Chapter-3

Principles and Practices of Hygiene in Medieval Malabar

The word hygiene, if applied in the broadest sense, signifies the rules and regulations for a near faultless state of mind and body. It is neither desirable nor possible to dissociate from examining the tradition of healing and hygiene, the basic elements of the life; mind and body. Traditional societies and their cultural ethos understood them as complementary to each other by nature. Any incongruity in this basic premise was believed to have caused total breakdown of living patterns and social life. Historically, cleansing; physical, social, ritual; appeared to have been a universal subject, though its applications and principles in different cultural areas. My examination here is confined to medieval Kerala, where hygiene as a practice occupied significant place in the entire social formation and relations for the reasons of a unique social processing. This chapter tries to explain the way medieval societies in Kerala approached hygiene in its three different manifestation; social, ritual and physical.

‘Disease per se had no existence’ in medieval Malabar as it was broadly understood as the results of violating different hygienic principles imposed on the society. Scripts and traditions in the region reinstated certain beliefs that considered the state of body and societal functioning was affected by every mental, moral and social action by the participants. Therefore this chapter tries to explore the ways in which people in medieval Malabar perceived different aspects of daily life such as clothing, food, water, climate, status, sex,

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1 Chikitsa Manjari, (trns), Sriman Nambothiri, Vidyarambham Publishers, Alapuzha, 1990
4 I have taken this idea from Hereward Carrington, from History Of Natural Hygiene, 1996, p.58
5 Zainuddeen Makhdum, Tuhfathul Mujahideen fee Ba-a-Si Akhbaril Burtuhkhalieyen” translated as “A Gift to the Warriors with Information about Portugese.” Written in Arabic (trns-Malayalam), C.Hamsa, Al-Huda Book Stall, Kozhikode, 1999, pp.40-41
occupations, religion, morality through different principles of hygiene to facilitate an undisturbed and uncontested social pattern.\textsuperscript{6} This explorations further established the fact that, the multiple concepts and practices of hygiene in medieval Malabar, mostly consciously and at times unconsciously were devised to boost up the social and ritual supremacy of the dominant social forces with whose support rulers established their political legitimacy.\textsuperscript{7}

Hygiene in general can be considered a science which treats the health of the body by various mechanisms. Hygiene on one hand deals with the causative elements which make the body, mind and environment of men unhealthy and on the other medicine deals with curing these by various means as it comes.\textsuperscript{8} Medieval Kerala perceived that carelessness towards once own being and indifferent attitude towards structured community and life, make them sick. Dreaded diseases such as consumption, typhoid or typhus fevers, small pox, scarlet fever, cholera and so on were seen as the result of utter negligence of one of the most prominent characteristics of the human civilization; sanitation and different principles of Hygiene.\textsuperscript{9}

In medieval Malabar, health problems were generally defined within the religious and spiritual terms. Emergence and establishment of diverse cultural groups in the region during the medieval period, provided premises for different rites, rituals and concepts to deal with

\textsuperscript{6} F S B Francois De Chaumont, \textit{A Manual Of Practical Hygiene}, J. & A Chuechill, New Buklington Street, 1878, p.23
\textsuperscript{7} Sheila Faith Weiss, \textit{Race Hygiene and National Efficiency: The Eugenics of Wilhelm Schallmayer}. This work expounds the works of Schallmayer, German Physician (1857-1919) who founded along with Alfred Ploetz, \textit{The German Eugenics} or German Race Hygiene concept. University of California Press, California, 1987
\textsuperscript{8}“The study of hygiene includes the examination of the conditions which affect the generation, development, growth, and decay of individuals of nations and of races, being on its scientific side coextensive with biology in its broadest sense, including sociology” Albert Henry Buck, \textit{A Treatise On Hygiene and Public Health}, Vol.2, W. Wood and Company, London, 1879, p.3
multiplicities of hygiene sensibility.\textsuperscript{10} It bore resemblances to any society in the middle age such as Europe or Arabian Peninsula, where diseases were connected with sin, hygiene and moral impurities.\textsuperscript{11} Therefore, canvas of this chapter consists of many elements such as food; its preparation, usage, and abuse; water; its significance in communities, availability, rituals associated water, religious and customs in relation to water.\textsuperscript{12} Cloth, an important element of physical hygiene and its use and consumption, its regulation and importance in the maintenance of the hygiene has also been looked into. However, the main thrust area of study focuses on the way various notions of personal cleanliness through which the realization of body and social space acquired during the period concern through the praxis of purity and impurities: physical, moral and ritual.\textsuperscript{13}

Pursuit of hygiene, physical and moral, was considered by upper strata to be the paramount priority as it became a method of imagining the integrity and the purity of the self and community.\textsuperscript{14} Socio-cultural life in Medieval Malabar had experienced with various aspects of physical, social and moral hygiene and the negligence of which was believed to

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  \item \textsuperscript{10}Koka Sandesham (trans), Prof.Gopikkuttan, Current Books, Trichur, 1996; Fra Paolino da San Bartolomeo, \textit{Voyage to the East Indies; Observations Made During A Refidence of Thirteen Years Between 1776 and 1789 in District Little Frequented by the Europeans}, (trans) by William Johnston, London
  \item \textsuperscript{11}George Rosen, \textit{A History of Public Health}, The John Hopkins University Press, Maryland, 1993 p.29
  \item \textsuperscript{12}Lisa J Lucero, \textit{Water and Ritual, The Rise and Fall of Classic Maya Rulers}, University of Texas Press, Austin, 2006, pp.5-33
  \item \textsuperscript{14}Alison Bashford, \textit{Imperial Hygiene: A Critical History of Colonialism, Nationalism and Public Health}, Palgrave, 2004, p.4; W. E Dhanakoti Raju, \textit{The Elements Of Hygiene On The Laws Of Health}, C Foster And Company, London, 1875, pp.1-3, “When the heart hides the blood-vessels by which the blood derived from food is conveyed to every part of the body, the organs of respiration which purify the blood by means of the air we breathe,—when these other organs of the body remain entire and perform their respective functions regularly and smoothly, no uneasiness or pain is felt, and we are enabled to enjoy life, and to discharge efficiently the various duties devolving upon us. Such a condition of the body is called health”
\end{itemize}
have caused miseries and sufferings.\textsuperscript{15} These miseries were actually seen as the direct results of violating of the human beings of the law of nature and cultural pattern which. And hence, violation, as it believed, effected immediately on human body and disrupted social life.\textsuperscript{16} All caste/religious groups in the region generally believed that the violation of different normative agencies of health, such as sacred bath, sacrifices and ablutions, did not necessarily result the immediate destruction of the health, social order and environment but rather caused a gradual decay would definitely fall upon at times though.\textsuperscript{17} Apart from some major diseases such as \textit{malaria, small pox} and \textit{cholera}, most of the health problems were believed to have occurred due to the ignorance and carelessness of different hygiene concepts practiced in the society at multiple levels.\textsuperscript{18} Thus, the death from afore mentioned diseases were classified as \textit{ku- mṛtu} or bad death which in turn assisted in establishing certain cleansing rituals that further reduced social relations.\textsuperscript{19}

Nevertheless, in practice, many actual and health problems emerged out from the precarious physical hygiene conditions prevailing among the poor due to the negligence by the multiple layered authorities.\textsuperscript{20} Epidemic diseases had generally one pattern by which it

\textsuperscript{15}Ahmad Bava Musliar, \textit{Feehi Shifahunnas upakaram Upakaram}, C.H.Muhammad and Sons, Thirurangadi, 2001.p.22-26


\textsuperscript{19}Shirley Firth, Dying, \textit{Death and Bereavement in a British Hindu Community}, Peeters, 1997,p.53

\textsuperscript{20}Duarte Barbosa, \textit{A Description of the Coast of Africa and Malabar in the Beginning of the Sixteenth Century}, (trs), Henry E. J. Stanley, The Hakluyt Society, London, 1865, Reprint, CUP, 2009, “There were people who live in the mountains very poorly and miserably. And they have no other
originates from the filthy and unhealthy conditions of medieval Malabar where poor people lived under malnourished condition as reported by 16\textsuperscript{th} century travelers.\textsuperscript{21} Subsequent centuries, witnessed large scale malaria which generally began as dysentery which in turn created a proverb by itself in the region which goes like “if you are subject to dysentery avoid Malabar”.\textsuperscript{22} The living condition of poor, who were generally lower caste groups such as \textit{Pulayar} and \textit{Parayar}, exposed them to damp and cold.\textsuperscript{23} During the monsoon season this brought to them acute liver problems and Malaria.\textsuperscript{24} Nevertheless these menaces gradually spread across the regions and finally affected affluent and powerful sections who could afford to treat themselves with greater access to superior knowledge, access and money and power.

By 16\textsuperscript{th} century, Communities in this region had scrupulously defined normative rules, applied regulating and monitoring agencies at temporal and non temporal level to keep multiple level of hygienic and health practices.\textsuperscript{25} This in return facilitated some technical

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\item occupation than bringing wood and grass to the city for sale, to support themselves. And these people have no intercourse with any others, nor others with them, under pain of death ; and they go naked, covering only their middles, many of them do so with only leaves of trees, and some with small and very dirty cloths.” p.141
\item \textit{Em nome de Deus}: The Journal of the First Voyage of Vasco da Gama to India, 1497–1499, (trns), Glenn J. Ames, Brill, Leiden, 2009, p.89, “This (surrounding crowd in expectation for food) was due to the multitude of people who live in this country and the scarcity of food for them. One time it even happened that some of our men were mending some sails and took biscuits with them to eat. So many people surrounded them, both small children and grown men, that they took the biscuits out of their hands, and in the end, they had none to eat.”
\item William Logan, Malabar Manual, Vol.1., AES, New Delhi, 1887,p.217
\item Ibid,p.218; Barbosa, “They are looked upon as worse than the devil, and as altogether condemned so that by looking at them only they consider themselves as defiled and excommunicated, which they call contaminated.They support themselves on \textit{ynamे}, (?) which is like the root of the maize which is found in the island of Antilla, and on other roots and wild fruits, and they cover themselves with leaves and eat the flesh of wild animals.”p.144
\item Ibid,p.218; Barbosa, “They are looked upon as worse than the devil, and as altogether condemned so that by looking at them only they consider themselves as defiled and excommunicated, which they call contaminated.They support themselves on \textit{ynamे}, (?) which is like the root of the maize which is found in the island of Antilla, and on other roots and wild fruits, and they cover themselves with leaves and eat the flesh of wild animals.”p.144
\item Zainuddhin Makhdum, \textit{Thuhafathul Mujahideen}, Thirurangadi Press, Calicut, 2002,pp.40-43; “There are among them high castes, low castes, and castes of other degrees in between.A bath is
advancement also, worth mentioning though exclusive in practice, with the capacity of further development which could withstand many historical nuggets.\textsuperscript{26} Hygiene at the principle and practical level maneuvered itself with close proximity of socio-cultural morality which of course did have a direct relation with political authority.\textsuperscript{27} Main sources of the information for this study are obtained from textual and architectural findings from the area under scrutiny. While textual references give ample data for the socio-cultural aspects of hygiene, architectural archetypes such as Kovilakams (palaces), Illams, and Mana and ecclesiastical structures such as temples and mosques give valuable insights in to the technical aspects of the hygiene processing. It is worth to remember that the inferiority of the laterite stone as building material and abundant supply of the long lasting forest woods created a base for a unique architectural style in medieval Malabar.\textsuperscript{28}

Generally, concepts of hygiene and sanitary conditions had in many ways affected every sections of the population.\textsuperscript{29} General appalling sanitation condition caused many water born contagious diseases of which the end result was widespread deaths in many Asian countries in which Malabar region was more susceptible.\textsuperscript{30} This sense of insecurity in terms of hygiene brought in water in to the centre stage of scriptural and practical basis of hygiene of all living communities such as Nambutiris, Nair, Thiyya, Pulayar, Mappila and so on as it happened across the world.\textsuperscript{31} Water terms such as Kulam (ponds), Chira (lake), and Kinar

\textsuperscript{26}Elizebeth Lane Furdell, \textit{The Royal Doctors, 1485-1714; Medical Personnel at the Tudor and Stuart Courts}, University of Rochester Press, 2001, pp.1-17
\textsuperscript{28}By A.H. Longhurst , Story of the Stupa, p.33
\textsuperscript{29}Zainuddin Makhdum,op.cit, p.47
\textsuperscript{30}Radhey Shyam Chaurasia, \textit{History of Medieval India From 1000 AD to 1707 AD}, 2002
\textsuperscript{31}Ananthapuravarnanam (14\textsuperscript{th}-15\textsuperscript{th} Century Sandesha Kavya).Compilation and Commentary by K.Rathnamma, State Institution of Languages, Trivandrum, 1997, p.15-18;29-35; Lisa J. Lucero,
(well) established themselves not only in the cultural lexicography but also in the political processing in the region.\textsuperscript{32} Authority and control over water bodies became a tool for political legitimacy which could make rulers like Samutiri in Malabar more “sacred” and politically superior.\textsuperscript{33}

There were \textit{sarassu} (pond) such as Pathmanabha Temple Ponds in Trivandrum which was believed to have been constructed by \textit{Agni Devan} (the God of fire) or Vishnu and were to be protected by the ruler.\textsuperscript{34} The continuous struggle between the King Samutiri of Malabar and other chieftains over the political legitimacy of supremacy was decided by the chain of fights called \textit{Mamankam},\textsuperscript{35} a celebration which was originally activated to hold the sacred right of the descent of the sacred river Ganga in to the Sacredmost River in Malabar, \textit{Bharatha} or \textit{Nila}.\textsuperscript{36} By the virtue of being the tangible authority over a sacred river and its bank, Samutiri was uplifted to the status of the “rakshapurush”, considered a moral authority or the protector of the social and cultural life in the region.\textsuperscript{37} These political and moral actions began with elaborate rites hygiene rituals such as \textit{maghasnanam}, a ritual purification ceremony at the commencement of the festival.\textsuperscript{38} The River \textit{Perar (Bharathappuzha)} which

\textit{Water and Ritual: The Rise and Fall of Classic Maya Rulers}, The University of Texas Press, 2006; Susan C. Anderson and Bruce H. Tabb, (eds), \textit{Water, Leisure and Culture European Historical Perspectives}, Berg, Oxford, 2002; Francesca De Châtel, \textit{Water Sheikhs & Dam Builders: Stories of People and Water in the Middle East}, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswik, New Jersey, 2007; “Mohammedans are divided in to four sects, which are called saphy(Shafites), Anaphy (Hanafites), Malck(Malekites) and Ambeli(Hanbalites) of which the first are chiefly found on this coast. These sects are called thus after the name of four teachers.” Adrian Moens, 1781, op.cit,p.199.

