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CASTES OF MALABAR

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Before any serious attempt is made to study the caste system as seen today, it is essential to understand the 'varna' classification and its original import. This however is not easy, as the available evidences are scattered in a voluminous literature and hence very difficult to collect and arrange for easy reference. Even when so collected, they will, as a rule, be found to be silent on the very points we wish to be informed, or they may even be misleading or dubious, while annotators either give only a mere word for word interpretation or pass on without any comment. The studies of orientalists of the Western School, though critical, often miss the essential trend of Indian mentality and thought, a factor which is quite foreign to their culture. This tends to detract a good deal of value from their otherwise useful labours.

In ancient Indian literature of the type of *Śruti*, *Smṛiti*, *Itihasas* and *Purāṇas* one often meets with extremely subtle and high ideas and sentiments intimately mixed up with what apparently looks like the most childish gibberish imaginable. The Western student simply ignores them or considers them to be latterday interpolations and utilises only such texts as appeal to him as sensible. No positive science will ever countenance such attempts to brush aside

any findings however much they may appear to be silly or against accepted canons. It is the business of the student to take cognizance of all observed facts and explain them if needed, after even modifying the original conclusions. To the student who wants to reconstruct unrecorded history all utterances found in accredited works are 'observed facts', and he ought to deal with them as such. If he has positive proof of any text being of the nature of an interpolation he is, of course, justified in discarding it; but he should not do so on mere surmises and probabilities. To discard a text simply because its apparent meaning is not in agreement with what precedes and follows is wrong, and to consider it as an interpolation on that basis is equivalent to taking that the author might have been out of his senses at the time of writing that portion.

How then are we to reconcile the high and abstract thoughts and the apparent nonsense we find intermixed? These childish looking utterances when analysed in the way they ought to be with the aid of keys handed down to the initiates in the 'Sampradaya forms', will be found to be teachings of a higher order than even the highest open teachings. These hidden teachings are often of a nature that can effecti-

vely destroy the child-like simple religious faith of the uncultured man in the street. These teachings are, therefore, a source of great danger to the average man though they may be of supreme importance to the cultured seekers after truth. Hence it became necessary for ancient writers to veil such teachings with apparent gibberish unintelligible to the masses. The Sampradaya keys are unwritten rules and meanings protected from the uninitiated even as the Masonic teachings and secrets are. If one is to get the true import of ancient Indian teachings as contained in the sacred writings, it becomes imperative to follow this line of approach without discarding the apparent nonsenses. Initiated on one's solemn oath one is not at liberty to divulge the key though one can without cause for reproach explain many of the teachings thus veiled.

To the Hindu Sruti means not only the Samhita proper or Hymns, but also the Upanishads, Brahmanas etc. as well. Smritis are authorised interpretations of Sruti rules and regulations by eminent teachers in the light of customs and usages prevailing at the time and place of the teacher who composed them. To the Hindu, therefore, Smritis are not valid and inviolable rules for all times or places. All rules of Smritis can be classed as Vidhi, or obligatory, Anuvada, or permissive, and Nishedha or prohibitory. In the Anuvada group are included 'Apaddhar-nas' or rules permitting omission and commission of Vidhis and Nishedhas under certain well defined conditions. All the three groups and more especially the Anuvada group is strongly coloured by custom or 'sishtacara' of the place and period. Hence to find out the original and 'Sanatana' factor underlying the rule it becomes essential to discard the indeterminate sishtacara factor from it.

Due to sishtachara accretions of centuries some of the present-day customs have turned out to be the very opposite of Sruti injunctions. With these preliminary remarks we shall now proceed to study the varna classification of ancient India.

The earliest reference to this subject in Vedic literature is recognised to be the well known Purusha Sookta or Hymn on the Virat-form of God conceived as Macrocosm in the shape and form of man, the microcosm. The tenth mantra of this hymn is a series of questions: "What is His head, what are His arms, what are said to be His thighs and feet, etc.". (2010 കി212, 3 സിര, കൗതാമ്യ, കാന്യപാദാധ്യായേ ?) To this comes the reply "Brahmana is His face, arms are made of Kshatriyas, who are Vaisyas are His thighs, Sudras are born from His feet etc.". (ഉപാഹ്2നോസ്യ മായാ2നാ2നാമ്യ രാമന്യ കൃതഃ ഉക്തജന്യയരൊഃ2: 2 ഐ2വ്വദോ2ഭാജനേ2). It should be noted that these are specific answers to specific questions as to what each of the different parts of the Personified Macrocosm is. Annotators including Sayana—and these are modern comparatively—interpret the answers to mean that the brahmana is born from the face of God and so forth. That neither the context nor the language used warrants such interpretation is plain enough.

It is a universally accepted symbolism to depict knowledge as head or face, and power as arms. Thigh is here represented as wealth, probably from the Indian merchant's posture, viz. squatting. The text viewed in the light of this symbolism would mean that the Personified Macrocosm has for its head or face the intelligentsia or more simply the faculty of intellect, for arms physical prowess or military and governing power, and

for thighs wealth or capital power or resources. Sudra is depicted as born from His feet. Sudra represents labour and service as is quite evident from the functions assigned to him. The former three factors, knowledge, prowess and wealth depend mostly on oneself, whereas service to oneself should every time come from outside, and has to be 'created' or made. Hence this one factor alone is expressed as being 'born' from His feet. Thus the whole description pictures the Virat or Personified Macrocosm as having for its head personified knowledge, arms military and governing power, thighs wealth or economic factor, and labour or service as being derived from its feet. This interpretation will be found to be in tune with the subsequent mantras where His nabhi is described as the antariksha, etc. This representation is not only apt and poetic to depict Personified Macrocosm, but the classification of man into intelligentia, governing power, capitalists and labour is eternal and universal.

Now this very hymn presupposes knowledge of this four-fold classification based on functions of man in any ordered society as well as their names, in those who sang it. In other words the Aryans ought to have had this classification among them long before the hymn was composed. It is to avoid this unavoidable inference that some Orientalists take this hymn as a latter-day interpolation. The inference from the hymn is however well corroborated by the existence of an identical four-fold division of man among the Iranian Aryans as seen from the Avesta. The Avesta mentions four classes, 'Acharva' Rathae stao; 'Vastriafshyas' and 'Huitos'. The Atharva was the priest. It is noteworthy that the Sanskrit word 'Atharvan' meant a priest who had to deal

with Soma and Agni; and the word according to M. Williams is probably derived from an obsolete term 'Ather' = Agni. Rathae stao was the warrior class of the Iranians. This word again appears to be allied to the Sanskrit word Ratheshtha occurring in the Vedas and meaning a warrior fighting from his chariot. (M. W.). Vastriafshyas was the cultivator and one can detect the Sanskrit equivalent of 'Vastu' = ground (cf. vasta vika = gardener) in the word. Huitos was the slave or the servant class. In Pahlavi 'Hutosh' meant workman. Now it is well known that 'H' of Pahlavi and, as a matter of fact, of several other Aryan tongues, is equivalent to 'S' of Sanskrit. (Cf. Ahura = Asura; Hall = Sall = sala). Hence the Sanskrit equivalent of the Iranian word according to philological rules should be 'Sutash' or 'Sutaksh'. Now we meet with a Vedic term 'Sutashita' — good worker, from su = good and twas't or twaksh, a worker or maker. Further it will be noted that the origin of the word Sudra is not clear and the lexicographers' derivation from "suc" is unconvincing. Again it will be noted that the Huitos and Sulras have the same function. Thus it will be seen that the four classes according to function are identifiable in both Iranian and Indo-Aryan groups, and three of the class nomenclature are identifiable as similar.

This is proof to show that the four-fold classification of man based on primary social functions was not made by the Indo-Aryans after coming to India, but must have been in existence before the two branches separated. Further it will be noted that such a system of classification was something which could be expected in any ordered society.

This original classification based on

functions has little to do with the air-tight caste system of afterdays. The well known Gita stanza "Chaturvarnyam maya srushtam....." by a peculiar and punning arrangement of words means to say that the four-fold classification is based on functions and aptitudes and in that sense I, God am its creator; in other words it means that the classification is natural; but I am not the creator of the classification known as the caste-system. In other words Krishna is made to say that the classification based on primary functions is natural, whereas the hereditary caste system as seen at the time of the Mahabharata is an artificial product of man. The same work Mahabharata on another occasion says "there was only one varna or class in ancient days and the subsequent four-fold classification came into being as a result of functional differences. (ഏകവർണമിദം പൂർവ്വം വിശേഷസ്വഭാവവിശിഷ്ടം, വർണ ക്തിയാവിശേഷേണ പാശ്ചാത്യർണ്യം പ്രകീർത്തിതം).

Orientalists are unanimous in thinking that there was no caste system, at any rate as it exists now, in the early days. Rig Veda I—112—3 says "I am an artisan, my father a doctor, mother grinds (corn) on stone....." (കാതരഹം കാതേരിത ഇവേല പ്രജ്ഞിണിന, നാനാ വിധോപന്യയോ നന്മാളവ.....). This means that there were no hereditary castes at that time as we see today. There are several stories in Sritis to show that a change from one class to another was possible in those days. The Aitareya Brahmana has a story of one Kavasha, afterwards the kudashta guru of Kausheetakas, where the advancement of a born Sudra to the fullest status of a Brahmin is related. The Rishis finding Kavasha to be of low birth first refuse to admit him to be initiated in such terms as "How can this rouge of a non-Brahmin, the son of a slave (or son of a prostitute) be

permitted among us and initiated..... (രന്ധ്യാ: പുത്ര: കിരചോബ്രൂഹണ: കഥം നോ മധ്യ ലിക്ഷേച്ഛതി.....). This man is described as "ഏകമത്സ്യമേവകഥിപോനാഹമഹിരാസ മഹതേയം", Sankara annotates it as..... "മഹിരാ സോനാമഹിമൃതേയം അപത്യമേകമേയം", Itara means low, expelled from society etc. in vedic language. Finally we find him exalted to Brahmin-hood and as a great man. Similar is the story of Jabala Satyakama the son of a servant maid who did not know the father of her child. The boy on enquiring of its mother about his gotra to get admission into a gurukula is told by the mother "I do not know to which gotra you belong; in my youth I was wandering as a maid and I got you, that is all I know; my name is Jabala and your name is Satyakama; hence say that you are Satyakama of Jabala". (നാഹമേവ ദേവ, കാത, യദേതാനുസംകഥസി, ഹവഹം പരന്തി പരിചാലിണി യാവനേകപഥമേവേ; സാഹമേകനവക യദേതാനുസംകഥസി, ജമോലാമൃതാമാഹമസ്മിസത്യകാ മേനാമേവമസി). This boy was initiated on his words and we find him afterwards as a Rishi himself.

