

# MAKING OF HISTORY

**Prof. K. V. Krishna Iyer**

and

**Prof. Mrs Mary Samuel David**

**1979**

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and  
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# **MAKING OF HISTORY (History)**

**By Prof. K. V. Krishna Iyyer  
and  
Prof. Mrs Mary Samuel David**

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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The Making of History is sixth in the series of our monthly publications. The authors Prof. K. V. Krishna Iyer and Prof. Mary Samuel David are very well-known to the lovers of Kerala History. Masterly craftsmanship and erudite scholarship are the landmarks of their historical writings. The book under reference also fall in line with their usual historical narratives.

Prof. Krishna Iyer is the celebrated author of 'The Zamcrins of Calicut' and many other works on Kerala History. He is easily the pioneer among the living historians of Kerala. His studies on problems of Kerala History present original thinking and lucid narration. Eventhough we cannot agree with all the views expressed by the learned author, they serve to arouse a keen insight in the minds of the readers on such problems in history.

Prof. Mary Samuel David analysis literary works in such a way as to bring out a grand trinity of unity between the novelist, the poet and the historian. According to her a book of history comes

into being when the myriads of facts are selected, arranged described and narrated skilfully.

The pure and chaste way in which this scholar of English presents her views has a touch of her own individuality. Her studies on Nineveh of the Bible and The New Testament as history are of great importance to the students and teachers of History.

I have great pleasure in presenting this book before our patrons and reading public. I thank Shri. M. Shajahan, proprietor, Anupama Press, Trivandrum for executing the printing of the book.

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Dr. C. K. Kareem

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## SOME PARALLELISMS IN THE THOUGHTS AND EVENTS OF THE EAST AND THE WEST

History offers some parallelisms, if not exact identity of Thoughts and Events, among peoples, in regions and times wide apart. The basic ideas of the three great religions of India-Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism are the Immortality of the Soul and its Transmigration and Re-Incarnation according to the Law of *Karma*. And these are found also in the writings of the western philosophers and mathematician, Pythagoras also. According to the Indian religions, all animals including, of course man, consist of an immortal soul and a mortal body, the body alone perishing at death, the soul seeking a new body to be reborn in the world according to its *Karma* in a previous life or in the life just ended. *Karma* is derived from the Sanskrit *Kr* to do, and it includes all that we think, speak and do. And every thought, word and deed of ours rebound in the same kind and in the same measure. We get or give a Kiss for a Kiss or a Kick for a Kick in this life or in the life to come. Thus, in the *Silappathikarm*, one of the oldest of the Tamil epics, written by the Chera prince, Ilango Atikal, the hero, Kovalan, suffers death by false evidence because in a previous life as a king's servant he had put to death an innocent man on false

evidence. The same epic tells us also of a generous lady being reborn as a princess on account of her charities and pilgrimages, and a monkey which she had adopted and had accompanied escorted her son and coming to his father's throne in due course. The immortal Malayalam poet, Puntanam, thus describes the Law of *Karma* and the transmigration of Soul :—

Raised are we to heaven or pushed to hell  
By our deeds, good or bad.  
As *Chandala* born is he  
Bastard, brutal who in deeds had been  
As Devas (gods) Demons are born again,  
Devas fall to earth and trees become.  
The elephant dies and as goat is born  
The goat dies and as elephant is born  
The tiger dies and as man is reborn,  
The woman dies and as fox is reborn.  
As a despicable worm to be trampled upon  
Is the tyrant of ruthless deeds reborn,  
We rise or fall according to deeds, good or bad.(1)

Pythagoras not only believed in the Immortality of the soul and its Transmigration, he is said to have been even able to recognise a deceased friend. One day, as he was walking through the street he found some people molesting a dog. At once he stopped and said : "Dont harass the dog. This dog was a friend of mine in its previous life as one of us. I can recognise him from its voice !"

1. Jnanappana, lines 74-92.



The idea of the Messiah begins to appear in Jewish history after the conquest of Israel by the Assyrians. It runs all through the *Prophets*, crystallising in Daniel and taking final shape in the Gospels. It seems very much like the Lord's promise, in the *Bhagavadgita* "Whenever righteousness decays and unrighteousness raises its head, then I embody myself, O Bharata; for the protection of the good, the destruction of the wicked and for the establishment of righteousness I am born age after age! (2)

In the course of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says: "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink: nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on ... Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them... .. Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you. That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like any one of these. Wherefore if God so clothe the grass of the field which today is and tomorrow is cast into the even, *shall* he not much more clothe, O! ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying what shall we eat what shall we drink or where withal shall we be clothed?..... Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (3) The same idea,

2. IV, 7.8.

3. Mathew, vi, 25-33

divested of the explanations and illustrations, is found in the Lord's words to Arjuna: Those who worship me, thinking of nothing else, their burden of *Yoga* and *Kshema* is born by me (*Yoga* is the provision of means for the maintenance of life and *Kshema* is the protection of what has been provided ) (4)

Almost all religions extol poverty and condemns the pursuit of wealth. Jesus exhorted his bearers not to lay up treasure upon earth for where your treasure is there will your heart be also."(5) He did not himself have even a house"(6) the only way to be perfect is to be completely homeless.(7) And poverty is preached not only by the poor carpenter's son but also by Mahavira and Gautama Buddha, who belonged to royal families and would have come to kingdom and power in due course.

The great men of the East and the West, again give the highest place to love in the relation of man to man. The New Testament of Christ based upon, Love completes the Old Testament of Moses and the Prophets according to which the relations between man and men are determined by the Law of Reciprocity or Retaliation. (8) "for",

4. Bhagavadgita, ix, 22.

5. Mat. vi 22.

6. The Son of Man hath not where to lay his head" viii 20;

7. ibid xix 21.

8. Mark x 30, 31, Mat. xxiii, 37, 38, 39 Exodus, xxi, 24, 25;

said Jesus "all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword". (9) Mahavira and Gautama preached Love as a fundamental principle of human conduct because of the Law of *Karma*. And we have Mahatma Gandhi in the twentieth century advocating Love as the best and perhaps the only means of realising democracy in modern times. "War", said he, "might give us another rule but would never give us a rule in terms of the common people. The section of the people who would drive away the present rulers by organised violence would themselves occupy the seats of power and never part with power. War would never bring power to the masses". (10)

Though born as a Jew, Jesus's ideas were not only far in advance of his fellow Jews as in respect of the relations between man and man, they were even revolutionary in respect of the relations between man and wife and between man and God! The mosaic code allowed, polygamy and treated marriage as a contract permitting divorce for incompatibility. But Jesus insisted on monogamy, and raised marriage to the level of a sacrament. (11) And his idea of adultery sounds very much like that of the Hindus: "say unto you," said he, "whoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery already in her heart." (12)

9. Mat. xxvi, 52.

10. Basu and Patwardhan, Gandhi, in Indian Politics, p. 19.

11. Mat. xix, 6, 7, 9 Mark x, 12

12. Mat. v, 28.

Jesus's relation between man and his God is more than revolutionary; they are sublime. God Jehovah protected and favoured only the Jews. And though he punished them, He did so, as a father does, for their improvement. But the God of Jesus is the common Father of all, Jew and gentile. He grants His favours to all those "who seek them". "Ask", said he and it shall be given, you; seek and ye shall find: knock and it shall be opened unto you for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (13). The God of Jesus forgives as easily as Krishna of the Hindus. Jehovah is more like their Siva - the stern, unbending easily offended and terrible in punishment. The Hindus have however given Siva a Parvati to soften his wrath. Lacking in the softening influence of woman, *Jehovah* inspires terror and trembling even when he grants his favours, limited, of course, to the Jews.

Naturally, as tyrants, so to speak, both Jehovah and Siva are jealous, and suspicious of their devotees, off and on, they test their loyalty. Jehovah asks Abraham for his son's flesh as a burnt offering, and ever devoted, Abraham is ready to kill his only son, who is however saved by Jehovah himself, just in the nick of time, when Abraham had drawn his sword and was about to lay it on his son. (14) Almost, in the same

13. Mat. v, 7, 8.

14. Gen. xxii, 1-12.

manner, Siva tests his *Siruttondan* (humble devotee) Paramjyoti (Pallava Mahendravarman's commander-in. chief). He appears before him disguised as a Brahmin and demands in the Lord's name his son's flesh to be cooked for his food. As the devotee cannot refuse anything demanded in his Lord's name, Paramjyoti and his wife killed their son, cooked his flesh and served it. But just before He began to eat He asked them to go out and call their son! After many protestations that they had killed him and he had died, they made bold to go out and call their son by his name, And, lo! he came running from the other end of the street!

Numberless are the instances of the saving power of devotion. It is not generally known that General Eisenhower, who brought down Hitler, had the Bible always in his pocket. And he used to refer to it off and on for inspiration, strength and help.

The Prophet tells how three times, while he had taken refuge in the darkness of the caves his enemies hands came within a hair's breadth of his face without touching it! The courier sent by the Meccans to arrest him told the Medinans how his horse stumbled under him three times, the third time never to rise again, and he who had been sent to seize the prophet ended by becoming his disciple and follower!

Jesus's death is clouded in mystery. At the last moment, it is said, in the Gospels, he cried out "O God, O God, why hast Thou forsaken

me?" and gave up the spirit. It is unthinkable that the loving Father did not hear the Son of Man's prayer and left him helpless. The Gospel accounts of the Crucifixion seem to be confused. Jesus was mounted on the cross (at the third!) sixth hour of the day: till the ninth hour, when Jesus gave up his spirit, the whole region was enveloped in darkness: there was thunder: there was lightning: there were earthquakes; these last were so intense that the veil of the temple was rent in twain from top to bottom, the stones over the graves all rolled down and the saints rose and came out of their graves; and all these lasted till next morning. Could it be that in the confusion and fear caused by the darkness, thunder, lightning and earthquakes Jesus was saved from death, especially as these phenomena seem to express the anger of God?(15)

These and other parallelisms, which students of History, can easily collect, are in themselves very interesting. Some of these show that human societies were not living in water tight compartments or monastic seclusion and isolation, excluded from all contact with the outside world. Where there is no possibility of contact, direct or indirect, close and intimate or remote in place and time, they show also that the same causes produce the same results, the differences being due to local variations in environment and cultural heritage, involving race, temperament and history.

15. (Mat. XXVII, 45,46,51,52,53, XXVIII, 2: Mark XV, 25,33,34,38, Luke, XXIII, 44,45,46).

## HISTORY FROM WORDS

King Cheraman Perumal (A. D. 690-751) of Kerala was known also as Kazhar irrariyar Nayanar (കാഴ്ചിരരിവാർ നായനാർ) or the Saiva saint (Nayanar) who knew the language of every creature that could emit any sound (Kazharirrarivar). We may not all have Cheraman Perumal's gift. Nevertheless we can distinguish birds from beasts and both from reptiles sounds they produce. We can also recognize their different species, the cat from the fox, the cow from the buffalo, the lizard from the squirrel, the cock from the crow, the pigeon from the parrot and the brahmani kite from the pariah tribe. With a little patience we can discover the significance of the variations in the sounds produced, say, by the domestic dog and the pigeon and even by the common crow. The dog's bark announces not only a new arrival but also indicates whether it is a stranger or a frequenter. The pigeon bewails its loneliness and woos its mate in different ways. We can easily differentiate between the crow inviting its fellows to a feast and assembling them to oust an unwanted one. The chimpanzee, it is said, can produce thirty-three different sounds, (1) presumably corresponding to its different wants and emotions.

1. To express their emotions fowls and pigeons have twelve specific sounds, dogs fifteen, horned cattle twenty, and pass twenty different sounds plus a repertory of gestures. Durant. The Story of Civilization Vol. i, Our Oriental Heritage p. 73.

Man's emotions and desires are countless in number and of varying degrees of intensity too. In his attempt to express them, thanks to the control of his vocal organs, has emerged a correspondingly big vocabulary. Through the vocal cards every impression begets immediately or in time a corresponding expression. As the origin of every word there must be an event or experience. Though forgotten now, it lies imbedded in it.

On account of differences of food, daily life, habits and climate slight differences arise in pronunciation. The letters are the same, but their pronunciation varies. To the northerner sa (ശ) and (സ) are not so easy as sha (ഷ); for him sri (ശ്രീ) is Shri (ഷ്രീ) and Subrahmanyam is Shubrahmanyam (ഷുബ്രഹ്മണ്യൻ). For some sha (ഷ) ja; nation is najn (നീജൻ) in S. Kanara. The Katuppattan transforms ia (ഴ) into sha (ഷ) for him nali (ഴി) is nazhi (നഴി) and valappalan (വാഴപ്പഴം) is vashappasham (വാഷപ്പഴം). In North Malabar va does duty for la (ല): the Elimala (എഴിമല) is Eyinala, Palayannur (പഴയന്നൂർ) Payyannur, Mayyali (മയ്യാഴി) Mayyayi. Here ava (അവ) is shortened into o (ഒ): aven (അവൻ) is on (ഒൻ), avarkku (അവർക്ക്) orkku (ഒർക്ക്). In Mankombu and other places short u becomes o and ulu (ഉള്ളൂ) is ollo (ഒള്ളോ). The Palghat carpenter cannot pronounce the half-vowel u: it is always the full vowel, undu (ഉണ്ടു) becoming undu (ഉണ്ടൂ) which in other places means has



taken food. In\* Chowghat short a is short e and in the seventeenth century deeds of the Guruvayur devaswam its name appears as Kuruvayur. Till Narayana Bhattatiri in literary Malayalam it appears as Kuruvayur (കുരുവായൂർ) thus is Chatakasandesa we have Kuruvayur enru peram pradesam (കുരുവായൂരെൻറു പേരാം പ്രദേശം). In the Laccadives, especially in the northern group colonised from Kanara va is ba, and every where pa (പ) is fa, penkutti being pronounced as fenkutty (2) The Tamilian is always unhappy when he comes to the double nasal nnu (ന്നു) for him arinnu (അറിഞ്ഞു) is arinju (അറിഞ്ചു). -

Twice at least in History this difference in pronunciation has been a matter of life and death, life for the unknown friend and death for the betrayed foe. Some time about 1000 B. C. there was a war between the people of Gilead and the people of Ephraim. The Gileadites wanted to punish the Ephraimites for harassing the Gileadites who had settled in their midst. The men of Gilead occupied Ephraim. The vanquished Ephraimites tried to save their lives by averring that they were the Gileadites, who had settled among the Ephraimites. The Ephraimites pronounced sha (ഷ) as sa (സ). So the commander-in-chief, Jephtha, asked everyone of them to say shibboleth, and killed everyone who pronounced it as

2. R. H. Ellis. A short Account of the Laccadives and Minicoy, pp. 67, 68.

sibboleth. (3) In 1818 the Druses defeated Ibrahim Fasha's combined army of Egyptians. The victors wanted to save and set free the Syrians among the prisoners. So they conducted a test like Jephtha. The Gamel of the Druses was pronounced as Jamel by the Syrians, and Kamel by the Turks. As a result of the test the Jamels were all set free, and the Kamels were all executed.

In the circumstances prevailing today even a small difference in intonation has acquired a new importance. "Everyone in his own land" has become the cry everywhere. From the way one speaks one's native land can be easily discovered. The people of Kerala have to go to other lands and live there to earn their livelihood. The adoption by them of customs and fashions of the land where they live as both welcome and praiseworthy.

On the basis of the influence of other languages on Malayalam its history can be divided into (i) Tamil Period (ii) Sanskrit-Malayalam Period, (iii) Anglo-Malayalam period and (iv) Hindi-Malayalam Period. The Roman authors of the first century, A. D. have all called Kerala by the name of Tamilakam (തമിഴകം) the contribution of Kerala to the Sangham literature is in no way inferior to that of Chola and Pandya. In the subsequent Bhakti movement the share of Kerala was not unimportant. As the Bhakti literature was

intended for the laity as well as the learned we can be sure that the language of the common people here was also Tamil. With the Tapatisamvaranam of the half-Pallava Kulasekhara varman the Sanskrit period may be said to have begun in Kerala. It is not possible to say when Malayalam became separate from Tamil. At any rate as evidence of the ancient Tamil period have survived in Malayalam a number of words from the Sangham and Bhakti literature, (4)

Selecting and combining the best words in Sanskrit and Tamil, it is said, Tunjattu Ramanujan Ezhuttachan set the standard for Malayalam, and through his puranic works lifted Malayalam literature from the vulgar eroticism into which it had sunk and set it on a much nobler and higher path. With the establishment of British supremacy began the Anglo-Malayalam period and a revolution in every department of life, political, economic, social and spiritual. The aim as well as the medium and methods of education all changed, and new and new departments and subjects came forward. Adopting the necessary English words Malayalam vocabulary became correspondingly extensive. With western ideas and models penetrating everywhere, Malayalam literature departed from the path marked for it by Ezhuttachan, and became secular, realistic and materialistic. The importance of poetry declined, and with the appearance of the news papers the power of prose was firmly established, like the *kasba* and *fasil*, which evidence

4. Ulloor S. Parameswara Ayya., History of Malayalam Literature, Vol. I, pp. 25-6,

the Mysorean interrugnum, the English words in the Malayalam language are the silent mementoes of the erstwhile British supremacy. In 1947 Hindi was declared the official language; it remains to be seen what influence a poorer language like Hindi can exert on a much richer language like Malayalam as the result of official patronage.

