Chapter 4

ASHTAVAIDYAS OF KERALA:
A SOCIOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL OVERVIEW

Kerala has been through the ages an integral part of the Indian sub-continent. Its history is a part of the general history of India and its culture is one of the major streams that have enriched the composite culture of the country. At the same time, Kerala has the distinction of being an independent geographical and political entity from very early days. Its unique geographical position and peculiar physical features have invested Kerala with a distinct identity. The land of Kerala comprises a narrow coastal strip in the south-western part of the Indian peninsula, bounded by the Western Ghats on the east and the Arabian Sea on the west. Paradoxical as it might seem, this geographical position has helped to ensure, to some extent, its political and cultural isolation from the rest of the country and facilitated its extensive and active contacts with the countries of the outside world.¹

Kerala lies at a length of 360 miles in north–south direction, along the coastal line, between 80 18’ and 120 48’ North latitude and between 740 52’ and 770 24’ East longitude. It has a total area of 15,002 sq. miles (38,855sq.km). The territory of the state can broadly be divided into three

natural divisions, viz., the highland, the mid land and the lowland. The Western Ghats, which range along the eastern border, constitute the highland. It is covered by thick forests in its upper ranges while in the lower ranges the forests are interspersed with plantations. The lowland stretches along the coastal plain on the western side of the state. The soil in this region is sandy. The coconut tree (kalpavriksha) grows luxuriantly in this area and dominates the landscape. Paddy is also extensively cultivated here. Sand-witched between the 'lowland' and the 'highland', is the geographic formation called 'midland'. The region is predominantly lateritic in its soil texture and the topographical alignment is undulating. Though the river valleys are broken intermittently by isolated hillocks, plains in some cases even lead upto the forest-clad uplands.

The region is rich in agricultural production. Coconut, paddy, tapioca, spices and cashew are the most important crops. On the higher elevations of the

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2 Chattopadhyay, S. ' Land reforms in Kerala: An Overview' in G R Ravindra Kumar and N Subhash (eds), CESS Silver Jubilee Compendium: Earth System Science and Natural Resources Management, Centre for Earth Science Studies, 2004, Thiruvananthapuram, pp 211-228, Chattopadhyay, S and Mahamaya Chattopadhyay, Terrain Analysis of Kerala: Concept, Method and Application, Technical Monograph No.1/95,STEC, Trivandrum, (1995) Govt. of Kerala. An early rendition of these topographic/geographic divisions of the terrain along with their corresponding living patterns can be traced from the Tamil compositions belonging to the Sangham Genre. The different environmental settings were organized into Five Ecotypes (Ainthinai). The forest regions and pastures were called Kurinji and Mullai respectively. The uncultivable and barren regions were pala or palai, the cultivated wetland regions were recognized as Marutham lands and the coastal tract of fisheries identified as Neythal. See for instance, Sivathamby, Early South Indian Society and Economy: The Tinai Concept, Social Scientist, Vol. 3, No. 5 (Dec., 1974), pp. 20-37, Rajan Gurukkal. Towards the Voice of Dissent: Trajectory of Ideological Transformation in Early South India, Social Scientist, Vol. 21, No. 1/2 (Jan. - Feb., 1993), pp. 2-22

Ghats there are extensive tea and cardamom plantations while pepper, rubber, ginger and turmeric flourish in the lower elevations\textsuperscript{4}

\textbf{Geographical position and Topographical alignment}

The geographical position of Kerala has its own uniqueness and its landscape has its own beauty. In the poetic language of Mahakavi Vallathol, “Mother Kerala sleeps with head on the lap of the Sahyadri clad in green” and “her feet pillowed on the crystal ocean-sand with Kumari at one end and the Lord of Gokarna on the other\textsuperscript{5}”. This peculiar geographical location of Kerala has considerably influenced the course of its history and culture. This region, from the dawn of its very ‘history’ had enjoyed a kind of insularity, which has rendered it immunity from the grand political convulsions operating at the level of Indian Subcontinent. The region of Kerala seldom felt a comprehensive impact of foreign invasions—save the invading Mysorians of late 18\textsuperscript{th} century— as its north Indian counterparts where depredations across the borders were taking place at regular intervals. The spread of Pan-Indian ideological currents into Kerala such as, Brahmanism, Buddhism and Jainism, as the historical scholarship on South India attests, was a much slow process of incorporation and adaptation\textsuperscript{6}.

\textsuperscript{4} Menon, \textit{A Survey of Kerala History}, p.2
\textsuperscript{5} Menon, \textit{A Survey of Kerala History}, p.2
Kerala was also able to evolve its own way of life and social institutions unhampered by excessive interference from outside. This factor has helped in the growth of peculiar social institutions like *Marumakkathayam* or the matrilineal inheritance\(^7\) and polyandry\(^8\) etc. Even, the communities of Brahmans and the Muslims who as a rule follow the *Makkathayam* or partrilineal inheritance within the sub-continental context have *Marumakkathayis* among them. The *Namboothiris* of Payyannur Gramam and the Mappilas of North Malabar invited much ethnographic attention due to this particularity\(^9\). Kerala also has its own distinctive styles of art and architecture which are in many respects different, even from those in other parts of South India\(^10\). Art forms, such as *Kathakali*, *Chakiar Kuthu*, *Ottam Tullal* and *Mohini Attam* were developed in Kerala in this atmosphere of ‘splendid isolation’\(^11\)

The evolution of the language and culture of Kerala has also been influenced by the contacts with the Tamil and Kannada regions. The southern dialect of Malayalam shows traces of Tamil influence while the northern dialect bears a Kannada influence. Similarly, the customs and manners of the

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\(^8\) A Aiyappan, Fraternal Polyandry in Malabar, Vol. 15, 1935, pp 111-112


\(^11\) Sreedhara Menon, op. cit, p 5
people in the ‘extreme-south’ and in the ‘extreme-north’ show influences from the adjoining cultural-regions. The traces of Pallava, Chalukya and Vijayanagar styles may be seen in the temple architecture in the ‘High Ranges’ and some of the adjoining areas in Idukki district\textsuperscript{12}. Several temples dedicated to Madurai Minakshi may be seen here. The Minachil taluk has itself derived its name from Goddess Minakshi, popularly called Minachi in Tamil Nadu. In fact, Kerala history embraces within its scope a study of the relations of Kerala with such inter-state border districts as Kanyakumari, Tirunelveli, Madurai, Coimbatore, Coorg, Mysore and South-Canara in their proper historical/sociological perspective.