Sritis which are latter-day productions reproducing the existing conditions of the times also contemplate such and similar change of castes. Manu says that a Brahmin who neglects vedic studies and takes to other pursuits becomes a Sudra together with his descendants. (യോനയിത്യവിചിന്താപരം അന്യക്രമേണ സമീപസ്ഥേനാഭവേ മന്യേ യി സന്യാസം). Manu corroborates this statement in several places. The reverse is also contemplated, for he says that by continued marriages with Brahmins a Sudra family can attain Brahmin-hood by the seventh generation. (ഏതദാമം ബ്രാഹ്മണാജാതം മന്യേനസംഭവേ പ്രജായതേ, അമന്യോഭവേനമസിഷാതിം ഗമക്വേ സപ്തമത്വതാൽ). Kulluka annotates the last word as "മന്യേനാഭവേനാഭിത്യവിധാനാൽ സപ്ത

മലബാറിൽ ഉദാഹരണങ്ങൾ കണ്ടുകിട്ടുന്നു. Similar examples could be multiplied as almost all dharmasastras speak in this vein.

The Puranas and Itihasas abound in examples and stories pointing to change of castes besides explicit statements to the same effect. Bhagavata after enumerating the characteristics of different varnas goes on to say that one should be deemed to belong to that varna whose characteristics one bears even if one is born in a different varna. (യസ്യായുഗുണേ പ്രോക്തം പുണ്യാവർണാ ചാപ്യന്തേ യസ്യേവ വർണാഭാവേന നിർവൃതേ). Again Vysampayana tells Yudhishtira that "not by family tradition nor by birth but by samakaras and vrithi (culture and conduct) one becomes a Brahmin; one even of a Chandala class is a Brahmin if of good conduct. (ന കലേന നജാ ശ്വാവാ ക്രിയാമിത ബ്രാഹ്മണാ ഭവേൽ ചണ്ഡാലോപി നിപുണശ്ചോ ബ്രാഹ്മണഃ സ യുധിഷ്ഠിര). The great Vyasa, the compiler of the vedas and author of Mahabharatam, is described as the son of a fisherman and an illegitimate one to boot. Parasara is the son of a Chandala, and so on. Speaking of the son of a prostitute becoming a Brahmin, Mahabharata says "that the great Muni Vasishtha is the son of a prostitute, and Samskara or culture is the sole factor in the matter of social advancement. (ഗണികാഗർഭസംഗ്രാഹാ വസിഷ്ഠശ്ചൈവാമുനിഃ കപസ്യോബ്രാഹ്മണോന്മാതഃ സംസ്കാരം യതുകാരണം.) Mahabharata, Santi parva speaks of several examples of Kahatrias who have become Brahmins such as Devapi and others. Parasurama reckoned as a Brahmin and an avatara is the son of a Brahmin by a Kahatriya woman. Renuka the sister of Visvamitra. Vayupurana speaks of cases of all four castes in one and the same family, and all becoming Brahmins as a result of samakaras. (പാത്രാമൃതംസമസ്തേ

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There is evidence to show that none of the four classes were absolutely excluded from the study of vedas. If it was otherwise we would never have got a Kavana, or a Satyakama initiated into the Brahmin fold. Mahabharata Santi parva says. (ധർമ്മാ യതേ ക്രിയായതേകാം നിശ്ചം നപ്രതിക്ഷിപ്യതേ, മര്യേതേവമേവ, വർണാ യേകാം ബ്രാഹ്മിസമസ്താപി വിഹിതാബ്രാഹ്മണാപ്യം ഭാഗേകാഭാഗേനകാശകം).

From the above considerations the following inferences appear to be legitimate. (a) The four-fold classification or Chatur-Varnyam existed even before the Indo- and Iranian Aryans separated; (b) the said classification was based on aptitude and function and was not of a purely hereditary character; (c) change from one to another was permitted under certain conditions; (d) the present day restrictions were not present then and (e) Sudras were one of the Aryan class itself and not derived from the aboriginal tribes of India or Dasyus, or at any rate there was a purely Aryan Sudra in those days.

The last inference is against the view of most Orientalists and hence would demand some evidence. One such is the omission itself of the term Dasyu in connection with the classification of man in the virat personification. It is well known that the Dasyus were considered as enemies of the Aryans and the vedic literature has scarcely a good word about them. The Aryans were always praying to God to simply annihilate the Dasyus. Rig. I—33—4. prays to Indra to kill the Dasyus. (വധിഷ്ഠിത്യം യനിനം യതാ

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the various sankara castes were to be classed as the sub-division of one or other of the four principal castes. Though different functions are assigned to these sub-divisions they are explicitly stated as resulting from class exogamy. By instituting a compulsory code of endogamy in respect of each varna and sub-varna and assigning to the product of each exogamic relation a separate status and a name a means is opened up for an endless possibility of new castes arising in the land. The desire to marry in one's own fold and to exclude marriages from other folds is a universal trait that can even to-day be seen in practically any country in spite of all modern ideas of no differences and civil marriages. It is well known that a European marrying a Negress is looked down upon by both the communities. As to that even the marriage between, say, an English and a Portuguese will not be so acceptable as that between an English and English. In Vedic times rules of endogamy relating to varnas were, even if existing never so strict as they were afterwards. This is probably so because all the four varnas in earlier days considered themselves only as Aryans and not as specific groups. Later on when the idea that each Varna was a separate and specific group with functions and traditional differences got established rules of endogamy began to be strict. In earlier Smritis we find endogamy encouraged and class exogamy strongly discouraged though it was not prohibited as in still latter days. (Manu X. 64&65 read with Kulluka's annotation.) Even today exogamy is not completely tabooed as will be evidenced by the custom in Malabar, where Brahmins marry Kehatrias in full religious form, Kehatrias marry Samanthas and even certain high class Nairs in regular sacramental

fashion. Class exogamy is strictly prohibited in Malabar only in case of 'pratiloma' forms.

That even here some margin was allowed is evident from the custom of pratiloma marriages between Nambudiri women and Elayatu males, a set of patita Brahmins with whom Brahmins observe touch pollution normally. Besides this pratiloma exclusion in respect of castes there is also an unwritten code of mutual exclusion in respect of Geographical differences among the same castes. Till recently this exclusion was the rule and even now it has not completely gone out of vogue. Northern and Southern Nambudiris do not mutually marry on the score that they will not cross a rivulet, Korampuzha; Northern and Southern Ezhavas do not intermarry. And so are several other classes. Not only in marriage is this geographical exclusion seen; different geographical units generally observe mutual exclusion in all socio-religious functions. Two equally high class Nambudiris one a northerner and the other a southerner though of equal Brahminic rights and status, as a rule observe mutual exclusion in socio-religious matters. It should be noted that geographical differences manifest in the form of mutual exclusion, whereas in cases of functional caste differences there is always a sense of high and low and the exclusion is one-sided. Interdining is not a criterion to differentiate castes in Malabar, though in the case of women the rules about interdining are stricter than among men. Brahmins of all descriptions, provided they belong to the Pancha-Dravida classes, freely interdine. (Pancha-Dravida is the generic name which includes Malayalis, Tamilians, Telugus, Canarese and Maharastras). Malabar Brahmins, and Pancha-Dravida group as a whole interdine freely

with Malabar Kahatrias, Brahmins, Kahatrias, Samanthas, (a few of the ampalavasis under certain restricted conditions), and certain families of Nairs dine together in the same hall open to each other's view though they may not all dine in the same line (pankti-bhojana). Thus it may be noted that exclusion or inclusion in respect of marriages, eating food prepared by a class, or dining together cannot be used as a criterion to differentiate castes. In fact there is no single infallible criterion. The nearest one is the traditional function of the class, though that function might have long ceased to be operative. This could only mean that function and caste are indissolubly linked together in the Indian mind. All other criteria, severally and in combination, may be found to fail in some cases. Some of the Western students, for example Emile Senart, have fallen into serious errors by recognising intermarriage and interdining as the basic criteria to distinguish castes. This mistake has caused them to understand caste differently from what is visualised by the Indian mind.

We shall now try to get a glimpse into the past of Malabar. Acceptable evidence of a documentary character is practically absent. The tradition is that the Nambudiris are immigrants from some other part of India, and most students accept this. Nairs are supposed to be Dravidians and the original inhabitants of Malabar. Whatever might have been the origin of Nairs and Nambudiris, today, as a result of centuries of anuloma marriages between these two classes they cannot easily be distinguished on ethnic grounds. The strong temptation to imitate the Nambudiri has resulted in making the manners and customs of Nairs approximate as much as possible to those of Nambudiris. The real Malayali population has so far

aryanised that a Bengal group and a Malabar group looks identical in respect of physiognomy, whereas the physiognomy of the neighbouring classes as the Tamil or Kanarese are acutely different from that of Malayalis. This observation has been corroborated by many people, Bengalis who have visited Malabar and Malayalis who have visited Bengal. The extremely shut out Geographical position and the high conservative spirit of the Nambudiris have together tended to preserve the social and religious customs of Malabar without much change, so that, one may expect to find some internal evidence in them pointing to their original home.

The story of the Nambudiri immigration is that they were brought by Parasurama, the warrior Brahmin. Now Parasurama was an Aryan Brahmin of North India. It is quite probable that Aryan Brahmins of the North migrated to the south under the leadership of such an adventurous Brahmin as Parasurama. On analysing the existing customs in Malabar we shall be struck by the resemblances they bear to those of Bengal. We shall cite just a few out of many.

(a) Yatra and Yatra-brahmins—Yatra, known also as Swasti, etc, is the earliest religious performance in Malabar. It is a purely Brahmin institution and is not enacted anywhere except in Brahmin or equivalent houses. It is performed by a set of low class Brahmins dressed in military fashion with sword shield, etc. A similar play and of the same name was current in Bengal and was the earliest form of dramatic entertainment in India. This was enacted by a set of Brahmins below in rank to the Kulis, (Encycl. Brit. under Drama).

(b). The religious mode of wearing cloth is alike in principle for the Nambudiri

and the Bengali. Both dress in right handed fashion, the frill falling in front and to the left, and the right hand end going between the thighs, whereas the neighbouring Tamil and Kanarese dress in the reverse manner.

(c). The most important and unavoidable ornaments of a married woman among Malabar Brahmins are the mangalya-sutra and the metal bangles, (other than gold) known as 'loha-vala', which should always be multiple and unequal on both hands. This is the same with Bengal Brahmins, whereas the bangle has no such importance to the neighbours of Malabar.

(d). On the death of husbands it is only the mangalya-sutra and the loha bangles that are discarded as obligatory among Malayalis. Other ornaments, or the hair are not removed. They however do not use kumkum on their forehead. This in very nearly the same in Bengal while Tamilians etc. nearly mutilate the poor widow.