Language is one of the main sources for the pre-historic period.<sup>1</sup> Our idea of the proto-Australoids is derived mainly from the survivor words in Tamil, though whether Tamil is indigenous or foreign has yet to be determined. A proper study of the language of the Negritos of the Andamans is still to be made. It may give the clue not only to the peopling of South India but also to the submerged Lemuria or Gondwana continent and the great migrations between the east and the west.

The early history of the Laccadives is to a large extent derived from the survivor words. Geographically and historically these islands form part of the mainland opposite, that is, Kerala. Its language is now Malayalam. As in Kerala, here also Malayalam had been preceded by Tamil. Even today they use the Tamil tanni (തണി) for the Malayalam vellam (വെള്ളം) for the Malayalam or water, and the Tamil sollu (ശൊല്ലു) for the Malayalam parayu (പറയുക) or say. A few Sanskrit words also have survived, and they indicate that

Brahmins had been living here and in those days this small group, now consisting of 17 or 19 islands and reefs, was a much bigger one, consisting of so many islands as deserving the name by which it is known now. The people here refer to the north as *uttaranthi* (ഉത്തരന്തി) to the east as *purbānthi* (പുർബ്ബന്ധി) to the south as *takkanthi* (തെക്കന്തി) and to the west as *anaranthi* (അനരന്തി) or *aparanthi* (അപരന്തി) (5) These are contracted variants of the Sanskrit *uttaranthis*, *purvanthisi*, *dakshinanthisi* and *aparanthisi*. And these have been found in the very day speech of the common people. Though we cannot say that once upon a time Sanskrit had been the language of the people here, we can certainly say that people knowing Sanskrit had been living here. It is with these words that the Brahmins living in the opposite mainland offer their thrice daily prayer to the deities presiding over the four directions. Hence these Sanskrit knowing people must be Brahmins.

Did these Brahmins belong to South India or North India? From the situation of the islands we must say that they were southerners. In south India Brahmins lost caste if they spent more than a few hours in a boat. They have to offer their daily prayers to the sun thrice a day after a plunge bath in a tank. They should do it *kanathe*, *konathe*, *kantu* (കാണാതെ, കോണാതെ, കണ്ടു) without seeing the sun (കാണാതെ) looking straight up at the sun (കോണാതെ) and looking at the sun (കണ്ടു), that is, before sunrise exactly at midday

and before sunset. At the most the Brahmins could travel by boat only for ten hours at night. However fast, the boat cannot cover more than thirty miles. If the early Brahmin colonists of the Laccadives were southerners the island nearest to the mainland and most of the islands themselves one from the other must be within this distance. The nearest island now is Androth, which is 123 miles away from Calicut (Kozhikode). Alberuni refers to the instability of these islands. and it is quite possible that those that had once been close to the mainland have disappeared.

An inscription of Rajendra Chola I, refers to a tradition that Parasurama erected a fortress in Santimattivu (Androth?) for keeping the gold crown worthy of Goddess Lakshmi. (6) If so Parasurama must have created these islands also or Parasurama's Kerala extended westwards as far as and included the islands also. This story need not be mere fiction Parasurama's father, Jamadagni, was Haiheya Kartavirayarjuna's priest. Kartariya is said to have defeated Ravana of Lanka and levied tribute from him. In these circumstances the Haiheya king might have visited Lanka off and on. Sea voyages were not forbidden to the Brahmins of North India. And Jamadagni and along with him Parasurama, might have accompanied the king in his visits to Lanka. Noticing the potentialities of these islands, Parasuram might have erected a fortress at Santimattivu after exterminating the Haiheyas. Perhaps this might have been a fortress erected by Kartavirya himself.

6. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cholas*, Vol. I, 241.

It is also possible that Brahmins had come here independently of Parasurama. In 326 B. C. Alexander occupied the settlement of the Brachmanol Brahmins) on the Indus after a hard fought battle. Those who survived the slaughter might have escaped to these island by sea, especially as the Greeks were not familiar with the Indian coast South of Gujerat. And when the island began to sink these Brahmins might have come to the mainland, as the Tiyyas had done in much later times, by sea. The similarity of house-names in the islands and in the mainland may be used to prove movement from the mainland to the islands and also vice versa. Opening new fields of research, this kind of reasoning may prove fruitful or fruitless. Either way it will be a gain. If fruitful it may be pursued further; if fruitless so much time is saved for future research. Nevertheless it serves to indicate how much wealth lie hidden behind words or in the words themselves.

### **Proper Nouns Originally connotative**

Originally proper nouns were all connotative. Krishna came into existence from his black colour, Pandu from his white colour, Kartikala from the black scar on his leg, Chenkuttuvan from his red colour, 'Pundarikasha from his beautifull lotus like eye, Yanaikkatchey from his fear-inspiring look like that of elephant's, Induchudan from wearing the crescent on the head, Narmudi from the mudi or crown of nar or vettiver (the sweet smelling root of a plant so called), Chakrapani from the discus in his hand, Ol Val Ko Peruncheral from the shining sword in king Peruncheral's

hand, Kesavan from killing Kesi, Kadal pira kottiyavan from driving back the enemies coming by sea, and Azhi athan from being the Lord of the sea. A Chera king was called Perunchorru-thiyan from a perunchoru given by him. Perunchoru is a feast given by a king to his soldiers on the eve of a battle; it denotes also a feast in propitiation of departed souls. As this Chera king had waged a number of wars he must have given also a corresponding number of perunchorus. But it is not these perunchorus, but the perunchoru given to the Pandavas. Kauravas and their hosts that the poet has in his mind. It is the custom even now for those who go to Kurukshetra to perform a sradha for these departed heroes according to their means from a handful of water in propitiation to a sumptuous perunchoru for eighteen days, accompanied also by many gifts in kind and cash. This offering is made by all, irrespective of any kinship direct or indirect, real or imaginary. Even now the Brahmins make a monthly offering of sesamum and water to the souls of all those who had no living relatives at all when they died, not to speak of the childless. It is a feast of this kind that is praised by the poet. Uthiyan belongs to the first century A. D. The pilgrimage which is alluded to in this perunchoru feast indicates that as early as the beginning of the Christian era South Indians had begun to visit North India, and the Puranas of North India had made their way to South India.



Imaiyavarampan was the elder son of Uthiyan. The name indicates one or more of the achievements connoted by it. (i) Imaiavarampan is explained as the king who had the Himalayas as the boundary of his kingdom. Like his father, Imaiavarampan was a great warrior. He annexed all the lands from Kodungallur to Kasargod and added also the Laccadives to the Chera empire. He met with his death in the course of his attempt to conquer Kongunad, east of the Western Ghats. The poet would have been more exact if instead of calling him Imaiavarampan he had called him Sahyavarampan or Vadamalaivarampan, he who had the Sahya or Vadamala as his boundary. But exaggeration is the genius of poetry as exactness is of science. (ii) The word is also explained as the ampan or friend of the gods (inaiyavar). As the friend of the gods he would be building temples and the Patiruppattu says he transformed forests into shrines. (7) (iii) Imaiavarampan may also mean the favourite of gods or devanam priyadarsi as Asoka calls himself. And it is said in the Manimakalai that the first Buddhist vihara was built at Kodungalur in his reign, and presumably with his help. And the Buddhist monks who built it might have called him a second priyadarsi.

### **Titles of Kings**

Like real names the titles, popular surnames may also be of help to the historian. Svathi Tirunal of Travancore was known as Garbhasriman or one who became a king even before his birth. No

one before him had had the unique distinction of becoming a king while still in the mother's womb. In Marumakkathayam royal families one becomes the seniormost only in his old age. All those who ascend the gadi are kizhavan or old men. And coming to the throne at a ripe old age they die also not long after their accession. Kartika Tirunal Rama Varma was called Kizhavan Raja because he became a Kizhavan as Raja, that is, he ruled for many years, for forty years, dying in 1798 at the ripe old age of seventy four. He was also called Dharma Raja. At the bottom of this title lies the history of Kerala from 1788 to 1792. While fighting Tipu he also have unstinted food and clothing to the hundreds and thousands of refugees who flocked to Travancore for four years until they returned after Tipu ceded Malabar to the British. The titles of Ravi Varman Kulasekhara can be called a sahasranamam, or thousand names, so many are they. And most of them are true, Rama Varma Sakthan Tampuran, who became Cochin Raja in 1769, was literally a Sakthan, that is, a strong king. No one else could have stopped the murders and robberies that had become a daily feature in the kingdom before his accession. The Zamorin, who converted the annual religious rite called Pattattanam into a grand literary conference, was also called Sakthan Tampuran. Perhaps it was in his time that the Cochin Raja was reduced to subjection. As the princes of the Zamorin's family worked as team it is very difficult to point any one as solely responsible for a particular achievement.

These titles however should not be accepted by the historian without investigation. Though the English had to withdraw from France round about A. D. 1453 the kings of England retained the title of the King of France down A. D. 1802 in their proclamations. Kulasekhara Azhvar called himself Kudalarkōn or King of Madura (Pandyas) Kozhikkon or King of the Cholas, and Kollikkavalan or Protector of the Kollimalais. He is believed to have lived from 767 to 834. But during all this while the Chera (Kerala) kings had no possessions in the country of the Pandyas or of the Cholas. Even on the strength of a frontier raid neighbouring king have assumed the title of the King of the Keralas.

### Place Names.

The investigation of place names is very interesting. In Kerala there are 2 Kollams, 2 Kollangodes, 2 Perumpadappus, 2. Vadakaras, 2 Talasseries, 2 Kallays, 2 Kantiyurs, 2 Kutiravattams 2 Kudallurs and 2 Kumaranputhurs. The same house names are found in different places in Kerala and in Laccadives. This might have been the result of colonisation or partition, same physical features, or specialisation in or localisation of some craft or trade.

The Original name of Trivandrum was Sriyanandapuram (ശ്രീയാനന്ദപുരം) or the city of One who gives anandam (ആനന്ദം) or pleasure to Goddess sri or Lakshmi. Gradually it changed into Siyanandapuram (ശ്രീയാനന്ദപുരം) Syananduram (സ്യാനന്ദപുരം) Tiruvanantapuram (തിരുവാനന്ദപുരം) which led to

the association of Ananta (അനന്തൻ) and Anantan-kadu (അനന്തൻ കാട്) with this place. Ezhimala became Ezhumala (എഴുമല), 'Saptasaila (സപ്ത ശൈലം) and Elimala (ഇലിമല) which last perhaps gave the name of Mushikas (മുഷികർ) to its Kolatiri rulers. The etymology of Kozhikkode, Cochin and Kodungallur as of even Madras still remains controversial. We have yet to satisfactorily identify the places mentioned in the Sangham literature and the Roman classical works of the early centuries of the Christian era. How Karur came within the Chera empire and why Ptolemy referred to it as a Chera capital have to be determined.

The origin of place names ending in Azhi, Kara, Kadu, Kulam, Puzha, Vay, Padi, Para, and Pathi, (അഴി, കര, കാട്, കുളം, പുഴ, വരക, പടി, പാറ, പതി) is obvious. Is Kodu (കൊടു) to be derived from kudi (കുടി) hut or kudu (കൂടു) assemble? Those ending in Puram (പുരം) and Mangalam (മംഗലം) must have been originally Brahmin settlements. There are many places ending in Ur (ഉർ) and Cheri (ചേരി). The antiquity of Ur may go back at least to 1500 B. C, as it was the name of the capital of the ancient Chaldean empire. Can it be derived from urru (ഉറു) well or spring? Fresh water being essential, the earliest settlements must have been made near natural wells or springs. Cheri, derived from cheruka (ചേറുക) or assemble, may be explained as an assemblage of huts. Was there at first any difference between the status of the people living in urs and cheries? During the annual Kadir festival of Kudallur there is a Cherivaravu, literally coming

of the cheri. The procession consists wholly of cherumas, who were originally agrestic slaves. Perhaps ur was originally the name of an upper class settlement and cheri of a settlement of the lower classes. Along the Kerala coast many places have been encroached upon by the sea, and from many places the sea has also withdrawn, Manappuram (മണപ്പുറം) Karappuram (കരപ്പുറം) Azhikkara (അഴിക്കര) Nindakara (നീണ്ടകര) Vaippu (വൈയ്പു) Vechur (വെച്ചൂർ) Vaikam (വൈക്കം) and Kadalorakkudi (കടലോരക്കുടി) are places from where the sea has receded. If the places encroached upon by the sea the location of the Buddhist Srimulavasam (ശ്രീമൂലവാസം) also called Tirumula-ppadam (തിരുമൂലപാദം) is controversial. It has been located in North Kerala near Tellichery, and also in South Kerala near Ampalappuzha. Buddhist relics have been discovered in the Maldives, and they may be discovered in the Laccadives. Hence it is not impossible that Srimulavasam might have been one of the now sunken islands of the Laccadives. (8)

### Changes in bonnotation.

The names of many places in Kerala end in palli. Pallikkunnu has been sanskritized into Viharachalar, and Edappalli as Antaravihara. So the place names ending in, palli must have been Buddhist or Jain settlements, with monasteries or places for the assembling of the Sangha. It is quite possible that the Buddhist and Jaina missionaries first

approached the depressed classes living in paliams or low marshy land. The association with the monks might have given a holy aspect to the palli, and as an honorific got itself attached to royalty in such words as Pallikolluka (പള്ളികൊള്ളുക) pallikkattil (പള്ളിക്കൂട്ടിൽ) pallittandu (പള്ളിത്തണ്ടു) palliyottam (പള്ളിയോട്ടം) and even pallissavam (പള്ളിശ്ശവം). Free masonry is an analogous example in the English language. Originally it was freestone masonry work in free or soft stone, as distinguished from rough stone. (9) On account of the association with medieval monks and monasteries free masonry has now become an all comprehending philosophy and way of life, re-inforcing the teaching of the great religions of the world.

If palli was upgraded, tevaradiyar (തേവരിടിയൻ) became degraded. Literally a female slave of the Lord, her duties were to gather flowers for worship, make garlands for the Lord, and sing and dance before the Lord while He went out in procession. The Brahmin Vishnuchitta's daughter, Andal Azhvar, was perhaps the earliest tevaradiyal who is supposed to have married Him. Kulasekhara Azhvar is said to have given away his daughter Cholakulavalli in marriage to Sriranganatha. In the same way and for the same purpose Ravivarman Kulasekhara is said to have made over his elder daughter to Arulalapperumal of Kanchipuram and the younger daughter to Sriranganatha of Srirangam. (10) People treated

9. Oxford English Dictionary, Vol. V.

10. Travancore Archaeological (series Vol. V): Parameswara Ayyar, History of Malayalam Literature 199, 292.

them with all the respect and reverence due to their rank and saintliness. It was considered a great honour to have tevaradiyal for wife. Cherukara Kuttathi was married by Kayankulam Kerala Varma and their daughter Unniyad by Perum-padappu Rama Varma. Kuttathi is even the heroine of Damodara Chakkiyar's Sivavilasam in Sanskrit and Unniyadi of his manipravala Unniyadicharitam in Malayalam. Offerings were made to the tevaradiyal as to the Lord, and they were all duly made over to the Lord and credited in the temple accounts. As the devaswam appropriated whatever was obtained but the tevaradiyal the authorities began to gradually transform her into a source of revenue. They began to appoint tevaradiyals on a fixed salary, and causing them to be taught Vatsyayana and on Vaisikatantra to allure the opposite sex, set them on prostitution. Thus what had originally connoted great honour and respect in society sank into a term of the vilest reproach.

