CHAPTER I

LAND AND PEOPLE OF MAVELIKKARA

The ancient town of Mavelikkara is situated in Alappuzha district of Kerala on the banks of the river Acchankovil. It is the southern part of Alappuzha district. Its geographical location is 8km east of national highway NH 47 and 15 km west of the central road. The State Highway and MC road lie at latitude 9.15° north and longitude 76.32° east and 25 feet above sea level. The history of Mavelikkara dates back around 400 years.

The known history of Mavelikkara starts from the reign of King Maveli who ruled the Madathinkoor kingdom, whose capital was Kambam and Koodallur. Before the reign of King Maveli there existed a kingdom called Odnad. This was also called Onattukara. Mavelikkara is known as the capital of Onattukara. Onattukara is famous for its agro climatic zone. Blessed by natural resources, Mavelikkara has flourished from very ancient times as a land of rich and diverse traditions in art forms, culture and religion and has registered prosperity in agriculture and trade activities. Mavelikkara is geographically divided into five natural segments. The coastal belt, plains, valleys, high lands and slanty region. The coastal belt stretches along the Arabian Sea coast and the soil in this region is sandy. The soil condition is clay combined with loose soil in the eastern parts.  

The offshore sea in this region is more than twenty metres deep. The locale is quite alluring for a natural poet. It attracted the merchants and traders to carry out trade and commerce by sea from time immemorial. The plains are very fertile and soil is laterite. This region is rich in agricultural products like paddy, coconut, banana gingelly, etc.60

The slanty land is covered with red soil, small stones and pebbles. Mango, tapioca, oil seeds and other tuber crops are extensively cultivated here. The high land of this region, where the soil is red sandy has an average elevation of 40 metres from the mean sea level. The valleys play a pivotal role in the topography of Mavelikkara. The valleys are noted for soil erosion. Though soil in this region is fertile, constant erosion is a great threat to farming.61

Terminology and history

The origin of the name Mavelikkara is shrouded in obscurity. People of the locality believe that the term Mavelikkara might have been derived from the goddess Mahalekshmi. Mavelikkara signifies that it is the land blessed by Mahalekshmi, the Goddess of prosperity. Ma is Mahalekshmi, and Veli has got the meaning Guard. Ma and Veli are two measures of the Sangham era. The land name may indicate the fact that it was an area which produced immeasurable quantities of paddy.62

60. Muncipality records 2007. p2
61. ibid, p. 2
62. opicit, p 10
There is difference of opinion regarding the origin of the term Mavelikkara as one notion observes that it is the shore of a great ocean and so they call it Mavelikkara. Mavelikkara, from very ancient times, was a part of Onattukara (north to Desinganadu) and was governed by the Kayamkulam rulers, with its capital at Kandiyoor Mattom. In the 11th century literature, Thiruvallacheppedu, Unniyadicharitham and Unnuneelisandhesam there are references to the history of Odanadu and Kandiyoor.

It is believed that during the Sangam period, the regions including Mavelikkara have been under the control of Ayi rulers. Many of the festivals in this region indicate the presence of an agricultural society during that period. In course of time; this place witnessed different religious and cultural formations like Buddhism, Hinduism and Christianity. Under the influence of various cultural streams, Mavelikkara evolved into a cultural locale moulded under specific socio-economic conditions.

Onattukara consisted of four kovilakams-Perakathu, Cherayi, Puthiyidathu, and Pazhedathu. The eldest member of these kovilakams was made the king of Onattukara. Later Onattukara split into two, one conjoined to Venad and the other remained as Kayamkulam. In 1737, Ramayyan became the Dhalva of Venad. In 1746, Marthandavarma conquered the land and annexed it to Travancore. During his period, Mavelikkara came into prominence as a major business centre of Venad. After this, Ramayyan constructed a ‘Pandakasala’ at Mavelikkara.

63. Kandiyoor Mattom denotes river side. Geographically, Mattom represents lower grassland, where lord sreekhanda’s image is constructed so people like to call this place as Kandiyoor
64. Karazham Venugopal, Chennithalayude Kshethra Samskara Samithy, 2002, p 19
65. Orthodox Sabha’s hereditary, Orthodox Sabha’s Suvioner, 2009, p 1
An agreement of mutual territorial integrity was signed between the Dutch and the Travancore rulers at Mavelikkara in 1753. As a memorial to this agreement the Dutch donated a sthamba vilakku to the Sree Krishna temple at Mavelikkara. Ramayyan also constructed a ‘kotta’ (fort) at Mavelikkara. After the rule of Dhalva, Lord Macualay destroyed it in 1809. This place in the heart of the town is also known as Kottakkakam, and the Dhalva Madom near the Sree Krishna Temple is also considered as a monument of these events.67

Mavelikkara is also famous as a land of palaces; royalty of these castles is reflected all over the place. The site of the Royal Palace Gate at the back of Raja Ravi Varma College is an example for this. Archaeologists uphold the view that the peculiar feature of Mavelikkara was the presence of Buddha Mandapams which indicate the presence of Buddhism in the 6th & 7th AD. The chariots festivals of Mavelikkara, viz Chettikulangara Kumbha Bharani, Vettiyar temple’s Vishu Utsavam etc, resemble the chariots festival of North Indian temples.68

The museum of Kerala Panini A.R Raja Raja Varma, who laid the foundation of Malayalam language, is known as Sharada Mandiram, which is situated near Lord Sree Krishna temple. The table, chair, crown, pallaku, etc used by him and many of his paintings are preserved here. The Sree Krishna Temple, Kandiyoor Lord Shiva temple, Chettikulangara Devi temple, Puthiyakavu St. Mary’s Cathedral, C.S.I Christ Church,

67. Malayala Manorama, Mavelikkara’s Palaces special Feature 2003, Kottayam edition .P 1
68. Charoit festivals of North Indian Puri Temple
Pathichira St John’s Valiya Palli, Mavelikkara Mosque (pookada junction), etc are the epitome of religious harmony. The mutual love and affection of Hindu and Christian communities of Mavelikkara is evident from the ‘Purathezhunnallippu’ and ‘Ethirelppu’ the processions of Puthiyakavu Devi Temple which start in front of the Puthiyakavu St.Mary’s Cathedral Church. Mutual faith and harmony between these religions existing for long remain unaffected to date.69

**Geo Bio Diversity**

Soil is one of the most important natural resources. Soil is made up of stones, rocks and sand. The types of soil differ from place to place. Different kinds of soil are found in different regions of Kerala. The fertile soil found in Mavelikkara made Mavelikkara rich in the field of agriculture. This land is also known as upper Kuttanad region.

Alluvial soil is very fertile. It is found close to river banks which are finely layered. Agricultural fields are the main beneficiaries of this soil. Under the red soil, fertile soil is also present in the plain area which is good for cultivation. At various places in Mavelikkara Taluk, alluvial soil is also present.

Laterite soil is made up of mud, stones and rocks. It is found in the hilly and mountainious slopes. There is a high content of iron in this soil, whose contents

---

69. Puthiyakavu Devi Temple Vieshalpathippu .p.4
change according to the climatic conditions. Laterites are also used for building houses; hard varieties are cut into blocks and are used as brick stones. Climate has a great influence in the formation of laterite soil which is rich in nitrogen and has very little contents of phosphorous and calcium.\(^{70}\)

The variety of soil found in Mavelikkara has enriched the fertility of this area. This place definitely is an upper Kuttanadu zone. Vast paddy fields are seen in places where this type of soil is abundantly present. In the plains which have laterite soil, the lower areas are widely deposited with silt. Natural resources come from nature. People do not make natural resources, but gather them from the surroundings. Examples are air, water, oil, solar energy, wind energy.

Water is a very essential and is the cultural resource of Kerala. Uses of water cover agricultural, industrial, household and environmental activities. Virtually all of these human uses require fresh water. 97% of the water on earth is salt water. However, only 3% is fresh water; slightly over two thirds of this is frozen in glaciers and polar ice caps.\(^{71}\)

Kerala’s heavy rain and hot climate help the formation of laterite soil. The presence of nitrogen is more and calcium and phosphorous are much less in this soil. Another section of soil called Onattukara Mannu (soil) or Mavelikkara Mannu is also known as ‘Chara Mannu’ (ash soil). It is believed that during the ancient period the

\(^{70}\) Kissan informations File Chennithala agriculture office, p.8

\(^{71}\) Soil conservation department records, p 3
sea might have deposited this soil at the time of sea erosion. This soil is seen as white sand without the mixture of laterite soil or silt. A speciality of this soil is that water will not get stagnated for a long period in this soil. Because of this, fertility is also much less. Since water or moisture will not remain for long in this soil, it is being called as ‘Chorimanal (Quicksand).’

Nature and natural resources are very much important for the economic structure of any state. Water clears the way for the all round progress of the state. Many centuries ahead of evolving transport facilities on land, transport facilities had been through lakes and rivers from the southern end of Kerala to the northern end, from coastal area to hilly zones. The lakes, rivers and canals which poured life force into the life of the people in all spheres of the state, remained as the blood vessels of this state.

Agricultural pattern

Mavelikkara has been hailed as a land of immense prosperity, in many ancient literary works in Malayalam about Mavelikkara apart from the works of Kumaran Asan. The hard work of the people of Mavelikkara made Onattukara a trade centre. Various canals and water bodies of Mavelikkara made the soil of Mavelikkara very fertile. Major crops like paddy, coconut, banana and gingelly are grown in plenty. Besides these, Jack fruit tree, mango tree and other fruit yielding varieties are also grown. Tuber crops like tapoica are also seen here. All types of oil seeds are also grown.

---

72. Interview with agriculture officer at Chettikulangara
Mavelikkara is also famous for its cattle rearing. As a result of this “Kalakettutsavam” is also celebrated.

In Mavelikkara area the agricultural land is divided into four layers (levels). Higher level plots (purayidangal) are paddy fields. The field or meadow (thara or thakidi) in between the plots and paddy fields and the lowest lying dry field (punchanilangal) is known as virippu. First crop kharif (cultivated in the month of Kanni) is Mundakan and second crop is Rabi, i.e two paddy cultivation and one sesame (gingelly) cultivation as third crop are being cultivated in Mavelikkara’s soil. The seeds used for first crop paddy cultivation were called Onattukara Kochuvithu. These seeds are of pleasant form, short ripening period and have good resistance against diseases and insects.74

For the second crop, two types of seeds called Champavu and Mundakan are used. These seeds need a longer more ripening period, shooting spikes during winter (season bound), hay and resistance against diseases. For cultivation (dry field Puncha) also Kochuvithu seeds were used. Besides seeds like Munnayar, Thavalakkannu, Vallala, etc were also used. When water availability was more, ‘Kulappala’s seeds were used. The speciality of Kulappala seeds is that as the water level rises, the plants will grow very fast. In the case of a few varieties of seeds with short ripening period, paddy will become ripe within specific damp i.e period bound cultivation.75

74. Kissan Information File, 2007, p.2
Sesame (Gingelly) is being cultivated as third crop. Gingelly of Mavelikkara area is known as ‘Karellu’. It is believed that the Onattukara gingelly which has a ripening period of 75 to 80 days has considerable medicinal properties. Now paddy cultivation is considerably reduced. The main occupation of the major portion of the households is farming.76

Kochukunju’s words on the system of cultivation:

It was believed that 28th and 29th of Meenam are the days of land preparation and nobody should enter the field during this period. The field is prepared and the seeds are seen ahead of the south–west monsoon (Edavapathi). During this shower or (In this rain which is available ahead of south-West monsoon (Edavapathi) the field is prepared and seeds are sown). Sowing seeds through the channels created by the ploughs in a ‘Njori’ is the method of sowing. The channel created by the plough is called ‘Pozhi’ (furrow). This system of sowing is called ‘follow the furrows and sow the seeds (Pozhipidichu Vitheduka)’. There should be a distance of ½’ between the rows and 9-11’ between the ‘Njoris’. The seeds should be taken inside the hand and sown in such a way that 15-20 seeds should fall in one ‘Njori’. Harvesting of the first crop will begin in the month of Karkidakam. After the harvest the month ‘Chingam’ will be welcomed. Making the statement

75 Chennithala Agricultural office conducted seminar Krishyum Anubavigallum
76 Dr. Cheravally Sasi, Odanadinte Ulthudippukal, Sky book Publications, 2007, p 73
Onamootunna Kara became Onattukara meaningful, after the harvest of the first crop, ‘Onam’ a harvest festival comes in the month of Chingam.  

