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THE
ETHNOGRAPHICAL SURVEY OF THE COCHIN STATE

MONOGRAPH No. 6.

Caste--PULAYAS.

BY

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Ernakulam.

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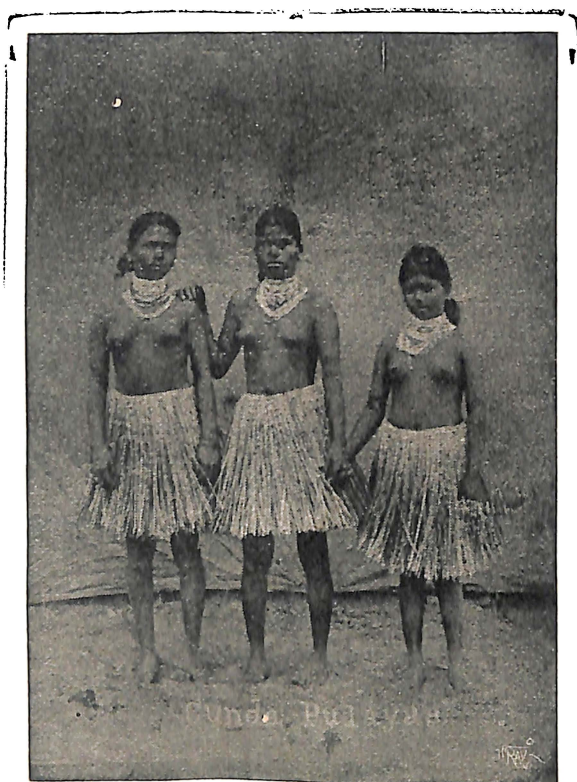
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Thunda Pulaya Girls.

THE PULAYAS OF COCHIN.

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The Pulayas of Cochin form an important class of the agrestic serfs, both in point of number and as being a typical representative of a tribe. They are, in the northern parts of the State, called the Cherumas.

Language.—The Pulayas speak a kind of low Malayalam largely mixed up with Tamil words and terminations. It is probable that they are the descendants of the original inhabitants of Kerala speaking Tamil, for the earliest form of the Malayalam language is Kodum Tamil (the oldest form of Tamil). Professor A. H. Keane remarks, that the Pulayas and other low tribes speaking Dravidian Malayalam is very curious. It finds its analogue in the broken English of the Negroes of North America and elsewhere. He thinks that they and other low tribes had a language which is now forgotten. They are wholly illiterate. When they speak of the bodily members such as an eye or an ear to a superior, they prefix to it the epithet 'old' such as 'old eye' or 'old ear'. They call their children 'calves', their silver "copper" and their paddy 'chaff'. When addressing one they begin by saying your slave has got permission. The Nayars, they call *thampurans* (lords).

Origin and traditions of the caste.—The question of their origin is still undecided. The word Pulayan is derived from 'pula' which means pollution. If the word 'pula' may be regarded as another form of 'palla', the Pallans of the Tamil Districts and the Pulayas of Cochin, Travancore and Malabar may be regarded as identical tribes, who have been, from a remote period, subject to the same kind of treatment from their masters. The name *Cherumas* or *Cheramakkal* is said to signify the 'sons of the soil' or as some say *Cheriamakkal*, little children as Parasurama is said to have directed their being cared for and treated as such. It is said that Malabar constituted the ancient Chera kingdom. In the name of Cheranad or the country (*Nad*) of the Cheras given to the district lying along the coast, and inland

south-east of Calicut we find that the ancient name is preserved. Chernad, part of Ernad Taluk and the neighbourhood of it, appear to have been the most thickly parts of the country. Ernad, Walluvanad and Ponnani are the three taluks of Malabar from which converts to Islam have been drawn from the slave population, which must have been denser in these taluks. There is therefore something to be said in favour of the view that the Pulayas were the aborigines of Malabar. According to one tradition they are the descendants of the aborigines conquered by the Chola kings and they preferred slavery to starving freedom in the jungles. Another tradition assigns their creation to Parasurama who gave them to the Brahmins to till the soil. They are by some regarded as the descendants of the Dravidian immigrants and by others as still older inhabitants. It is also said that they are the descendants of the old Turanean race that peopled India before Aryan invasion. Like Africa, India has received influxes of population from other parts of the world but the dark peoples are merged in the lighter invaders. Professor A. H. Keane is led to believe that the Pulayas belong to one of the primitive groups representing different Negrito, Kolerian and Dravidian blends. He adds that, judging from their short stature, low forehead, and high cheek bones they belong to the Negrito race which formed a substratum throughout the peninsula though now mainly submerged by the later arrivals of the Kolerians, Dravidians and the Aryans. From traditions current among the Pulayas it would appear that once upon a time they had dominions over several parts of the country. A person called Aikkara Yajaman whose ancestors were Pulaya kings is still held in considerable respect by the Pulayas of north Travancore and duly acknowledged as their chieftain and lord, while the Aikkaranad in the Kunnethnad Taluk still remains to lend colour to the tale. In Trivandrum on the banks of the Velli-lake is a hill called Pulayanar Kotta where it is believed that a Pulaya king once ruled. In other places also, they are said to have held sway. As a Faraya found at Melkote the image of Celvapillai, as a Savara was originally in possession of the sacred stone which

became the idol in the temple of Jaganath, so also is the worship of Padmanabha in Trivandrum intimately connected with a Pulayan. Once a *Pulakalli* (a Pulaya woman) who was living with her husband in the *Ananthay kadu* (jungle) suddenly heard the cry of a baby. She rushed to the spot and saw to her surprise a child lying on the ground protected by a cobra. She took pity on it and nursed it like her own child. The appearance of the snake intimated to her the divine origin of the infant. This proved to be true for the child was an incarnation of Vishnu. As soon as the Raja of Travancore heard of the wonderful event he built a shrine on the spot where the baby had been found and he dedicated it to Padmanabha. The Pulayas round Trivandrum assert to this day that in former times a Pulaya king ruled and had his castle not far from the present capital of Travancore.

The following story is also current among them. The Pulayas got from the god Siva, a boon, with spade and axe to clear forests to cultivate lands and own them. When other people took possession of them they were advised to work under them. That these people were the original inhabitants of the land is proved by certain rights they have been possessing in the Bhagavathy temples of the villages in which they have been living from a remote period. (Vide Religion).

Pretrial slavery.—By far the greater part of the labour in the field was and is even now performed by the Cherumas or Pulayas in Malabar, Cochin and Travancore. They were the absolute property of the *thampurans* or lords, and were employed in any kind of labour which their masters pleased. They were not attached to the soil, but might be sold or transferred in any manner that their masters thought fit; only a wife could not be sold separately. Children were separated from their parents and brothers from sisters. The slaves were of different castes, namely Pulayas or Cherumas, Eralans and Parayas; and the differences in the marriage customs of these castes caused considerable variations in the rights of the masters to the children of their slaves,

which depended upon the castes to which they belonged. The master was bound to give a slave a certain allowance of provisions; a man or woman able to work received two *edangazhies* of paddy (1a-6p) daily. Children and old persons unable to work were given half this pittance, while no allowance whatever was given to infants. This was totally inadequate to support them, but the slaves on each estate used to get one-twenty-first part of the gross produce of the paddy in order to encourage them to care and industry. A male slave used to get 7 cubits of cloth for two *mundus* and a woman fourteen cubits for two *mundis*.

