

PALGHAT TALUK.

By P. Karunakara Menon.

Position.—This is the easternmost Taluk of the District and lies between $10^{\circ} 25'$ and $10^{\circ} 55'$ N. Lat. and between $76^{\circ} 27'$ and $76^{\circ} 55'$ E. Long. It formerly comprised the Taluks of Palghat and Temmalapuram which were amalgamated into one in 1861.

Boundaries.—North, Walluvanad Taluk; east, Coimbatore and Pollachi Taluks in the Coimbatore District and Cochin State; south, the Native State of Cochin; west, the Cochin State and Walluvanad Taluk.

Area.—The Taluk not having been yet fully surveyed the exact area is not known; but, for the purposes of the census of 1881, it was taken to be 613 square miles.

Soil—Topography.—The District not having been surveyed the true nature of the soil too is not known, but speaking in general terms it may be described as black loam. This Taluk is singularly diversified and interesting in its physical aspect, especially towards the hilly tracts along the Coimbatore and Cochin frontiers. The most striking feature in its configuration is the extensive gap historically known by the name of the "Palghat Gap" in the otherwise unbroken great range of the Western Ghats, about 25 miles across and more than 6,000 feet lower than the hills on its north and south and lying on the meridian of $76^{\circ} 45'$ E. and between the parallels of $10^{\circ} 33'$ N. and $10^{\circ} 52'$ N. This remarkable opening with the lofty Nilgiri Hills and the Anamalais on either side, overtopping the ranges by several thousand feet, the numerous projecting off-shoots of the main chain separating the Taluk from the neighbouring Coimbatore District with their heavy forests, extensive ravines and jungles stretching westwards the forest-clad uplands and the gradually succeeding flat rice fields fringed with high palmyra groves and the numerous mountain torrents and small rivers: all combined give an enchantment to the scenery. Almost all these extensive and valuable forests are private property, except the two Government forests known by the names of the "Chenat Nayar" and the "Walayar" Reserves. The former of these two reserve forests is a block of hill forest which originally formed portion of the Chenat Nayar escheat, while the latter comprises the "Varalapadi" and "Pulampara" forests which were purchased by Government some years ago with the special object of supplying the Madras Railway Company with wood-fuel. The Chenat Nayar and the private heavy forests in the Taluk, all contain more or less valuable trees, among others, teak and blackwood; while cardamom, honey, gum, &c., constitute the chief minor produce which is collected in the case of the private forests by the resident jungle tribes and generally bartered in the plains for the necessaries of life. The Government forests are under the charge of a Ranger stationed at Palghat, who is assisted in his work by 7 forest guards. Of the rivers intersecting the Taluk the most important are the Kalpathi (locally called the Nelanadi) the Kannadi and the Kollangod (locally designated the Gayathrinadi) rivers. The first two rivers uniting near Parali take the name of the Ponnani river or *Bharathapula* and the last, viz., the Kollangod river, joins the Ponnani river a little farther on. The Kalpathi river has its source at a place called Chentamarakulam in the hills north of Walayar where the stream forms the boundary between the Malabar and Coimbatore Districts, while the other two are said to rise in the Kollangod bluff or the Malaya mountains being the north-western extremities of the Anamalais.

Climate, Health and Meteorology.—During the dry season the climate is very hot, but during the rains it is pleasant and healthy. From November to February a strong east or land-wind blows almost incessantly through the Palghat Gap which makes the weather very trying. The water supply generally is satisfactory and the health of the people, as a rule, good. The prevailing diseases in the Taluk may be said to be smallpox and fever. The Waiyap and other forests are malarious. Cholera makes its appearance occasionally.

Population.—The census of 1881 revealed a total of 342,454 inhabitants distributed over 56 amsams and dwelling in 60,351 houses. Classified according to religion, there were 306,662 Hindus, 32,330 Muhammadans and 3,462 Christians. The density of the population was per square mile 559 per amsam 6,115 and per house 5—7. The number of houses returned as unoccupied was 12,234. Of the total population the number of males was 165,311 and of females 177,143. The percentage of increase in population, as compared with 1871, was in respect of males 3·82 and in that of females 6·31 or 5·09, of both sexes. The appended statement shows the classification of the people according to their various occupations :—

Professional ..	..	..	5,090
Domestic ..	..	..	1,526
Commercial ..	..	..	7,097
Agricultural ..	..	..	93,841
Industrial ..	..	..	51,477
Independent ..	..	..	183,423
Total ..			342,454

SUB-DIVISIONS OF THE TALUK FOR ADMINISTRATIVE PURPOSES.

