

## THE ROYAL FAMILY OF COCHIN— ITS IDEALS

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THE royal family of Cochin traces its descent from the last of the Perumals (392-427 A. D.); it has thus completed fifteen hundred and fifteen years of existence. The first king of the family, *i. e.*, the first Gosri *alias* Kocciri *alias* Kocci Kiritapati was Vira Kerala Cakravarti who ascended the throne when his uncle, the last of the Perumals, passed away in 427 A. D. Since then, through the long sweep of centuries, the family has been functioning; and it can, therefore, claim a continuity and antiquity scarcely paralleled by any other royal family here or elsewhere.

A full history of the family has never yet been written and may perhaps never be written at all for the obvious reason that the materials for a work of the kind cannot be had. But some epigraphs and copper plates have been published, and these, side by side with the references scattered about in literature, Sanskrit and Malayala, give us enough light to help us to visualise the progress of Cochin through the ages; and the one thing that stands out most prominently throughout the whole period of its existence is the unsullied maintenance of the family ideals and traditions. These are to some extent elucidated in the family coat of arms and are expressed succinctly in

the family motto—*Honour is our family treasure.*

The family coat of arms is supported on either side by elephants and they indicate protection from external aggression; they remind us of the natural bulwarks which have always offered us a large measure of safety and security from outside foes. Inside the crest stands right in the centre a conch, symbolising purity and reputation for purity, with a lighted lamp and an open umbrella to the right and left and a palanquin above it. The last is the traditional aristocratic conveyance and it announces the onward march of progress, steady though slow. So far as progress is concerned, Cochin has always stood in the very forefront of the modern progressive States in India, and this was equally true in ancient days as well, as evidenced, partially though, by her wonderfully rich contribution to the arts of peace, particularly in realm of learning and literature and drama and dramatic arts. Progress, however, is possible, only when there is internal security, and this is vouchsafed by the open umbrella, symbolising unified sovereignty. Another equally important requisite for progress is education, and the lighted lamp signifies that. It is indeed a matter for pride and

gratification that even today Cochin leads the rest of India in so far as literacy is concerned and, if we would look back, it would be seen that Cochin's was the most notable part of Kerala contribution to the sum total of Sanskrit literature, while in the realm of Malayalam she stands prominent as the inaugurator of varied types of literature. If progress should be ensured and prevented from stagnating, it should be based upon a foundation of purity, and this is evidenced by the conch and that in the most central position. Purity of motives, of words, and of deeds alone can give permanency to worldly achievements; and this has always been the motivating force in all the activities of our sovereigns. Security from external aggression, internal peace and prosperity, spread of learning and the consequential progress all round—these make a kingdom famous and the conch indicates further the reputation of the kings of Cochin through ages. Cochin was well-known both in the east and the west. Compare for instance the statement of the Portuguese when they came here, that they found the port filled up with ships from China and Malacca! Thus the family coat of arms tells us something of the ideas and ideals which our sovereigns have always been zealously cultivating.

These ideals are to some extent cryptically summed up in the family motto—

honour is our family treasure. The kings of Cochin have always maintained their honour. The traditions and records so far brought out to light, do indicate that Cochin has had her own share and a rich share too of the ills of life, but they do not suggest, much less reveal, any action or incident in the history of the family of which one need be ashamed. Even in the darkest hour of her history—and such hours were not few in her long history—she maintained her honour unsullied. She would rather sacrifice all that she had at the altar of her honour. And a very typical instance of this attitude is furnished by the answer which the king of Cochin gave the Zamorin when at the head of a victorious army he stood at the gates of Cochin and demanded the surrender of the Portuguese, offering as the other alternative the sacking of the city. Despite the entreaty of the Portuguese themselves to save himself and the fair city of Cochin, the king sent the proud reply that his plighted word was to him more sacred and precious than every other worldly possession of his. May we not see in this steadfast maintenance of the Kuladharmā the reason of the greatness of the family, the source of its success, and the cause of its longevity?

Whatever records leap to light,

They n' ver n' ver shall be shamed!