

KERALA CABINET



*C. Achutha Menon*



*K. C. George*



*K. P. Gopalan*



*T. V. Thomas*



*E. M. S. NAMBOODIRIPAD*  
*Chief Minister*



*K. R. Gouri*



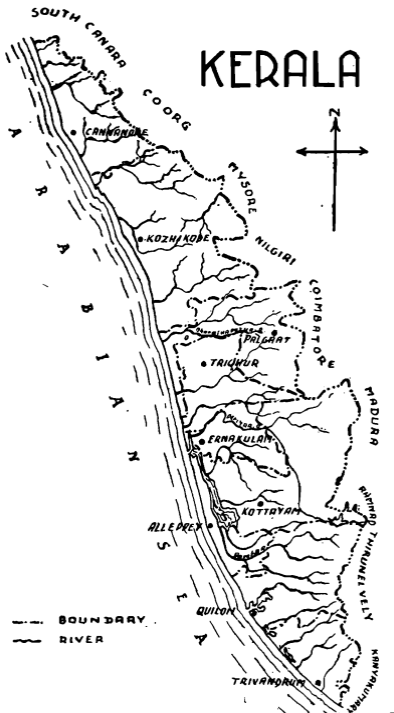
*T. A. Majid*



*Joseph Mundassery*



# KERALA



## **KERALA STATE**

**KERALA STATE**, one of the 14 States of the Indian Republic, has been formed by the union of the major part of the old Travancore-Cochin State (the taluks of Thovala, Agastheeswaram, Kalkulam, Vilavancode and a part of Shencottah having been transferred to the Madras State) and the Malabar district and Kasargode taluk of the old Madras State. With the southernmost extremity at Parassala, about 35 miles up from the 'land's end of India', it stretches along the shores of the Arabian Sea for a distance of about 360 miles with Mysore State on the north and north-east and Madras State on the east and south. The breadth of the State varies from 20 miles in the extreme north and south, to over 75 miles in the middle.

It lies between  $8^{\circ}$ - $18'$  and  $12^{\circ}$ - $48'$  northern latitudes and between  $74^{\circ}$ - $52'$  and  $77^{\circ}$ - $22'$  eastern longitudes.

Comprising some 15,000 square miles in area, Kerala is the smallest State in the Indian Union. Its population, according to the 1951 Census, was over 13,500,000; in 1958 it is computed at well over 15,000,000. Thus, in area, Kerala is bigger than Albania (11,000 sq. miles) Belgium (11,781 sq. miles), the Netherlands (12,868 sq. miles) and Formosa (13,906 sq. miles). Kerala is only slightly smaller than Switzerland (15,944 sq. miles). In population Kerala ranks higher than Albania (1,122,000), Switzerland (4,715,000), Austria (6,900,000) Belgium (8,513,000), the Netherlands (9,625,000) and Formosa (10,000,000). All these countries (including Formosa which, in point of fact, constitutes what is referred to as Nationalist China) are individual sovereign States recognised under international law, and are members of the United Nations. Kerala is thus bigger and more populous than six world States. It is, however, less than one-twelfth of the size of Bombay, the biggest, bi-lingual State in the Indian Union.

### **PHYSICAL FEATURES**

Kerala forms a distinct region, marked off from the adjoining areas by the Western Ghats which run parallel to the sea and constitute an almost continuous mountain wall on the eastern side. The Western Ghats dominate the topography of the country. The coast contains a narrow strip of land from the extreme south up to Kozhikode. North of

Kozhikode, the coastline is fringed with low cliffs alternating with stretches of sand. A few miles to the interior, the scene changes and the sand level rises towards the barrier of the Ghats at first in ranges of low red laterite hills interspersed with paddy fields and cocoanut gardens and later in the long spurs, deep ravines and thick jungles that mark the beginning of the main Western Ghats. The Ghats maintain an average elevation of 3,000 feet, soaring up into peaks 6,000 to 8,000 feet high in certain places. The Anamudi peak in Kottayam district rises up to a height of 8,837 feet and forms the highest point in India south of the Himalayas. Though pierced by a number of passes, the chief of which is the 25 mile wide Palghat Gap, the Western Ghats protect Kerala from the dry winds of the Eastern Plains and help to ensure a steady rainfall during the south-west monsoon. Detached from the main range, there are several outlying hills which break the monotony of the undulating laterite downs of the low country.

Based on physical features, the State falls into three natural divisions—the lowland bordering the sea, the midland consisting of the undulating country east of the lowlands and the forest-clad highland on the extreme east.

The lowland bordering the sea is densely covered with cocoanut palms. Paddy is also extensively grown. In the midland region may be seen valleys broken here and there by isolated hills; and the plains leading to the forest-clad uplands. This region bears the largest extent of agricultural and paddy lands. On the higher elevation are extensive tea and cardamom plantations while pepper, rubber, ginger and turmeric flourish in the lower elevations. The hilly portion is broken up by long spurs, extensive ravines, dense forests and tangled jungles. Kerala forests are famous for their unique variety of fauna and flora.

**Climate and rainfall.**—The diversity of the physical features results in a corresponding diversity of climate. In some of the mountain peaks pinching cold is experienced; lower down at an elevation of three to five thousand feet, one meets with a bracing cold climate. In the plains the climate is generally hot. Though the mean maximum temperature is only around 90°F it is oppressive in the moisture-laden atmosphere of the plains. Humidity is very high and rises to about 90 per cent during the south-west monsoon. The annual variation of temperature is small; the diurnal range is only about 10°F.

The south-west monsoon starts towards the end of May or the beginning of June heralded by thunder-storms and holds sway till September when the rains fade out. October brings in the north-east monsoon. Dry weather sets in by the end of December. January and February are the driest and coolest months of the year. March, April and May are generally very hot. Most parts of Kerala get fairly heavy rainfall. The highest rainfall occurs on the High Range in Kottayam district where it amounts to over 200 inches. On the coast, it generally decreases as one goes south. Thus, while Trivandrum has an average annual rainfall of 64 inches, Kozhikode gets 118 inches. Though variations in rainfall do occur, complete failure of rains is almost unknown and floods cause more destruction to crops than drought.