Recent reviews of Francis Zimmerman’s path-breaking book, and the blurbs on its dust jacket, are so laudatory that it is time to reflect in some depth on its limitations and the theoretical and methodological issues it raises for the study of systems of Hindu thought.\textsuperscript{13} F. Zimmerman, a student of Louis Dumont, recognizes that the dominant pattern of Hindu thought is the opposition between ‘the pure’ and ‘the impure’ that in turn generates a hierarchy. But, he says, there is another key moment, an ecological theme in Hindu medicine that seems to contradict with the dominant one.\textsuperscript{14} This is the idea; found in the ancient Hindu medical texts, that the classification of the land and its fauna are systemically related to body function, disease classification, and therapeutics.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{12} H. Sankar. \textit{An Architectural Survey of Temples of Kerala}, Archeological Survey of India, 1970
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
This ecological theme stretches from the borders of deserts to those of monsoon forests. Since the spread entails basic structural contrast between anupa, the region of water and jangala, the dry climate that of jangala is so vast, we must say, as Zimmerman, “pick out one primary sense of dry lands with varying extensions: pseudo steppes, brakes, savannahs, sparse forests”. Thus Zimmerman in effect superimposes the classical formulations of jangala and anupa on a modern ecological map. His argument constantly shuttles between the “ecological” ideas of ancient Ayurvedic thinkers (Susruta, Caraka, and Vagbhata) and those of modern European geographers and ecologists.

Parasurama Tradition

An examination of Parasurama legend on the origin of Kerala would also help us to understand some of the basic facts relating to the geography of ancient Kerala. According to this legend, the land of Kerala was a gift of Arabian Sea to Parasurama, one of the ten incarnations (avatars) of Lord Vishnu. The legend states that Parasurama threw his parasu or axe across the sea from Gokarnam to Kanyakumari and water receded upto the spot where it fell. The tract of territory so thrown up is said to have constituted the land of Kerala, otherwise called Bhargavakshetram or Parasuramakshetram. It should be stated that there is very little factual basis for the ‘Parasurama Tradition’

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17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
19 Herman Gundert (ed), Keralolpatti: The Origin of Malabar, Basel Mission Book and Tract Depository, Mangalore, 1890
that Parasurama himself being considered a mythological hero. The legend seems to have been concocted at a certain stage by interested parties with a view to popularizing the theory of Brahmin predominance. There are references to the legend of Parasuram's creation of Kerala from the sea in Kalidasa's Raghuvamsa (Chapter IV Verse 53) and in the Tiruvalangadu Copper plates of Rajendra Chola. It was handed down from generation to generation and finally enshrined in the Keralolpathi, the Malayalam work of doubtful historical value compiled sometime in the 18th and 19th century.

Whatever be its historical validity, the Parasurama legend embodies some geological/topographical awareness pertaining to ancient Kerala. Though geography is, as K.M. Panikkar has observed, "the most permanent and invariable factor of history", it is an accepted fact that the geographical features of a country do not themselves remain stationary in all ages. The consensus among scholars is that a substantial portion of Kerala must have been under water during early phases of human inhabitation or fluio-marine in origin. Arabian Sea itself has extended right up to the foot of the Western Ghats. The coastal-belt of the Alleppey district is believed to have been submerged under water in the ancient past or at least it might have constituted an extensive swamp interspersed with sand-banks and mud-banks here and there. The existence of marine fossils including coral-reefs at Vazhapalli near Changanachery is cited as an evidence in support of the contention that the

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20 Sreedhara Menon, p 5
21 Sreedhara Menon, 11
tract in question might have been at one time under the sea$^{24}$. The land might have been thrown up from the sea because of the operation of volcanic or seismological factors. Geologists pointed out that the numerous rivers, which take their course from the Western Ghats, might have also brought down in their course large quantities of silt and mud while ocean currents might have deposited immense quantities of sand on the shore$^{25}$. A vast stretch of land area might have thus come into existence by the steady accumulation of silt and sand. Perhaps, the Parasurama legend regarding the creation of Kerala from out of the sea highlights this geographical truth$^{26}$.

**Origin of the names “Kerala” and “Malabar”**

An examination of some of the theories regarding the origin of the names “Kerala” and “Malabar” is also relevant to our study of the geographical factor in relation to Kerala history. The coastal belt lying between the Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea in Peninsular India was designated as “Kerala” in Sanskrit literature, even from very ancient times. All early writers on Kerala have used the words Kerala and Chera almost as synonyms$^{27}$. An attempt is made by some scholars to trace the etymology of the term ‘Kerala’ from the word *kera* (coconut) which is one of the characteristic products of the Western-Coast. However, all writers do not share this view: Dr: Gundert, the author of the monumental Malayalam lexicon, observes that the word “*keram*” is “the

$^{24}$ Panikkar, K.M, op cit, p.56  
$^{25}$ A. Sreedhara Menon, p.12  
$^{26}$ ibid  
$^{27}$ Ibid
Canarese pronunciation” of the word “cheram” and he describes “Keralam” as “Cheram”- the country between Gokarnam and Cumari. The word ‘charal’ in Tamil means the declivity of a hill or a mountain-slope and according to some writers the word must have got itself corrupted in course of time into ‘cheral’, giving its name to Kerala or Chera country, this theory emphasizes the mountainous character of Kerala as the basis of the origin of its name. However, the derivation of the name “Chera” or “Kerala” from ‘Charal’ is a little far-fetched. In ancient works, the land is invariably referred to as the Chera country and the ruler of the land as the Chera. There is also an opinion that the word Keralam (Cheralam) made of the two words Cher (sandy/marshy) and alam (region) and that it literally means the slushy land. However, a different interpretation is also possible, since the word cher or cherna has the meaning as ‘the added’, and hence, Cheralam (along with its Sanskritised version ‘Keralam) means the land, which was added on (to the already existing mountainous or hilly country). The above derivation would make the land of Kerala a reclamation or addition to the land from the sea, lending support to the geological interpretation given to the Parasurama tradition.

The land of Kerala is also alternatively known as “Malabar”. Even from the time of Cosmas Indicopleustus (6th century A.D), the Kerala Coast is referred to as Male by Arab navigators. Alibiruni (973-1048 A.D) is perhaps

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31 Ibid
32 Ibid.
the first Arab writer to call the country Malabar. Arab writers to describe the land however, indiscriminately use the names Malibar, Manibar, Mulibar and Munibar. The name is reminiscent of the word “Malanadu” which literally means “the hill country”. According to Logan the name, Malabar is of semi-foreign origin. It is suggested that Malabar is a compound of two syllables, viz., mala and bar, the former a Dravidian word meaning hill or mountain and the latter either the Arabo-Persian word barr which means country or the Arabo-Persian word barr which means continent. However, it may be pointed out that the term “Malabar” need not necessarily be of semi-foreign origin. As the country was known as “Malanadu” in medieval Tamil and early Malayalam, the name Malabar could well be a corruption of the alternative word “Malavaram” which means “the hilly country”. Whether the origin of the word is semi-foreign or fully indigenous, there is no doubt whatsoever that Malabar has taken its name from the hilly or mountainous character of the country.