Second crop cultivation is called ‘Mundakan’ cultivation. Here the seeds are sown in the month of Midhunam and Karkidakam. After sowing of seeds, the water will be drained out. The seeds germinated like this are called as ‘Kuruppu Vithu’ (tender seedlings). In this period also the practice of using water wheel is there for getting water. It is seen that while using the water wheel ‘Chakram Chavittu pattu’ (Singing while operating the water wheel) is sung. By December-January reaping or harvest will begin. On the outskirts of Mavelikkara, ‘Makarakoythu’ is celebrated as a festival. The paddy obtained after harvest will be collected and kept as a heap. This heap of paddy is known as Poli.

Another important stage of Mavelikkara’s agricultural heritage is the summer crop sesame (gingelly) cultivation. After Makara Koiethu (harvest of Makara month), field will be ploughed with country-plough thoroughly. Using a fork the rubbish weeds etc will be removed and the field is prepared and sesame seeds are sown. The sesame plants will grow up to a height of five ft in certain fields. The fruit of sesame is called as ‘Kathika’. Having a life span of three months, the sesame plants are uprooted in the mornings. After removing the leaves by shaking the uprooted plants, it will be kept under sun light for three to five days. After this the fruits (Kathika) will split and...

---

77. Interview with Kochukunju (Chennithala Neluleppaddaka samath member under the Chennithala agricultural department, Chennithala grama panchayath

78. Vallikunnam Panchayat agricultural department seminar report, 2007, p.5
sesame seeds (Ellu) will come out. This will be cleaned by winnowing and sifting and kept (stored) safely. The people of Mavelikkara have given much importance to agriculture.\footnote{Kissan information file, Chettikulangara agricultural office, 2007, p.7}

Mavelikkara, a part of Onattukara has an important position in the agricultural map. The old saying that the people of Onattukara have made the people of other states enjoy ‘onam feast’ with their agricultural produce is very much apt. There are plenty of places connected with paddy cultivation.

Mavelikkara also known as Onattukara is the place lying between the sea and backwaters, a section of land in the middle of the red soil area in the East and the Arabian Sea in the west. Kerala is classified into 13 agro-climatic zones; Onattukara is an important agricultural zone among them.\footnote{Chennithala Panchayat Janakiyasuthram, 2008. P7}

Names of places connected with paddy cultivation are plenty here. The place with low lying paddy fields became ‘Thazhakkara’, the place where Eranellu’ was cultivated became Erela, the field where pannom seeds were used became Ponnela. The place where ‘Chemnellu’ was cultivated became Chennithala; etc. That is how the place names are connected with paddy cultivation. The field which was very close to the ‘Palli’ became Pallippadu. All these transformation stories are very famous. The cultivation system of Mavelikkara is mixed with the agricultural names. Dealing with
puncha cultivation; the important punchas (dry fields) are Thazhakkara Puncha, Vallikunnam Puncha, and Karingalil Chalil Puncha.

**Regional variations of agricultural language**

There is some technicality in the agricultural language of the farmers of each place. They identify the natural things and agricultural appliances by pretty names. The main livelihood of the earlier periods of the dwellers of Onattukara who had azert for cultivation and affinity towards hard work was mainly from paddy cultivation. So there are many technical names connected with the agricultural culture of Mavelikkara. Words used by the illiterate farmers such as *Polathekku, Pothan, Misaru* (days food, fire wood), *Korandi, Pathamburam, chamban, Pazhukka Pookkachola, Thonnan, Konjatta, Pedi, Vedala, Kurumba, Cheramam, Poovazhi, Mon thi, Durisam, Paranu, Erayam, Koorappu*, etc are the pure village usages which require translation.

We can see some other arrangement of words (usages) which can be claimed Mavelikkara’s own. Take *Appem Ooppem* (unwanted people) *Kilichatham Mulachatham* (unwanted queries) *Thannem Pinnem* (repeatedly) (again and again) such dictions, proverbs like Nellari Koduthu pullari vanguka, Ellu Koduthal ellolam, *Muttam Vettunnavanu Munnazhi, Adukuparayunnuvan Anjazhi, Kalaparikkanjal*

81. ibid. p8
Vilakanam, Njazhi, Njattil pizhachal chottil pizhakkum, all these are connected with agriculture.82

Barter system also existed there in Mavelikkara, so the grass seeds used to be bought by giving paddy seeds even if the transaction was under loss. If ellu is given what you get back will also be ellu – as we give, those who cut the wood will get three measures only, but those who talk pleasingly will get five measures. If weeds are not plucked in time, we can see the consequences reflected in the crop. If the things are not done timely, the yield will be very poor. If the seedlings are not good, it can be seen in the food. If the contribution is not good, the outcome will also be much less.

**Agriculture and worship of deities**

The people of Mavelikkara have an inseparable relation between agriculture and worship of god. As far as Mavelikkara is concerned, the importance of paddy field is very great. People of this area are using paddy fields for functions like keeping down and displaying Kettukazhcha, conducting plays, performing rolling, etc. When the fields are yielding crops abundantly, the farmers show their gratitude towards the deity concerned. The new year of paddy coming up is an occasion of expectation for the farmers, *(Kathir pooja)* and a religious rite, also called as Illam Nira is there for the farmers to conduct pooja for the year of paddy.

---

82. Interview with local people
Another indispensable ritual connected with agriculture in Mavelikkara is the Kathir Kala or Kathir Kala ritual. The farmers of yester year could not imagine paddy farming without oxen and ploughs. Though he daily ties the oxen that help them to make the land fertile, one day they will carry an idol of the ox on their back, shoulders and worship it, ritualistically.\textsuperscript{83}

The belief of the old is that if they worship the oxen who help them in cultivation, they can get greater yield. Covering the ox with white or red silk cloth, with ornamental hangings and bells on umbrellas, enclosed in wheel carts they will go around the field and then reach the temple for worship. Kathir Kala is smaller than Kettukala. These oxen were fed with the spikes of paddy and decorated with paddy spikes. After reaching temple with fanfare, the farmers will make offerings.

Another agricultural ritual is \textit{Ucharam}. Since the Aran (the planet Mars) reaches, the zenith from Makaram 28\textsuperscript{th} onwards, (Malayalam Month), \textit{Ucharam} is celebrated in Mavelikkara’s soil in that assumption. As part of this, \textit{Pathayam} (large wooden chest for storing paddy and other grains) will be closed by dusk for three days. During these days paddy should not be taken or given. The next two days there should not be any farming work or cleaning of the house usually. On the fourth day the barn will be opened. That day a heap of dry leaves will be burned in the field. With this, Ucharam comes to an end.

\textsuperscript{83} Dr. Cheravally Sasi, Nattukrishiyude Anushtana padangal, Janapadam, April, 2010. P 30
The basis of this ritual is the belief that mother earth goes in through the period of menstruation and the farmers with respect allows her to take rest for three days. The zeal of the agricultural tradition of the masses can be seen reaching its pinnacle and that is not easily explained. Mavelikkara has plenty of stories to be narrated and they are all connected with agricultural abundance. The crop and belief connected with agricultural abundance existed here.  

The cultivation of betel leaf was a very important one; the important one is that nobody should enter the betel-vineyard during dusk. Another one is about male-female betel leaves. If the left side of the leaf is elevated, that is female and if the right side is so that is male. For auspicious occasions only female betel leaves should be used. Male leaves are used for chewing only. Like this on Tuesdays and Fridays and Sankrama days, bronze vessels, gold, jewels, paddy and rice should not be lent or taken or borrowed.

Paddy and rice should not be measured facing the south. It is very auspicious to see paddy after awakening from sleep. Like this so many beliefs still exist in Mavelikkara, which is also known as upper Kuttanadu, forming the major part of the paddy land. After paddy cultivation, the next main crop is coconut. This place had country oil mills to extract oil from gingelly and coconuts. The bulls were used to the turn the oil-mill. Chettiar who have made the oil-mills operation their hereditary

84. ibid. p31
85. opcit. p35
work have their family names like Vaniyathoppu, Chettikulangara, Kopprappura, and Chakkalakkal, etc. still exist. Varieties of tubers like, *yams, Colacasia, ariceunut amaranthus, tapioca* and other vegetables and spices etc are commonly seen here.\(^{86}\)

If the condition of coconut cultivation is looked into, it can be seen that *Padinjaran Nediya Enam* was usually cultivated everywhere. In some places other varieties like Komadan, TxD ,DxT, Lakshadweep, are being cultivated. At an average 30-35 coconuts are available from a coconut tree.\(^{87}\)

Markets are the milestones of any culture and their development or progress. In Mavelikkara region there were very famous markets, trade centres to sell the agricultural products of farmers and to buy the materials for agricultural purposes. Mattom & Sreeparvatham markets were very famous. Detailed narration is there in Unniyadi Charitham about these markets and the materials sold here.\(^{88}\)

Kumbha Bharani Market of Chettikulangara is an important fair held in connection with Chettikulangara Kumbha Bharani festival to buy and sell the products and implements. All types of agricultural products and agricultural implements (appliances) used to be sold and bought here. Other important markets of Mavelikkara are Mankamkuzhi market, Kannattumuri market, Karippuzha market, Kallumala market, Kurathikadu market and Punnamood market.\(^{89}\)

---

\(^{86}\) Interviews with Vaniyathoppil Family  
\(^{87}\) Kayamkulam Coconut Research Centre Report, p2  
\(^{88}\) Suranad KunJan Pillai, Unniyadicharitham , 1956, p27
ACHANKOVIL RIVER

Kerala has in the present territory under its government, 41 west flowing rivers and three east running ones which together with five west flowing rivers of the 4 taluks of south Travancore ceded to Tamil nadu, make Kerala an aqua – cradle that nurtures a riparian civilization. Achan Kovil River plays an important role in the geographical division of Mavelikkara influencing its historical evolution.90 The Achan Kovil River which has a length of about 128 km and its three tributaries are Kallar, Patthanamthitta and Alappuzha. Achan Kovil Rivers were used for internal transport and trading activities in the ancient period. The spices produced in the hilly area were transported to the coastal ports through these rivers.

During the modern period the Europeans expanded their sphere of domination through these rivers. The average annual rainfall of this river is 2600 mm. About 1484 sq.km are the catchment area of this river. The towns on the banks of the Achan Kovil River are Konni, Pathanamthitta, Pandalam and Mavelikkara.91 This river is in a latitude of 9º.00’ – 9º-18’N, longitude of 7º-20'- 77º as per the findings in the study by CWRDM92 of Kozhikode about the water availability of Achankovil River. By 2050, it will be less by 459 million cubic metres.93 The abundance of water in the Achan Kovil River changes the course of Mavelikkara Kuttamperur River and Puthen river which are the two main tributaries of Achan Kovil River. The small rivers

89. ibid, p28
90. Chettikulangara Kumbabharani Chantha, Mathrubhumi, 2008, March, 11, p4
92. ibid p.3
originating from Ramakalmedu, a place near Achan Kovil, Koovamala and Hrishimala join together and flow to a distance of 128 km through three districts and reach Veyapuram and merge with the Pampa. The Achan Kovil River on one side transforms itself in to the holy river Pamba, the destroyer of sins, flowing 176 km and reaching here, on the other side.94

These river banks and the dwelling centres are the cradle of the landscape here. Kuttanperur River and Puthen River are the gulf of nature and the ancestors controlled the flow of these two rivers to make the entire area of agricultural land very fertile. Kuttanperur River starts from Ulunthi, a place on the north east of Mavelikkara and travels 8 km through Gramam, Ennakkadu and Budhanoor and merges with the Pamba at Nakkada. The river flowing through both sides is the living blood vessels of the Pamba and the Achan Kovil River.95 When water rises in the Achan Kovil River, the excess water flows in to the Pamba River. The Chennithala Palliyodam of Mavelikkara which visits Aranmula every year for more than 100 years travels the Achan Kovil River to participate in the Aranmula boat race conducted every year on the eve of Onam.