One of the duties of the tevaradiyal was to dance before the Lord. The dancer is called Kutthan (കൂത്തൻ); its feminine is Kutthatthi (കൂത്തത്തി). With tevaradiyal the word Kutthatthi also became a term of reproach as the vulgar Kutthachi (കൂത്തച്ചി). Kanam (കാണം) originally meant a horse gram in Tamil. In the Sangham literature and down to the thirteenth century it was applied to a gold coin of weight of a horse gram. In Ayyan Atikal's grant of A. D. 848-849 to Tarisappalli it is used to denote a kind of a tax as in Enikkanam (എന്നിക്കാണം) and Talaikkanam (താളൈക്കാണം). As

Kanams were advanced as loans to landlords and taken by them as security for rent, a land tenure of this name came into being. Even after the fanam and the rupee superseded the kanam the tenure retained its old name in course of time the Kanam Tenure became one of the most difficult problems of Kerala history, and dominated its politics till its abolition in 1928. Thus the history of kanam is part of the political and economic history of Kerala. Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva are the four Vedas. But in the seventeenth century Islam became the Nalam Vedam (നാലാം വേദം) or the Fourth Veda in Kerala. In his old age, it is said, Cheraman Perumal became greatly worried for having received Kerala as a gift from the Brahmins. While it was a great merit to give gifts to Brahmins but to receive a gift from a Bramin was a great sin. He desired to wash off this sin. The Brahmins said that no expiation could be found in the six sastras and the three Vedas, and it was possible only in the Fourth Veda. (11) So Cheraman Perumal, says the Keralolpatti, partitioned Kerala among his kinsmen and relatives and went to the prophet to embrace Islam. The identification of Islam with the Fourth Veda reflects the attitude of the laity to the religion from Arabia in the seventeenth century when the Keralolpatti took shape. In those days the Hindus and Muslims lived not only as good neighbours on the most friendly terms, but also the former looked upon the religion of the latter as their Fourth Veda. Incidentally it also proves

11. Keralolpathi, p. 74.



that the Keralotpatti cannot be an abridgement of Tunjathu Ramanujan Ezhuthassan's Keralantakam or the Land of Kerala, as Ezhuthassan knew fully well that the Fourth Veda was the Atharva Veda.

The conclusions indicated above may be right or wrong. But there is no doubt a lot of history lies imbedded in our words – both in their origin and in the changes that have taken place in the connotation of some of them.



## **CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN KERALA FROM ANCIENT PERIOD TO MODERN AGE.**

1. Kerala consists of the westward or windward slopes of the Western Ghats, with their criss cross of shots, some of them even reaching to the sea, and narrow coast strip, 500 kilometres long with an average width of only 50 kilometres, intersected by numerous backwaters, rivers and canals. Neither the mountain slopes, dreaded for their torrential rains and summer fires and drought, nor the geologically recently formed coast strip, waterlogged and for the most part unwholesome, could not have been the cradle of the human race. Kerala could have been peopled only from outside. The existence of man in the submerged continent of Gondwana, which forms the bed of the Arabian Sea, had not yet been historically established. So the ancestors of the various peoples who have made Kerala a 'museum of races' must have come mostly from paradesa (Tamilnad) east of the Western Ghats.

2 The antiquity of man in paradesa goes to about 300,000 B. C. Till now no paleoliths have been discovered in Kerala, as they have been found in paradesa it is certain that future research will bring them to light. Till then the microliths recovered from Kozhikode (Calicut) and

the microlith workshop discovered near Cochin must remain the earliest evidence of man in Kerala. On account of their similarity with the Tinnevelley microliths Kerala microliths must also be assigned to the forth millennium (4000-3001) B. C.

3. It is not easy to assign definite chronological limits to the various stages in the history of culture and civilization in Kerala. It has to be a little arbitrary and tentative. The various periods in the history of Kerala culture are as follows:

1. Food Gathering and Nomadism Down to 3000 B. C
2. Beginnings of Civilization 3000-700 -do-
3. Dravidian Civilization 700-350 -do-
4. Influence of the North B.C. 350-500 A. D.
5. Reaction against Jainism and Buddhism 500-1000 -do-
6. The Namputiri Dictatorship 1000-1800 -do-
7. Influence of the West. 1800-1947 -do-
1. Food Gathering and Nomadism-Negritos (Down to 3000 B. C.)

4. The earliest man had only his hands (with perhaps claw like-nails), teeth and legs to protect himself against enemies and support himself with food. Distinguished from other animals by the gift of reasons with a constructive imagination and a purposive will, he began slowly to reinforce his bare hands with bones, sticks and stones found on the spot. Gradually they improved in quality and increased in quantity and variety. These first tools and implements made of wood and bone

have all disappeared, worn away by weather or eaten away by white ants. The Kādars of the Anamalais and the Neliampatis are believed to be the descendants of the people of this Age of Wood and Bone. The Ernadans of Nilambur retained till the beginning of this century some of the features of their earliest ancestors. They were eating roots, fruits and nuts, and also all sorts of vermin. They were very fond of the slow moving python, very fleshy and easy to catch and kill. The natural caves in which the laterite slopes abounded and hollows of trees served as rest houses and maternity wards in their wanderings from place to place in search of food. Living in small groups of ten to fifteen members they were nude, without any ideas of sex, incest, marriage and family. Like animals they must have at first expressed their ideas and emotions by different sounds, out of which gradually emerged a language which has survived in the Andamans and the Asiatic archipelago.

5. The Microlith people were far advanced in civilization than the Ernadans. The microliths provided points, heads and edges for digging sticks, arrows, darts and scrapers. Besides roots, fruits and nuts the food of the microlith people consisted of small game, reptiles, birds and fish which they could catch or kill. They ate them raw, being ignorant of making fire. As their tools and implements were too slender to cope with the fauna and flora of the mountain passes they could have come to Kerala only by the Aramboli route, round the Southern end of the Western

Ghats. They must have crossed the rivers at their source or by floats made of trunks of trees. It is quite possible that by scrapping off the trunks of trees charred by forest fire they had made some sort of a boat.

6. Short, dark, round-headed, broad-nosed with woolly-haired head, protruding jaws and prominent buttocks, these early peoples are known as Nigritos. Besides the Kadars and Ernadans, this group includes the Kurumpans, Mala-arayans, Malappantarams, Malappulayans, Malasans, Mutuvans, Ullattans, Eralis, Vetans, Cherumans and Pulayans

7. No great progress is possible without an assured food supply. Food supply can be assured only if it is produced. The Proto-Australoids and the Australoids, who began to appear round about 3000 B. C., were food producers as well as food gatherers.

## 2. Beginnings of Civilizations: Proto-Australoids and Australoids (3000-700 B. C.)

8. Short, dark and flatnosed like the Negritos, but also long headed and hairy in face and body the Proto-Australoids came from North Africa and Egypt, and the Australoids from the pacific regions. The Irulans, Karumpalans, Mala-arayans, Malakkans, (Malamuttans, Mala-panikkans), Malavetans, Mavilons Nattumalayans and Nayatis are included in their descendants. Absorbing the Negritos, they form the aborigines of Kerala.

9. Besides weapons made of wood and bone the new-comers had also the stone axe, which enabled them to hunt big game. They knew how to make fire. They cleared forests and cultivated rice, coconut, plantain pepper and betel. They even raised kitchen vegetables like brinjal and pumpkin. They reared cattle, and cooked their food over fire in pots scooped out of stone or made of clay. They tamed elephants and horses and maintained poultries and even pets like pigeons, parrots and peacocks. They grew cotton and silk cotton and made cloth for wear and beds and sofas for sleeping and sitting. Besides collecting honey, they made gur by boiling toddy.

10. They reckoned days according to the moon. They knew the use of numbers and perhaps also divination by numbers. They were adepts in sorcery and magic, and had an elaborate code of taboos.

11. The new economy—that of producing food as distinguished from its mere gathering—led to far reaching changes. The granaries, built as stores, expanded into residential houses, and nomadism gave way to settled habits, and communism to property. Working in the same field and living in the same house engendered priorities, preferences, and aversions and promiscuity gave way to companionship and marriage giving rise to parental and filial feelings. One of the important rites of marriage was the exchange of food by the bride and bridegroom, pointing to the origin of marriage and family in economics. And the need for permanent co-operation and alliance with neighbour groups led to notions of incest

exogamy and endogamy. It cannot be said whether these marriage unions were patrilocal or matrilocal. As there was very little wealth and safety lay in numbers, partition was not thought of and the problem of inheritance did not arise.

12. With the evolution of the family the attitude of the people to their dead became family-oriented. As the departed were believed to continue their life though unseen, with the same feelings and activities, the living kinsmen protected the dead body against carrion birds and animals by burying it, along with pots of water, liquor and rice, and a characteristic tool if a male, an ornament if a female and a toy if a child. They propitiated the deceased every year, generally during the annual festival, a representative stone being installed on the manram by the side of the images of the deities.

13. With the evolution of the family the attitude of the people to their dead became family-oriented. As the departed were believed to continue their life though unseen ancestral worship came into being.

14. Their pantheon also became family oriented. They worshipped one supreme father and mother, They believed that things moved and grew an account of a spirit residing in them. So they venerated animals and trees, rivers and waterfalls, the sun and the moon, thunder and lightning, in fact everything that attracted or frightened them. Nagas or serpents received special worship, every house having a serpent shrine.

15 They had no temples for their deities. On the open manram, or raised platform at the foot of the banyan or some other tree, where arranged the stones representing their deities and departed ancestors. Every year they celebrated a festival offering flowers, fruits, coconuts, liquor and rice and flesh cooked on the spot to these representative stone at the manram. It was followed by song and dance, in the course of which the unseen powers descended on the priest and conferred their blessings

16. Compared to the Negritos, the Australoids had more or less a well-developed language, which has been named Kolarian or Munda. Occasional visits of minstrels called Panans and danseuses called Viralis, of their own accord or engaged for marriage functions, served to enliven rural monotony. The regular setting and rising of the sun, the regular phases of the moon and the regular disappearance of vegetation in summer and its reappearance after the monsoon rains might have vaguely suggested what later on became the bedrock of Hindu philosophy, the cycle of death and rebirth.

### 3. The Dravidian civilization. (700-350 B. C.)

17 While the aboriginal society was slowly coming up on the basis of the family and a food producing economy the Tamils (corrupted into Dramila and Dravida) of the Eastern Mediterranean invaded South India round about 700 B. C. They came to settle in the land, not to levy tribute. With their weapons of iron it was easy for them to defeat the earlier inhabitants, who had only weapons



of stone. Among them, those who managed to flee to the hills saved their lives. Of the rest only virgins were spared, and they were reduced to slavery. It was as though a bit of Eastern Mediterranean was transplanted across the Arabian Sea along the South Indian coast with its language institution and culture.

18. Merchants and sea-farers, the new comers were highly civilized. The patrilineal family was the unit of society. Adult marriage was the rule. On account of the dowry system crosscousins in marriage was preferred, and uncle-niece marriage also resorted to, as a means of recovering what had been given away.

19. Society was divided according to occupations and professions. On account of their importance warriors occupied the top of the society. Bigger land owners and merchants intermarried with the governing classes. Learned men called Ayyar and Kizhar (literally old men) were respected by all.

20. Cereals, flesh and fish, cooked over fire, formed the staple food. The Tamils were familiar with irrigation, and land was cultivated with the help of slaves. With a keen eye for commerce, they developed every industry based upon the product of the three regions of hill, plain and sea. From the beginning their trade connection extended to the Mediterranean, and as time went on they extended it to the Bay of Bengal, reaching China and Strirajya (Melanesia), in the first century before Christ. From old habit as well as for greater

safety they lived in walled towns. They were fond of music and dancing, and the panans and the viralis were the first among the earliest inhabitants to win their favour.

21. However exclusive the conquerors might have been at the beginning, gradually they adopted some of the words, ideas and beliefs of the conquered. Their attitude to the dead in their original homes was one of indifference. They placed the dead in the family vaults, and their connection with them ended with the funeral feast. When the graves became over-crowded they were cleared for the newcomers. In course of time the Tamils accepted the ancestor worship of the conquered especially as a source of help in times of danger. The kings and nobles placed their dead or their excarnated remains in urns, and burying them, raised some monument like menhir, kudakkalu, or toppikkallu, over the graves, dolminoid cists called nannangadis becoming the fashion in the early centuries of the Christian era. Like the conquered the Tamils also believed in a supreme father and mother. Perhaps the association of Siva with the bull and the banyan tree, of Subramanya with the serpent and the peacock, of Krishna with the brahmani kite and basil (tulasi), or Kali with the lion and the tank tree, and of Ganapati with the elephant represents a fusion of Dravidian and pre-Dravidian ideas. It is quite possible also that South India owes the structural temple to the Dravidians. Human sacrifice and the practice of companionship in death of widows, friends and followers both found in Paradesa but quite unknown in Kerala, must have been brought by them.

#### 4. Influence of the North (B. C. 350-500 A. D.)

21. The growing composite Dravidian culture was considerably influenced by the arrival of the Brahmins by 350 B. C. and the Jain and Buddhist monks by 250 B. C. from the North. They brought new ideas and new norms and values. And the Tamil language was considerably enriched not only by corresponding words from Sanscrit, Parakrit and Pali, but also by a number of words in common parlance.

22. The influence of the Brahmins was more profound, extensive far-reaching and permanent than that of the Buddhists and Jains on account of their wide outlook and flexibility of approach. The kings and nobles appointed them as their priests and religious and even political advisers. They brought with them a clear notion of the samsarachakra or cycle of death and re-birth and the law of Karma. They reorganised society according to the principles of Varnasramadharma. The Ayyars and Kizhars were taken into the Brahmin caste through a religious function; Mazhavars or warriors and kings became Kshatriyas, Vellalas (or landowners) Vaniks (or merchants) and Nun-kalais (or artisans) Vaisyas, and unskilled labourers and descendants of emancipated slaves Sudras. Those who had fled to the hills were Avarnas or outside the Varnasramadharma. The Tamils gave up the Kalavu or secret romance before marriage, and adopted Manu's virgin marriage and prohibition of widow remarriage. But cross-cousin marriage and niece-uncle marriage were too

deeply rooted in economics to be changed, and, though horribly incestuous according to Manu, they were allowed by the Brahmins as local custom. As the Tamils and the Brahmins were patrilineal, inheritance did not become a problem.

23. The Brahmins introduced cremation for quick exorcism and assisted in the housing of exorcised remains in megalith. Believers in the Vedic revelation that Reality (God) is one and sages call Him by various names, they assimilated the Dravidian pantheon with theirs, and readily consecrated the image of Kannaki. And the Kannaki cult, spreading as far as Malwa in the north and Ceylon in the South, is still a force today in Kerala anticipating the present Ayyappan cult in enforcing strict discipline and prayer among its votaries for at least a few days in the year. Sanskrit became the language of worship, but the song and dance of the indigenous worship remained as an important ancillary.

24. One of the Kerala kings, named Palyanai, studied the vedic scripture, and another, named Senkuttuvan, entrusted the education of his son to the Brahmin Paranar. One and all, the Kerala princes were liberal patrons of poetry; one of them, Ilanko Adigal, wrote the earliest epic in Tamil, another, Aduktopattu Cheralatan, was a great dancer.

25. The Jains and Buddhists were popular among the lower classes. They taught their respective religions by parable story; and devoid of ritual and expense, these were also easy to practise.

26. In the first century of the Christian era took place three important events: the arrival of Roman merchants, in about 30 A.D., of St. Thomas in 52 A.D. and of the Jews in 68-70 A.D. Though the Romans have long ago been forgotten Cherukara Kuttatti and her daughter, Unniyadi, they were the cultural descendants of the Roman girls who were brought to the royal harem; and Roman athletes must have made their contribution to Kalarippayattu.

#### 5. Reaction against Jainism and Buddhism (A.D. 500-1000)

27. Jainism and Buddhism were however too cold, prosaic and boring to the South Indian genius, inclined to mysticism and ecstasy. And they would have naturally declined. It was precipitated by the iconoclasm of the Kalabhra Achutha Vikkanta (A.D. 525). In the reaction which it provoked Buddhism completely disappeared, and Jainism was mauled beyond recover. The Pallis and deities of the Buddhists and Jains were transformed into Hindu shrines and gods. In the Bhakti movement led by the Nayanars, or Saiva saints, and Azhvars, or Vaishnava saints, Cheraman Perumal Nayanar and Kulasekhar Azhavar of Kerala took an active part. And their songs have an important place in the canons of South Indian Saivism and Vaishnavism. Sankaracharya reformed worship, introduced Manasapuja or mental worship, without ritual, and gave a new orientation to Hindu philosophy and religion by his Vedanta and Shanmata or worship of six deities, Siva, Vishnu,

Ambal Ganapati, Subrahmanya and Surya respectively for wisdom, prosperity, power, strength, valour and splendour. Pilgrims from all over India began to come to Kerala to make their obeisance at the temples praised by the Nayanars and Azhavas, especially during the Mahamagha festival of Tirunavay, praised by Tirumangai Azhvar and Nammazhvar. On account of Savia saint Manikka-vachakar's son Tiruvempavai and Azhvar Anda's song Tiruppavai the Dhanu Tiruvatira became a national festival in South India including Kerala. Besides kings and nobles, common people began to make grants to temples for lamps and worships.

