CHAPTER III
KERALA-CULTURE HERITAGE AND ESTABLISHMENT OF EARLY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND LIBRARIES

The state of Kerala has made rich and varied contributions to the cultural heritage of India. Culture of Kerala has been an integral part of the mainstream of Indian culture.\(^1\) The history of Kerala is part of the general history of India and its culture is one of the major streams that have enriched the cultural heritage of the country.\(^2\)

Kerala's unique geographical position and peculiar physical features have invested Kerala with distinct individuality. The land of Kerala comprises the narrow coastal strip bounded by the Western Ghats on the east and Arabian Sea on the west, in the southern part of Indian Peninsula. The low belt which boarders on the sea and the backwaters is by nature flat and swampy, but has in the course of ages become rich with works of man, and the landscape shaded and fanned by the feathering palm present scene.

As we leave the sea-board, an undulating country, diversified with grassy flats, naked hills and wooded terraces, intersected by numerous torrents and rapids dashing down from cliff to valley, and profusely dotted with simple house sleds, Orchards and cultivated


fields, rolls up to the foot of the Western Ghats.³

H. G. Woodward in his book, "Kerala the Gem of India" narrates: "there is a beauty in Kerala not to be found elsewhere in India, . . . tree trunks smothered in moss and orchids, rhododendrons bearded with lichen, grassy glades and many coloured flowers, tree ferns, elephant reeds, cascades and rivers, the sight of distant hills and valleys.⁴ During the time of British rule, the National Geographic Society record says: It is the most beautiful, the most fertile, and the richest district in the Madras Presidency."

The Legendary Belief About the Origin of Kerala

H. G. Woodward explains that this sacred country (Kerala) of the Hindus was reclaimed from the sea, according to the legend, for the sole use of the Brahmans. It holds a high place in ancient Hindu literature, besides being mentioned in the two Indian epics "The Ramayana" and the "Mahabharata." It is known to Hindu India as "Dharma Rajyam" --the land of charity.⁵

In the Hindu sacred scriptures, "Brahmanda Purana," is given the traditional origin of this country.⁶ We are told that the sacred temple city of Gokurnam—shown on our maps as Goa—have—


⁵Ibid

⁶Ibid, p.10
ing been submerged by the sea, the inhabitants went to the divine warrior Parasurama with the petition, "Hear the cause of our now coming, O thou who possessest mercy. We who once lived at Gokurnam are now afflicted by the sons of Sagara, who dug a hole and descended to the infernal regions, and were burned with the fire of Kapila's anger. And now, all the country where the sons of Sagara dug, has become ocean; and because Gokurnam, the great temple, has sunk beneath the waves with its sacred waters, we are greatly distressed." 7

Parasurama prevailed upon the god of the sea to grant him permission to hurl his battle-ax out into the waters. The ax fell at Kanyakumari (Cape Comorin), on the extreme Southwest coast, and immediately the waters receded, leaving all the land now known as Kerala.

This is, of course, but myth, and we cannot attach any importance to it; but it is certainly true that geologists affirm that much of the country has at one time been submerged, as the various formations now to be seen in the seacoast cliffs and beds seem to indicate. It is thought by many that volcanic action is the cause of the reappearance of the land.

It is very difficult to attempt to trace back the history of Kerala, for, as is generally the case in India, there has been no regular or continuous record kept of its origin, progress, or peoples. Indian rajas have never seemed to be anxious to preserve the history of their kingdoms; indeed they have sometimes deliberately

7 Ibid
destroyed all the old records, believing that in so doing, the history of their lands would begin with their reign.

There is, however, ample material for a good and fairly reliable record to be gathered from all parts of the land. This is to be found in the writing upon palm leaves (which when properly bound will last almost indefinitely), upon copper plates and stone inscriptions, the sacred Hindu scriptures and temple records, in old proverbs and maxims and songs, in old traditions, and from the diaries and books of old soldiers, sailors, and travelers. From this it will be seen that the history of Kerala is founded almost entirely upon tradition. It is from these sources that another story is told of the great sage and warrior Parasurama.

It is said that sometime later Parasurama, at his father's command, cut off his mother's head. In compensation of the crime which haunted him continually (although his father had restored his wife to life), and in pity for the sad condition of the people of Gokarnam, he created Kerala and peopled it. It was his intention that the land be for the special benefit of the Brahmans.