\textsuperscript{32}Kokasandesam, op.cit, pp.11-19
\textsuperscript{33}Ibid, p.61, lines-14-4
\textsuperscript{34}Ananthapuravarnanam, op.cit,p.10,lines-16-17
\textsuperscript{35}Philip Zarilli, \textit{When the Body Becomes all Eyes}, OUP, New Delhi, 1998, p.41
\textsuperscript{37}Koka Sandesam, line-21-22, p.66 “Mamankam festival had originally been celebrated under the auspices of the Chera emperors. In 12th century the Zamorin conquered this place and assumed the proud function of the Raksapurusa or protector of the Mamankam.” \textit{The Indian Historical Quarterly}: Volume 6, 1930
\textsuperscript{38}Kokasandesam, op.cit,p.67, lines-23
had been considered as ‘sacred water body’ acquired its ritual superiority during the period concerned.\(^3^9\)

Also, the common people, at practical and philosophical level, had realized the importance of the water and its usage during the time under study.\(^4^0\) In Malabar, people were generally believed to have had their body cleaned twice and it was necessary on their part to wash properly the hand and face before every meal since they were forced to engage mostly in agriculture related activities where mud and dirt must have been integral part of their daily chores.\(^4^1\) Meticulous observance of this practice was on one side mandatory by the social normative while on the other clinical reasons worked its course.\(^4^2\)

Joëlle Allouche-Benayoun, writes of Jewish tradition in Algeria

> “The rites of water embody the passage from the profane to the sacred, the passage from the “outer” to the “inner,” the passage from the state of nature to the state of culture. But above all…. (they) seem to be a symbolic way of casting out the existential anguish inherent in the thinking human being.”\(^4^3\)

Number of mosques was at work at places such as Calicut, Cannore, Quilon, Ponnani and Friday congregational prayers (Jumaath) during the period, as reported by Ibn bathuta, Abd-al Razzak and others. These were was part of an established practice of scriptural based Islamic religious community on the coast who had adhered to the basic principles of hygiene,

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\(^{3^9}\)Ibid, p.68, lines-24

\(^{4^0}\)Kokasandesam, op.cit, lines-28-29, p.70

\(^{4^1}\)Duarte Barbosa, Description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar. A Description of The Coasts of East Africa and Malabar in the Beginning of The Sixteenth Century, London, Printed for the Hakluyt Society, p.108

\(^{4^2}\)A.L, Basham, “The Practice of Medicine in Ancient and Medieval India”, in Asian Medical Systems; A Comparative Study (Ed), Charles M.Leslie, University of California Press, Berkeley,1977, pp.18-43

purity and pollution. The architectural patterns and textual traditions give testimonies to a well established Islamic community which was called mappila on the entire coast of Malabar. They, along with numerous Muslim traders from Arabia, must have been very specific in the provisions of the physical hygiene, as these practices acquired a well defined pattern in the entire Muslim world during the period under study. They had adhered to the hygiene principles of Shafi School of Sunni Islam which was strongly prevalent from Hadramauth to South East Asia during this time. Shafi-i-Jami Masjid at Cochin, constructed before 16th century, testify the strong presence of Shafi framework of Islamic hygienic practices such as Vudu, Janabath, Janaza and Circumcision prevalent on the Malabar region.

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44Em Nome de Deus: The Journal of the First Voyage of Vasco da Gama to India,1497–1499 (trans&ed), Glenn J. Ames, Leiden, Boston, 2009, p.145, “In this (Calicut) city there reside many very wealthy Moorish merchants, and all the trade is in their hands. They have a fine mosque, in the square of the town.”; Abdul Sheriff, Dhow Cultures and the Indian Ocean: Cosmopolitanism, Commerce, and Islam, Columbia University Press, New York, 2010, p. It is interesting that during 14th century itself, names of the days of the week came in to existence such as Velliazhcha (Friday) and Jnayarazhcha (Sunday). Payyannurpattu, op.cit, p.26, lines-85


46“The spread of Islam produced a distinct Islamic folk culture which is termed as the Mappila culture. Here the proliferation of indigenous elements, the Islamic doctrines, Sufi and other religious orders and fraternities created favourable atmosphere for mixing together of the officially prescribed rules of religion with folk features..” says Husain Ra attā i, Mappila Muslims: A Study on Society and Anti Colonial Struggles, Other Books, Calicut, 2007, p.66; Brian A. Catlos, The Victors and The Vanquished: Christians and Muslims of Catalonia and Aragon, 1050–1300, Cambridge University Press, UK, 2004, p.56; Andrew Rippin, Muslims: Their religious Beliefs and Practices, 2005, Routledge, p.103-119

47Andre Wink, Alhind, The Slave Kings and The Islamic Conquest, E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1997, p.277; “As bearers of Islamic knowledge and prestige, Hadramis were creators of Islamic knowledge; Hadramis were everywhere potential creators of public spaces and institutions. Not surprisingly Hadramis were welcomed in the new port cities and states where they made local alliances and functioned in important capacities. What is fairly remarkable about the Hadrami experience is that they were able to retain a distinct identity at one level, and at the same time create a completely new one, Lakshmi Subramanian, “Commerce, Circulation, and Consumption Indian Ocean Communities in Historical Perspective” in Indian Ocean Studies: Cultural, Social, and Political Perspectives (Ed), Shanti Moorthy and Ashraf Jamal, Routledge, New York, p.142

Ubiquitous water bodies, ponds (*Kulams*) were very common in medieval Kerala.\(^{49}\) These water bodies also represent a different dynamism of social control as they associated, directly, to the dominant socio-political authorities.\(^{50}\) Ponds associated with non-temporal spaces were under the direct control of *nambutiri* priests who were under the kingly patronage as it happened in the medieval Europe.\(^{51}\) Alberuni mentioned exquisite sacred ponds at different sacred geographies in India in his *Kitabul Hind*.

“Our people, (the Muslims) when they see them, wonder at them and are unable to describe them, much less to construct anything like them.”\(^{52}\)

Abundance of secular and sacred water bodies set in, the people of Malabar taking two times bath (*kuli*) which by medieval time came around as a cultural compulsion before taking their daily meal.\(^{53}\) Different styles of bathing were prescribed for different occasions, for its hygienic relevance, such as pregnancy, delivery, death, prayers etc.\(^{54}\) “Early in the morning, these pagans go to wash at tank, which (where) tank is a pond of still water and itself with the more general principles of medicine and hygiene. There are several verses of the Quran in which medical questions of a very general order are discussed; there are also many sayings of the Prophet dealing with health, sickness, hygiene, and other questions pertaining to the field of medicine. Such diseases as leprosy, pleurisy, and ophthalmia are mentioned; remedies such as cupping, cautery and the use of honey are proposed. This body of sayings on medical questions was systematized by later Muslim writers, and became known as Medicine of the Prophet (*Tibb al-Nabi*), p.192.

\(^{49}\)Ananthapuravarnanam,op.cit,  
\(^{50}\)Ananthapuravarnanam, op.cit,p.18, lines-37-38; Kakasandesam, lines-19-9  
\(^{54}\)Ananthapuravarnanam, op.cit, pp.8-10, lines, 14-16, “oil bath, athletic exercise simple bath and oil syringing are also necessary as these will restore health and establish the digestive powers and likewise create intellectual brightness, personal beauty, acuteness of senses and prolongation of senses” says William logan, *Malabar Manual*, p.219
when they are washed, they may not touch any person until they have said their prayers and this in their house.\textsuperscript{55}

Along with this, eating customs were also developed as this period becoming suggestive to use right hands for eating as the left hand was considered unhygienic and polluting.\textsuperscript{56} People eating with left hand were considered morally weak by the society irrespective of other differences. They did it because touching food with left was considered “polluted” as the left hand was associated with cleaning the body parts after toilets and a way of satan.\textsuperscript{57} Therefore, in medieval Malabar, certain hygienic practices got religious character by which their observations were enhanced.\textsuperscript{58} People developed the concept of having individual plates for taking food which ensured much desired physical distance of one from another. For Christians, there were prohibitions on eating flesh upon Saturdays in memory of the lord and eating the flesh was considered a moral sin.\textsuperscript{59}

The synod doth command all the members thereof upon pain of

Mortal Sin, not to eat flesh upon Saturday, in memory of our lord’s

\textsuperscript{55}Ludovico Di Varthema, \textit{The Travels of Ludovico Di Varthema in Egypt, Syria, Arabia Deserta and Arabia Felix, in Persia, India, and Ethiopia, AD 1503 to 1508,} (trans)from original Italian edition of 1510, by John Winter Jones, London, 1863, p.149
\textsuperscript{56}Barbosa,op.cit,114
\textsuperscript{57}Barbosa says, “He then begins eat with right hand, taking handful of the rice without a spoon, and with the same hand he takes some of all the dishes and mixes it with the race and with his left hand he must not touch anything of what he eats” op.cit, p.114; In an hadith, Jabir reported that allah’s Messenger forbade that a man should eat with the left hand or walk with one sandal or wrap himself completely leaving no opening for the arms (to draw out) or support himself when sitting with a single garment wrapped round his knees which may expose his private parts” \textit{Imam Muslim,} Book, 024, Number, 5234.
\textsuperscript{59}Michael Geddess, \textit{The History of the Church of Malabar; From the Times of its Being Discovered by the Portuguese in the year 1501, Giving an Account of Persecutions and Violent Methods of the Roman Prelates to Reduce them to the Subjection of the Church of Rome,} London, 1694,pp.350-354
burial, but Eggs, Milk, Butter, or Cheese they may lawfully eat upon Saturdays.”

Sources provide “depictions and descriptions” of the bathing facilities and pattern of physical and moral cleansing rituals associated with that as bathing rituals were involved in fighting as well as harvesting. Contact with “impure” people and environment necessitated a ritual bath with all its paraphernalia. Initiation for yearly harvest and fighting another person were begun with ritual bathing. Even the blood shedding fights were preceded by a cleansing ritual bath. “Aromal Cevakar, famous medieval warrior in Kdathanadu of the Malabar region had to undergo a ceremonial bath with all the rituals before he set out for the angam or duel. In Malabar, bathing mostly occurred in the nearby river or in the private ponds or wells where many herbals and related elements were used. Apart from the ritual benefit these bathing also helped to retain the body composure as well as the use of herbs for body washing was very prevalent there.

These were easily available in the shrubs and bushes and the jungles as described Sandeshakavyas. In northern ballads (Vatakkan Pattukal), we have ample evidence for people using different types of herbs such as sandalwood, musk and oil for bathing. These

60Ibid,p.357
61Paul B New man, Daily Life in the Middle Ages, pp.152-155
62Anathpuravaranam, p.14,lines-28-29
63Ibid, pp.41-44 lines-100-106
64 “just before the harvest (in august) a member of the family, after a ceremonial bath fetches a sheaf of paddy from the fields. He is greeted by a women with a burning oil lamb.” Says, M. T. Narayanan, Agrarian Relations in late Medieval Malabar, ICHR, New Delhi, 2003, p.161, Says K.S.Mathew, Society in Medieval Malabar: A Study Based on Vadakka Pāuka, 1979
65Ibid.
67Anathpuravaranam, lines-25-28
were also used even by heroes like Tacholi Othenan. Unlike in Europe, where bathing was largely a communal activity for many material reasons, it had been individualistic in nature in medieval Malabar, except for occasional ritual hygienic baths such as *Theertha Snanam*.

Political establishments ensured the physical well being and basic physical hygiene of the foreign traders, who were in majority, Muslims. “In the road stations along Malabar special rest houses, *dyar al-muslimin*, were reserved for Muslims, without which the Muslim traders could hardly be expected to have travelled. Small and simple wells were dug up to cater the commercial, physical and ritual needs of the traders, especially the caravans which were generally carried out by the Arab merchants. The accounts of foreigners who visited the region during the period, reported a sort of organized structure of bath houses and wells along the trade routes in entire Malabar region, some of which are still in use or renovated.

“The road over the whole distance runs beneath the shade of trees and at every half a mile there is a wooden shed with benches on which all travelers, weather Muslims or infidels may sit. At each shed there is a well for drinking and an infidel who is in charge of it. If the traveler is infidel he gives him water in vessels; if he is Muslim he pours the water in to his hands, continuing to do so until him sign to him to stop. However, Muslims are most highly honored amongst them except that

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69 “Tachcholi meppayil kunhi odenan took an oil bath, and rubbed over his body A mixture of perfume, sandalwood and musk And sat down for dinner.” William Logan, Malabar Manual, Vol.1, p.152
70 Paul B New Man, op.cit, p.152
71 *Kokasandesam*, op.cit, line-23,p.67
73 Ibid, p.71
74 Edward C. Sachau, London: Trubner & Co., Ludgate, Hill.1888, Ballantyne, ‘They grow their hair, beard and moustache and walk around half naked. Some people wear two fingers width cloths around their waist while most of the people use cotton dresses and long socks.’ Al Beruni, p.91
as we have said they do not eat with them nor allow them in to their
houses”  75

Thannerpanthals, (water stopovers), the place where travelers offered water, were very
common in entire region of Malabar and medieval literatures talk about resting merchants
and travelers at these places. 76 Nevertheless, dominant castes maintained their moral and
social hygiene by having their own bath houses and tanks in the confinements of their
compound. “A tank (pond) is an inseparable accompaniment, and in most Nambutiri houses
there are three or four of them, the largest being used for bathing and the others for general
and kitchen purposes.” 77 Thus bathing and bathing facilities served to emphasize the social
status and significance of the communities concerned. Therefore construction, management
and control of bathing facilities and water bodies became one of the important aspects of the
socio-cultural life of Malabar. 78 King Zamurin of Calicut, Ali Rajas of Arakkal, King of
Cochin and many local rulers and upper caste groups maintained their rein over water bodies
through local chieftains or militia.

