

PECHIPPARA

(Contributed.)

A branch road from Marthandam or Thoduvetti at the twenty-fifth mile stone on the trunk road from Trivandrum to Cape Comorin, leads off to Pechippara, one of the loveliest places in Travancore. A detour of thirteen and a half miles across typical countryside takes the visitor to Pechippara. The road to Pechippara cuts through several small villages around which history and folklore have gathered interesting stories.

THIRUVATTAR

Four miles from Martandam *en route* Pechippara is Thiruvattar where the Thamravarni River winds around the ancient Vishnu Temple. Dedicated to Adi Kesava Perumal (Vishnu), this temple is one of the three Vaishnavite Shrines in India, where the image of the God is in a reclining posture, the other two temples being at Strirangam and Trivandrum. There are a number of picturesque waterfalls and delightful cascades in the river which winds around the shrine at Thiruvattar. The great Alvars, in their hymns ascribed to the early eighth century, have referred to the sanctity of this temple, which is remarkable for its sculpture and wood carving.

THIRUNANDIKKARA

Five miles beyond Thiruvattar is Thirunandikkara which has a thousand-year old rock cut cave temple. The earliest relics of mural painting in India, ascribed to the early ninth century, so far discovered in South India, are to be found in this rock cut temple. An eminent artist and critic of mural art and a wellknown student,

restorer and copyist of ancient oriental art has said that perfection is the only word that can be used to describe the quality of the frescoes at Thirunandikkara. Admirably excellent and faithful copies of these striking wall paintings are exhibited in the Sri Chitralayam, State Art Gallery at Trivandrum.

THRIPPARAPPU

On the way to the Pechippara reservoir is Thripparappu, famous for its Siva temple and water falls. Situated amidst idyllic sylvan scenery, Thripparappu attracts large numbers of pilgrims and sightseers. The river Kodayar flows close to the temple. The Kodayar Irrigation Extension Project provides for the construction of a Pick-up Weir across the Kodayar at Thripparappu and diverting the waters of the Kodayar through two systems of channels to irrigate the Kalkulam and Vilavancode Taluks in South Travancore. The Kodayar has an independent catchment below the Pechippara Dam and above Thripparappu and the water from this catchment will be sufficient to irrigate a large acreage of paddy fields. With this aim, a submersible concrete weir at Thripparappu and ten miles of channels, four miles on the right bank, and six miles on the left bank, have been recently completed. The Thripparappu System of irrigation will be opened in the course of the next few weeks.

PERINCHANI

Not far from Thripparappu is Perinchani, a beauty spot nestling among high hills.

The Kodayar Irrigation Extension Project includes the construction of a masonry dam at Perinchani which will store the water that now flows to waste every year over the Puthen Dam during the floods. The Perinchani Reservoir Scheme is designed to irrigate and bring under the plough another sixty thousand acres of land in South Travancore. This scheme involves the construction of a dam one hundred feet high at its deepest section and eight hundred and sixty feet long at the top and with a width of eighteen feet at the top and seventyfour feet at the base. The Perinchani Reservoir will have a capacity of one thousand five hundred million cubic feet. When completed this reservoir will be one of the most picturesque artificial lakes in South India.

AT PECHIPPARA

The thirteen and a half mile long road which passes through South Travancore's charming scenery ends at the brink of the Pechippara reservoir. The mighty dam thrown across the Kodayar River at Pechippara sustains a great irrigation scheme which irrigates tens of thousands of acres of paddy fields in South Travancore, and is a marvel of engineering skill. The extensive reservoir at Pechippara which is in the heart of a region of forests, covers 3230 acres and is surrounded by forestclad hills which rise in gentle slopes. The Kodayar Irrigation Scheme which has almost literally converted the arid land of South Travancore into the fertile plains of Nanjinad, now famous as the Granary of the South, is essentially dependent upon the Pechippara Reservoir.

Work on the present Pechippara Dam was commenced in 1896 and was completed in June 1906. It is constructed mainly of concrete in surkhi mortar with skin walls of rubble masonry. At the river bed are

constructed two under sluice-valves with vents 4 feet by 10 feet. At present these vents remain closed permanently with masonry. The top 15 feet of the dam is built entirely of rubble masonry. The length of the Dam is 1396 feet, the width at the foundation is 105 feet and the total height is 306 feet. The waterspread area of the Reservoir at full tank level is 5.47 sq. miles, and the catchment area of the lake is 80 sq. miles. The average annual rainfall at Pechippara at the time of the construction of the Dam and Reservoir was 166 inches. Since then the rainfall has varied from 150 inches to 87.93 inches. The net expenditure on the work is 80.3 lakhs of rupees. The Reservoir gathers a bumper monsoon every year. The dam arrests the flood and causes the artificial lake to swell.

THE OLD PANDYAN DAM AND CHANNEL

It is interesting to remember that the modern Engineers who constructed the now famous Dam at Pechippara only followed as a continuation, of course with suitable modifications, the works which were already so efficiently executed by the old-time Engineers in the past centuries. This is an eloquent tribute to the greatness of the Engineers of the past whose knowledge of irrigation and engineering was admirably profound. The Old Pandyan Dam and Pandyan Kai constructed so early as 900 A. D. convince the visitor of the great foresight and effort put into the undertaking by the Engineers of the old Pandyan Rulers. Nanjinad owes its present fertility to the Old Pandyan Dam thrown across the Parilayar and the Old Pandyan Channel cut across chiefly through solid rock for about two miles.

