord of the whole of Kerala.

Zamorin's Conquests.

After defeating Porlathiri and acquiring Calicut, the Zamorin embarked on a series of conquests. The Rajas of Beypore, Parappanad and Vellat and the chieftains of Kurumbranad and Payyurmala were forced to acknowledge his supremacy. The ruler of Valluvanad was the most powerful adversary whom the Zamorin had to face. The Zamorin wanted to acquire Tirunavaya, for political reasons and to preside over the Mamankam festival. Besides he wanted to have control over the agrarian tract around Bharatapuzha and the port of Ponnani. The river Nila was the main artery of communication with the interior. Kurumatsaram, an internal feud between two Brahmin settlements of Sukapuram and Panniyur gave an opportunity to the Zamorin to intervene. When the domain of Tirumanasseri Namputiri, the leader of the Panniyur faction was attacked by ValluvaKonathiri, the former appealed to the Zamorin for help. There upon Zamorin moved his army in to action and drove the Valluvanad Raja from Ponnani. After a bitter and

prolonged campaign, the Zamorin captured Tirunavaya and assumed the unique position of Rakshapura (protector) of Mamankom. The Arab merchants offered all help to the Zamorin in this conquest. The conquest however ushered in an era of bitter rivalry between the two kingdoms

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between the two kingdoms. The Zamorin continued his success. Before long he brought Nilambur, Manjeri and Vankata Kotta (Kottakkal) under his control. Nedunganad acknowledged his authority Talapilly Raja too submitted to his authority. The Punnathur chief became a strong supporter of the Zamorin. The Perumpadappu Swarupam was forced to vacate its headquarters at Chitrakutam and move in to Thiru Vanchikkulam. In the course of the 14th Century, the Zamorin further extended his conquests over central Kerala. He brought Thrikkannamathilakam under his possession and the Cochin Raja was forced to shift his headquarters from Vanchi to Kochi (1405 AD).

The conflict with Kochi began in the 11th century. It was the growing ambition of the Zamorin that forced the Cochin ruler to abandon his headquarters at Vanneri and later at Vanchi and move to Kochi. The dissensions in the Cochin royal family necessitated the intervention of the Zamorin. When the Raja bequeathed the newly formed port of Kochi to his mistress, the Raja's relatives pleaded to the Zamorin to intervene. Thereupon the Zamorin marched into the Cochin territory, occupied the Raja's palace at Thrissur, defeated the Raja and installed his nominee as the new ruler of Kochi. The new ruler acknowledged Zamorin's overlordship and agreed to sell his pepper through Calicut Port. The Chieftains of Edappalli and Kodungallur and the Arab merchants helped the Zamorin in this venture.

The Zamorin's encounter with Kochi brought him to the borders of the fertile Kuttanad and Palakkad. His authority

was recognized by the chiefs of Ambalapuzha, Vadakkumkur and Oadanad. Although there was a cloud of Conflict with Venad, it was brought to an honourable settlement. The Palakkad Raja was also brought under control by conquering Naduvattom. The powerful Kolathunad in the North also submitted to the Zamorin's authority. Thus, by the end of the 15th century, the Zamorin had become the overlord of almost two-thirds Kerala. His prestige and position increased immensely. Visions of a united Kerala have already been floating when the arrival of a few Portuguese ships under Vasco Da Gama changed the course of events and involved the Zamorin in a life and death struggle with European imperialism.

Administration.

The administrative set up of the kingdom was based on sound and liberal principles. The king was all in all. But his unlimited power was tempered on the one hand by the vassal chieftains and on the other by the Brahmins. The administration was carried on under the direct orders of the Zamorin and his ministers. The four important ministers are called *Sarvadhikaryakkars* and minor ministers are called *Karyakkar*. The important ministers were

- (i) Mangat Achan, the senior most minister who held a unique position in government
- (ii) Dharmoth Panikkar who was the instructor in arms to the Zamorin and the officer in charge of the Kalari;
- (iii) Tinyancheri Elayayath and

(iv) Varakkal ParaNampi. The last two were Brahmin ministers and enjoyed special privileges.