Perfume and fragrance had formed a tradition by themselves in the cultural setup of
Medieval Kerala, as they were part of most of the rituals stretching from birth to death.
Verthema describes the ways in which Brahmins in Malabar (Nambutiri) used perfume and
scents to bring to gods divinity and exclusiveness by applying scented water over idols before
worshiping them in temples. 79 Idols, altars and idols were perfumed in Malabar during the
medieval time. 80 Smell featured predominantly in all aspect of life, ill health and well being

76 Kokasandesam, op.cit,lines-20
77 Edgar Thurston, K. Rangachari, Castes and Tribes of Southern India, Volume 1
78 See the elaborate discussion about water, society and power in Paolo Squatriti, Water and Society in
Early Medieval Italy, 400-1000, Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom, 1998
79 Varthema, op.cit, pp.137-138
80 Ibid,op.cit,p.138
as removing filth; physical, moral and verbal. 81 Barboza gives us a detailed aspects of the tradition of elite people keeping themselves ‘good smelling’ and ‘perfumed.’ Also he gives some details of “smelling good” herbal substances such as saffron, cinnamon, jasmine, special ginger called hely which cultivated at Cannanore, Putjak and many other sweet smelling herbal objects. 82 Inscriptional sources indicate that, Camphor, a highly qualified source of perfume, was traded as a commodity from 11th century in Malabar. 83 Photos from 18th century show that the tradition continued and proper care was taken care of especially by the royal and elite women for the up keeping the body. 84 

Even though the upper caste women used descent costumes, they were not to be seen outside the residential boundaries without escort and were strictly confined as “gosha” as they were called “antarjanam” which signifies “inside people.” 85 They have apparently oiled their hair with the abundant availability of the coconut oil and covered their body with muslin or Cotton which they used to make rouka the long cloak. 86 Upper caste noble women used to have “long hair, black eyes, extended years which is pierced and straight delicate persons. They are accustomed to wash twice a day; to anoint their bodies every week with coconut oil, or white of an egg; and to rub their skin with a plant called Incia, the rind of which has property of removing all filth. This ablution and friction strengthen the body and the same time prevents too violent perspiration.” 87 Nevertheless, lower caste women from mukkuvas or paravas were prohibited from wearing dresses above their waist and were described as the ones who “ reveal head, breast, front, back, hand and full body in order to solicit with their

82 *Kokasandesam*, op.cit, p.63, lines-18. *Kukkumam* or Saffron as a cosmetic item found its place in Kokasandesam where its termed as *Kashmeeram*; The Dutch in Malabar, op.cit, p.219.
83 Nilakanta Sastri, 1932, p.323
84 Photo of an 18th Century Tampurati of Kuttipuram Kovilakam is attached.
85 Fawcett, *Nambutiris*, op.cit, p.40
86 *Ananthapurvarananam*, p.27, line-61
87 Fra Bartolomeo, op.cit, p.153; they have “long hair, black eyes, extended pierced ears. They used muslin or cotton to make rouka the long cloak” *Anathapurvarananam*, op.cit, lines-61,p.27
wicked language forgetting themselves.” These was supplemented by the nature of their employment such as fishing and dyeing that did not expected them of taking care of their body. These jobs made them exposed to sun and air in contrast to the upper caste women who were always in the protection of men and shades of palm gardens and enclosures.

The tradition of smell continued alluring various cosmetic items found in markets in medieval Malabar. Many specialized Theruvu (streets) in the region during medieval period suggest that there was sufficient demand for the commodities for local and international consumption. Vadakkan Pattukals (Northern Ballards) give plenty of references to such street markets as Kalavanibha Theruvu (Street of Potters), Chakkaravanibha Theruvu (Street of Jaggery), Chaliya Theruvu (Street of Weavers) and many Angadis (markets) sprang up in medieval Malabar. Large quantities of cosmetics, for which they built big pandiyala (warehouses), goods imported in to South India from west Asia, South East Asia and china.

These products were traded in Theruvu, of which some of them named after the communities that dominated the functionalities such as Jonaka Theruvu and Nazrani Theruvu at Nadapuram which dominated by Muslims and Christians respectively. Thus, traders had carried out their mission of decorating human bodies, with the protection of the

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88 Ananthapuravaranam, p.41,lines-100
89 Bartolomeo.op.cit, p.153
90 Ananthapuravaranam,op.cit, lines,55-60,pp.25-27
93 Payannurppattu, op.cit, p.16, lines-50. Apart from the herbals and cosmetics items traded were arms and warring equipments in these towns. In tradition, where martial arts and related medicines developed, traders made profit of trading arms such as kuntham,(long spear), shoolam (sort of a small spear), valu (sword), vel (arrows),kaikkatthi (Pen knife) and so on. Op.cit, p.10, lines-28; Kathleen Gough and David Schneider, Matrilineal Kingship. University of California Press, Los Angeles,1961, p.321
94 K.S.Mathew, op.cit, pp.45-46
rulers who enormously benefited from these endeavors.\textsuperscript{95} “Whenever foreign merchants enter their ports three secretaries of the king immediately repair on board their vessels write down their names and report them to him. The king thereupon grants them security for their property which they may even leave in the open field without any guard.”\textsuperscript{96} This was happening in a situation where consumption, ownership or displaying many material items such expensive clothing, ornaments, and even descent dwelling by the lower caste groups were made out to be punishable offence in a highly “sumptuary” structure of medieval Malabar.\textsuperscript{97}

Generally, women in Medieval Malabar gave immense importance to embellishing their body with expensive items such as Kanakam (gold), Mothiram (ring), kampi (metal bangles) to increase physical beauty.\textsuperscript{98} Medieval poets perceived as “perfect and beautiful” when women have ‘eyes like karimkoovalam (black back tree), long eyes stretching unto ears and smell generating thick hair.’\textsuperscript{99} Vaniyams (market) traded in mutthu (pearl), manikyam (emerald), rathnam (precious stones), Vajram (diamond) under the tutelage of merchant guilds who were very powerful in the region.\textsuperscript{100} This markets also traded in ari (rice), payaru (lentil), pananeer (rose water), puli (tamarind) under the patronage of powerful chetti merchants and other Kulavaniyars (grain merchants) well in to 18\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{101}

\textsuperscript{95}Zainuddin Makhdum, 2006, p.46
\textsuperscript{96}Rabbi Benjamin of Tudel, \textit{The Itinerary of Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela}, (ed), A.Asher, A.Asher &Company, London, 1840, p.138
\textsuperscript{98}Payyanurpattu, op.cit, p.30
\textsuperscript{99}Kokasandesam, op.cit, p.59, lines-11 and 64, p.89 koonthal was the term for hair.
\textsuperscript{100}Payyannurpattu, op.cit, p.30, “A lucky venture! A lucky venture! Plenty of rubies, plenty of emeralds, many thanks you owe to God for bringing you to a country where there are such riches!”Em Nome de Dues, op.cit, p72
\textsuperscript{101}Ibid,pp.29-30, lines-96-97, Barbosa, op.cit,p.31
The vibrant and organized networks of aromatic materials from different gardens in Malabar were exported to different parts of the world.\textsuperscript{102} The pattern of cosmetic herbs exported from the region was noticed by medieval travelers such as Bathuta in 14\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{103} This export business was largely done by the Arab merchants who were settled and became wealthy on account of that.\textsuperscript{104} “Ten to thirty men stood to pull at each oar. Garden-herbs and ginger were grown on deck, and on it, too, were houses built for the chief officers and their wives. The quarters of the junk were three-fold, fastened together by spikes”\textsuperscript{105} and gone to different parts of the world. Other groups of merchants included in these trading activities were \textit{Tulikar} (Turks), \textit{Mandakar} (not known), \textit{Kalingar} (odisha), \textit{Gaudar} (Bengali merchants), \textit{Pandinadanmar} (Nadars from Tamilnadu), \textit{Kutayariyar} (Brahmins from Kudaku), \textit{Chozhiyar} (Tamil merchants).\textsuperscript{106} Large \textit{kappal}s (ships) were entrusted to export these commodities in various markets within Kerala and outside as mentioned by \textit{Payyanurpattu}.\textsuperscript{107} This proposition explains that spices and cosmetics formed a major commodity on the mercantile activities of the Malabar.\textsuperscript{108}

The commodities in this \textit{Theruvu} included precious stones, pearls, perfumes, aromatics, myrobalans, honey, wax, textiles including silk of which the best quality was known as \textit{veerapali}.\textsuperscript{109} Silks items from China such as raw silk, silk stuffs, silk stockings,
were exchanged extensively in different parts of Medieval Kerala for people who were conscious about physical appearance and upkeepment. In Malabar, apart from the local theuvus, from 13th century onwards the ports of West Coast also attained significant positions in trading these commodities. Quilon (Kollam) was an important port and the Chinese Yuan emperors sent missions to this place. Some items such as cloves were used for oral hygiene as its bark were prescribed for tooth ache at least from early tenth century traded extensively here. The account of Jacobus Visscher describes the existence of such Bazars; though fortified; which exchanged commodities with Britain and Dutch in the later periods as well.

We get instances of important materials like black, cinnamon, pepper, ginger and clove used even in Italy as it is and is mentioned elaborately in the many works of famous women physician Trotula. Nevertheless, expensive and rare items were used by the city elites who were generally positioned themselves on the top of caste hierarchy too and experienced refined and structured pattern of the hygienic measures. These cosmetics items

side of Calicut.” Girolamo Sernigi, Second Letter to a Gentleman at Florence, This letter was written in August 1499 after the return of the São Gabriel under the command of João de Sá, op.cit, p.152

10Dutch in Malabar, op.cit, p.220
11Upinder Sing, A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India, p.587
11aGoods shipped to Orissa in the middle of the fourteenth century and Kulam in Malabar included cloves and nutmegs.”ibid, p.158
12Jacobs Visscher, Letters from Malabar,(1743) tr.: To Which is added An Account of Travâ’ncore, and Fra Bartolomeo’s Travels in that Country, Madras, 1862, p.119; R. A. Donkin, op.cit, 71
13Monica H Green, (ed&trns), The Trotula, The Medieval Compendium of Women Medicine, PENN, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 2001 “histories of women as in histories of medicine, readers often find a passing reference to a mysterious person called Trotula of Salerno. “Trotula,” for whom no substantive historical evidence has ever been brought forth, is said by some to have lived in the eleventh or twelfth century and is alleged to have written the most important book on women’s medicine in medieval Europe, On the Diseases of Women (De Passionibus Mulierum)”. p.1 .Another work “Women’s Cosmetics” relies on both local ingredients (numerous herbs and animal products) and imported substances (frankincense, cloves,(India), cinnamon (India), nutmeg, galangal).p.46; “First, a quintal21 of cinnamon is worth 25 cruzados, A quintal of cloves is worth 20+es, A quintal of pepper is worth 15+es, A quintal of ginger is worth 11+es, And in Calicut a bahar,22 equal to 5 quintals is worth 20+es, A quintal of nutmeg is worth 16+es, A quintal of lac is worth 25+es, Em nome de Deu,op.cit, p.119

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were used in multiple capacities. People even preserved the dead bodies by applying fragrance and medicines to keep them for years, says Rabbi Benjamin. This is to note that this practice is still carried by Viswhakarma Brahmin families in Kerala especially in the Palaghat area. Even Swamiyar from Vaidiyar clans do it and it is known as samadhiyiruthal of which Rabbi would have felt as the common practice of Kerala. They applied many oils, sandal and bhasmams and covered the dead body properly and keep in a stone casket which would be later filled with karppooram, sabrani, and salt and was thought as preserving the body. “the dead body having been laid on the pile rice is scattered over the deceased’ face and mouth by all blood relations, and pieces of gold are placed in the nine openings of the body, apparently to provide the deceased soul with money for its journey by whatever exit it leaves the body, thus recalling the somewhat similar practice of the roman world. After fire has been applied to the pile the company retires and bathes. They observe pollution for ten days and during that time abstain from supper and the use of salt in curries.”

Prevention of the public and private odors was a very prominent practice of the period by using different herbal components. Various fragrances were used according to the situation and place and it was very common in houses, temples, mosques and churches. This practice was not confined to the rich class of the society but percolated in to the polluted and mlechcha communities but the standard and coast were varied. Depending on the climatical conditions and the availability of the plant varieties, they used various items of deodorant and spread the fragrance in the entire habiting place. Plants such as Frankincense (Boswellia Sacra) were very much part of the traditional church services in Malabar to signify that the prayers could raise to the presence of the god like the same way the sweet

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115Rabbi Benjamin, op.cit,p.140; “the inhabitants do not bury their dead but embalm them with certain spices, put them upon stools and cover them with cloths, every family keeping apart.”
116William Logan, op.cit, p.129
117Medieval fondness towards perfumes and incenses was illustrated by Marco Polo, p.68
People yielded fragrance from *Thulasi, Rose flower, Saffron, Resins, Spikenard, Sandal Gums*, and from many other spices like *cardamom, ginger and camphor.* There were organized and specific pattern for the extraction of the fragrance and specific components gave different smells. There was no gender constrains to the use of perfumes as women used it for specific cleansing purposes like face and skin.

Many of the plants came from nearby forest and jungles where generally lower caste people were assigned to do the gathering job, as the upper caste communities were prohibited from undertaking the agricultural/labor related works. Since people applied fragrance to enhance the smell in living space and possessions, there had to be human labour to prepare, blend, and compound various plants like aloewood, saffron, musk, rose, jasmine, sandalwood, henna, and civet. However, given the social and cultural confinement of the period suggest that women in general used aromatic substances for the agreeable presence in the private space as their involvement in the public was considered unethical or sacrilege.

The smell of aromatics and other fragrance was very prominent in the rituals of all communities on the Malabar Coast to make rituals completed with good smell. This period was known for its elaborate rituals for attaining worldly as well as the otherworldly gains. Rituals originated in early medieval period used many commodities to discharge enticing

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120 Marco Polo, p.170; “From this land of Calicut, which is also called Upper India, comes the spices that are consumed in the east and west, in Portugal, and in all the countries of the world. Precious stones of every type also come from this city called Calicut. That is: in this city there are, of local production, the following spices: much ginger; pepper, cinnamon, even though this is not as fine as that coming from an island, called Çilam(Kollam) which is eight days journey from Calicut. All this cinnamon passed through the city of Calicut. There is an island, called Melaca which sends cloves to this city. The ships from Meca [Mecca] load spices here and carry them to a city in Mecca, Em nome de dues, op.cit,p.98
122 Constance Classen, Anthony Synnott, op.cit, p.126
smells; for the moral satisfaction of the gods and goddesses.\textsuperscript{124} Certain plants such as \textit{Thulasi}, \textit{Neem}, \textit{Peepal}, \textit{Dhrbha} that ensured ritual hygiene in religious functions were considered to be sacred and believed to have had curing powers.\textsuperscript{125} People in all creeds believed the immediate relation between the ill health and the God. Batuta explained that the beliefs among the sea robbers as well, who never harm or alarm the people who inhabited around the Coast or in the island as they believed that they would be burnt by the wrath of god with serious ill health if they do so. Therefore they even used to forgo the sea robbers and left those free unpunished.\textsuperscript{126}

Black Death was very common in the period under the scan and reported on the coast of Indian Ocean.\textsuperscript{127} Bathuta does not mention its brutal occurrence in Malabar or any other region in Kerala. But he gives an account of the endemic spreading across the cost the Nile as result of the unhygienic practices of the population across the river. Plague has always been the result of the unkempt environment and unhygienic surroundings which leads to the uncontrollable breading of the transmitting elements like rodents.\textsuperscript{128} “On his return to Cairo, he found the Black Death wasting the population. Mocking, lethal, invisible, this awful plague was rapidly sweeping westward and destroying whole families. There were mass burials in Egypt as it happened elsewhere especially in Europe and it was not an exceptional situation at any count. Modern science later on proved beyond any doubt that the scientific