Kuttanadu is Asia’s biggest water ridge dwelling system. It is known as the granary of Kerala. Mavelikkara taluk is a part of upper Kuttanad. With the end of the rainy season, the water sources in different parts of Mavelikkara taluk stop their flow and

93. C.W.R.D.M—Centre whater Resource Development Management
94. Alappuzha District Gazetteer, p. 4
95. Ibid. P.5
turn in to a muddy channel. Even then this river continues to flow through Kuttanadu without drying up and joins the Vembanadu Lake.\(^{96}\) Joint studies conducted by the National Water Development Authority (NWDA) under the Central Water Resources Department Prepared a report on the possibility study of Achan Kovil-Veppar Link Canal Project in August 1995 and submitted its report to the governments of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. A decision on this project has not been taken so far purportedly owing to certain technical problems.\(^{97}\)

The influence of gulf money on Mavelikkara taluk has increased during the past ten years. Subsequently the construction field has improved and the demand for river sand has increased excessively. It can be said that the trend has become a threat to the existence of the Achan Kovil River. The important water bodies in the town include the Achankovil River, Thodiyoor, Arattukadavu canal and a few sub canals reaching the above major canals. Theruvilkulam, Valliakulam, Velloorkulam, Kattukulam, are the famous ponds found here.\(^{98}\)

**Geology**

Achan Kovil River flows through a variety of rock types. The major geological formations of the watershed are Archaean crystallines, viz. charnockite with patches

---

\(^{96}\) Allappuzha jilla panchayath records  
\(^{97}\) ibid. 53,  
\(^{98}\) Opicit. p, 78,
of granite, biotite geniss with migmatite. Other litho units are literite, sand stone and coastal alluvium with a little clay and lignite intercalation. The river is unique in that along its route, we can see a large number of ancient temples. They indicate the richness of the river basin, identified by human beings since ancient times and that they preferred to settle down there so that they could grow crops in the fertile lands.\textsuperscript{99} Edappon, a place famous for its flora and fauna is on the banks of the Achan Kovil River. The annual discharge of Achan Kovil River is 1.48Km3/year and transports a significant amount of solute flux ($1389 \times 10^6 \text{ t/yr}$) and suspended flux ($27 \times 10^6 \text{ t/yr}$) to the Vembanad estuary lake.\textsuperscript{100}

**Stream length ratio of Achan Kovil River**

Stream length has an important relationship with the surface flow and discharge. The total length of all streams in the basin is calculated to be 2889.83km. Horton (1945) defines length ratio (RI) as the ratio of mean length of channel segment of a given order to that of a lower order. A large number of smaller streams are developed where the formations are less permeable.\textsuperscript{101}

**Achan Kovil River Circularity Ratio**

The circularity ratio of Achan Kovil River basin is twenty, which indicates that the area is characterized by high to moderate relief and drainage system with structurally controlled length and the drainage frequency of streams. Land use, land cover, climate

\textsuperscript{99} Http://ien.wikipedia.org/Achan Kovil,p, 1
\textsuperscript{100} ibid. p2
\textsuperscript{101} Drainage Characteristics Achan Kovil River basin Kerala, Journal Ecological Society of India Vol 7 June 2008, p, 843
relief and slopes influence the aerial parameters like elongation and circularity ratios of the basins.\textsuperscript{102}

**Art & Craft Diversity**

In Kerala’s cultural tradition, Mavelikkara’s handicraft heritage is an unavoidable one. Certain business activities are also connected with this. In Mavelikkara the best one is the traditional making style of metal products moulded in metals which was a commercial art in olden days. The articles like idols of God and Goddesses seen in the ancient temples of Mavelikkara, statues, lamps, big flat vessels of bronze (Varppu), copper vessels for boiling paddy, are traditionally made in Mannar near Mavelikkara. These products proclaim the extreme beauty of art work. The lamps of this place are in different shapes and sizes. Aalila lamp (Banyan leaf shape), serpent lamp, pooja lamps, etc. are some of the important items among them. Many wooden instruments with painting, carved pictures etc are also seen here. In many Temples and Churches of Kerala these carvings are seen. The handicrafts in wood are among the old art works of Kerala.\textsuperscript{103}

The wooden articles are chairs, tables, setties, sofa, almirahs, divancot, radio stand, etc. The notable (great) wooden carvings are on Lord Krishna’s childhood plays, Rugmini Swayamvaram, stories on incarnations, etc. Plenty of carvings are there in Mavelikkara’s Kandiyoor temple, Thripperumthur temple, Mattam Narasimha

\textsuperscript{102} ibid., 845
\textsuperscript{103} Aleppy District Gazetteer, wood Carving, p, 26
temple, etc. Besides these, the carvings in the church of Puthiyakavu are very attractive. Many expert artists from ‘Asari’ (carpenter) community were making picture paintings and carvings here. Making of baskets, waste baskets, chairs, cradle, bags, etc. was the hereditary work of people belonging to paraya community. The articles made out of canes attracted the attention of the people very much. Weavings mats, making baskets and other attractive articles were the traditional handicraft. Many products were made from bamboo. The traditional work of the goldsmiths is making ornaments. The ornaments of Kerala are noted very much for their artistic perfection.

The people of Mavelikkara use special types of ornaments on different occasions. Hindu ladies used to wear ornaments like Nagapadam, Palapoomala and Swastik chain. On special occasions adyal chains were also used. The Thalikoottam used by Namboodiri ladies is very famous. Tamil Brahmins used Kasumala, Odiyanum, and etc. Christian ladies used to wear various types of ornaments. Mekka rings, combu, thala, valika, etc. were among them. Ladies used rowka, an old fashioned blouse. White clothes were used for making rowkas. Rowka was worn by pulling in front and tying. The shape of the rowka can be placed in between a bodice and blouse. In the olden days men used to wear dhothies and an upper cloth. This upper cloth is called randammundu which is used instead of shirts. Even though shirt was introduced,

104. ibid. 27
randammund became an additional attire of the Christian ladies of old generation. Now also in some old Christian Tharavadu elder ladies still wear this dress. This also is made of white cloth. This dress is gradually disappearing. Makkathayam is a ring worn on the upper part of the ear. Christian ladies of old generation used to wear this ornament. This is a gold ring with beautiful designs and carving. The upper ear lobe had to be pierced for wearing this ornament.\(^{106}\)

**The Society**

The people of Mavelikkara are hard working and are cultured. The basic observation can be made on social formation, cultural formation, etc, of the people of Mavelikkara by connecting together the recorded evidences and folk knowledge. The social formation of Mavelikkara is very much related with the society of this place. The prehistory of Kerala is shrouded in obscurity. The Megalithic of Kerala belonging to the Megalithic complex common to south India are associated with the cult of the dead. Megalithic settlements in Kerala were divided into hunters and farmers. Kerala had contacts with foreign countries even from time immemorial.

Classical writers like Pliny, the anonymous authors ‘Peripuls’ and Ptolemy gave detailed accounts of the sea-ports through which Kerala kept up her commercial and cultural contact with foreign countries in the early centuries of the Christian era. The most important of these ports were Muziris, Tyndis, Barace and Neleynda. Muziris

\(^{106}\). Information From Public Relations department, Government of Kerala
was the gateway of ancient India and apart from serving as the emporium of trade for the Phoenicians, the Egyptians, the Greeks and the Romans in turn, it also gave shelter for the first time to the Christian, Jewish and Muslim communities who enriched the cultural heritage of Kerala. Pliny refers to Muziris as one of the most important ports of India. Muziris was the ancient name of the port near Kodungallur. The exports from this place were pepper coming from Kottanora, great quantities of fine pearls, ivory, silk cloth, diamonds and sapphires and tortoise shell.\textsuperscript{107} The author of the Periplus refers to it as a large village close to the shore situated 500 stadia north of Muziris. The place figures in Tamil literature as Thondi and it has been praised in several Tamil works of the ‘sangam’ age. It has been identified by scholars alternatively with Kadalundi, Ponnani and Pantalayani Kollam at the time when the author of the periplus wrote, Hindis was an important coastal village. Barace was a main centre of trade, situated to the south of Muziris.\textsuperscript{108}

The author of the ‘Periplus’ refers to the fact that large quantities of pepper were brought down to Barace. Several writers are inclined to identify Barace with Purakkad, near Mavelikkara, south of Alappuzha. Purakkad is also believed by some to be phonetically allied to Berace, the place having been referred to as Poraca and Porcai by Portuguese and Dutch writers. Another port to the South of Muziris mentioned by the early classical writers is Nelcynda. It is said to have been 500

\textsuperscript{107} The Culture and Civilization of Ancient India. P.83
\textsuperscript{108} A. Sreedhara Menon, A Survey of Kerala History, D.C. Books, 2007 p.17
stadia south of Muziris while some identified the place with Neendakkara others identify it with Niranam. The western countries got spices and precious stones, etc from south India.\textsuperscript{109}

In the records of Ashoka’s period there is reference to the trade by westerners with Kerala. Reference is there about Kerala in Ashoka’s second and thirteenth stone edicts (Shila Sasanam). The second stone inscription narrated that charitable hospitals for human beings and animals were established in the states lying near the border of the kingdom belonging to Cholas, Pandyas, Satheeya, Puthras and Kerala Puthras and in Thambapanni. These stone inscriptions were installed in six places. In the 13\textsuperscript{th} stone instructions reference is there about the moral victory he could achieve outside his kingdom.\textsuperscript{110}

Cheras are also included in the reference from Chola Pandyas to Thambipanni. It was not able to consider that there was a particular religious belief for the people during Sangha Period. But they believed in supernatural powers. Paradevathas (family deities) were there for each Gothra. It can be trees, rivers or hills. They worshipped Kottavei, ’ who protected their warriors.

The first dwelling style of Kerala, Mulla, Kurunji, Eriyavan, Pulam Ozhaver, were staying in Marutha areas. These places are the cultivating land having availability of

\textsuperscript{109} Op cit .p.62, 63
\textsuperscript{110} Epigraphic India Vol II.p, 466
water. This land was permanent agricultural land ploughed and cultivated. Vellala
farmers are the ‘Uzhavars’. The Oorus together form the chief of Marutham.\textsuperscript{111}

Arrival of the people (masses) from the Mediterranean zone started in BC
1500. The great stone memorials were built up in the lap of Sahya by the people. From the
power of hard work of the people (producing more than required) they had
acquired the ability to produce more than what they required. The use of iron existed
for a long period. Their main occupation was rearing of cattle. Agriculture was an
added occupation.\textsuperscript{112} In North India the Indo-Aryan culture was widely spread when
the great stone culture started growing in South India. It can be considered that the
Aryans who attacked Indus Valley Civilization in 18\textsuperscript{th} Century B.C., after fighting
for some period started compromising with the Dravidians.\textsuperscript{113}

The importance of Buddhism is very much evident in Mavelikkara’s soil. The
temple festivals and customs such as Chettikulangara Kuthiottom and Kettukaczha
have originated from Buddhist customs and practices. It is said that Sreemoolavasam
was situated to the south of Purakkadu, the Odanadu’s west coast Thirkunnapuzha,situated 15 km east of this the Buddha idol of Mavelikkara’s Putharachan is there. To the south of Mavelikkara, at Bharanikavu a turban wearing,
meditating Buddha idol is seen. The image is popularly known as Pallikkal Puthrachen
which, term is interpreted as a corruption of Buddhar Achen.\textsuperscript{114} The other famous

\textsuperscript{111} Dr. Rajan Gurukkal, Keralathinte prake Charithram, Kanaka Keralam Charitravum Varthamanavum, Editor Babu John, Published by Bharath Bhavan, Jan. 2011 p.24
\textsuperscript{112} The Birth of Indian Civilization, P, 29
\textsuperscript{113} D.D.Kosambi, an Introduction to the Study of History, Vikas publishing house p. 96
Buddha idols are at Maruthur Kulangara of Karunagappally on the southern side of Odanadu and Karumadi on the eastern side of Purakkadu.\(^\text{115}\)

The places like Pallicharitham, Pallippuram, etc. have many Buddhist monasteries. The goddesses of Jainas, ‘Padmavathy Devi and the Buddhists Pranjaparamatha became Hindu Bhagavathis later. The Kuthirakettu being conducted at Chettikulangara temple in Mavelikkara taluk reminds us of the Buddhist festival of North India narrated by the Chinese traveller Huyan-Sang. According to the schedule for ascertaining the divisions of land, the head quarters of the centres of the chieftains were generally arranged in the western coastal areas.