There was an elaborate civil service to attend to the day to day work of administration. The taxes due in the government were collected by Karyakkars. Their accounts were kept by the Menokkis (clerks). Barbosa observed that the Zamorin kept many accountants in his palace. They are all in one room separate and far from the king, sitting on benches and there they write all the affairs of the king's revenue. The kingdom consisted of different Nadus, each under a Naduvazhi. The Naduvazhi had to pay Purushantaram (succession Fee) to the Zamorin. He had to send presents on such occasions as Mamankam, Ariyitt Vazhcha. The capital city of Calicut had a governor and customs office of its own.

The Zamorin had a well-equipped an efficient army. Each Desam ha a Kalari where Nair youths were given training in arms. The city of Calicut had a standing army. The Zamorin maintained a cavalry force and an ordinance depot. The navy of the Zamorin was manned by the moplahs and the Kunjalis were the admirals of the Calicut fleet. The king was the fountain of justice. Justice was administered free to all. Property disputes were settled by Panchayats. Caste tribunals tried cases involving offences against morally and religion. Whipping, flogging, mutilation were the punishments awarded. Death penalty was inflicted for serious crimes. However, Brahmins were exempted from punishments.

Cultural Achievements.

Calicut made significant contributions to our cultural heritage under the Zamorins. Their patronage of culture overshadowed their political achievements. The Zamorins were great scholars and patronised scholars and men of letters. Calicut became a great centre of art and letters during the time of the Zamorins. Manavikrama, the most celebrated of the early Zamorins, was the author of *Vikramiya*. The Zamorins' court was adorned by the famous Eighteen and a Half (*Patinettara Kavikal*) poets. The most celebrated ones of the Zamorin's court were Uddanada Sastrikal, Payyur and Kakkasseri Bhattas. Chennos Namputiri and Punam, the last being the half poet. Uddanda was the author of *Kokila Sandesam* and *Mallikamarutam*. Kakkasseri was the author of *Vasumitra-Manavikrama* while Chennos Nampudiri composed *Tantra Samuchayam*.

Jati Hierarchies and Caste issues

There were number of studies emerged in Kerala about the Jati Hierarchies. But most of the studies have been concentrated upon the process of how a tribe become a caste, social stratification and caste formations in Kerala. Recent studies in Kerala history shown that caste have emerged in Kerala as a result of Brahmanical social order and temple-oriented hierarchies. The growth of jati system in Kerala is corresponded with the growth of medieval agrarian system. Jati hierarchies formed in Kerala represented the Brahmanical socio- legal system. Early medieval Kerala witnessed the incorporation of various jati and tribal groups into the Jati

hierarchy. This incorporation made dynamic change in the Medieval social formation. Foreign observers who described in detail the caste division in Kerala also noted that they were based on occupational divisions. Brahmanas along with Naduvazhi chiefs exercised authority over fertile agrarian regions. Next in the hierarchy came the temple servants, militia and tenants. The militia and tenants were generally called Nairs. The actual cultivator group were among the depressed caste groups in the medieval agrarian order. The growth of garden land cultivation promoted the social status of the Ezhava community. They were the main growers of coconut. Some Ezhava families had acquired the position of royal servants under Purakkad raja.

The whole society was divided into different caste hierarchies like Naduvazhis at the top then Uralers (trustees of Brahmaswam and Devaswom lands) this *uraler* caste mostly belongs to brahmins then below this group Karaler (tenants and intermediary holders) they mostly came from the Nair community. Below them the Kudiyar (Settled tenant cultivator) this group mostly came from Nairs and Ezhavas and the last group who decorated bottom of medieval agrarian society was *Adiyar*. This group were bonded service classes. Castes like *pulayar* belongs to this group who were considered as slave caste. They were bought and sold along with the land in which they work. This group is considered as the major power of production. This group were employed in wet land agriculture and garden land cultivation. Artisan and similar occupational groups enjoyed a higher socio-economic status

than *adiyar*. Carpenters, stonemasons, goldsmiths and other metal workers were traditionally used for the construction of temples. There were people from non-Hindu religious groups who played a role in medieval agriculture. The documents of the early medieval period mention the presence of Syrian Christians and Muslim merchants in the coastal regions of Kerala.