(e). Coloured cloth is the rule in South India for sumangalis; but in Bengal and Malabar white cloth with a coloured border is the rule. It should here be noted that the Malabar Brahmin, male or female, does not use plain, mull-like cloth for religious wear: only cloth with a border even though it be as small as a 'tortu' (bath-towel) will ever be used. Brahmin women do not use mull-like pieces even for daily wear.

(f). Malabar and Bengal Brahmin ladies are strictly ghosha, while our neighbours are not. Those who ascribe the ghosha system to Muhammadan influence should bear in mind that Malabar was not subject to any such influence worth mentioning. The influence of Tipu and Hyder were confined only to small and definite areas and the ancient Arabic influence if any was similarly

limited. Further it should be noted that the ghosha system is found only among Brahmins, and if it was due to extraneous influence on the country it ought to have affected all classes in the country.

(g). Vedic names of men and women are common in Bengal and Malabar such as, Vishnugupta, Mathrdatta, Upendra Sarma, Savitri, Droupadi, Atreyi, etc. Such names are unknown among Tamilians and other neighbours.

(h). Villa housing, i.e. single houses in separate compounds is the rule in Malabar and rural Bengal as against the universal village system of Tamil-nad.

(i). The ashtamangalya or tala containing the 8 auspicious things is an important factor in all social functions both for the Malayali and the Bengali, while it is either of no importance or absent in Tamil parts.

(j). So is 'ulu ulu sabda' or mangala-dhwani (kurava). It is very important in Bengal and Malabar and almost unknown in Tamil areas.

(k). The 'Vrata' period of the 'Vatu' extends to some four years among Malabar Brahmins as well as Bengal Brahmins (kulins). With Tamil, Telugu, Kanarese etc. Brahmins it may be said to extend till marriage. In other words our neighbours have no snatakas among them while Malayalis and Bengalis have.

(l). The Bengali and Malayali tie their sacred thread in 'Pavitra' fashion, while Tamilians etc. do it in 'Brahma' fashion.

(m). The Tantrika form of worship (not necessarily the vama) is the only form of worship in Malabar temples whereas it, including the use of mudras and beejas, are of rare occurrence in Tamil parts. This form is very common in Bengal. Even the Vama

form, though Brahmins do not use generally, is current in Malabar. It is done by certain classes of ampalavasis as the 'Kurukkal' and 'Adikal'. Still in some of the temples where this form is used Brahmins perform the other form on the same idol, often without any purificatory rites as at Cranganore, which means that the Brahmins, though they do not perform it, approve of it. Such conditions will not be met with in Tamilnad.

(n) In Malabar among certain sutrakaras there is a certain ceremony in connection with marriage where a Brahmacharin is presented with a fish. Note that Brahmins eat fish in Bengal.

(o). The anuloma practice of Kulin brahmins marrying any number of non-kulin brahmin girls where such wives remain under the roof of their parents permanently is, or rather was, common in Bengal. Compare this with the practice in Malabar of brahmins marrying any number of girls from non-brahmins where the girls remain with their parents. Such customs are unknown in Tamil areas.

Many more such examples are available showing similarity between Malabar and Bengal customs. All these points cited above are as well points of difference between the Malayali Brahmin and his neighbours. Such striking similarities in socio-religious and other important matters point to a very probable relation between these two people. Most of these, especially those connected with rites and ceremonies directly apply only to the brahmins, and it may be argued that the Nairs might have adopted them from the Nambudiris in the course of imitating them.

If that is so who are Nairs? They are

now considered Sudras and Dravidians. The generic term Nair covers a wide field and on careful examination we will find included under that term classes like 'Velakkathala Nair' (barber) for whom other Nairs observe even touch pollution. It should also be noted that one sect among Nairs is specifically called 'Sudra Nair' whose function is certain socio-religious menial service to Brahmins and Kshatriyas. (This class is the north Malabar equivalent of Illakkara). Six or seven of the 13 classes into which nairs are divided occupy a distinctly higher status than that of Sudras of other parts of India. The higher classes have access to Yaga sala etc. even. Some of them have to hear Veda expressly recited to them in the course of certain ceremonies. Brahmins of other parts of India do not marry Sudras, nor would sudras give their girls to Brahmins in marriage. Smritis are against Brahmins marrying Sudras, in fact, even casual connection is strongly disapproved of even by the special Smriti for Malabar. Manu says: ഇദം ശ്വേതാശ്വേതം വ്യാപാരം താമ്രവ്യാപാരം, ജാതിപരസ്യം തന്യാം ബ്രഹ്മണാദേവ നിവൃത്തം, and Sankara Smriti has: വിശ്വാ വിപ്രകുലാൽ പന്നം യാതാൽപരിണായപ്രഭും, കാമോന്മുഖത്വം വൈശ്യം, നമു കൂടും കാണ്ഡന, And കൂടും നന്ദാശ്വൽ വിശ്വാവാ താമ്രം വൈശ്യം ചൂഡ വാ, പ്രശ്ലോം മമഭാരതം യദേകാദമനുസാരാധാരം തൽ ഹൈന്ദവം" എന്നിത്യം ത്രിമൈവൈശ്വപരന്മാരേകം.

In Malabar we see marriages between higher class Nair women and Brahmins as the rule, and there is not the least degradation attached to these marriages. If these higher class Nairs were Sudras this could not have happened. Again it may be noted that a Brahmin cannot marry all who style as Nair, say, for example velakkathala nair (barber) or velutheda nair (washerman) without degradation. In the face of the

more quoted strict and plain rules one cannot expect the most conservative human being, the Nambudiri, to have started marriages with Nairs if they were Sudras. Again in no part of India there is interdining between Brahmins and others. In Malabar Brahmins and Kshatriyas freely interdine as well as eat food prepared by Kshatriyas. Brahmins eat with Samantas, and even certain Nairs as Kavalappara moopil nair, etc. in the same room. With one Nair, who after all need not even belong to any special family, Thachudaya kymal of Iringalakkuda temple Brahmins eat in the same line even. If it is contended that he is a sanyasin it makes matters worse, for Sankara smriti allows sanyasa only to high class Brahmins. (സംനാഥൻ സന്യാസം കല്പിച്ചിട്ടുള്ളവനാൽ അന്നം താങ്ങുന്നതിന്നു നാമുണ്ടാക്കുന്നതാവിധം) These peculiar customs when viewed together point only to one possibility, viz. that the high class Nairs are not Sudras in any sense of the term.

It may be urged that the increased privileges that the high class Nairs and Samantas enjoyed in Malabar are the result of their wealth and position in the land. If so one would expect to find similar conditions in other parts of India as well, which of course we do not find. Again in Malabar itself we meet with many cases where the social position and wealth, etc. were quite disproportionate. The Zamorin of Calicut the biggest king in olden days had a distinctly lower status than that of petty chiefs like the Bepore and Parappanad families, or small kings like those of Cochin. It should also be remembered that the Brahmins of Malabar were never penniless dependants of kings but were the landed aristocracy of Malabar. Many of them, the

Adhyas for instance, had sovereign rights and such as had sovereign rights even though first class Brahmins really, only suffered a social deterioration as will be evidenced by the fact that these have no agnihotra rights, and that high grade Aryans do not use them for their socio-religious functions. On the other hand we note a definite relation between the higher status of non-Brahmins and their functions (traditional) and vrithi or conduct. It should be noted that the higher classes of Nairs were a military class and were never the menial servant class or field labourers. They were also landed proprietors and landlords. Even to-day though poor a Nair as a rule refuses to work in paddy fields or take to artisanship. All these tend to show that Nairs (the higher classes) were not Sudras as ordinarily understood in India but were something higher. Then who are they? The traditional function of the Sudra is menial service and artisanship (dasya vrithi and silpa v.dya). Though the last of the higher denominations, viz. Sudra Nair of the north or the Ilakkars of the south of Kerala had dasya vrithi of the Brahmins and Kshatriyas, none of the higher groups took to silpa vidya. Again it is interesting to note that those who took to dasya vrithi had the specific appellation 'sudra' added on to their name in Malabar proper. If all Nairs were sudras this is superfluous and meaningless.

Now turning to Manu we read that the descendants of Kshatriyas by their non-performance of samskaras and karmas became Sudras in course of time, and Dravidas are one such example. (Manu X-43 നാമകേരളം ക്രിമുഖോപാദിതം: കുരുതുകാരം: ധൃത്യപാ നാമകേരളം ഇവരെന്നാൽക്കേരളം. പാണിനികാ ശാസ്ത്രം വിഷ്ണു:.....Kulluka in his

annotation says ചെറുപ്പം "നാദിഭാഷാഭാഷാ: സന്തഃ ക്രിയാചോപപിനാ (ശുഭ്രകോപനാ:). The probability that can be inferred from these evidences is that the higher classes of Nairs at any rate are Kshatriyas who have lost their original status by omission of vedic studies and samasaras. This helps us well to understand how they came to be considered as Sudras by the Brahmins. In other words high class Nairs are vratyakshatrias. In ancient days we learn that vratyas were readmitted into their original status after vratyastoma prayaschitha rites. Apastamba the authority for Deccan says they regain *status quo ante* (തകരാറിലും പ്രകൃതിവൽ), after prayaschitta. The annotator of this passage says (തേ സാധി ശ്മശാനവശേഷായ: ശേഷവശാക അപ്യക്താനം മോക്ഷനം ച വർജ്ജയൽ ആപ്യുചി ന കർത്വം ഭിത്യം; തേഷാം സാധമേവ ശുചിമിച്ഛതാം പ്രായശ്ചിത്താനന്തര മപനന്തം.....) Prof. Bhandarkar says that there are many instances of readmissions into Hinduism and even to Brahminhood as evidenced by lithic records. Malabar Brahmins however did not very much countenance vratyastoma readmissions as is evident from their own *smriti* "പ്രായശ്ചിത്തം ചെയ്യാനന്തര സാധി പ്രാ: പ്രത്യുപാദാനം നാശം ജന്മേനാധാരാ രാമേഷ്വര ഉദേശാദിനം. This, it will be noted, did not absolutely shut out the possibility of readmissions in selected cases as will be evident from even recent admissions into society after prayaschitta of people who suffered social degradation during the Mappila riots. That this is not the result of modern mentality will be evidenced by the fact that many families were taken back after similar incidents during Tipu's invasion, a branch of the Parappanad Kshatriya family being one of them, and on their demise their heirs did all *aparakriya* as usual. Apart from this, continued marriages

with Brahmins also tended to raise the status of Nairs, etc (Manu X-64 quoted before). But on account of specific prohibitory customs only very few perhaps were admitted back into Kshatriahood. We shall say more about this when considering Nairs and Kshatrias.