The headquarters of Odanadu was shifted from Kandiyoor Mattam to Eruva and from there to Kayamkulam. Kandiyoor temple was constructed about three years before the Malayalam era began. The growth of the temple is very clear from the documents obtained after years of the installation of the idol in the temple.\(^\text{116}\)

This record relates to the handing over of land by Odanattu Narayanan to Chandrasekharan Thiruvikkaram in the presence of Kodikkulathil Iravikumaran Thirikkunta Poozharaman. Thathan and Thaliyadhikari seen in each and every part, people including Thamaracheri Damodaran Narayanan, few should give Akkiltham to the temple by managing the temple rightfully. Odandu Naryanan Chandrasekharan

\(^\text{114.} \) Puttarkulam- The plot of ground near the place of the discovery of this image is even now known as Puttarkavu and a tank near by as

\(^\text{115.} \) Sanku Iyer, Keralavum Buddha Mathavum, p 65

\(^\text{116.} \) Dr. N.M .Namboothri, Kerala Samskkaram, Akkavumpuravum, Calicut University, Central Co-operative Stores. p.225
who donated the land to the Karalar might be an Odanadu chieftain. If the conditions in that offering are revoked, the temple management should be abandoned.117

The division of Mooshakanadu in the north and Venadu in the south has affected the landscape and the social structure of Kerala considerably. Different Swaroopams were there and they came to be known as either Naduvazhi or Nadudaivars and they were the rulers of the land. The Swaroopam was divided into many family branches and a lot of dynasties were formed from this. Each dynasty was again divided into small domains or units and it led to the formation of a feudal family system. In modern Kerala historiography, the swaroopams and their chiefs are unproblematically represented as Kingdoms and Kings.

The term Swaroopam in fact refers to two different entities; the first, as we have already mentioned, in the space in which ‘Muppu’ vaazcha’ takes place and the second is the family of the Muppu and others involved in the Vaazcha.118

There are references about Thara, Thara Koottam, and Nattu Koottam etc. each one being a system of ruling the state. Thinking about traditional history, an explanation available there that Thara was the basic of the dwellings of the people only and group committee of this was called as ‘Tharakoottam’ and the committee of Tharakoottams was called as ‘Nattu Koottams. Each state was divided into Tharas for the civil rule at

117. Ibid. p.226
the village level was the running of the Thara under the direction of Nair organization. There is an opinion that Noottavar sangham is the group of these elders (Karanavers).

The general observation is that four families were responsible for each Thara. It can be considered that Munnoottuvar, Anjoottavar and Arunoottavar were the representations of these Tharas.\textsuperscript{119} The tendencies of breaking down the traditional Brahmin families centered on the village temples and spreading of these Brahmin families all over the land sectors due to various reasons started with the fall of Cheras. In the 7\textsuperscript{th} and 8\textsuperscript{th} century, the Brahmins reached Kerala from the north. During that period Kings and Chieftains donated land for establishing Brahmin villages. The Muzhikkulam records of the 10\textsuperscript{th} century are the oldest record narrating about the Namboodiri Urallors, the Administrators of the temples.\textsuperscript{120}

In the beginning of the 12\textsuperscript{th} century itself the Namboodiries started controlling the Kings. Slave-trade was also started after Brahmin domination. After the strengthening of the caste-system slavery was started. Political and administrative structures and institutional arrangement took various forms during the period of state formation in Kerala.\textsuperscript{121}

The institutions where religious and temporal matters were discussed are the Thalie. A virtual auditor’s function over the local chieftains gaining gradual dominance over them were obtained in the thalies. Writings Kachams were adopted

\textsuperscript{119} Dr. M.R. Rahava Warrier, A History of Brahmin Settlement Journal of Kerala studies, December, 1974 and also March, 1975, p. 16
\textsuperscript{120} Dr. K.K Pillai, Kerala Charitham Vol. I, History Association, p. 854
for the management of the Temples and their authority, keeping in view a new culture centering round institutions and sanctified by the formal reduction of decisions. The model for the subsequent adoptions was that of the convention adopted at Muzhikkulam\textsuperscript{122}

The practice of taking a share measured from the agricultural income marks the beginning of feudalism. After the beginning of feudalism the Brahmin domination, not only controlled the wealth, but also started controlling the private lives of the individuals.

By the 14\textsuperscript{th} century most of the paddy fields became the property of the temples. Temple properties were controlled by the Uranla samithi known as Sabha or Yogam. In the 15\textsuperscript{th} and 16\textsuperscript{th} centuries the right to conduct the functions in the temples and the temple properties needed for that were shared by the Ooraders (village headmen). Devaswom wealth became the properties of Brahmins.\textsuperscript{123}

In the prevailing situation, it is the birth right of the landlords to receive the profit from the properties. Before getting the right from the management authorities (Oorazhmavaksam) in a traditional way, there was an intermediate period, i.e the whole life period i.e the whole janmam, that right continued to be enjoyed. From that birth-right, the Janmi, the landlord, originated.\textsuperscript{124}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{121}T.Madhavan Menon, A Hand Book of Kerala, p.236
\item \textsuperscript{122}K.P. Padmanaba Menon, History of Kerala, New Delhi, 270
\item \textsuperscript{123}K N Ganesh P HD Thesis June 1987 page58
\end{itemize}
At a later stage Mavelikkara was ruled by Kayamkulam Raja known as the royal dynasty of Odanadu. The capital (Headquarters) was shifted from Kandiyoor Mattam to Eruva. As years passed by, Anizham Thirunal Marthandavarma, the Raja of Venadu started to conquer Kayamkulam and in 1734 Kayamkulam was merged with Thiruvithamcore by him. Land-tax (property tax) was introduced during the period of Marthanda Varma in 1739. Though the landlord-tenant regulation was not organized in 1896, the agitations for the right conducted by the tenants here and there got recognized on the condition that the tenants should give landlord tax as per the 12th amendment in the Landlord Tenant Regulation Act of 1933. The tenants got the ownership of the land which was in their custody. The predecessors of Kulasekharans, the Venadu royal dynasty and Thiruvithamcore royal dynasty were following matriarchy.  

Like this the Predecessors of Ayi kings of Odanadu Dynasty were also following matriarchy. After this there were changes in the social, structural and traditional customs of Mavelikkara. The administrative machinery introduced by the British Government based on a system of official hierarchy was new. In this set up the general public had no role of their own. As a result, the village republics were also converted into local administration. After the completion of British Authority, the social structure also was changed in favour of them. It is seen that the living standard, living style, caste divisions, cultural factors, etc. maintain very different levels.

124. Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, Jenmi system, Sahithya pravarthka Sahakarna Sangam, Kottayam Page 54
125. Prof. Achutha Warrior, Kerala Samskkaram, State Institute of Kerala Languages, March 2003, p 128
The splendour of Mavelikkara has some relation with the royal families. In the beginning stage, people used to lead their life doing traditional handicraft. Now the remains of these things cannot be seen here. The progress in education, the basic facilities provided by the democratic government, excellent living facilities, etc. took the living conditions to higher levels. It is a clear fact that basic observation can be made on social formation, cultural formation, etc by connecting together the recorded evidences and folk knowledge. The people of Mavelikkara have different styles of living standard, life style, caste and creed and culture. Besides these, Mavelikkara is the birth place of people who became famous in various fields.

Mavelikkara is a place which gave birth to famous people who occupied prominent position in life. The people of Mavelikkara are very much interested in agriculture and trade. According to the changes from time to time, many people of Mavelikkara prefer to work outside the state or abroad to get a better remuneration. The influence of gulf money has also played a vital role in the development of Mavelikkara. The average income groups are not seen much, but some people in certain areas of Mavelikkara are earning their livelihood by doing daily work. Even though agriculture is the main occupation of the people in Mavelikkara and neighbouring villages, we can find large buildings which are a sign of newly acquired wealth through foreign money.126

126. Obtained from various records from Mavelikkara Municipality
Although majority of people of Mavelikkara have sufficient income to meet their expenses, there are some people who still depend on casual labour and small business. We can also see some of the very rich families of Central Travancore. The Mavelikkara taluk has an area of about 4¼ square miles with a population of 3.16 lakhs (as per 1991 census), the second position in the district with a rural population of 2.88 lakhs. The population density is 1323 persons per sq. km. The total population consists of 288042.

Though there is good progress in the field of trade unemployment is a curse among the people due to lack of industries which can provide employment to a large number of people.

Mavelikkara also has a very good place in the field of education with various schools and colleges which consist of engineering colleges, Teacher’s Training Institute, Fine Arts College, IHRD Colleges, etc. There are many facilities for the protection of health as there is a Taluk Hospital, besides private hospitals. In Mavelikkara taluk both private and KSRTC buses operate. There is a KSRTC bus depot and also private bus stand for private buses.  

Local Administration

The Travancore Village Panchayat Regulation Act of 1925 was the step taken by the local self government towards the development of the state. The government has

127. ibid p 6
the power to declare any revenue, village or group of villages for this purpose. According to this Act the national and state level local self governments enjoying relatively great autonomy have come into vogue, after a long evolution and legislative measures.

**Divisions of Local Governance in Mavelikkara**

The present Mavelikkara taluk has an area of 230.37sq kms. The administrative wings of Mavelikkara are divided into seven administrative territorial divisions. They are Mavelikkara town, Mavelikkara villages, Mavelikkara Municipality. Two Block Panchayats, Mavelikkara Taluk, Mavelikkara Legislative Assembly and Mavelikkara Parliament constituency.\(^{128}\)

Mavelikkara is a town of central Thiruvithamcore having a high artistic and cultural heritage. This is the place made fertile by the course of Achan Kovil River and the plain nature of the land. Today’s Mavelikkara town consists of Mavelikkara villages and certain portions of Thazhakkara, Thekkekkara, Kannamangalam and Chennithala villages. The town gets rain fall for about 6 months during Monsoon, with an average 235 mm in the last year. The town has an average of temperature difference between 23°C to 33°C. The soil conditions are clay combined loose soil in the eastern parts. The important water bodies in the town include the Achan Kovil River, Thodiyoor – Arattukadavu canal, and a few sub canals. Employment abroad, employment in public

\(^{128}\). Mavelikkara Taluk Office Records  *Division of Panchayath*. p.7
and private sectors, and commercial establishments, has reduced the positive attitude of many towards agriculture.  

**Mavelikkara Municipality**

Mavelikkara Municipality was formed in the name of the town. In 1912, as per the 3rd Regulations of 1076 (Malayalm Year) Kochukottarathil Udayavarma Thamburan was nominated as the first president of the Municipality by government order. During the period of Diwan Krishnan Nair in 1919, as per the 5-10 Regulation, Mavelikkara Town Improvement Committee was renamed as Municipality. During the Diwan Raghavaiah’s period, as a result of the strong argument made by Kochikkal Parameswaran Thambi, the Praja Sabha Member in Thiruvithamcore Praja Sabha, selecting the president for Municipality through election was permitted in the year 1922.

Artist Rama Varma Raja was elected as the first president of the Municipality in 1922. In 1936 Mavelikkara Municipal Council was dismissed. Against this in 1940 a great protest was started. As a result of this the District Court was permitted according to the order of Maharaja. In 1941 an order was issued reconstituting the Municipal Council.

Mavelikkara Municipality consists of 28 wards, viz Mattom North, Kuruvikkad ward, Kandiyoor, Municipal Bus stand, Prayikkara temple ward, Prayikkara ward, and private sectors, and commercial establishments, has reduced the positive attitude of many towards agriculture.  

---

129. Mavelikkara Muncipality –A profile and Demography, 2009, p.3
130. Interview with Adv. K.R Murlidharan , Muncipal Chairman ,Mavelikkara Muncipality, date -10-8-2011
ward, Hospital ward, Thazhakkara, Market ward, Kottar kavu ward, Railway station ward, Kallumala, Umbernadu, Ayurveda Hospital ward, Power House ward, Padithodu ward, Punnamoodu ward, Ponakam ward, Factory ward, Civil station ward, Kochikkal South, Ponnaram Thottam ward, Kottackkam, Municipal office ward, Kochikkal ward Panachimood ward, Kandiyoor South, Thattarambam ward One: Mattom North this ward is situated at the north east side of the Municipality. Mattom Narasimha Temple and St. Sebastian Church etc. are situated in this ward. Kettukazhcha (Bhima) for Chettukulangara Devi Temple starts from here.

Ward Two: Kuruvikkad ward is situated on the north west side of the municipality. Harijan colony and Sreekandapuram hospital are situated in this ward.

Ward Three: Kandiyoor ward is on the north west of the municipality. In this ward Kandiyoor Temple, Kandiyoor Arattukadavu and the irrigation pump installed as per the “Japanese Drinking Water Project” etc. are situated here.

Ward Four: Municipal Bus Stand Private Bustand, P.W.Drest house, Municipal park, B.H.High school, Pete Memorial Training College, L.PSchool, CSI auditorium etc. are situated here.

Ward Five: Prayikkara temple, Puthiyakavu Devi temple, and NSS taluk union office, etc. are there in this ward. This ward is situated on the north east of the Municipality.

Ward Six: Prayikkara St. Mary’s church is situated in this ward. This ward is on the north east side of the Municipality.
Ward Seven: (Hospital ward) Govt. hospital, Marthoma Parish Hall, etc. are situated here.