Geology supports the tradition which asserts that Kerala was raised out of the sea; but the ancient have dressed the tradition in the grab of Parasurama. K. P. Padmanabha Menon, an authority on Kerala History says that it is possible that the great Parasurama led the Aryan settlers into "Keralam," which long before their advent, had evolved a culture unique in its own way. The legend

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8 Padmanabha Menon, 1986, p.502
May be a myth but it has gone into Hindu Scriptures and thus proves that Kerala had a place in Indian cultural life. Secondly, it throws some light on the early settlers of Kerala—the Brahmans—the chosen people for education in ancient India. So from time immemorial onwards Kerala was known for her educational achievements.

Kerala is the favoured name, and the people will tell that it was first so called in ancient times by the God Shiva, in honour of the marriage of the sea king's daughter to Keralan. The word 'kerala' was used by all early Sanscrit writers as a synonym to the word 'Chera.' Some scholars derive the name from 'Kera' or coconut which is one of the staple products of this land. But this view is not generally accepted. Dr. Gundert observes that the word "Keram," is the Canarese pronunciation of the word 'Cheram' and he describes "Keralam" as 'Cheralam.' The word 'Cheral' in Tamil means the slope of a hill or a mountain. There is also a view that the word "Keralam" is made of the two words 'Cher' (sand) and 'alam' (region) and that it literally means the slushy land. 'Cher' or 'Chernta' means added and hence Cheralam means the land which was added on to the already existing mountainous or hilly country. The word 'Cheralam' might have, in course of time, got itself Sanskritised as Keralam. The above derivation would make the land of Kerala a reclamation or addition to the land from the sea, leading support to the geological

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interpretation given to Parasurama tradition.\textsuperscript{11}

Al-Idris called the country "Manibar" late in the year 1153 A.D. The Arabs had in their stock another favourite name "Biladul Phul--Phul" meaning thereby the country of pepper. The traveller Rashid-ud-deen (1247) and Marco Polo (1292) named the country "Malibar" whereas Ibn-Battuta (1342) calls it "Malaibar." The word 'Malabar' used by travellers and also in the Portuguese and Dutch records is particularly equivalent to Kerala.\textsuperscript{12}

The Aryans must have found the country divided into villages. Each village is self-contained and consisted of houses situated in the detached gardens. These villages had their own organization for agrarian, social, civil and administrative purposes. They were in fact miniature republics so far as their civil life was concerned. It was the "Nattar" (people of the country) who administered the country with the help of Kuttom (the National Assembly). For political purposes the country was divided into Desam and Nadus.

At one period in the political evolution of the country, the groups of villages called 'Nads' were placed under chieftains known as Taliyatiries nominated for three years. There were eighteen and a half Talies in Kerala, a 'tali' being the area covered by the jurisdiction of the chieftain. The dissensions among the Taliyatiries and the unrest among the people due to the bad rule of these led them to appeal to powerful neighbouring rulers for help. This is how the

\textsuperscript{11}Sreedhara Menon, 1980, p.12

perumala, viceroys chosen from the royal houses of Chera, Chola and Pandya came to rule over Kerala. The date of the Perumal period have not yet been definitely determined. Some say A.D. 216 as the date of its commencement while others say B.C. 113 is the correct year.\(^\text{1}^3\)

The capital of the Perumals was Tiruvanchikulam near Cranganur. The Egyptians, the Phoenicians, the Greeks and the Romans came to this port for commercial purposes. The Jews, the Muslims and the Christians claim Cranganur as their first settlement. "There was a great University at Matilakam near Cranganur where the 'Vidval-sabha' the assembly of the wise, directed the studies of the university and enacted laws for the country.\(^\text{1}^4\) The establishment of this university shows that this area was the center of studies and higher learning. Also there are references about the well equipped library services available to the knowledge thirsty scholars.

Paradoxical as it might seem, the geographical position has helped to ensure, to some extent, its political and cultural isolation from the rest of the country and also facilitated its extensive and active contacts with the countries of the outside world.

**Contacts of Kerala with Foreign Countries**

Kerala is in the strange position of being almost the closest part of India to the western world, and yet farthest from their

\(^\text{1}^3\)Sreedhara Menon, 1980, p.1.