Revenue and Magisterial.—The unit of administration is as elsewhere the amsam, of which there are 56 in the Taluk, each being under an Adhikari assisted by a Menon and, except in one or two instances, by two peons. The Adikaris exercise also, as elsewhere, civil powers in respect of petty suits for sums of money not exceeding Rs. 20 and criminal powers in respect of petty cases of theft and assault, arising in their respective amsams. The Tahsildar, assisted by a Deputy Tahsildar to whom are assigned certain specified amsams, has the general revenue charge of the Taluk. The two officers likewise exercise magisterial powers, the Deputy Tahsildar over the area constituting his division and the Tahsildar specially over the remaining portion of the Taluk. The former has his headquarters at Alathur and the latter at Palghat. This Taluk with its adjoining Walluvanad Taluk, forms a separate revenue division designated the "Head Assistant's Division" placed under the charge of a Head Assistant Collector and Magistrate, whose headquarters are at Palghat.

Judicial, Civil.—There are two Munsifs' Courts in the taluk located at Palghat and Alathur respectively, and also a Sub-Judge's Court which is stationed at the former place.

Registration.—For registration purposes the Taluk is divided into 4 sub-districts designated the Palghat, Alathur, Koduvayur and Mankara sub-districts, the Sub-Registrars' offices being located at Palghat, Alathur, Pudunagaram and Parali respectively. The Koduvayur Sub-Registrar exercises also magisterial powers in respect of nuisance, cases arising within the Pudunagaram town.

Police.—For Police administration, the Taluk is divided into two divisions each placed under an Inspector whose headquarters are at Palghat and Alathur respectively.

Railway Stations.—The Madras Railway enters the Taluk at Walayar through the remarkable Palghat Gap of the Western Ghats. Its length in the Taluk is about 30 miles. The stations are as follow :—

1. *Walayar*—15½ miles east of Palghat.

2. *Congecode*—8½ miles do. do.

3. *Palghat*.—This place is specially noted for trade in timber which from the Mannarghat forests, the Chenat Nayar, Government Reserve and the adjoining private forests, is largely brought to the depots belonging to Government and private merchants and then exported by rail to various parts of the other districts in the Presidency, and also to other places.

4. *Parali*.—5½ miles west of Palghat. There is a Sub-Registrar's office and a distillery here, and about 3 miles from the place there is a Police station and also an estate, called the *Mankara Nayar* estate under the Court of Wards, which was assumed charge of on 3rd December 1877.

IMPORTANT TOWNS AND VILLAGES.

Palghat.—[Pala + kadu, a jungle of pala (*echites scholaris*) trees]—is the chief inland town in the District and a Municipality, and in respect of population stands next to the Calicut town in the district and 14th out of a total number of 227 towns as defined by the last census in the Madras Presidency. The business part of the town lies about 3 miles south of the Olavakod or Palghat-Railway Station and this, with its suburbs comprising the Municipality, covers an area of more than 9 miles and includes portions of Koppam, Puthur, Yakkara, Akathethara, Kavalpad, Vadakunthara and Kannadi amsams. According to the last census, the total population of the place is 36,339 classified into 30,424 Hindus, 4,854 Muhammadans and 1,061 Christians. The male population returned is 17,673 and the female 18,666. The following statement compares houses, population and municipal revenue of the place during the 10 years previous to the last census :—

—	Houses.	Population.	Revenue.
1871	5,561	30,752	17,507
1881	6,081	36,339	15,725
Increase or decrease	520	5,587	1,782

On the whole the town has an interesting appearance. Next to the big bazaar (also called *Chathurangapetta*) referred to, the most busy division of the place is *Sultanpetta*. Through this passes the main thoroughfare, by the side or in the vicinity of which are situated the chief public buildings of the place, viz., the Municipal school, the District Munsif's Court, the Head Assistant Collector's dwelling house and his office, the Sub-Judge's Court, the Municipal and Post office, the Roman Catholic Church, the

Municipal hospital with its beautifully laid out garden, and the Protestant Church. Here is also situated an old massive fort built of granite slabs and laterite pieces wherein are located the Taluk Cutcheri, the Sub-Registrar's office and the Police station. In-patients as well as out-patients are largely treated in the hospital referred to, the total number of beds available for in-patients being 16 ; 8 for males and 8 for females. There is also an Assistant Police Superintendent's office here. The trade is chiefly in tobacco, foodgrains, particularly, the dry grains, oil of all sorts, and various kinds of cloths. Timber is largely exported by rail. The place is specially famous for trade in *Pullupaya* (grass mats), generally known by the name of *Palghat mats* and may also be said to be the centre of tobacco trade in the District. The Brahman community called *Pattars* almost all belong to this Taluk. There are no less than 19 separate settlements or gramams of this community within the Municipal limits. They are as follow :—