Condition of the slaves in former times.—Slavery was common throughout the western coast and the prejudices of the high caste people rendered their degradation quite complete. They were in many places attached to the soil, but real property in market value was not much above the cattle united with them in the same bondage and greatly below them in estimation. They were with capricious indifference looked upon by their masters, who were either Nayars or Native Christians, who, though they were divided in caste, agreed in oppression. Though this slavery deserved commiseration, yet it was by no means the most rigid form of that wretched state which prevailed in other countries. Personal chastisement was not often inflicted, yet they experienced little sympathy in sickness, when they were left to nature. They were also dismissed to poverty and in age abandoned. Manumission was scarcely practised nor even desired. They never possessed property of any kind, and freedom to them was only productive of starvation or renewed servitude which occurred when they were presented to some temples in compliance with some vow. In early times the murder of a slave was scarcely considered a crime. The deed of transfer generally contained the clause, "you may kill him or her." They had no idea beyond their occupation, and were never guilty of any violence to their masters, to whom they were absolutely obedient from the sluggish apathy of their character, which rendered them ever mindful of their own lot. As born slaves, their children also were born in slavery and every landlord had a large number of

them. In cases of indigence a Pulaya uncle and mother might sell a child for fifty or sixty fanoms and if a higher price could be obtained it would be of no use to them as the proprietor would take the surplus. The eldest son was the property of the owner of the mother, who also had the right of redeeming the first child for sixteen fanoms whether the possessor liked it or not.

Tenures by which the slaves were held in former times.— There were, says Francis Buchanan, three modes of transferring the usufruct slaves. The first was by *jem* or sale, where the full value of the slave was given, and the property was entirely transferred to a new master who was, in some measure, bound by his interest to attend to the welfare of his slave. A young man with his wife used to be sold for 250 or 350 fanoms (1 fanom = 4 as = 8 pies). Four or five children, two of whom were beginning to work, would make the family worth five hundred or six hundred fanoms. The second manner of transferring the labour of slaves was by *kanom* or mortgage. The proprietor by this received a loan of money, generally two-thirds of the value of the slaves, and a small quantity of paddy to show that his right on them still existed. He might either resume the property of the slaves, whenever he pleased to repay the money borrowed without the payment of any interest. In the case of any of the slaves dying, the *kanom* holder was bound to supply another of equal value. The lender maintained them and had their labour for the interest of his money and for their support. The third method of transfer or employing slaves was letting them for *pattom* or rent. In this case, for an annual sum, the master lent them to another man who commanded their labour and supported them. The annual *pattom* or rent was 8 fanoms, and half as much for a woman. The last two tenures, says Buchanan, were abominable; for the person who exacted the labour and furnished the subsistence of the slave was indirectly interested to increase the former and diminish the latter as much as possible. In fact the slaves were severely treated, and their diminutive stature and squalid appearance testified to the want of adequate nourishment. Five families of slaves

numbering twenty-five persons of all ages are adequate to cultivate two hundred *paras* or $12\frac{1}{2}$ acres of rice land.

The subsistence of the slaves.—They were employed in agriculture and were paid in grain, three measures of paddy to a man, two to a woman and one to a child. Even this was not regularly paid, being reduced to half on days they did not work and withheld on symptoms of refractoriness. Harvest to them was a period of comparative plenty but their meagre squalid appearance often betrayed their insufficiency of diet to which both sexes were equally doomed. A large number of slaves belonged to the government to whom they were escheated as other property on the extinction of their owner's family, and they were employed partly on government lands and partly rented to ryots. Every landlord had a large number of them. But as these poor creatures formed a peculiar and numerous caste, they were granted certain privileges which secured their maintenance, so that none might perish from want. Their masters no doubt were bound to give them food, but in Malabar they had the right of building, planting and all agricultural work for which they received wages in paddy, and the estates on which they worked, belonged either to their masters or to somebody else. If their master be not in need of out door labour, they might seek it elsewhere, always taking care on pain of punishment to appear before him at his summons.

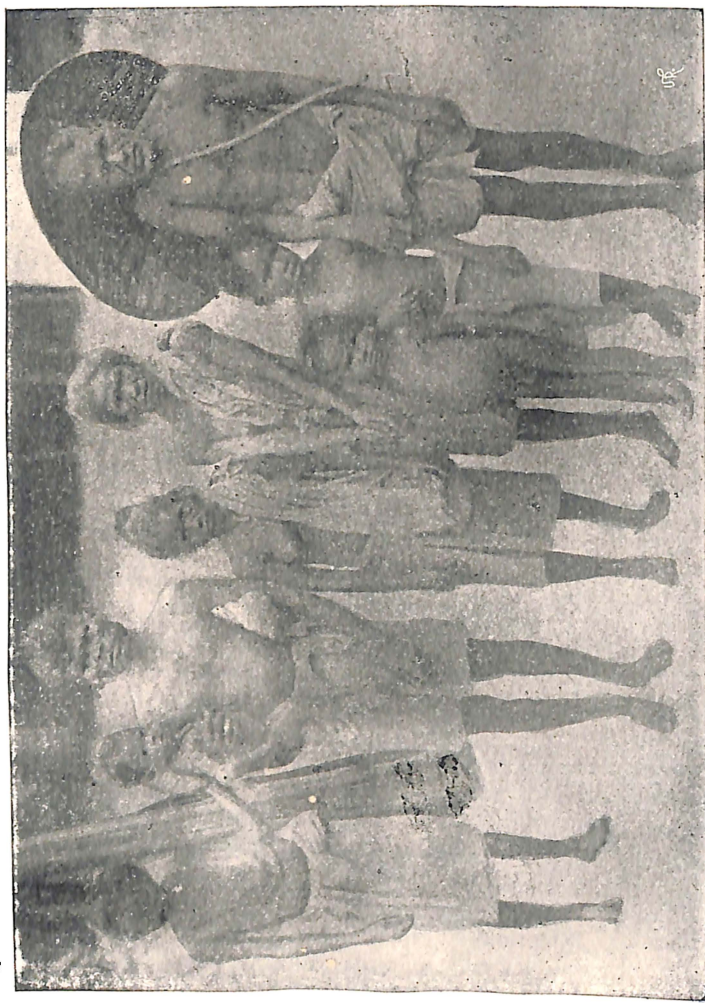
The external appearance presents several varieties. They are remarkable for an extreme darkness of complexion which cannot be the effect of exposure and which approaches that of an African, but they are seen invariably stamped with the Hindu features and do not bear any traces of a distinct race. The bark (spathe) of the areca palm often furnishes the whole clothing which at best never exceeds a bit of cloth sufficient for the purpose of decency. The hair is allowed to grow wild and form an immense mass of impurities which could not be imagined without shrinking.