\(^\text{1}^4\)Padmanabha Menon, 1986, p.503
knowledge. For this reason, the enlightenment of the west is everywhere mingled with conservation of the East, and although Western education is more prevalent here than in any other part of India, caste rules are more strictly observed.\(^{15}\)

This is especially true in the Southern portion of Kerala, which is composed of the Indian states of Travancore and Cochin. As long ago as 1817, the then ruling Queen (Rani) of Travancore, with the encouragement of the British Resident, Colonel J. Munro, issued an order that the state should defray the entire cost of the education of its people, in order that there might be no backwardness in the spread of enlightenment among them. The early educational system would be discussed later separately in this chapter.

Even in time immemorial, Kerala had extensive commercial and cultural contacts with the countries of the outside world. The fabulous story of these foreign contacts which began with the trade in Kerala's cinnamon, pepper and other spices goes back to the 3rd century B.C. if not earlier. The spices of Malabar have always attracted the attention of foreign nations and it was in fact the desire to enrich themselves by trade in those articles that brought European nations to India.\(^{16}\)

The early foreign contacts led to the introduction of such religions as Christianity, Judaism, and Islam into the land and helped to make Kerala the cradle of varied cultures and way of life.

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\(^{15}\) Padmanabha Menon, 1986, p.395

\(^{16}\) Ibid., p.396
The later foreign contacts which commenced with Vasco da Gama's landing at Calicut in 1498, however resulted in the establishment of foreign domination over the land.

A greed for profits from the trade in these articles particularly, cinnamon and pepper, says Mr. Whitehouse, was one of the inducements which stimulated the Portuguese to find their way to India via Cape of Good Hope.\textsuperscript{17}

The ancient harbours of Kerala were filled with ships from all parts of the world. Ivory, Sandalwood- and spices attracted the phoenician merchants. The influence of the Chinese is evident in the China fishing nets still used along the coast- and in the architecture of the buildings.\textsuperscript{18}

It is thought by many that the navy of King Solomon visited this land about 1000 B.C. Historians have suggested that the "Ophir" mentioned in sacred history is the little seacoast village of Pavur, a few miles south of the capital of the State of Travancore. In substantiation, they refer to the Bible, (I Kings 10:22) "The king had at sea a navy of Tarshish, bringing gold and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks." All these things, with the possible exception of silver, are the products of this land.\textsuperscript{19}

The Old Testament of the Bible contains plentiful references to cinnamon and cardamom, spices indigenous to Kerala. Cinnamon

\textsuperscript{17} Woodward, p.8.

\textsuperscript{18} Woodward, p.12

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid
is referred in the Bible as one of the ingredients of the holy anointing oils and perfumes used in the ritual of Tabernacle erected by Moses, the great Jewish law-giver, in the wilderness of Sinai. The date of the building of the Tabernacle is given as 1490 B.C. and it is clear from this that cinnamon was well-known to the Hebrews of the day. All these indicate that Kerala had contacts with foreign countries from time immemorial.

Pliny, in the beginning of the Christian era, refers to one of the rulers of Kerala; and it is definitely established from his writings that Greece and Rome carried on an extensive commerce with this southwest coast of India. When Rome became the mistress of the world, her trade with Kerala increased. We are told that emissaries from Rome had visited this land. Large number of Roman gold coins have been discovered from time to time in this land, some of which can still be seen in the state Museum at Trivandrum. These coins bear an older date than those which have been found in other parts of India. Persian and Arabian ships were often seen in the harbours, and doing business up and down the coast. Famous travellers such as Vasco da Gama and Marco Polo, have given us authentic information concerning the trade carried on with this country and the customs of the people. The Danish, the Portuguese, the Dutch and the English have all left traces of their sojourn here. Dr. K. S. Mathew, an authority on Indo-Portuguese history says that it was not the discovery by Columbus, but that of the

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20 Sreedhara Menon, 1980, p.53
21 Ibid., p.13
sea-route to India by the end of the fifteenth century and the establishment of European trade on the Indian coast that brought about the economic revolution.\textsuperscript{22} The trade of the Portuguese with Malabar coast also helped the Portuguese to establish their factories on the Malabar coast as a result a number of Portuguese men began to reside in Cochin, Cannanore, Quilon and Calicut. "Many of them married local women giving rise to a mixed race." \textsuperscript{23}