Ward Eight: Thazhakkara. It is situated on the east side of the Municipality. Karyamvattom temple, the offices of the Orthodox Sabha, Thazhakkara M.S. High School, etc. are there in this ward.

Ward Nine: Market Ward: This ward is on the east side of the Municipality. Puthiya Kavu Market, Block Office, LIC Office, L.P School etc. are situated here.

Ward Ten: Kottarkavu: BSNL tower, Kottarkavu Devi Temple, etc. are situated here.

Ward Eleven: Railway station ward: Railway stations, Maruthachi Temple, etc. are situated here.

Ward Twelve: Kallumala: College Junction, Indian Evangelical mission institutions Bishop Moore College, St. Mary’s School, etc. are situated here.

Ward Thirteen: Umbernadu: Harijan Colony, Bishop Moore Lady’s hostel, FCI, etc. are here. This ward is on the east south side of the Municipality.

Ward Fourteen: Ayurveda Hospital ward: Hospital, Excise office, Irrigation Dept office, Regional workshop of KSRTC etc. are situated here.

Ward Fifteen: Power House Ward: The Office of Divisional Engineer, KSEB, Hospital, 7th Day School, etc. are situated here. This ward is on the south side of the Municipality.
Ward Sixteen: Paduthodu Ward: This ward is on the East South of the Municipality. ITC for scheduled caste is situated here.

Ward Seventeen: Punnamoodu Ward: This is situated on the south side of the Municipality. Punnamoodu market, Alummod School, Headquarters of the Malankara Sabha, etc. are there in this ward.

Ward Eighteen: Ponakam Ward: This ward is on the south side of the Municipality. ESI Hospital is situated here.

Ward Nineteen: Factory Ward: This ward is on the south east side of the Municipality. A factory is situated in this ward.

Ward Twenty: Civil Station Ward: Regional Transport Office, mini civil station, court, Mavelikkara sub jail, C.I office, Vidhyadhiraja Public School, etc. are situated here. This ward is on the south side of the Municipality.

Ward Twenty One: Kochikkal South: This is situated on the south west side of the municipality.

Ward Twenty Two: Ponnaram Thottam ward. Ponnaram Thottom Devi Temple, Varanasi madam etc. are situated here.

Ward Twenty Three: Kottakakam Ward: Sreekrishna temple, Guruvayoorappan temple, Mavelikkara palace, municipal Town Hall, LP School, Raja Ravi Varma Institute, Mannoor madam temple, Sree Krishna Gana Sabha Auditorium, etc. are situated here.

Ward Twenty Five: Kochikkal Ward: This is situated on the western side of the Municipality. Ganapathy Temple, Hanuman Temple, Fire station, Agricultural office, etc are there in this wards.

Ward Twenty Six: Panachimood Ward. Panachimood ward is on the west of the Municipality. Mattom St.Johns, Bull Market, public cemetery, etc are situated here.

Ward Twenty Seven: Kandiyoor South: Kandiyoor Fish Market, Kalari Colony, etc. are here. This ward is situated on the western side of the Municipality.

Ward Twenty Eight: Thattarambalam: VSM Hospital, Saraswathy temple, Excise office etc. are situated. This is on the western side of the Municipality. 

**Block Panchayat**

Regional governments existed in ancient India. The word ‘Panchayt’ was used initially in the meaning of a ruling council consisting of pancha (five) members. The structure and the working style of modern panchayats were started during the British rule. The first regional Government was the Madras Municipal Corporation.

---

131. Mavelikkara Municipality Budget Records. 2010, p3
of 1867. The resolution of Lord Rippon in 1882 directed that the regional Government should include the elected unofficial members. The royal commission report of 1909 directed that the villages should be the basic component of the regional government. The Government of India Act of 1919 instructed to remove the officials from the position of presidents in the municipal establishments.\textsuperscript{132}

The central province scheme introduced in 1948 was an important step for the restructuring of the regional self governing bodies and the process of decentralization of authority. The governing structure came into existence in 1950 which included the regional governments in the list of states and specified the importance of organizing panchayats.

Thiruvalla Taluk is on the North side of Mavelikkara, on the north-east is the boundary of the Chengannur taluk and on the eastern side is Pandalam. On the southern it is Kayamkulam. Thazhakkara, Vettiyar, Vallikunna, Bharanikkavu, Kattanam, Chennithala, Thrippurunthura, Palamel, Chunakkara, Mavelikkara, Thekkekara, Nooranadu, Thamarakkulam, Kannamangalam, Peringala, etc. are the important villages of Mavelikkara.

According to the Travancore Village Panchayat Act of 1925, village panchayats were formed with the membership of not less than five and not more than eleven.

\textsuperscript{132} Mavelikkara block panchayath reports 2009, Page1
Later Village unions came into existence as per the Travancore Village Union Act of 1940.133

After the merging of Thiru-Kochi in 1949, the Travancore - Cochin Village Panchayat came into force in 1950, and as per the above Act class I, class II, class III Panchayats came into existence. Mavelikara Taluk consists of Mavelikara Municipality and two block panchayats. Among two block Panchayats one is Mavelikara Block Panchayat and other is Bharanikkavu Block Panchayat. Chettiukulangara, Chennithala – Thripperumthura, Mavelikara – Thekkekkara and Thazhakkara are under Mavelikara Block Panchayat. Nooranadu, Vallikunnam, Bharanikkavu, Mavelikara, Thamarakkulam, Chunakkara and Palamel Panchayat are in Bharanikkavu Block Panchayat.134

Chennithala Thripperumthura Panchayat

Chennithala Thripperumthura Panchayat is a place having considerable cultural heritage, tradition and social background. Mannar Panchayat in the north, Mannar and Budhanoor Panchayats in the east, Mavelikara Municipality and Chettikulangara Panchayat in the south and Pallippadu Panchayat in the west are the important boundaries of Chennithala Thripperumthura Panchayat. The total area of this Panchayat is 22.26 Sq.kms. Padingarevazhi, Eramathur east, Navodaya Ward, Oripram, Karazhma, Karazhma east, Aasramam ward, Prayikkara, Cherukol, Cherukol west,

133. C.prasad , Editor, Mavelikkara Tekkekkara Grama Panchayath, published by Mavelikkara Tekkekkara grama panchayath ,year 2005 , p.151
134. Ibid , p152
Kottakkakam, Panchayat office ward, Thripperumthura Chalayil temple ward, PHC Ward, Thekkemuri and Karikkuzhi are the 18 wards of Chennithala Thripperunthura Panchayat.\textsuperscript{135}

Reference to this village can be seen in ancient writings about this village which is blessed with Achan Kovil River, extensive paddy fields and natural beauty. There is narration in praise of Thripperumthura Mahadevan as “ Iniya Puzhayum Chettu Pinnittadu mutte Chenithala Marukarhasila Lokayetha” and also about V aliya Perumbuzha Kadavu in the Unnuneeli Sandesam which is a very famous poem written by an unknown poet in the 6\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{136}

It can be inferred from the evidence that from ancient period onwards these places were under observation of people from other places. It is known from old folk songs that this village was under the rule of the King of Kayamkulam. The locals are of the opinion that the Minister’s Secretariat of Kayamkulam Raja was working here and the places like Kottamuri, Kottakkakam etc. indicate the boundaries of this country. Edappally swaroopam had its headquarters here. Panchayats which are formed of two villages, Chennithala and Thripperumthura are completely an agricultural zone.

The geography of this place is of plains and low lying water logged areas. Paddy, coconut, arecanut, etc. are the main crops of this area. But tuber plants, turmeric, ginger, vegetables, cocoa etc. are also being cultivated as inter crop. The temples,

\textsuperscript{135} Chennithala Thripperumthura Janakiyasuthram padathi 2007-2008 Page-8
\textsuperscript{136} Karazhma Venugopal Chennithalayude kshethra samskaram Kerala Kshethra samrakshana samathy Alappuzha publication January2002 Page-2
worshipping places (centres) of various religious followers and hermitages (Ashrams) and refuges of social organizations vouch for the observation of spiritual heritage, cultural environment and religious harmony in this place. Sri Dharmananda Swamikal who was also known as Chennithala Siddhan is worth remembering whole-heartedly. ‘Aathma Bodhodhaya Sangham (Spiritual Awareness group) and Sree Subhanandasramam are centres of spiritual refuge of the locality. The wall paintings on the Thripperumthura Mahadevar temple and Edappally Swaroopam Mansions remind us of the artistic skill of ancient artists. This village Panchayat was not lagging in arts and literature.

Chennithala Thripperumthura Panchayat is the place which has given birth to Kathakali artists like Chennithala Kochu Pillai Panicker, Kunjan Pillai and Chellappan Pillai, etc. Sri NP.Chellappan Nair, Sri M.Krishnan Kutty, Sri KL.Mohana Varma and Sri Chennithala Krishna Aiyar (Iyer) were very famous writers from this Panchayat. Many volunteers (Freedom fighters) who have participated in National Independence Movement (Struggle) were from Chennithala Thripperumthura Panchayat. Elanthodathu Raman Nair who was also known as Mannar Raman Nair also born and brought up in this Panchayat. He visited Mahatmaji and participated in many hunger strikes and agitations undertaken by the great leader. Chennithala

---

137. Interview with various people in Chennithala
Thripperumthura Panchayat is notable for its cultural heritage. Compared to neighbouring places, so many places of worship of different religions are located in this Panchayat. Kathakali, Ottan Thullal, Padakam, Velakali, Kabaidi, Kakkarassinadakam, Panchavadyam, Nagaswaram, from the artistic heritage of this place.

‘Kudakali’ is an attractive art form still in vogue which is performed in connection with the Areeppara Maholsavam at Karazhma Bhagavathi temple on Edavam first. One among the ‘Palliyodams’ (Snake boats) which accompany the ‘Thiruvona Thoni’ of Thiru Aaranmulayappan on Uthrittadhi day of the Malayalam month of Chingam is from this Panchayat. This is a panchayat where people of various castes and religions stay together. They comprise Hindus, Christians, Muslims and Yuyomayas. Chennithala Thripperumthura Panchayat which is in the fore front in the educational field has a very enivable tradition in education.

It is believed that the Vettathuvila Primary School is the first educational institution of this Panchayat. Chennithala Goverment Model School also was established somewhat in the same period. Though Chennithala Thripperumthura Panchayat has no glowing position in the commercial field, from the mid 1950s, match box industry was there in this village Panchayat. Other occupations of this Panchayat are coir industry, brick industry, coconut business and Khadi Unit. As per the census

139. ibid. 9
140. opcit.21,28
141. Opcit 21-28
of 1991, the population of Chennithala Thriperumthura Panchayat was 27569. Out of this, 13259 are male and 14310 female. In the field of education, this Panchayat is in the forefront. The literacy rate of this Panchyat is 93.89%. The female literacy is 91.12% and the male literacy is 96.79%.  

Chunakkara Panchayat

Chunakkara is an agricultural village. This region is situated in Mavelikkara taluk of Alappuzha district. Its boundaries are, as follows. In the north Thazhakkara Panchayat, in the south Thamarakkulam Panchayat, on the eastern side Nooranadu Panchayat and Bharanikkavu on the western side Thekkekara panchayat. The total area of this Panchayat is 17.32 sq. kms. Komallur Muri, Kotta Ward, Thekkum Muri, Kizhakkum Muri, Naduvile Muri, Komallur Karimulakkal, Thekkum Muri, Vadakkum Muri, etc. are the names of wards in the Chunakkara Panchayat. While approaching the middle part of this Panchayat, the surface of the earth is mostly seen as of a higher elevation and slanting on the sides. Two types of land, plots and fields are there in this Panchayat.  

The paddy fields are divided into ‘Orupoov Nilam’ and ‘Irupoov Nilam’ i.e. the fields are harvested once in a year and twice in a year respectively. Chunakkara Panchayat includes 1235 hectare coastal land (Purayidams plots), 90 hectares of ‘Puncha’ and

---

142. Census Report 1991 page141
143. Chunnakara grama panchyath janakeyasuthranam padhathi 2008 page-17
382 hectares of ‘Viruppu’ field, making it a total area of 1707 hectares. The main crops cultivated here are paddy, coconut, rubber, pepper, and other fruit yielding trees, tapioca, plantains, ginger, corn, yam, colocasia, etc. The locals are of different opinions on the history of the place name ‘Chunakkara’. ‘Chuna’ was the name of a tree and ‘Kara’ is having two meanings the coast and the country. So it is said that the land which had ‘Chunamaram’ became ‘Chunakkara’. The glowing face of a feudal culture can be seen here.\(^{144}\) So many persons who attained fame in different positions like Sanskrit scholars, poets, physicians, artists, sorcerers, astrologers, etc. lived in this region. The important persons among them were Chunakkara Warriers.