#### 6. The Nambutiri Dictatorship (A. D. 1000-1800).

28. In 988 A. D. the Cholas invaded Kerala with a view to its conquest. But the Keralites put up a stout resistance. And though in the midst of the war the ruling dynasty disappeared (some time about 1036 A. D.), the erstwhile feudatories, now became independent chiefs, succeeded in driving them out in 1120 A. D. The most important result of this protracted war was the cultural unity of South India came to an end. Culturally and politically Kerala separated from paradesa. It had already an era of its own called Kollam tonri andu. Now a separate language also began to emerge, and it came to be called Malayalam. In marked contrast to the highly centralised despotism of paradesa, Kerala was divided into a number of petty kingdoms and village republics.

29. Out of the strains and stresses of the war emerged a new society. The Brahmins came

to be called Nambutiris, though the word is first found associated with the fourth in succession from Ramanujacharya as Numburi Varada Lokacharya (I), Nampi being a common word in paradesa for a learned Brahmin. The Nambutiris exercised dictatorial powers. As learned men and priests they had been enjoying considerable influence. In the wars with the Cholas they took an active part and, commanders like Turumanasseri, Tinayancheri, Karuvayur and Kudamalur (Ampalapuzha) became independent chiefs. The younger sons went out to fight against the Cholas, the eldest son remaining at home to discharge the duties of the householder. Though there were long intervals of peace in the struggle with the Cholas there was no knowing when fighting would flare up and they would be summoned to the battle field. So they did not marry. For all religious purposes they remained Brahmachari consorting with the woman of the matrilineal flock who had now come into prominence. The progressive shortening of the fertility period in the female brought about the progressive extinction of the Nambutiri families and corresponding accumulation of wealth by the surviving reversioners. As learned men and priests, chiefs and landowners, and fathers' paternal uncles or cousins of the matrilineal folk the Nambutiris became supreme.

30. The matrilineal peoples of Kerala consisted of patrilineal families which have for some special reason adopted matriliney and the descendants of matrilineal tribes who had come from the north or from the islands in the west. If they had

come from the North they must have been descendants of the Aratta Vahikas of Mahabharata, if from the west they might have originally belonged to the Stirirajya of the Puranas and the Periplus of the first century A. C.

31. Thus by the thirteenth century Kerala society had become highly complicated. It was divided horizontally into two groups according to inheritance as patrilineal or and matrilineal, and vertically into hereditary castes. A meticulous regard for cleanliness had engendered also ideas of pollution by approach.

32. In spite of these handicaps, literature, arts and science made considerable progress during the social dictatorship of the Namputiris. Freed from all family pre-occupations, they could devote their whole attention to spiritual and intellectual pursuits. Temples became centre of spirituality and learning, and prompted arts and sciences relating to their architecture and worship, and calculated to enhance their sanctity. Temples like Guruvayur, Vaikom, Ettumanur and Triprayar became famous for their cure by prayer and bhajan. At the Pattattanam of Kozhikode Tali temple an annual pension of 101 fanams, now equivalent to 300 paras of paddy, was granted for life to the learned men selected every year by the Zamorin's Vidyat-sabha, consisting of his spiritual advisers and earlier recipients of.

33. The temple festivals with their Kuttus and Tullals, processions, shows, Vedic and literary contests, fireworks and stalls were of the highest



educative events? The now extinct twelve yearly Mahamagha did for Kerala what the Olympian and Pythian festivals did for Ancient Greece. The annual festival of Trikkakara gradually became the present national Onam festival with its subtle exhortation to the chiefs to rule the land like the ideal king Mahabali. It is the Kudiyaattam of the Chakkiyars, the Ashtapadiyaattam of the Vishnu temples, Krishnattam of Guruvayur and Ramanattam of Kottarakara that have together produced the famous Kathakali. Among the noteworthy contributions of the Namputiri dictatorship to culture are Dragganita or local astronomy, Mantravadam or healing by Mantras, and development of Ayurveda in relation to rheumatism and other ailments by message.

34. The Namputiris deserve special praise for fostering Sanskrit when it was being virtually starved out of existence in North India, for transforming war into a tournament conducted according to well-defined rules, especially for the protection of the non-combatants, and for elevating the matrilineal folk with whom they came into intimate contact. And without any contempt, pride or exclusiveness born of power, wealth, birth and learning, they recognised in Tunjattu Ramanujan Ezhuttachan, a prophet and seer, who like his Tamilnad namesake of the twelfth century, revived the Sarangati of the Azhvars, and like Kulasekhara Azhvar exhorted the people to surrender themselves to Rama or Krishna and obtain Moksha or deliverance at the end of this life itself. Rather than Ezhuttachan's formal and immediate disciples like

Suruanarayanan Ezhuttachan, it is the Namputiris, Puntanam, Antarjanam Kururamma, Kudallur Kunjikkavu and Vazhakkulam Vasudevan who carried his message to the people at large.

## 7. Influence of the West.

35. In A. D. 1498 the Portuguese landed at Calicut and Kerala was directly linked with Europe. They wanted to establish monopoly not by out-bidding their rivals but at the point of the pistol. The use of the fire-arms was another blow they inflicted upon Keralamaryada. They introduced indeed the printing press in A. D. 1577. It has not however been unmixed benefit. Though it helped to spread learning its ultimate effect was to reduce the importance of memory in education and make the teacher and the taught alike a slave to the notebook. The Dutch introduced the plantation system and raised the importance of the cash crops relatively to that of the food crops.

36 The British supremacy (1800-1947) brought about nothing less than a revolution. In 1834 they declared that the object of education should be a knowledge of western philosophy and science through the medium of the English language.

So Sanskrit gradually lost its importance, and along with it declined also the learning and culture based on it.

37. Under the influence of Western Nationalism everything that cannot stand the test of reason and offer concrete evidence in support, was gradually

discarded. The vast world of subjective experience, intuition and faith has been rejected, though by an Irony of History the very Science which has pooh-poohed it is now coming to recognise it (as the sixth sense telepathy, clair-voyance, psychokinesis, retro-cognition and precognition). Under the influence of western Materialism the fullness and richness of life are now held to consist in the multiplicity of wants and their fulfilment, and the crimes committed in their pursuit are explained away as due to frustration. Under the influence of western Individualism even the most cherished and warmest of human relationships is now held to be a matter of contract.

38. It has been rightly said that he who sows the wind will reap the whirlwind. The study of Western Philosophy and Science has now boomeranged against its own promoters. The history of England – the seventeenth century struggle against the king, the eighteenth century successful bid for Independence by the American colonies and the reforms effected through the Parliament engendered a desire for Independence and a Parliamentary Government on the English model. The age long indifference to politics and government disappeared, and the people became increasingly political-minded, intuitively through the pattini or fast, frequent in Kerala History for the redress

of political grievances. Mahatma Gandhi secured Independence and the English withdrew from India in 1947.

39. The problems created by Independence have not yet been solved. The culture of the future had not yet taken definite shape. The Economic which had brought the Family into existence is gone, and under the stress of the New Economics the Commune, bigger than the family and without its commandments and inhibitions may become the social unit of the future.



**Prof: MRS. MARY SAMUEL DAVID**

## THE OLD TESTAMENT AS HISTORY

"A noble book! All men's book! It is our first, oldest statement of the never-ending problem—man's destiny, and God's ways with him here on earth; and all in such free-flowing outlines—grand in its sincerity, in its simplicity and its epic melody." Thus spoke Carlyle moved by the grandeur of the Bible. This tribute is only one of the innumerable voices raised in loud chorus pronouncing the Bible as pure literature. The fiery eloquence of the Jeremiads, the exquisite lyrical beauty of the Song of Songs and the powerful drama of the Book of Job are some of the factors that have contributed to the abiding literary value of the Bible, and eminent writers have gone to the extent of calling the Bible "a Book worth all other books which were ever printed." The Bible's uniqueness is based on many reasons. It is the oldest of the books being read today. It is at once the most widely quoted and distributed as well as the most widely translated of all books. 'Almost every one in the world can find it at least parts of the Bible written in his own language...No other book can equal its record. In one single year, enough copies were distributed to average forty seven for every minute of every hour night and day.'<sup>1</sup> But the universality of the Bible or its literary value is readily conceded, the authenticity of the

1. The World Book Encyclopaedia

Bible and its acceptability as reliable source of history are questioned by many. There has been a strong tendency to dismiss the old Testament, especially the Pentateuch, or the first five books of the Bible, as pure myth. One of the most eloquent among the detractors of the Bible has been Assyriologist Friedrich Delitzsch who, in his book "Die Grosse Entauschung" (The Great Deception) has tried to establish that the Bible's record of early history was a fraud perpetrated on the Jewish people by their religious leaders after their return from Babylon in 537 B.C. But such charges are now swept away by an overwhelming sea of irrefutable evidence which establishes the Bible as "the story of the people who occupied a certain geographical territory who lived and died on it, who worked and worshipped here ..... and who left tangible evidence of their presence."2

Volumes would be required to describe how scientific enquiry has vindicated the remarkable accuracy of the Old Testament and proved that there is actual history at the back of all these narratives. This article attempts only to pick out a few of the 'legends' of the Old Testament and to show how geologists and archaeologists have forced the world to see these familiar stories in an altogether new light.

Oliver Wendel Holmes, the American poet once said, "The Spade ... has fed the tribes, of mankind. It has furnished them with water, coal, iron and

gold. And now it is giving them truth—historical truth.” It is this spade of archaeologists that has now exonerated the Bible and compelled the attention of the world to its marvellous historicity. As a result of the exciting archaeological activities carried on in Assyria, Egypt and Palestine a new insight into the Bible narratives has been obtained. The well preserved tombs of the Pharaohs of Egypt, the magnificent palaces of the Kings of Assyria, Babylon and Persia as well as the ruins of hundreds of cities and towns have yielded literally, tons of materials that prove the genuineness of the Bible. The decipherment of the Rosetta Stone in 1822 proved to be a major step in unearthing Bible history. This stone found by a French Officer in an excavation made at Fort St. Julien near Rosetta in the Nile delta has an inscription in three different languages; the hieroglyphic, the demotic and the Greek. It was an invaluable asset as it furnished the key whereby the Egyptian hieroglyphics could be unlocked. Twenty years after the decipherment of the Rosetta Stone, the Assyrian Cuneiform or wedge-shaped letters were decoded. Thus the way was open for a careful scrutiny of Bible narratives in the light of archaeological findings.

The date of composition of the Pentateuch and its authorship have been much debated. These five books are attributed to Moses and Bible scholars believe that the book of Genesis was compiled by Moses from very ancient documents, some of them going back to the Pre-Flood period. These documents together narrate the story



of the human race from the Creation, carried through the Flood and finally ending in the foundation of the nation of Israel, in the twelve sons of Jacob. The time of composition of Genesis is estimated to be 4026-1728 B. C., a fact which can raise eye-brows, for, it stands opposed to the popular belief that writing came much later. How were Moses and his predecessors able to write? Was not writing a later human development. This genuine doubt is dispelled by archaeological findings that prove man's ability to write from very early times. The well-known archaeologist Sir Charles Martson states; 'In Mesopotamia, Asia Minor, Egypt, Syria and Persia, excavators have been finding whole libraries of clay tablets, covered with writing in the cuneiform or wedge shaped characters and in other scripts.' 3 Sir Leonard Wolled's excavations on the Ur of site of the Chaldeans have resulted in irrefutable evidence that prompts him to declare that writing goes back to nearly 4,000 years B. C, Lending strong support to his view, another archaeologist writes "One of the most remarkable facts which has emerged from archaeological research is that the art of writing began in the earliest historical times known to man "4

None of the original Manuscript or handwritten copies of the Bible books are known to exist today. So it may well be asked, how do

3. 'The Bible is True' by Sir Charles Marston

4. 'New Discoveries in Babylonia about Genesis' by P. J. Wiseman - 1936.

we know that the extant copies are accurate and unchanged? The answer is found in the Hebrew tradition of preserving their scripture. A passage in the Old Testament serves to illuminate the case with which the scriptures were preserved and circulated and the scrupulousness with which copies were made of the original writings. A significant sentence in Deuteronomy enjoins the King of Israel to write "a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the Priests, the Eevites." This accuracy in the transmission of Hebrew scriptures has been borne out by the Dead Sea Scrolls discovered in 1947 in the Qumran caves situated Northwest of the Dead Sea, and described as 'the greatest find ever made in the field of Biblical archaeology and one of the greatest in any field.' Thanks to the continued efforts of Bedouins, archaeologists and governmental officials over a period of several years, hundreds of manuscripts have been uncovered. These scrolls cover all the books of the Hebrew Scriptures except Esther but the most beautifully preserved among these is the Isiah Scroll which scholars date as being one thousand years older than the oldest extant manuscript of the text of Isiah. What caused the greatest amazement among scholars is the fact that though ten centuries separate these two texts there was no difference at all between them excepting minor variation in spelling.

While archaeology has offered the world eloquent testimony to the antiquity of the Bible books and their accurate transmission, it has done not a little to raise many of the incidents of the Old

Testament from mere stories to trustworthy documents of historical events. The story of the flood told in Genesis 5 has generally been viewed as one of those legends of the Bible. Even those who accept the flood, do so only after reducing the global flood to a merely local one. To them it is inconceivable that the entire earth should have been submerged under water. Yet geologists have claimed that this could indeed have happened and that in fact it did. "If all the irregularities on the earth's surface were to be smoothed out, both above and below the water, so that there were no dens or holes anywhere no land would show at all. The ocean would cover the entire globe to a depth of 8,000 feet"<sup>6</sup>. Geology claims that the earth's surface was at one time smoother and more regular and that the Himalayas, the Alps and the Rocky mountains had not been pushed to such imposing stature as now. Sea-shells found on the highest mountains, and carcasses of tens of thousands of animals unearthed in the extremely cold north and identified to be those of types that do not normally live in cold regions are further geological evidence of the flood.

Those who refute the idea of the universal flood, will find it difficult to explain how the idea persisted in the imagination of all the peoples of the world and found its way into the folk-lore and traditions of diverse races and nationalities. The matter has been neatly summed up in the remarkable book "Target Earth." In the

5. Chapter 6 and 7

6. The Sea-Life Nature Library.

ordinary experience of man, floods are not of such great or of such widespread occurrence that he would generate a story of an overwhelming all exterminating flood — why then should practically all races of men have this legend of a great deluge? Why should people who lived far from the ocean in dry land country such as central Mexico or Central Asia have legend of a flood?

"If universal deluge had not been an actuality, then some races would have had their wicked ancestors being eliminated by awesome volcanic eruptions great blizzards, droughts. Thus the universality of the deluge story is one of the best arguments for its truth.

"Any of these legends, taken by itself might be brushed aside as the working of a vivid human imagination, but...taken together; from the world-wide aspect, they become well-nigh incontrovertible."

Archaeology has vindicated the Bible account of the Flood by unearthing ancient tablets in which repeated references are made to 'the flood', 'the age before the flood: 'the incriptions of the time before the flood'. etc. More than 17 centuries after the Flood, the Assyrian King Ashurbanipal, referred to as Aenapper in the Bible (Ezra 4:10) proudly claimed: "I had my joy in the reading of inscriptions on stone from time before the flood." If the flood he spoke of needed no further identification even after 17 centuries, it must have been no ordinary flood, but a universal catastrophe that he was speaking of.

Recent archaeological research has come upon remarkable finds that make the story of the Ark in which Noah and his family survived the flood acceptable. Here is a translation of the report that came in news papers on August 12, 1969: 7 "From the snow of Mt. Ararat in Eastern Turkey, the archaeological Research Foundation 'Search' has found certain pieces of wood that are 4000 years old and are believed to be the remnants of Noah's Ark.