Ayurveda in Kerala

To trace the history of Ayurveda in Kerala from the remote past, we need to have a clear picture of the social life of Kerala in the early days. However, our knowledge of that period is fragmentary and confined mainly to semi-legendary accounts. Systematic study of the past through the material

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33 A. Sreedhara Menon, p.13.
34 Logan, Malabar, op. cit, p 1
35 Logan, ibid, Sreedhara Menon, p13
evidence is a recent development. It would be convenient to study the history of Ayurveda in Kerala in three stages viz pre-Sanskrit, Sanskrit and Modern periods. The word ‘Ayurveda’ denotes in this context the system of medicine described in the classical texts like Caraka Samhityha and Susruta Samhityha. This naturally reached Kerala with the advent of Sanskrit or by the Sanskrit influence among Keralites. However, some features of Ayurveda in Kerala, i.e., medicinal species, methods of treatments and peculiarities of advancement etc. show certain characteristics very different from that of classical treatises.

There is reason to believe that some indigenous system of healing prevailed here before the advent of Sanskrit and Ayurvedic works. This system contributed much to the development of Ayurveda in Kerala.

Thus the aforesaid division of the history of Ayurvedic practices in Kerala is justifiable since each stage represent the particular traits of diagnosis and treatment.

The Ancient Period

Research is on, regarding the original inhabitants of Kerala, the rich flora and fauna and on the life of aborigines which is capable of providing valuable clues of the life of pre-historic people. The layout of land was not as it is of today; some scholars hold the view that this part of south India was linked to the African continent by some group of islands. There is a view that the

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37 N.V Krishnankutty Varier, op cit, p.305
38 ibid
coconut tree might have come to Kerala from Pacific island. The life of the aborigines of those periods is being studied. It is believed that at one stage the Dravidians conquered them. The struggle of a leader to conquer, and the use of an axe to subjugate the natural forces lay dormant in the unconscious mind of the society, which later manifested in the myth of Parasurama. The 'terminating Rama with the axe (parasu)' represents setting up of new villages, commencement of an 'ordained society' and the customs of the Brahmin predominance. This could be the icon of the new culture and of new modes of dominance. The natural layout of Kerala had warded off the possibilities of major interventions from outside through land. These circumstances impelled it to make relations with the distant regions by sea-route and fight against nature for its own existence. From ancient days onwards, the early habitants had established contacts with places like Egypt, Arabia, and Iran etc., by the means of water transport. The roadsteads on the western coast were familiar in trans-oceanic shipping as favorable 'ports of call'. These peculiar set up was responsible for the different customs, habits and culture of this state. Kerala has been liberal to different cultures and religions than any other regions of India. Though not all these developments were discrete from the common

40 N.V Krishnankutty Varier, op cit, p.305
cultural stream of India, it reminds the diverse experiences and connections that influence the civilizations of Kerala.

There are divergent opinions regarding the time of the beginning of Sanskrit influence in Kerala. According to some, most powerful and widespread upsurge of Sanskrit must have been during the fifth to seventh centuries; but there are evidences to show that these influences began much earlier. A general view is that Malayalam and Tamil are cognates tracing their origin to a common source\textsuperscript{42}. The land from Tirupati to Kanyakumari was once known as Centamilnatu. There had been interaction between the Aryan and Dravidian civilization even before the inception of Centamil literature\textsuperscript{43}. Ullur S. Paramesvara Iyer enlists the Sanskrit terms like \textit{deva}, \textit{devi}, \textit{kala}, \textit{loka}, \textit{bhuta}, \textit{yama}, \textit{varuna}, etc crept into Centamil prior to two thousand years; so also Sanskrit adopted the Dravidian terms like \textit{atavi}, \textit{katu}, \textit{katti}, \textit{kunda}, \textit{sava}, \textit{chaya}, \textit{pattanam}, etc to its vocabulary\textsuperscript{44}. He continues that the Ceras, though belonged to the Ksatriya caste, were not intolerant to Buddhism and Jainism\textsuperscript{45}. According to Vatakkanur Rajaarajavarman, Sanskrit education had exerted its influence in the South more than four thousand years ago\textsuperscript{46}.

An examination of the societal structure, family organization, customs, modes of worship and other characteristics reveals the inclination of the people

\textsuperscript{42} \textit{History of Ayurveda} N.V.Krishnaankutty Varier, p.307
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{44} Uloor S.Paramesvara Iyer, \textit{Kerala Sahitya Caritram}, vol &II, University of Kerala, 1970.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{46} N.V. Krishnaankutty Varier, p.307, Vatakkanur Raja Raja Varma ascribes the authorship of Matangalila to Tirumangalattu Nilakanthan Moss of Trpranotu. Ullur says it is Tirumangalattu Nilakanthan Nampisan; and according to Kotunnllur Kunnukuttan Tampuran, its author is a scholar from Perumanam village.
of Kerala towards pre-Aryan traditions\textsuperscript{47}. The overseas connection the people of Kerala had in the olden days is well known. Hence, when the Aryan civilization came to this land, there already existed a civilization that was capable enough not only in absorbing the new ones but also in contributing to its enrichment. It would be quite reasonable to think that prior to the propagation of Sanskrit Ayurvedic works in Kerala; there had already existed a more or less developed system of treatment. The Ayurvedic system and Sanskrit literary works that came later reformed this system and gave it a new form and content\textsuperscript{48}.

The herbal remedies, mode of treatments and certain formulations that are popular among the physicians of Kerala (like the treatment modalities for toxicity, smallpox, etc.) are the indications of a well-developed medical system that was in existence. There are various remedies in the Kerala formulations perhaps that cannot be traced in the treatises of Caraka, Susruta, and Vagbhata\textsuperscript{49}. Though references can be seen in Ayurvedic texts, many special methods had developed with particular care and importance. The Sahasrayoga, one of the Ayurvedic treatises popular in Kerala, is an example\textsuperscript{50}. The physicians and families use this as a treasure of household remedies. Formulations like \textit{Kasturyadigulika, Gorocanadigulika, Konpacadigulika, Dhanvantaramgulika, Ilanirkuzhampū} etc. are not found their place in classical texts\textsuperscript{51}.