According to K.N. Ganesh the proliferation of castes in medieval Kerala had appeared through an entitlement process. Entitlement is the process by which an individual group of individuals or an institution is given a set of privileges or an institution is given a set of privileges including the title with which the institution or individual comes to be associated with. The entitlement process includes awarding a title or name (*peru*), placing the title holder in a particular position or rank (*sthanam*) privileges (*avakasam*). The titles and privileges were clearly related to the centres of political and social power. Rulers and chieftains and temples were the providers of the title. The formation of *swarupams* and *saketams* in the post-perumal period resulted in the expansion and diversification of these functions. Each *swarupam* needed a variety of persons to carry out the military, political, judicial and ideological functions. Venand and Kozhikode documents pertaining to the medieval period speak about the variety of rituals attached with the granting of these titles such as Handling over the royal sword (*utavalanakkal*) Giving sword and dress (*valum pudavayum kodukkal*) giving shield and dress (*chelayum churikayum kodukkal*) Some other positions given by the

zamorin during his Ariyittuvazcha rituals were Achan, Panikkar, Menon, Elayath, Eradi, Vellodi, talakappunayar. The list of sthanam holders cut across caste boundaries. It is possible that most of that majority of the titled functionaries were named by the naduvazhi chief through a function called *peruvili*. Peruvili was preceded by customary offerings to the ruler and it was called Tirumulkazhca.

The person who received *sthanam* and *peru* had a set of privileges and responsibilities associated with the title. Many titled person had the right of adhikaram over village or desams and they were expected to collect the dues customarily collected by the ruler such as *ankam, chunkam, ezha, kozha, pizha and changathamukhamnokku etc.* The titled persons also had military responsibilities . Dharmoth Panikkar holding a major sthanam under the Samutiri , were the military instructors of the samutiri family, Mangat achan Tinayacheri ilayath and paranambi had administrative responsibilities as sarvadyakaryakkar.

The titles discussed above were held mainly by the upper castes. But there is evidence of that the entitlement process had extended to other social groups also. The Padiyettam documents of Padmanabhi swami temple mentioned about the titles given to the other groups like astrologer, Variyan (temple servant) were holding *Tanam*. In the Ariyittuvazcha ceremony of the Samutiri, the Tunnara charavarthi played a major role. This title was held by a member of *saliya* community. The entitlement was also given to Muslim and Christian families especially to merchants.

Christian merchants held the titles like Tharakan, Mudalali and Mappila. Entitlement or *Sthanamanangal* was extended to Chanar, Ilavar Mukkuvar and pulayar. The titles like Trippappur channan, Pananchannan were titles given to Nadar community. The titles included Trippappur Ariyan and Thrippapur Muttariyan names associated with fisherman community. These entitlements give privileges in the day to day aspects of different communities like wearing bangles and earring for women, using percussion instruments for marriage, sitting on a mat in places invited, etc.

Caste oppression

Customary rights and privileges in pre modern Kerala strengthened caste structure and created political hierarchy. But the customary structure and caste privileges did not disturb the existing jati hierarchy. Untouchability and unsee ability and unapproachability was widely prevalent in the medieval Kerala society. slave trade was widely prevalent in medieval Kerala. *Adiyanmai* was a form of forced labour practiced in medieval period. The caste mostly employed for this work were pulayas, Cherumas, parayan etc. The term *pulaya* originated from the term *pulam* which means wetland. Medieval literature and inscriptions frequently mentioned the term *Kudi* in connection with wetland and garden land agriculture production. This *kudi* is the settlement of adiyar groups related to the field. The Kuti had to give a share production to its overlord as *Kudimai*. This is as a payment for staying in the *Kudi*. The texts like *Keralolpathi* and *Sankarasmriti* legitimised the caste segregation practiced by Brahmins upon other castes

Gender relations (position of women)

Women were suppressed in medieval Kerala. With regard to the condition of women one can have a general outline, speaking sometimes of one caste, or class or status, sometimes of another, as there are so many classes with corresponding diversity of manners, customs, habits, food, titles, marriage, laws, religion, property and rank in society. But generally, in almost all these sections, women were thoroughly restricted from the main stream society by various prevalent evil practices. The practices continued till 19th century.

Smarthavicharam is the important social evil that existed among the higher castes of Kerala during pre-modern period. This was particularly existed among the Brahmins. It is actually to outset the polluted *Nambuthiri* lady from her caste and family in the name of adultery. She had to face trials if she was suspected by any of her family members or others that she had illicit relation with other man. In the trial period she had to be in *Anchampuram* and must lead a secluded life. If adultery is proved, she will be excommunicated from her community and thereby became a slave. The famous *Suchindram Kaimukku* is a remarkable example to *Smarthavicharam*.