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{124}Cardamom, a main ingredient for many of the medieval fragrance making was cultivated in Quilandi which was a major export zone in the medieval period. Al Beruni, p.106
\textsuperscript{125}V.V.Balakrishnan, \textit{Chedikalum Avayyude Oushadhagunangalum}, DC Books, Kottayam, 2007 op.cit, p.256
\textsuperscript{126}Bathuta,p.- then he talks about some customs of married couple on the occasion of the marriage on which the bride rose and kissed her groom's hand ; he sat beside her, and he and she put betel and fawfel into one another's mouth. Then the covering of the platform was let down, and the whole structure, with bride and bridegroom on it, was carried into the palace.
\textsuperscript{127}Akhil Bakshi, \textit{Silk Road on Wheels: Travels Through Central Asia and Tibet},p.15
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significance of the plants in the rituals, though it is still a question if people who ritualized these plants knew its scientific significance.\textsuperscript{129}

Widespread offerings on the incense in the Hindu and Muslim ritual especially in Saints worships in the indigenous Islamic practices had in that way medical and ritual significances.\textsuperscript{130} The significance of the perfumes actually had two dimensions; symbolic and hygienic. They recognized alliance of fragrance and ritual in order to keep a divine and hygienic environment.\textsuperscript{131} Combustion is associated with purification in ritual and hygienic sense for which they used \textit{Ashtagandha} type of fragrances for creation of \textit{dhoopa}.\textsuperscript{132} They wanted to evoke a temporary body of the spirit through incensed smoke of the rituals. “Sun worshipers in medieval Kerala take up their censers and burn incenses in honor of this their deity.”\textsuperscript{133} Combination of herbs and incenses and scents were used to awaken a particular deity or please the divine body of the saints.\textsuperscript{134} They used the aromatic substances to offset the pungent and sickening smell of the organic materials as evident from many rituals of significance.\textsuperscript{135} People in medieval Kerala used different kinds of lacs, coarse camphor, good quality borax, camphor for anointing the idols, eating and for the eyes, eagle wood, aloe-

\textsuperscript{129} Malika Mohammada, \textit{The Foundations of the Composite Culture in India}, Aakar Books, Delhi, 2007, p.374
\textsuperscript{130} During medieval period usage of incenses was widely prevalent across communities. Says Meenakshi Khanna, \textit{Cultural History of Medieval India}, p.238. This tradition goes on uninterruptedly with Saints worshipers at places like Ajmer and Nizamuddhin which are of medieval origin.
\textsuperscript{132} \textit{Kokasandesam}, op.cit,p.74,lines-35-36
\textsuperscript{133} Rabbi Benjamin, op.cit, p.140
\textsuperscript{134} Rosemary Guiley, \textit{The Encyclopedia of Magic and Alchemy}, Info Base Publication, New York, 2006
\textsuperscript{135} Nicola Conti, p.27 “They enter the temple morning and even ing, having first washed themselves in pure water ; and some times prostrating themselves upon the ground with hands and feet held up, repeat their prayers and kiss the ground, at others offer incense to their gods by burning spices and the wood of the aloe.”
wood, musk powder, fresh tamarinds, Indigo,\textsuperscript{136} encienzo, amber, mirobolans, coloured
sandal to enhance their physical and ritual visibility.\textsuperscript{137} Other cosmetics they used were
spikenard, white sandal, nutmeg, mace, acoro (calamo aromatic); a kind of aquatic plant used
in medicine, turbith, convolvulus turpethum, the root of which was used as purgative.\textsuperscript{138}
They also made use of serapine, socotra aloes, cardamums, rhubarb and Opium\textsuperscript{139} which was
largely traded in Calicut by Chinese and Arab merchants.\textsuperscript{140}

The markets of perfumery had a long history of its own on the entire Malabar
Coast.\textsuperscript{141} The history of perfume trade of Malabar with Western and Eastern Europe goes
back many centuries. Most of the commodities traded were having direct or indirect
association with perfume industry inside the land and outside. Pepper, a major component in
the medieval and even in the early colonial period was traded with many places in Far East
and eastern European countries.\textsuperscript{142} These items were not only used in the food preparation as
widely believed, but used a major component in the incense making industry. Other
commodities like cardamom and ginger; that had a significant application in rituals and
cosmetics; were traded along with pepper and used in the many sacrificial rituals in the

\textsuperscript{136}Marco Polo, op.cit.p.410 “they procure it from an herbaceous plant which is taken up by the roots
and put in to tubes of water where it is stuffed to remain till it rots when they press out the juice. This
upon being exposed to the sun and evaporated leaves a kind of paste which is cut in to small pieces of
the form in which we see it brought to us.”

\textsuperscript{137}Barbosa, op.cit, pp.221-222

\textsuperscript{138}ibid

\textsuperscript{139}Barbosa, op.cit, pp.221-224

\textsuperscript{140}Chopra R N, I.C. Chopra, \textit{Indigenous Drugs Of India}, p.205

\textsuperscript{141}Stephen Dale, “The Hadhrami Diaspora in South Western India: The Role of Sayyeds of the
Malabar Coast” in Ulrike Freitag, W.G.Clarence-Smith (eds) \textit{Hadhrami Traders, Scholars and

\textsuperscript{142}Nicolo Conti, Storage Houses (pandikashala) were common across the city as thousands of traders
across the world thronged to exchange commodities such as pepper, dried ginger both of them had
strong medicinal value. Also commodities such as ilavargapatta, thannikka were exchanged for the
medicinal and culinary purpose. p. 183.; Rabbi Benjamin, op.cit,p.139
Christian/biblical religion across the world. These commodities were generally cultivated in the high land areas of Malabar where communities such as Ezhavas and Mappilas were engaged along with other agrarian communities over the region. These communities completely engrossed in the production, distribution and delivery of the items which were mostly bought by the incoming merchants from different part of the world. Coastal areas of Malabar; Panthalayani Quillion, Bepore, Ponnani, Tellicherry, Ezhimala, Chirakkal and many other places had strong economic bond with hinterland merchants who could extract maximum profit out this business.

However the extensive markets meant for enhancing physical beauty and ritual reverence did not transcend to the practical life of common people. Hygiene ladders in the medieval centuries prohibited these items from permeating in to the practical life of lower caste groups who did not have a sublime life to live with. This brought in to huge disparities in the consumption of the cosmetics and ornaments. Rich women could afford to wear gold, silver, emerald, sapphire, bronze, special stones imported from Golconda and many such places to make their body complete, enhanced and protected. Poor and working women used things made of clay, ordinary stones, and things like that which were easily and cheaply available. Rich women also used the cosmetic items which make them young, youthful and

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143 Patric Faas, *Around the Roman Table: Food and Feasting in Ancient Rome*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2003, p.33
147 Daud Ali, op.cit, p.200; “Generally the women of this country are ugly and short in stature, and wear much gold jewelry around their necks, and many bracelets on their arms; and on their toes they wear rings set with precious stones.”En dome de dues, op.cit,p.72
148 Nikitin, says that south Indian land is over stalked with the people; but those in the country are very miserable whilst the nobles are extremely opulent and delight in luxury” cited in Robert Sewell, (trns),
clean. *Thampuratti* and *Kettilamma* women from *Kovilakams* elated themselves with wide use of rose water, amber, *kasthuri, sambrani, thippali, kayam* which were also considered “sacred” and outside the ambit of poor’s reach. These items were mostly locally produced and sometimes imported to Calicut city due to the excess demand by the royal and rich women who by low and norms prohibited inferior beings wearing them.\(^{149}\)

Makhdum corroborates the facts written by Bathuta in the earlier century, regarding the male and female dressing pattern on the Malabar Coast. Body was generally exposed, as they usually wore a short piece of cloth which covered very little of their body. It covered just the waist and little below and followed by all castes and genders among the Hindus. As an agrarian community, people in the lower strata, attended and involved the outdoor activity with the only exception of the Brahmin women who strictly remained indoor to keep the moral as well as physical purity. Nevertheless, elite Nair women also showed themselves with much embellishment; dress and the ornaments, mostly in order to bring in the desirable *sambandham* relations from ritually superior Brahmins.\(^{150}\)

The hygienic and fashion attitude of these two sections was well noticed as they were “very clean and well dressed, they hold it a great honor that they know how to please men. For them bath is more an article of faith than a daily ablution…no dress, however, slightly soiled, will be worn again. A sense of almost hieratic purity breathes from them like an emanation….the upper part of the (body) remains bare, but for a necklace round the throat, and occasionally a gold belt or gold bosses in the ears” was the general pattern of the

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\(^{149}\)Feiseen, Velayyudhan, passim, op.cit, p.200

\(^{150}\)Makhdoom, op.cit.p. 41; “All or most of these people are clothed in cotton-cloths from the waist down to the knee, but from the waist upwards they go naked. Courtiers and men of condition dress in the same manner, but make use of silk stuff’s, reddish or scarlet or of other colors, as seems good to them. The wives (ladies) of men of condition are clothed above the girdle in very white and delicate linen; but the wives of the lower degree are naked above waist.”Em nome de dues, op.cit,p.149
aristocratic women in Malabar. At the same time general condition of lesser privileged as they were noticed as poor women having dark and thick hair on their head which was generally knotted at the back side while it was different in the case of upper caste women who made it on the top of the head in the front.

Arab merchants, who were also devout Muslims, traveled across the region of the Malabar in search of spices and easier routes to the different places from the hinterland, were the real beneficiaries along with the native merchants of the bathing rooms and the wells for personal and religious needs. Special rest houses were reserved for Muslim merchants called as Darul Muslimeen, in which they could do the normal hygienic practices along with their ritual purifications and worships. These merchants had established huge mosques in the city of Calicut with the assistance of Samutiri in order to structuralize the ritual pattern of purification. Every mosque built bore from outside the image of temples as the masonry and artisans generally belonged to non-mappila community. But the reality of the interior of the mosques express the amalgamation of Indo-West Asian architecture as “the tiered roofs of the buildings and the corridors around some of the mosques are examples of local forms taken from domestic architecture and from Hindu shrines. Other features such as doors with semi-circular arches and mihrabs, semicircular in plan with arches are forms preferred by the Arab settlers.”

Attached washing tanks (houz) in the mosques were used by Muslim community as the common place for purification unlike caste Hindus who constructed sacred ponds on the

151 Maud Diver, Royal India: A Descriptive and Historical Study of India’s Fifteen Principal States and Their Rulers, Hawthorn Books, US, 1942, pp. 218-219
152 Feiseen, ibid
153 Andre Wink, op.cit, p.74
156 Mehrdad Shokoohy,op.cit, p,247
basis of ritual hierarchy.  

Water bodies constructed attached to mosques at Calicut, Cannanore and many other places served “practical, ritual and symbolic use of water” and notion of purifications in Islamic sensibilities. However the construction pattern adopted by Muslims for *hauz* was similar to the ponds constructed with the medieval temples. Well established pattern of washing/purifying tanks express in itself that of a settled Islamic community that adhered to Islamic hygienic principles and purifying concepts like any such communities during the period. The pattern and construction of the bathing ghats and ponds the notion of cleanliness attained a ritualistic among different communities in their daily affairs in Medieval Malabar.  

Even though practice of constructing ablution pool (*hauz*) in the centre of a covered hall only started in 16th century, mosques and related rituals were very much part of their life.

Clothing and its relation to the environment and cleanliness can be constructed from the paintings pertaining to the period especially by the colonial invaders who came to Malabar in 15th century and it surprising that the pattern still continues in many part of the Kerala in all section of the populace. Cotton and Muslims from Cheol were the principle material for dressing and the elite class always used the best variety of the cotton materials.

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157 *Kokasandesam*, op.cit,p.61,lines-14  
158 *Islamic Ideology and Ritual: Architectural and Spatial Manifestations*, State University of New York, Buffalo, 2007, p.31  
161 *Cochirajyacharithram*, Mathrubumi, 1989, p.76  
162 *Once the date for poittu was fixed, Otenan made all the preparations namely, getting costly dress and ornaments, ... When he went to Calicut to purchase the dress and other things,” K.S Mathew, *Society in Medieval Malabar: A Study Based on Vadakka Pātaka*, p.110  
163 *Barbosa*, op.cit. p.70; *Marco Polo describes Kerala as the land where no tailor lived. There was not a need for a tailor as people were not really in need of them as they wore very little that unstitched. Marco Polo, the author himself attributed the reasons to the humidity and the hot climate. p.38;
Roomals (handkerchiefs), cambay (cloth item from cambay), tuppatti (common garments) and other types of garments were very common on the Malabar Coast. \(^{165}\)

Like in the Gulf of Cambay, Muslims on the Malabar coast dressed in Izar and Mizar, i.e., a long trouser and a jerkin respectively as, spacious pattern of these garments made sure of the easy regulation of the air and temperature. \(^{166}\) Muslims by this time generally differed themselves from the earlier naked body and started to cover up due to the consciousness about a religion and its regulations. \(^{167}\)

Tight fit was not used by any section and even the Muslim women did not use much spread veils in North India on Malabar Coast. \(^{168}\)

Cau Ju-Kua describes that “the ruler of the country has his body draped, but goes barefooted. He wears a turban and a lion-cloth both of white cotton cloth. Sometimes he wears a white cotton shirt with narrow sleeves.” \(^{169}\)

People in Malabar would have resorted to the minimum and decent way of dressing to avoid over heat and subsequent sweating which leads to the formation of microbes which cause skin rashes and allergies. \(^{170}\) Microbes accumulated in folds cause many allergies and skin disease and it is very prominent in the tropical countries. However, it is difficult to say that the intricacies involved in their formation and related health problems were understood by the common people or travelers. But travelers from Marco Polo to Buchanan give vivid description about the climate of the region. Climate used to be very humid and sultry often on the entire area of Arabian Sea and Malabar Coast. “During the whole of the summer the heat is extreme. From the third hour of the day people shut themselves in their houses until the

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\(^{165}\) Dutch in Malabar, op. cit., p. 220

\(^{166}\) Raj Kumar, *Encyclopedia of Untouchables: Ancient Medieval and Modern*, pp. 239-240

\(^{167}\) Em nome de dues, op. cit., p. 149; Raj Kumar, “they go naked and bare, and wear a piece of cotton or of silk around their middle and with nothing on their head. some Moorish foot merchants on the other hand wear a short shirt extending to the waist but all pagans go without a shirt”. p. 143

\(^{168}\) K. M. Ashraf, *Life and Culture of People in Hindustan*, p. 240

evening, at which time everybody goes out.”171 The extreme climate on Arabian Sea forced Arab and Chinese merchants to sail after the month of May since Indian “littorals dotted with numerous ports and harbours, which were already known for their brisk export and import trade were ideally located as stopovers of ships sailing across the Indian Ocean.”172

Due to the extreme humidity sailors generally started off their journey to the western coast of India when sun comes in Sagittarius, i.e, the second half of November and the first half of December.173 Ibn Bathuta made a sarcastic comment on the arrival of the king on a sultry day by saying “tragedy followed a comedy” as the king arrived in the stormy weather with just a loin-cloth174 under his waist and a scantiest of headgear, and a necklace of jewels. He was also decorated with kuda (umbrella), the royal insignia of the ancient and medieval kings.175 There was special dress makers in places like Dharmmadam and Panthalayani in Malabar, who exported to royal and aristocratic people across the world dresses demanded in the specific climatic pattern of the respective geographic region.176 Native population also