\textsuperscript{47} N.V. Krishnaankutty Varier, p.307
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid. p.308
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.
The peculiarities of the physicians of Kerala can be traced in the special preparations and doses they use to prescribe for *sannipata* (a contagious fever with fits) and for toxicological treatment. Remedies found everywhere in the herbaceous greenery of Kerala such as *karalayam, mukkuti, tumpa*, etc. enjoy wide popularity only among the keralites. The coconut is familiar in the North and its properties are described in the Sanskrit works. However, the coconut milk and tender coconut water are used in so many *Keraliya* medicinal preparations. *Ilanirkuzhampu* is an example. All the parts of coconut tree—the midrib of leaf blade, fronds, roots, fibers of husk, shell, etc. are used as medicines. *Verukinpuzhu* (semen of civet cat) is an ingredient that could be seen only in the Kerala formulations. Many remedies like this can be identified as different from that of the traditional pan-Indian formulations on Ayurveda. Many formulations in pediatrics are unique to Kerala; so are the formulations like *Karuttagulika, Marmagulika*, etc. The treatment procedures such as *dhara, navarakkizhi, pizhicciU, talam, talapoticcil*, etc, have been widely accepted as the systematized Keraliya methods of treatment. Let us consider the making and usage of *dharapatti* for such treatments as a contribution of Kerala to the traditional Indian medical system.

The physicians were drawn from different strata of society. Medical practice never remained a monopoly of any class/ caste. Along with the Brahmin Ashtavaidyas who were entitled to be instructed in Vedas, many

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52 Interview conducted with Brahmadattan Namboothiri, Ollannur Mana, Thrissur, April 23rd, 2006.
53 Ibid.
54 N.V.Krishnaankutty Varier, p.308
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid.

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traditional Ezhava families studied Sanskrit works and practiced the science down the generations\textsuperscript{59}. The title Vaidya found added too many of their cognomen\textsuperscript{60}. The social nature of the medical profession prior to the arrival of Sanskrit can be gauged from the enormity of depressed classes and families who followed the medical practices as their traditional occupational profile\textsuperscript{61}. In addition, there were families that had specialized in particular aspects of nursing and followed it as their occupation, though without any formal qualifications. For instance, velan and mannan were the social classes that practiced medicine, midwifery as their profession. The castes panikkan and ganakan were skillful in pediatrics, and kuruppans were experts in uzhicil (massage) and marmacikitsa\textsuperscript{62}. There are families that followed pediatrics, ophthalmology, toxicology, demonology, etc. as their traditional profession. There were families that followed only a particular nostrum useful in peculiar ailments, cuts, fractures, etc. as their inherited ingenuity. All these facts indicate that there was a widespread social foundation for medical practice in Kerala prior to the advent of Sanskrit\textsuperscript{63}.

In ancient time, it can be seen that medical science developed together with ‘mantric methods’ in all societies. This period shows man’s endeavor to control and take advantage of any unusual biological or natural phenomenon by power of will or by propitiation. Many human societies were totemestic. They considered plants and animals as their ancestors; the tradition of worshipping

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid. Naryana Guru’s maternal uncle, Krishnan Vaidyar, was an ayurvedic physician.
\textsuperscript{61} N.V.Krishnaankutty Varier, p.309
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid.
such plants and animals continues to this day. The effort to control such unusual phenomenon and beings, naturally has led to the study and classification of their characteristics features. Many herbal remedies are associated and honored with religious beliefs and customs. *Palakkompezhunnallikkal*—a ceremonial reception with the branch of a *pala* tree (Alstonia Scholaris) in the *Ayyappanvilakku* (a festival), is an example. *Pala* is a significant tree with rich healing properties. It is a good remedy for many types of fevers and diseases that are caused due to the vitiation of blood. The tree was worshipped as the symbol of the Dravidian deity, Ayyappan. The customs like decking hair with *dasapuspa* and *pathirapu* (midnight flower), etc. are associated with the medical use of herbs along with the religious ceremonies. Many seasonal rituals involve the use of medicinal herbs in Kerala.

Tolakapya, the famous grammatical work of the sangham period does not include medical profession under the six professions prescribed for Brahmans. But it refers to the caste *velan* and discusses *veryiattu*—a pregnancy ritual involved with *mantras* and herbs. It is quite reasonable to think that priesthood, sorcery and medicines were intermixed in Kerala in the

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64 Ibid.
65 Ibid.310
66 Ibid. Of all the available literature, the first scientific work on the subject is Henry Van Rheede, the then Dutch Governor of Malabar who was inquisitive in botany. His voluminous work on Indian medicinal plants completed by 1676 and published between 1686 and 1706. This book has brought out in twelve volumes from Amsterdam titled *Hortus Malabaricus* during 1678-1693. Itti Acchutan was one of the prominent personalities who rendered services to the Governor in compiling this book. A physician by tradition to Cokavarna (Ezhava) of Kollada house in Karappalli, near Cherthala, Alapuzha district.
67 N.V.Krishnaankutty Varier, p.310
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
early period similar to that of other regions. The conflicting approach towards medical profession was based on the conceptions of caste distinction prevailed in Kerala\textsuperscript{70}. By the augmented influence of Aryan culture and Sanskrit, changes might have come about in the medical system and its practitioners. Ayurveda, which was embedded with Sanskrit, have merged with the old-system of medicine that was prevailing. The local system must have influenced the structure and content of Ayurveda and helped its further progress in Kerala\textsuperscript{71}.

Sanskrit became the authentic language during the period of Brahmin dominance. The language fascinated the elites in the society. \textit{Vedic} and \textit{Tantric} differences and \textit{Saiva} and \textit{Vaisnava} conflicts were comparatively negligible among Kerala Brahamins who generally tended to reconcile with all faiths\textsuperscript{72}. We are not sure, whether it was the historical background of Kerala with its Buddhist and Jain influence that encouraged the brahmins to adopt such an attitude, or whether it was their inherent nature. Anyhow, this is an index to the influence of our ancient culture\textsuperscript{73}. The people of Kerala not only absorbed the incoming cultural waves but also refined/redefined them to suit within their societal setting. Kerala has contributed standard works and preceptors in the field of astrology and philosophical systems. This creative power remained active in the field of medicine as well. Vagbhata thought to be a Buddhist, was recognized by all as the authority in the systems of traditional medicine\textsuperscript{74}.

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{74} Interview conducted with Cheriya Naryanan Namboothiri, Vaidyamadham, May 5th, 2006.
During the fifth and the seventh centuries, Buddhist and Tantric streams dominated in the south, in Sri Saila and other places. Some scholars hold that Buddhism and Jainism were popular in Kerala before the Brahmin predominance. Many present Hindu temples were Buddhist and Jain places of worship. It is possible that during the resurgence of Brahmanism it absorbed the Buddhist and Jain philosophy and Dravidian, Tantric, Saiva and Vaisnava cultures. The Brahmin culture of Kerala assimilated both the temple culture and the Vedic culture.