Abolition of slavery.—“The question of slavery and the slave trade attracted the attention of the Honourable Company’s Government. In the year 1792, the year in which British rule commenced, a proclamation was issued against dealing in slaves. A person offering a slave was considered to be a thief. Both the dealer and the purchaser were severely dealt with. Fishermen and Māpillas conveying slaves were severely flogged and fined at the rate of ten rupees for each slave and the vessels used in trade were confiscated. The proclamation was directed against the prevalent practice of robbers carrying off by force the children of the most useful inhabitants, the Tiyyas and their cultivators. This practice was kept alive by the facility with which the slaves could be sold on the coast to the agents of vessels engaged in the trade sailing from the French settlement at Mahe and the Dutch settlement at Cochin. These ships in general carried the slaves to the French islands. In 1819 the Principal Collector wrote a report on the condition of the Cherumas and received orders that the practice of selling slaves for arrears of revenue be immediately discontinued. In 1826 the Government ordered a remission in the Collector’s accounts of Rs. 927—13—0 which was the annual revenue from the slaves on Government lands in Malabar. In 1841 Mr. E. B. Thomas, the judge at Calicut, wrote in strong terms a letter to Sadir Adalut in which he pointed out that women in some taluks fetched high prices in order to breed slaves; that the average cost of a young male under ten years was about Rs. 3—8—0, of a female somewhat less; that an infant ten months old was sold in a court auction for Rs. 1—10—6; and that in a recent suit, the right to twenty slaves was the sole matter for litigation and was disposed of on its merits. In a further letter he pointed out that the slaves had increased in numbers. The Government of India passed Act V of 1843 of which the provisions were widely published throughout Malabar. Any person claiming a slave as *jenm*, *kanom* or *panayam*, the right of such claim cannot be investigated in any one of the public courts or offices. In 1852 and again in 1855, the fact that traffic in slaves still continued, was brought to the

notice of the Government, but no measures for the emancipation of the Cherumas were deemed to be necessary."* The penalties for slave dealing were brought under the provisions of the Penal Code and this was the final blow to slavery in India, especially in Malabar. The slave will never understand what freedom means, until measures are adopted which give them indefeasible rights in the small orchards occupied by them as house sites. In the Cochin State also, the same kind of slavery and slave dealing as was prevailing in Malabar had been long in existence. A copy of the proclamation dealing with the abolition of slavery and slave trade was communicated to His Highness the then Raja of the State. It was published in the same year, declaring it a serious offence to buy and sell slaves in the State, to thrash and confine them for petty faults. It also put a stop to the sale of slaves for court decrees and arrears of rent, and gave freedom to the Pulaya slaves residing and working in the Government lands.

The condition of the slaves after the abolition of slavery.— Though emancipated, they have been and are even now in many localities, more or less in the same condition. They have been unable to appreciate the benefits conferred upon them. Working from day to day they depend upon their masters for their maintenance, whose extreme conservatism of caste coupled with the primitive customs of the people and the physical confinement of the soil prevented them from any intercourse with the outside world and caused utter degradation. The old men amongst them still say that they were in former days better fed and looked after by their masters than now. They are in some places, left to a great extent, to shift for themselves. Their name is even now connected with everything revolting and shunned as if infected with plague. The higher classes view their presence with indignation, and even towns and markets would be considered defiled by their approach. Though slavery has been abolished many years ago, the name slave or *valliyol* (a person receiving *valli* i. e. paddy given to a slave) and a bondage though nominal or real, still survives. There are *jennies* (landlords) and farmers in the State, owning twenty, thirty and even more than hundred Pulayas working under them, satisfied with two

* Logan's Manual of Malabar.



Kanaka-Cherumans.

or two measures and a half, of paddy doled out to them as wages for their hard work in the fields during the day and watching the crops at night. The wages are either reduced to half or entirely withheld on days they do not work. Sometimes a few of them run away from their masters and work under some other farmer or do some domestic work in the houses of Syrian Christians for the same wages and eventually become converts on their persuasion. The owners are now a days afraid of the Pulayas running away and yet they take no steps for the improvement of their condition. Their wages are still at the rates above referred to. In various localities where I had been for investigations, I was suspected of being employed by the Government to report on their condition with a view to loosen the existing bond between them and their masters. Their lot is one of misery and with the present disabilities before them the improvement of their condition is hopeless and even Christian missionaries are not able to do much in this direction.

Internal structure of the caste.—There are numerous classes or sub tribes among the Pulayas and they are as punctilious to shades of difference as are their more fortunate masters. The total number of subdivisions in Malabar at the last census was 37, of which the most important were Kanakkan, Pulacheruman, Eralan, Koodan and Rolan. In the northern parts of the Cochin State, especially in the Chittur taluk, the following sub tribes which appear to be endogamous septs, are found in the following order of social precedence.

1. *Eralan or Era Cherumas.*—They are so called because of their being permitted to come as far as the eaves of the houses of Izhuvas. They are also found in the Palghat taluk of South Malabar.

2.* *Konga Cherumas.*—They are found in the Chittur taluk.

3. *Koodan* is another sub tribe found in the Thalapally taluk. (Vide monograph on the Koodans).

4. *Kanakka Cherumas.*—They are found in the taluks of Chittur, Thalapally and Trichur.

2* They are like Izhuvas in appearance.

5. *Pula Cherumas or Pasu Pulayas*.—They are found all over the State.

6. *Para Cherumas or Parayas*.—They too are found in all parts of the State. (Vide monograph on the Parayas).

In the southern parts of the State the Pulayas are divided into the following sub tribes, namely Valluva Pulayas or Kulamary Vettuvus or Vettuva Pulayas and Thanda Pulayas. There are quite different divisions in Travancore. In the course of my investigations in more than half a dozen localities among the various sub tribes, I have found that one or two sub tribes in each locality form isolated communities the members of which profess superiority over those of others. They are in a position to give me the necessary information regarding their customs and manners, but are absolutely ignorant of those prevailing among other sub tribes in other places. Hence the above classification is only provisional. Each sub tribe is further subdivided into *Illams* or *Koottams*, which mean family groups which are ascertained in marriage negotiations, so as to avoid conjugal unions between the members of the same family. The following are the names of some of the *Koottams* obtained from the Pulayas around Cochin.

1. Thandalathu Koottam.
2. Moothanam Koottam.
3. Nambiyar Koottam.
4. Thachili Koottam.
5. Pulikunnethu Koottam.
6. Paruthi Koottam.
7. Kochanam Koottam.
8. Mannathu Koottam.
9. Paruthi Koottam.
10. Naringana Koottam.

The above names are either the house names of their masters, or those of the masters whose slaves their ancestors had been in former times. Invariably the *Koottams* are called after the house names of their masters.

Habitations.—Their huts are generally called *madams* which are put up on the banks of fields, in the middle of paddy flats or on trees along their borders, so as to enable them to watch the crops after the toils of the day. They are discouraged from erecting better huts under the idea, that if settled more comfortably, they would be less inclined to move as cultivation required. The *madams* above referred to are very poor huts supported on four small posts and thatched with leaves. The sides are protected with the same kind of leaves. There is only one room and the floor though slightly raised, is very damp during the rainy months. These temporary buildings are removed after the harvest and put up in places where cultivation has to be carried on. Cooking is done inside the hut during rainy months and outside during summer. All the members of the family sleep together in the same hut. Small temporary huts are sometimes erected which are little better than inverted baskets. These are placed in the rice field while the crop is on the ground and near the stacks while it is thrashing. In the northern parts of the State, the Pulaya huts are made of mud walls and provided with wooden doors. The roofs are of bamboo framework thatched with palmyra leaves. The floor is raised and the huts are provided with pyals on three sides. They have also small compounds around them. In such huts the verandah on one side which is generally converted into a kind of room serves as the kitchen. There is only one room inside which is the sleeping apartment of the newly married youngsters. The others, I am told, sleep on the verandahs. They have no furniture. Their utensils consist of a few earthen pots for cooking and keeping water, a few earthen dishes for taking food. In addition to those I examined in the hut, I found a wooden mortar, a few pestles, two pans, two winnowing pans, a fish basket for each woman, a few cocoanut shells for keeping salt and other things, a few baskets, some big and some small of their own making in one of which a few dirty

cloths were placed, some mats of their own making, a bamboo vessel for measuring corn and a vessel for containing toddy. They form the sum total of property by which all the Pulayas' requirements are satisfied. They have also baskets for each function, and they are made and kept by the women who sometimes hand them over to the landlord whenever he wants them either at home or in the field. Negligence is punished with thrashing.