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Kalpathi. | 11. Sekaripuram. |
| 2. Palaya Kalpathi. | 12. Ramanadhapuram. |
| 3. Chathapuram. | 13. Tarakad. |
| 4. Govindarajapuram. | 14. Vatakkumthara. |
| 5. Vaidyanadhapuram. | 15. Nurni. |
| 6. Komarapuram. | 16. Nellisberi. |
| 7. Lakshminarayanapuram. | 17. Thondikulam. |
| 8. Mukka. | 18. Pallipram. |
| 9. Chokkanadhapuram. | 19. Tirunilayi. |
| 10. Puttamkurshi. | |

Of the numerous Hindu temples attached to these gramams, the most important is the *Kalpathi Siva* temple. A car festival lasting, for three days, is annually celebrated here in November, which gathers together a large crowd of people belonging not only to the various parts of this District but also to the neighbouring Cochin State and Coimbatore District. Besides this, there are also two places deserving notice, one within the municipal limits and the other in the neighbouring Elappalli amsam, both of which are held in high estimation and largely resorted to by the people. The so-called holy places are respectively named *Mukka* and *Ramasara thirdham*. The former is the place where the three mountain streams called the Palayar, Malayar and Walayar unite and take the name of the Kalpathi river ; while the latter is popularly believed to have been created by Rama, the hero of Ramayana, at the instance of his brother Lakshmanan in the days of their temporary retirement to the jungles for the purpose of bathing in the Ganges water.

Alathur—[alam + oor, meaning the city of alam trees, (ഓല) *Dalbergia* used to make mortar], the headquarters of the Deputy Tahsildar of Alathur, is an important village situated in Kattusseri amsam about 13 miles from Palghat on the road from there to the Cochin frontier via Vadakkancheri. The place contains a District Munsif's Court, a Sub-Registrar's office, a Police station, a Post office, and a Middle class school. There is also a small bazaar and a travellers' bungalow here. In the vicinity of the place lies the " Alathur " Hill or " Velumalai," one of the Trigonometrical Survey stations in the District, it contains a somewhat large cave and a natural spring higher up, which is never dry. There is also a ruined Hindu temple here. It is popularly believed that the cave was formerly inhabited. The existence of portions of walls dividing the cave into compartments of hearths and a small mill, all seem to

support this tradition. There is a mosque and a Roman Catholic Church here. They are tiled buildings and 140 and 107 feet in extent respectively. In the adjoining Vatakkethara amsam there is a Syrian Christian Church known by the name of the *Melarkott Pulli*. This too is a tiled building about 210 feet in extent. The total population of the amsam is 3,517 of whom no less than 2,883 are Hindus. Of the remainder, 556 are Muhammadans and the rest Christians.

Vadakkancheri—[vadakku + cheri, means the northern village that is on the northern side of the hill-ranges separating the Taluk from the adjoining Cochin State]—is one of the chief Muhammadan villages in the Taluk, situated in the amsam of the same name about 7 miles south-west of Alathur. The amsam is hill-bound on its south and west. There is a travellers' bungalow and a Police station here. There is also a bazaar which is chiefly inhabited by Muhammadans who have a mosque about 102 feet in extent. The building is tiled. The place contains also a small Roman Catholic church. This and the adjoining Kannanur kinds. Trade in the minor produce of the hills and also in timber is largely carried on here. An important Hindu temple named "*Tirunara*" is situated in the vicinity. This is held to be of great antiquity, and the tank or spring popularly known by the name of *Brahmakundam* attached to the temple is held in great reverence by the people, believing it to be as the name implies, a place where "*Brahma*" performed *yagam* or sacrifice. A handful of earth taken from the bed of this sacred tank is believed to be essential to the performance of sacrifices by Nambutiri Brahmans. The total population of the amsam is 11,496, classified into 9,141 Hindus, 1,611 Muhammadans and 744 Christians.