Temple therapeutics

Temple was the centre of all beliefs and knowledge that controlled the social life of Kerala in the early centuries. All gods were healers of mental and physical ailments. The temples at Cottanikkara and Kotunnallur are considered as divine centers giving protection from evil spirits and smallpox. The principles of health are part of the temple culture though they are projected through the religious viewpoint. Temples were often the centers for popularizing Vedic knowledge. They encouraged the study of Sanskrit and sciences like, astrology and medicine. Temples were the centers of literature, art, grammar, science like astrology and medicine. Though the leadership of the temple culture vested with the Namboothiris, the rulers came forward as the

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According Cheriya Naryanan Namboothiri, Indu and Jarjada are the two prominent disciples of Vagbhata in Kerala. In this Indu (pen name), considered a vaidyan from the Kaarathol Illam (one of the Ashtavaidya family, now it does not exist)

75 N.V Krishnaankutty Varier, p.311
76 Ibid.
77 Ibid.
guardsians of temples to assert their right and influence. Medicine, toxicology, sorcery, etc., became the traditional profession of Namboothiri families. Their professions acquired special status and recognition as they belonged to the upper strata of the society and were honored by the kings and the local rulers. Many legendary stories became popular among the masses. The Ashtavaidyas, though Brahmans, followed the heredity of Vagbhata.

In fact, "Ashtavaidyas are not the eight families of physicians. It is said that there were numerous villages of Vedic brahmans in Kerala and that they had eighteen congregations. Those who lived in relation with Vedic congregation needed the aid of well-versed physicians in all the eight branches of Ayurveda (astangas); thus, these physicians due to their ingenuity in all the eight branches of Ayurveda were acknowledged as Ashtavaidyas—the complete physicians. Wherever there was a Brahmin congregation there was a family of Ashtavaidyas. In course of time, some Ashtavaidya families came to be without descendants and merged with the other families.

These Ashtavaidya families functioned as traditional institutions for studying, teaching, and practicing and popularizing the Ashtavaidyam. There was a popular belief among the people that Ashtavaidyas were bestowed with the divine power of healing. In the Vedic view, practicing medicine was inferior in status but at the same time, they were bound to accept its grandeur and necessity. Kallur, Kunnamparampu, Kattumattam and Kalati were the

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78 Ibid.
79 Interview conducted with Brahmadattan Namboothiri, Ollannur Mana, Thrissur, April 23rd, 2006.
80 Aithyamala of Kottarattil Sankunni accounts many legendary stories about Ashtavaidyas.
81 N.V. Krishnanikutty Varier, p.3
82 Ibid p.312
83 Kottarattil Sankunni, Aithyamala.
Namboothiri families who followed sorcery as their traditional profession; and those of Pampumekkatu, Kokkara, Karatu, Mannarasala and Vettikkotu were the families associated with toxicology\textsuperscript{84}.

Like the Namboothiris, there were many renowned families of other castes that excelled in the study of Sanskrit, philosophy and medical science. Many among them have made enormous contributions to the development of Malayalam language and the progress of the scientific knowledge\textsuperscript{85}. Many popular medical treatises in Malayalam reveal the fact that many formulations came from eminent physicians of lower castes. Legends are not wanting about these either\textsuperscript{86}.

Contributions to the medial science have been made from all walks of life. The massage therapy owes much to practice of the martial art Kalarippayattu\textsuperscript{87}. May tactics that are being practiced in this art are based on tan understanding of nervous system and vital points. The physical exercises and practices to achieve bodily tameness in the training of Kathakali art strengthen this argument\textsuperscript{88}. The system, of massage-therapy (Uzhiccil) is intended to heal general physical diseases. Marmacikitsa (therapeutic massage) has been developed as a part of the special treatments in Kerala\textsuperscript{89}. Frequent

\textsuperscript{84} Interview conducted with Brahmadattan Namboothiri, Ollannur Mana, Thrissur, April 23\textsuperscript{rd}, 2006
\textsuperscript{85} N.V.Krishnaankutty Varier, p.313
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{87} Interview conducted with Sankaran Moss, Pulamanthol Illam, 21\textsuperscript{st} January 2007.
\textsuperscript{88} N.V.Krishnaankutty Varier, p.313
\textsuperscript{89} Interview conducted with Sankaran Moss, Pulamanthol Illam, 21\textsuperscript{st} January, 2007.
occurrence of snakebites and endemic presence of small-pox must have encouraged the study and research of toxicology and vasuricikitsa\textsuperscript{90}.

**Texts and Commentaries**

The medical literature of Kerala can be studied under three heads: (a) commentaries on original works and independent works based on them (b) compendium of popular formulations and methods of treatment jotted down by traditional physicians and (c) recent works written after the development of modern science\textsuperscript{91}.

With the recognition of Sanskrit as a medium of scientific descriptions, its learning became unavoidable for intellectuals. There was a common pattern of study recognized by the scholars. The traditional way of studying Sanskrit was started with literature and went onto grammar, logic, astrology and medical science. Thereafter, those who wished could specialize on any of the higher disciplines. Physicians has thus to acquire a basic knowledge on all sciences in general, and all the scholars learnt Ayurveda. Though many did not practice medicine they wrote interpretations and commentaries on ayurvedic works\textsuperscript{92}. *Ashtangahridayam* was one of the works that largely attracted scholars in Kerala. There were many Malayalam commentaries on this work; quite a few of which went unpublished and some of the published works are not

\textsuperscript{90} Interview conducted with Brahmadattan Namboothiri, Ollannur Mana, Thrissur, April 23\textsuperscript{rd}, 2006.
\textsuperscript{91} N.V.Krishnaankutty Varier, p.313
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid.p.314
available now\(^{93}\). Indu who wrote *Sasilekha*, a commentary on *Ashtangahridayam* and *Ashtangasangraham* belonged to Kerala\(^{94}\).

*Pathyam*, which is among the most popular treatises, came to be accepted as an authority for all later commentaries. The anonymous author has laid down the principles on which his work had been based\(^{95}\). His views are often quoted by his successors. Another commentary, *Brahmapathyam* is less popular. *Kairali*, authored by Pulamantol Muss popularly known as ‘Pulamantol Commentary’ is another authoritative work\(^{96}\). The exact period of *Pulamantol Commentary* could not be fixed. The work is confined to *Uttarasthana* in which the *Rasayana* and *Vajikarana* chapters are omitted. It is said that these omitted chapters as well as *Vikrithivijnaniya* and *Duthavijnaniya* were not taught to non-brahmin students\(^{97}\). It was taught to the Brahmin disciples only after a period of devout worship of the family deity\(^{98}\). The text gives the prose order of each stanza, the word meanings and the local names of various drugs. The commentator adds his own verses in the beginning of every chapter to keep the continuity. All these make it an ideal commentary for students\(^{99}\).