Marriage prohibition.—Marriage is endogamous so far as the sub tribe is concerned. It is prohibited among the members of the same *Koottam* (family group). In the Chittur taluk of the State, members of the same village do not intermarry, for they believe that their ancestors may have been the slaves of some local landlord and as such the descendants of the same parents. A young man may marry the daughter of his maternal uncle, but this is not allowed among some of the sub tribes. A young man may marry a girl among the relations of his father, but not among those of his mother. In the Palghat taluk, the Kanakka Cherumas pride themselves on the fact that they avoid girls within seven degrees of relationship.

Marriage customs.—The marriage customs of the Pulayas vary as their subdivisions. In the southern parts of the State, Pulaya girls are married before puberty while in other places among the Kanakka Cherumas and other sub tribes they are married both before and after puberty. In the former case when a girl has not been married before maturity she is regarded as having become polluted and stigmatised as a woman whose age is known. Her parents and uncles lose all claim upon her. They formally 'drive her out of the hut' and proceed to purify it by sprinkling water mixed with cowdung both inside and outside, as also with sand. She is thus turned out of caste. She was in former times handed over to the *vallon*, who either married her to his own son or sold her to a slave master. If a girl is too poor to be married before puberty, the castemen of the *kara* (village) raise a subscription and marry her to one of themselves. In no case is a Pulaya

girl among the Valluva Pulayas of the southern parts of the State allowed to remain unmarried before puberty. The Kanakka and Pula Cherumas marry their girls both before and after puberty, and after marriage they remain with their husbands.

Puberty ceremonies.—When a Pulaya girl comes of age, she is located in a separate hut. Five *vallons* and the castemen of the *kara* (village) are invited to take part in the performance of the ceremony. A song called *Malapattu* is sung for an hour by a Parayan to the accompaniment of drum and pipe. The Parayan gets a *para* of paddy (seven annas) and his assistants three annas each. As soon as this is over, seven cocoanuts are broken and the water is poured over the head of the girl and the broken halves are distributed among the five *vallons* and the seven girls who also are invited. Some more water is also poured on the girl's head at the time. She is lodged in a temporary hut for seven days during which food is served to her at a distance. She is forbidden to go out and play with her friends. Each of the *vallons* gets a measure of rice also. On the morning of the seventh day the *vallons* of the *kara* and the castemen are again invited. The latter bring with them some rice, vegetables and toddy to defray the expenses of the feast. At dawn the chief host, the mother of the girl, gives oil to the seven Pulaya maidens and to her daughter for an oil bath, when they go to a neighbouring tank or stream to bathe and return home. The girl is then neatly dressed and adorned in her best. Her face is painted yellow and marked with spots of various colours. She stands before a few Parayas, who play on their flute and drum to cast out the demons, if any, from her body. The girl leaps with frantic movements if she is possessed with them. In that case they transfer them to a tree close by, driving a nail into the trunk after due offerings. If she is not possessed with them she remains unmoved and the Parayas bring the music to a close. The girl is again bathed with her companions who are all treated to a dinner. The ceremony then comes to an end with a feast to the castemen. The ceremony described above is performed by the Valluva Pulayas in the southern parts, near and around the suburbs of Cochin, but is

unknown among other sub tribes elsewhere. The devil driving by the Parayas is not attended to. Nor do the latter erect temporary huts for the girls to be lodged during the menses. The girls at this period are allowed to remain in a corner of the huts, but are not allowed to touch others. She is bathed on the seventh day and the castemen including friends and relations are invited to a feast. It is a belief among these and other people that girls and women during the menses are under the malign influence of demons which are cast out by ceremonial offerings. In the case of girls who come of age during their stay with husbands, the expenses connected with puberty are met by them, and the girls' parents contribute their share.

When a young Pulayan wishes to marry he applies to his master who is bound to defray the expenses. He gives seven fanoms (1 fanom = 4 as. 8 p.) to the bride's master, one fanom worth of cloth to the bride elect and about ten fanoms for the marriage feast, in all his expenses amount to ten rupees. The ceremony consists in tying a ring attached to a thread round the neck of the bride. This is provided by her parents. When he becomes tired of his wife he may dispose of her to any other person who will pay the expenses incurred at the marriage. There are even now places where the husband and wife serve different masters, but more frequently the same master. The women of this class are given in usufruct scarcely ever in complete possession. The eldest male child belongs to the master of the mother. The rest of the family remain with the mother while young, but being the property of the owner revert to him when of an age to be useful. She also follows them in the event of her becoming a widow.

In some places a man brings a woman to his master and says that he wishes to keep her as wife. She receives her allowance of rice, but may leave her husband as she likes and is not particular in changing one spouse for another. The husband's master by the old law maintains his wife and children until they are able to work, when the eldest son becomes his property and others of the mother's master.

* Among the Konga Cherumas, a young man who wishes to marry sends his sister to tie the *tali* and bring her to his family. The custom is borrowed from the Izhuvas of the same taluk.

In other places the marriage ceremonies of the Era Cherumas are more formal. The bridegroom's party goes to the bride's hut and presents rice, and betel leaf to the head of the family and asks for the bride. Consent is indicated by the bride's brother placing some rice and cloth before the assembly and throwing rice on the headman of the caste who is present. On the appointed day the bridegroom goes to the hut with two companions and presents the girl with cloth and money (twelve fanoms.) From that day he is regarded as her husband and cohabitation begins at once. But the bride cannot accompany him until the ceremony called *mangalam* is performed. The bridegroom's party goes in procession to the bride's hut where a feast awaits them. The man gives sweet meats to the girl's brother. The caste priest recites the family history of the two persons and the names of their masters and deities. They are then seated before a lamp and a heap of rice in a pandal. One of the assembly gets up and delivers a speech on the duties of married life touching upon the evils of theft, cheating, adultery and the like. Rice is thrown on the heads of the couple and the man prostrates himself before the feet of the elders. The next day rice is again thrown on their heads. Then the party assembled makes presents to the pair, a part of which goes to the priest and a part to the master of the husband. Divorce is very easy, but the money paid must be returned to the woman.