### EVOLUTION OF THE STATE

The ancient history of Kerala is, to a great extent, shrouded in the mists of tradition. According to a popular legend the land crust that forms Kerala was raised from the depths of the ocean as the result of the severe penance offered by Parasurama, Brahmin avatar of Vishnu, for his vengeful wars and destructive campaign against the Kshatriyas. The land thus raised, by a mighty heave of Parasurama's battleaxe was Kerala, extending from Gokarnam to Kanyakumari. Whatever be the historic basis for the tradition, it is generally believed that the area comprising Kerala had been formed by the recession of the sea.

The first half of the 9th century A.D. was an important epoch in the history of Kerala. The feeling of unity between the various groups of the Malayalam speaking people had become sufficiently strong as to cause the starting of an era, the *Kollavarsham* from August 825 A.D. Thus the era pre-  
sages, in recorded history, the advent of the present Kerala State by over eleven centuries. The "Kollavarsham" was used for the official calendars of the Governments of Travancore and Cochin till their integration in 1949; it is still followed by the masses for religious observance and cultural festivals.

It is recorded that the warring chieftains of Kerala, unable to accept local over-lordships, chose a foreign nobleman for political sovereignty; these were the Perumals of the Chera dynasty. The end of the reign of the last of the Chera Perumals was a turning point in the history of Kerala. From that

period onwards, the Malayalam-speaking people began to draw apart from other races east of the Ghats and build up a distinctive culture of their own.

The end of the Perumals' reign was followed by a division of the country among local kshatriyas which gave ample scope for mutual rivalries and feuds. The weakening of solidarity, in its turn, paved the way for invasion of Muslim adventurers and later the consolidation of power in the hands of foreigners in different parts of Kerala.

**Travancore.**—In Travancore, the southernmost area of Kerala, there were a number of principalities of which Venad was the most powerful. The English first settled in Anjengo in Travancore having got the site in 1684 as a grant from the Queen of Attingal. Maharaja Marthanda Varma, son of the Queen of Attingal, became the *Adhipathi* of Venad in 1729 and succeeded in crushing the feudal chieftains who had risen in revolt against dynastic absolutism. After having united Attingal with Venad, Marthanda Varma proceeded on a campaign of conquest and after a bloody campaign brought the territories comprising several independent principalities under his sway, thus creating Travancore, which was destined to become in later years, one of India's most progressive States. Contrite at the colossal slaughter and destruction he had caused, Marthanda Varma dedicated his entire kingdom to *Padmanabha*, the family deity at Trivandrum. Marthanda Varma and his successors thereafter ruled the State as the *Dasas* or *Sevinis* of Padmanabha.

In the wars in which the East India Company was engaged in Carnatic and in Mysore in the eighteenth century, Travancore rendered unflinching military assistance to the Company and was reckoned as one of its staunchest allies. As a bulwark against invasion by Tippu Sultan, Travancore entered into an agreement with the Company in 1788 and in 1795 a formal treaty was concluded by which the Company agreed to protect Travancore from all foreign enemies in return for certain concessions. In 1805 a new treaty was signed, fixing an annual contribution of Rs. 8 lakhs in lieu of the Company's obligations for the defence of Travancore. This pecuniary obligation continued till the lapse of paramountcy in 1947. On the integration of Travancore and Cochin on the 1st of July 1949, His Highness Balarama Varma, Maharaja of Travancore, assumed the office of Raj Pramukh.

**Cochin.**—As in the case of Travancore, the early history of Cochin State is also dimmed by obscurity. According to tradition, the Rajas of Cochin held the territory by right of direct succession from Cheraman Perumal who divided his kingdom among his relatives and chief nobles.

In 1502 the Portuguese were given a strip of land near the Port of Cochin, and in the following year they were allowed to build a fort at the place and to establish commercial relations with the State. In the wars with the Zamorin, the Raja of Cochin derived considerable help from the Portuguese. About the latter part of the 17th Century the Portuguese influence in the West Coast began to decline and in 1663, when they were defeated by the Dutch and ousted from the town of Cochin, the Raja of Cochin entered into a treaty with the triumphant power and conceded to them the same privileges as had been extended to the Portuguese. About a century later, in 1759, when the Dutch power began to wane, the Raja of Cochin was attacked by the Zamorin of Calicut, but the aggressor was repulsed with the powerful assistance of the Travancore Ruler. In 1776, the State was invaded by Hyder Ali, to whom—and subsequently to his son Tippu Sultan—Cochin remained tributary for decades. In 1791, Maharaja of Cochin entered into a treaty of alliance with the East India Company. His Highness agreed to become tributary to the Company and to pay an annual subsidy in return for the protection promised by the Company. A series of Maharajas ruled the State thereafter in peace. On the integration of Travancore and Cochin, the Maharaja of Cochin gave up ruling powers.

**Malabar.**—In the northern area of Kerala, the Zamorin of Calicut, whose ancestor had received the gift of a small area of land from the last of the Perumals and a sword with which he was enjoined to enlarge the power bequest, acted up to the behest and subdued all the neighbouring princes. The Zamorin's incursions were sometimes made with the aid of Arabs who had arrived in Kerala and built the Calicut City as a base of trading operations. With the help of the Arabs, the then veterans in naval operations, the Zamorin organised a *pucca* naval force, which has left behind a glorious chapter in the history of this ancient land. Thanks to this naval unit under the able captaincy of Kunjali Marikar the Zamorin managed in the early stages to keep the Portuguese invaders and pirates off the Kerala coast. In the 14th Century, the Vijayanagar rulers brought the Zamorin into temporary subjection, but by

the end of the 15th Century, when the Portuguese Admiral Vasco de Gama arrived in Calicut, the Zamorin was the strongest among the Malabar Princes.

The subsequent history of Malabar is the history of struggles among the petty principalities, with the Portuguese taking sides, the arrival of other Western powers on the scene, the conquests of the Sultans of Mysore and bloody battles which followed, resulting in the extermination of principalities, one after another. In 1792, Tippu, who had to encounter severe opposition from the Travancore forces aided by the British entered into an agreement, ceding Malabar to the British. The Zamorin's family continued to enjoy lands under lease, and subsequently the Zamorin and several other Rajas were granted perpetual pension.

From 1792 began the history of British domain in Kerala. It is a history ennobled by chapters of heroic resistance to the foreigner, as in the case of Pazhassi Raja of Malabar and Velu Thampi of Travancore.