Sreedhara Menon says that the landing of Vasco da Gama at Calicut in May 1498 marked the beginning of a new epoch in the history of Kerala. The immediate object of the Portuguese was the expansion of trade, but they entertained in course of time grand vision of building up an empire in India by bringing the local powers under subjection. The Portuguese contact led to some results in the political, economic and social field. The most important political result was that the political disunity of Kerala was confirmed by the century and a half of Portuguese contact. The Portuguese contact led to some change in the economic field also. The Portuguese put an end to the age long trade connection Kerala had with countries like Arabia and Egypt. Increasing trade contacts with Europe also led to the introduction of European fashions and luxuries. The Portuguese contact led to some results in the educational and cultural field as well. The Portuguese founded theological Seminaries and colleges at Cochin, Cranganore, Anakamali and Vaipicotta for the purpose of

\textsuperscript{22}K. S. Mathew, Portuguese Trade with India in the Sixteenth Century, New Delhi, Manohar Publication, 1983, p.200.

\textsuperscript{23}Ibid., p.215
training Christian priests. These institutions helped to spread knowledge among the local people.\textsuperscript{24}

Origin of Malayalam Language

Malayalam as a distinct literacy language developed at a very late stage in our history. It was, in its early phase, subjected very much, first to Tamil and then to Sanskrit.\textsuperscript{25} Till about 800 A.D. Kerala was almost a part of Tamilaakam and the language of the region was Tamil.

Ulloor S. Parameswar Iyer, an authority in the history of Malayalam Language says that Malayalam as a language had been indebted to Tamil and Kannada.\textsuperscript{26} People of Kerala wanted to identify Malayalam separately from Tamil, then they gave it the new name "Malayanma" or "Malayayama." \textsuperscript{27} Malayanma means the thing which belongs to the Malayalies. The people of Kerala identified their language also with the same name.

Upto 800 A.D. Kerala was almost a part of Tamil (Tamilakam). The Tamil with localised form was the Malayalam language of the period.\textsuperscript{28}

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\textsuperscript{24}Sreedhara Menon, 1980, p.220 \\
\textsuperscript{25}E. M. S. Namboodiripad, Kerala Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow, Calcutta, National Book Agency Private Limited, 1968, p.61 \\
\textsuperscript{26}Ulloor S. Parameswara Iyer, Kerala Sahitya Charitram, Vol. 1 Trivandrum, Kerala University, 1967, p. 28. \\
\textsuperscript{27}Ibid., p.38 \\
\textsuperscript{28}A. Sreedhara Menon, Kerala Charitram, Kottayam, Sahitya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society, Ltd., 1969, p.494.
\end{flushright}
The writing is known as "ezhuthu." Ezhuthu is derived from "ezhu" or "azhu" (to mark by cutting or gouging) and stands for marks or letters formed by some process of engraving. In South India the common mode of writing was by some process of engraving, either by means of a sharp style or by the use of a fine sharp chisel and mallet.

The cheseling method was used on rocks or on thick copper plates, and this method subsequently derived its name "Vethezhuthu" or cut-letters from its method of production. The form of writing produced by a style got the name of "Kolezuthu" from 'Kole'- a style or an elongated stick-like material and ezhuth means letters.

Kerala had its 'lipis' or scripts from early days. The earliest script in vogue was 'Vettezhuthu.' Vettezhuthu was so called after the shape of its characters. (Vatta=circular and exhuthu=writing). Burnel considers the 'Vettezhuthu' alphabet as having been introduced into South India by the Phoenicians who were one of the earliest of the foreign people to make their way to ancient part of Muziris in Kerala. On the basis of the aged resemblance between Ashokan Brahmi, Tamil Brahmi and 'Vettezhuthu' it has been suggested by some that the term Vettezhuthu would mean northern script. Whatever be the origin of the script, the fact is that it was existing in Kerala long before the commencement of Kollam Era (A.D. 825). The "Vattezhuthu" script changed shape from age to age. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the script which was once circular in shape had become oblong with the result that it came to be called as Kolezhu-

Malayalam, the language of Kerala evolved from proto-Tamil. In the words of Dr. K. M. George, the author of 'A Survey of Malayalam Literature', "Malayalam owes its origin to the Proto-Dravidian tongue, it had long and intimate association with Tamil, but has evolved itself into its present form under certain special circumstances prevalent in Kerala."