In the Ooragam Proverthy of the Trichur taluk, where my notes were taken, I find that the marriage among the Pulayas of that locality and the neighbouring villages is a rude form of *sambandham*, somewhat similar to that which prevails among the Nayars whose slaves a large majority of them are. The husband, if he may be so called, goes to the woman's hut with his wages to stay therein with her for the night. They may serve under different masters. A somewhat similar custom prevails among the Pula Cherumas of the Trichur taluk. The connection is called *Merungu Kooduka* which means to tame or to associate with. A young man who wishes to marry goes to the parents of the young woman

and asks their consent to associate with their daughter. If they approve, he goes to her at night as often as he likes. Both the husband and wife may serve different masters. The woman seldom comes to the husband's hut to stay with him except with the permission of the *thamar* (landlord) on auspicious occasions. They are at liberty to separate at their will and pleasure, and the children born of this union belong to the mother's landlord. These people appear to be in a sort of more slavish bondage to their masters. Among the Kanakka Cherumas in the northern parts of the State, the following marital relations are in force. When a young man chooses a girl for wedding the preliminary arrangements are made in her hut in the presence of her parents, relations and the castemen of the village. The auspicious day is fixed and a sum of five fanoms is paid as the bride's price. The members assembled are treated to a dinner. A similar entertainment is also held at the bridegroom's hut to the bride's parents, uncles and others who come to see the bridegroom. On the morning of the day fixed for the wedding, the bridegroom and his party go to the bride's hut where they are welcomed and seated on mats in a small pandal put up in front of the hut. A *muri* (a piece of cloth) and two small *mundus* (small pieces of cloth) are the marriage presents to the bride elect. A vessel full of paddy, a lighted lamp and a coccanut are placed in a conspicuous part therein. The bride is taken to the booth and seated by the side of the bridegroom. With prayers to their gods for blessings on the couple the *tali* is tied round the bride's neck. The ceremony is brought to a close with a feast to those assembled there. Toddy is an indispensable item of the feast. During the night they amuse themselves by dancing a kind of wild dance in which both men and women joyfully take part. After this the bridegroom goes to his own hut along with his wife and his party where also they indulge in a feast. After a week two persons from the bride's hut come to invite the married couple. The bridegroom and the bride stay in the bride's hut for a few days, but cannot return to his hut unless an entertainment called *Vathal chora* is given him. The marriage is now practically over and he goes to the bride's hut as often as he likes. Before

the bride enters the pandal she goes seven times round it with seven virgins before her. The bridegroom's sister completes the knot. By a strange custom the bride's mother does not approach the bridegroom, lest it should cause a ceremonial pollution.

The marriage customs of the Valluva Pulayas in the southern parts of the State especially in the Cochin and Kannayannur taluks are more formal and interesting. The average age of a young man for marriage is between fifteen and twenty, while that of a girl is between ten and twelve. Before a young Pulayan thinks of marriage, he has to contract a formal and voluntary friendship with another young Pulayan of the same age and locality. If he is not socially inclined, his father selects one for him from a Pulaya family of the same or higher status, but not of the same *illam*. If the two parents agree among themselves, they meet in the hut of either of them with a view to solemnise it. They fix a day for the ceremony and invite their *vallon* and the castemen of the village. The guests are treated to a feast in the usual Pulaya fashion. The chief guest and the host eat together in the same dish. After the feast, the father of the boy who has to obtain a friend for his son enquires of the *vallon* and those assembled there, whether he may be permitted to buy friendship by the payment of money. They give their permission and the boy's father gives the money to the father of the selected friend. The two boys then clasp hands and they are never to quarrel. The new friend from that date becomes a member of the boy's family. He comes in and goes out of their hut as he likes. There is no ceremony performed in it nor anything done without consulting him. He is thus an inseparable factor in all ceremonies especially in marriage. I suspect that the friend has some claim over a man's wife.

The first observance in marriage consists in seeing the girl. The bridegroom elect, his friend, father and maternal uncle go to the bride's hut to be satisfied with the girl. If the wedding is not to take place at any early date, the bridegroom's parents have to keep up the claim on the bride elect, by sending presents to her guardians. The presents, generally

sweet meats, are taken to her hut by the bridegroom and his friend, who are well fed by the mother of the girl and are given a few necessities, when they take leave of her the next morning. The next observance is the marriage negotiation, which consists in giving the bride's price and choosing an auspicious day in consultation with the local astrologer (*Kaniyan*). On the evening previous to the wedding, the friends and relations of the bridegroom are treated to a feast in his hut. Next day at dawn, the bridegroom and his friend purified by a bath and neatly dressed in a white cloth with a handkerchief tied over it, and with a knife stuck into their girdles, go to the hut of the bride elect, accompanied by his party who are all well received and seated on mats spread on the floor. Over a mat specially made by the bride's mother are placed three measures of rice, some particles of gold, a brass plate, a plank with a white and red cover on it. The bridegroom, after making seven rounds around the pandal, stands on the plank and the bride soon follows making three rounds, when four women hold a canopy of cloth over her head and seven virgins go in front of her. The bride then stands beside her man and then they face each other. The girl's guardian puts on the wedding necklace, a gold bead on a string. Musical tunes are played. Prayers are offered up to the Sun to bless the necklace which is tied round the neck of the girl. The bridegroom's friend standing behind tightens the knot already made. The religious part of the ceremony is now over, and the bridegroom and the bride are taken inside the hut and food is served to them in the same leaf. Next the guests are fed and then they begin the *poli* or subscription. A piece of silk or any red cloth is spread on the floor or a brass plate is placed before the husband. The guests assembled put in a few annas and take leave of the chief host as they depart. The bride is soon taken to the bridegroom's hut and her parents visit her the next day and get a consideration in return. On the fourth day the bridegroom and the bride bathe and worship the local deity, and on the seventh day they again return to the bride's hut, when the *tali* is formally removed from the neck of the girl who is bedecked with brass beads round her neck, rings on her ears and armlets.

The next morning the mother-in-law presents her son-in-law and his friend with a few necessities of life and sends them home with her daughter.*

Pregnancy.—During the seventh month of the pregnancy of a young woman, the ceremony of *puli kuti* or tamarind juice drinking is performed for her, similar to that performed for the young women of other castes. (Vide my monograph on the Izhuvas). This is also an occasion for casting out devils from her body, if any. The wife is brought back to the hut of her own family. The devil driver erects a tentlike structure, and covers it with plantain barks and leaves of the cocoanut tree. The flower of an areca palm is fixed at the apex. A cocoanut palm flower is cut out and covered with a piece of cloth, the cut part being exposed. The woman is seated in front of the tentlike structure with the flower in her lap, which symbolizes the yet unborn child in the womb. The water of a tender cocoanut in spoons made of the leaf of the jack tree is poured over the cut end by those assembled, namely, the *vallon*, the guardian, the brothers and sisters present. The devil driver then breaks open the flower and by looking at the fruits predicts the sex of the child in the womb. If there are fruits at the end nearest the stem, the child will live and if the number of fruits is even there will be twins. There will be deaths if any fruit is not well formed. The devil driver repeats an incantation whereby he invokes the aid of Kali who is believed to be present in the tent. He fans the woman with the flower and she throws up rice and a flower on it. He repeats another incantation which is a prayer to Kali to cast out the devil from her body. This magical ceremony is called *Garbha-bali* (pregnancy offering). The structure, with the offering, is taken up

*FOOT NOTE.—“At a wedding among the Cherumas of Malabar, when the wedding party sets out they form a large gang of people, and at intervals, the men set to at stick play, the women singing in chorus to encourage them. Let us see—let us see—the stick play (*padi-tallu*) oh! Cherumar. At their weddings men and women mingle indiscriminately in dancing. On the arrival of the bride at the bridegroom's hut, she is expected to weep loudly and deplore her fate; and, on entering, she must tread on a pestle placed across the threshold.” The custom prevails among the Pula Cherumas and is dying out. (Manual of Malabar.)

and placed in a corner of the compound reserved for gods. The devotee then goes through the remaining forms of the ceremony. She pours into twenty one leaf spoons placed in front of the tent, a mixture of cow's milk, water of the tender cocoanut, flower and turmeric powder. Then she walks round the tent seven times, and with a palm flower sprinkles the same mixture on it. Next she throws a handful of rice and paddy, after revolving each handful of rice round her head; and then covers the offering with a piece of cloth. She now returns and her husband puts into her mouth seven globules of prepared tamarind. The devil driver now rubs her body with Phlomis petals and paddy and thereby finds out whether she is possessed or not, and if she is, the devil is driven out with the usual offerings. The devil driver gets, for his services, twelve measures and a half of paddy and two pieces of cloth. Similar customs are also prevailing among other castes. The tamarind juice may have a medicinal effect. The husband should not, during this period, get shaved.