### **Merger and Reorganisation**

Thus it may be seen that Kerala, which in ancient times was under the sway of the Chera Kings, as a cohesive unit continued to be so for several centuries when the vicissitudes of history fragmented the land into petty principalities almost all of them having a chequered career of rise, temporary expansion and annexation by a powerful neighbour. This state of affairs underwent a change during the days of the Perumals when a sort of loose unity among the virtually autonomous chieftaincies was forged. Again, a process of disintegration set in after the last among the celebrated Perumals viz., Cheraman Perumal. In more recent historical times, Kerala as stated above was divided into three distinct constituents.

When the administrative map of India was redrawn, on the recommendations of the States Reorganisation Commission, with special emphasis on linguistic and cultural homogeneity the present State of Kerala emerged officially on November 1, 1956, thus consummating the long-cherished aspiration of the Malayalam-speaking population.

### **NATURAL RESOURCES**

Kerala abounds in natural wealth which even from the early past had attracted foreign nations. Thousands of years ago, the ships of Phoenicians laden with gold reached the



shores of Kerala and returned with pepper, spices and ivory over which the State could maintain some sort of monopoly and does so even in modern times of acute competition. The subsequent history of Kerala is actually the history of the pursuits by different nations to gain monopoly for trade in its natural produces. The rivers, backwaters, sea board, forests etc., of the State abound in natural wealth, the exploitation of which on scientific lines would ensure the prosperity of the people.

**Rivers.**—The heavy annual rainfall and the broken nature of the country resulted in a large number of rivers and streams. Most of them flow down to the Arabian Sea or into the backwaters along the coast. As the Western Ghats are nowhere more than 75 miles from the sea, these rivers are comparatively short. The important rivers are (from north to south) Vālar-pattanam (70 miles); Chaliar (96 miles); Kadalundi (75 miles); Bharathapuzha (166 miles); Chalakudy (70 miles); Periyar (142 miles); Pampa (90 miles); Achankovil (70 miles) and Kallada (70 miles).

The paradox of nature's beauty and bounty existing side by side with poverty and under-development is sought to be ended by exploiting the river water resources of the State. These rivers provide ample scope for developing irrigation facilities necessary for stepping up food production. The rivers in the State which rise at 3,000 to 4,000 ft. above sea level and fall within a distance of 20 miles to a level of about 500 ft. provide immense scope for hydro-electric generation. The rivers are also important as means of communication. Most of the major industrial concerns of the State are situated by the side of large rivers.

**Backwaters.**—The backwaters are peculiar feature of Kerala. The coast line is generally fringed with lakes or backwaters and canals have been dug to connect them, so that there is uninterrupted inland water communication from Trivandrum to Thiruvananthapuram, a distance of 220 miles. The Vembanad lake stretching from Alleppey to Cochin is the biggest water basin and is 70 square miles in area.

Backwater fishing is a thriving industry in several parts of Kerala. There are exhaustive deposits of lime-shell which is essential for building purposes and which feeds the cement industry in the State.

The palm-fringed lagoons are among the important tourist attractions of Kerala.

**Forests.**—The State is very rich in its forests. These consist of deciduous sub-tropical evergreen, evergreen tropical rain forests and deciduous monsoon forests. The foot hills of the Western Ghats contain a number of scrub jungles and in the interior of the Ghats there are some luxuriant sholas. Of the total geographical area of the State, 25.8 per cent is under forests. In this matter, the State ranks second among the States in India, only Assam having a larger percentage of its area under forests. The Kerala forests are comparatively very rich. The revenue from the forests is about Rs. 10 per acre in the State while it is only Rs. 3 in India as a whole.

Favourable conditions of climate and soil prevalent in the country, especially its copious rainfall and humid atmosphere have given rise to magnificent forest flora, rich in its luxuriance of growth and variety. The fauna and flora of the Kerala forests as already pointed out constitute a great source of wealth. The game sanctuary in the Periyar lake and wild life nursery at Edapalayam along with the administration of forest laws have safeguarded the animal wealth of the forest area. The gigantic trees in the perennial embrace of winding creepers afford a splendid luxuriance of foliage and flowers everywhere. While in their cool shades the doves coo and cuckoo cries and a rare variety of other birds thrive, the tiger quenches his thirst in the spring below and the deer flees for life. Elephant, bisons, cheetahs, leopards, Nilgri ibexes, wild boars, sambur and monkeys are but a few of the other animals seen in Kerala forests.

Silviculture and the industries connected with forest produces have led to the development of forest resources in other directions. Nearly 600 species of timber are grown in the forests. Teak, blackwood, ebony, softwood and rosewood are a few of the State monopoly trees cultivated on commercial scale. There are more than 80,000 acres of forest plantations, chiefly teak at present. The State has a flourishing timber industry. The timber yard at Kallai is reported to be the second largest in the whole world. The minor items of forest produces consist of reeds, sandal wood, rattan, honey, wax, rubber and ivory besides firewood, charcoal, cardamom, bamboo, and a variety of rare medicinal herbs. The tusks of elephants that

die in the forest constitute another source of revenue. These forest produces feed a large number of industries in the State.

**Minerals.**—With the advent of the atomic era Kerala has gained prominence by virtue of its large deposits of the thorium-bearing mineral, monozite. Several valuable minerals occur in many parts of the State. The beach sands in Quilon District are rich in heavy minerals like monozite, ilmenite, rutile, zircon and sillimanite. China Clay or Kaolin suitable for the manufacture of porcelain is found in many parts of the State. An inferior type of clay occurs in many places and is used for the manufacture of tiles and bricks. Deposits of graphite also occur in many parts of the State. The backwaters of the coastal areas contain large quantities of lime-shell which are being continuously replenished from time to time. This source of calcium carbonate is used for the manufacture of cement.