Yet another popular commentary is *Hridaya*. *Lalita* is another commentary based on all those mentioned above. A reference in this text attributes its authorship to *Pulamantol Moss*. *Cikitsamanjari* is an original

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93 Interview conducted with Cheriya Naryanan Namboothiri, Vaidyamadham, May 5\(^{th}\), 2006.
94 Ibid.
95 N.V Krishnankutty Varier p.314
96 Interview conducted with Sankaran Moss, Pulamanthol Illam, 21\(^{st}\) January, 2007.
97 N.V Krishnankutty Varier p.314
98 Ibid.
99 Ibid.
work by Pulamantol Muss, the author of Kairali. The author of Vakya.pradipika introduces himself as Paramesvaran Namboothiri of Bhargava clan hailing from Alattiyur village. This commentary, very useful to the students, ends with the first part of Cikitsam.

Sararthadarpanam and Bhavaprakasam are commentaries by Kaikkulangara Rama Varier, written in Malayalam. Similar is the case with Bhaskara; a renowned commentary by Uppottu Kannan. Arunodayam is a commentary authored by Govidan Vaidyar. Another famous work in this category is Vasudeviyang. Some other published works, dealing with Ayurveda are Hrdayapriya and its compendium Sukhasadhakam. These are the works by Vaikkathhu Pacchuu Mutthathu based on Ashtangahridayam. Ashtangasara by Uppottu Kannan, the author of Yogamatra, is a similar work. Velutteri Kesvan Vaidyar translated Ashtangahridayam in verse to Malayalam and Perunelli Krishnan Vaidyar has translated a part of it. Ravivarman Koyithampuran of Laksmipuram palace in Changanachery initiated his commentary on Ashtangahridayam both in Sanskrit and in Malayalam. Apart from the commentaries on Ashtangahridayam, there were many interpretations and translations on other prominent works, many of them have not yet been published or even traced out.

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100 Ibid.
101 Ibid.
102 Ibid. p.315
103 Ibid.
104 Ullur, p. 213
105 Ibid
106 N.V Krishnankutty Varier p.315
Paravur Kesavanasan wrote *Sarachandrika*, a commentary on *Madhavanidana*. He has prepared a brief connotation to *Vaidyasangraha* of *Pantarattu Narayanan Pillai*. He also wrote commentaries on *Sarngadharasamhitha*, *Bhavaprakasa* and *Bhaisjyaratnavali*, but all of them are incomplete.\(^{107}\)

Some other works

Rasavaisesika:

The author of this work is Bhadantangujuna. Its commentator is Narasimha. Kolatteri Sankara Menon, its editor and the then director of Ayurveda of Travanocre, opines that the author of this wok belongs to the fifth, and the commentator to the eighth centuries. The contents of this work include the principles of health; the study of mercury, the properties of matter, etc. Thiruvananthapuram Sanskrit Series has published this work.\(^{108}\)

Rasopanisat

This work consists of eighteen chapters. It has been brought out by the Thiruvananthapuram Sanskrit Series.\(^{109}\)

\(^{107}\) Ibid.

\(^{108}\) Ibid.

\(^{109}\) Ibid.
Vaidyamanorma

This work in Sanskrit is purely of Kerala origin. It is very popular among the physicians of Kerala. This work consists of twenty-two parts from jvara to rasayana-vajikarana treatments. Thrissur Bharativilasm press has brought out this work in Malayalam script with a commentary of Vacaspati T.C Paramesvaran Moss\textsuperscript{110}. The book imbibes the coups and artifices of Kerala people and some rare formulations unseen on other works. Yadava Sharma from Bombay has also published this work in nagara script along with Ayurvediyagranthamala, with a special reference made to Thaikkattu Nilakanthan Moss as the source of the book\textsuperscript{111}. It has only twenty parts, of which, some portions are missing, it says about its authorship that it is written by Vaidya Arya Sri Kalidasa; Yadav Sharma states that all that is known about this Kalidasa is that that he was a Keralite\textsuperscript{112}.

Dharakalpa

This is another Kerala work published along with Rajamarttanda. Dhara is purely a Kerala treatment. Dharakalpa has been included in the Sahasrayoga. Allupurattu Impiccangurukkal has published this with his commentary\textsuperscript{113}.

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{112} N.V. Krishnankutty Varier p.316
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid.
Sindooramanjari

This work by Thrissur Thaikkattu Naryanan Moss (1871-1908) deals with the purifying process of copper, iron, sulphur, mica, mercury and other minerals.

Alattur Manipravalam

This is a medical work ascribed to the early stage of inception of the Manipravalam literature. Ullur S. Paramesvara Iyer holds that its author is one of the Nampis of Alattur. This book has drawn much attention of the scholars and the linguists. Ullur opines that the first half stanza of this work quoted in Lilatilakam corroborates the view that this work belongs to the early stage of the beginning of Manipravalam literature. There are many other works like Sahasrayoga, Cikitsakrama, Yogaratnaprakasika, Vaidyamanjari, Cikitsamanjari etc. that are popular among Kerala-physicians but unknown elsewhere. The authors of these works are not known. Another famous work is Yogamrta written in Manipravalam style presumably by a Namboothiri connected with the village Perincellur, who lived during the seventeenth century. Uppottu Kannan has published this with his annotation. Yogasaram

114 Sahityacaritram, Ullur, 113
115 Ibid.
116 Ibid.
117 N.V. Krishnankutty Varier p.317
118 Ibid.
is another ancient work. *Vaidyamanjari*, authored by Putukkattumathattil Krishnanan, is a scientific work\(^{119}\).

**Toxicology**

Kerala has shown its unique proficiency in toxicology. There are specific remedies that are proved as effective for various poisons. The physicians have shown their skill to identify the minute differences among the poisonous creatures. Works in this branch, however, generally follow the Sanskrit traditions\(^{120}\). Ammaman Thampuran of Cochin, an expert toxicologist and celebrated literary man, says in *Gadyapuspanjali*, that toxicity was considered as supervene (*agantuka*)—accidental—and that its methods of treatment followed in Kerala were based on Ayurveda. The diagnostic treatments described based on the *tridosha* principle\(^{121}\). The popularity of potent remedies points to the intense research done in this field. However, it is *Visavadiya-prakarana* of Ashtangahridayam that is being recognized as the base for all the toxic treatments\(^{122}\). Ashtangahridayam, Narayaniya, Uddisa, Utpla, Mekhala, Kalavanchana and Laksanamatra are the seven scientific treatises that generally accepted as the authority on this subject. All other toxicological works are based on these seven\(^{123}\).