Childbirth.—When a young woman is about to give birth to a child, she is lodged in a small hut near her dwelling, and is attended by her mother and a few elderly women of the family. After the child is born the mother and the baby are bathed. She is purified by a bath on the seventh day. The woman who has acted as midwife draws on the ground seven lines at an interval of two feet from one another and spreads over them aloe leaves shorn to shreds. Then with burning sticks in hand, the mother with the baby goes seven times over the leaves backwards and forwards and the mother is purified. For these seven days the father should not eat anything made of rice. He manages to live on toddy, fruits and other things. It is customary during these days for the friends of the woman to visit the lying-in-lodge and see the baby and the mother. The mother and the baby remain in the lodge for sixteen days, when she is purified by a bath so as to be free from pollution, after which she goes to the main hut. Her *Enangathy* sweeps the hut and compound and sprinkles water mixed with cowdung on her body, as she returns after the bath.

In some places the barks of *Athi* (*Ficus Racemosa*), and *Ithi* (*Ficus Indica*) are well beaten and bruised and mixed with water. Some milk is also added to this mixture and this is sprinkled both inside and outside the hut. Only after this do they think that the hut and the compound are purified. Among the Cherumas of Palghat, the pollution is for ten days. The expenses connected with this are defrayed by the husband. The treatment after delivery is the same as that described in my account of the other low castes.

Naming ceremony.—This falls on the twenty-eighth day after delivery. The day is one of festivity to friends and relations. The names in common use among men are, Kurumban, Chathan, Thevan, Anjanan, Thuluvan, Maniyan, Vallon, Vithon, Kochen, Oonniyalan, Payinkili, Charalan, Mathakili, Ishuathi, Kurali, while those among women are Kurumba, Punala, Mayithanam, Azhaki, Kunjala, Thiruma, Pazhukka, Thenankili, Cherukoti, Cherunila, Oma, Puna, Anathara.

Ear-boring.—It is performed during the sixth or seventh year of a boy or girl. The *vallon* who is invited bores the ears with a sharp needle. The wound is healed by applying cocoanut oil and the hole is gradually widened by inserting cork, a wooden plug or a roll of palm leaves. The castemen of the village are invited and fed. The landlord gives the parents of the girl three *paras* of paddy and this, together with what the guests bring, goes to defray the expenses of the ceremony. After meals, with drum-beating they go to the house of the *thamar* (landlord) and present him with a *para* of beaten rice which is distributed among his servants. The ear-borer gets eight *edangazhies* of paddy, a cocoanut, a vessel of rice and four annas.

Polygamy and Polyandry.—These are almost unknown. The Kanakka Cherumas of Palghat consider it a disgrace to have two wives located either in the same or different huts. Men who have two wives are not admitted into their society.

Widow marriage.—A woman after the death of her husband may marry anybody she likes, except her brother-in-law. If she marries again the children, if any, go with the mother to the new husband; and if sufficiently grown up, they stay in the mother's family, and live by their own labour.

Adultery.—A woman found to be in intercourse with a Paraya is outcasted. She becomes a convert to Christianity or Mahomadanism. If it takes place within the caste, she is well thrashed and prevented from resorting to the bad practice. In certain cases when the illicit connection becomes public, the castemen of the village meet with their *rallon* (headman) and conduct a regular enquiry into the matter and pronounce verdict upon evidence. If a young woman becomes pregnant before marriage, her lover, should he be a Pulaya, is compelled to marry her as otherwise she is placed under a ban. If both are married the lover is well thrashed and fined. The woman is taken before a *thandan* (an Izhuva headman) who, after enquiry, gives her the water of a tender cocoanut which she is asked to drink, when she is believed to be freed from the sin. Her husband may take her back again as wife or she is at liberty to marry another. The *Thandan* gets a few annas, betel leaves and nuts and tobacco. Both the woman's father and the lover are fined and the fine is spent in the purchase of toddy which is indulged in by those present there at the time. Inclinations to such wicked purposes are said to be rare among these half starving people; nevertheless, instances of boys and girls of very handsome appearance were met with by me in the course of my investigations, which are the products of clandestine intercourse with the members of other castes.

Divorce.—A woman who does not like her husband may leave him after returning the money spent on marriage, which is generally given by the new husband, while a man who wishes to relinquish his wife, is not entitled to any portion of the money spent. In the northern parts of the State, there is a relic of the primitive custom, namely, that a young woman before marriage mates with one or two

paramours with the connivance of her parents. Eventually one of them marries her, but this illicit union ceases at once after marriage.

Inheritance.—Both the systems, namely, succession through the son and that through the nephew, are found amongst the Pulayas. When questioned as to which custom they follow, they invariably answer the latter, while at the same time they say that they properly look after their sons and daughters.* The truth is that they have no property, but merely subsist on the wages of their work. In many cases they follow the custom of their Nayar landlords.

Tribal organization.—They have a tribal assembly which consists of the elderly members of the caste, who meet on all important occasions affecting the welfare of the caste. They have their *Vallon* or *Valiyavan* (great man) who presides at their marriage, funeral and other ceremonies, decides all disputes among the Pulayas with the aid of the castemen of the village. He is entitled to a fee for all his services. He is also entitled to the following privileges, an umbrella of palm leaves slightly concave with a long handle, the bracelet of honour, the box for keeping betel leaves and a long ear-ring made of gold. As a president of the elders, he is a supreme judge and law giver or the expounder of the custom. His verdict is binding in all cases of theft, adultery and the like. As has been already said, his presence and sanction are necessary for all marriage and funeral ceremonies. In fact he is responsible for the good behaviour of his people. The other functionaries are the *Kuruppan* and the *Vadikkaran*. *Kuruppan* is a corrupt form of *Kurippan*, which means one who makes notes or writes. He is the officer who is next in dignity to the *Vallon*. He helps the *Vallon* in the exercise of his authority. In the trial of offences, he takes the chief part in sifting evidence, and declares on the facts of the case. The *Vadikkaran* is the constable who brings the parties to the suit, keeps order and inflicts punishment on the offender. In the Palghat taluk of south Malabar, it is said that the Cherumas in former times used to hold grand meetings for cases of theft, adultery, divorce &c.

* The Kanakka Cherumas of Palghat follow Makkathayam.

at *Kannati kutti vattal*. These assemblies consisted of the members of their caste in localities between Valayar Forests and Karimpuzha (in Valluvanad taluk), and in those between the northern and southern hills. It is also said that their deliberations used to last for several days together and that this was their tribal court. In the event of any body's committing a crime, the punishment inflicted on him was a fine of a few rupees or sometimes a sound thrashing. To prove the innocence of a man's guilt, he had to swear കണ്ണാടി സ്വരൂപം അറികെ അൻ ചെയ്തിട്ടില്ല. "By Kannati swarupam (assembly) I have not done it". It is held so sacred that no cheruman who had committed a crime, would swear falsely by this assembly. As time went on they found it difficult to meet and so left off assembling together. At present for all similar cases, they invite the headmen and the elderly members of several villages for deliberation and decision. For all cases of adultery a fine of 64 or 120 fanoms (1 fanom = 4 as 8 pies) was imposed upon the parents of the woman and her lover. Such a woman was allowed to marry one or two years after the birth of the child.