... It was from a part of the mountain 14,000 ft. high that a group of six archaeologists led by the President of Search R. E. Grawford, discovered these pieces. In 1945 a piece of wood assembled by hand was obtained from there and it was this that prompted 'Search' to carry on exploration of the region. The pieces of timber are accepted by archaeologists to be the remnants of the Ark that Noah built." 7

Genesis Chapter XI tells us how, several years after the Flood, men in defiance of Al-mighty, God began the construction of a temple tower on the plain of Shinar, and how the task could not be completed as God punished the arrogant folk by splitting up their language into many tongues and by scattering them into diverse directions. But is the story of the tower of Babel merely a figment of somebody's imagination? Archaeologists say no, for they have located the site of the city of Babel in Mesopotamia and have come across the remains of several

such temple towers, any one of which could have been the Tower, though some scholars think that the traditional Tower of Babel is at Borsippa, ten miles from the centre of Babylon. George Smith, staff member of the British Museum, found an ancient tablet bearing this inscription relating to the collapse of such a tower or ziggurat. "The building of this temple offended the gods. In a night they threw down what had been built. They scattered them abroad, and made strange their speech. Their progress they impeded, .They wept hot tears for Babylon' a passage which is certainly reminiscent of the Bible story. Moreover historians writing of Babylon centuries later spoke of men of antiquity who 'built a huge tower, that they might ascend up to heaven. But God caused a wind to blow, and overthrew their design, and gave to each a different language, wherefore the city was called Babylon.' Even in the materials used for the building of the tower, the Bible's account is surprisingly accurate. They were made not of stones' says the Bible, but with burnt bricks, using bitumen or asphalt as mortar. Archaeologists have found remains of a number of such ziggurats in various stages of decay, and the oldest of these ziggurats, the one at Uruk was found to be built with clay, bricks and asphalt.

That a diversification of language occurred suddenly somewhere at this stage is the verdict of eminent scholars. An interesting aspect of the study of the origin of different languages within the human race which tallies with the Bible story is summed up by Sir Henry Rawlinson, Oriental

language scholar who writes: 'If we were to be guided by the mere intersection of linguistic paths, and independently of all reference to the reference to the scriptural records, we should still be led to fix on the plains of Shinar (in Mesopotamia) as the focus from which the various lines had radiated.'<sup>8</sup>

One of the grim scenes that the Old Testament abounds in is that of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Sulphur and fire rain upon these "cities of the Plain," while Lot and his family, obeying God's commandment flee from the dreadful scene. Lot's wife tarries just a little to cast a last lingering look upon the place and is at once turned into a pillar of salt. Is this account merely a Sunday School story apt to put the fear of the Lord into one or does it have any roots in reality? The answer is provided by a remarkable book entitled 'Exploration at Godom' where we read this illuminating account: "This region was found by the Geologists to be a burned-out region of oil and asphalt....Now wherever these conditions exist there is an accumulation of gases, and the geologists tell us that here at some time which they cannot exactly fix, these gases were ignited by some means also to them unknown, and there was a great explosion with first an upheaval, and then a subsidence of the strata. The character of the ruptured strata has also been determined, with most

8. The Historical Evidence' of the truth of the scripture Records

interesting conclusions. There is along the lower part of this plain, a great stratum of rock salt, which on the western side of the plain shows itself in that great salt mountain, now known as Jebel Usdum. At its base is a stratum of rock salt about one hundred and fifty feet thick. It is almost pure salt, but lies in layers of salt and falling down over them also, is a marl in which is much free sulphur, lumps of which we picked up along sea. When the explosion of gases took place, this stratum of salt mixed with sulphur was ruptured with the other strata, and the salt and sulphur carried up into the heavens red-hot, and so rained down upon Godom and Gomorrah and over the whole region, exactly as the scripture describes the rain of fire and brimstone from heaven. Mixed with salt and sulphur was also asphalt, heated to a high degree.... One of the refugees, like some of those at Pompeii carried too much and was caught in the descending deluge and incrustated with salt as indeed the mountain peaks nearby are to this day."9 It is believed that it was lightning that touched off the explosions, and early historians have given abundant testimony to the destruction. The Greek Geographer Strabo who wrote about the turn of the Christian era and the Jewish historian Josephus who lived in the first century A. D. have claimed to have witnessed the ruins of these cities, the area of which is now submerged beneath the slowly rising waters of the southern part of the Dead Sea. In recent

9. Explorations At Godom pp. 127-134 by M. G. Kyle.



years certain American divers were reported to have found extensive underwater remnants of the civilization that flourished and languished 4,000 years ago and of regions that were once fertile plains. 10

The last ten chapters of Genesis are devoted to one of the most charming stories of the Old Testament—that of Joseph and his life in Egypt. Egyptologists are now in possession of an amazing supply of artifacts that corroborate even the minutest of the details of the story. Potiphar, it is learnt, bears a genuine Egyptian name; Stewardships, such as that with which Joseph was entrusted appear frequently; dreams were a matter of intense interest; the title “the Chief of the bakers” has been found. On their birthdays Egyptian Kings were accustomed to grant amnesties; the magicians were among other things, entrusted with interpreting portants; shaving before appearing before Pharaoh was required.”<sup>11</sup> Archaeologists who studied the Egyptian records were puzzled by the fact that these records were completely silent about the exodus of the people of Israel from Egypt and the disaster that befell Pharaoh’s army that pursued the Israelites. This omission is explained satisfactorily by the fact that Egyptian records, being always positive and emphasizing the successes of the Pharaoh, never cared to

10. The New York Times, April 25, 1960

11. The New Schaaf - Herzog Encyclopaedia of Religious Knowledge 1958, vol.6. p. 231

mention his defeats and failures. It was even the practice, we are told of new Egyptian dynasties to erase from the earlier records anything they felt undesirable. Thus after the death of Queen Hatshepsut, Thutmose III had her name and figure chiselled out of a stone monument discovered at Deir-el-Bahri, Egypt.

A telling instance of the reliability of the Bible was the discovery of non-Biblical evidence regarding the Hitties, the descendants of Canaan. These people are mentioned 47 times in the Old Testament under the name of 'Hittitis' and 14 times under the name of their father 'Heth'.<sup>12</sup> But since the name never figured in any secular history of the period, their very existence was doubted. But in the first decade of the twentieth century a great deal of evidence poured in relation to the Hittites. A number of artificats of every sort including thousands of clay tablets written in Hittite cuneiform script and other languages of the day, were unearthed at the site of an ancient Hittite capital located about 90 miles east of Ankara. Innumerable are the instances of Old Testament names of places and persons being proved accurate by archaeological research.

A favourable line of attack used by the detractors of the Bible was that the Old Testament is full of names of kings who never existed and that therefore Bible history is nothing better than a myth. They based their reasoning on the fact that 47 monarchs apart from those of Israel and Judah mentioned in

12. Gen: 10-15-Joshua 33:1-9.

the Bible were not to be traced anywhere in similar histories. Hence, these names were relegated to the column of mythology. Then something disburbing happened. All these controversial kings rose from the dead in an archaeological resurrection. "In some cases a burial mound was uncovered, in others as annalistic tablet, a boundary marker or a building inscribed with the monarch's name. Now all 47 of these presumably fabulous characters have been transformed from the columns of 'mythology' to the accepted records of established history."13

Valuble archaeological finds like the Moabite Stone 14 and the clay cylinder know as King Sennacherib's Prism unearthed by the great English archaeologist. A. H. Layard while excavating the ruins of the Assyrian King's palace, also vindicate the surprising accuracy of the geographical locations mentioned in the Bible. It is this accuracy that prompted Dr. Zeleve Shremer, leader of a geological expedition in the Sinai Peninsula to state, "we have our own maps and geodetic survey plans of course, but where the Bible and maps are at odds, we opt for the Book". And one of the most successful Palestinian archaeologists admitted that he owed his success to "the amazing historical memory of the Bible."

Hundreds of instances can be cited of how the spade of archaeology has exonerated the Bible

13. Harry Rimmer-Dead Men tell tales, p. 22.

14. An Inscription discovered in 1868 by a German missionary F. A. Klein.

and vindicated its historicity. In all the fabulous mass of evidence unearthed, there is not one word, one testimony, or the fact that has contradicted or disproved a single line of the Bible. Cecil B. De Mille, the famous American motion-picture producer and director once said that every page of the Old Testament contains excellent drama. It is equally true that every page of it affords genuine historical material. Archaeology has not said its last word yet, but from what it has done, the Bible emerges as a unique book of history.



## HISTORY AS LITERATURE

An awareness of the past and an intense desire to recreate bit by bit long-forgotten times have always been the life-blood of civilisation. It is this awareness and this desire that bring history and literature together. Both are highly responsive to the romance of the past and both recognise the continuation of the past in the present. History is the result of the fascination that the past exercise over man; and why it entices the men of letters is best explained by Carlyle: 'consider all that lies in that one word Past ! what a pathetic, sacred, in every sense *Poetic* meaning is implied in it; a meaning growing ever the clearer the farther we recede in time—more of that same Past we have to look through! History after all is the true poetry. And reality, if rightly interpreted is grander than Fiction'. To be thus stimulated by the past and to reconstruct it faithfully one requires human warmth and sympathy, a gift that brings novelist, poet and historian together. It is not really surprising that Walter Scott and Victor Hugo wrote history of those eminent historians like Parkman, Prescott and Froude attempted writing novels. However Aristotle in his *Poetics* has discounted history on the ground that it merely recorded particular facts and did not, like drama, derive an illuminating general truth from a

consistent plot. But history has since been recognised to have a wider connotation than it had for Aristotle and historiography is now understood to mean more than compiling facts. A book of history comes into being when the myriads of facts are selected, arranged, described and narrated skilfully. Aristotle's dictum holds good for chronicles and what is upheld as history by the modern scientific historians to whom it is the law of the Medes and the Persians that strict objectivity should be observed in presenting facts. But other schools of history exist and the world has a treasury of historical writings by eminent men whose handling of the subject has caused them to be labelled as either Romantic historians or Philosophic historians. It is these works that have permanent literary appeal and have ranked with the gems in world literature. The works of Herodotus, Thucydides, Gibbon, Voltaire, Carlyle and Macaulay are just a few examples of these. These colossal works lie outside the narrow limits of the Aristotelean conception of history and have won for their authors immortality twice over, as writers and as historians.

It is with these telling words that the first of European histories begins: 'Herodotus of Halicarnassus here displays his researches, with the intent that things which have happened may not perish from among men by the lapse of time, and that great and marvellous deeds, some displayed by Greeks; others by barbarians, may not lack renown.' To the heap of tradition, legend

and history persisting among the Greeks, Herodotus brought a discipline. He controlled his vast subject matter with an expert hand and imposed a unity on subject that he handled. This genius, who broke the barrier to Greek historiography was hailed as 'the father of history', by Ciero. We might call him 'the father of European Prose' as well. His History is a highly readable hotch-potch of geographical descriptions, legends and stories for which he had a weakness. As if anticipating criticism for his unhistorical methods Herodotus writes in the second book: 'Upto this point my observation, judgement, and research have been speaking I am now going to utter Egyptian accounts base on hearsay; mingled with them will be something of my own observation.' With disarming candour and a surprising capacity for self-criticism, Herodotus confides in his readers "It is my duty to repeat what is said, but to believe unreservedly is not; this remark applies to all my work." Whatever deficiency History of Herodotus may have as history, it certainly remains a marvellous literary work that enchants readers by the beauty of its telling

With Thucydides a new type of historiography emerged – the critical history of contemporary affairs that had little use for legends and hearsay but relied entirely on observed facts. This prompted David Hume to say: "The first page of Thucydides is, in my opinion the commencement of real history." This man of the Peloponnesian War, the world's first ever war correspondent, had a keenly developed analytical faculty that enabled

him to probe deeply into the human passions underlying political actions. With its objectivity and intellectual clarity, Thucydides' 'History of the Peloponnesian War' combines great virtuosity of style. And later Greek historians strove hard to emulate the literary techniques of Thucydides, especially his rhetoric.

Roman history developed from the association of Greek saga with Italy, above all in the myth of Aeneas. While Cato stimulated the growth of Roman historiography, Cicero laid down the principles of rhetoric that were to govern the presentation of Roman history. Elegance of style was always regarded as the chief ingredient of Roman historical writing. The best example of this is Livy's history, a prose epic that is worthy of comparison with Virgil's Aeneid. This work that recounts Rome's triumph over Carthage makes use of the grand style appropriate to the greatness of its subject. It displays a brilliant use of the dramatic art and of the Ciceronian rhetoric, especially in speeches. The Annals of Tacitus enriches history by bringing to it style, rhetoric, biography, ethnography as well as tragical descriptions that lend dramatic colour to his interpretation of significant events. After this work throbbing with passion, Roman history has no masterpiece to offer. Genuine interest in the material is lacking and to this added the defect of weak presentation.

The decline in Roman historiography was due partly to the challenge of the Christian historians.



To these, history was interesting only in so far as it revealed God's control over events of this world. These historians had little use for colourful legends or pagan myths style did not matter to them either. The ecclesiastical history compiled by Eusebius, a scholar of the 4th century is the typical example of this dull and actual presentation of facts. The Christian writers' attitude to history is summed up by Socrates Scholasticus who declared. "I did not bother about majestic style, but noted down what I found in the written records or heard from reliable informants". Another writer of the period Sozomen has remarked "the historian must regard everything as secondary to truth." However in St. Augustine's City of God, a long and incredibly learned philosophy of history, we get all the literary and artistic touches worthy of the author of that truly great literary work, Confessions.

The dark ages are lit up by a few interesting works such as History of the Franks by Gregory of Tours, Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation by Bede and the Anglo Saxon Chronicles which owed its origin to King Alfred. The historical writings of the later middle ages were on the whole less interesting from the literary point of view, though Jean Froissart and Philippe de Commines have penned entertaining narratives of the Hundred Years War. But the greatest impetus to history was given by that literary giant of the Renaissance, Petrarch. Petrarch's visit to Rome was a profoundly moving experience. Magnificent Rome, with its ancient monuments and its sacred relics, its rich heritage and its majestic pagan ruins stirred his imagination.

The soul that had immortalised Laura in some of the world's greatest love poems now succumbed utterly to the charms of Rome which he equates with history. His rhetorical question, "what is history, but the glorification of ancient Rome?" riverted the attention of many a Renaissance historian to the "Grandeur that was Rome". The Italian Renaissance made a note-worthy contribution to the art of historiography and with men like Machiavelli drawn to the subject, history became a department of literature.

England, emerging from medieval modes of thought, witnessed a spate of historical writings that found their way into the literary repository of the nation. The most interesting among these is Holinghed's 'Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland,' a work that provided Marlowe and Shakespeare with not merely plays, but some of their best scenes as well. The religious and political ferment of Tudor times stimulated historical writing with strong literary appeal. Even Francis Bacon's masterly style was made to serve history, in his work *History of Henry VII*. Another versatile Elizabethan, Walter Raleigh wrote his *History of the World* while in the Tower of London. And Hakluyt rendered history fascinating when he enshrined in his work the adventures of Raleigh, Drake and others.

The 18th century was a marvellous time for historiography such colossal figures as Gibbon, Hume and Voltaire belong to this period. Each of these brought to history literary experience as

well as philosophic insight. Prodigious scholarship and elaborate research have gone into Gibbon's mammoth work. The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. Its literary richness is due partly to Gibbon's style and more so to that intense love which Gibbon felt for the subject from the moment he conceived the idea while "musing amidst the ruins of the Capital". Voltaire had at first scant respect for history. In one of his works *L'Ingenu* he says "History is nothing more than a picture of the Yorkists and Lancastrians, and many others, is much like reading the history of highway robbers". He was drawn into the writing of history when *Momo-du Chatelet*, the woman he loved, denounced history "as an old almanac". What does it matter to me," she argued "a French woman living on my estate, to know that Egil succeeded Haquin in Sweden, and that Ottoman was the son of Ortogrul..... I have never yet been able to finish any long history of our modern nations. I can see scarcely anything in them but confusion, a host of minute events without connection or sequence, a thousand battles which settled nothing. I renounce a study which overwhelms the mind without illuminating it." Voltaire pondered over her reasoning and arrived at the conclusion: "Only Philosophers should write history." This precept he soon followed up by practice, the result being his *Philosophy of History*, preceded by such preparatory studies as *History of Russia*, *History of Charles XII*, the Age of

Louis XIV and The Age of Louis XIII. Voltaire's approach to history was novel. "I wish to write a history not of wars, but of society, and to ascertain how men lived in the interior of their families, and what were the arts which they commonly cultivated. My object is the history of the human mind, and not a mere detail of petty facts; nor am I concerned with the history of great lords.... but I want to know what were the steps by which men passed from barbarism to civilization." And when this task was performed by a writer in whose fingers, as Anatole France noticed, "the pen runs and laughs", the result could not but be one of the most precious gems in world literature.