In the earlier period, Chunakkara was under some chieftains. As a result of this the names of places are Kottappadom, Meveli, and Kottarathil Mala and such like. King Marthanda Varma brought this place under Thiruvithamcore. Chunakkara Grama Panchayat is a place where most of the folk art forms have grown nicely. Many Bhajana groups (Prayer groups) were active in this place. Chunakkara is very much famous for bhajana groups like Panappattu, Sastham pattu, Vilppattu, Villadichanpattu, Kodungalloorpattu, etc.\(^{145}\)

This is also a place where folk arts like Koladikali, Parisamuttu Kali, and Kakkarassi Nadakam, have attained growth. So many famous places of worship like

\(^{144}\) Chunakkara samgravikasana rekha chunakkara panchyat ,1996 ,Editor Sreekumar, Saint Joseph Computer Division printed by Charumooodu page-15

temples, mosques and churches can be seen in this place. Among these Chunakkara Thiruvairoor temple, Chunakkara Jamaath mosque and Mar Baselius Gregorious Orthodox Church are very ancient structures.

So many people who participated in national independence struggle were from this Panchayat. Sri Raman Nair of Thuruthi Vadakkethil, who lifted the pride of this country by participating in law-breaking agitations and other uprisings several times in the 1930s as part of national independence struggle, was from Chunakkara Panchayat. He had also participated in the salt satyagrah in Dhandi along with Gandhiji and underwent imprisonment. People like Kalikkal Nanu Pillai, Thuruthiyil Vasudevan Pillai, Aaryattu Abraham, Kalikkal Thekkathil Sreedharan Pillai, Chellathu Sreedharan Pillai, and Kalikkal Thekkathil Sukumara Pillai were the main warriors of the national struggle for independence. They all were from the Chunakkara Panchayat.

Chunakkara Panchayat is the place where small and big racial (or group) struggle took place earlier. ‘Chira Varambu’ agitation, Kalluppunthal agitation, etc. were the racial struggles which shook the whole state thoroughly. Very strong farm labourers’ movement and farmers movement had taken roots in this place. The place of Chunakkara Panchayat in the educational field also carries much importance. An educational institution was started here in 1897. Now this is known as the Goverment U.P School of Chunakkara. The School was started by Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangham. It now functions as a Goverment Welfare School. The first endeavour in the field of Adult
Education was the establishment of the Sahithya Poshini Library in 1948. Cashew industry is an important business in Chunakkara Grama Panchayat. Along with this, business in bricks and rubber is also prevalent here. The population as per the census of 1991 was 21129. Of this 10113 are men and 11016 women. Among the population 8919 women and 8530 men were literate.\textsuperscript{146}

**Thazhakkara Panchayat**

Thazhakara Panchayat has 13 wards. They are Thazhakara, Vazhupadi, Kunnam, Kallimel, Vettiyar-A, Vettiyar-B, Vettiyar-C, Vettiyar-D, Vettiyar-E, Eravankara, Arunoottimangalam-A, Arunoottimangalam-B and Aakanattukara. Thazhakkara Panchayat is situated between latitude of 9°14" north and a longitude of 76°33" east, at the south-east part in Alappuzha District. On the northern side is Achankovil River, in the west Mavelikkara Municipality, Thekkekara of Mavelikkara, Chunakkara Panchayat and Nooranadu Panchayat are on the eastern side. The local people have two opinions about the history of the name as Thazhakkara. When all these places were under the majestic rule of Edappally Swaraoopam, this place was seen as ‘Thalakkara’ since this area was at the top level socially, economically, educationally, culturally and geographically and later it became ‘Thazhakkara’.\textsuperscript{147}

\textsuperscript{146} chunakkara panchayathu samagra vikasana rekha, chunakkara panchayath1996-p12
\textsuperscript{147} Thazhakara panchyath yearly report 1999-2000,Page9
Another version is that during the period of Cheraman Perumal, a group of people connected with handicrafts came to this area and stayed here. Beautiful decorative materials were woven out of the leaves of Pandanus plants and these were taken to the native place of Cheraman Perumal. The dried leaves of pandanus are called as ‘Thazha’ and from this period onwards this place was called ‘Thazhakkara’. There are two revenue villages in Thazhakkara Panchayat area. Thazhakkara and Vettiyar. It is believed that the area through which water channel ‘Varattaru’ flows was earlier the place where Acchankovilaru was flowing. Farmers of that period who have voluntarily shown interest, grouped themselves together and came with implements and they diverted the course of Achan Kovil River and thus this place came to be called Vettiyar. Thazhakkara Panchayat has a heritage connected with Mavelikkara’s royal family, owing to its influence and co-operation with this place. The Bungalow which was used as the summer residence by Thampurans, who were in power during this period, is still there in Thazhakara Panchayat.
The Mavelikkara - Sabarimala road passes through Thazhakkara Panchayat. ‘Pottamel Kadavu’ which is connected with Sabarimala is in ward II of Thazhakara Panchayat. The famous and expansive sandy island situated on the western side of Paramel Kadavu has been a resting centre of Pilgrims of Sabarimala for long.

The Subramanya temple in Thazhakkara Panchayat, Panayannur Kavu Temple in Vazhuvadi, Darmasastha temple at Kunnam, Palliyarakavu temple at Vettiyar, Thalelkavu

148. ibid.12
temple and Ramalloor temple of Eravankara, Iruthikavu temple of Arunoottimangalam, Kandalankavu temple of Vettiyar, Kirathankav of Vazhuvadi are very famous temples of this area.

Thazhakkara area has churches and mosques which are the symbols of hundreds of years’ heritage and social backgrounds. Punchaman Madam which is connected with the history of Kadamattath Kathanar is also situated here. The Eravankara Unnithans who were the spokesmen and exponents of Kathakali songs earned World fame in Kathakali songs in the early period of its inception when the Kathakali Movement took shape and Sri Parappurathu who authored novels like Aranazhikaneram, Panitheeratha Veehu, Ninamaninja Kalppadukal, etc. in Malayalam and who earned fame and recognition as the novelist of the lay men are the proud sons of Thazhakkara Panchayat.

During the National Independence Movement many students who participated in it and were imprisoned following famous students agitation, were from Thazhakkara Panchayat. Thazhakkara area witnessed various struggles for the right of the working class during democratic Governments’ period. The agitation of the farm labourers of Thazhakkara is very famous. In this movement hundreds of labourers became victims of police brutality in custody.
Thazhakkara area was also visited by Sri AK.Gopalan and Sri Jyothi Basu. Thazhakkara Panchayat area is an agricultural village. The soil is clay mixed with gravel (coarse sand). On the banks of paddy fields the soil is alluvial. In most parts of Thazhakkara Panchayat laterite soil and sand are seen. Paddy, coconut and tapioca are the important cultivation. The production of paddy is 1750-1900 kgs per hectare. The total area of Thazhakkara Panchayat is 2526 hectare. Thazhakkara Panchayat has a lot of channels, ponds and canals. Besides this Pampa irrigation canal passes through all areas of this Panchayat. P.I.Ps Sub-canals also pass through this area. The District Agricultural Farm is working in Thazhakara Panchayat. It was established in July 1963. Thazhakara Panchayat was able to commence an industrial zone many years back.

During the Government of 1957 an industrial estate was established in Thazhakkara. In the educational zone the first educational institutions of this village were the Sanskrit School of Thazhakkara and the Governemnt High School of Kunnam. The majority of the population in Thazhakkara Village are Hindus. Besides a good section comprises the followers of Christianity and Islam. As per the census of 1991 the total population of this village was 35126. Out of this 16730 were men and 18396 were women. 27734 people are literate in Thazhakkara Panchayat. In this 14204 are men and 13530 are women. But after this as per the study tour and the data collection as part of the planning at the grass roots level the total population of Thazhakara Panchayat is 42,137. Of these 20349 are men and 21788 are women.\textsuperscript{149}

\textsuperscript{149} Thazhakkara panchayath vikasna Rekha,2006
Bharanikkavu Grama Panchayat

Bharanikkavu Grama panchayat is a special grade panchayat of Mavelikkara taluk in Alappuzha. This panchayat is located in Mavelikkara taluk. The total area of Bharanikkavu village panchayat is 60.83 Sq.km south Vallikkunnam and Krishnapuram panchayats towards south are Pallickal Naduvillemuri, Pallickal North, Pallickal south, Bharanikkavu are in this panchayat. Laterite soil, quick-sand and silt are found here.

Bharanikkavu grama panchayat has two villages Bharanikkavu and Kattanam. 14 wards are there in Bharanikkavu Panchayat. The important Vettikkodu, Kattanam east, Kattanam west, Kattanam south, Elappikkulam North, Elappikkulam south, Elappikkulam west, Kattachira south, Mankuzhi south, Mankuzhi north, Kattachira, Koyikkal and Manjadithara. The geographical nature of Bharanikkavu which is a part of Onattukara is the same as that of Onattukara. As per the geographical nature of this panchayt the place can be divided into two zones i.e. plains and small hills. Paddy, plantain, corn, colocasia, yam, tubers, betel leaves, tapioca and vegetables in small quantity are being cultivated in Bharanikkavu Panchayat. The total agricultural land of this Panchayat is 2232 hectares. The festival of Bharanikkavu temple is celebrated on Bharani Nakshatra of Meenam (Malayalam month). The place where this temple stands today was a dense jungle (Kavu) years back. Local peoples believe that this temple, its Goddess, and the holy name of the goddess altogether got the name ‘Bharanikkavu’ for this place. One Buddha idol is there which was earlier installed very close to the Devi temple and now it is being maintained separately.
This idol proclaims the antiquity of this place. Kattanam valiya palli (forana church) which is believed to have some connection with ‘Kadamattathu Kathanar, stands as a reminder by the end of 1940s, is also situated in Bharanikavu Panchayat. Vettikodu Nagaraja temple is the only temple in Kerala where Bhagavan Ananthan the eldest and the noblest among the eight Nagas born to Kashya Prajapathi and his wife Kadru, are installed in their intrinsic forms (original form) and worshipped. This temple is situated in Bharanikavu Panchayat.

Bharanikkavu village panchayat which is the heart land of Oonattukara in central Travancore is a region maintaining high standards in education and culture. Bharanikkavu Government U.P. School, CMS H.S, Govt.Model U.P. School, Pallickal Nagaraja Vilasam U.P. School are the important educational institutions of Bharanikkavu Panchayat. The people of this panchayat belong to Hindu, Christian and Muslim religions. Vettikkodu Nagaraja temple, St.Steephen’s Orthodox church (Valiya palli) of Kattanam, the mosque Elappikkulam are the important places of worship at Bharanikkavu. Many ritualistic arts used to be performed in this village panchayat. The important artistic forms are Villadichanpattu, Chilambu Pattu, Bhajana Pattu, etc.

Bharanikkavu witnesses the local festivals commonly known as ‘Kettutlsavangal’. Furniture industries, printing press, match box business unit, weaving centers, candle business unit, biscuit production, brick factories, etc. are the important businesses in the commercial field of this panchayat. As per the census of 2001 the populations of
Bharanikkavu panchayat is 34,572. Of this 16,592 are men and 17,980 are women. 

The literacy rate of the people is 95%.\textsuperscript{150}

\textbf{Mavelikkara Thekkekkara Panchayat}

Thekkekkara Panchayat is a Panchayat of Mavelikkara Taluk in Alappuzha district. Thekkekkara Panchayt came into existence on 15\textsuperscript{th} August 1953. The total area of Thekkekkara panchayat is 20 sq.kms. 15 wards are there in Mavelikkara Thekkekkara Panchayat. Umbernadu, Cherukunnam, Thadathilal, Varenikkal, Choorallur, Pallickal east, Kurathikadu, Ponnezha, Vathikulam, Olakettiambalam, Pothen Kulangara, Ponakam, Mullikulangara, Vadakke Mankuzhi and Pallarimangalam are the names of the wards. The literacy rate of Thekkekkara panchayat is 99%. Thekkekkara Panchayat is included in Mavelikkara Block panchayat. Mavelikkara Thekkekkara panchayat has its own historical originality in social and cultural aspects. Before the formation of Thiruvithamcore, Thekkekkara was under the royal dynasty of Mavelikkara. The chief among Aaruveettil Madambis (titled Nair Aristocrat) Mandayath family was staying in Thekkekkara panchayat. The place for hanging the culprits was in Pallarimangalam ward. That place is still known as ‘Kazhu Moola’. The royal commands were enforced by Madambis. The chumaduthangis (load rest), Kalathattu (resting place for travellers) which were there in the royal period, still exist in this Panchayat. The national movement that took place in the first half of 20\textsuperscript{th} century had great influence on the people of 

\textsuperscript{150} Pallickal Devarajan, Panchayat Vijnaneeyam, Bharanikavu Grama Panchayat, Sky book Publishers, June 2010
Thekkekkara also along with the other villages of Kerala. Parappezhathu N.Padmanabhan and Kutttimeenathethil Kesava Pillai, the freedom fighters arrested and imprisoned, for participating in the freedom struggle (Independence struggle) and Vaikom sathyagraha, heeding the summons for agitation by the Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi, are the proud sons of Thekkekkara Panchayat.