Religion.—The Pulayas are pure animists, but are slowly coming on to the higher forms of worship. Their gods are Parakutty, Karinkutty, Chathan and the spirits of their ancestors. Offerings to these gods are given on *Karkadaka* and *Makara Sankranties*, *Onam*, *Vishu* and other auspicious days, when one of the Pulayas present turns a *Velichapad* and speaks to the assembly as if by inspiration. They are also the devout worshippers of Kali or Bhagavati whose aid is invoked in all times of danger and illness. They take part in the village festivals celebrated in honour of her. Kodungallur Bhagavati is their guardian deity. The deity is rudely represented by an image or stone on a raised piece ground in the open air. Their priest is one of their own castemen, and at the beginning of the new year, he offers to the goddess fowls, fruits and toddy. Very probably, Kali must have been the village goddess of the Dravidians, watching over the welfare of the inhabitants of the villages in rural parts. The Pulayas also believe that spirits exercise an influence over the members of their families and therefore regular offerings are given to them every year on *Sankranti* days.

The chief festivals in which the Pulayas take part are,

1. *Pooram Vela*.—This which may be described as the Saturnalia of Malabar, is an important festival held in the village Bhagavati temple). It is a festival in which the members of all castes below Brahmans take part. It takes place either in Kumbham, (February—March) or Meenam, (March—April). The Cherumas of the northern parts as well as the Pulayas of the southern parts of the State attend the festival after a sumptuous meal and toddy drinking according to their custom and join the procession. Toy horses are made, and attached to long bamboo poles which are carried to the neighbourhood of the temple. As they go, they leap and dance to the accompaniment of pipe and drum. One among them who acts as a *Velichapad* (devil dancer) goes in front of them, and after a good deal of dancing and loud praying in honour of the deity, they return home.

2. *Vittu Iduka*.—This festival consists in putting seeds or bringing paddy seeds to the temple of the village Bhagavati. This also is an important festival which they celebrate on the day of Bharani, the second lunar day in Kumbham, (February—March). Standing at a distance assigned to them by the village authorities, where they offer prayers to Kali, they put the paddy grains, which they have brought, on a bamboo mat spread in front of them, after which they return home. In the Chittur Taluk, there is a festival called *Kathiru*, celebrated in honour of the village goddess in the month of Vrischikam (November—December), when these people start from the farms of their masters, and go in procession accompanied with the music of pipe and drum. A special feature of the *Kathiru* festival is the presence, at the temple of the village goddess, of a large number of domelike structures made of bamboo and plantain stems, richly ornamented and hung with flowers, leaves and ears of corn. These structures are called *Sarakootams*, and are fixed on a

pair of parallel bamboo poles. These agrestic serfs bear them in grand processions starting from their respective farms with pipe and drum, shouting and dancing and also with fireworks. Small globular packets of palmyra leaves in which are packed handfuls of paddy rolled up in straw, are also carried by them in huge bunches along with the *Sarakootams*. These packets are called *Kathirkootoos* * and are thrown away among the crowds of spectators all along the route of the procession and also on arrival at the temple. The spectators both young and old scramble to obtain as many of the packets as possible and carry them home. They are then hung in front of the houses, for it is believed that their presence will help promoting the prosperity of the family until the festival comes round again next year. The greater the number of these trophies obtained for a family by its members, the greater, it is believed, will be the prosperity of the family. The festival is one of the very few occasions on which Pulayas and other agrestic serfs, who are supposed to impart, so to speak, a long distant atmospheric pollution, and consequently may not approach the habitations of high caste Hindus, are freely allowed to enter villages and worship in the village temples which generally occupy central positions in those villages. Processions carrying *Sarakootams* and *Kathirkootoos* start from the several farms surrounding the village early enough to reach the temple about dusk in the evening when the scores of processions that have made their way from all corners of the village to the temple, merge into one great concourse of people. The *Sarakootams* are arranged in beautiful rows in front of the village goddess. The Cherumas dance, sing and shout to their hearts content. Bengal lights are lighted and fireworks exhibited. *Kathirkootoos* are thrown by dozens and scores from all sides of the temple. The crowds then disperse.

* A collection of the ears of corn.

At night the Pulayas and other serfs, who have accompanied the procession to the temple, are, in the majority of cases, fed by their respective masters at their houses, and then all go back to the farms.

3. *Mandalam Vilakku*.—This is a forty-one days' festival in Bhagavati temples extending from the first of Vrischikam (November—December), to the tenth of Dhanu, (December—January), during which temples are brightly illuminated both inside and outside at night. There is much music and drum-beating at night, and offerings of cooked pease or Bengal gram and cakes are made to the goddess, after which they are distributed among those present. The forty-first day, the day on which the festival terminates, is one of grand celebration, when all castemen attend the temple. The Cherumas, Malayars and Eravallars attend the festival in Chittur. They also attend the *Konga Pata* festival there (Vide monograph on the Nayars). In rural parts of the State, a kind of puppet show performance (*Olapara koothu*) is acted by Kosavans (Potters) and Tamil Chetties, in honour of the village deity to which they contribute their share of subscription. They also attend the cock festival of Cranganore and offer sacrifices of fowls.

Death and funeral ceremonies.—When a Pulayan is dead, the castemen in the neighbourhood are informed. An offering is made to the Kodungallur Bhagavati, who is believed to watch over their welfare and is regarded as their ancestral deity. Dead bodies are generally buried. The relatives, one by one, bring a new piece of cloth, with rice and paddy tied at the four corners of the cloth for throwing it over the dead. The cloth is placed over the corpse and they cry aloud three times beating their breasts after which they retire. The corpse is then bathed, dressed and placed on a bier. A few Parayas are invited to beat drums and play on their musical instruments,—a performance which is continued for an hour or two. After this a few bits of plantain

leaves with rice flour and paddy are placed near the corpse to serve as food for the spirit of the dead. The bier is carried to the grave yard by six bearers three on each side. The pit is dug, and the body covered with a piece of cloth. After it has been lowered into it, the pit is filled in with earth. Twenty-one small bits of leaves are placed over the grave above the spot where the mouth of the dead man would be, with a double branched twig fixed to the centre. A cocoanut is cut open and its water is allowed to flow in the direction of the twig which represents the dead man's mouth. Such of the members of the family as could not give him *kanji* or boiled rice before death, now give it to him. The six coffin bearers prostrate themselves before the corpse, three on each side of the grave. The priest then puts on it a ripe cocoanut and a tender one for the spirit of the dead man to eat and drink. Then all go home and indulge in toddy and *aval* (beaten rice). The priest gets twelve measures of rice, the grave diggers twelve annas, the *vallon* two annas, and the coffin bearers each an anna. The son or the nephew is the chief mourner who erects a mound of earth on the south side of the hut and uses it as a place of worship. For seven days both morning and evening he prostrates himself before it and sprinkles the water of a tender cocoanut on it, and on the eighth evening his friends, relatives, the *vallon* and the devil driver assemble together. The devil driver turns round and blows his conch, finds out the position of the ghost as to whether it has taken up its abode in the mound or is kept under restraint by some deity. Should the latter be the case, the ceremony of deliverance has to be performed, after which the spirit is set up as a household deity. The chief mourner bathes early in the morning and offers a rice ball offering (*ninda bali*) to the departed spirit. This he continues for fifteen days, and on the morning of the sixteenth the members of the family bathe to be free from pollution, and their *enangan* cleans the hut and the compound by sweeping and sprinkling water mixed with cowdung. He also sprinkles the same water on the members of the family



Pulayas.

as they return after the bath. The chief mourner gets shaved, bathes and returns to the hut. Some boiled rice, paddy and cocoanut pieces are placed over a plantain leaf, and he, with the members of his family, calls on the spirit of the dead to take them. Then they all bathe and return home. The castemen who have assembled there by invitation are sumptuously fed. The chief mourner performs the *diksha* * and after the expiry of the year a similar feast is given to the castemen.