171Rabbi Benjamin, op.cit, p.139
173George Fadlo Hourani, Arab Seafaring in the Indian Ocean in Ancient and Early Medieval Times, Princeton University Press, New Joursey, 1979,p.74
174John of Monti Corvine says that “He does not, however, equally admire the persons of the natives, who seem to him to resemble devils rather than men. These devils were all black and naked, having only a piece of cloth tied round their Middle, and holding in one hand a shining javelin, and in the other a buckler of bullocks hide. On being presented to the Sameri (samuthiri), or King, whom he found, in a similar state of nudity, in a hall adorned with paintings, and surrounded by two or three thousand attendants.” Says Abdurazak, p.56 On special occasion king would appear with all the paraphernalia and the symbols of the power folded in his extensive dressing materials which was not in accord with the tradition of the time and the region. Al-Beruni, p.103
175Mahuan says that Cochin Raja used turbans unlike his counterparts of the other region. Most of the time turban would be or in Yellow or white which was emulated by the ordinary folk as well. This turban would have to be the direct result of the high humid condition prevails in the Cochin coast port which was very near to the palace,p.193
176Al-Beruni, op.cit, p.103
delighted in applying the perfumes and “bathing twice a day, which the heat forces them to
do yet trees give delicious shade.”177

Bathuta observed that people in Malabar wore a little; irrespective of the caste,
religion, gender and the position.178 Other travelers had also corroborated this observation
without citing reasons; health, social or ritual.179 Nevertheless, it is for sure that the unique
climate and the geography necessitated the larger behavior of scanty dressing.180 Ferishta, the
historian of Deccan, talks about hostile condition of the Deccan through which people
unfamiliar with the topography maneuvered rigorous political actions.181 Interestingly, not
only wearing but also removing the dresses in it expressed a way to show hygiene rituals and
social hierarchy.182 “The petty Rajahs subordinate to rajah of Cochin must thus show their
respect to him and they must remove their upper garment in his presence and remain bare

177 Bathuta; (William Boulting), refers to some other people around on the Indian ocean region,
preumably tribals in Malaccan island. The men were generally naked and walked around like that
while women dressed in handful of leaves. He was very positive when he explains the health and
hygiene consciousness of the people of Malabar. However he was highly critical about the people
living in other part of the Indian ocean. He expresses his disliking toward these people saying that
they got “doglike faces.” He also talks about the brutality of the punishment over these regions
completely different from the coastal area. Bathuta was told that a man might be the husband of 30 or
more of these beauties. “Adultery was severely punished, the male offender being hanged, unless he
could find a friend or a slave willing to suffer in his place; the woman being trampled to death and her
body cast into the sea.”p.147

178 Bathuta, op.cit, 165

179 Barbosa, CUP, 2009 “In all this said country of Malabar there are a great quantity of Moors, who
are of the same language and colour as the gentiles of the country. They go bare like the nairs,only
they wear, to distinguish themselves from the gentiles,small round caps on their heads and their
beards fully grown. So that it appears to me that these people are a fifth part of all the inhabitants that
there are in this country. They call these Moors Mapulers, they carry on nearly all the trades of the
seaports: and in the interior of the country they are very well provided with estates and farms. So that
if the King of Portugal had not discovered India this country would have had a Moorish king: because many of the gentiles turned Moors for any offence which they received amongst one another: and the Moors did them great honour, and if they were women they immediately married them. These
people have many mosques in the country in which they also unite in council.”

180 Seiroku Noma, Japanese Costume and Textile Arts, Weather Hill, 1974, pp.9-11; Heather Colyer

181 Ferishta, History of Deccan from the First Mahummedan Conquests, (trans) by Jonathan Scott, Vol-
1, London, 1794, p.44

182 Cantor Visscher, Letters from Malabar,1862, p.87
shoulders till he gives them permission to resume it."\(^{183}\) On the other hand it should also be understood why the lower class and caste population had little around their body as they engaged in the laborious work on the field and other related activities.\(^{184}\) Later documentists do corroborates the unbearable tropical nature of the Indian climate and the heat.\(^{185}\)

During the summer seasons, Malabar merchants did not prefer to remain in the heat of the city which would make them vulnerable to seasonal diseases.\(^{186}\) Humidity, over heat and possible smoke concentration in the medieval Malabar cities such as Calicut must have forced laborers and common people to retire to their gardens along the river or sea shore and construct the huts over the water.\(^{187}\) By covering the side of the hut by green leaves they could beat the heat usually blow from nine in the morning to the 12 forenoon. But death was still a common menace on the ground of suffocation and impeded respiration. Whenever a threat of heat wave was perceived they used to sink in the water till it goes away. Persistent perspiration throughout the year; rain and humidity; prevented people from wearing the tight cloths which could have been the breeding ground for bacteria and rashes.

Undergarments for men were made of cotton which was generally called *langoti*, a lengthy cotton undergarment wrapped beneath *dhoti* (*mundu*) that was mandatory for the *Kalari* practitioners.\(^{188}\) This unique dress is also found mentioned by Abdurazaq who visited

\(^{183}\)Ibid,p.87  
\(^{185}\)Climate condition was very humid and it rains only specific time of the year. People stayed in the muddy houses which were tethered with coconut leaves in a different way. Says John of Monti Corvino who traveled in Malabar during the year between 1292 and 1293. Velayudhan (passim),op.cit, p.117.  
\(^{187}\)Marco Polo, op.cit, 41; Ibn Bathuta, op.cit, p.167  
\(^{188}\)Feiseen, (1436) in his *Sing Sheng Lan* describing the dress pattern of the Srilanka, where Feiseen stayed a considerable time in understanding the society, he gives a complete different picture. People covered their body as much as they could unlike people from Malabar. Men and women used cotton cloths to cover their body and kept a cloth on the head and waist. Velayudhan, op.cit, p.199
Calicut in 15th century as Lankoutah. Only Muslim and upper caste women were allowed to cover the entire body while many other sections were prohibited from doing so. This condition prevailed till the last stages of 18th century when Tipu Sultan by law gave permission in Malabar for every section of the society to cover the body as they liked. Upper caste women used to cover their breast with rouka / mulakkai or mulaikkili (bodice). However, they had to remove these garments before the temple idols and caste superiors as their physical preservation should not become a hindrance to the superior ritual hygiene these elements represented. Any violation of this ritual hygiene based on ritual ranking for the sake of physical hygiene was taken very seriously and often meted with severe punishments. Muslims on the Malabar Coast tried to imitate the Arab merchants by appearing in expensive apparel and other things like deodorant in their own clusters due to higher ranking in the social circle for their economic prosperity.

Generally food was taken by hands and cooked in the earthen pottery made of laterite clay. However the elite sections had preferred brass vessels especially for the bigger community gatherings through which they expressed the prosperity and power they wielded. Many of the erstwhile royal families still use the same vessels which were known

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189 Mehrdad Shokoohy (ed), Muslim architecture of South India: The Sultanate of Ma'bar and the Tradition of Maritime Settlers on the Malabar and Coromandal Coast of Tamilnadu, Routledge, 2003,p.144
191 C.K.Kareem, Kerala under hydar Ali and Tipu Sultan, Kerala History Association, 1973, pp.182-187; Medieval towns supplied dress materials and other items for Muslims such as shirts and rouka which were generally worn by caste Hindus, Rajagopalan, op.cit, p.72
192 Payyannurpattu, p.32, line-104; ananthapurvarmanam,p.30,lines-66
193 K. Thulaseedharan, Community and Caste in Tradition, College Book House,1977, p.35; Kathleen Gough, op.cit, 327
195 There is an abundance of silken stuff s, namely, velvets of various colors, satins, damask, taffetas, brocades worked in gold, scarlet cloth, brass and tin ware. In fact, all these things are to be found in abundance, and it is my opinion that the cloths worked in gold and the silks are brought there from
for durability and special significance. By this time availability and accessibility of expensive metals made upper strata in the society to use vassals of tin, brass, copper, cinnabar, lead and so on.196 Food was eaten and served in the same metal vessels generally while common people had their food mostly from the leaves.197 Ruling and social elites also had improvised storage systems that they used to keep pickles and jam made out from the seasonal fruits and vegetables.198 They generally kept these items in bharanis or ceramic bottles or Cheeni Cairo.” Girolamo Sernigi’s First Letter to a Gentleman at Florence. This first letter was written sometime around 10 July 1499 after the return of Coelho’s ship, the Berrio, and based on his conversations with the crew. Cited in Em Nome De Deus, p.146; Brass utensils had been continuously used by cooking, serving and preserving food well up to 18th century. Francis Buchanan, A Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar.p.130.

philippus Baldaeus, A True and Exact Description of the Most Celebrated East-India Coasts of Malabar and Coromandel and Also of the Isle of Ceylon With Their Adjacent Kingdoms& Provinces, First Publication, Amsterdam, 1672, reprinted, AES, New Delhi, 2000,p.622

It was practice all over the region during medieval times. Bathuta talks about Ceylonese people who “would bring it (food) in their pots and sit at a distance from us. They would also serve us with rice which is their principle food on banana leaves and then go away and what we left over was eaten by dogs and birds.”Ibn Bathuta, 2005, p. 96

Prohibition of the cow/beef eating was strictly executed in Malabar as most of the local kings were claimed to be Kshatriyas or Samantha kshatriyas. This was also formed the main aspects of the strong moral hygiene of the upper caste Hindus of the period which witnessed a strong revival tendencies. Al Idrisi, Velayudhan ,op.cit, p.107 ‘Cow and bulls were venerated and considered holly and not to be killed’ reports John of Monti Corvino who traveled the region between 1292 and 93.p.117; The Kovilakam(palace) and related places in Calicut was cleaned by the mixture of cow dung and water and sprinkled it occasionally. They were washed everyday with these things and the cleanliness in the temples around the city was properly maintained. As we have mentioned earlier, Mahuan also mentioned the cow dung bhasmam which was applied by the people with the Hindu belief and used after taking bath. Muslims did not use this as they had a different pattern of cleaning. They generally cleaned with water only and before the prayers they cleaned themselves from the tank inside the mosques in Calicut which around thirty at that time. Velayudhan,op.cit, p.194; These was strictly followed by Namutiris who “do not eat flesh nor fish, they are much reverenced and honoured by the Indians, and they are not executed for any offence which they may commit.”says Barbosa, op.cit, p.121; The King of this city of Chalichut eats neither of meat nor fish nor anything that has been killed, nor do his barons, courtiers, or other persons of quality…….and it is a great thing that they should be able to support themselves without eating meat or fish. The common people eat meat and fish, but they do not eat oxen or cows, for the hold these animals to be blessed (benedetto), and when they meet an ox on the highway they touch him, and afterwards kiss their hand, as a sign of great humility.”Em Nome de Deus, op.cit, p.148
Bharanis which were major exports from China during the period. The Chinese also traded in the musk, hemp-silk, colored silk taffeta, blue porcelain dishes, and bowls in gold and silver. The interesting part of this preserving method was, most of the cheeni bharani found, were having an imperfect shape with their lids broken in order to get tax reductions on the ports where unbroken and perfect pieces attracted more taxes. These utensils were washed with ash powder of burnt wood and coconut peal. The high carbon contents in these materials gave shining looks to the brass and iron utensils. Ash was also used for kalam (clay pots) for removing the smelly left over of the food which would in turn results in the bacterial functions and health problems. These carbons contents easily absorbed the impurities of the oil and food and retained original sheen and look. They also used juices from some plants which still common in many part of the Malabar.

There are scanty evidence to suggest that there was some kind of standard hygienic practices in the preparation of the food and serving especially among the common people. Lower caste groups dwelled far away from the roads and the vicinity of the affluent that “pass

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199 This was the time the trade relation between India and China established as such especially during the period of Sug dynasty from 960 to 1279 AD. Gold, Silver, Iron, Chyilyam, Akil, Rihnosers Horn, Kavidi, Salt, Cotton, Silk were the major items of trade. Says Chau-ju-Qua visited Kerala in 12th century; Kumar Suresh Singh, *People of India: Volume 27, Part 1, Anthropological Survey of India*, 2002, p.72; The cheena bharani (a big jar made of China clay, also introduced by the Chinese) was a popular jar among the higher castes.; *Cheena Chatti, CheenaBharani, Cheena Crackers, Cheena fence, Chinese wires, China bazaar in Quilon, etc., prove the intimate contacts between China and Kerala*, says G. Krishnan Nadar, *Historiography and History of Kerala*, Learners’Book House,2001, p.43


202 Fryer Jordhanus, “People use coconut tree for many different purposes of which house construction was very important. They take the trunk of the tree for pillars and beam while use the leaves to have the tope part of the house. The construction and the style of the houses and other buildings in kraal very much affected by the availability of the material and the way climate functioned in the region.” Velayudhan,op.cit, p.150
their lives in poverty." However, the available evidences are enough to suggest that, in relation to the affluent sections, especially in the Kovilakams and the Tharavadus, careful preparation of the food were monitored and taken care for political and ritual reasons. Barbosa reports the presence of Brahmin cooks in the royal court of Samutiri. No lower caste people were allowed to enter the kitchen for cooking or taking food and if that happened they were severely punished. Kovilakams had specific rules and regulation for kitchen which was actually worked as place for socialization in the sufficient physical space it offered for entertaining large number of people. There had been architectural structures suggesting that sanitation and ventilation of the kitchen were properly maintained and preserved. “Some of the Nambutiri houses are immense structure, almost palatial, while hard by is the temple, an adjunct of the house. At the eastern side of the compound is the gate entrance, sometimes almost a small house in itself (patippura) always kept scrupulously clean.” Thus architectural designs of the medieval period took into consideration the physical hygiene of the occupants inside the structure by ensuring air circulations and room for easy movements. The awareness regarding the food borne disease and food poisoning was very strong among upper sections of the people and the proper care was taken. Illams, Mana

Barbosa, op.cit, p.65; “he (Barbosa) mentions that some of the lower classes in that region were very poor, some bringing wood and grass for sale in the city, others living on roots and wild fruits covering themselves with leaves and eating the flesh of wild animals.” Says William Harrison Moreland, India at the Death of Akbar: An Economic Study, Elibron Classics,2006, p.267
The kings make great use of these Bramans for many things, except in deeds of arms. Only Bramans can cook the king's food, or else men of the king's own family, and so all the king's relations have this same custom of having their food cooked by Bramans.” Barbosa, p.123
Sainuddhin Makhdum, Since the caste system was very prevalent implemented stringently to enter the upper caste house was impossible for lower caste people.,p.42
Koka Sandesam,uses the term kilivathil for ventilation.op.cit,p.97,lines-77
F. Fawcett, Florence Evans, Edgar Thurston, Nambutiris, pp.43-44 “in Malabar, the house of the Zamorin and of many another grandee is called Kovilakam, meaning in a kind of way, palace; the abode of the Nambutiri is an Illam, that of the Namutirippadu a “Mana”or “Manakkal”.ibid
and Kovilakam constructed special spaces for cleansing, modified versions of which could still be seen at many places in Malabar.