**Wealth from waters.**—With a coastline of about 360 miles and a large number of backwaters in close proximity to the sea and linked to it by its tidal ebb and flow and the existence of numerous freshwater streams, the economic benefits accruing from proper exploitation of the inexhaustible wealth of the waters are bound to be immense. It is estimated that the annual fish catch in the State amounts to about 2.5 lakh tons which is one-fifth of the total catch in India. Kerala ranks second among the States in India in *per capita* consumption of fish. Among the chief marine products can be included shark liver oil, turtle oil and body oil of leather jacket, which besides being put to their separate uses are often mixed together for wood treatment by boatmen. The sea-worm called tripang and several marine plants and weeds of nutrition value and sargasso weed for commercial extraction of iodine are also other valuable sea products. The shell-fish industry is carried on along the shores of the lakes. Oyster culture is also carried on in certain places.

### Distribution according to Religion

According to the 1951 census the distribution of population on the basis of religion was as follows:

|            |           | <i>Percentage.</i> |
|------------|-----------|--------------------|
| Hindus     | 83,60,596 | 61                 |
| Christians | 29,35,385 | 22                 |
| Muslims    | 22,02,774 | 16                 |
| Sikhs      | 308       |                    |
| Others     | 52,466    |                    |

The population of scheduled castes in the State was 12,51,730 and that of scheduled tribes 74,056.

### Language and Literacy

Malayalam is the mother-tongue of the majority of the population. 1,26,65,626 persons out of 136 lakhs i. e., 90 per cent according to census figures of 1951 speak Malayalam. Next comes Tamil which is spoken by 9 per cent i. e., 5,92,968 persons. Distribution according to other languages is as follows:

|           |          |
|-----------|----------|
| Konkani   | 67,688   |
| Kanarese  | 47,468   |
| Telugu    | 43,576   |
| Marathi   | 20,203   |
| Gujerathi | 6,036    |
| Hindi     | 5,920    |
| Others    | 1,02,044 |

With 40.4 per cent literacy, Kerala stands foremost among the Indian States in educational advancement. The percentage of literacy among those aged five years and above is 47.4 per cent.

### Customs and manners

The Malayalees have a distinctiveness in personal appearance marked by fairness of complexion and regularity of features, clean habits and simple life. The Malayalee women were noted for their preference of simple white dress though the manner of dressing varied with the women of the various communities. The Nayar ladies had their *pudava*, *rouka* and upper cloth, all white in colour and the Christian ladies, their cloth worn in a distinctive style with a fan-like portion on the backside, and long sleeved blouse. The women of this part used to wear heavy and varied ornaments. Some of them used to load their head, ears, nose, neck, arms, the waist and ankles with heavy jewellery. But, there has been in the past few decades, rapid changes in all these. The outlook of the people

Life generally has changed considerably and new ideas resulting from liberal education have permeated society at large. The wearing of caste marks has become a rarity. The long shave of the Christians has disappeared. The Muslims are giving up their cap and the turban. Women of all castes and communities are taking to the saree and the blouse. They are also limiting their ornaments to a few bangles, a gold chain and a pair of *Kammals*.

Of the customs peculiar to Kerala, the most important are the Marumakkathayam and the joint family system. The Marumakkathayam system determines inheritance through the female line. The Kshatriyas, the Ambalavasis, the Samanairs, Nayars, some of the Ezhavas (also called Thiyyas) and some Muslims followed this system. The joint family system is where the members live under the same roof without partition and the eldest male member of the family, who is called the *tharuvu* exercises full power over the affairs of the family peculiar to this land. During the past four or five decades, there had been an urge for a change in the age-old customs. Legislative sanctions were given to claim partition from the joint families and adopt Makkathayam i.e., inheritance through the male line. Due advantage has been taken of these legislations by the majority of these communities and the gradual but steady break up of the joint family system has resulted in individual members leaving their joint family and setting up homes of their own.

As an appendage of Marumakkathayam and joint family system, the *Sambandam* system of marriage was prevalent among the Nayar community of Kerala. Under this system, the wife used to live in her own joint family and the husband only occasionally visited her. There was no community of life between the husband and wife. With the break-up of joint family system, the *Sambandam* system is giving place to the modern system of marriage and married life.

Observance of caste system with all its rigour and formalities was another peculiarity of Kerala. Though the system prevailed throughout India, no other place was marked by its strict enforcement than Kerala that the great Vivekananda referred to Kerala as 'the mad-house of India'. Persons belonging to non-caste-Hindus, called the *Avarnas* were not allowed to enter and worship in Hindu temples, were prohibited from passing through public high-ways adjoining temples and were not allowed to mix with caste-Hindus, called the *Savarnas* in

public schools or other public institutions. There were instances of educated men from among the *Avarnas* having been denied the opportunity to enter Government service just because they belonged to *Avarna* communities. Of late, the observance of untouchability has almost vanished from the fair land of Kerala, consequent upon the powerful movement for social reform and abolition of the caste-system ably led by the great saint Sree Narayana Guru. This gave the inspiration for the Temple Entry Proclamation by the Maharaja of Travancore followed by legislations for temple entry and removal of caste-disabilities by the Governments of Travancore, Cochin and Madras.

The foregoing paras will give the reader a glimpse of some of the salient ancient customs and manners of the people of this land and the rapid changes some of them have undergone as a result of the progress made along modern lines. The progress, indeed, has been remarkable. One characteristic feature of the progress has been that an intelligent differentiation is distinctly visible in what is given up and retained. The people have not, for example, in spite of all the revolutionary changes they have witnessed given up their intensely religious devotion, their habits of maintaining a high standard of personal cleanliness, simplicity in food and clothing and above all, their passion for education and learning.

#### **Position of Women**

Women of Kerala, from early days, enjoyed to a large extent the freedom to live an outdoor life and to commune with Nature. They used to enjoy along with men the recitals of the *puranas* and *ithihasas*, the performance of Sanskrit dramas and indigenous arts like *Kathakali*, *Patakam* etc., in the family quadrangle and in the temple premises. Festivals like *Onam* and *Thiruvathira* gave occasion for social contacts and for the exhibition of literary and musical talents and folk dances. Both the high and the low knew to read and to write, to sing and to dance. In *Chilappatikaram* mention is made that Kannaki was first spotted in Chera land by some women engaged in *Kuravai-nittam* (a kind of folk dance). *Chanrotsavam*, a poetic composition of XII century, refers to women artists like Mathi remarkable for her musical talent and dexterity in playing the *Veena*. Her daughter, Medini-Vennilavu, even when five years old, is said to have been accomplished in the arts of finery, in mixing up cosmetics for toilet and in the skilful use of language. She is also described as having a fine aesthetic

appreciation of Sanskrit dramas like *Sakuntalam*, *Malavikagnitram* and *Kadambaricharitam*.