**Early System of Education in Kerala**

Before the widespread use of printing, people lived their lives in what we call 'traditional societies', in the sense that knowledge and culture came handed down from previous generations, passed on by parents, teachers and older members of the community. Since there was no printing, there was no printed books for education. Copies of books were very hard to come out, because they had to be individually written on palm leaf or some materials like that.

It will be a surprise for the modern man to understand that people learned in ancient days without books being freely available. How did people learn things and become educated in the traditional society? The basic answer is simple: people learned largely by direct personal contact, and traditional culture was organized so that it could be carried directly from person to person, and from

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31Vikas Publishing House, Discovering Kerala, New Delhi, p.6.

In traditional Kerala a child's literature education would start when the child was three to five years old, with a ceremony of initiation into letters, performed on some suitable occasion of religious worship. Along with the usual devotional rituals, a respected teacher or elder would pull out the child's tongue and symbolically write on it an invocation to the god Ganapathi ('Harih Sree Ganapataya Namah') with a gold coin or ring, then write with the same material the letters of the Malayalam alphabet.

Then the teacher or the elder would make the child trace out the same religious invocation ('Harih Sree Ganapataya Namaha') and the letters of the alphabets (starting from 'a', 'a', . . . . , etc.) in some cooked parboiled rice spread out on a "Thalika" (metal plate or a tray). And finally the teacher would receive some kind of offering from the child as a sign that the child is now accepted as a pupil. This gift is known as "Dakshina."

Writing on the tongue with something made out of gold would symbolize the importance of chanting and reciting in traditional education; and soon after this ceremony the young pupil would begin formal lessons in reciting the alphabets, always starting the recitation with the religious invocation to Ganapathi.

After the primary education, which lasted a couple of years, if a student wanted to continue his education, which he will if he

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33 Ananda Wood, Knowledge Before Printing and After, Bombay, Oxford University Press, 1985, p.2

34 Ibid., p.35.
were a Brahmin or noble man, then in order to pursue a systematic intellectual training he would have to learn a classical language. The chief classical language of Kerala was Sanskrit. After the classical texts one had to study the traditional science the 'Sastras.'

From very early times Kerala had developed various programmes such as folk dramas, story telling, poetic symposia, dance, puppetry and other art forms through which education was imparted to large group of people of all ages. Men and women who were occupied in family or occupational activities were exposed to this folk education.

**Temple Universities**

The temple of Kerala was known as "Salai." In the age of Kulasekharas of Mahodayapuram (800 - 1102 A.D.) educational efforts received a great impetus. With the rise of temple to a place of prominence in the social and cultural life, the educational institutions received special attention as they formed an integral part of the temple complex itself. All the major temples had school or colleges attached to them. It should be noted that schools, colleges and libraries functioned as adjuncts to Buddhist and Jain Shrines and that during the period of the decline of Buddhism and Jainism when the Buddhist and Jain shrines got themselves converted into Hindu temples, the educational and cultural institutions which were maintained under their auspices continued undisturbed.

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The educational institutions attached to the temples were known as Salais. Later these were known as "Patasalais." The inscriptions of the period gives us some details about the origin of the Salais, though established by the rulers of the day, could go forward primarily because of the sincere support of the enlightened persons in the community for their upkeep and maintenance. The most important of the Salais about which we get some information are those of Kandalur, Parthivasekarapuram, Tiruvella and Muzhi-kulam. Of these, Kandalur Salai seems to have had the pride of place among the educational institutions of the period. About the location of this Salai, there is a controversy. But most probably this must have been at Trivandrum. Institutions like Kandalur and Parthivasekarapuram being devoted to higher education did not admit a large number of students. Since these places were centers for higher learning, it is proper for us to believe that these centers were equipped with good "Vidyabhandaras" (libraries).

These Salais also had boarding facilities. Schools were intended exclusively for the higher education of the Brahmin youth and not for the general education of members of all the communities. The students underwent a rigorous course of studies in the Vedas, the Sastras and other branches of learning. S. Desivinayagam Pillai says "Kandalur Salai was an ancient institution, the Nalanda of South India and it was looked upon as a model by the people of

\[37\text{Ibid., p.282}\]
The Chola-Chera war of the eleventh century which caused a social upheaval seems to have led to the decline of the Salai. The Salais mainly disappeared due to the lack of patronage. There are very less references to 'Salais' in inscriptional records after the twelfth century. Another cause of the decline of Salais must be the decline in character and calibre of the students. Many of them lost their interest in intellectual pursuits and took to military training.