\(^{119}\) Ibid.
\(^{120}\) Interview conducted with Brahmadattan Namboothiri, Ollannur Mana, Thrissur, April 23\(^{rd}\), 2006.
\(^{121}\) N.V. Krishnankutty Varier p.317
\(^{122}\) Ibid.
\(^{123}\) Ibid.
The approach to antitoxic procedure is of twofold: one is *Visavidya* i.e. the treatment by means of mantras and the other is the treatment by the application of medicines\(^{124}\). Narayaniya mostly deals with *mantras*, and Uddisa is medicine oriented. *Kalavanchana* deals with measures to be done in critical conditions. Laksanamatra is of an elementary work authored by Sundara Bhattacharya\(^{125}\). All these works are popular in Kerala, but it is not known whether they are of Kerala origin\(^{126}\). The most important work on this subject is *Jyotsnika* by Karattu Namboothiri who was a famous toxicologist\(^{127}\). *Prayogasamucchaya* is an ancient work on toxicology, and Kochuynnithaampuran of Cochin has translated it to Malayalam. It narrates various personal experiences of the author\(^{128}\). There are many other published works like *Visavaidyapravesika* and *Sarvagaralapramochana* by Kuttamathu Cheriya Ramakkuruppu\(^{129}\).

**Pediatrics**

Kerala has its own credit for many significant achievements and contributions in the field of pediatrics. Gulikas like *Kompancadi*, *Nirgundyadi* and *Asalyadi*, *Ghrita* and *Kashaya* formulations etc. were the household remedies that were used without consulting by a physician\(^{130}\). M.K. Vaidyar says in his introduction to *Maharasa* published by Madras Manuscript Library

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\(^{124}\) Interview conducted with Brahmadattan Namboothiri, Ollannur Mana, Thrissur, April 23\(^{rd}\), 2006.
\(^{125}\) N.V. Krishnankutty Varier p.318
\(^{126}\) Ibid.
\(^{127}\) Interview conducted with Brahmadattan Namboothiri, Ollannur Mana, Thrissur, April 23\(^{rd}\), 2006.
\(^{128}\) N.V. Krishnankutty Varier p.318
\(^{129}\) Ibid.
\(^{130}\) Ibid.
that many formulations contained in *Arogyakalpadrumam*, a pediatric work by Kaikkulangara Rama Varier are Sanskrit translations of formulations contained in the jottings of Kerala physicians. However, pediatric commentaries in Malayalam are generally based on Sanskrit treatises. Such works are in plenty and some of them were kept in secrecy\textsuperscript{131}. *Karappan* is a pediatric work Kotunnallur Kunnukuttan Thampuran. *Arogyacintamani* is written by Vallathol Narayana Menon. The two other medical works are *Garbharaksakramam* and *Vaidyajivanam* authored by Vallathol\textsuperscript{132}.

**Modern Age**

What we term by the modern age is the period after the development of a new educational system—that is to say, the beginning of a system under which education was imparted through institutions or organizations replacing the traditional *Gurukula* system. As in other parts of India, it was the clarion call of renaissance that awakened a new sense of patriotism and self-confidence in the people of Kerala also. The message of the new age inspired to take a liberal view towards the oriental sciences, revive, and propagate them with suitable modifications. With this came up many organizations for teaching and popularizing Ayurveda and became the cause for setting up of teaching institutions with updated courses, scheme and syllabus in the government level.

\textsuperscript{131} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{132} Ibid.
The first Auyrvedapathasala came into being in 1886 at Thiruvananthapuram when Kaviyur Paramesvaran Muttatu, a disciple of erudite Pachhu Mutthathu, started a school in a house annexed to the Medicine Hall of the palace\textsuperscript{133}. Later this was taken over by the government by the recommendation of Srimulamtriunal Maharaja\textsuperscript{134}. The school was upgraded to the status of a college in 1918 by Kolattheri Sankara Menon, the then Director of Ayurveda and the degrees awarded from here were titled Vaidyasastrī and Vaidyakalanidhi\textsuperscript{135}. A new syllabus was introduced in 1943-44 based on the recommendation and course outline of the Tirumurtti committee. A course for Diploma in Ayurvedic Medicine (DAM) was setup in 1957 when Dr. A.R Menon was the Health Minister\textsuperscript{136}. Gradually, all courses were combined into a single degree course. The college now has grown in to a centre with all facilities of research and PG courses.

The solid contribution for the recent popularity of Ayurveda at international level came from Vaidyaratnam P.S. Varier\textsuperscript{137}. It was his endeavors to reform Ayurveda with modern concepts and the efforts he put to propagate ayurvedic education that became the cause of this popularity. He studied both Ayurveda and modern medicine; he gained a thorough knowledge on the subject and by his diligent efforts started the Arya Vaidya Sala at

\textsuperscript{133} Ibid. p.323
\textsuperscript{134} N.V Krishnankutt Varier p.323
\textsuperscript{135} N.V Krishnankutt Varier p.323
\textsuperscript{136} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{137} P.S Varier was born on 16 March 1869 into a orthodox but talented family of temple service caste (Varier) in Kottakkal, Calicut district. Konath Achutha Varier introduced him to the rudiments of Ayurveda, after which he studied for four years under Ashta vadiyan Kuttancheri Vasudevan Mooss who was at that time one of the highly accomplished Ayurvedic physicians.
Kottakkal\textsuperscript{138}. He introduced modern ideas in his pharmaceutical enterprise. As the pharmacy prospered he took over the Aryavaidyasamajam and its school. Giving importance to modern anatomy he introduced a new syllabus and for this purpose, he wrote Astangasariram and Brhacchariram\textsuperscript{139}. Apart from these, \textit{Dhanvantari}, a monthly published by him with PV Krsnan Varier as its editor was a popular platform for scientific discussion; the articles he wrote for the magazine were very informative\textsuperscript{140}. Thus, his laudable contributions for the propagation of Ayurveda ever remain indelible in the history of Ayurveda in Kerala.

Other writers have contributed in the formation of the new age. Dr. L.A. Ravi Varma has to his credit many articles evaluating and popularizing Ayurveda. His book \textit{Sariram} deals with the correlation between body, matter, ailment and remedy\textsuperscript{141}. The services rendered by Vatakkepattu Narayanan Nair, a reckonable physician and scholar, to make awareness about the efficacy of Ayurveda in nonprofessionals, are laudable. His \textit{Anugrahamimamsa}, a small Sanskrit book, deals with the ailments caused by bacteria from the Ayurveda point of view. Manakkotan Kesvan Vaidyar, the author of \textit{Pancakarma}, was an expert physician; \textit{Vastipradipam} by Panavalli Krsnan Vaidyar is a work very useful to students and professional as a reference text\textsuperscript{142}.