In the history of the past, we come across a galaxy of sublime womanhood, remarkable for scholarship and culture. The folk songs praise the martial prowess and war tactics of the Amazon queen, who boldly defended her husband against the invaders. Van Rhee reports the military manoeuvres of the young Amazon princess of Attingal, who as the head of an army, drove back the invader, Kerala Varma of Nedumangad. There were women poets and scholars in the court of the Kerala Kings. It is written in *Sangham* literature that Kakkai-taiyan (Nechullayar) the poetess was presented with nine *kalams* of gold and a hundred thousand gold coins, by king Cherathathan. *Visnumayacharitham* of the X century was composed by Umadevi Thampuratti. The devotional songs and poems of the woman Saint Kuroorama are still sung in many homes. Learned scholars like Manorama Thampuratti and Kuttikunju Thankachi, have left their imprint on Sanskrit and Malayalam literature.

To-day our State leads the other parts of India in women's education. Women in Kerala occupy high positions in every field of public activity, including educational, judicial, medical and engineering professions. The 'new woman' has a finer rhythm of life, a wider outlook and a broader vision than her sister of the previous century. She can now boast of not only an intense social sense, but also a civic and national consciousness. She has used her freedom judiciously and in the spirit of becoming an equal partner with man. She has never sacrificed her modesty or her womanliness, or her simplicity on the altar of fashion. Education has only sharpened her intellect, widened her outlook and intensified her national and civic sense.

### Cultural background

Kerala, cut off as it is from the rest of India, by the Western Ghats, has a culture with certain distinct characteristics. Nevertheless, it shares with the rest of India a unity of culture, having an unbroken continuity between the past and the present. From very ancient days, the Indian continent—Bharata Varsha—has had a culture which is basically the same throughout. Differences in language or in political setting had only split the single ray of culture into colourful and diversified spectrum. Sanskrit language and literature have always had a unifying influence. Sanskrit has been, to a considerable extent, the vehicle of our culture, the repository

of our spiritual love, philosophy, mythology, law, literature etc. It has shaped and enriched almost all the languages in the country, particularly the Malayalam language, which has assimilated and appropriated Sanskrit sounds, words, and idioms in a very large measure.

The cultural affinities of Kerala with the rest of South India are still deeper and more intimate. The territory south of the Vindhya ranges, comprising mainly the Telugu, Kannadiga, Tamil and Malayalam speaking areas, had at one time, a common language of Dravidian stock. Ulloor Parameswara Iyer would have it that this Dravida language was the original language of the people of South India. He calls it *Pazhamtamil*, which may be termed as the parent of Tamil, Telugu, Kannadiga and Malayalam languages. Telugu and Kannada got separated from the parent language much earlier, leaving the rest of South India, comprising the kingdoms of Chera, Chola and Pandya with one language, which again later got split into the present Tamil and Malayalam languages. Copious references are found in *Sangham* literature to Cheras and Chera Kings. (Ancient Kerala was called Chera Kingdom). The *Pathittupathu*, one of the literary compositions of the Sangham Age, is an anthology of ten poems devoted to ten different Chera Kings. *Chilappathikaram*, which is a Tamil epic of this period, is the product of Ilango Adigal, the brother of Shenguttuvan, who reigned in Thiruvanchikulam, the Chera capital (2nd century A. D.)

There is yet another aspect of Kerala life and history which deserves to be mentioned here. The cosmopolitan outlook and character of the Malayalee, which has attracted the attention of several people, is due to historical causes. Kerala appears to have had the largest contacts with the rest of the world—contacts which go back to the millenium preceding the Christian era. There were important trading centres in the Kerala coast viz. Cranganore, Quilon, Cochin. Calicut, Kadalundi, Cannanore and Dharmadam. Egypt, Asia Minor, the Assyrian and Babylonian empires at the height of their power, the Grecians, the Romans, the Chinese—all these had trade relations with Kerala long before the Christian era. And during the early centuries of Christian era, trade relations existed with the Malaya Peninsula, the Philippines, Java and Sumatra. Ships from these countries of the East and the West, laden with cargo, used to sail into the Kerala waters and take back in return the special products of Kerala. Muslim traders from Arabia and elsewhere also came in large numbers



for purposes of trade. The Kerala Kings and in particular Marthandam Perumal and later the Zamorins, gave them all help and facilities and even permitted them to settle down here.

It is believed that the apostle St. Thomas had landed in Kerala during the early period of Christianity. The spread of Christianity in Kerala, more than in any other place in India, contributed to the advent of the Holy Saint. One of the oldest Muslim mosques in India is found near Cranganore. The history of the advent of Jews to Kerala (Cranganore) is also traced back to ancient times. The Jews later on established their colony in Cochin and built their Synagogue there. The Hindus, the Muslims and the Christians lived in Kerala side by side with each other, each influencing and being influenced by the culture of the other. The tolerance and the cosmopolitan outlook which characterise the Malayalee is perhaps accounted for mainly by such cosmopolitan living and contacts which Kerala had with the outside world for several centuries.

## MALAYALAM LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Language of Kerala had its origin, as mentioned above, in *Tamizh*, which got split up into different dialects due to a variety of circumstances. The origin of Malayalam literature is of a very much later period, say IX or the X century of the Christian era. The songs and ballads of the rustic people are presented to us as specimens of old Malayalam poetry and cannot be considered to belong to the earliest period. Nevertheless, they may be taken as typical of the popular songs which existed before.

### Early types of literary composition

One of the oldest works of admitted literary worth, which has come down to us, is the *Ramacharitam* (XII century)—a long poem composed in a dialect closely resembling Tamil. It deals with the *Yudha*—the great war in the *Ramayana*—in a very elaborate and artistic manner. This work is the best surviving representative of a category called *pattu* (song) which was a popular type of literary composition in early times.