We shall now take each class and subclass (only purely Malabar classes will be considered here) and study them with a view to find out the basis of the classification.

I. BRAHMINS.

1. This group is divided into two major classes, (1) the Nampoori and (2) the Potti, the former representing what is known as the true Malabar Brahmin, and the latter Brahmins of Tulu extraction who have taken to Malabar customs and manners. The word as used now, viz. Nampoothiri is only an improved form of Nampoori; 'thiri' a term of courtesy is added to many words. Cf. *empranthiri*, *adithiri*, *Samootheri*, etc. where 'thiri' seems to be derived from, Sanskrit root 'Drng' = 'Adare'. Again it will be seen that a class of good Malabar Brahmins go by the name of Nampidi in North Malabar. Variants derived from the same root are seen in the forms Nampi, Nampyathi, etc. as well. The word Nampidi; can be philologically equated with 'Nampiri' which appears to be the correct original form; this then changed itself into Nampoori. Taken thus the word will be derived from two Dravidian terms 'nam' = our and piri, a variant of *piran* = master or lord, the whole meaning our lord. This derivation will be found to be justifiable when we see similar words like *Empran* used for Tulu Brahmins (sometimes even for domiciled Tulu Brahmins) where the word is 'Em' = our, or En = my, and *piran* = lord; and *Thampuran* for Chieftains, both Brahmin and Kshatriya.

Sam *piran* = their, and *piran* a lord. The *Sam* is not met with in literature as applied to themselves by Nampoories. In documents connected with only expressions as for example *Sam*. 'Sankaran Sankaran, Malayala-brahman, swasthom, muppatharu vayassu' etc. only. Further, Nampoories and Kahatrias address Adhyas alone as Nampoori, and last, others being addressed by their *Sam* name only, such as Elayadam. These are referred to in the same manner. It should also be borne in mind that Adhyas are addressed and referred to by Nairs etc. as Thampurans which would show some relation between the two terms Nampoori and thampuran. When viewed in this light the terms Nampoori, thampuran and Empran are only honorific titles pointing to wealth or position and not to any Brahminical distinction *per se*. The priesthood among all castes are given an equivalent status to that of the wealthy as will be seen from expressions like 'His Lordship' as applied to Christian Bishops etc. If the Malayalies were using the term in that sense one will have to explain why the Tamil Brahmins etc. were never addressed or referred to by that term.¹ The Nampoories are classified as:

1. The terms Nampoori and Empran are by others usually derived from two different words *nampi* and *piran*. *Nampoori* = *nampi* + *thiri* = *nampi* + Skt. *tri*. *Thampuran* also in the Malayalam words *നമ്പിയാർ*, *തമ്പുരാൻ*, *നമ്പിയാക്കിട്ട*, *നമ്പിയച്ചൻ*, *നമ്പിയടി*, *തമ്പുരാട്ടൻ*, *നമ്പിച്ചി*, *നമ്പിപ്പുറം*, *നമ്പി വെട്ട*, *പുറം*, *പാറമ്പി*, *വാരമ്പി*, *കാമ്പി*, *കുളമ്പി*, *പട്ടമ്പി* (*പട്ടമ്പി*).

It is found in Tamil also as *നമ്പി*, *തമ്പുരാൻ*, *തമ്പി* *തമ്പുരാൻ* *തമ്പി*. In these instances *nampi* appears to have some of respect. I too am inclined to take it to be a compound form of *nampi* + *piran*. The change may be accounted thus.

(a) *Adhyas*. This Sanskrit term clearly indicates a status due to wealth. This class is supposed to be the highest among Nampoories. But certain significant facts tend to show that they are not really the highest. These have no Agnihotra rights, nor do they have the right of *Sanyasa*, nor again are they employed by high class *Asya*-brahmins to officiate for their socio-religious needs. These are now generally explained away by saying that they are so pure that they do not require *Yaga* or *Sanyasa*. This explanation is on the very face of it futile and Hinduism contemplates none so high as may not require *Sanyasa*. Again all these *Adhyas* possessed sovereign rights as will be seen from historical facts as well as the present day remnants of their past temporal power in the shape of sword and shield-bearers to accompany them whenever they get out. On account of this *Kahatria* status they enjoyed they have sustained a slight degradation in their Brahminical status as evidenced by the loss of two or three of the most coveted Brahminical rights.

(b) *Asyas*. From '*asya*' = face; denoting their full, Brahminical character, the term being derived from the legend in *Purusha-*

നം വിരാൻ—(നം ചാൻ and) നംചി

Cf. 1 എം വിരാൻ—(എം ചാൻ, and എം ചി)

2. നം ചിരാൻ—നംചാൻ and നം ചി

The forms in brackets are not found in use in Tamil or Malayalam. നം, എം and നം are forms of Dravidian *നം*, *എം* and *നം*, which latter is itself used as a title of honor or respect in *വമ്പിയാൻ*, *മണ്ണിയാൻ*, *തിരുവഴിയാൻ*, *കാമ്പിയാൻ* (*കാമ്പ്* + *നമ്പി* + *യാൻ*). I take *വിരാൻ* to be a corruption of Sanskrit *വിരാജ*, an old title of honor or distinction.

പ്രായം; *വിരാജൻ*, *വിരാജൻ*, *വിരാജൻ*, *വിരാജൻ*

—T. K. Joseph.

sookta. These have all Brahminical rights in full. Formerly only the high class Nampoories used this term to describe themselves though now it is often being indiscriminately used. Their occupation is even today purely sacerdotal. Among them there are distinctions based on geographical distribution appearing in the form of mutual exclusion in marriages and in officiating for socio-religious functions of importance. As said once before wherever one meets with mutual exclusion while belonging to the same class one may be sure of finding a difference in geographical distribution either past or present, but in such cases there will be no sense of high and low between them.

C. *Ordinary*. These have all the rights except Yaga.

D. *Namamatrakas*. These are Brahmins only in name as the nomenclature itself would reveal. There are many sub-classes among them. The women of the first three classes (a, b, c) do not eat the food prepared by these and the next group (e). The sub-classes of (d) are (i) *Yatra* Nampooris whose function as the name suggests is to enact Yatra performance in military dress and paraphernalia. Their degradation is due to this military function. (ii) *Ashtavadyas*. These are the traditional doctors of the land. Here also degradation is due to their function. (iii) *Gramani*. These were petty chiefs of villages as the name denotes, and they too were degraded on account of their function as village officers.

E. *Saptas*. These are Brahmins who lost status for some sinful act of theirs which was rewarded with curse (sapa) from others in the form of loss of status. They are (i) *Panniyur gramam*, a whole village or group who permitted Tanilians to enter

Malabar, for which they were degraded, (ii) *Urul-parisha-mooss* is another class. The term denotes literally 'first among the people of a village'. (iii) Another class of a *saptas* are the descendants of those who received *danam* or gift of land, and (iv) the last of this group is the Payannore village. There is a special peculiarity with this last class as they are the only Brahmins who follow the line of female descent or full *marumakkathayam* (matriarchal) system, the curse being for accepting the maternal system of inheritance.

Groups (d) and (e) have not even right to the study of Vedas.

II. The other major class or *Potties* are Brahmins of Tulu extraction who have adopted Malabar customs and manners. They are also divided into sub-classes. The foremost among them are the *Tiruvalla-desais*, (=those of Tiruvalla village), a name designating geographical distribution. They are Brahmins with full sacerdotal rights as the good *Asyans*. There are, however, certain differences between *Asyans* and these in ornaments, etc. pointing to their different origin, but none of any importance whatever, so much so that many of these *potties* have surreptitiously taken the title of Nampooris. In matters of intermarriage and socio-religious officiating they are mutually exclusive as will be expected. (See *Kerala Society Papers*, Series 2: *Annals & Antiquities of Tiruvalla*.)

Below them we get potty brahmins enjoying varying degrees of Brahminical rights, some even having no right to study Vedas. Some of these occupy positions of temporal chieftainship and are what the *Gramanias* are among the Nampoories. Besides these there are many who are classed as 'Ottas' or singles where there

are a few houses of the same group. Some of these are recent Tulu domiciles as will be evident from their surnames such as 'Hegde' etc. These may be considered as transition forms. Some of the 'singles' are supposed to be originally Elayathus or a sect of people who function as the priests of Nairs.

In ordinary life the males of all Brahmins of the 'Pancha-Dravida' group, viz. Malabar Brahmins of all denominations, Tamil, Telugu, Canarese and Maharashtra Brahmins freely interdine though their females may not interdine or eat food prepared by those considered as low. For example a Tamil Brahmin woman will eat the food prepared by a Nampoori woman, but *not vice versa*. Among the Malabar Brahmin groups even females of the first three classes (a, b, c) freely interdine and eat of each other's preparation. Inter-marriages among these three sub-classes are common but not with the rest, though pratiloma marriages, where a higher girl is given to a man of lower status is permitted under exceptional circumstances. But on such marriages the girl loses her former status and takes her husband's status.

There is one other class known as Elayatu, Nampyati or Nampyatiiri, who may be considered as patita Brahmins. He is the purohita of Nairs, and his fall is attributed to that function of his. There are cases where nampyatis are given girls from high class nampoori houses, which tends to show that he is really a patita brahmin. Brahmins and Kshatrias do not dine even in the same room with them, and they even observe touch pollution. Malabar brahmins observe touch pollution for all but Pancha-dravida brahmins even in ordinary life, and for religious purposes they observe for all except the three upper sub-classes among them.