This and Adukkala Ovara were used (kitchen drainage) for washing utensils and plates. These Ovaras were unique features of the medieval hygiene technique and was meticulously followed in affluent families depending upon the availability and the demand of the situations. These houses had overas carved out of granite stones and made by the expert masons who were generally from the lower castes. These Ovaras were rectangular in shape and had enough space to accommodate large cooking vessels which required lots of care as most of them were imported and very costly. Plates and utensils were kept upside down for protecting those from dust and dirt of community hearths and kitchen.

Many textual and traditional references to points out a general understanding on the contamination of the food especially if it kept open and hence they were kept in dry pits. Generally people kept the food such as milk, butter, lemons, citrons, and limes, dates; fresh and dried which were abundant for “haves” in vassals tightly closed with wooden, ceramic lids and sometimes even used leaves especially of the banana. Indigenously made lids, jars and pots are discovered from many places even from iron period onwards from places such as Kaladi which shows that this tradition has had a long history in Medieval Kerala. Apart

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209 J.L. Goff, Medieval Civilization, pp.212-220
210 Padmanabha Menon, op.cit, p.55
211 Francis Buchanan, op.cit, 102
212 Payyannu Pattu; Em Nome de Dues, p.148
213 John D Marignolli, “People ate from the leaves generally and on the special occasion they eat on the banana leaves. He feels that there is no bigger leaves on the planet than banana leaves (vazhayila) and it was sufficient enough to serve many people but surprisingly only one person takes food from it. This practice was done to ensure the proper eating and the food parcels from other plates do not enter in to the others plate.”; Girolamo Sernigi, op.cit, p.148
214 This is found during an archaeological excavation by the team members of Kerala University and found by Ramesh, from Kannur University. The urns were excavated by a team of researchers led by B. Ramesh, Director of the Research Centre at Sree Sankara College in Kalady. "Three types of earthen urn burials and some pots were found in a single day's excavation. Due to heavy downpour, the contents were severely affected. The biggest urn is 4.5 feet high and 2.75 ft in diameter," Dr.
from physical hygiene aspects, principles of ritual hygiene were strictly practiced in the kitchens also. “The children of inferior mothers are never brought into the Taravad of the superior fathers…they may live there (in exceptional conditions). And where they do so, they cannot enter the Taravad kitchen or touch the women while they are eating.” One of the reasons could be the prescription of the Indian legal texts about the contamination of the food through the touch of inferior castes and mlechchas (‘impure’/’unclean’) in medieval times.

Social hygiene was monitored through social boundaries in which caste groups had to keep certain physical distance from Brahmins. By this time, society structured in to confinement of different castes groups when jati formula established its articulation on cultural life. Nambutiris and Nairs became very predominant in the graded hierarchy of the caste structure which was based on different principles of social and ritual hygiene. Varthema gives a clear picture of this as he talks of the low caste;

“These two last classes of people, that is to say, the poliar and hirava may not approach either naeri or the Brahmins within fifty paces, unless they have been called by them and they always go by private ways through the marshes. And when they pass through the said places they always go crying out with a loud voice and this they do in order that they may not meet the naeri or the Brahmins….for should

Ramesh said. He said that its lower half had a height of 2.75 ft. The height of the upper half cannot be ascertained due to the damage that has occurred to it over the years. This was found 2.5 feet beneath the surface. It is a handmade red-and-black ware having a shape similar to that of an egg, with an ovoid lid. A prominent rim is seen on the middle part that joins the two halves.

http://www.hindu.com/2006/07/31/stories/2006073108810400.htm

215 F.Fawcett, op.cit, p.189

216 Alakananda Bhattacharrya, The Mlechchas in Ancient India: Their History and Culture, 2003, p.102

217 Kesavan Veluthat, The Early Medieval in South India, OUP, New Delhi, 2009, p.93

218 Zainuddin Makhdum, 2006, pp.43-44
they not be crying out…. the above mentioned naeri may kill them without incurring any punishment.”

The original manners and habits of hygiene of the Nambutiris were preserved on the Malabar Coast till Nineteenth century. Brahmins kept all lower caste groups in utmost distance. Caste such as “Nair (who) could approach a Nambutiri but must not touch him. A Tiyya must stand at the distance of 36 steps, and a Pulayan should stand at the distance of 96 feet. If any chance should touch, him he must expiate the pollution thus contracted by instantly bathing and spending lot of time reciting the holy scripts.”

Pollution principles and Taboos regarding food; cooking, eating and serving were much prevalent well up to 19th centuries. Food, which was touched by someone, was considered polluted or echil and taking it by the man had demanded certain ritual cleansing in the same way if someone happens to eat before washing their hand whose social position was demoted.

Religion and cultural norms thus restrained possible socialization and hence society was under an imposed burden of multiple hygiene hierarchy;

“There is salvation for him but in fleeing from one place to another place where no one knows his circumstances. Otherwise, the chief of the town takes him and sells him to one below him in rank in the event that he is a youth or a woman. Or else he comes to us and converts to Islam or becomes a yogi or a Christian. In this way they do not permit

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219Varthema, op.cit,p.142
220Baskaranunni, op.cit
221David Brewster, The Edinburg Encyclopedia, Vol-13, William Blackwood, London, 1830, p.287; “On the outskirts of the village, in separate small hamlets lived the very low castes of Parayas and pulayas…pulayas were until 1850 the agricultural serves of nayars, temple servants and Brahmins. As highly polluting castes, pulayans and parayans were theoretically forbidden to approach the high castes within a distance of sixty four feet. They might not enter the good area of the village or walk the main paths”Cathleen Gough, op.cit, 331
222Fred Fawcett, Florence Evance, Edgar Thurston, Nambutiris, 1900, AES, New Delhi, pp.48-50
the superior to consume food cooked by the inferior, for eating outside
of his rank entails the above mentioned consequences."224

Thus, the principles of social hygiene and ritual purity and pollution were strongly at work
Eight Century onwards in Malabar. 225 The centrality and pervasive nature of purity concept
in the region also facilitated different social frameworks and cultural norms such as
parayappedi and pulayappedi.226 Pulayanas are one of the original sections of the population
in Malabar who were considered as “praedial slaves” and was considered to be causative for
unhygienic social situation and pollution at all levels; physical, social and moral.227

Concepts of pollution, purity and hygiene worked in the life of Malabar at two
different level; instrumental and expressive. At the instrumental level there were conspicuous
actions to influence other's actions and while at the expressive level, belief systems could
reinforce social pressures. These patterns could be seen in the etiquette of eating procedures
in the region. Mouth and hands were washed after every meal and it was obligatory on part of
the Islamic community.228 After their meal people generally poured water though the lips,
keeping the glass on top of the lips for the fear of defilement.229 It became a common practice
in Malabar among non-Brahmin upper castes to eat the leftover food of Nambutiri in plantain

the need to accept food from impure hands and pollution resulting from contact with mlecchas”p.73
226 M.N.Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India*, “the structural distance between various castes is
defined in terms of pollution and purity. A higher caste is always “pure” in relation to lower caste, and
in order to retain its higher status it should abstain from certain forms of contact with the lower.”p.127
228 “They were very different in terms of food culture and the way of eating. They don’t eat roti or
wine like in Europe and eat with hand not spoons.” John of Monti Corvino, op.cit, p.118
229 Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, Routledge,
2003 “The process of eating is potentially polluting, but the manner determines the amount of
pollution. Saliva – even one’s own, is extremely defiling. If a Brahmin inadvertently touches his
fingers to his lips, he should bathe or at least change his clothes. Also, saliva pollution can be
transmitted through some material substances. These two beliefs have led to the practice of drinking
water by pouring it into the mouth instead of putting the lips on the edge of the cup…through the hand
so that they never directly touch the lips.”p.34
leaf for good luck, better health and divine blessings. Even ruling families made arrangements for Brahmin feast and consumed the leftover food primarily for material reasons.230

In the chapter concerning the pattern of eating of the political elite of the region Varthema delves in some interesting aspects. “Four of the principle Brahmins takes the food which the king is to eat and carry it to the devil …and then the said Brahmins carry that food to the king.231 During the same period, foreigners who generally considered as being mlechas were not given food and water but only in the plates or bowls as the very touch of an outsider would result moral pollution.232 Hence they were given food and drink in their hand. Mandates for having individual plates and exclusive hygienic/ritual space called agrashalas (food court) also ensured desired physical distance of one from another in feasts which were integral part of the medieval temple centric culture of Kerala.233

Land owning castes like Nambutiris234 and Nairs constructed houses with many amenities and comforts in their Illams and Kovilakams. They maintained luxurious bath rooms

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230Sadasivan, op.cit, p.264 .“A man who has periodically paid money to Brahmins chiefly of the nambutiri caste is said to have be saved.every family regularly makes a point of observing feasts and feeding Brahmins and paying them money and receiving their blessings.”T.K.G.Panikkar, op.cit, p.196
231Lodovico de Varthema, op.cit, p.139
232Andre Wink, op.cit, p.253; ‘The process of eating is potentially polluting, but the manner determines the amount of pollution. Saliva-even one’s own-is extremely defiling. If a Brahmin inadvertently touches his fingers to his lips, he should bathe or at least change his clothes. Also, saliva pollution can be transmitted through some material substances. These two beliefs have led to the practice of drinking water by pouring it into the mouth instead of putting the lips on the edge of the cup, and of smoking cigarettes . . . through the hand so that they never directly touch the lips.Eating of any food-even drinking coffee-should be preceded by washing the hands and feet.’; Mary Douglas, Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo, Routledge, New York, 1966p.35
233Ananthapuravarnanam,op.cit,p.56,lines- 133
234Lemercinier Genevieve, Religion and Ideology in Kerala, D.K .Agencies, New Delhi, 1984, pp.132-134
Barbosa describes the large houses and servants employed for the maintenance of the houses of rich in Malabar for bathing, eating, drinking, and sleeping till a paradigm shift after the emergence of the Portuguese on the coast. These bath rooms were having elaborate drainage patterns and were it released in to the common drainage outside the house compound. There were elaborate bathing rituals in every community on Malabar Coast, apart from the daily bath, such as ritual bathing related to marriages, puberty, and child birth and so on. We have to notice that foreign travelers were amused to see wide spread customs of various bathing by every section of the society for the reason that of middle age people in Europe were not particular in taking bath even among the nobles till Eighteenth century. Sometimes these ritualistic patterns attained the nature of social gatherings and communal functions in the confined wall of the traditional houses.

Debate over the relation of hygiene and dominance brings in an interesting area of royal hygiene practices of Malabar. The highest political authority in the region, Samutiri was very particular with his maintenance of hygiene; physical, social and ritual. The ritual hygiene of eating was preserved by keeping Brahmins around him to make sure that the

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235 George Fadlo Hourani, John Carswell, *Arab Seafaring in the Indian Ocean in Ancient and Early Medieval Times*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1995, p.70; We can see it in many medieval palaces in Thripunithura in Ernakulam and Arakkal in Kannur districts. “In Malabar, the houses of the rich were built of teak wood and consisted of more than two storeys.” Says Pran Nath Chopra, Baij Nath Puri, Manmath Nath Das (eds), *A Social, Cultural, and Economic History of India*, Macmillan India, 1974, p.154

236 Barbosa, op.cit, 148

237 “People in Malabar were very particular about the cleanliness and the practices of the hygiene and were readily spent time and energy for the upkeepment.” Says Al-Beruni, p.102

238 Norman Roth, *Daily life of the Jews in the Middle Ages*, Greenwood publishing house, US, 2005, p.64

239 It should be noted that European monarchs and nobility did not consider personal hygiene as some thing very important from Carolingian time (8th century onwards). Carolingian aristocrats changed cloths and bathed at least once a week, on Saturdays…to monks bathing more than once a week seemed an unnecessary luxury; to aristocrats, it often seemed desirable.” Jackson J. Spielvogel, *Western Civilization*, Words Worth, Boston, 2011, p.249
sacredness of the ‘king’s body’ was maintained. His social legitimacy and hygiene was ensured through numerous elaborate rituals in which ariyittuvazhcha attained a major place. Tirumuti Pazhayari Carttu, another name of the same ceremony, conferred on the king the absolute power by Vedic Brahmins who concluded the ceremony with a ceremonial showering of the sacred rice on his head.

The king was constantly accompanied by a servant who keeps a kolambhi (a pot which has a big mouth) which was made of gold. The king spits into that and carefully avoids it going out of it since saliva was considered to be extremely unhygienic and polluting. The golden pot was supplemented with a golden tumbler with water filled. He keeps a big golden plate which comprises many things and from which he takes some leaves and keeps chewing. This was very common in the region and king does it every day all the time. The king was to be given bettle leaves (murukkan) by ritually hygienic Brahmin Nambuhiri, whose constant presence around the king was ensured. This must have been a political strategy of the ruler to show that the political authority could always be powerful than social hierarchy with the power he wielded and hence the mutual dependency should be respected. Notwithstanding

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240 Varthema, p.140 “when the king has finished his meal, the said Brahmins take that food which the king did not require and carry it into a court yard and place it on the ground. And the said Brahmins clap their hands three times and at his clapping a very great number of black crows come to this said food and eat it.”

241 K.K.N. Kurup, *India’s Naval Traditions: The Role of Kunhali Marakkars*, 1997, p.67. Through this social hygienic process, “sovereign status is conferred upon the Zamorin by a group of Vedic Brahmins along with a long process of ritual which is concluded with ceremonial showering of the sacred rice on the head of the newly created King.”

242 Em Nome De deus, op.cit,p.78, “He (the king Samutiri) held, in his left hand, a very large golden cup, with the height of a half jug, and the width of two palms at its mouth, and it appeared very heavy. Into this cup he threw the husks of a certain herb which the men of this country chew for its calming effect, which they call tambor. On his right side stood a basin of gold, so large that a man might just encircle it with his arms, in which these herbs were kept, and many silver jugs, and the canopy above was all gilt”. John Pinkerton, *A General Collection of the Best and Most Interesting Voyages and Travels in Various Parts of Asia*, Vol. 2, 1989, p.76; “Natives of India (Malabar), are addicted to the custom of having continually in their mouth the leaf called tembul; which they do partly from habit and partly from the gratification it affords…Persons of rank have the leaf prepared with camphor and
the bettle chewing habit for “good looking” and healthy, the sacredness and the hygiene of the royal chamber was ensured, by prohibiting spitting and sneezing in the royal court. And punished, if anyone found guilty, accordingly whoever did it from any caste background.