The 19th century witnessed an unprecedented flowering of history. This was the era of the Romantic historian. The novels of Sir Walter Scott and his imitators evoked a tremendous interest in the past. The Romantic school of historians under the influence of Scott exalted imagination as the key to history. The greatest of the continental historians belonging to this school was Jules Michelet whose *History of France*, despite its soundness of facts becomes at times almost visionary. In England the enthusiasm for the past stirred up by Scott and the Romantic poets, resulted in an avid demand for well-written history. The man who rose to meet this demand was Macaulay, statesman, poet, essayist, biographer and historian all rolled into one. More than any other writer Macaulay succeeded in making history

attractive to thousands of readers. The first two volumes of his eminently readable History of England from the Accession of James the Second were greeted with such fervour that thirteen thousand copies were sold in four months. Macaulay's cocksureness has been perhaps the chief point of criticism levelled against his work, but when we consider the staggeringly vast array of his facts, the inaccuracy that has slipped in may be overlooked. The qualities that enabled him to perform such an incredible feat were a passion for reading, a marvellous retentive memory, a wide range of knowledge and a faculty for vivid presentation. Every page of his work is imbued with that rare quality, that power of vitalizing the past, which compensates for minor defects.

Carlyle's excursions into history were prompted by reverence for the past. His *Past and Present strove* 'to penetrate...into a somewhat remote century...in hope of perhaps illustrating our own poor century thereby.' His desire to replace 'drum and trumpet' history by the story of the common man resulted in his highly coloured picture of the French Revolution, which evinces Carlyle's sympathy with the masses. His growing conviction that great men decide the fate of nations finds eloquent expression in *On Heroes and Hero Worship and the Heroic in History*. Though Carlyle's idealism of the past and his cult of the leader may not be acceptable to all, there is no denying the force of his apocalyptic style and the overwhelming sweep of his eloquence. While Carlyle dubbed the fact-loving antiquarian 'Dryasdust', he was also the greatest defender of the

historian's claim to literary greatness. With characteristic exaggeration he declared that the smallest real fact about the past of man which Dryasdust could unearth was "more poetical than all Shelley and more romantic than all Scott." The Romantic school responded to the view of the English historian R. G. Collingwood, that "the horizon of history had to be widened through a more sympathetic investigation of those past ages which the Enlightenment had treated as unenlightened or barbaric and left in obscurity." Hence the Romantics in England as well as their German and French counterparts, gave the world, history full of eloquent nostalgia. Professional historians viewed with a frown the attempts of poets and literary men to write history through a re-creation of old myths and the creation of old myths and the creation of new ones. The Romantics' claim was made articulate by Novalis, the leader of early German Romanticism, when he said that there is more truth in the poets' fairy tales "than in scholarly chronicles." Diligent researchers with their hands covered with the dust of archives raised their voice in vehement protest. The storm was not confined to Europe. In England it raged around Froude whose literary brilliance could not cover a multitude of sins resulting from his penchant for manipulating them to serve his own likes and dislikes.

Cleo, the Muse of history obviously love wars fought with the sword as well as those waged with the mightier pen. One of the most spirited battles is being fought between the

philosophic historians and the scientific historians. With Hegel and Marx insisting that history provided a philosophy of the world and with the German historian Leopold Von Ranke and his followers vehemently denying this, the controversy is a very serious one. Arnold Toynbee's conviction that comparative history on the grandest possible scale can and must be written led him to write his vast *Study of History* which propounds the laws of growth and decay that all civilizations follow. But his generalisation have been furiously attacked and his facts challenged by other historians. That in writing history the history needs some philosophical and ethical rules seems to be the view cherished by Bertrand Russel who, defending his *History of Civilisation* writes in his Autobiography; "I was sometimes accused by reviewers of writing not a true history but a biased account of the events that I arbitrarily chose to write of. But to my mind a man without a bias cannot write interesting history — if indeed such a man exists. I regarded it as mere humbug to pretend to lack of bias. Moreover, a book, like any other work should be held together by its point of view (Autobiography — Vol. II)

A controversy that is as much alive today as in the time of Froude and Macaulay is about the question whether imagination should be admitted into the writing of history. The battle is fought between those who hold that the best approach to historical truth is that of the artist with his power of divination, and those who fight for the scientific approach with its calipers

and micrometer. Francis Parkman, the most readable of all 19th century American historians has enunciated the stand of his school in these words: "Faithfulness to history involves far more than a research, however patient and scrupulous, into special facts. Such facts may be detailed with the most scrupulous minuteness, and yet the narrative taken as a whole, may be unmeaning or untrue." Theodore Roosevelt who had little sympathy for the arid precisians wrote that history is not good unless it is "a vivid and powerful presentation of scientific matter in literary form" The appeal of history is imaginative and hence imagination, an artistic quality need not hinder the presentation of facts in accurate form. On the other hand it can be a positive asset one without which the masses of facts will remain lifeless and drab and unmeaning. Without life there is no truth in history and without imagination no life. The want of imagination in most historians is lamented by Macaulay in one of his most famous passages; "A truly great historian would reclaim those materials which the novelist has appropriated. We should not then have to look for the wars and votes of the Puritans in Clarendon, and for their phraseology in 'Old Mortality' for one half of King James in Hume and the other half in 'The Fortunes of Nigel.'" Society would be shown from the highest to the lowest, from the throne of the legate to the chimney corner where the begging friar regaled himself. Palmers, minstrels, crusaders, the stately monastery with the good cheer in its refectory and the tournament with the herald and



ladies, the trumpets and the cloth of gold would give truth and life to the presentation.' G. M. Trevelyan, Macaulay's famous descendant rose to answer this call and to widen the scope of history by including within it the picture of the daily life of the inhabitants of the land in past ages. 'This includes,' says Trevelyan in the preface to his *English Social History* "the human as well as the economic relation of different classes to one another, the character of family and household life, the conditions of labour and of leisure, the attitude, of man to nature, the culture of each age as it arose out of these general conditions of life, and took overchanging forms in religion, literature and music, architecture, learning and thought." J. R. Greene who wrote '*A Short History of the English People*' without letting it sink into "a mere record of the butchery of men by their fellowmen" and the German historian Jacob Burckhardt, whose *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* by stressing the cultural achievements created a valuable form of history – Kulturgeschichte – have done a great deal to undermine the conception of history as a mere pile of facts and to bring it within the compass of literature. This activity is kept alive in France where a group of social historians are attempting to re-write the history of Europe by taking into account the history of nutrition, the evolution of concepts of childhood, and other long neglected aspects of cultural geography. If history is to be read with pleasure, it must be written in a lively style. This can give to narrative history the appeal

of a good story real told. A good style is an asset to the historian as it confers literary merit to his writing, and ensures its popularity. To elephantine pace of many a historian's prose has made it difficult for readers to relish history. It is the charming and facile style of H. G. Wells or of Jawaharlal Nehru that draws readers to their works from any other pedantic work on World History. "To represent historical episodes with a uniform dullness is, at least in part to misrepresent them. In fact, the historian who writes un-interestingly is to that extent a bad historian. He is professionally under obligation to describe, along with the ordinary, the most exciting events of the world's past and to recreate their atmosphere. If his account of a battle reads like a gunsmith's catalogue, if his tale of a hero's romance sounds like a license clerk's register, he is failing to reconstruct the proper atmosphere." 1 Good style coupled with imagination can make history-vibrant with life.

The twentieth century has made available to the historian innumerable sources and a bewildering heap of documents in print as well as in manuscripts. Unable to cope with such a frightening mass of materials single-handed, many historians now resort to collaboration which can sometimes ensure a happy fusion of scientific thoroughness with literary charm. Historians are now conscious of the need to write readable history and to banish from people's minds the idea that historiography

1. *Understanding History* by Louis Gottschalk, p. 14

is taking little bits out of a great many books which no one has ever read and putting them together into one book which no one will read."<sup>2</sup> What lends history its deepest interest is that it never remains in conventional ruts. It is never written once and for all, but has incessantly to be rewritten. It is never dead but is intensely, challengingly alive. And always its criterion is truth. It is these two aspects of history that bring it close to literature, for one of the best definitions so far given of literature, describes it as "that which carries truth alive to the hearts of men." How will the historian of today set about his task so that his work, important as history, becomes also abiding literature? He will in the first place avoid the laboured and unattractive style that several historical works suffer from. He will not insist on the myth that the historian should be neutral and totally detached, nor will he yield to the schizophrenic division of the humanist and the scientist in the historian; he will recapture the magic of the past and give life to it by the vividness of his imagination, but he will see that his artistic susceptibility does not smother his love of facts. His genius will not be 'all air and fire' but will consist of more earthly components. He will write the sort of history that no one could read without being moved and inspired. But by always keeping his eye on truth he will avoid that pitfall of unauthenticity and too much art which can give rise to the indictment: "History fades into mere literature".

2. Ibid, p. 24

## NINEVEH OF THE BIBLE

The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold  
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple  
and gold  
And the sheen of his spears was like stars  
on the sea,  
When the blue wave rolls rightly on deep  
Galilea.

Like the leaves of the forest, when summer  
is green,  
The host with their banners at sunset were  
seen;  
Like the leaves of the forest, when autumn  
hath blown,  
That host on the morrow lay withered and  
strown.

For the Angel of Death spread his wings on  
the blast,  
And breathed in the face of the foe as he  
passed;  
And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly  
and chill,  
And their hearts but once heaved, and for  
ever grew still.

This is Byron's famous rendering of an episode  
in the Old Testament, described in II Kings,

Chapter 19 and ,II Chronicles Chapter 33, an episode that appealed powerfully to Byron's imagination as it is the story of a cruel, blood-thirsty king who swooping down upon a small nation was destroyed by the wrath of God. However the story is not fictitious, The king was real and the incident has been recorded elsewhere in history. The mighty king was Sennacherib of Assyria who launched his fierce conquests from his magnificent capital Nineveh, the city of blood. This blood-smirched capital of the rapacious and ferocious Assyrian kings provoked the Bible prophets to utter the most dreadful predictions regarding its fate. Around the year 533 B. C. Nahum the prophet was inspired to pronounce the burden of Nineveh in which he foresaw the desolation of Nineveh.

Despite the prominent way in which Nineveh figured in the bible, scholars considered that the Nineveh of the Bible had never existed. That however was before the age of great archaeological discoveries. Towards the close of the sixteenth century Sir Anthony Shirley, visited the area and commented, "Nineveh that which God Himself calleth That great citie hath not one stone standing which may give memory of the being of a towne." Since the beginning of the nineteenth century the site of Nineveh has attracted various archaeologists of eminence who excavated parts of Nineveh and its suburbs. The first to survey and map Nineveh was C. J. Rich in 1820, a work later completed by Felix Jones and published by him in 1854. Since then excavations have been

undertaken intermittently but more than anyone else it is the great English archaeologist Sir Henry Layard who helped to unravel the past of Nineveh and to gather solid records to establish its history. His book *'Nineveh and Its Remains'* is a brilliant story of one of the great excavations in the history of archaeology. Regarding the excavations at this site he said in the course of a speech given in London in 1854. "But who could have believed that records themselves should have been found which, as to the minuteness of their details, and the wonderful accuracy of their statements should confirm almost word for word the very text of scriptures." Layard discovered the palace of Sennacherib and unearthed thousands of tablets inscribed in cuneiform from the great library of Ashurbanipal II. Other archaeologists like Hormuze Rassan and Campbell Thomson continued the work and the latter excavated the temple of Nebo on behalf of the British Museum and discovered the site of the palace of Ashurbanipal. Together these archaeological findings have rounded up the history of this bloody city whose colossal lions with human heads do justify prophet Nahum's description of it as 'a den of lions'.

The city of Nineveh like Calah (modern Nimrud) is said to have been built by Nimrod the ruthless king whom the Bible (Genesis X- 8-12) describes as the first on earth to be a mighty man. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord. More splendid than the early story of this city on the east bank of the Tigris was its history during that period of Assyrian splendour referred to as the

Sargonids,— the period of the last dynasty of Assyria which begins with Sargon II ( 722–705 ) a sequence of four extraordinarily powerful kings who raised the kingdom to its peaks. Sargon II who is mentioned in the Bible (Isaiah 20:1) was the first king of the last Assyrian dynasty. His palace was uncovered in 1843 at Khorsabad on a northern branch of the Tigris River, and much has been learned of Sargon's wars of expansion. It was during his time that the northern kingdom of Palestine became an Assyrian Province and the southern kingdom of Judah under king Hezekiah maintained its existence by paying history. Revolts in Syria were put down ruthlessly by Sargon and the Hittite and Armenian states were absorbed into the Assyrian empire. Even Babylon was taken in the 12th year of his reign and Sargon became the governor of Babylon. This fierce Assyrian ruler lost his life on a campaign in Iran in 705. His son Sennacherib succeeded him.

In many respects Sennacherib was different from his father. He left the capital Dur-Sharrukin (Sargon's fortress) that his father had built and resided first in Ashur and later in Nineveh where he built a magnificent palace. It was thus that Nineveh became the Capital of Assyria.

When Shennacherib had put down a revolt of the Babylonians, Hezekiah, king of Judah revolted. In 701 Sennacherib marched into Palestine where he conquered Lakhish and besieged Jerusalem. It was this siege which turned out to be a mighty disaster for the haughty Assyrian that

Byron has made the subject matter of his well-known poem 'The Destruction of Sennacherib', from which a few stanzas have already been quoted. The episode is recorded in several books of the Old Testament. The Bible version and the account of the siege given by Herodotus agree and both have kept the memory of how Sennacherib had to give up this siege because of the miraculous death of thousands of his men. In spite of the retreat of the Assyrian Hezekiah paid tribute and forestalled future invasion on his kingdom.

It is significant that a slanted version of his invasion of Judah appears in a remarkable archaeological find known as king Sennacherib's prism. Layard excavating the ruins of Sennacherib's great palace at Kuyunjik came upon innumerable clay cylinders on "prisms" which were yearly reports of events or annals of Sennacherib. The final edition of these annals, apparently made shortly before his death appears on what is known as the Taylor Prism preserved in the British Museum. An even finer copy is found on a prism that is preserved in the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. It is in these last annals that mention is made of Sennacherib's invasion of Judah. It reads: As for Hezekiah, the Jew, who did not submit to my yoke 46 of his strong walled cities, as well as the small cities in their neighbourhood, which were without number—by escalade and by bringing up siege engines, by attacking and storming on foot, by mines, tunnels and breaches, I besieged and took, 200, 150 people



great and small, male and female, horses, mules, asses, camels, cattle, and sheep, without number. I brought away from them and counted as spoil. Himself, like a caged bird, I shut up in Jerusalem, his royal city ... I added to the former tribute and laid upon him as their yearly payment a tax in the form of gifts... 30 talents of gold and 800 talents of silver ... and all kinds of valuable treasures." Sennacherib's version coincides with the Bible where Assyrian victories are concerned. As for this tribute imposed by Sennacherib upon Hezekiah, the Bible confirms the thirty talents of gold, but mentions only 300 talents of silver, Professor Olmstead in his book Assyrian Historiography throws light on the inflated version of Sennacherib's victory:... When Sennacherib tells us that he took from... Judah no less than 200, 150 prisoners and in spite of the fact that Jerusalem itself was not captured, we may deduct the 200,000 as a product of the exuberant fancy of the Assyrian scribe and accept the 150 as somewhere near the actual number captured and carried off." Sennacherib's annals offer no explanation as to why he did not capture Jerusalem. They state however that the king trustingly left for Assyria with only a "promise to pay" on Hezekiah's part. Professor Emeritus of Semitic Language, Ira M. Price thinks that "this order of events look like a screen to cover up something which he does not wish to mention". No mention is made at all of the wholesale loss of troops. "In view of the general note of boasting which pervades the inscriptions of the Assyrian king's...it is hardly to be expected

that Sennacherib would record such a defeat."

The disastrous siege Jerusalem of encouraged the Babylonians to rebel again. But in 689 Sennacherib conquered Babylon and laid waste the kingdom. For the rest of his reign Babylon remained a wasteland. The destruction of Babylon was deemed a sin and in 681 Sennacherib was killed by some of his sons.

For a long while archaeologists puzzled over two different versions of the murder of King Sennacherib. In II Kings Chapter 19 we read: "So Sennacherib King of Assyria departed, (from Judah after the disastrous siege of Jerusalem) and went and returned, and dwelt at Ninevah, And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword! and they escaped into the land of Armenia. And Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead." However the document known as the Babylonian chronicle unearthed by archaeologist stated that Sennacherib was killed by just one of his sons who had revolted. Berossus, Babylonian priest of the third century B. C. and Nabonidus, Babylonian king of the sixth century B. C give the same account, namely that Sennacherib was slain only by one of his sons. But a more recent archaeologist find, a fragment of the prism of Esarhaddon the son who succeeded Sennacherib it is stated in unmistakable terms that his "brothers" revolted and killed their father and then took flight.