**Sabha Mutts**

"Though the 'Salais' declined and disappeared, another chain of educational institutions sprang up and flourished in Kerala in the early medieval period." They are the Sabha Mutts which like the Salais were also Temple Universities. These institutions functioned mainly in central and northern Kerala. Among the earliest of the "Sabha Mutts" are those founded at Trichur by Sankaracharya himself like the "Vadakke Madham," "Naduvi Madham," "Edayil Madham" and "Tekke Madham." The Madhams of Trichur richly endowed from the days of Sankara himself and they played an important part in promotion of Vedic studies. In due course of time, Sabha Mutts came to be established in other centers of Kerala.

The system of education conformed to the "Gurukula" idea. After the "Upanayanam" ceremony the Namboothiri boys were sent

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38 Kerala Society Papers, Series II, p.103

to the residence of a teacher and he later completed his course of studies in the Sabha Mutt. Competitive examinations were occasionally held between the pupils of two institutions. They were made to repeat at random selected portions from the 'Vedas.' A Sreedhara Menon explains that there are Sabha Mutts even today at Trichur and Tirunavai where instruction in Vedas in the traditional way is being imparted. A 'Sabha Mutt' functions at Chovannur also under the management of the Cochin Devaswam Board. A great scholar of Malayalam language and culture, Ilamkulam Kunjan Pillai, describes in his book that when Kerala was under the influence of the "Namboodiris" (Brahmins), people of Sudra caste were not allowed to go for education. Therefore, most of the common people became ignorant. The Namboodiris of Kerala even did not like if a Sudra spoke clearly and fluently the language. The age of the Namboodiris' continued up to A.D.1600.

The above mentioned information shows that during the time of the Namboodiri influence, the educational scene of Kerala also was controlled by them. They did not like the low caste Hindus getting education. During this period education was exclusively for the Brahmins. Other castes were not allowed to study even though there are some references about the education of low caste Hindus, but it was very negligible.

\[40\text{Ibid., p.286}\]

\[41\text{Ilamkulam P. N. Kunjan Pillai, Chila Kerala Charitra Pras-nangal, Kottayam, National Book Stall, 1956, pp. 36-37.}\]
We have been dealing so far with only such institutions as were intended for the education of the Brahmin youth. There was a parallel system of village schools called "Ezhuthupallis" where the non-Brahmin youth got their education. The Ezhuthupally functioned in each 'Kara' or village under the Ezhuthuchan or Asan (teacher). The School was held either in the house of the 'Asan' or in the house of some important person in the village.\(^{42}\)

In the Ezhuthupally they were taught reading, writing, Arithmetics, the Kavyas (Poetry) and the rudiments of Astronomy and Astrology. The advanced course included the detailed study of Kavyas (Poetry), Alankaras, Natakas, Logic, Grammar and Ayurveda. The system of education in Ezhuthupalli aimed at the moral, intellectual and physical well-being of the students. The 'Asan' was remunerated in kind. He had greater influence over his pupils than their own parents and this made the 'Asan' a very important figure in social life of the village.

The 'Ezhuthupalli' was also a mixed school where both boys and girls studied. They were taught reading, writing and different subjects such as Kavyas (Poetry), Arithmetic, Astronomy and Astrology. The girls had also certain special subjects in their course of studies. They were taught Music and Art. They were also taught to read verses from "Ramayana" and "Mahabharata." "Kaikottikali" or "Tiruvati-

\(^{42}\)Sreedhara Menon (1979), p. 287.
rakali" (special recreational form of dance type of a game performed exclusively by girls and ladies) were also taught. This was very good for physical exercise for girls. "Thus the system of education in "Ezhuthupalli" aimed at the moral, intellectual and physical well-being of the boys and girls."

The system of village education described above made unprecedented strides since the seventeenth century. Great impetus was given to it by Tunchat Ezuthachan, "The Father of Malayalam Language." Education of the masses was held out by Ezuthachan as the great ideal. The 'Ezhuthupalli' which catered to the needs of the masses rather than of the upper class elite fitted admirably into Ezuthachan's scheme of things. Having revolted against the Brahmin monopoly of Sanskrit learning and studies. Ezuthachan also started a Vedic school and "Guru Madham" at Chitur.