II. KSHATRIAS

A possibility of these having arisen from Nairs by purification by rites or by continued anuloma marriages of Brahmins should not be lost sight of. It is noteworthy that the Varma appellation peculiar to Kshatrias is found in Malabar among those recognised as Kshatrias, among Samanthas, and recently even among Nairs though very rarely. The name of a recent famous poet Ravi Varman Tampi, a Nair, is one such example of the name among Nairs. Among those recognised as Kshatrias there are sub-divisions based on geographical considerations, such as the Panthalom group and the Poonjar-Cranganore group, who are said to have come from Madura, and belong to the old Madura royal house of the Tamil country. One group near Kasergode even now has Tulu characteristics. Then there are the Beypore-Parappanad group, Kottayam group, Cochin group, besides many Thampanas and Thirumulpads scattered throughout Malabar. All these are related to Brahmins in the same way. As inter-marriages between Kshatrias are not done in Malabar, and as Kshatrias do not officiate in socio-religious functions there is no variety of exclusion among them. Finally there is the Kolaswaroopam group, whose relations towards Nampoori Brahmins are slightly different from that of the other Kshatrias. Kolaswaroopam women are married by the other Kshatrias mentioned above. Other Kshatrias have been, till recently, observing exclusion of Kolaswaroopam members in respect of religious functions. All these Kshatrias have one or other of the following class designation added to their real names, such as Kovil-adhikari, Koli-pandala, Thampan, Thirumulpad, or Thampuram (Raja). But a difference

in designation does not mean that they are of different classes. All these designations are those pointing to their temporal power as kings, or chiefs and has nothing to do with class division. For example a house related to the Cochin royal family (Vellarpally) take the designation of Thampnan, whereas the royal house takes the designation of Thampuran or Raja, though the old designation appears to be Kovil-adbhikari. The selfsame appellations are also used by Samanthas and aristocratic Nair houses. For example Kuthiravattathu Nairs style themselves as Thampnans, and the Nilampur chiefs style themselves as Thirumulpads. Most of the Samanthas now style themselves as Rajas. Designations are so much intermingled that they are of no use to determine the social class of the individual. Samanthas are described by Manu, Yajñavalkya and others as feudatory chiefs. The Kshatriyas of Malabar have as a rule 11 days' pollution after births and deaths, and among Samanthas there are some having 11 days, some 12, others 13 and yet others 14. The Nairs have 15 as a rule. Kshatriyas have the sacred thread. Most Samanthas have not, while some put it on during certain religious functions. The Kshatriyas have all mantra-samskaras, while Samanthas and Nairs have some of the samskaras generally without mantras. But for these differences above mentioned, Kshatriyas, Samanthas and Nairs are absolutely alike. The Kshatriyas of Malabar do not enjoy the right of Vedic studies, of yagas, etc. enjoined in Śmṛitis for Kshatriyas. The Kshatriya females are married only to Brahmins. The religious rite of marriage is only a mock affair, the bridegrooms being lower class Brahmins such as Yatra-brahmins or Aryappattars. Remarriages are freely permitted and as a rule

only high class Brahmins become the real husbands. If a high class Brahmin condescends to be bridegroom in the religious mock marriage of the Kshatriyas he suffers a loss of status and his former equals will not permit him to take part in their socio-religious functions.

The Samantha is next to Kshatriya in social status and we have already noted many things about him. Some of the Samanthas, e. g. Kuthiravattathu Thampnan and certain Kartha families in North Travancore are even considered Nairs and their old designation appears to be that. Every one of them however can trace their origin to some chieftain or other, and this tradition is in most cases borne out by the existence of political pension from Governments. Their habits of life are like those of Nampoories; they do not eat meat, do not eat with Nairs and even observe touch pollution for Nairs. They marry their girls either to Brahmins or to those of their own class. Most of these enjoy the right of eating with Brahmins in the same room. Some of these, e. g. Pandalai, Eradi, Vallodi, etc. enjoy this right in the North, but not in the South. Brahmins observe touch pollution for most of the Samantha classes. By function all these at one time or other were petty chiefs and are now with rare exceptions landlords or political pensioners. Many of the class names of samanthas point to geographical factors. The term 'Ati' means feet and is of the same import as 'Thiruvati' = pūjyapada of Sanskrit. We sometimes find either ati or thiruvati used indiscriminately in old records as for example, Venattu Mootha Thiruvatikāl or Venattu Mootha Atikal, to mean the same thing. Eradi meant the atikal of Ernad, Vallodi the atikal or prince of Valluvanad, Nedungadi of Nedunganad

and so on. There is no sense of high and low between these groups as will be expected in cases of geographical distinctions, but some amount of mutual exclusion in matters of religious importance are even now noticeable. The fine gradations from Nair to Kahatris together with the fact that certain true Nairs (e. g. Kavalappara moopil nair) enjoy the right of sala-bhojana with Brahmins, the general similarity in customs and manners between all these gradations, and the very probable fact that Nairs are 'vratya kahatris' point to the possibility of both Samanthas and Kahatris having arisen from the Nairs.

One other point is also noteworthy. Malabar brahmins do no 'anjali' bowing to any but God; they, whenever they have to show respect to man, do 'abhivadyam' by touching the feet of the honoured. Kahatris do this during religious rites, and at other times they do the anjali bow (thozhuka) with folded hands when they meet their uncles, elder brothers, mother, etc. for the first time on a day. Before doing this they pull down the sacred thread from off the left shoulder on the plea that with the sacred thread in position one ought not to bow to any but God. If this means anything it could mean only that either they had originally no sacred thread, or they began wearing only recently. It is not likely that bowing came second, for if bowing came possible with sacred thread on, and stilling had sacred thread from the beginning bowing would not have crept in and they would have got on as the Nampoories do. The custom is that bowing, the essentially Hindu form of it (with hands brought together), was prevalent among them at first, and the thread came in later on, which means that originally they were without thread, or

in other words they were Nairs.

Another factor we have to consider is in relation to those high class Kahatris who trace their line from the Tamil kings of Madura. Note that they, though foreigners, are classed as first class Kahatris now. We have still on the eastern side of the Ghats many Zemindars who trace their descent from the selfsame kings. But they do not enjoy equal privileges with their counterparts now in Malabar. Though they style themselves as Kahatris the Malayali treats them on almost the same level as the Nairs only.

III. AMPALAVASIS.

According to the Brahmins the next class is the Ampalavasi or temple-residing class; though it must be admitted that Brahmins have no sort of intermingling with ampalavasis whereas they have some with certain Nairs as shown before. The Ampalavasis are all by function temple servants each class having a different principal function. Some of the Samanthas and Ampalavasis dine together in the same room. Among Ampalavasis some have sacred thread while others have not. The highest among this class is the Moothathu—elder as the name itself implies. He is Brahmin, like in customs and manners, but has neither rights of intermingling with Brahmins nor of learning the Vedas. These are, even those having a sacred thread, considered by high class Nairs as below them. Though there is plenty of local differences as a rule Nair women of high classes do not eat food touched by Ampalavasis. Neither do they marry them. Some of the Ampalavasis are decidedly patitas (degenerates) from Brahmins, e. g. the Chakkiair and Nampiar. They are the children of Brahmin women formally convicted of adultery, the children

however being born to the legitimate father. This system of recruiting Chakiars and Nampiaris are still current. As the classification of Ampalavasies is based on differences in function there is a strong sense of high and low among them. Some of them as the Pisharodi are believed to be Buddhist or Jaiga sanyasins who have returned to the Hindu fold during the decline of those religions. They are supposed to be the old "Battarakas or bhattarakatiruvadikal" of the Buddhists. Some of their customs and manners point to such a possibility. Some others as Kurukkal (Gurukkal=preceptors), Adikal, etc. appear to be the remnants of the old vamachara form of tantrism as their present functions themselves would show.

In fact the Ampalavasis or Antarala (middling) group is a motley group derived from many sources and having different primary occupations. Except the Moothathu all others generally dine together in the same room. Being temple servants and often residing in close proximity to temples, they had greater chances of intimate associations with Brahmins, with the result that they cultivated a general characteristic of imitating the Brahmin in all their manners and customs and knowledge of Sanskrit language and literature, of medicine, etc. This was helped by the free anuloma marriages with Brahmins which arose out of their close contact with Brahmins every day. Most of them permitted Brahmin marriages in their homes. Besides the close intimacy with the Brahmins these people had plenty of leisure during noon time as their work was usually confined to morning and evening hours, and this helped them to take to Sanskrit education. They were as a rule well educated in Sanskrit. On account of all these Brahmins gave them a higher status

than the Nairs though the Nairs do not recognise this generally. Some of the groups are still further divided 'on geographical basis as in the case of Variers. Here of course there is no sense of high and low but only mutual exclusion.

IV. NAIRS.

Next come the Nairs. They are considered Sudras by Brahmins, but their social status is higher than that of Sudras of many other parts of India. They may broadly be classed as the high class group and the lower classes. The difference between some of the higher classes and the Samanthas is practically nil as shown before. Some of them (Kavalappara Nair and Kuthiravattathu Nair) enjoy the right of interdining with Brahmins as do the Samanthas. We have elsewhere come to the irresistible conclusion that the higher class of Nairs must have been 'vratyas kshatriyas' in the beginning.

There are 18 sects among them. The nomenclature differs in different parts of Malabar, and in some cases there is confusion of status and function. The sub-divisions are:—

1. Kiriyaam (കിരിയാം). From 'griha'=house; these are landlords and every way equal to Samanthas. Some of them have sala-bhojana with Brahmins, and all have the right to enter a yaga-sala.
2. Tharakan (തരകൻ). Originally merchants by function; now mostly landlords. Derived from 'tharaku' (തരകം= tariff)
3. Ravarikal (രവരിക്കൾ). Just as no. 2, derived from Vyapari (വ്യാപാരി a merchant).

These three form the highest group and they can intermarry.

From the functions of the second and third

it will be noted that they ought to fall into the *vysya* class. It should be noted that there is no *vysya* class among pure Malayalees.

1. Purathucharna nair (പുറത്തുചാർന്നവർ). Purathu=out, and charna=attached, joined. These were the militia attached to the different States or Swaroopams. Hence they are also called Swaroopak-kars. By function these are then equal to Kehatrias of varna classification.
5. Akathucharna nair. (അകത്തുചാർന്നവർ). Akathu=in, and charna=attached, joined. These are servants other than the military, attached to kings. In Travancore these and no. 4 fall together in the same class as Swaroopak-kars. The subdivision is current only in British Malabar where no. 4 is taken as of a higher status than no. 5.
6. Sudra nair (ശൂദ്രന്മാർ). Function, service of Brahmins. Equal to Illakkars of Travancore and other southern parts. This is the last class of good Nairs in the North, though in Travancore etc. these have come to be classed as higher than nos. 4 and 5 (Swaroopakkars).

Numbers 4, 5 and 6 are classed as middle class Nairs in the North and high class Nairs in the South where the first three classes are wanting. The 12 classes following are considered low.

7. Padamangalom (പാദമംഗലം). } Function
8. Pallichan (പള്ളിചാൻ) } cannot be identified now. ²

2. According to Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, s. v. Nayar, Padamangalam's occupation is 'temple carrels such as sweeping, carrying lamps during processions, etc.', and Pallichohans (പള്ളിജി എലിക്കാർ) are 'bearers of palanquins for Brahmins and Malabar chieftains. They are also employed as their attendants to carry their sword and shield before them'. (*Loc. cit.*, pp. 298, 299.)

T. K. J.

9. Anthooran. (ആന്തൂർ). Palanquin bearers, from 'Andola' palanquin. ³

10. Kulangara nair (കുലങ്ങാറന്മാർ). These are bards who sing in certain temples like 'Ayyappan-kavu', 'Bhadrakali-kavu', 'Vettakuruvan-kavu', etc. The classes known as Kuruppu, Maran, (കുറുപ്പു, മാറൻ) etc. of Travancore fall into this group. Note that Maran and Kuruppu are the same. (There is a status Kurup which is a military distinction; that has nothing to do with caste. Such military distinctions are found among other castes as well as among non-Hindus. E. g. there are houses enjoying 'Panikkar' status both among Nampoories as well as among Syrian Christians and Mohamedans.)