THE PUTHEN DAM AND CHANNEL

In the reign of Maharaja Martanda Varma the Great, was constructed another anicut on the model of the old Pandyan

THE SUBSIDIARY
DAM NEAR
THRIPPARAPPU.

On the way to the Pechippara Dam and Reservoir, is Thripparappu. The Temple and Water Falls here are famous alike in legend and history.



ON THE WAY TO
PECHIPPARA

A familiar sight on the way to Pechippara is herds of cattle grazing on the luscious meadows, and sloping hills, on either sides of the canal.



The picturesque river at Perunchani near Pechippara



The old Dam built at the commands of Maharaja Martanda Varma

Dam, a quarter of mile below it. Another long channel was also cut. Known as the Puthen Dam, and the Puthen Channel, these remarkable engineering undertakings executed in A. D. 1750. succeeded in bringing the waters to Padmanabhapuram, the then capital of the State and irrigating a considerable number of acres of paddy fields.

A ROYAL ANECDOTE

It is said that His Highness Maharaja Marthanda Varma personally supervised the construction of the dam and channel. An interesting anecdote in this connection is on the lips of old men. The Maharaja used to go to the spot almost every day early morning and remain late in the night closely supervising the work, taking but a simple meal in the course of the day. He used to sit on a rock nearby and a servant was wont to hold a palm leaf umbrella to protect the Royal Master from the hot sun. Realising that the labour of the cooly thus engaged was being lost in the all-out effort towards the construction of the Dam, the Maharaja ordered a stone cutter to make a hole in the rock so that the handle of the umbrella could be fixed into it, and the services of the cooly utilised for work in connection with the Dam. People around the locality point out to the visitors the hole made in the rock.

LATTER DAY DEVELOPMENTS

Captain Horsely of the Madras service was invited in the year 1837 to suggest improvements for the irrigation of South Travancore. It was he who first suggested to throw a dam at Pechippara and cut a channel to the left bank of the river. The proposal was laid in cold storage until 1877 when Dewan Nanoo Pillai, a son of the soil and native of South Travancore who was fully alive to the local conditions, reopened

the proposal. Colonel Mead of the Madras P. W. D. whose opinion was sought in 1879 suggested that the Kodayar Scheme was premature and that the Puthen Dam might be improved.

The improvements formulated by Colonel Mead were completed in 1885 during the reign of His Highness Maharaja Sri Visakhom Thiruvial. His Highness performed the ceremony of opening the headworks of the Pandian Kal and Padmanabhapuram Puthenar. On that great occasion in the history of South Travancore, His Highness said:—"When events shall have proved that, after the waters of the Paraliyar have been economised to the utmost extent, they have fallen short of the demand of the agricultural population, it will be time to woo her twin sister the Kodayar, and to consider at what point and in what manner she might be best coaxed to yield up her treasures into the common coffers which these headworks constitute".

The State Chief Engineer who finally brought to shape the scheme for the construction of the Pechippara Dam was Mr. A. H. Jacob. The project was developed to its present proportions by his successor Mr. W. Jopp. The scheme was further revised by Mr. Cecil A. Smith who followed Mr. Jopp as Chief Engineer. The Project was practically completed under the auspices of Mr. A. H. Bastow who succeeded Mr. C. A. Smith.

THE KODAYAR PROJECT

The Kodayar Project as finally adopted was to throw a dam across the Kodayar at Pechippara with two feeding channels. The right bank channel was dropped after further investigation. The left bank channel taps the Kodayar and supplements the

Paraliyar over the Puthen Dam. The irrigation system starts at the Puthen Dam. At this spot the combined waters of the Kodayar and Paraliyar are distributed, one through the P. P. Channel and the other through the Pandyan Kal. The 141 miles of main channels have a number of subsidiary channels running to 184 miles, with a syphon five feet in diameter, several bridges, an aqueduct and two tunnels. The paddy fields to be irrigated are brought under blocks surrounded by natural boundaries controlled by sluices at the ridge. The Pechippara Reservoir is open for purposes of irrigating the paddy fields in Nanjinad and Edanad from the 20th of May to the 15th of February.

PECHIPPARA RESERVOIR

The Pechippara Reservoir is a magnificent stretch of water. Terraced hills rise from its shores. The Government Camp Shed perched on a pretty eminence on the shores of the Reservoir overlooks the lake of 3230 acres. Situated in the heart of forest-clad hills, this artificial Reservoir offers one of the finest sights in the world. Clusters of dead trees could be seen in the lake with their withered heads raised above the water level, and their slender dried arms spread out. All round the vast reservoir of rain water is the virgin forest land, the home of the tiger, bison, elephant, and other wild animals and full-blooded aboriginal tribes,

especially the Kanikkars. Not infrequently do wild animals rove on the margin of the lake and come down to the lake to drink. A cruise over the placid waters of the reservoir is a rich experience, and a splendid revelation.

A Beauty Spot where Nature has lavished her charms, Pechippara affords a rich diversity of attractions to the carefree tourist, the keen shikhari, the enterprising student of Engineering and Irrigation, the talented painter, the expert camera man, the painstaking Anthropologist and the student of Natural History.