With the appearance of Thunchat Ezuthachan may be associated the beginnings of the most active phase in the functioning of village schools in Kerala. The system of village education continued till the spread of English education in the Nineteenth century and it lingered on in remote corners of the rural areas of the State even till very recent times.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{43}}\text{Ibid.}, \text{p.288}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{44}}\text{Ibid.}, \text{p.}\]
Kalaris

"The institutions, known as "Kalaris", were intended to foster the martial spirit of the Nayars (warrior community) and to keep them fit for work in the wars. These were fencing schools, and were generally attached to the "Bhagavati" (goddess) temple of each village." Each 'Kalari' is presided over by its 'Asan' (master), who supervised the message and the physical culture of the pupils placed under his charge. This training enabled the young men not only to become excellent warriors but also to endure any amount of fatigue, to show wonderful feats with their body.

Sreedhara Menon says that if the Sabha Mutts and the Ezhuthupalli took care of the purely academic aspects of education, the 'Kalari' catered to the needs of physical culture or physical education. The Kalari was an indigenous institution peculiar to Kerala. Each 'kara' or village had its Kalari. It was customary for children who completed their education in the village schools to proceed to the 'kalari' for getting trained in gymnastics and the use of arms.46

Christian Seminaries and Western Education

The 'Salais' and Sabha Mutts were serving in a way the needs of theological education as far as the Hindus were concerned. The Muslims had their educational schools known as "Madrasas." "But it is with the church in Kerala that we associate theological education

45 Padmanabha Menon, (Vol. I), p.472
46 Sreedhara menon (1979), p.288
Portuguese were mainly responsible for establishing seminaries in Kerala for theological studies. Portuguese were also responsible for the introduction of printing presses in Kerala. The earliest of the presses were those set up in 1577 at Cochin and Vaipicotta. The first printed book, namely, the Tamil version of the theological work 'Doctrine Christiana' was issued from Cochin in 1579. The Portuguese also established printing presses in Quilon, Kodungallur and Ambazhakad. Simultaneously, the Portuguese also set up seminaries and colleges for training up priests for service in the church. The earliest of the seminaries was established at Kodungallur in 1541. They started a Jesuit College at Cochin. With this, Cochin became a great Latin Centre. The establishment of printing presses, theological Seminaries and Colleges helped the progress of education and enlightenment in general and Christian theological education in particular.

There were seminaries at Kottayam and still these seminaries are continuing with the educational programme. All these places had good libraries to supplement knowledge to the students. Some of these libraries are the store-houses for old documents in Syriac language.

The introduction of Western education marks a great epoch in the history of Kerala. The credit for taking the first tangible steps towards the introduction and diffusion of Western education

48 Ibid., p.292
goes to the Christian missionaries. The Catholic missionaries who first landed in Kerala were more interested in the propagation of their faith. But the Protestant missionaries who followed them took keen interest in the spread of Western education. The Western education had its own impact on the social, economic, religious, political and cultural life of Kerala. As a powerful instrument of social change, education helped in reducing the rigidity of caste system and mitigating evils. Owing to education and the subsequent social changes, untouchability and unapproachability began to vanish from the land. The lower classes were liberated from slavery. The status of women rose in the society. The spread of Western culture and English education led to the growth of National Movement in Kerala. The great treasures of the West were open to the people of the country which accelerated the intellectual growth and cultural development.

**Ancient and Medieval Centers of Learning in Kerala**

Apart from Salais, Sabha Mutta, Ezhuthupalli, etc., there were other important centers of learning in the wide sense of the term. One of the earliest centers of learning in Kerala is Trikana Matilakam near Kodungallur. It was at one time the center of scholars.

In the age of Kulasekhara of Mahodayapuram (800-1102 A.D.) educational centers flourished at Kandalur, Parthivasekharapuram, Tiruvella and Muzhikulam. On its palmy days some of the brightest

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50 Eapen, p.246.

51 Ibid., p.249.
luminaries on the literary firmament of Kerala lived here. Special mention should be made of Kulasekara Alwar, the author of the "Mukundamala," "Perumal Thirumozhi," and other famous writers, Vasudeva Battathiri, the author of the 'Yamaka Kavyas,' Tolan, the author of the "Kramadipikas" and "Attaprakarams" and Sankaranarayana, the author of the Astronomical work, "Laghubhaskariyavyakhya." 52

Quilon the capital of Venad, rose to the highest of its eminence as a center of learning under famous ruler Ravi Varma Kulasekara (1249-1314) who has been described in his Trivandrum Inscription as "the master of sixty four arts."