11. Itacherry (ഇടച്ചേരി). hearers-men by function, Derivation clear, ഇട+ചേരി.
12. Otathu nair (ഓട്ടത്തുന്മാർ). These are boatmen (from Otam boat) ⁴
13. Vattakkatan or Chakkala (വട്ടക്കാടൻ, ചക്കലന്മാർ). Oil pressers by function as the name implies. ⁵

3. Gundert's Dictionary has 'ആന്തൂർ, ആന്തൂർ,.....N. p., Plat under Calicut, from which are derived the ആന്തൂർ നായന്മാർ *pothars* also ആന്തൂർ KU, കലം ഉണ്ടാക്കുന്ന ആന്തൂരിന്മാർ T. B., ആന്തൂർ (anthooran) means a man of the village called Anthoor.'

—T. K. J.

4. Thurston has in *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 299 thus: 'Otam, also called Kuna. Their occupation is to tile or shakol temples and Brahman houses'. There are some ഓട്ടൻ-ഓട്ടത്തുന്മാർ in Trivandrum. Their ancestors' *matier* was making roofing tiles (ഓട്ട) of clay.

—T. K. J.

5. The first name Vattakkal means a man of the place called Vattakadu; the second means a Nale of the 'oil-press-house'. Gundert has recorded also the name കച്ചലിന്മാർ for him.

—T. K. J.

14. Ezhuthachan (ഏഴത്തച്ചൻ). Primary teachers or teachers of alphabets as the name implies.
15. Athikurichi (അതിക്കുരിച്ചി). Function at cremation and last services of Nairs. (from aathi=bone) ⁶
16. Urali nair (ഉരളിനായർ). These were village menials and were subdivided into many such as, kolayan (കൊലയാൻ) the blacksmith, azhuthan (അഴത്തൻ) the carpenter, muvvari മൂവ്വരി the sweeper, eruman (ഏറുമാൻ) the climber, etc. ⁷
17. Veluthada nair (വെളുത്തടനായർ). The washerman caste from velutha=white or clean. ⁸
18. Velakkathala nair. (വെളുക്കത്തലനായർ). the barber from 'velakka' = to clean and thala, head.

6. Aththikurichchi looks like the name of a village, meaning literally the bonehill-village or the fig-tree hill-village. This class of Nairs seems to be known also as അസിമ്പാരി, i.e. bone-gatherer.

—T. K. J.

7. Goudert says in his Dictionary. "ഉരളി.....

1. Lower Sudra caste (ഏതമാൻ, കല്ലുരിയാൻ No.) their work അർപ്പണ, കല്ലിന്നി." Some non-Sudra castes too are known as ഉരളി (oorli) in different parts of Kerala. Oorli=the village-man.

—T. K. J.

8. Velutthadam the white place, is used to designate the house of a Malayali washerman in some parts of Central Travancore. According to Goudert it means "the washing turf." There is Karutthidam (black place) also used as a house name in Travancore.

9. വിളക്കത്തവർ, വിളക്കത്തചൻ, &c. are difficult to interpret. Could വിളക്കത്ത or.....തല be the name of a village? Could it have any possible connection with paraschites the latter and mummy embalmer of old Egypt? In Kerala barbers are supposed to have a knowledge of medicine and surgery too. They are called also Vaidyas (physicians) in some places. Barber women not as midwives.

—T. K. J.

The last three groups are not considered by Nairs as nairs at all, and other Nairs observe touch pollution with them. Class no. 16 is not seen in Travancore. The classes from no. 6 downwards appear to be real Sudras by their function. Brahmins and Kahatrias observe touch pollution in respect of all Nairs, all Ampalavasis, Samanthas, and Pathitha Brahmins such as Ilayathu. As such the question of touch pollution is no criterion to determine the true class to which the higher class Nairs belong. Brahmins marry in the houses of nos. 1 to 8, 10 and 11 though only the first 6 are considered to be fit & proper.

Below is given an alphabetical list of the main castes among pure Malabarians denoting their traditional function and explaining the terms as far as possible.

An alphabetically arranged list of castes of Malabar showing function. (Names culled from the last Census Report of Travancore. Only true Malabar castes are considered here).

1. Alhavan also known as uppalhavan (അളവൻ, ഉപ്പുളവൻ). The salt manufacturing caste; from 'alham' = salt-pan and 'an' = doer.
2. Ampalavasi (അമ്പലവാസി). A generic name for several classes whose general function is service in temples; for subdivisions *vide text*.
3. Ampattan (അമ്പട്ടൻ). Barber caste in South Travancore, &c. from Ambashtha (Skt.) one of the samkara Varnas whose function was surgery. His other names are kahawrakkar, kahuraka, from kahur, a lancet, pointing to the surgical function, Pranopakari, helper of life, Pandita, learned etc. Originally barbers and surgeons were the same

- all over the world as is evident from the terms used (cf. Chirurgeon=Skt. kshuraka=surgeon). Instead of calling him a barber, out of respect for his profession he was called by the name of his more useful function to society. (Ambashthanam chikitsitam'. Manu X-47)
4. Arayan (അയൻ), a class of fishermen. (See 44).
 5. Asari (അടർ), carpenter.
 6. Atikal (അടികൾ). A class of ampalavasis. (vide text for derivation).
 7. Atiyoti (അടിയതി). A class of samanthas. (According to Gundert there is a class of Nairs of this name in Kadathanad in British Malabar. See also Thurston, Vol. V, p. 300 -T. K. J.)
 8. Brahmin. See text.
 9. Chakkala, see under Nairs.
 10. Chakkir (ചക്കിയാർ). One of the ampalavasis, whose function is to enact. His name in some Tamil works is 'koothachakkaiyan'. (koothu=dance).
 11. Chavalhakkaran (ചവളക്കാരൻ). A fisherman class. (A low Nayar tribe, according to Bailey's Dictionary, 1845.—T. K. J.)
 12. Chayakkaran (ചായക്കാരൻ). Dyer caste (chayam=dye). (A low-caste washerman in some parts of Travancore. See 45 for another.—T. K. J.)
 13. Chayakurup (ചായക്കുറുപ്പ്) A class of workers in lacquer (kurup stands for teacher or master worker)
 14. Chempukotty (ചമ്പുകോട്ട) Coppersmith.
 - 14 a Chetty (ചെട്ടി). A generic name for vyayas (Non-Malayali, from sreshthi=chief merchant. Sett is also derived from this).
 15. Cholavan (ചോലവൻ) A class of weavers
 16. Daivampadi, also called Brahmani (ദൈവംപാടി, ബ്രഹ്മണി) A class of ampalavasis whose women sing in temples (Daivam=God, & padi=singer). (Vathis of South Travancore, a Nair sub-caste, are also called Daivampadis probably because they 'sing songs about God' to the accompaniment of nanthuni, a kind of guitar.—T. K. J.)
 17. Ilavanian (ഇലവാനിയൻ). A class of petty traders (ila=leaf & vanian from vanija, trader) (Originally seller of betel leaf or perhaps plantain leaf T: K. J.)
 18. Ilayathu (ഇലയത്ത്) The purohitha of Nairs. (Term means the junior, the lesser Brahmin. The other names for them are 'nampyathi' or nampyathiri, a diminutive form of nampoor. (See 49):
 19. Itayan (ഇടയൻ) Herdsman class
 20. Izhava (ഇഴവൻ). The liquor making class of Malabar. Name geographical. from Izham—Ceylon. These were, it is said, originally Buddhists who have come from Ceylon. Some of their customs are in favour of the tradition. They are now Hindus, but excluded from higher society on account of their profession. In British Malabar these are known as Theeyas, & in Travancore and cochin chilanthis (=Ceylon theeyas), chovans etc. It is said that in some parts of Malabar Theeyas have no distance pollution. (It is the Izhavas living among Syrian Christians that are called chovans -T. K. J.)
 21. Izhavathi or Vathi (ഇഴവത്തിയാതി) The barbers and purohithas of Ezhavas (Vathy from vadhyan, a purohitha or teacher). (For a Nair Vathi see 16—T. K. J.)

22. Kallan (കല്ലൻ). Mason caste, a sub-division of Kammalas (Kal—stone)
23. Kammala (കമ്മലൻ), generic name for all artisan classes, especially five classes (from Sk. Karmakara—artisan (Or, karma alan, കർമ്മജ്ഞൻ—T. K. J.)
24. Kanikkaran (കാണിക്കാരൻ) A forest tribe
25. Kaniyan (കണിയാൻ) Astrologer caste from Sk. 'Gan' to compute, cf. Ganaka, Gani)
26. Karuvan (കരവൻ). A worker in brass or bronze (Karu—mould (Gundert: കരമാൻ, കരവാനുൾ=blacksmith of low caste—T. K. J.)
27. Kattasan (കാട്ടാടാൻ). A hill tribe who makes baskets etc. (Kat=forest, and asan=a teacher).
28. Kollan (കൊല്ലൻ). Blacksmith class (see 26, and 23).
29. Krishnan vaka (ക്രിഷ്ണൻ വക) A pastoral sect of Sudras in S. Travancore, Non-Malabar class) Name derived from the traditional life of Sreekrishna).
30. Kashtria, see text, name denotes protector.
31. Kumbhi (കുംഭി) A potter class. (Kumbha pot - (See 36 and 86).
32. Kuravan (കുറവൻ, കൊറവൻ). An agricultural labourer.
33. Kurukkal (കുറുക്കൽ). *See text.*
34. Kurup (കുറുപ്പ്). An ancient name applied to certain Nair classes who sing at certain temples. (vide text). Also a title. (See 93)
35. Koothati or Kampathel-koothati (കൂത്താടി, കമ്പത്തൽ കൂത്താടി). A class of rope dancers (Kamatham=pole, Koothati=dancer.)
36. Kusavan (കുടവൻ). Potter Non-malabar (See 31 and 86) (Called കുടയാൻ in some places—T. K. J.)
37. Malanair (മലനായർ). A hill tribe doing agricultural work on hills. N. B. All words beginning with 'Mala' denote a forest class.
38. Malamkuti (മലമുടി). A hill tribe,
39. Malampantaram (മലമ്പന്തരം). A class among hill tribes. (cf. Pantaram, a saivite sanyasin of Tamil nad.) See 61.
40. Malavelan (മലവേലൻ). A hill tribe of sorcerers. See 'Velan', 85.
41. Malavetan (മലവേടൻ). A hill tribe of hunters. (vetan=hunter).
42. Malaullatan (മലമുളളാടൻ). A hill tribe dwelling in the interior of forests.
43. Malayan (മലയാൻ). A generic name for all hilltribes.
44. Mala-arayan (മലയായൻ). A hill tribe.
45. Mannan (മണ്ണൻ). Now these are tree climbers and washermen. The word is a variant of Tamil Vannan. Even today mannan is the religious washerman of Malayalees, for 'mannante mattu' or 'mannathy mattu', or cloth washed by mannan is essential for religious purification. Mattu: change of cloth. Thus traditionally he is the washerman (Tamil *മാണ്ണു*, Mannu=to wash.—T. K. J.)
46. Marakkan (മരയ്ക്കൻ). One of the fishermen class, specially applied to sea-fishing class. From maru or marre, an arabic term for the sea. Cf. words like 'fathemari' etc.
47. Maran (മാരൻ). A drummer caste. (See 16 and 34).
48. Mukkuvan (മുക്കുവൻ). A fisherman caste (Mung or Muk=to dive).
49. Moothathu (മൂത്താഴ്). One of the ampalavai castes He is the highest among them. (See 18).
50. Nampiti (നമ്പടി). A diminutive form of nampoori?, There are several differ-

ent classes having that name. It appears to be a generic name depicting position of honour.