One of the most striking facts about the early history of Malayalam is the development of the *manipravalam*, a combination of Malayalam and Sanskrit for literary purposes. The intimate association of the Malayalees with the Namboodiri

Brahmins afforded an opportunity for a new relation between Malayalam and Sanskrit. In daily intercourse, more and more Sanskrit words and expressions were used in conversation by Namboodiris, thus bringing into existence a mixed dialect of Malayalam and Sanskrit. This mixed language became so popular that the Namboodiris thought that it could conveniently be used as a literary medium. They had not adequate command of the native dialect to use it as a medium of literature, and the masses could not understand Sanskrit. Both these difficulties were solved by adopting the mixed language for literary purposes. This was, according to the editor of the Malayalam Lexicon Shri Suranad Kunjan Pillai, how the *manipravala* came into vogue.

The poets of the *manipravala* school mostly used Sanskrit metres and they freely adopted ideas, conventions, and even concepts from Sanskrit Poetry. *Lilatilakam* (XIV century) a contemporary Sanskrit work on Malayalam grammar and rhetoric, furnishes valuable information on the Malayalam literature of the period. *Unnichirutevi Charitam* (Champu). *Unnu Nili Sandesam* (Sandesa Kavya) *Chandrotsavam* (Poem) and *Ramayanam* (Champu composed by Punam Namboodiri) were some of the best works of the period.

#### The evolution of a new style in Malayalam

The further course of the literature found a confluence of the two types, the *pattu* and *manipravala*, in the works of the great masters of literature during XV to the XVIII centuries. Cherusseri and the three Poets known as Kannassa Panikars (XV to XVI centuries) were the foremost poets who attempted a fusion of the two styles of composition. Their work, the *Krishna Pattu* of Cherusseri, the *Ramayanam* the *Mahabharatham* and other works of the three poets of the Kannassa family were masterpieces which laid the foundation of modern Malayalam.

#### Ezhuthachan

The tradition built by Cherusseri and Kannassan was carried to perfection by Ezhuthachan, who is revered as the father of the Malayalam literature. His major works, the *Adhyatma Ramayanam* and the *Mahabharatham* are adaptations from Sanskrit and are composed in the form of *Kilipattu* (parrot songs).

Ezhuthachan had no great successor in the field of *Kilipattu*, and his age was followed by a period of lull in literature

The succeeding century witnessed a great revival of literary activity with the advent of Unnayi Varier and Kunchan Nambiar. Theirs are the output in two spheres of our literature—the *Kathakali* and the *Tullal*. *Nalacharitham* by Unnayi Varier is perhaps the best *Kathakali* work ever produced in the language. It is a masterpiece of rare excellence, in which the elements of poetry, music and drama are harmoniously blended.

#### Kunchan Nambiar

Kunchan Nambiar, the originator of the *Tullal*, is the most important poet in Malayalam, and his *tullal* works numbering more than 70 are considered as a precious heritage in Malayalam literature. Like many other classical poets in Malayalam, Nambiar borrowed themes from the *Puranas*, but he showed wonderful originality in presentation. The secret of his art lay in his unrivalled ability to view *puranic* stories against the background of contemporary life.

#### Cultural Renaissance

The Malayalam literature witnessed a period of stagnation in a full century after the period of Kunchan Nambiar. Venkayya Nambodiris and a few other poets of the period brought back Malayalam poetry, from the sublime heights it had been slipping to vulgar sensuality and rhetorical hypnotism. A salutatory change from this state of affairs was brought about thanks to the contributions of Kerala Varma Valiyakoil Thampuran and A. R. Raja Raja Varma. The 20th century witnessed a cultural renaissance unprecedented in its scope in the history of Kerala. The old values had changed giving place to new. Customs, manners and even concepts that were hitherto considered eternal and of permanent value were changed and a new outlook moulded out of modern education and necessities of changed circumstances began to overtake the daily life of the people. The caste system, the *Marumakkathayam* and the unquestioned supremacy of the *Karavanan* in the families and such other customs and conventions that constituted the pillars of the old order shook themselves to their very foundations. This cultural transformation reflected on Malayalam language and literature with its natural beauty and lyrical emotionalism.

#### The Modern Era

The great poet Kumaran Asan introduced into Malayalam a new class of literature called *Khandakavyas*, modelled on the modern poems and lyrical pieces of English. He was the true

representative of the cultural renaissance that had overtake the land of Kerala. His poems were of a revolutionary nature in the real sense and at the same time of sublime beauty and unparalleled imagination. He unveiled the greatness and nobility of 'Man' and deprecated all tendencies that destroyed the charm and purity of human emotions such as love, affection and sympathy. His poetic works such as *Nalini*, *Leela*, *Chintavishtayaya Sita*, *Duravastha*, *Chandala Bhikshuki* and *Karun* are brilliant lyrical compositions that are ever cherished as great treasures in Malayalam literature.

The modern period in Malayalam literature may be said to have commenced with the advent of Asan. Poets Vallathol and Ullur were his contemporaries, and together they comprised a trio that lit up Malayalam Poetry to resplendent splendour of presentation and unequalled beauty of emotional grandeur. Poet Vallathol is also known as the National Poet of Kerala, as his poems are permeated with a pride in the cultural glory of India, which aspect kindled a love for the mother country in the hearts of all Indians. His poems such as *Enday Gurunadhan*, *Pathaka Vandanam*, *Nammuday Marupati*, *Mathruvandanam* and a score of other poems devoted to the cause of nationalism and national liberation had inspiring effect on the national movement in Kerala. Vallathol's poetry is also noted for its rhythmic charm and sonant beauty.

### **Prose literature comes of age**

This period is also marked by pre-eminent growth of Malayalam prose. Novel, a desideratum in Malayalam till then, found its place in the literature of the language during this period. Special mention should be made of great novelists O. Chandu Menon and C. V. Raman Pillai, who enriched the literature by their eminent works of fiction.

### **Latest trends**

During the last quarter of a century considerable wealth has been built up both in prose and in poetry. Short story has had its climax. Drama, as a popular art form had blossomed during the period.

In a bird's eye view of the whole field of Malayalam literature, what strikes one most is the rich variety of its literary forms and the originality of the Malayalee writers.