- **Kollangod**—is an important village in Padinharathara amsam, situated about 12 miles south of Palghat. Hindus are the predominating race in the amsam, who represent 3,978 or 97 per cent out of a total population of 4,104; of the remaining 125 are Muhammadans and 1 Christian. The place contains a Police station and a travellers' bungalow and was formerly noted as being the seat of a petty chieftain named the *Venganatt Nambidi*, who reigned in these parts of the Taluk before the administration of the district passed into British hands. The present representatives of this ancient family have their residence here. There is an important Hindu temple named the *Kachankurushi Temple* here, dedicated to Vishnu. It is 264 feet in length and 180 in breadth. The *Srikovil* and the *Nalambalam* are both tiled, and the *mandapam* and the surrounding wall of the *Srikovil* painted all over with figures representing the various incarnations of *Vishnu*. As a preliminary step to the performance of a *yagam* or sacrifice by any Nambutiri Brahman in the district, it is said that the intended sacrificer ought to come first to this temple and receive from the hands of the *Venganatt Nambidi*, the moon-plant (*cyanchum acidum*), the black wood (*mimosa catechu*) and the skin of a black antelope all of which are required for the purpose. Six and three miles respectively from this temple on the hills (*Tenmala*), separating the Taluk from the neighbouring Cochin State, there are two natural springs called the *Govinda-thirdham* and the *Sithakundu*. Both of these are held in veneration and resorted to by the people. The origin of the former sacred spring is popularly ascribed to *Devendra* while in respect of the latter the tradition current is that it was created by *Sita*, wife of *Rama*, the hero of *Ramayana*,

for the purpose of her bathing in *Ganga*, the water of the Ganges, during the time of their sojourn in those parts in the days of their retirement to the jungle for holy purposes.

Pudunagaram.—[Pudu+nagaram, means new town]—is the most important and thickly inhabited Muhammadan village in the Taluk. It is situated in Koduvayur amsam about 6 miles south of Palghat. In respect of total population this amsam stands next to only the Palghat municipality while in that of Muhammadan population alone it ranks first in the Taluk. The total population is 14,030, classified as follows :—Hindus 8,855, Muhammadans 5,149 and Christians 26. The place contains a Police station and also a *Jamath mosque* (Jama musjed). It is a tiled building 240 feet in length and 180 in breadth. The Koduvayur Sub-Registrar's office is located here. He is invested with magisterial powers to try petty cases of nuisance occurring in the village.

Palathulli.—is a village in the amsam of the same name, situated about 8 miles south-east of Palghat. It is chiefly inhabited by Chettis. The place is one of the chief centres of cattle trade in the District. The cattle are exported from the adjoining Coimbatore District, especially from the Pollachi weekly market. The amsam contains a total of 5,861 inhabitants, of whom 5,293 are Hindus, 561 Muhammadans and 7 Christians.

Hindu temples.—The most important Hindu temples in the Taluk are—

1. *Kallekkulam* alias *Emur Bhagavathi temple*.—In Akathethara amsam. Dedicated to *Jaladurgha*. The roof of the Srikovil is covered with copper sheeting. The other portions are tiled. The temple is 132 × 114 feet in extent.

2. *Kalpathi*.—In Puthur amsam. Dedicated to *Siva*. The Srikovil is covered with copper sheeting. The other buildings are tiled. The temple is 288 × 120 feet in extent.

3. *Madappallikavu*.—In Yakkara amsam. Dedicated to *Vana-durga*. Tiled. 156 × 138 feet in extent.

4. *Karhamkurussi*.—In Padinharathara amsam. Dedicated to *Vishnu*. Tiled. 264 × 180 feet in extent.

5. *Pallavur* or *Tripallavur*.—In Pallavur amsam. Dedicated to *Siva*. Tiled. 500 feet in extent.

6. *Tripalur*.—In Vateketara amsam. Dedicated to *Siva*. Tiled. 532 feet in extent.

7. *Kongad*.—In Kongad amsam. Dedicated to *Bhagavathi*. Tiled. 192 × 150 feet in extent.

8. *Tirunara*.—In Vadakkancheri amsam. Dedicated to *Siva* and *Vishnu*. Partly tiled and partly thatched. 250 feet in extent.

9. *Tiruvalathur*.—In Tiruvalathur amsam. Dedicated to *Durgha*. The Srikovil is covered with copper sheeting. The other buildings are tiled. 366 × 330 feet in extent.

10. *Kotamba*.—In Tiruvalathur amsam. Dedicated to *Subraman-yan*. Terraced roof. 132 × 126 feet in extent.