51. Nampiyathi (നമ്പിയാതി), Same as Ilayathu, No. 18.
52. Nampiar (നമ്പ്യാർ). A class of ampalavasis akin to Chakkiares. The pure children of a Nampoor woman convicted of adultery become nampiares if they have not yet undergone upanayanam; if they have they become Chakkiares. It will be noted that a Chakkiares and a Nampiar may be direct brothers, and yet belong to two castes. There is also a mere title nampiyar which is not a caste. (A Nair class in British Malabar is called Nampiyar.—T. K. J.)
53. Nampoothiri. See text.
54. Nattuvan (നട്ടുവൻ) Conductor of dancing. (Nat=to dance)
55. Nayar (നായർ). Essentially the martial class of Malabar. Nayar=leader, or respectable man cf. Naidu, Naickan, etc. Sk. Nayaka=leader).
56. Nayati (നായാടി). Hill tribe of hunters. (nayattu=hunting, from nay=dog)
57. Ochchan (ഓച്ചൻ). A name given to marans or drummers and musicians in Tamil areas of Malabar. (See 47).
58. Pallan (പല്ലൻ). A Tamil class of agriculturists (pallam=slope or valley of a hill.)
59. Panan (പാണൻ). A class of musicians cf. phrases as 'panan pattu'. They do needle work also.
60. Panikkan (പാണിക്കൻ). A generic name for many classes such as carpenters etc. Also used as a title (Panikkar) to denote proficiency in military training. In this sense it is applied to different castes and even non-Hindus. There are

Panikkar title-holders among nampoories, Syrian Christians & Nairs.

61. Pantaram (പന്തരം). Tamil class of professional mendicants.
 62. Paravan (പറവൻ). A class of fishermen, who collect certain bivalve shells, and make lime from them.
 63. Paraiiah (പറയൻ). The caste equated with Chandala of old. They are the lowest class in Malabar.
 - Pilappally (പിള്ളപ്പള്ളി) A small community of ampalavasis in Ampalapurtha taluq in Travancore.
 65. Peharoty (പെഹരോടി) An ampalavasi sect. See text.
 66. Pontan (പൊന്തൻ) Palanquin carrier
 67. Potty (പൊറ്റി) A class of Malabar Brahmins (Pottu, to protect). Such a term of respect is perfectly understandable when applied to priestly classes.
 68. Pothuvai (പൊതുവായി) a class of ampalavasis. (Common man or a man of general service).
 69. Pulayan (പുലയൻ) A corrupt derivative of pulkasa as is evidenced from Sankara Smriti etc. He is the worker in paddy fields. In the north he is known as Cheruman. (Known as qayon in some parts of Cochin. Cheruman has recently been converted into Cheraman, ചെരമൻ. Pulayan=man of pollution.
- T. K. J.
70. Pulluvan (പുലുവൻ) A caste whose work is to sing in serpent groves (Pulinda, name of a Nagakanyaka. Pulinda means a barbarous tribe of forest dwellers)
 71. Pushpakan (പുഷ്പകൻ) An Ampalavasi class who supplies flowers for worship (pushpa=flower)
 72. Chalian (ചാലിയൻ) weaver class.
 73. Samanthan (സാമന്തൻ) A generic name

for petty chiefs. *Vide* text.

74. Thalhaven (താലവൻ) Another name for Maravara (thala=anklet, from the ankle-like rope they put on their legs to help as a support in climbing palms. Maravan itself is from mara=a tree)
75. Thantan (തന്തൻ). A sect of palm climbers.
76. Theeyattunni (Theyyattunni തിരുത്തുണ്ണി-തെയ്യത്തുണ്ണി) An ampalavasi sect who performs a dance in honour of Devi (Devi, and attan). (Gintert distinguishes തിരുത്തുണ്ണി from തെയ്യത്തുണ്ണി. One is തിരുത്തുണ്ണി, the other തെയ്യത്തുണ്ണി—T. K. J.)
77. Ullatan (ഉല്ലാതൻ). A hunting caste found in low countries
78. Uppara (ഉപ്പറ) A salt making class (uppu=salt) (See 1)
79. Urali (ഉരാളി) A semi-hill tribe of hunters and watchmen. They are village watchmen
80. Valan (വാലൻ) A class of fishermen
81. Valhan (വാളൻ) A sawyer caste (Valh=saw)
82. Vaniyan (വാനിയൻ) Now oil pressers and traders. Skt. Vanija=trader
83. Vannan (വണ്ണൻ). See Mannan. Washer-man caste. (Tamil mannu means to wash—T. K. J.)
84. Varier (വരിയർ). An ampalavasi class whose occupation is to sweep and clean the inside of temples, especially the Balikkal, the stone altar in front of the god in a temple. (From 'var' to collect cf. expression atichuvarku, toothu-varauka etc). (Variyam is used in Malabar inscriptions as denoting a high office. The holder of that office is a Variyan. Could it be a corruption of "കോവ എരിയൻ", head of an assembly or council? കോവ=സഭ—T. K. J.)

85. Velan (വേലൻ). A caste of mantravadi or sorcerers.
86. Velhan (വേളൻ). Potter class. (See 31 and 35).
87. Vellala (വേളാളൻ) Tamil term for agricultural class. (Velh=perhaps agricultural land. Originally Velh=olh=Light, and hence open place outside, hence garden or cultivable land. Cf. words like velhi etc. വേലം=മരം-മേളി-വേളി)
88. Veluthetan, വേളത്തേടൻ. See text. Veluthata nsir, Washerman
89. Vettuvan (വേട്ടവൻ) A low caste of predial slaves
90. Vilkuruppu or Villasan (വിൽകുറുപ്പു-വില്ലാശൻ) One of the Kammalar caste (See 23) who acts as their priests, formerly maker of bows

A few non-Malabar classes are as well included in the list when they are found to be so common as to be considered as domiciled in some part of Malabar. It will be noted that the vast majority of the names point to the traditional function the caste is expected to do. Thus it will be evident that caste distinction is practically based on function. When the distinction is a purely geographical factor either no differences will be noticed as between Valloties, Eraties, etc. or there is a sense of mutual exclusiveness as in the case of Nampoories of the North and the South. It will be noted that evidence has been adduced to show that change from one caste or class into another was practicable in ancient India and even in comparatively recent times. In many cases such conversions might have taken generations but still it was possible. In course of time this change came to be completely lost as a result of a common human desire to keep one's hearth untainted

by anything the least supposed to be lower than one's own. This mentality together with the ignorance of the real basis of the Dharmasastra injunctions tended to crystallize each occupational unit into a separate caste, and hence the large number and variety. Among the large number cited in this paper not more than some two or three can be classed as having derived by 'Samkara' intermarriage process. The existing fact that many of the castes of today are engaged in other occupations than their traditional function is of no importance. Exigencies of modern times necessitated the change, but the original function is at any rate discernible in the name. In as much as purely Malabar castes are concerned it may be said that some members at least among each class have even today to do the traditional functions.

—L. A. Ravi Varma

APPENDIX I

The Pre-Aryan People in Kerala

(T. K. J.)

Who were the people whom the Aryans—the ancestors of the Nambudiri Brahmins—saw in Kerala when they entered it for the first time, say about 2500 years ago? They were, I imagine, Dravidians from the Indus Valley and perhaps direct from Mesopotamia (Sumer), who had already settled down in Kerala and the rest of the West Coast strip. They too, like the Aryans, were foreigners, and were closely related, as modern ethnologists say, to the ancient Cretans and the Sumerians of Mesopotamia. Perhaps there might have been also at that time in Kerala a few Negritos of the Palaeolithic Age and a few Kolians of the

first wave of Austic immigration in the Neolithic Age. These two races were more ancient than the Dravidians.

When the Aryans first came to Kerala there was, I think, no caste distinction among the Kerala Dravidians, the ancestors of the present day Nairs, Pillais, and of some other non-Aryan castes of Kerala. A few of them were kings or chiefs, many others were land-owners and cultivators, others were hunters or fishermen, others cultivators without ownership of land, some others were workers in clay, stone, wood, copper, iron & some other metals, a few were boatmen or navigators, a few acted as barbers, washermen, priests, physicians, sorcerers, &c. and all males alike, to my mind, were fighters, so much so that Manu in whose days they were called Sudras (Vrushalas) in Aryan terminology, regarded the Dravidians as having been previously Kahatriyas (Manu X. 43—between 200 B.C. & 200 A.D.).

They never burned their dead, but buried them in oblong or round coffins with their ornaments and weapons, and also offerings of food, as their ancestors had done and their Dravidian contemporaries were doing on the East Coast & in other parts of India and in regions to the west of India.

They must have observed no sort of contact pollution or distance pollution. Their language was the then form of Tamil & Malayalam, which form had, I think, several features of the Sumero—Accadian language of their ancestors. Their word for king or chief was neither raja, nor tampuran, nor arachar, nor kaimal, nor kartha found in modern Tamil and Malayalam, but it was *ko* which still survives and has a corresponding word *go* meaning noble in Sumerian. The Kerala Dravidians must have had inter-

communication by land and sea with the East Coast Dravidians; and by sea with the regions west of India.

—T. K. Joseph

APPENDIX II

Malabar Low Castes, about 1700 A. D.

(T. K. J.)