The *Kathakali* and the *tullal* are indigenous literary forms which emerged out of the genius for artistic expression

Malayalee poets. The peculiar characteristics of the Malayalees—their love for the good and the beautiful things in life, their martial qualities, their high regard for spiritual as well as material values, their sense of fun and frolic, are all reflected in their literary works. While retaining much of the Dravidian elements in common with Tamil, Malayalam has been able to develop in its own way, freely taking whatever it wanted for its growth from the inexhaustible treasures of Sanskrit. But, in the Malayalam has come more under the influence of Sanskrit and its recent trends give indications of an independent development suited to the present day conditions of Malayalee life. The wealth of literature that Malayalam acquired during its development for more than a thousand years is remarkable, and there is ample promise that its future is equally bright.

## ART AND ART FORMS

Generally, Kerala presents a pageant unlike anything else here in India. The famous pantomine dance-drama known as Kathakali is a product of Kerala. It can be said that this type of dancing was evolved from the various forms of stage-dances obtaining from time immemorial, such as *Krishnanattam* and *Koothu*.

The origin of *Kathakali* is attributed to a princely whim. The Zamorins of Calicut wrote and staged a play known as *Krishnanattam* based on the life-story of Krishna. Having seen the merits of this new play, the Raja of *Kottarakkara*, a princely state in South Kerala, requested the Zamorin to lend him a *Krishnanattam* troupe for performance at his court. The Zamorin's reply that the Southerners were incapable of appreciating such forms of art stung the latter to quick retaliation. The Raja of *Kottarakkara*, who was no mean scholar, himself wrote a play based on the Rama legend and staged it with several new features. It came to be known as *Ramanattam*. It proved a successful experiment and attracted the attention of playwrights, patrons and actors in an increasing number. And when plays were written based on other mythological themes the name *Ramanattam* gave way to *Attakatha* (Attakatha = Story-play).

**Koothu**—*Koothu*

*Koothu* represents the earliest known history of Kerala. It is believed to have been introduced

into Kerala by the early Arayan immigrants and the earliest written reference to this art is found in the Tamil epic *Chilappathikaram* which was composed by the Kerala Prince Ilango Adigal in the 2nd Century A. D.

The *Chakiar Koothu* is so called because it can be performed only by members of the Chakiar caste. In olden days it was staged only inside temples and to be witnessed only by Hindus of the highest caste. The texts used for the exposition of the art are epics and *puranas* written in Sanskrit. The exposition is enlivened by numerous witty analogies and allusions to topical political and social events.

### **Kudiyattam**

There is yet another way in which the Chakiar can present his art. Instead of a solo performance by a lone chakiar, a number of performers get together and stage a dance-drama of sorts. Such a performance is known as *Kudiyattam*. As in the *Chakiar Koothu*, in *Kudiyattam* also the text of the play is in Sanskrit and its interpretation is done in Malayalam.

The *Kudiyattam* art was encouraged much by the Perumals, who ruled over Kerala until the 8th century A. D. The names of Kulasekhara Perumal, Bhaskara Ravi Varma Perumal and Cheraman Perumal, in particular, are remembered with reverence for the considerable patronage they gave to this art.

### **Patakam**

Another type of dance in Kerala, which is related to the *Chakiar Koothu*, is the *Patakam*. In its technical content this dance is similar to the solo dance of the Chakiars. But prominence is given to the Malayalam language and not to Sanskrit as in the case of *Koothu*, and greater licence in technique and presentation is given to the performer.

### **The Tullal**

Another variety of dance that survives to this day is the *tullal*. There are three forms of the *tullal* dance viz., the *ottan*, the *parayan* and the *seethankan* of which *ottan thullal* is the most popular one. These dances owe their origin to Kunchan Nambiar, one of the foremost poets of Kerala. It is interesting to recall the circumstances that contributed to the origin of *thullal*. Kunchan Nambiar, it is stated, was once obliged to accompany on the drum a certain *Chakiar* who was giving a performance of the *Koothu* at a temple. Presumably, Kunchan Nambiar could not satisfy the requirements of the *Chakiar* who

lighted and disparaged Nambiar in the presence of the entire assembly. Next day, Nambiar came attired in an entirely new type of costume and began to sing and dance in the vicinity in a manner quite unknown. All those assembled for Chakiar's *Koothu* were immediately attracted to him. The *tullal* dance introduced by Nambiar soon became so popular that it spread throughout Kerala.

### Mohini Attam

While Tamil Nad has a form of solo dance which is generally known as *Bharata Natyam*, Kerala also has a parallel tradition of dance, which is known as *Mohini Attam*. This is a solo dance intended for performance by women alone. It is a dance which has a preponderance of the sensuous element, and it is probably for this reason that it is known as *Mohini Attam*. The music used in *Mohini Attam*, as in *Bharata Natyam*, is classical carnatic, but the language of the songs is Malayalam. No stage or curtain or setting is used. It can be staged at any time and place.

### Kathaprasangam

*Kathaprasangam* or *Harikatha* is a mono-act evolved out of *Patakam* and in early times the performer of *Harikatha* adhered strictly to puranic stories. Narration of the story is interwoven with music which renders the story-telling interesting and absorbing. Now-a-days social themes and even moral pieces are dealt with in *Kathaprasangam* and the performance of this art-form has become immensely popular throughout Kerala.

### Dravidian art-forms

The *Chakiar Koothu*, *Kudiyattam* and *Patakam* all had their origin in Kerala as a result of Aryan influence. There are certain others that stemmed from Dravidian sources and among them, *Mutiyettu*, *Thirayattam* and *Tiyyattam* are the most important. These dances are intended to glorify *Bhagavati* and this they do by using for their exposition themes which deal with the triumph of *Bhagavati* over *Darika* and various other demons. In many of these dances the performers, who impersonate the various Gods and Demons, appear attired and adorned in exotic resplendence. Some of the characters wear masks on their faces; the others all paint their faces in elaborate but strictly conventional designs. Many of these dances were borrowed and incorporated in *Krishnanattam*, from which the art of *Kathakali* finally developed.

## Music

Music was an art that flourished in the temples in Kerala. Hymns sung in praise of Gods and Goddesses were an integral part of every art-form that developed in Kerala. Although Carnatic music is in vogue in Kerala as the classical music, Kerala appears to have evolved a somewhat distinctive style of singing, known as the *sopana* style. It is believed that the *sopana style* derived its name from the *sopana*—or flight of steps leading to the *srikovil* (sanctum sanctorum) of temples which was the place allotted, for the ritual singing of *Ashtapadis* from Jayadeva's '*Gita Govindam*'. This immortal musical work in Sanskrit has been very popular throughout Kerala from early times; and the inference is that when *Kathakali* (or *Ramanattam* as it was then called) was invented by Kottarakara Thampuran, the traditional style of singing *Ashtapadis* was adopted in Kathakali singing too.