Barbosa describes that kings of Cochin did not have the right to keep oudu, a roof material made of clay, to save him from the usual torrential rain during the monsoon season which generally cause seasonal diseases, on his Kovilakam. Denial of a basic material for the upkeepment of physical hygiene founded on the superior sense of ritual hygiene Samutiri held, for virtue of being the Raksha Purushan as already mentioned. It shows that superior ritual hygiene and social purity facilitated an exclusive political right during medieval period. The same exclusivity again refused Cochin kings the rights to mint coins and keep umbrella along the paraphernalia, as long as was he under the political tutelage of the Calicut rulers. He did not even have the right to wear the crown which was a symbol of the political sovereignty as we seen in the Mughal political culture later. Whenever he distracted from this practice, was he met with an immediate admonishment. Due to the political actions based on the senses of ritual hygiene made the king of Cochin feel that the arrival of Portuguese in 16th century was a golden opportunity to come by. He was thus subsequently gifted a Golden Crown by the early colonial masters who found an ally in him in the fight against Samutiri. He was also to keep earlier, the sword of the Samutiri as the token of the obedience to other aromatic drugs and also with a mixture of quick lime.” Marco Polo, *The travels of Marco Polo: The Venetian*, Thomas Wright (ed), London, 1854; Abdur Razaq, p.218

Ibid, p.218

Barbosa, op.cit, pp.156-157,”the king of Calicut observed this as a law and the king of Cochin used to give him a tribute of elephants, and so returned to Calicut. And the king of Cochin could not coin money, nor roof his houses with tiles under pain of losing his state.” Barbosa, p.241


him. This was the time Portuguese arrived and naturally was received by the Cochin kings who was deeply wounded with multiple humiliations.\(^249\)

By 16\(^{th}\) century king of Calicut started taking much care about his appearance after the emergence of the different traders on the coast. He wanted to change the appearance and to show the wealth and magnitude of the power he wields. New dressing pattern with turban and polished shoes, hygiene materials now evolved into a different political language itself.\(^{250}\) The change in the dress pattern reflected in the changing political landscape of medieval Malabar, where we witness contestations and efforts to dominate each other in the subsequent centuries.\(^{251}\) Malabar rulers were never bothered about the appearance or dressing pattern when Arabs and Chinese appeared on the coast.\(^{252}\) However, after the appearance of the Portuguese, there was a conscious effort from them to change look and appearance and proper care was taken to maintain body and living environment. Still, bathing remained most important ritual in the morning as far the hygiene was concerned. This was accompanied by the application of turmeric, sandal, and chenninayakam (dried leaves of aloevera) properly mixed with rose water.\(^{253}\) Kings used to sit on the elevated wooden thinnas which were extremely polished and clean. This place was daily cleaned with the cow dung and kings used to receive all delegates sitting on the elevated platform on which he dictated policies and observed special hygiene practices to please the people of power and authority.\(^{254}\)

Hygiene practices, especially ritual hygiene, did not stop with the death of the political authority. *Samvadsara Pareeksha*, a particular ritual was practiced after the death of


\(^{250}\) Daud Ali,op.cit,p.144; S.R.Bakshi, op.cit, p.380


\(^{252}\) Barbosa,op.cit, p.36

\(^{253}\) Ibid, p.242

\(^{254}\) Barbosa, p, 242
medieval Malabar kings. This was by and large observed by the kith and kin of the deceased. Sometimes it was extended to his political dependence in order to save kings’ soul and his domine from ritual pollution.\footnote{Barbosa, p.107 “And before burning him they keep him there when dead for three days, waiting for the assembling of the above mentioned persons, that they may see him if he died of a natural death, or avenge his death if any one killed him, as they are obliged to do in case of a violent death. And they observe this ceremony very rigidly. After having burned him, all shave themselves from head to foot, excepting the eye lashes, from the prince, the heir to the throne, to the smallest child of the kingdom: that is, those who are Gentiles, and they also clean their teeth, and universally leave off eating betel for thirteen days from that time; and if in this period they find any one who eats it, his lips are cut off by the executioner. During these thirteen days the prince does not rule, nor is he enthroned as king, in order to see if in this time anyone will rise up to oppose him; and when this term is accomplished, all the grandees and former governors make him swear to maintain all the laws of the late king, and to pay the debts which he owed, and to labor to recover that which other former kings had lost.”} “This King of Calicut, and also the other kings of Malabar, when they die, are burned in the country with much sandal and aloes wood; and at the burning, all the nephews and brothers and nearest \textit{(male)} relations collect together, and all the grandees of the realm, and confidantes of the king, and they lament for him and burn him.\footnote{Barbosa, ibid} The diseased body was buried after three days and no one shaves their body except non-Hindu believers. It was applicable to even to the new born baby.\footnote{John Nieuhoff, \textit{A Collection of Voyages and Travels}, Vol-2 (ed) John Churchill, Asian Educational Services, p.140} Betel chewing was banned for 13 days and if anybody found doing it would be definite that his lips would have been cut off. People were banned from fishing and eating non-vegetarian foods. After 13\textsuperscript{th} day except for the next king everybody was free to eat and drink.\footnote{Ibid, John Nieuhoff, the Dutch man travelled extensively in Malabar at various times from 1653and 1670 and gives some interesting pictures of rituals and caste distinctions in the region says Edward Farley Oaten, \textit{European Travellers in India: During the Fifteenth, Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries}, AES, New Delhi, 1991, p.246} Newly appointed king was to get along with the same ritual for one year and was not to cut his hair, beard and nails. It was shown that to have a perfect purity ritual and the successful travel of the diseased soul, people were banned from keeping the actual personal hygiene in the medieval period.\footnote{Barbosa, Ibid,p.244}
Barbosa also gives some details of the significance of the ritual hygiene practices which were directly associated with the king and his coronation. When a new king had to be thronged on the crown, he had to enter the city from the River Kallai side at Calicut via Ambadi Kovilakam which was a very powerful royal associate under the control of Arakkam Patta family. When the king had to enter his own Kovilakam, it had to be cleaned properly and made as shining as the crown as there would have been many people of prominence to witness the entire function. Thus, a practice of ritual hygiene could also ensure the political legitimacy and alliances. The people who were appointed to do the cleaning job were called as akahuparishakal as reported by Calicut Grandhvari. Once the entry was over, he had to go to the palace through the Tali Temple. However, the ruler himself was not permitted to enter the temple as he was ritually polluted during the travel as many people from different case would have seen him despite him being the very guardian of the temple and all temples in his political domain.

Sprinkling water for ritual purification had always been a custom in Kerala as reported by En Nome De Dues. “They threw holy water over us and gave us white ashes which the Christians of this country are in the habit of putting on their foreheads, breasts, around the neck and their upper arms. They performed this entire ceremony on the Captain, and gave him the ashes to put on.” Even king had to stand at the eastern gate of the temple for the purification by sprinkling sacred water by vendiyammamar. As the king gets polluted and the ritual hygiene was broken by the travelling for the coronation ceremony, he was not supposed to visit the Tali temple and Valayanatukavu. He would enter the court

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260 Kokasandesam, op.cit, p.82, lines-52. The lake, associated with the temple, was known as sarvadityncchira during the period under study; The Splendours of Kerala, 1979, p.146. This temple could be dated back to 12th -13th centuries.
261 Duarte Barbosa, Fernão de Magalhães,op.cit, p. 21
262 En nome de dues, op.cit, p.76
263 Barbosa,op.cit. p.21
264 Ibid, p.247
hall next day and nobody was permitted to make sounds or loud breathings as it would affect the health and ritual purity the king obtained in order to sanitize his political authority. The paramount ritual hygiene he represented was visibly expressed by over a thousand sweepers; *pularivazhi vellatti* at his palace. They were kept also to "show the power and strength as well as the wealth of the king" who was considered to be the biggest in his time. Barbosa says that as far the palace and the court was concerned; fifty sweepers were enough to do the daily demand.

The procession of the king was a major ritual event by which he could show the aura and the magnitude of the socio-ritual authority and purity to his counter parts as well as his own subjects. Throughout in the procession, certain hygiene practices were adopted as a symbol of ritual exclusiveness and the wealth. He would have orderlies on his right with a golden *Kindi* and on the left a silver *kindi* filled with water. *Kindi* was prominent cleansing item of trade in the regions such as *Keechilpattanam* and *Trishivaperur* during 14th to 16th century. Third person accompanied would stand behind the king with a Turkish towel, by which he could well convince his associations with outside world, though it was actually used for constant cleaning of his face in the scorching and humid condition of the Malabar Coast. By continuously taking water from the exclusive gold and silver *Kindis* shown the subjects and foreign emissaries the wealth and exclusivity he possessed. Another two people were to stand on the left of the *Kindi* holders keeping with them gold and silver *Kolambis* which were meant to be the spit bins of the king. Another pair holding two water vessels, which contained Holy Water, ensured the visibility of the ritual purity and sacerdotal space on which the ruler stood.

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265 *Kokasandesam*, p.93, lines-71, it uses the word *pularivazhi vellatti* (sweeper at dawn).
266 *Barbosa*, op.cit, p.247,
267 *Ibid*
268 *Payyannurpatu*, op.cit,p.32, lines-103-104.
269 *Ananthapuravarnanam*,op.cit, p.32,lines-73 elaborates the active and vigorous gold markets in medieval Kerala. It was dealt with an active trading group called *ponvaniyar*,pp.32-33,lines-73-81
Many widespread customs and rituals in pre-colonial Kerala concerning the ritual purifications; bathing, fire, exclusion, excommunication, quarantine, restrictions and avoidance had dual purposes to serve. One was exclusively for ritual purity and moral fitness while the other one was ensuring social control and hygiene hierarchy. These purposes were satisfied through the power of isolation, punishment and branding as permanently degraded.270 These practices were also strongly influenced by the practices on the land in a largely agrarian economy. Nambutiri Janmi who could control the life and death of other caste people had certain privileges and discretion to impose social closure for subordinate castes by using the tools of ritual hygiene.271 The displeasure of the dominant had impacted directly on the hygiene practices of the affected who would be subjected to the enmity of the hamlet/region. This practice was called Desa Virodham, or Swajana Virodham or the enmity of own caste groups.272 People who were subjected to these treatments were prohibited from observing basic hygiene practices such as shaving, bathing and washing as the “excommunicated people were not served by village barbers, their women (were) denied of purificatory cloths, clothes after confinements, their presence prohibited in temples or bathing tanks.”273

There were two dimensions to this particular practices of the hygiene, one used to be controlled by the ‘law’ sanctioned by the religious authorities, while other one is sanctioned by the manners and executed by the social consciousness.274 Generally hygiene principles were directly associated with prohibitions and ‘negativism’ which were very prominent in the

271 P. Radhakrishnan, *Peasant Struggles, Land Reforms and Social Change: Malabar 1836-1982*, p. 20; Return to An Order, Dated 22 April 1841, Copy of the Dispatch from the Governor-General of India in Council to the Court of Directors of the East India Company, Dated the 8th Day of February, 1841, p. 127
272 P. Radakrishnan, op. cit, p. 20
273 V. V. Kunhi Krishnan, *Tenancy Legislation in Malabar, 1880-1970: An Historical Analysis*
274 Kokasandesam shows that physical and social process of hygiene were to be in accordance with religious and moral principles of medieval Kerala as in the case of worshippers in Guruvayur Temple in 14th Century. op. cit, p. 75, lines-37
entire functioning of hygiene rituals. These taboos were attained a religious sanction in all the communities at work and applied in matters like food, proximity, dress, water, by categorizing as ‘harmful’ and ‘polluted’ as means of asserting moral and social power.

Ritual and social hygiene customs followed by the Hindus were termed as “strange” by Sainuddin and “not to be found anywhere in the world.” The death of the relatives was mourned by the year long “abstinence” from “unhygienic” things and “action” which would invite the wrath of priths and spirits. These practices were similar in patriarchal and matriarchal castes in medieval Kerala. Therefore, many rituals were to be followed in this strenuous period of abstinence and shown a complete sense of detachment from the worldly affairs. Taboos were making inroads to the daily life of people as it encompassed cutting the hair or nail, eating fish or meat, chewing betel leaves or having sexual intercourses with any women. Society at large never deviated from these accepted norms for the fear of deceased spirits affecting them permanently, as the practices otherwise believed to have brought in blessing.

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275 Carol Lansing, op.cit, p.86
277 Many rituals were observed by the family members of the diseased and the fate of the wife was pathetic as she was not allowed to get marry or to have kids. She was to be virtually excommunicated from all social gatherings and functions. Says John of Monti Corvino, p.118
278 Zainuddin Makhdum, op.cit,40; Fryer Jordhanus was the first foreigner who recorded the matriarchal systems among the Nairs of Kerala. He visited Malabar in 1321 and stayed here for 5 years. p.147
279 F.Fawcett,op.cit,p.277
280 Zainuddin Makhdum, p.40
281 Ibid.40,Makhdum says that many such practices were observed by Muslim community as well. “They read Quran they learn it by heart; they recite it beautifully; they acquire religious learning; they perform prayers and other from worship; yet it is extremely strange and surprising that this custom prevails among them.” This was a reference to the prevailing customs among the mappila who inherited it from the Hindu community. This cultural similarity is seen in many other fields as well especially in the hygienic practices.
Sheikh Sainuddin explains a strange custom prevailed in the man-women relationship within the native cultural practices. Only eldest in the Brahmin community was entitled to marry as his brothers had to satisfy themselves “as rule” with the illicit relationship with next immediate caste women called Sambandham keeping the ‘superior and ritual purity at bay.’ At the same time “physical” and ritual hygiene were maintained among the higher caste groups by banning the sexual intercourse with inferior caste especially in the anuloma intercourse (a man having sex with a lower caste female). The man or women from the higher caste was caught red-handed while committing the prohibited, they were forced to abandon their respective castes and the leave the place. But Brahmins were exempted from this as till 19th century the practice of Sambandham was much prevalent in the region. There was no question of out casting them as they were the main authority of the defining and explaining Veda and other religious scriptures in accordance with their personal and communitarian interests. Therefore Nambutiri caste could arbitrarily regulate the social intercourse of all castes in medieval Malabar.