Fairs and Festivals.—Some of the most important festivals celebrated and the fairs held on such occasions in the Taluk are shown below :—

Names of fairs and festivals.	Month held.	Number of days lasting.	Number of persons attending.
1 Kalpathi car festival	November ..	3	
2 Tiruvalathur utsavam	November and December.	9	
3 Kotamba car festival	January and February.	3	
4 Kongad puram festival	March and April.	8	
5 Thachamkurushi utsavam	April and May.	10	
6 Koduvayur car festival	December and January.	2	
7 Pudukulangara kavu vela	March and April.	1	About 7,000
8 Parakkatt kavu alias Kavasseri puram.	Do.	1	About 12,000
9 Tripahur navarathri utsavam ..	September and October.	9	

Travellers' Bungalows.—There are four travellers' bungalows in the Taluk which are named below :—

1. Palghat, 3 miles from the Olavakod Railway Station.
2. Alathur, 13 miles from Palghat.
3. Vadakkancheri, 20 miles from Palghat.
4. Kollangod, 12 miles from Palghat.

Weekly Markets.—The trade of the Taluk is carried on by means of permanent markets in the Palghat town and a few other places and of weekly markets, the most important of which are as follow :—

1. Palathulli in Palathulli amsam held on Sundays.
2. Kongad in Kongad do. „ Mondays.
3. Alathur in Kattisseri do. „ Wednesdays.
4. Vadakkancheri in Vaddakkancheri } „ Thursdays.
5. Para }
6. Palghat „ Fridays.

The chief articles of export are the various kinds of foodgrains, tobacco, Palghat mats and various kinds of coarse cloths manufactured in Vadakkancheri and certain other parts of the Taluk, while the chief articles of import are tobacco and various kinds of cloths, spices and cattle. The Palathulli market may be said to be the chief centre of cattle trade in the District, while the Kongad market is also noted for the same.

Trigonometrical Survey Stations.—There are two Trigonometrical Survey stations in the taluk. They are—

	Name.	Latitude.	Longitude.
1	Kurachimala S. ..	10° 47' 10.15"	76° 39' 29.61"
2	Alathur H. S. ..	10° 37' 30.07"	76° 34' 28.80"

PALGHAT FORESTS.

By Rhodes Morgan, Esq., District Forest Officer.

There are four tracts of forests which have been under the management of the Forest Department in the Palghat Range since 1883. The most important of these is the Chenat Nayar forest, which escheated in the early years of the century to Government. The area of this forest is 15,205 acres, of which 12,253 acres are forest, and the balance, 2,952 acres, grass land and sheet-rock. These forests are situated in a rocky range of hills connected with the Western Ghats, which rise to a height of 5,000 feet (Elival peak). On the lower slopes, *i.e.*, up to 1,000 feet elevation, the forests are deciduous, above that, evergreen. The principal trees in the lower zone of deciduous forest are teak (almost exterminated), rose-wood, venghay, vontek, irul, etc. The evergreen forests contain white and red cedar, iynee, poonspar, ironwood, etc.

The lower slopes are very malarious, but the open grass lands higher up are above fever range.

There is a forest rest-house on Karimala, at an elevation of about 4,000 feet and another, at the base, near Dhoni. The forests are worked on the "Jardinage" or selection-felling system, the only one feasible in a forest where any felling of blocks might result in serious landslips, and would end in the ruin of the forest. There is very little soil on these hills, which are composed of solid gneiss.

A small quantity of timber is now removed annually, not exceeding 15,000 cubic feet, the forest having been very recklessly worked in former years, and the more valuable trees almost exterminated. This forest has been surveyed and demarcated with cairns of stones and posts.

The second forest is situated at Walayar on the line of rail. The area of this forest is 3,017 acres, of which 2,600 acres is productive, the rest being barren rock. The forest has been divided into two blocks and ten compartments, and each compartment further sub-divided into sub-compartments. It is worked for fuel for the supply of the railway, and teak poles. The "coupes" are worked on a rotation of ten years, the produce being sold to contractors. A working scheme of this forest has been prepared. It is fenced in, and fire protected annually, and cattle are rigidly excluded. There is a special forest pound for stray cattle.

The remaining two forests are situated in the Walluvanad taluk. They are known as the Panakadan forest in the Tiruvallam division and the Silent valley. The first of these is situated on a small rocky hill of about 1,000 acres in extent. The trees in it are deciduous and of average growth, the villagers in the neighbourhood having been in the habit of pollarding the trees for manure for their paddy fields. In 1883, this was put a stop to and a forest guard appointed to look after this