According to the geographical nature of Thekkekkara Panchayat, it can be divided into four main zones as high plains, sloppy areas, valleys and plains. The total agricultural lands of Thekkekkara village panchayat are 1615 hectares. Tapioca, rubber, plantains, ginger, turmeric, etc. are the main cultivations of Thekkekkara Panchayat. Even now tapioca cultivation is being done extensively. Other estate crops like cashew trees, jack tree, mango tree, other fruit yielding trees and plants are also being cultivated abundantly in this area. In this Panchayat of Oonattukara agricultural zone, even now the main production field is cultivated with paddy.

Cashew factories, Sarvodaya co-operative Sangam units under the auspices of khadi board, hollow-bricks units like 75 small scale industrial units exist in Thekkekkara Panchayat. A total of 15 schools are there in Thekkekkara panchayat. There are also a lower primary, three upper Primary and one high school. There are also eight aided schools, a Government school and three unaided schools. The people
of Thekkkekara Panchayat are Hindus and Christianits. Only two families belonging to Muslim community stay here. Mullikalangara Devi Temple, Malimel Devi temple, Vasoorimala temple are the important temples. St.George Orthodox Chapel, Mullikulangara, St.Thomas Marthoma Church, St.Johns Malankara Catholic Church, etc. are the important Churches.

There are no places of Muslim worship in this Panchayat. In this panchayat; the ritualistic arts are still in vogue. Pulluvan pattu, Anpoli, Kuthiyottam, Kalmezhuthu pattu, Bhajanapattu, Villadichan pattu, etc. are the important arts. Kabadikali, golikali, Kallukali are played on the eve of Onam festival. According to the census of 2001 Thekkekkara panchayat has the 5th position in population in Mavelikkara taluk. The total population is 31,747 of which 14873 are men and 16874 women. The total number of houses in Thekkekara Panchayat is 7661. Both men and women are 99% literate.151

**Palamel Panchayat**

Palamel Panchayat is a land abounding in natural beauty and is situated at the south-east end of Alappuzha district having an area of 25.60 sq. kms, consisting of about 40 small and big hills. The village which includes Palamel Panchayat is the Palamel Village. Palamel Panchayat is included in the Bharanikkavu Block Panchayat.

151 C. Prasad, Editor, MavelikkaraThekkekkara Grama PanchayathVijnaneeyam, Sky book. Publishers,
On the northern side of Palamel panchayat is Pandalam village, Pallickal and Thamarakkulam Panchayats on the south and Nooranadu Panchayat on the West are the important boundaries. As per its geographical nature, Palamel Panchayat can be divided into five sectors, i.e., hilly areas, slopes, valleys, flood-prone areas and water-stagnant places.

Based on the climatic conditions, Palamel Panchayat comes under southern midland section having a hot climate with more humidity. The land surface is filled with stones and soil having an average 2 feet thick water trickling, soil suitable for cultivation and the underneath of this soil, laterate stones and forest (wild) stones can be seen. In certain areas of Palamel Panchayat, red rocks (Chenkal Para), granite and forest rocks are seen. Beside these, sand-hill, sandy areas, silt etc. are also seen. Palamel Panchayat was able to share an important, though very small role in the history of Thiruvithamcore. Kayamkulam - Punalur Road was a very important royal road which passed through Mavelikka. The second working office (Pravarthi Kacheri) of Mavelikkara Taluk was at Nooranadu. This Pravarthi Kacheri was divided into two as Nooranadu Village and Palamel Village during the last period of royal rule. Most of the areas in Palamel Panchayat belonged to the land lords of Chengannur. Vanjippuzha, and Vazhoor Madom. Giving leadership in the activities of freedom fight against the foreign domination and the barbaric rule of Sir CP started in Palamel Panchayat from 1938 onwards.
Palamel Panchayat has glittered a lot in the commercial field. In the early period people met their day-to-day expenses by making baskets of different types (Kutta, Vatti and Muram - a shallow basket to winnow the grains), and Panambu (Bamboo mats) for agricultural household use made by using bamboos and reeds. In 1950s a business man by name Waltair (a white man) came from Kollam to Palamel Panchayat and started Gemini Cashew Factory here. Other business units like Copra (dry coconut) mills, Flour mills, Rubber Processing Unit, Co-operative Society for Milk Production and Sale, etc. were working in Palamel Panchayat.

Palamel Panchayat has a tradition of great contribution in the educational field. Kavumbadu School was initially started in the land belonging to Elayasseril family. This is the first school of Palamel Panchayat. The people of Palamel Panchayat belong to Hindu, Christian and Muslim Sections. The important temples of this Panchayat are Kunnin Subramaniya Swamy temple, Palanthara Shiva temple, Kumarapuram Subramaniya temple, Karimankavu Shiva temple etc. Other places of worship are Panayil Hebron Marthoma Church, Panayil Catholic Church, Salem Mar Thoma Church and Aadiakkattukulangara Mohideen Mosque located in Palamel Panchayat. ‘Kalakettu,’ ‘Rasa’ in connection with the Perunal (great day festival) ‘Chandanakkuda’ procession in connection with mosque festival add a festive look to Palamel Panchayat.
Palamel Panchayat is very famous for fine arts. Parisamuttu Kali, Velakali, Thiruvathira Kali, etc. are the famous folk art forms. Kudassanattu Madhavan Pillai, who is known as Pandalam Gandhian was involved in national movement. He has portrayed the significances of this region in National Movement and his own life experience in his books ‘Kambam’ and ‘Gandhi Darsanam’. According to the census report of 1991, the total population was 29471 of this 15210 were women and 14261 were men. The literacy rate of Palamel Panchayat is 81%. The main attraction of Palamel panchayat is in Noorinadu, the migratory birds (Deshadana Pakshikal) are also seen here. In a report it is mentioned that more than 10,000 waterbirds are found in the water bird Centre which was named after the late Induchoodan, the famous bird watcher. The birds reach here for reproduction from May to December. Palamel Panchayat is a rare centre having more than eight kinds of water birds including the Indian Darter which is on the brink of extinction.

**Nooranadu Panchayat**

Nooranadu Panchayat is the region which is situated on the south-east end of Alappuzha district, between latitude north 90°17" and 9°14" and longitude east 76°36" and 76°39". The boundaries are Acchan Kovil River in the north, KP.Road in the south, Karingali Puncha (dry field) in the east and Peruvelil chal puncha on the western side. The total area of Nooranadu Panchayat is 2654.39 hectare. The important wards are

---

152. Palamel Panchayath Vikasna Rekha 1996
Puthuppally Kunnam, Edakkunnam, Thatham Munna, Naduvile Muri Palamel, Pazhanjikkonum, Pulimel, Edappon, Pattor, Aattuva and Cherumukham. Nooranadu Panchayat was established in 1961.

Nooru Revenue Karas (one hundred Karas) taken from half portions of Bharanikavu, Thamarakkulam, Chunakkara, Palamel, Thonnallur, Kulanada, Vallikunnam, certain parts of Sooranadu were named as “Nooru Nadu”. Later Nooranadu was formed syncopating (by shortening) ‘Nooru Nadu’. As the legends, have it, the Nooranadu – Padanilam Parabrahma temple seen today was formed out of a raised platform made at the bottom of a Banyan tree with few forest stones during ancient period.

The legend of this place is that people of this Kara had a Kara - rivalry (Karamalsaram) for the ownership of the temple and led their men to war, this place became ‘Padanilam’, according to the locals. Kayamkulam was one among the most powerful states of Thiruvithamcore. The place that came under the boundary of Nooranadu was called ‘Padanilam’. In the initial stage 22 Karas were there. Later on only Padanilam became the rightful place of 18 Karas. The stones which were installed as a symbol of settlement (compromise) around the temple are the 18 big stone lamps. Based on the geographical nature, Nooranadu can be divided into four parts. There are high levels of areas, sloppy areas, plains and valleys. Land cultivation is widely seen in Nooranadu Panchayat. In the high level area laterite soil is seen. Iruppu paddy fields and high lands were the agricultural land.
The important crops are paddy, rubber, coconut, arecanut, tapioca, cashew-nut tree, corn, yam, ginger, vegetable betel leaves, etc. The educational guides of Nooranadu were only a few. Social reformers believed that education is the foremost social necessity. The important persons among them were Noorukodi Sri Neelakanta Pillai, Nedukulanjiyil Sri Govinda Pillai and Malamukalil Sri Narayanan Vaidyan, etc. The first educational institution is the present Palamel Government LP School. This School was established in the Malayalam year 1080. Nooru Kodiyil Sri Neelakanta Pillai established this school. The first high school of Nooranadu is the Padanilam High School. This was established in the year 1952. If viewed from the commercial angle, the soil which is required for brick making is available in plenty in many parts of Nooranadu Panchayat; because of this brick business is running flourished here. One commercial unit for making electronic choke is also working now.

Other establishments like crusher metal, steel furniture and engineering business units are also operating here. People of this village belong to Hindu, Christian and Muslim communities. Among the temples in Noorandu Village Panchayat, the most famous temple is Parabrahma temple. Among the churches, Fathima Matha Church, and Padanilam St. Thomas Church are very famous. The famous mosque is Jama-Ath Mosque Padanilam, the place where the conflict took place. A poem reminding us about the fighting period is worth remembering.
(The Panans used to tighten and keep ready the thread on the previous day of the war. Those who fall wounded, will have wounds stitched with thread. To give medicine to the wounded, Mahavaidyan, keeping his medical book in his hand, holding ‘Olakkuda’ was running around. This is the gist of the poem.)

Poopadathullal and Pambuthullal were conducted based on family worship practice. It can be said that the folk art ‘Kolam Kali’ was born along with this village. The folk arts like Thiruvathira Kali, Kaduva Kali, Parisamuttu Kali, Kakkarissi, Vilppattu etc. proclaim the artistic tradition of Nooranadu. Nooranadu is the place known for dexterity in Kathakali. This place has earned name and fame by conducting Kathakali in the areas starting from Thiruvananthapuram to Kottayam. Pakkulathil Raghavan Unnithan, Chakkandam Keshava Pillai, Kallur Raghavan Pillai, Kodur Kizhekkekthil Raghavan Unnithan and Erezhathu Narayanan Unnithan were the main participants of the above Kathakali programme. According to the census of 1991, the total population was 24455. Out of this, 11707 were males and 12748 were females. The literacy rate of this place is about 97.75%.\textsuperscript{153}

\textsuperscript{153} Nooranadu Panchayath, Janakiya padhathi, 2010 p26
Vallikunnam Panchayat

Vallikunnam Panchayat is situated at the southern end of Alappuzha district. This village’s western portion is of sandy plain area, mid-land is of hill slopes and valleys and the eastern part is with small hilly areas. The boundaries of this Panchayat are, on the west Ochira and Krishnapuram Panchayats, in the north Bharanikkavu and Thamarakkulam Panchayats, in the east Tharamarakkulam Panchayat and Thazhava Panchayat is on the southern side. The total area of this Panchayat is 21.37 sq.kms. Vallikunnam Panchayat came into existance in the year 1953. There are two stories in connection with the origin of the name of this place Vallikkunnam. The locals are of the opinion that Vallikunnam is the place of Valli Devi, the wife of Lord Subramaniya. The presence of Valli Devi’s idol in the Padayanivattom temple supports this view. Another speculation is that since this place is of hills having climbing plants, this place became ‘Vallikunnam’.