Numerous are the current publications aimed at the value-based study of Ayurveda. A branch of the institute is functioning at Cheruthuruthy that studies

\textsuperscript{138} P.S Varier Shashti Varshika Charitram, Kottakkal, 1929, p.26
\textsuperscript{139} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{140} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{141} N.V Krishnankutty Varier p.326
\textsuperscript{142} Ibid.
and undertakes research activities. The general indifferent outlook that prevailed among the people towards the ayurvedic system of treatment has changed. Ayurveda has won worldwide recognition. There are various Ayurvedic Research Institutes in the all India level; a branch of such an institute is functioning at Cheruthuruthy, Kerala.  

The multi-faceted advancement in all the branches of modern science has helped the development of medicine too. Diabolic diseases like plague, smallpox, cholera, malaria, etc. have been virtually eliminated or controlled. However, the achievements of modern science as regards disease like cardiac afflictions, diabetes, cancer and psychological disorders, etc. are far from satisfactory. The general interest that the government has shown in Ayurveda, the importance given to ayurvedic studies in the universities, the worldwide recognition it has gained, etc.- all emphasize the importance of Kerala system of Ayurveda in the modern life and the obligation of the Kerala towards the development and propagation of Ayurveda. These favorable circumstances should be utilized to give it a renewed vigour in its development.

Ashtavaidyas of Kerala

Kerala is acknowledged as the land of Parasurama is prominent for its alluring and exotic natural beauty. More over, the land named “God’s own country” became the cradle for growth and development of traditional sciences,
Ashtavaidyas are known for their immense dedication, preservation and contribution to their traditional occupational profile. Besides, their genealogy goes to Vagbhata one among the great triad. They were well versed in all the eight branches of Ayurveda. Stories of medical legends mentioned in the book named “Eitheehyamala” (Garland of Tales) are even studied during medical education for their excellent clinical attitudes. *Chikitsa Manjari, Yogamrutam, AbhidanManjari, Alathoor Manipravalam, Kairali and Vakyapradipika* commentary on *Ashtanga Hridaya* are few among the authorship-accredited books by them.

Ashtavaidyas service cannot be fully appreciated without mentioning the social conditions that prevailed in Kerala a century ago. Caste discrimination was prevalent in this land and the Vedas were restricted only to upper class Brahmins. A *vaidya* is a practitioner of Ayurveda or an Ayurvedic physician. It was impurity for the Brahmins to touch or even see people of lower castes. The Ashtavaidyans denied this tradition and even practiced *salya tantra* (surgery technique) on people from all castes. Thus Ashtavaidyans got their place in their community lowered. Other Brahmins did not recognize practitioners of *vaidya*.

Thus, marital alliances between Brahmins practicing *vaidyam* and the ‘pure’ Brahmins remained discouraged. A practicing Ashta Vaidya was not

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144 Interview conducted with E.T. Narayanan Moss, Eledath Thaikkattu, April 26th, 2006, 10 am
145 Ibid.
147 Ibid.
148 Ibid.
149 Interview conducted with Sankaran Moss, Pulamanthol Illam, 20th January, 2007
150 Ibid.
permitted to undertake public-priesthood (in temples)\textsuperscript{151}. However, later this condition has changed and now marital alliance is possible between all Namboodiri and Brahmin families\textsuperscript{152}. Vaidyamadham family, a family that traditionally practiced Ashtavaidya was bit different and they practice Vedas and participated in yagnas and poojas.

According to NVK Varier’s “Ayurveda Charitram”, the word Ashtavaidyan does not mean that the eight designated families of physicians, but rather refers to eighteen Ashtanga vaidyans, each one designated to eighteen Sabhaamadhams (Vedam Schools) serving the thirty two Grammas of Kerala\textsuperscript{153}. These families became proficient in all the eight branches (Astangas) of Ayurveda system (Poorna Vaidyan or complete physicians). In the later period, the word ‘Ashtaangavaidyans’ shortened to ‘Ashtavaidyans’\textsuperscript{154}. It so happens that, in the absence of male members, several of these families had to be finally merged into eight of these families\textsuperscript{155}. The families are listed below with the existing families in the left column. Except Aalathiyoor and Kaarathol who are Nampis, all others are Mosses.

\textsuperscript{151} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{152} Interview dated May 2\textsuperscript{nd} 2006, with P.T. Vasudevan Moss, SNA Oushadhasala, Thrissur
\textsuperscript{153} N.V Krishnankutty Varier p.312
\textsuperscript{154} Interview conducted with Cheriya Naryanan Namboothiri, Vaidyamadham, May 5\textsuperscript{th}, 2006.
\textsuperscript{155} Ibid.
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| 1. | Aalathiyoor Nambi | Aalathiyoor Nambi  
|   | Kaarakathol Nambi | Choondal Mooss |
| 2. | Elayidath Thaikkattu Mooss | Elayidath Thaikkattu Mooss  
|   | Kuriyedath Mooss (Njarakkal Mooss) | Kurumempilly Mooss  
|   |   | Paduthol Mooss |
| 3. | Pazhanellippurathu Thaikkatu Mooss | Pazhanellippurathu Thaikkatu Mooss.  
|   |   | Peringavu Mooss  
|   |   | Parappur Mooss |
| 4. | Kuttancheri Mooss | Kuttancheri Mooss  
|   | Vatuthala Mooss | Akalaanath Mooss |
| 5. | Vayaskara Mooss | Vayaskara Mooss |
| 6. | Chirattamann Mooss | Chirattamann Mooss (Olassa Mooss) |
| 7. | Vellotu Mooss | Vellotu Mooss  
|   |   | Ubhayur Mooss |
| 8. | Pulamanthol Mooss | Pulamanthol Mooss |
Moreover, among the above-mentioned Ashtavaidyas, only four families are practicing vadiyam\textsuperscript{156}. They are Thrissur Thaikkattu (Pazhanellippurathu Thaikkattu Moss), Elayidath Thaikkattu Moss (Ollur Thaikkattu Moss), Chirattamann Moss (Olassa Moss) and Pulamantol Moss\textsuperscript{157}. And there is a difference of opinion among Ashtavaidya practitioners in Kerala about the occupational identity of Vaidyamadham physicians. In this study, we will be considering Vaidyamadham as an Ashtavaidyan family. It is a belief that the lineage of this family goes back to Aalathiyoor Nambi Illam\textsuperscript{158}, the renowned Ashtavaidyas of Kerala.

Thus this chapter provides a detailed description about the history of Kerala from a medicinal point of view. And it also narrates the epistemological works of the distinguished persons in this area of medicine. And the chapter concludes with list of the each of Ashtavadiya families in Kerala.

\textsuperscript{156} Interview conducted with E.T. Narayanan Moss, Eledath Thaikkattu, April 26\textsuperscript{th}, 2006, 10 am

\textsuperscript{157} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{158} Vaidyamadham considered being yaga vaidyas. Once there was no male member in this family to do the ceremony because of that they adopt a child from Nambi Illam