Another important social evil existed among the medieval society was *mannappedi pulappedi*. It prevailed among the upper caste women. By these, *Mannans, Parayas, Pulayars* or others of lower castes can contact high caste women by means of touching, throwing stone or stick on some particular days. The direct or distant touch can even pollute the higher caste women and they will become outcastes. The man who contacted her can put

claim over her. These customs can be considered as the tactics of higher castes to suppress females in their own caste

Devadasi system was another form of exploitation. The term *Devadasi* means servant of God. *Devadasis* were girls attached to temples and were learnt and efficient dancers. They enjoyed special status in society. Based on this, they were even given seats with royal women. But in the later period, their status was declined merely to prostitutes and the higher castes who had the authority of temples exploited and used them. This decline of their moral standards is evident from the Manipravalam literature, particularly from the *Acchi charithams*, especially *Unniyacchi Charitham* and *Unnichiruthevi Charitham*. The erotic poem Chandrolsavam composed during 15th and 16th centuries with its theme the moon festival conducted by a Devadasi Medini Vennilavu testifies the complete moral degeneracy of the system. At the same time, these kinds of systems were fully supported by the society which is giving prime importance to the chastity of women.

Marumakkathayam (matrilineal system) system was an important feature of medieval Kerala society. It refers to inheritance through the female line. The system gained strength during this period. As per this system, all the children born to the women of the family remain in the same family till death. It was mainly followed by the Nair caste to which the rulers belonged to. Many foreign travellers who made reference about this custom were morocco traveller Ibn Battutta, Friar Jordanus, a Dominican missionary, Portuguese traveller Durate Barbosa also made comment about this system

Advent of Europeans

Western political powers reached Kerala coast at the end of fifteenth century, at that time Kerala is known for its spice trade credentials throughout the Indian ocean region. The first European power who reached Kerala was Portuguese. The political authority in Kerala was fragmented at the time of

Portuguese arrival. Contemporary records mention about more than thirty major and minor swarupams in Kerala. The Kolathiri, Samutiri and Venattadi were the three major swarupams. The political situations in 16th century Kerala was mostly based on mutual conflicts and rivalry between Samutiri and perumbadappu on the one side and Samutiri and Valluvakonatiri on the other side. It was into this feudal scene the Portuguese came with interests, tactics. The inherent weakness of the political system suited their schemes. The arrival of Portuguese in the Malabar coast adversely affected the Muslim merchants who monopolised the relations in the Malabar coast. The Portuguese already have bitter rivalries with the Muslims in Mediterranean and African coast. Portuguese were failed to create a trade relation with samutiri but Kolathiri and perumbadappu chief made a trade alliance with Portuguese. The arrival of Portuguese in Malabar coast transformed the many traditional features of polity, society, economy and culture of Kerala.

The objectives of the Portuguese policy in Kerala were the same as their general foreign policy objectives in the East namely ‘pepper and Christians’. The first historic Portuguese

mission to India was headed by Vasco da Gama who reached Calicut on 21st May 1498. Gama was well received by Samutiri but Portuguese failed to create a trade relation with Samutiri. Second Portuguese mission to India was headed by Pedro Alvariz Cabral. To monopolise Arabian sea in the Malabar coast and to keep away the Muslim traders from trading activities Portuguese introduced a new system called *cartaz*. As per the new system different trading groups in the Arabian sea have to get a permission letter from Portuguese to conduct trading activities. The conflict between Portuguese and Samutiri led to the conflict between Kunjali marakkar and Portuguese. The presence of Portuguese in the Malabar coast changed the sea war strategy of the whole region

Kerala as a Linguistic and Cultural Region

In ancient times Kerala was a part of tamilakam. Language spoken in this region was tamil. Evolution of Malayalam as a language started during the time of perumal dynasty onwards. Bakthi literature produced in the perumal period enriched the literary tradition of Kerala. Kerala got a separate political identity during the perumal period.