Kerala has produced great masters in the art of music. The names of Shadkala Govinda Marar and Maharaja Swathi Thirunal are cherished with loving regard and profound admiration. Swathi Thirunal, the musician King of Travancore had his musical compositions covering six different languages, viz., Tamil, Telegu, Kannada, Sanskrit, Marathi and Malayalam. He occupies a unique place in the world of Carnatic Music. He is a contemporary of Thyagaraja, the musician saint of South India.

Side by side with Carnatic Music an indigenous form of music also developed in Kerala. The women labourers engaged in the fields, the boatmen plying their oars, and the mendicant going about with his begging bowl, all had their songs sung in native tunes. There were also songs of enchantment sung in serpent-groves, as well as songs to propitiate particular deities like *Kali* and *Ayyappa*. Songs composed in these tunes however remained only as a means of popular amusement and did not rise to the dignity of an art. Of late, Malayalam musicians are, however, working out a fusion of these indigenous tunes with Carnatic Music as a result of which a new and happy form of Malayalam Music is slowly emerging.

## Sculpture

Sculpture in ancient Kerala was designed only as a decorative element of an architectural scheme, and was therefore determined by the canons and exigencies of the architectural



of a building. Within these boundaries however there has been a conscious artistic striving for creative expression in plastic arts, which reflect the religious zeal of the people and their taste for decoration and embellishment.

Most of the earlier sculptors were artists, not merely craftsmen; and they always created something new and original in stone. The earliest specimens of sculpture in stone are the three figures found in the cave Temple at Kaviyur, which belong to the eighth century A. D. if not earlier. Belonging almost to the same period are the rock-out reliefs at Vizhinjam, showing a close resemblance to later Pallava work. Five stone images of the Buddha discovered by the Archaeological Department in Central Travancore are fine examples of ninth century sculpture. All of them are seated images of Buddha in the *varanasi* posture. The ancient Vishnu temple at Trikkoditthalam in Changanasseri taluk in Central Travancore has two panels with sculptures belonging to the 11th century, and showing two distinct types of ancient dances *Kudaikoothu* (umbrella dance) and *Kudakoothu* (pot dance). Two other panels depicting dancing figures presumed to belong to the 12th century A. D., and also two figures of *dwarapalas* carved with vigour and vigour in black granite, are found in the ancient temple at Trivikramamangalam, 3 miles east of Trivandrum. The exquisite image of Vishnu at Guruvayur temple may be regarded as an example of later development in sculpture. The *Primanabhaswami* temple, Trivandrum, has preserved the remains of the best traditions of stone sculpture in the State, and is the receptacle of some of the finest examples of the sculptor's art of the 18th century. They bear testimony not only to these traditions but also to outside influence.

No noteworthy examples of sculpture seem to have been produced subsequent to the plethora of artistic output in the construction of the Trivandrum temple in the early part of the seventeenth century. This is largely due to the cessation of temple building in the State, caused to a great extent by the wars for preservation and expansion in the latter part of the seventeenth century.

### Painting

The earliest specimens of painting in Kerala belong to the eighth century A. D. Relics of them found in the rock-cut cave temple at Tirunandikara in South Travancore have been copied and kept in the Sri Chitralayam at Trivandrum. A painting

which belongs to a period not later than the sixteenth century A. D. is found on the *gopura* (tower) of the Shiva temple at Ettumanur, which, Dr. Coomaraswamy says, in "Introduction to Indian Art" is "the only old example of Dravidian painting".

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries appear to have been a period of unprecedented activity in pictorial art. The most important of the paintings belonging to this period are on the topmost floor of the four-storeyed building in the Padmanabhapuram Palace (now in the Madras State) a former capital of Travancore. There are nearly 50 scenes of mythological interest painted on the four walls of the room. They are a valuable artistic heritage full of charm and inspiring beauty.

The pinnacle of achievement in the pictorial art of the State is seen on the walls of the shrines of the Sri Padmanabhaswami temple at Trivandrum. They are executed in purely native style and are perhaps the latest record of indigenous painting of the best sort on a somewhat large scale.

Painting in oil-colours was little known in Kerala before the time of Raja Ravi Varma. The paintings of Raja Ravi Varma are mostly scenes and figures of mythological interest. They are remarkable for their richness of tone. Even during his life time Ravi Varma had become famous in the art circles of the world by meriting top awards in exhibitions at Paris, Vienna, Chicago and London. Many of his paintings are preserved in the Sri Chitralayam the art gallery at Trivandrum.



### **Patronage of arts**

Arts and art-forms in Kerala had been patronised by the Rajas and Rulers from time immemorial. Perumals in the early period, and then chieftains and Rajas of the later periods were the prime patrons of all art, literature and culture that ennobled the cultural glory of Kerala. There had been a shift in this tradition with the advent of the British, when the Rajas could no more concentrate themselves in patronising art. A new element was introduced into the cultural development which was confined to the upper strata of the society till then. There arose a new awakening in the common man in the development of the art and culture of the land. Naturally people began to take upon themselves the responsibility of maintaining and developing the cultural heritage. Organisations and institutions like the Kerala Sahitya Parishat, Kerala Kala Mandalam and Purogamana Sahitya Sangham grew up on the initiative

artists and men of literature. Though started without official patronage, these institutions were able to contribute in no small measure to the development of art and literature in Kerala, especially in the recent period.

After the dawn of independence Government themselves are showing increasing interest in the promotion of art and literature. A Sahitya Academy with Sardar K. M. Panickar as President has been constituted for the promotion of Malayalam language and literature. A Sangeeta Nataka Akademi with Smt. Manku Thampuran as President has been recently formed. Both the Academies have their offices situated at Trichur. Regional theatres are to be constructed at Trichur, Trichur and Kozhikode and the existence of such theatres are sure to give a fillip to theatrical arts in Kerala. Government have recently taken over "the Kerala State Mandalam" and are planning to develop it into a big institution for imparting lessons in *Nritta*, *Nritya*, *Natya* and other visual arts.