Esarhaddon\* who succeeded Sennacherib extended the empire farther than any Assyrian king before him by conquering Egypt. Later, while he was on the way to Egypt to suppress a revolt he died. His successor was the remarkable king Ashurbanipal (669 – 630). He had an excellent education and was well – trained in war – fare and all manly sports.

Soon after the death of Ashurbanipal there was anarchy in Babylonia. In 612 Chaldeans and Medes attacked Nineveh. The city was looted and destroyed, never to be rebuilt again. Shortly after the fall of Nineveh in 612 Assyria ceased to exist.

It was during Sennacherib's reign that Nineveh reached the zenith of its glory. He made it a truly magnificent city. He laid out fresh streets and squares and built the famous "palace without a rival" the plan of which has been mostly recovered. The excavation laid bare about 80 rooms of the palace and almost two miles of sculptures. Its magnificent entrance was decorated with ten colossal winged bulls with human heads, the bulls being inscribed with the annals of six years of his reign. The inner surfaces of his palace walls once gleamed with facings of enamelled bricks, blue, orange and red. The floors were of marble inlaid with metal arabesques. On a palace wall Assyrian warriors are shown impaling prisoners and flaying them alive. Sennacherib is shown sitting on a throne with a long procession of captives advancing towards the king. An inscription reads. "Sennacherib, king of the world, kog in f the land of Ashur."

At the time the total area of Nineveh was about 1,800 acres. Fifteen great gates penetrated its defensive walls—18 canals brought water from the hills to Nineveh. Several sections of a magnificently constructed aqueduct have been discovered around this place. Another palace uncovered at Nineveh belonged to king Ashurbanipal. The king's royal library was a source of surprise and delight to the excavators. It contained thousands of clay tablets some of which the king had obtained from private sources. But the largest section consisted of copies he had made of originals scattered through-out all the provinces of his realm. Among the tablets found were the Babylonian accounts of the creation and of the Flood. The inscriptions on some tablets were so fine that a magnifying glass was required to read them. These tablets incorporate the ancient lore of Mesopotamia and deal with a wide range of subjects, literary, religious and administrative. Mathematics, botany and chemistry are among the subjects dealt with. Above all they provide a mass of information about the ancient world. One of the inscriptions shows the great interest king Ashurbanipal took in his library: 'I read the beautiful clay tablets from Sumer and the obscure Akkadian writing which is hard to master. I had my joy in the reading of inscriptions on stone from the time before the flood.'

Nineveh enriched itself by warfare and because of the ferocity and rapacity that reigned there it became the most feared city in the world. We

read in the Bible of the repentance of the Ninevite at the preaching of the prophet Jonah who was directed by God to preach there. But they relapsed again to their ways and during the reign of the last dynasty of kings, Nineveh reached the zenith of its cruelty and orgies. "Nineveh was impressed on the consciousness of mankind by little else than murder, plunder, suppression and the violation of the weak, by war and all manner of physical violence; by the deeds of a Sanguinary dynasty of rulers who held down the people by terror and who often were liquidated by rivals more ferocious than themselves."<sup>2</sup> The triumphant return of the Assyrian armies to Nineveh was an occasion that called for unspeakable cruelty. Captives were often led about by cords attached to hooks that pierced the nose or the lips. Sometimes prisoners were impaled or flayed alive.

This savagery existed side by side with indescribable splendour. Loot poured into the city and the innumerable shops of Nineveh were store-houses of the world's greatest treasures. Even the austere prophet Nahum declared: "There is no end to the store, an abundance of all sorts of valuable articles."

For all its ferocity the city of Nineveh was very religious and the kings paid homage to the pantheon of gods many of whom were imported from Babylon. A passage from the Annals of Ashurbanipal is worthy of note "By the command of Ashur, Sin, Shamash, Ramman, Bel Nabu, Ishtar

2. C. W. Ceram - Gods, Graves and Scholars.

of Nineveh, Nirib, Nergal and Nūsku. I entered the land of Mannai and marched through it victoriously. Its cities great and small, which were without number, as far as Izirtu; I captured, I destroyed, I devastated, I burned with fire." The priests of Nineveh were incessant formers of war as they were supported largely from the spoils of conquest.

The destruction of this ferocious city is the refrain of some of the prophets of the Old Testament. "Behold I am against thee Saith the Lord of hosts, and I will discover thy skirts upon thy face, and I will shew the nation thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame. And I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile, and will set thee as a gazingstock. And it shall come to pass that all they that look upon thee shall feel from thee, and say, Nineveh is laid waste: who will bemoan her?"<sup>3</sup> The same prophet predicted the "utter end of the place" and that is exactly what happened to Nineveh. So complete was its ruin that soon its very site was forgotten. Xenephon's Anabasis makes it clear that when this Greek historian passed Nineveh's site at the beginning of the century, it had so completely perished that its very name was lost in oblivion. Two centuries after the fall of the city Herodotus describes Tigris as "the river upon which the town of Nineveh formerly stood". Alexander the Great extending his empire must have marched over the ruins of Nineveh; his famous victory at Gaugamela was won almost in sight of Nineveh's ruins. Yet none of Alexander's historians except Arrian alludes to Nineveh. By about A. D. 150 the

Greek writer Lucian wrote that "not a trace of it remains". Thus was fulfilled the prophecy. "And he will stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy Assyria; and will make Nineveh a desolation, and dry like a wilderness. And flocks shall lie down in the midst of her, all the beasts of the nations; both the cormorant and the bittern shall lodge in the upper lintels of it: their voice shall sing in the windows: desolation shall be in the thresholds; for he shall uncover the cedar work. This is the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, I am and there is none beside me; how is she become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in!, everyone that passeth by her shall hiss and wag his hand."



## WAS IT A FANATICAL OUTBREAK ?

The Mappilla Revolts of Malabar have often been collectively summed up as the eruption of communal hatred and religious fanaticism. This view, however, is a case of over-simplification of facts, for the Mappilla Revolts sprang not from religious causes, but from factors far more complex and dee-rooted. They were the inevitable outcome of years of agrarian problems that murtured poignant distress among a vast section of the community of Malabar; they were also intimately interwoven with the political unrest and the patriotic aspirations that were sweeping the people of India at a turbulent period of her history.

With the implementation of agrarian policy of the Company's government in Malabar, following the Treaty of Seringapatam in 1792, the foundation was laid for disaster. Failing to comprehend the system of land tenure then prevalent in Malabar, the English effected a rearrangement of the system in imitation of the fuedal system of Europe.<sup>1</sup> This was the root cause of all subsequent troubles in Malabar.

It was with the establishment of the Mysorean rule in Malabar that the system of land Survey

1. Special Commisloner's Report 1881, p. 161



and revenue was introduced. 2 The Namboodiris who enjoyed the ownership of land without paying anything towards land revenue felt aggrieved on the Mysorean reforms. Therefore they sold out their properties to the Mappillas, who thus came, into possession of the land. 3 The Mappillas who readily remitted the required land – tax to the Government, found themselves perfectly satisfied with the agrarian settlement made by the Mysoreans.

The Treaty of Seringapatam, however, changed the situation. The English erroneously equating the Jenmi with the actual owner of the land conferred upon him certain inalienable rights of ownership.<sup>4</sup> This extraordinary turn of circumstances coupled with the removal of the Mysoreans from Malabar, quickly prompted the return of the landlords to Malabar.<sup>5</sup> Hence from Travancore the descendants of those Jenmis who had turned their backs on the Malabar of the Mysoreans now came claiming rights which their fathers had never enjoyed. For they now came as the actual owners of the land, who could demand as their right a far greater share of the land's produce than was hitherto prescribed.<sup>6</sup>

2. Report of the Joint Commissioners of Malabar 1972, p. 150
3. Minutes of Sir John Shore on the Report of the Joint Commissioners, pp. 9-10
4. Major Walker - Report on the land Tenures of Malabar 1801, p. 9
5. Logan - Malabar Manual, Vol. I, p. 680
6. C. A. Innes - Malabar Gazetteer Vol. I, p. 73

For the Mappillas of Malabar" this 'sudden reversal of fortune wae devastating. They were at one stroke deprived of the land in their possession, and exposed to the mercy of the Namboodiri and Nair landlords who exploited the situation fully. All at one deep antagonism-marked the agrarian set up of Malabar and bitterness crept in between the Jenmis and the peasants.<sup>7</sup> Since the former were Namboodiris and Nairs and the latter almost always Mappillas, the peasant-landlord conflict inevitably became a clash between the Caste Hindus and the Mappillas.

This neat division of the community of Malabar into the caste Hindu Jenmis and the Mappilla peasants suggested to the English the possibility of trying in Malabar, the celebrated policy of divide and rule.<sup>8</sup> The English were on the side of the Jenmis, not merely because they believed them to be the real owners of the land, but also because they were more inclined to trust the loyalty of the Namboodiris than that of the Mappillas. In fact, the British assumed that the Mappillas of Malabar could not be loyal to the English who had terminated the Mysorean rule in Malabar and hence they viewed the entire community with suspicion. While under the Mysorean rule, the Mappillas of Malabar were loyal supporters of the government, and the Nairs and Namboodiris were looked upon as rebels, the tables were turned

7. Joint Commissioner's Report 1792, p. 845

8. J. W. Wye - Report on the Southern division of Malabar' 1801, p. 15

when the British took up the reins of authority in Malabar. For now the Nairs and Namboodiris were with the government and the Mappillas were cast in the role of disloyal rebels.<sup>9</sup>

The constant tension within the agrarian system which often led to violent revolts, opened the eyes of the British to the need for conducting an enquiry into the matter. In 1852, a one – man commission was appointed to look into the complicated agrarian question. The English officer, Strange, on whom rested this responsibility, submitted in the same year, his Report on the relation between the landlord and tenants.

Strange who was the perfect example of the bureaucrat, placed before the government his view that of the 31 revolts that had till then taken place only seven were agrarian and that the rest were all politically motivated.<sup>10</sup> He recommended stern action on the part of the government and rigorous measures of suppression.

The government lost no time in acting upon the recommendations of Strange. Collector Conolly ordered a thorough search of the entire place with a view to disarming the Mappillas of fire – arms and swords and whatever weapons they might have had in their possession.<sup>11</sup> Not satisfied with

9. C. A. Innes - Malabar Gazetteer p. 73

10. Thomas Launsde Stange - Correspondence regarding the relation of landlord and tenant in Malabar 1852, p. 8

11. Logan, Vol. I, p. 572.

these measures, the Collector advised the Madras government to enact the Mappilla Outrages Act. These Acts thus introduced served as an effective measure in reducing the power of the Mappillas.<sup>12</sup>

The smouldering indignation and rage of the Mappillas resulted in intense preparations for an armed revolt. The government received news to the effect that nearly twelve thousand Mappillas had rallied under the leadership of their religious head Syed Fazal, and that they were ready for a violent confrontation with the authorities.<sup>13</sup> The English at once met the crisis by transporting Fazal and his family to Arabia.<sup>14</sup> A few months later Collector Conolly was assassinated.<sup>15</sup>

Agrarian wrong and governmental suppression very often drove the Mappilla peasants to raise the flag of revolt. When this became a common occurrence the Government decided to probe into the tangled situation and to bring to light the real causes behind the determined agitations of the Mappillas. Thus W. Logan was appointed as a Special Commission. He set to work methodically and diligently enquired into the causes of the frequent outbursts. He traced the trouble all the way back to the root cause of the agrarian settlement of the English in Malabar. Logan was the first to realise and also to expose the grievous mistake committed by the English

12. Vide Mappillah Outrages Acts XXIII, CXIV, of 1854

Act XX of 1854.

13. Mappillah Outrages 1849—59. Vol. II, p. 117

14. Ibid, p. 217, Logan, Vol. I, p. 568.

15. Logan, Vol. I, p. 573.

regarding the settlement of land-tenure in Malabar consequent on their misunderstanding of the meaning of words like 'Jenmam, Kanam,' etc. 16. And the Report that Logan submitted in 1881 remains a comprehensive study of the land tenures of Malabar. He was able to lay his finger on the exact source of the unrest and revolts were the outcome of the agrarian tangle that the English had brought about in Malabar.

But with all its honest effort and painstaking enquiry, the Report of Logan remained an ineffective document. It did little to change the agrarian system, the evils of which continued unabated. Though certain provisions were made for protecting the interest of the peasants, these were by no means proportionate to the injury done to them earlier, nor adequate enough to ameliorate their lot. The evil that had set in, in the system of land tenure was retained.

Naturally the feeling of discontent grew. Intermittent outbursts took place, though they were of varying intensity. These revolts were staged mostly against the English and whenever there was murder or violence, the English were the victims. Sometimes the uprising was levelled against the jenmis. In both cases the British labelled the insurgence as a fanatical outburst born of religious bigotry and narrow-mindedness. But the fact was that the Mappillas were consistent in their uncompromising stand against the English both as tenants and as Mappillas. In

both Capacities their position had deteriorated under the British rule.<sup>17</sup> The Mappilla felt that not only his land and his property, but even his faith was being threatened. E. M. S. throws light on the complexity of the situation when he writes.

"Since the agrarian and economic policies that the British introduced in Malabar after the defeat of Tipu were evolved in consultation with the envoy of the Maharajah of Travancore and with the Hindu landlords who had sought assylum in Travancore, the Muslims got very little land and hardly any place in the administration. As a result of this, there developed in their mind a strong antagonism against the British and also against the Hindu who supported the administration.

"The conviction that it is the sacred duty of every Muslim to become a martyr, 'Shahid' in safeguarding his faith and in restoring the legitimate rights of the community, grew among the people."<sup>18</sup>

Giving impetus to the strong anti-British feeling in Malabar, came the wave of national sentiment felt all over India. The strong protest registered all over India against the Rowlat Act and the shudder that the Jalianwalah Bagh incident sent down the spine of the nation served to

17. E. M. S. Kerala Malayalikalude Jenmabhoomi, p. 363

18. B. M. S — Keralam Malayalikalude Janmabhoomi' p. 363.

intensify the uncompromising opposition that the Mappillas of Malabar had launched against the British rule. The First World War served to widen the gulf between the government and the Mappillas who, under allegiance to the Caliph trembled for the fate of the Caliphate and the safety of the various places of pilgrimage. The Indian Muslims made their fears articulate and demanded the solemn pledge from the English, to the effect that whether the war ended in victory or defeat for the Allies, the English would leave the holy places unmolested<sup>19</sup>. The British pacified the Muslims by assuring them that they were fighting only against Turkey, not against the Caliphate and that the sanctity of all the places of pilgrimage would be safeguarded. This promise eased the anxiety of the Muslims, but the end of the war saw a flagrant violation of this promise. For, the defeat of the Axis powers was followed by the division of the holy places.