There are different arguments among the scholars regarding the origin of Malayalam language from Sanskrit tradition and tamil language. Brahmin migration to Kerala popularised the Sanskrit traditions. But the folk traditions in Kerala are more inclined towards the tamil language. The departure from the pure Sanskrit tradition can be seen from the Maniavalam literature. The first historian who tried to analyse manivalam literature with a historical perspective

was Ilamkulam Kunja pillai. This literature was the combination of Sanskrit and existing oral traditions. The language used in this literature was an Hybrid language. Among the manipravalam literature, Lilatilakam a literature written in 14th century is considered as the work which firstly used Malayalam words. is the starting point of the evolution of the Malayalam language. Apart from Lilatilakam other Manipravalam literatures like Unniacci charitam, Unnichirutevi charitam both widened the evolution of Malayalam language. The development of Malayalam as an independent language from the influence of Tamil and Sanskrit language occurred at the end of 15th century when Cherusserry Namboothiri wrote *krishnagatha*. The theme of this work adopted from Sanskrit Bhagavatham but the language was clearly Malayalam.

More than one hundred Malayalam works were composed from the beginning of 16th century to the beginning of the 18th C. Medieval Bakthi literature mostly written during this period and this literature played a crucial role in the development of Malayalam language .The writings of Thunchath Ramanujan Ezhuthachan and the works of Poonthanam Namboothiri contributed well in the Bakthi poetry .Thunchath ezhuthachan is considered as the father of Malayalam language .He belonged a group of Nattuzhthachans who taught Malayalam letters as basic knowledge in indigenous schools. Ezhuthachan provided the innovative break in the nature of Malayalam literary production. He used a specific term of narrative called Kilippattu. Malayalam

language developed through these bakthi traditions mostly influenced by the brahmanic Sanskrit tradition. Bakthi literature contributed the development of Temple artforms like Kathakali and *Thullal*. Kathakali developed as an elite art form based on reputed temples. But *Thullal* was mostly influenced by Theyyam and other folk elements of Kerala culture. So, the *Thullal* literature contributed to popularisation of Malayalam language. Kunjan Nambiar played a crucial role in it.

Malayalam language gradually changed from oral traditions to written form. Later prose literature developed in this language. Malayalam language developed to a complete form with the arrival of Christian missionaries.

Formation of Malayali Identity

From the perception of pre modern and modern times the identity of Kerala has been ambiguous. The region now forming part of Kerala has originally been a part of larger entity called *tamilakam* and then of the Malabar coast. Later allusions to the region do not refer to Kerala but to an area called *Malainadu* or *malai mandalam* and the foreigners constantly referred to the region as Malabar. The more popular term appears to have been *malainadu* and Malayalam, and the later term referred to a bounded linguistic region. Texts like *Arthasastra*, *Ramayana*, *Mahabharatha*, various puranas, *Sakunthalam* and other important literary texts rendered into Malayalam. Alongside Sanskrit rendering an equally powerful pattu (song) tradition also developed that narrated the stories of valour, romance, and even philosophical thoughts of *malainatu* people. The formation of Kerala as a linguistic region

happened during 18th c. During this period when the language and literary and artistic forms, system of knowledge and livelihood patterns traveling from one place to another and the sensibility of Malayali different from that of the *paradesi* (non-resident) was created. The formation of two princely states of Travancore and cochin and the constitution of Malabar and south Canara. The quest for the cultural pasts of Kerala can also be perceived in the background of efforts to reconstruct the fragmented political entity into a single linguistic cultural region.

The events described or explained as makers of the cultural history of Kerala thus become the markers of the process of formation of Malayali culture in Kerala. Ezhuthachan became the father of Malayalam language, Kathakali became essential Malayali art, *Mohiniyattam* Malayali dance, *sopanana sangeetham* become the Malayali music, *kalari* became Kerala martial art. Malayali culture being discovered from the medieval elite culture. Kerala culture thus became a grand spectacle with its events, performance and heroes, monumental temples and palaces, picturesque gods. There is a problem of people excluded from the spectacle. The adoption of the elite linguistic form as Malayalam language leaves out numerous local ways of expression and even dialects. while taking of temple as a symbol of Kerala culture leaves out popular culture and this applies various other aspects like print culture, food and dress codes and taste.

Thus, an ambiguous geographical region, which was politically fragmented under various swarupam was grounded as linguistic region.