Under the Zamorins, Calicut attained fame as a center of Sanskrit learning all over South India. A galaxy of eighteen celebrated royal poets known as "Pathinettara Kavikal" lived at Calicut in 1466-71. Kottayam also rose to prominence as a center of learning and culture. Under the famous Vidwan Thampuran and Kerala Varma Pazhasai Raja, the art of Kathakali reached a high level of excellence at Kottayam.

Trivandrum as a Center of Learning

Trivandrum attained great fame as a center of learning and culture in the modern period commencing with the reign of Marthanda Varma (1729-1758) and his successors. Such stalwarts as Kunjan Nambiar Ramapurathu Variyar and Unnai Variyar enjoyed patronage of Travancore Court. 53 The Dharma Raja held a 'Panditha Sadas' or council of learned

53 Malayala Manorama (Kottayam), February 17, 1987.
men which gave opportunities to scholars from all parts of the kingdom to exhibit their talents and win honours.

In the 19th Century under the rulers like Maharaja Swathi Thirunal, Trivandrum reached the highest of its greatness as a center of enlightenment and culture.

In 1834 on the invitation of Maharaja Swathi Thirunal, Mr. J. Roberts, a Britisher who was the headmaster of C. M. S. English Seminary came to Trivandrum to start an English School. In 1866 it was raised to the status of a college. It is the nucleus of the present University of College, Trivandrum.

During the recent years, there have been many changes and developments which have set Kerala on the road to becoming a modern literate society. These changes ushered in a growing importance to formal education in the place of casual oral learning. As a result, the 19th Century saw the starting of night schools and libraries as adult education agencies.

The areas of erstwhile States of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar which today form the Kerala State, were foremost in developing programmes of adult education. The Kerala Christian Council, the Y. M. C. A., Rural Reconstruction Centre, the Servants of India Society the Devadhar Malabar Reconstruction Trust have to be remembered for doing effective and pioneering work in the State. The Government

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56 Pushpita Joh, p. 23
also came up with the gesture of giving grants to night schools and also recommending the starting of village reading rooms for the purpose of spreading adult education.

The years immediately following Independence, saw a great advance in the literacy and adult education programme. The government of the State of Travancore - Cochin inaugurated the State Social Education Schemes in 1951. It was a joint venture with the Department of Education and Community Development, and the Library Association actively participating. The State Department of Education instituted an Adult Education Research Training Center in Trivandrum.\(^\text{57}\)

According to the 1981 census, Kerala, the southern most state has the highest percentage of literacy (70\%) in the country. When a considerable part of the population of several states in the country were steeped in illiteracy, Kerala did well to bring their children under organized instruction.\(^\text{58}\)

Years before the advent of independence people of Kerala had attained a high percentage of literacy and good aptitude for reading. This can be authenticated by the fact that so many public libraries came to existence during the 19th Century itself. Today Kerala has the highest literacy rate. Kerala topped the States in women's education also. "The growth of public libraries in the nook and corner of Kerala may be one of the reasons for this tremendous

\(^{57}\)Ibid., p. 24.

growth of literacy." There are 5500 public libraries in Kerala, one in every ten square kilometers.

Comparative Figures of Kerala in the census since the formation of Kerala State (1981 census report) shows the following details:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>1951-61</th>
<th>1961-71</th>
<th>1971-81</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Area</strong></td>
<td>38,863 sq. km.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Density of population</strong> (Persons per sq. km)</td>
<td>435</td>
<td>549</td>
<td>655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex ratio (females per 1000 males)</strong></td>
<td>1022</td>
<td>1016</td>
<td>1032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Literacy rate total</strong>:</td>
<td>56.85</td>
<td>60.42</td>
<td>70.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male Literacy rate</strong></td>
<td>54.97</td>
<td>66.62</td>
<td>75.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female Literacy rate</strong></td>
<td>38.90</td>
<td>54.31</td>
<td>65.73</td>
</tr>
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The succeeding chapters of this Paper would reveal the history and development of public library movement in Kerala and examine its effects on the social, cultural and educational advancement of the State.