These rules were strictly followed by the committed community who considered this as their moral responsibility. Compositions of these taboos were actually the work of priestly castes which had considerable authority and charisma of “superiority.” This was ensured with

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282 Ibid, pp.41-43
283 First Travancore Nair Act was enacted in 1913; It recognized Sambandham as a legal marriage and allowed wife and children of a Nair, dying intestate one half of his self acquired property. says C.J.Fuller, The Nayars Today, CUP, 1976, p.134, for the detailed discussion of the system of medieval consortage see Chapter- 5 titled “The Traditional Nayar Marriage System” pp.99-123; J, Devika, Modern Asian Studies, Volume 39, Cambridge University Press., 2005,p.476
284 Zainuddin Makhdum, op.cit, p.41 “the children born of them by Nair women thus are not entitled to inherit their father’s wealth.”; “In Kerala only one member of a Brahmin Tarawad shall marry. The eldest son shall marry in preference to others. It is not necessary that the females of Samanthams, Sudras and others observe the rule of chastity. But the rule of chastity should be observed by the Brahmin females only.” Edith Jemima Simcox, Primitive Civilizations: Or Outlines of the History of Ownership in Archaic Communities, 2010, p.464
285 T.K.G.Panikkar, op.cit, 12; P.R.Parameshwaranpilla, Pracheena Likhithangal, pp.366-367
286 T.K.G.Panikkar, op.cit, p.12
the visible support of political hierarchy who were seeking the legitimacy in the hands of the Brahmin community.\textsuperscript{287} Generally ritual cleanliness and law had nothing to do with the actual physical health of human body or general sanitation of the surrounding environment. This imposed hygiene customs to a large extend facilitated the dominance of the affluent as it were social customs ruled the medieval social life rather than laws.\textsuperscript{288} These taboos in turn affected the smooth functioning of the society and banned people from upper layers from effortlessly mingling with the people in inferior boundaries. It is certain that these taboos generally helped the upper caste from contagious diseases such as cholera, leprosy, and other diseases generally associated with working class/ caste for their strict adherence to the socio-hygienic and ritualistic impositions; personal, domestic and public. However, it created a social structure which decided enclosures and boundaries for associations and affiliation in the medieval Malabar in the social functioning.\textsuperscript{289} Personal and public morality along with the application of the hygiene observation were largely a direct fall out of the territory based caste hierarchy and the notion of “superior” and inferior”.\textsuperscript{290}

This particular functioning style was perpetuated by the upper echelon of the caste hierarchy, in precedence starts with \textit{Nambutiri, Nairs}, polluted castes such as \textit{Tiyyas, Paniyan}, and lastly \textit{Pulayas, Parayas} and so on.\textsuperscript{291} With their overwhelming power; economically, politically and socially, first two casts could dictate the elements of public and private rituals of cleanliness in the medieval Kerala.\textsuperscript{292} Higher caste groups promulgated this

\begin{enumerate}
\item P.K.Gopalakrishnan, \textit{Keralathinte Samskarika Charitram}, State Institute of Languages, Trivandrum, 2000, p.240
\item Upinder Sing, op.cit, 2009, p.293
\item Francis Buchanan, \textit{A Journey from Madras Through the Countries of Mysore, Canara, and Malabar}, Asian Educational Service, 1988, Delhi, p.410; Barbosa, Op.cit, p.66
\item Filippo Osella and Carolina Osalla’s work shows that there has not been much change regarding the pollution attitude among the upper caste population in entire Kerala. There have been instances of
\end{enumerate}
power of segregation with “superior knowledge and ritual “exclusiveness” and persistent assistance from the royal patronage. With the strong assistance of the Nairs who were to take care of the normativities of the socio-cultural order of the time, Nambutiri caste could execute the hierarchy based hygienic and unhygienic practices of the region. And the “polluted” and unhygienic castes were prohibited on the public road and places of congregation while higher caste people always got a wider mobility and greater spatial range in terms of socialization.

The notion of hygiene; ritual, moral and physical was maintained by the strict deference of the caste system. It was not violated by any caste; individually or as a community, as everybody was very convinced with their notion of hygiene and related perception of the health. Brahmins and other dominant castes maintained hygiene; ritual and physical; by indulging themselves in an expansive and elaborate ritual bath. This bath was obligatory on their part when they conduct any physical contact or vicinity with polluting or lower caste people. This purity was strictly maintained by dividing inhabited area for different caste and prescribed geographical/ sacred distance for the same.


294 F. Fawcett, *Nayars of Malabar*, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi,1985, p.190

295 Ibid, p.411; “Araya (fisher folk) community of the Malabar during the 15th century were not allowed to rise the hut more than three foot (which was obviously an exaggeration) and required to bow their head and lay on the flour(*dandana niskaram*) if they come across the upper sections like Nairs or Chettis. They were to be in the same position till the person disappear from his scene” as to ensure the social hygiene was kept properly otherwise executed” Mahuan,(Velayudhan.Passim),op.cit, p.193


297 Zainuddin Makhdum, op.cit, p.42

Lowest of them were “excommunicated” and “accursed.” Pulaya (cherumar), lowest caste in the region has to “live in swampy fields and places where respectable people cannot go: they have very small and abject huts, and plough and sow the fields with rice, they use buffaloes and oxen. They do not speak to the Nairs, except from a long way off, as far as they can be heard speaking with a loud voice. When they go along the road they shout, so that whoever comes may speak to them, and that they may withdraw from the roads, and put themselves on the mountains. And whatever woman or man should touch these; their relations immediately kill them like a contaminated thing: and they kill so many of these pulers until they are weary of it, without any penalty.”299 Thus people who were perceived to be “contaminated” could be executed in order to maintain the sacerdotal principles of socio-ritual hygiene without invoking any punitive action from state.

Moral hygiene was maintained in the offerings, taking food and bathing in medieval times.300 Caste Hindus were degraded from his rank which sometimes also resulted in excommunication if they took food before the obligatory bath. The process of excommunication was very stringent and pain staking for a person who violated the order.301 Once the excommunication was done, he/she had to leave the place and settle in some remote place, detaching completely from the community they belonged.302 Any second violation of the imposition would cost him the life or the freedom as the violatory rules were executed by the writ of the local ruler who was the actual authority of the ritual purity with the help of Brahmins.303 Sometimes the violators were sold as slave or to a person to the inferior rank as the punishment of violating the ritual hygiene. As an anti-climax, sometimes the violator was

299 Barbosa, op.cit, p.143
300 Makhdum, op.cit, p.42
301 ibid
302 ibid
303 ibid, p.43
also left with options of embracing other religions that did not have taboo rules as stringent as in the original religion.\textsuperscript{304}

Makhdum talks about the hierarchy and the notion of superior hygiene and inferior hygiene in accordance with the caste. Even the Brahmins themselves were classified in to different groups for the hygiene ladder, highest among them were being \textit{Nambutiris} as they were known in medieval literatures such as \textit{payyanurpatu}.\textsuperscript{305} These ritual hygiene status was thus preserved by the systematic assignment of the job/profession\textsuperscript{306} The ritual purity of women was also strictly maintained in the higher caste with the strict rules and regulations. If she was seen or touched, by the lower caste persons or any polluting objects at some particular nights, she had to forgo the caste and remained in the rest of the life as lesser caste in the hierarchy.\textsuperscript{307} In order to avoid this particular contingency, she had to be accompanied by an able bodied male from the family. Lest, it happens yet again, she had to be converted in

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{304}Ibid
  \item \textsuperscript{305}Brahmins were divided along the line of different traits and their place of origin. There were \textit{Tulu Brahmins}, Tamil Brahmins or \textit{battar} and \textit{Saraswat Brahmins} or \textit{Konkanis}. Nambuthiri Brahmins were the most dignified among them and ritually most pure. They were the upholder of the spiritual and temporal needs of the people around. \textit{Tulu Brahmins} from South Canara were largely confined to the temple related activities while Tamil Brahmins were considered to be the early migrants from the Cola and Pandya region of the Tamil Nadu. \textit{Konkani} Brahmins were largely involved in trade and related activities and they have their own set of rules and regulation.
  \item \textsuperscript{306}Makhdum, op.cit, pp.42-44. Nambutiri women were not completely secluded as explained by Makhdum as there evidences show that they were participated in many rituals in the temple with the company of the Nair women. They also had social and personal contact with their relatives in the family and community. But again the fear of losing the moral hygiene was intact and they preserve that by covering the entire body and the head by dress and \textit{marakkuda} (indigenously made umbrella). They wrapped the entire body with the lengthy sheet of cotton or silk cloth. ‘Mara’ means mask or cover which used to cover the face.
  \item \textsuperscript{307}Barbosa, op.cit,143 “These low people during certain months of the year try as hard as they can to touch some of the Nair women, as best they may be able to manage it, and secretly by night, to do harm. So they go by night amongst the houses of the Nairs to touch women, and these take many precautions against this injury during this season. And if they touch any woman, even though no one see it, and though there should be no witnesses, she, the Nair woman herself, publishes it immediately, crying out, and leaves her house without choosing to enter it again to damage her lineage.”This tradition was called \textit{Pulappedi and Parayappedi}.
\end{itemize}
to Islam, Christianity or to become a yogi, keeping away any worldly pleasure from the life.\textsuperscript{308}

Hygienic taboos sometimes even caused diplomatic bottle necks as Nambutiris considered sea traveling would cause damage to his moral hygienic practices since he had to take food from the hands of mlechas.\textsuperscript{309} With the new vigor in the implementation of the taboos, Brahmins in Kerala did not participate in the maritime activities which were the main stay of the coastal economy.\textsuperscript{310} They restored ritual purity and social hygiene by excluding the unheeded fellow caste person by declaring them apankteya or not qualified enough to be in the same row with other Brahmins in feasts.\textsuperscript{311} Thus heedfulness to hygiene principles believed to have led to the physical hygiene which makes people ritually pure and maintains the public health and social order through decisive and punitive disciplinary measures.\textsuperscript{312}

There were still close relationship between some common practices like washing hands, dressing pattern and avoiding dead bodies and ill health persons which is relevant even today. Religious scripts and literatures prohibit the associations with dirty dresses, contact with dead bodies, certain animals, banning the flesh of certain animals and birds. Washerman community, manatamar as Barbosa describe them had to take care of the cleaning job of the upper Kerala though they were ‘unhygienic’ and pollution.”\textsuperscript{313} This caste

\textsuperscript{308}Zainuddin Makhdum, op.cit, p.44
\textsuperscript{309}Andre Wink, op.cit,p.73
\textsuperscript{310}Ibid, “The same maritime are in evidence in the 16\textsuperscript{th} century. When often created unique diplomatic difficulties for the Portuguese. At Calicut, at instance, in the year 1500, Pedralvares Cabral decided to retain some Hindu notables as hostages on board of his ships while attending the return of his Portuguese men from ashore. The Zamorin demanded their immediate return however ‘because they were gentil hommes and could neither eat nor drink on board.”
\textsuperscript{312}Nicholas Terpstra, The Politics of Ritual Kinship: Confraternities and Social Order in Early Modern Italy, Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, UK, 2000, p.125.
\textsuperscript{313}Barbosa, 2009, op.cit,p.136 “they serve all with cleanliness, and they all gain their livelihoods very

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was not supposed to touch or nor associate with any one nor do let others do the same. Interestingly, their precarious condition was perpetuated by associating them with certain sacred duties such as providing *mattu*; “purifying change of cloths’ to all higher castes especially Nairs even though their touch polluted.314

Hygiene and pollution rules were also laid for menstrual periods, child birth, pregnancy etc.315 Failure of purify the body with the cloths given by *mannan* females, during ceremonies such as *Thirandukalyanam* or death pollution, created sufficient premise for outcasting a Nair woman.316 Even lower caste *Chaliyar* women were very particular about the ritual quarantine called *pula* which was strictly observed for forty one days, the culmination of which was marked by a common feast for the caste people.317 This normative practice of hygiene shaped to a large extent in the social functioning of Christians as well. However, St.Thomas Christians imbibed the practice of untouchability and inducted ritual hygienic practice such as *Pula, Pulakali* and *Sradham*, related to birth and death.318

Control over women; physically, socially and ritually was determined by vigorous application of hygiene principles. Imposition of the many purification rituals and rules of bathing was commenced on them on many occasions of ritual significance. Strong arsenals of socio-cultural control of Brahmins were also used in the subordination of women’s social life. Female body was seen more prone to the pollution for different physical and reasons. Women, even if they were equal in ranks were causative for pollution at certain times such as

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315Payyannurpattu, op.cit
316T.K.G.Panikkar, op.cit,p.183
317Payyannurpattu,op.cit, p.7,lines-18
menstruation and it was in practice even among the lower caste. “A newly confined woman
has to stand at a distance of eighteen feet and a menstruating woman at twelve feet; hence the
necessity in all respectable houses for special buildings set apart for special use by the
women.”319 They were ritually secluded in many occasions like puberty, menstrual circle and
delivery to maintain hygiene in the entire household.320

Puberty rituals started at the onset of menstruation. A woman who had not undergone
the initiation or talikettu ceremony was to be “polluting, a witch and dangerous for a man to
marry because her sexuality would be out of his control.” 321 Through this ceremony a social
construction of sexual differences, necessity of heterosexuality and patriarchy were
established during the medieval time in Malabar. Men’s psychology, hidden power equations
and hierarchies were at function in these ceremonies.322

Women in normal time were removed from public eyes and everyday social contacts
while being shielded from external contacts. They were to be protected from lower caste
groups during certain months of the year. Nur Yalmon analyses it as a deliberate strategy to
preserve caste hygiene. 323 “If a woman has sexual contact with lower caste male not only she
and her future offspring but her caste could be polluted.”324 On the other hand lower “caste
groups could try as hard as they could to touch some of the Nair women preferably by night,
to do harm. So they go by night amongst the houses of the Nairs to touch women, and these
take many precautions against this injury during this season. And if they touch any woman,
even though no one see it, and though there should be no witnesses, she, the nair woman

319 William Logan, op.cit, p.118
320 Fawcett, op.cit, p.277
1978, p.48
322 Kathleen E Gough, “Female Initiation Rites on the Malabar Coast” *Journal of the Royal
Anthropological Institute*, 85, 1955, 45-80
323 Nur Yulman, “On the Purity of Women in the Castes of Cylon and Malabar”, *Journal of the Royal
324 Karen Paige, Jeffery M. Paige, op.cit, p.112
herself, publishes it immediately, crying out, and leaves her house without choosing to enter it again to damage her lineage. And what she most thinks of doing is to run to the house of some low people, to hide herself, that her relations may not kill her as a remedy for what has happened, or sell her to some strangers as they are accustomed to do. And touching is in this manner, that even if there is no contact from one person to another, yet by throwing anything, such as a stone or a stick, if the person is hit by it, he remains touched and lost. These people are great charmers, thieves, and very vile people." This moral hygiene rituals were often reflected the extreme form of protectionism and dominating behavior of a masculine centric society.

Girls who were undergoing puberty were vulnerable to the extra human powers who tried to violate the social hygiene of the dominant castes. Male dominance was again reflected in social custom like talikettu kalyanam, a ceremonial marriage however farce, in which the bride would probably not see the groom longer than the duration of the ceremony. But unfortunately she had to observe the death pollution rite for her marriage with the man, generally a Nambutiri. Interestingly the practicality of the alliance between the Brahmin and Sudra Nair did not go beyond a socially accepted concubinage without any responsibilities on the Male part involved.

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325 Barbosa, op.cit, p.143
327 “The need for effective sexual control over (such)women to maintain not only patrilineal succession (a requirement of all patriarchal societies) but also caste purity, the institution unique to Hindu society. The purity of women has a centrality in Brahmin patriarchy”, says Uma Chakravarti, “Conceptualizing Brahmanical Patriarchy in Early India; Gender, Caste, Class, and State,” in Manoranjan Mohanty, Readings in Indian Government and Politics, Class, Caste, Gender (ed), Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2004, p.272
328 A.Sreedhara Menon, op.cit, p.85