This breaking of the plighted troth was looked upon as a terrible betrayal towards the Muslims of India and it fanned the flames of anti-British fury already raging in Malabar. It was at this crisis that Muslim leaders as well as leaders of the Indian National Congress worked arm in arm for the expulsion of the English from the Indian soil and for the establishment of a free India which they both envisaged. Historians who have studied the great Mappilla Revolt of 1921 have pointed out that the Hindu-Muslim amity and

19. K. P. Kesava Menon — Kazhinjakalam pp. 90, 91.

joint-endeavour were the most striking feature of the momentous times. 20 'Many prominent men in Kerala came forward to implement the resolution taken at the Nagpur Conference, by establishing Khilafat Congress Committees in every village. In a short time a Khilafat Committee was formed at Calicut with Kunjikoya Tangal as the President, and Hussan Koya, U. Gopala Menon, and Sri. Melakkani Moydaen as secretaries.' 21

The purpose of the movement was to propagate the underlying principles of Non-co-operation by organising public meetings in all villages. Consequently, in all a brief span of time thousands of public meetings were held in Malabar and hundreds of Committees were formed enrolling tens of thousands of people as members. 22

A unique feature of the time that lent extraordinary power to the anti-British agitation was the confluence of the Khilafat and the Congress with the revolt of the long-oppressed tenants. 'The Khilafat Congress-Tenants-Conferences were marked by fiery speeches that roused the spirit of the Mappillas who were at once tenants, devoted Muslims and sworn enemies of British Imperialism.' 23 Gandhiji's visit to Malabar in 1920

20. Barrister A. K. Pillai — Kerala and Congresses, pp. 424 — 25.

21. K. Koyatti Moulavi — Malabar revolt pp. 3—4.

22. Koyatti Moulavi - Malabar Revolt p. 9

23. Barrister A. K. Pillai op. cit. p. 416

Ibid, pp. 429-30



strengthened the amity and singleness of purpose existing in the place and the Congress-Khilafat Committees were actually the symbols of Hindu-Muslim unity. The most eloquent expressions of this amity were the speeches made at Ottappalam from the same platform.<sup>24</sup>

This singular co-operation between the Hindus and the Muslims, posed a great threat to the authorities. Alarmed, they resorted to the use of force in suppressing the agitation that was rapidly gaining momentum. Anti-Khilafat Conferences were convened and violence was let loose wherever Khilafat conferences were held. The congress cap became a very much hated object and they ruthlessly vented their fury on people who were found in Gandhi Caps.<sup>25</sup> In February 1921, Yakub Hussain, the leader of the non-cooperation movement visited Malabar for Khilafat propaganda. But he was served with a prohibitory order which he violated along with U. Gopala Menon, K. Madhavan Nair and Moydeen Koya who were the local Khilafat leaders. All of them were arrested and sentenced to six months imprisonment.<sup>26</sup>

On August 17, 1921, exactly six months after the sentence of Yakub Hassan, and Madhavan Nair, U. Gopala Menon and Moydeen Koya, a mammoth meeting was held on the beach of Calicut. It was a remarkable display of the

24. Tottenham - Mappilla Rebellion 1921 - 22. pp. 5 - 6

25. Koyatti Moulavi - op. ci. p. 24

26. K. P. Kesava Menon, Kazhiniakalam p. 115

unity of the people of Malabar which confirmed the worst fear of the authorities. They launched at once a policy of force. People were beaten up at Thirurangadi, Pukkottur and Ottappalam. The glowing embers of trouble burst into a wild conflagration on the 20th of August when the District Magistrate along with a police retinue arrived at Thirurangadi and effected a night search in the mosque there. Some volunteers were arrested. Next morning dawned with all kinds of alarming news. The anxious crowd that gathered from different parts of Malabar became the sad victims of a brutal attack from the authorities.<sup>27</sup> They opened fire, thus unleashing all the pent-up fury of the people which now raged in an open revolt.

Much havoc was wrought by this confrontation between the Mappillas and the Government. On both sides, the revolt caused heavy loss. But the way in which the British retaliated was brutal. The wagon incident of November 10 is one of the most gruesome stories of barbarous cruelty ever perpetrated by man. The Police led nearly hundred rebels to the Tirur railway station from where they were transported to Coimbatore, packed in the compartment of goods - train which let in neither light nor air. <sup>28</sup> By the time the train reached Pothannur, 64 of these unfortunate prisoners had died of suffocation and the rest were at the point of death. Two or three Hindus were among the

27. K. Koyatti Moulavi, *op. cit*, p. 24

28. K. P. Kesava Menon, *Kazhinja Kalam* p 115

dead. 29 At least 10 thousand Mappillas lost their lives in the revolt and nearly 14 thousand were arrested and court – martialled. 30.

Perhaps the greatest harm that the English did to the rebels was to attribute their revolt to religious fanaticism. The story that the Mappilla revolt was one born out of communal hatred and religious intolerance was assiduously spread. "It is quite true that at a certain stage the revolt, as we have seen was utterly free from communal feeling or religious bigotry. But gradually the Hindus went over to the side of the authorities. So if they were looked upon as enemies by the insurgents, it does not mean that the latter were swayed by communalism or religious fanaticism." 31 In fact there is evidence to prove that the Mappilla leaders took great care to protect the life and property of Hindus. During the anarchic conditions prevalent in the country Kunju Mohamed Haji enforced certain special rules and code of behaviour for the Mappillas. "Hindus are not to be molested nor is their property to be looted. There should not be any forcible conversion. Those who violate these rules will be severely punished." 32 Several cases of aristocratic Hindu family being safeguarded by the Mappilla sentries posted by Ali Musaliar have been brought to light. Kapparatt

29. K. P. Kesava Menon, *Kazhinaja Kalam*, p, 116

30. K. Koyatti Moulavi, *Op. cit.* p. 114

31. Madhava Menon, Preface to the book by Koyattil Moulavi

32. Koyatti Moulavi, *Malabar Revolt, 1921*, p. 42.

House at Thirurangadi. Puzhickal House at Nannambra, and the House of Kuttippuram Panicker.<sup>33</sup> are among the notable Hindu houses that were closely guarded at the order of the Muslim leaders. If the revolt is characterised as fanatical outbreak it can be applicable only in the sense that the fanaticism was in fighting out the English from Malabar. Certainly it is a great injustice to brand this national upsurge as a religious outbreak. We cannot ignore the fact that thousands of human souls sacrificed their lives with courage showing fortitude even at the gallows. One glaring point that has to be reckoned with is that they laid their lives fighting against the foreign government. The historians of Kerala should be ashamed of their attitude in feigning ignorance of this brutal massacre of thousands by a colonial imperialist government on the plea of fanatical outbreak. It shows that our present day writers are more communal and fanatical than those illiterate human souls who at least fought and died, whether it be for religion or politics.

That the Mappilla Revolt was not communal is the testimony given by a host of writers.<sup>34</sup> The Committee consisting of Dr. Ansari and Vittalbai Patel, appointed by Indian National Congress reported that the revolt was not a communal uprising and that all rumours to that effect were utterly false. The verdict of the

33. Ibid. p. 42.

34. See the books of Barrister A. K. Pillai, K. P. Kesava Menon, Brahmadathan Namboothiri, E. M. S., Koyattil Moulavi and others

special court convened at Calicut to conduct the trial of Ali Musaliar and his 37 followers was as follows: "It was not mere fanaticism, it was not destitution that worked on the minds of Ali Musliar and his followers. The evidence conclusively shows that it was the influence of the Khilafat and non-cooperation movements that drove them to their crime."<sup>35</sup> It continues that "their aim, though born out of foolishness was to uproot the British government and in its place set up a Khilafat rule."<sup>36</sup>

The revolt, however, brought about a rupture in the relationship between the Hindus and the Muslims. Hindu Muslim amity which was the foundation for the Khilafat Movement was shaken. It was also felt that the Congress which absolved itself of all blame in this matter had betrayed the bond that had hitherto existed between the Khilafat and the Congress. For in no way was the Mappilla revolt of 1921 different from the riot of Chauri Chaura in Punjab. Like the latter the Mappilla Revolt too was a part of the independence struggle and was the flaring up of political aspirations. It was yet another instance of man's passionate love of liberty conquering fear of death and triumphing over the weapons of tyranny.

35. P. B. Evans - Note on the Rebellion - Tottenham - Mappilla Rebellion 1921, p. 42

36. Jbid, p. 43

## HISTORICAL NOVEL

Of all literary forms it is the novel that has the closest relation with history. Other forms may make use of historical themes or celebrate certain historical events and exalt historical personalities as in Shakespeare's historical plays or Tennyson's *Charge of the Light Brigade* or W. B. Yeats 'Easter 1916'. But the novel's relation to history is something special. The Oxford English Dictionary defines the novel as 'a fictitious prose narrative or tale of considerable length in which characters and actions representative of the real life of past or present times are portrayed in a plot of more or less complexity. Thus the novel, though essentially a fictitious literary form has yet its subjects taken from actual events. The romance is also a fictional narrative, but it is different from the novel proper and has very little to do with history as Henry James has pointed it: "Our sense of the way things happen is not involved in the romance which may be dealing 'in magic or at least has characters who are in some degree emancipated from the necessities of time and space and social circumstances. The novel is bound by the laws of every day probability as no other form is. Its subjects are taken from actual events and its narrative methods typically attempt to create an air of literal truth." The novel's pretence at literal authenticity is kept up by the medium of prose which the novel invariably uses, for

prose is also the medium of common speech. The novel belongs to a much later period in human history than the epic or heroic poetry. By the time the novel came into being, people had begun to discriminate between fact and fiction and the novelist claims for his fiction the authenticity of fact. It was with this idea of creating an impression of authenticity that many early novelists wrote their novels in the form of letters. Characters in a novel as the definition makes clear are not usually outside the usual dimension of common life. Their actions are the usual actions of men and women and the credibility of these actions is enhanced by the minute description of the environment. The novel gives a steady attention to the surface of things, houses, goods, appearances, daily life, ordinary conversations. All this makes the novel rooted in actual life and hence inseparably bound to history.

A novel is set in a particular place and in a particular moment of time — Moscow in 1812 or London in the beginning of the twentieth century or India under British Raj. These settings are not merely incidental; they are a vital part of the substance of the work. Shakespeare's 'Merchant of Venice' does not involve a commitment to a particular geographical or historical reality. Venice could be replaced by any other place and the play would not in any way suffer because of that. Time is also indeterminate here. But when Alexander Dumas sets his novels in Paris of Louis XIV or Margaret Mitchell chooses to tell the story of the American South in the

days of the Civil War, they are committing themselves to representing a verifiable external reality. All novelists are obsessed with life in time. In many great novels that depict human beings, changing, developing and decaying time plays a pre-dominant part. Time has been said to be the real hero of novels like 'The Old Wives Tale' by Arnold Bennet. Even "War and Peace" conveys this impression of the effect of time and the waxing and waning of a generation. A few novelists have tried to circumvent this tyranny of time over the novel and the rebel Gertrude Stein went to the extent of trying to abolish time. As E. M. Forster puts it she 'smashed and pulverized her clock' in an attempt to emancipate fiction from its subservience to Time, and to express in it the life by values only. But this attempt though praise-worthy was doomed to failure; for as soon as fiction is completely delivered from time it cannot express anything at all. All this points to the essentially historical nature of the novel.

The term 'historical novel' however is used in a restricted sense to indicate that category of fiction which deals with actual events in a definite period of the past and involves men and women who actually lived and were a part of history. In this sense the works of Fielding and Jane Austin are not historical novels, but they too serve as very reliable documents of the social and economic set up of the times they represent. Reading these novels can be a great



help to the student of history and the enjoyment the novels afford can be enhanced by a good knowledge of history. In this way history and fiction are very much interrelated and complementary.

But what about the novels that are avowedly and recognizably historical? What do they attempt to do? What are the problems that a novelist of this type has to deal with? It has often been asked if the historical novel is a modern invention. The credit for being the first really great historical novelist goes to Sir Walter Scott. He has displayed such brilliance and supremacy in this field that he may legitimately be thought of as its inventor. Close behind him we may rank Victor Hugo and Alexander Dumas. But it may be argued that the species goes back more than two thousand years to Xenophon. His work "Cyropaedia" a political romance based on the history of Cyrus, the founder of the Persian monarchy, is the nearest approach to the historical novel that classical literature affords. One reason for the relatively late origin of the historical novel could have been the very vague limit which was for long drawn between history and fiction. It was only when these two were carefully kept apart that the historical novel could have any justification for existing. It was the rational 18th century that first enforced the boundary between history and fiction. Before systematic historical criticism came into existence, what passed for history could very well be labelled historical novel. Pliny declared that all the world's historians down to his own

time were but 'narrators of fables' and his opinion was supported by many who extended the compliment to Pliny himself. Lord Wolsely entered Macaulay's History among the works of fiction which he was accustomed to carry for light reading on campaign. It is even said among historians that the whole works of Tacitus are a bold forgery of the Renaissance. If this is true the great Roman historian would be relegated to the position of the authors of 'Quo Vadis' and 'Salambo'. In the Middle Ages, also history and fiction were much allied and 'a thin partition did them divide'. In all medieval writings prose or verse, chronicle or history, fact and fiction were mixed together consciously or unconsciously in an inseparable fusion.

With the scientific approach to historiography when historians were compelled to curb their imagination, and relinquish a great many things with which they had once embellished their history the historical novel could emerge. Thus it was no longer possible for a Thucydides "to ornament his work with speeches which might would, should or could have been but never were delivered'. Now it is the historical novelist who endows the skeletons of the past with flesh and blood. This is precisely what Scott did. He revolutionized history. G. K. Chesterton paying a tribute to Scott writes: "Gibbon had traced in his cold, clear outline the procession of fourteen calamitous centuries that move past us with slow

and stately pace, each as like to the one that it follows as are the figures of the Parthenon. That was how Scott found history. He left it what it has been ever since, an eager aspiration, destined to perpetual change doomed to everlasting imperfection, but living, complex, broad as humanity itself".

Scott served as a model for many great historical novelists. What is more, he was a great eye-opener to the historians who came after him. Their conception of the past was altered because of him. Macaulay in one of his early essays "On History" writes: "Sir Walter Scott has used those fragments of truth which historians have scornfully thrown behind them. But a truly great historian would reclaim those materials which the novelist has appropriated". Historians after Scott learned to weave into their works those intimate, passionate, sometimes trivial daily details that lend colour to and recapture the infinite variety of the past. Macaulay himself, when he wrote history twenty years later did not forget to 'reclaim those materials which the novelist has appropriated'.

The task of the historical novelist is by no means easy. He has to be a man of special endowments. In the first place he must have an historical mind apt to study the record of a period. One who attempts to make a successful excursion into the historical novel must be prepared to expend a lot of time and energy in diligent research. But this alone does not make for the success of the work.

For instance, George Eliot, after a visit to Florence returned to England burning with interest in Italian Renaissance and embarked on laborious studies and elaborate documentation. Her labour and erudition could compare with those of Flaubert in writing 'Salamambo'. And yet the result 'Romola' is not a very successful historical novel. This is because she lacked the historical imagination to make her men and women convincingly of the age she was depicting. Rather she endows the men and women of 15th century Italy with the moral sense and standards of her own age and milieu and her Renaissance Italians stand as transplanted Victorians. Leslie Stephen in his critical work on George Eliot asserts that these characters never really lived in old Florence. "They were only masquerading these and getting the necessary properties from the history-shops at which such things are provided for the diligent student". So the second requisite of the historical novelist is the power of creative imagination able to reproduce the perceptions acquired through diligent labour, in a picture that has all the colours of actual life. Charles Kingsley's "Westward Ho", a patriotic tale of adventure, Jesuit intrigue and naval enterprise of Queen Elizabeth's time is a historical novel that stimulates the imagination of young and old. On the other hand George Gissing's Veranilda, a historical novel on the struggle of the dying Roman empire with the Goths, fails to come to life despite the author's erudition and patient research for many years. The same may be said of George Moore's 'Heloise and Abelard' which in spite of all the

antiquarian details represents the 12th century, as an exotic dream-world. Even 'Ivanhoe' is not altogether satisfactory as an evocation of the Middle Ages. Scott is so much better at depicting Scottish themes and periods. Even the greatest of all historical novels 'War and Peace' is not free from a similar defect; for Tolstoy transfers Russians of his time to the Napoleonic Period. Thackeray's 'Esmond' is one of the best English historical novels, precisely because it shows a feeling for the spirit and details of a period in the past most perfectly blended with the human interest. The Napoleonic wars figure again in what may be called the greatest historical fiction of the modern period, Hardy's 'The Dynasts'. But then it is a grand epic with its action conducted upon 'two planes Europe and the over-world where dwell 'the greatest intelligences.....which rage above our mortal state''. The scenes in prose however are of wonderful imaginative clarity and the palpitating excitement and the historical accuracy with which the battles are dramatized remind us of similar scenes in 'War and Peace'.

An important question facing the historical novelist is this: shall he deal with the actual figures of history and the actual events or shall he go outside them? If he goes outside what shall be his limits? Can he distort records, invent words, amend the facts or extend the annals? Many writers feel that these are sins to be avoided. A prominent American historical novelist Alfred Bertram Guthrie, Jr. feels that liberties like these tend to muddy history as the little story of George Washington and

the cherry tree has muddied history. There are some who even ask: why write historical novels at all, when history is here and everybody knows it? The answer is that the historical novel is no substitute for history. Good historical novels cloth the bones of history with flesh and recreate for us people, problems, passions, conflicts and special directions that in non-fiction treatment remain dry as dust for the majority of readers. History deals with actions of men. And though Aristotle said that 'all human happiness and misery takes the form of actions', we know that this is not the whole truth. Not merely actions, but the 'why' of the actions, the motives behind them are of vital interest and it is the historical novelist's task to understand men's motives, dreams and aspirations and to acquaint us with them. The remarks of a French critic Alain whom E. M. Forster quotes in his 'Aspects of the Novel', are pertinent here. Alain asserts that each human being has two sides appropriate to history and fiction. "All that is observable in a man - that is to say his actions and such of his spiritual existence as can be deduced from his actions - falls into the domain of history. But his romantic side includes the pure passions, that is to say the dreams, joys, sorrows and self-communings which politeness or shame prevent him from mentioning, and to express this side of human nature is one of the chief functions of the novel". Therefore no amount of well-written history will drive the historical novel out of existence.