The geographical nature of this panchayath is four fold i.e. plains, sloppy areas, high hilly areas and valleys. The important crops are paddy, coconut, tapioca, sesame and arecanut and the mid-crops are tubers, ginger, turmeric, pepper, plantains, etc. In the dry fields (Puncha) clay soil and in other areas laterite soil is found. In certain areas, in the starting areas of slopes sticky red sand is available. Vallikunnam was very famous for tapioca cultivation. Betel plants were cultivated with sacredness, entirely different from other cultivations. A major part of the land in Vallikunnam was
registered in the name of Nairs as tax free as a part of the rule of Thiruvithamcore royal family. Bad customs and inequality existed at Vallikunnam during that period.

As a part of resistance against social inequities, the social reformers like Ayyankali and Narayana Guru came to Vallikunnam and gave relief to the depressed classes. When the Independence struggle was at its peak its waves affected Vallikunnam Panchayat also. Under the leadership of Sri K. Kesavan Potti who became one of the founder leaders of the Communist Movement in central Thiruvithamcore subsequently and also the organizer of KPAC Drama troupe which created big ripples at the social movement of Vallikunnam.

The Sooranadu agitation and Meni agitation made Vallikunnam Panchayat very famous. Sooranadu agitation was a farm worker’s struggle against landlords. The reason for the flourishing of communism in Vallikunnam was Meni agitation. The circumstances that led to Meni agitation are the dismissal of the farm worker, Meni, from job by the landlord. The Communist Party had declared an agitation in continuation of the incident. The agitation that followed is known as Meni agitation. Kambisseril Kochikka Channar was the leader who shone as a silver star in the cultural history of Vallikunnam.

The Vaikom sathyagraha which took place as part of the legendary agitation which occurred from 1924 to 1936 with the aim of securing the rights to enter temples for the lower castes Kambisseril Kochikka Channar had organized the locals and
participated in the agitation along with his daughter. He had given strong leadership along with EV. Ramaswamy, Rajaji; and TK.Madhavan. The place name ‘Vallikunnam’ became more famous through Thoppil Bhasi and Kambisseri Karunakaran. The Communist movement like gained enormous popular support through plays ‘Ningalenne Communistakki’ (You made me a Communist) written and directed by Thoppil Bhasi. CK.Kunjuraman, KN.Gopalan, Panathazha Raghavan, Perur Madhavan Pillai, TK.Thevan, Dr.Puthussery Ramachandran all were famous individuals of Vallikunnam Panchayat. A convention was held at Vallikunnam by organizing Congress workers in 1953. Pandit Nehru participated in this convention. The people of this Panchayat belong to Hindu, Christian and Muslim religions. Vattaykkadu Devi temple and Padayanivattam Devi temple are very ancient temples of Vallikunnam. The very ancient Muslim Mosque of Vallikunnam is Chiramukhathu Mosque and Kanjippuzha Mosque. The CSI Church at Kondoodi Mukalil south is a very ancient place of worship of Christians. The Sanskrit Padasala which started in 1926 at Manakkattu is the first educational institution which was brought to Vallikunnam inhabitants in educational field. Late Sri KP.Krishna Vaidhyan was the founder of this institution. In 1964 this school was elevated to a Sanskrit High School of SNDP. Vallikunnam Panchayat has much importance in the field of art, literature and culture. Padayani is a ritualistic art form being performed in Bhadrakali temples.
Other art forms are Kalamezhuthu pattu, Thottampattu, Mudippechu, Kuthirakettu, Kolam Thullal, etc. Among ancient folk arts, Kakkarassei Nadakom is a dramatic form laying stress on jokes. Kollaka Keshava Pillai Aasan was the Master of this art form. He was a member of Kollaka House at Kaduvinal. He was staying in this Village Panchayat. The important factory among the commercial brick-tile factories, is the IC tile works established in the year 1962. Other businesses are cashew factories, Paper Mills, Milk Products, Copra Processing unit etc. The total population as per the census of 1991 was 27483 of this 13261 were males, and 14222 were females. About 22599 people were literate. The treasury and the Kaccheri of Mulakumadi Seelakaran (the incharge of a Kacheri) were worked in this building.\

**Thamarakkulam Panchayat**

Thamarakkulam panchayat is an agricultural village situated at the south-east end of Oonattukara region which is a part of Madhya Thiruvithamcore. The greatest area of Thamarakkulam Panchayat is the Madhavapuram Public market. This market was established by the Thiruvithamcore Diwan Sir T. Madhava Rao in Thamarakkulam village. The area is about 20.88 sq: kms. The boundaries are Bharanikkavu in the north, Nooranadu and Chunakkara Panchayats on the east, Palamel Pallikkal Village Panchayat in the south, Sooranadu north, Thazhava and Vallikunnam Panchayats, Vallikunnam and Bharanikkavu Panchayats in the west.

The important wards of Thamarakkulam Panchayat are Kannamkuzhi A, Kannamkuzhi B, and Perur Karazhma, Vedaraplay, Chathakiyara, Kottakkattuseri A, Kottakkattuseri B, Mekkumuri A, Mekkumuri B, Mekkumuri C and Kizhakkemuri. The total population of Thamarakkulam Village Panchayat is 24470 as per the census of 1991 Thamarkkulam panchayat region was under the custody of the king of Kayamkulam. Since the boundary stone Anikkal was there in this place, this place became Nediyanikkal temple. The temple of Kannamkuzhi which is 100 years old has the family deity (Thevara Murthy) situated here.

The Nooranadu Leprosy sanatorium which was shifted from the boundary of Kayamkulam Raja’s kingdom as per the order of Sreemoolam Raja is on the east of Thamarakkulam Panchayat. The emergence of a Mosque at Thamarakkulam Panchayat too is a matter of legend. According to the local people, years back in a lonely place people heard a loud voice of God filled with liveliness as blowing off. Hearing this, the Muslim believers came running to this place and started praying. Later in this place, Kallur Mosque was built. Thamarakkulam Panchayat has vast areas of red soil filled with laterite stones. The eastern section of this area is of higher elevation and filled with hard laterite stone. The middle portion is of less hard laterite soil, slanting to the western side.

The western end area is very low lying filled with laterite soil. Thamarakkulam Panchayat which is situated at the south-east end of the agricultural region Oonattukara which is an agricultural village. In the most fertile soil coconut, rubber, areca tree, etc. and spices like pepper, ginger, turmeric and pulses like peas, black gram, horse
gram etc, tapioca, corn, colocasia, pineapple are cultivated. Betel leaves are cultivated on a large scale in this panchayat. Paddy cultivation is done twice in a year. About 3300 quintal paddy is being produced annually.

In the western part of this village so many ‘Kavus” (groves) are seen. This is an indication of social relationship. From the earlier period onwards so many ‘Kavus’ (family temples) idol worshipping temples, ponds, etc. are seen here, in Thamarakkulam village the important business is cashew factories. But brick making business is also important in this area. The clay present in the paddy fields on the west and south side is suitable for brick making. In the industrial estate one unit is working for making Aluminum sheets and vessels. Khadi units and other small scale industries which give preference to women are also working here. In the educational zone, in the initial stage 23 ‘kudipallikudams’ were working here. One LP school was established in 1918. The Sanskrit school established in 1936 was holding too much importance currently so many educational institutions are working here155.

Chettikulangara Panchayat

Chettikulangara panchayat is a place which can be called the capital of Onattukara region including Mavelikkara taluk. It is also historically a most important place of central Thiruvithamcore. 21 wards are there in Chettikulangara Village Panchayat. They are Karippuzha, Aanjilipra, Mattom south, Pela, Kattuvalli, and Erezha North, PHC

155. Thamarakkulam Panchayath Samskarika samthi Report, 2009
ward, Erezha, Erezha south, Koypalli karazhma, Manapally, Koyikkathara, TK.Madhavan ward, Kannamangalam south, Kannamangalam North, Kaitha Vadakku (north), Chettikulangara, Kadavur south, and Kadavur. The total area of this place is 20.45sq.kms. On the north of Chettikulangara Panchayat lies Achan Kovil River and Mavelikkara municipality, in the east of Mavelikkara Municipality. Thekkekara and Bharanikkavu Panchayats, on the South Kayamkulam Municipality, Pathiyoor Panchayat, and in the West Pathiyoor, Cheppadu and Pallipadu Panchayats are situated.

Chettikulangara Panchayat is a region in the coastal plain area. The land is at three levels, i.e. Purayidams (plots), low lying paddy fields and puncha (dry fields). Most parts of Chettikulangara Panchayat are water-logged (stagnant) sandy areas. In puncha fields and river banks, clayey soil mixed with sand and alluvial soil is seen. The nature of cultivation in Chettikulangara Panchayat is, in viruppu fields twice paddy and once gingelly cultivation in a year (two blossom paddy and one blossom gingelly) and in Puncha fields paddy is cultivated once in an year (oru poovu) and in purayidams (plain plots) coconut, areca, jack fruit tree, mango trees, plantains, tapioca, corn, Colacasia, yam, tubers, pepper, ginger, turmeric, etc, are cultivated as main crops. The area of the land suitable for cultivation in Chettikulangara panchayat is 1897 hectors and 150 hectors puncha paddy fields. Chettikulangara which was very prosperous with the abundance of agricultural products once upon a time was greatly influenced by the

---

156. Chettikulangara Panchayath Annual Report . P.2
social reformists like Sree Narayana Guru, Ayyankali and Chattambi Swamikal in the progress of socio-educational field. The influence of National movement, the progress in people’s movements like Thiruvithamcore State Congress and the far sightedness of the people who have given leadership in the socio-cultural fields gave the people an opportunity to take ample interest in education.

After the formation of the revenue district, the District De-limitation Committee formed in 1958 asked for the formation of Chettikulangara Panchayat. The VS. Sanskrit High School of Koypally Karazhma is the first educational institution established in Chettikulangara panchayat. Before the Sanskrit school came up in 1884, one ‘kudipallykkudam’ (nursery school) was in existence here for ten years. Sreeman Kochu Pappu Vaidyan, the Sanskrit astrology pandit was the founder of this Sanskrit school. The reference to the girl’s school of Uluvam in Mavelikkara in the speech by Mahakavi Kumaranasan in 1915 in the Travancore Praja Sabha of that period about education invited special attention.157.

The aim of the educational working centres was to encourage getting educational facilities at less expense. The famous educational activist Vidwan A.N.P Nair was the founder manager of Vidyalaya Poshini. Under the auspices of this institution one educational magazine ‘Vidyalaya Poshini’ was published. Taking into all these aspects consideration the awakening Chettikulangara Panchayat has marked a remarkable

157. P.Basakaranunni , Pathonpatham Nootandile Keralam , Kerala Sahithiya Academy ,1988,p.86
change in the field of education. An institute for giving training to the teachers also worked under Vidyalaya Poshini. This was known as Chettikulangara High School. Many ancient temples and Christian churches are there in Chettikulangara Panchayat. The ancient places of worship are Chettikulangara Devi temple, Pathichira Orthodox Syrian Church and Kannamangalam St. Andrews Marthoma Church which is also called Poovannal Church.\textsuperscript{158}

The Kettukazhcha and Kuthiyottam performed on Kumbha Bharani day in Chettikulangara panchayat are a great spectacle attracting thousands to the temple of Chettikulangara. The agricultural festival conducted in connection with Kumbha Bharani festival is very famous. Njattupattu, Koythupattu, Pulluvan pattu, Kalamezhuthu pattu etc. are also very famous. Chettikulangara panchayat is a place where people of different castes and religions together in amity and brotherhood. The right for running cracker business as offerings to Chettikulangara Devi temple is vested with a Christian family by name ‘Nadeveedu’. The business establishments in Chettikulangara village panchayat are very few in number.\textsuperscript{159}

Another important zone is power; the dream project of Chettikulangara, the underground electric cable was recently commissioned. Efforts are a foot to put up the Chettikulangara Kumbha Bharani festival which bears the cultural intrinsic worth

\textsuperscript{158} Malayala Manorama, 2010, August, 18, p3
\textsuperscript{159} Festival Supplement, Malayala Manorama, 2008, March, P, 24
of Onattukara for the recognition of UNESCO. The population of Chettikulangara during the formation of Chettikulangara Panchayat in 1962 was 27,000.

As per the census of 1991, the populations climbed to 33,943 of this 16326 were males and 17617 were females. In this Panchayat, the ritualistic arts are still in prevalence. Pulluvan pattu, anpoli, Kuthiyottam, Kalamezhuthu pattu, Bhajanapattu, Villadichan Pattu, etc. are the important arts. Kabadikali, golikali, kallukali, etc. held in connection with Onam festival are played during this period also.\textsuperscript{160}

It is hoped that this chapter has given comprehensive information concerning the land and people of Mavelikkara.

\textsuperscript{160} Chettikulangara Barani Chantha , Mathirbhumi ,2008,March ,p,4