Sloans MS. 274) A, British Museum, London. Portuguese text by the Vicar of the Ernakulam Church (Cochin), dated 1676 A. D. or after, with six lines of notes in Dutch, has the following passage about Malabar (Kerala) castes:—

"Besides these Gentio (Hindu) Kings, Princes, and Nobles who are found in this people of the kingdom of Mallavar, there are other sects and castes also of Gentios, but common, vile, and low. They are the following:—

1. AIARI, which means carpenters.
2. MUJARE, which means metal-smelters.
3. COLLEN, blacksmiths.
4. TATEN, goldsmiths.

These four castes of Gentios recognise no superior, judge, or lord of theirs other than the Christians of St. Thomas, and that means the Fathers Cacazaros (Syrian priests).

Other castes, also low, are the following:— [Fol. 5 r]

5. CHECON, or Iravant those who cut palm-trees for wine or sura.
6. CANACAS, otherwise called Codum-guslar Canacas: they are merchants and people of trade and traffic.
7. BETAVA CANACA: the work of these is to fish, plant hedges (e. *marwar oeb*) in

the fields, row *manchus* (boats), and make *chunam* (lime)-kilns.

8. AREL: these fish in rivers, not in the sea.
9. MUCUAS: these are of lower caste, and fish in the sea.
10. HERAVALEM: these make mud-wall fences [*vallarios*] and enclosures [*seccas*].
11. TACEN: these are workmen, handling stone and mud.
12. MAHEN: these live in the mountains and Serras and are workmen who deal in honey and wax; they are also *varzeiros* [cultivators of rice-fields].
13. UL ADDA: these cut wood and perform country work [*orbas rusticanas*].
14. PULIAS: these are *varzeiros* [cultivators of rice-fields] and land cultivators, and they are the lowest and basest caste of people.
15. PAREAS: these make baskets and mats, and they are obliged to eat the flesh of all kinds of unclean dead animals and to skin them; and, if they do not do so, they are punished by the Gentio Kings.
16. NADDI: they are a caste of hunters, and have no other occupation; and they go about with their bows and arrows, and are obliged to accompany the Nairo, Gentio and Christian hunters.
17. BELLEN, or Mannan: the work of these is to wash soiled clothes, and not other things.
18. PAAVEN: these do the work of tailors [Fol. 5 v]
19. PARAVEN: these practice the diabolic art, form a pact with the devil, and are sorcerers. Others who go in for the same mischief of sorcery are the Polins, Paanen, Ballen, Pareas and Naddi;

20. CHOROAS: the occupation of these is to sell *chunambo* [lime], and they also are sorcerers by caste.

All these low castes of Gentios contain a very large number of families and persons. Only the Muzas have their huts near the sea, being fishermen. None of these castes has a king of its own; but they are subject, each of them, to the King of the land where they are, or the said King appoints one of them as chief.

21. GURIPU: which means fencing-master, and though he be of low caste, he is esteemed more than the rest.

22. PUDDIJA COLLE: they make shields and rods for soldiers, and do all other kinds of work in hides.

Among the Naires and nobles there are also found some more or less noble, chiefly—

23. BELACA TALEA: that is barbers; though Naires, they are among those of low caste, but under the patronage of our Christians.

24. BATTECATIE NAIRE: though Naires, they are a low caste for their work consists in making oil from *gardenim*, *marotta*, and coco-nuts.

25. CHIRAGUE PATTE: these also are of Naire caste, but of low blood; they do the work of merchants.

26. CHETTIAR: they do the same work, but are of very low Naire blood.

27. BELLETHEREN: they are also of low blood; they wash clothes.

28. CHALIA BELLETHEREN: also a [washermen] caste, but lower than the above one.

Among all these castes and diversities of Gentios, whether noble or common, whether high or low, there are still among these castes many more different castes, as they say: more than seventy; but those here noted suffice for the moment.

The Naires are in very great number, and also the Chagos or Poleas. The other castes of Gentios are not in such quantity and number".

Notes by T. K. Joseph

[References are to the numbers given above]

Nos. 1 to 4 are four of the five Kammala [artisan] castes of Kerala. They are ചെങ്കാല, കട്ടാല, കോളർ, തട്ടാർ correctly described by the author of the document. The fifth Kammala caste is ചെമ്പുകാള, copper smith. See my *Malabar Christian Copperplates* [in Malayalam], 1925 p. 84, sub voce ചെങ്കാല. They are now called also *Vishwa Brahmanas* [See No. 14 below].

The MS. says that the above four castes [1 to 4] and the Vilakkittalava [barber] caste [No. 23] are under the St. Thomas Christians. In fact there were eighteen [or 17 according to some authorities] low castes in Malabar who had been from very ancient days put under the protection of the Syrian Christians of Malabar. See the above book pp. 41 to 44 for a discussion of this topic.

No. 5 is ചെങ്കാർ, മരച്ചെൻ known also as ചോവൻ. Chekon or Chyon (=sevakam, one in military service under the Syrian Christians as mentioned above) is the Izava caste's name, only in places where they live among the Syrian Christians. In other places they are called

Izhavas or Teeyas or Chilanias [=Simhaladwipa people, Ceylonese immigrants]. See Barbosa's description of this and other castes in Stanley's translation, 1866, pp. 121-148.

No. 6, കണക്കൻ, കൊടുങ്ങല്ലൂർ കണക്കൻ. Kanakkan in Parur is coconut tree climber by occupation.

No. 7, വേദവക്കണക്കൻ. Kanakkan in these words and in others like കണക്കുമായി ചൊവ്വകാമൻ is a title of distinction, and has nothing to do with kanakku, account or arithmetic.

Nos. 6 and 7 are instances of titles or terms of respect originally conferred upon distinguished individuals or headmen of certain castes, becoming caste names in course of time. Nayar [nayakar=leader, or respectable gentleman], Arayan [=raja, king], Chetti [=sresathi, nobleman]. Nampi [=our lord], Empran [=my or our lord], Tampi [=his lordship], Maran [=marayan maharajan, great lord], Moopan [elder], Moothathu [elder], Thandan [a man wielding the staff of authority], Potti [nourisher], Nayikkan [leader], Pathiyan [leader or chief], Velaan [uncrowned king, now the potter caste], Pandaram [lord, officer of the treasury or store-house], Menon [one of superior rank or status], Rao [=Raja], Raju [Raja] are other instances.

See Nos. 22 and 24 for two other origins of caste names.

No. 8 is അയൻ and No. 9, മുക്കുവൻ.

No. 10 may be മറവാളൻ, but he is of the scabbard or sword sheath making caste, also called മറവാളൻ or കിടാമൻ. His is one of the 18 castes under the protection of the Syrian Christians [See No. 1-4 above]

Is it perhaps Manavalan (മണവാളൻ) a caste of bricklayers? It may not be Karuvellam-(Nair) found in South Travancore.

No. 11 is തച്ചൻ. The author means കുരു തച്ചൻ or പൂഴിത്തച്ചൻ. There are other kinds of തച്ചൻ-s also.

No. 12 ought to be MALEN, മലയൻ, Portuguese Serra means mountain chain. Cf. Spanish Sierra Morena, Sierra Nevada, & Sierra Leone, names of mountain ranges.

No. 13 is മൂക്കടൻ.

No. 14, പുലയൻ known as ചെറമകൻ, ചെറമൻ, മുളയൻ in other parts of Kerala. Cheruman was about a dozen years ago converted into Cheraman (ചെറമൻ) which is intended to be connected with Cheraman, the Chera King. Adi-dravida is another new name. Such changes of caste names owing to a sense of self-respect engendered by the influence of English education have been usual in recent years in Kerala.

No. 15, പനയൻ which name has been changed to Sambavan or Panchaman.

No. 16, വായാട, a very low caste.

No. 17 is വേലൻ, മണ്ണൻ (വണ്ണൻ). It is the Vela woman who washes very dirty and unclean cloths especially of women of some higher castes. Mannan is from Tamil mannatal, ~~മണ്ണുതടൽ~~, washing.

- No. 18 ought to be PAANEN, പാണൻ.
- No. 19 is പരവൻ. His new name is Bharatavan. Paravan is from paravai, the sea. Most Paravas are sea-coast castes of fishermen and mussel shell calciners.
- No. 20. കറവൻ, may be from കറവ, low status. Some ancient Jaina nuns (ഗുണനാമികൾക്കുറത്തികൾ, കുറത്തിയട്ടികൾ) were known as Kurathi, the feminine form of Kuravan. In this case Kuravan must perhaps be the Tamil form of Sanskrit plural guravah (masters, respectable men).
- No. 21 is കറപ്പ, perhaps derived from Sanskrit guru, master. Descriptions of Kurups and their *kalaris* [fencing schools] are found in many Portuguese and Dutch documents. കരക്കൾ, കറപ്പ and കറവൻ may be from the same Skt. word guru.
- No. 22 is പരിവക്കോളൻ, a caste name derived from the name of an occupation or *metier*. [See Nos. 7 and 24.]
- No. 23 is വാളക്കിത്തലവൻ. See Nos. 1 to 4 above. A caste name derived from a title. (See 7 & 22).
- No. 24 വടയ്ക്കുനായർ. Gerzelim = gingili, sesame (Sesamum Indicum), Marotte [മാരട്ടി], Hydnocarpus, tree, producing an oil seed. (From place name).
- No. 25, കടുപ്പടൻ ?
- No. 26 to 28. ചെട്ടിയാർ, ചെട്ടുത്തടൻ, മാലിയറുത്തടൻ. "Mainato" is ചെറന്നത്തൻ, a caste name for washerman in some places. He is called Pandi (പാണ്ടി), Pandya in some other places. See No. 12.

The author of the MS. wrote from "Angicaimal" i. e. Ernakulam in Cochin.

"In this land is my Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel", says the author, and he does not seem to have had information about castes in North Malabar and Travancore. The caste names and corresponding occupations in one locality are quite different in different parts of Kerala, so that no single investigator can possibly study the castes of Kerala in his lifetime. Such a comprehensive survey and study of Kerala castes has to be undertaken immediately as caste names and *metier* are rapidly changing. The lower classes of Nairs, like Syrian Christians and Ampalavasis, took to English education earlier than other Nairs and Nambudiris, and have more men and women occupying high positions in Government service.

—T. K. J.

Notes by Dr. L. A. Ravi Varma

- No. 10. Heravalem. There is an aboriginal tribe 'Cheruvalan' whose work is making baskets, fences etc. (Malabar Gazetteer).
- No. 12. 'Mahan'. May be 'Mavilons' (മാവിലോൻ), whose occupation and habitat tally with the description.
- No. 25. None of Nair caste who do the work of merchants are known by this or a similar name. If chirague patte really belongs to Nair caste there is only one class ending in 'patten' which is 'katuppattan.' They are not however merchants. Taking into consideration the fact that the author lived at Ernakulam where there was a large section of Konkana people, together with the Konkana-like termination 'patten' one is led to suspect some lower orders of Konkana, whose general occupation is that of merchants in some form or other.

—L. A. R. V.