Occupation of the Pulayas.—They are agricultural labourers and take part in every kind of agricultural work, such as fencing, ploughing, sowing, weeding, transplanting, reaping, pumping out water for *kole* cultivation, thatching farmhouses, and watering the gardens of their masters. The attention of the people is solely directed to the cultivation of paddy. During the rainy months, they live from hand to mouth. During the harvest they are able to save something, when they devise every means of spending it. It is then that they can afford to lie ill and call for the aid of the devil driver, to hold social feasts and dances, to celebrate marriages, to go to law for women's quarrels and to give offerings to their gods. Thus all their savings are squandered. During the summer months, they are in some places engaged in agriculture while in other localities they go to the forests to bring firewood or thorn bushes for their masters. In all cases of their labour, except during harvest, their wages are at the rate already described. Sometimes when pressed by want or hunger, they steal the cocoanuts, arecanuts or paddy belonging to their masters which they are to watch at night. When they are about to be caught, they sometimes run away to distant places to work under some other landlord. If caught they are well thrashed. Some are found working in the houses of Syrian Christians where Pulaya women act as sweepers, cooks and as rice pounders. In these cases, their wages are the same. Some, I am informed, work in plantations, where their wages are higher. Pulaya women are sometimes seen kneeling in water to gather in their basket any grains

* Allowing the hair to grow as a sign of mourning.

that may be found in the fields after harvest. They also catch fish, make baskets and coarse mats for sale.

There are some curious customs connected with harvest, prevailing amongst the Pulayas of the southern parts of the State. Before reaping, the Pulaya headman asks his master whether he may begin to reap. With his permission, he faces the east and puts the sickle to the stalks. The first bundles he reserves for the gods of his master, and the second for those of his castemen. Before thrashing, the same headman takes a few bundles of corn from the sheaf intended for their gods, and sprinkles toddy on them. Another Pulayan does the same thing for the various reapers, and says, as he does so, "come thrashing corn, increase." This is called filling the thrashing floor, and each man thrashes his own sheaves. When the thrashing is over, the headman puts his master's sheaf in the centre of the floor and his own at a short distance outside in order that the two sets of gods may look kindly on. The headman is privileged to measure the corn sitting with his two assistants, saying, "Come paddy, increase" as he counts. He also calls good paddy one, bad paddy two, and so on, until he counts ten. The eleventh is the share of the reaper. He takes a handful of it and places it in a basket, half of which falls to him, his assistants and to the watchman, while the other half is given away in charity to the poor men that come to the thrashing place. In the northern parts of the State, before reaping, offerings of goats, fowls and cocoanuts are made to Mallan and Muni. The Cheruma headman faces east and applies his sickle to the stalks, reserving the first stalk to the deities above mentioned. The corn is thrashed and measured by one of them, and as he does so, he says *labham* (profit) for one, *chetham* (loss) for two and counts regularly up to ten. The eleventh goes to the share of the reapers. Thus they get one *para* for every ten *paras* of corn thrashed. The poor people that attend the spot at the time are also given a handful of the grain. After reaping, the members of the castes named in the table below, receive a small portion

No.	Members of the caste	Purpose for which paddy is given	Remuneration for the services rendered
1	Carpenters	For making and repairing ploughs &c	A big bundle to fetch him a few <i>edangazhies</i> of paddy
2	Blacksmiths	For making sickles, knives and other tools	
3	Parayan	For lifting and placing the loads of stalks on the heads of the Cherumas to carry them to the farmyard	
4	Washerman or Mannan	For keeping off birds, insects &c from the fields by magic	
5	Vilkurup	For treating Cherumas during their illness, and for shampooing them, when wanted.	
6	Kaniyan or Astrologer	For informing them of the auspicious times for ploughing, sowing, transplanting and reaping and also of the time for giving rice, vegetables, oil &c. to the Cherumas during the Onam festival.	
7	Pulayan	For watching	A small portion of the field near the watchman's rest-hut is left unreaped for him. It would fetch him a <i>para</i> of paddy

of the corn for their services rendered to the farmers in the course of the months during which cultivation has been carried on. The Cherumas who are engaged in reaping get two bundles of corn each for every field. For measuring the corn from the farm yard, a Cheruman gets an *edangazhy* of paddy in addition to

his daily wages. Three *paras* of paddy are also set apart for the local village deity. During the month of Karkadakam, the masters of Cherumas give every Cheruman, a fowl, some oil, garlic, mustard, anise seeds, pepper and turmeric. They prepare a decoction of seeds and boil the flesh of the fowl in it, which they take for three days, during which they are allowed to take rest. Three days' wages are also given in advance. Their diet and the rest are intended to gain strength.

Status of the Pulayas.—The Pulayas eat at the hands of all castemen above them, but abstain from eating the food prepared by the Velakkathulavans (barbers), Mannans (washermen), Panans, Vettuvans, Parayans, Nayadis, Ulladans, Malayans, and Kadars. The Pulayas in the southern parts of the State have to stand at a distance of 90 feet from Brahmans and 64 feet from Nayars and this distance gradually diminishes towards the lower castes. They are polluted by Pula Cherumas, Parayas, Nayadis and Ulladans. The Kanakka Cherumas of the Chittur Taluk pollute Era Cherumas and Konga Cherumas by touch and by approach within a distance of seven or eight feet and are themselves polluted by Pula Cherumas, Parayas and Vettuvans, who have to stand at the same distance. Pulayas and Vettuvans bathe when they approach one another, for their status is a point of dispute as to who are superior to the others. They live far away from the vicinity of the high castemen and cannot approach within 120 feet from the outer wall of the temples of high castemen. They are a debased ignorant race and appear also as timid as hares at the approach of human beings. A European can scarcely succeed in coming near them, as their eyes and ears always keep watching for strangers, and they rush away at their approach in spite of every attempt to stop them. They rarely go along the public road, but if they do, they keep looking about to see if any person of the higher caste is near, in which case they dare not proceed. When on or near a road, they shout to give notice or warning of their approach as their presence within a certain distance causes pollution to the people of the superior castes. When

defiled by the touch of a Nayadi, a Cheruman has to bathe in seven tanks and let a few drops of blood flow out from one of his fingers. A Brahman who enters into the compound of a Pulayan has to change his holy thread, and take *panchagavyam** so as to be purified from pollution. In this connection it is curious to note that Malayans who have been considered to be inferior in status to Pulayas are above them; for a Malayan considers himself to be defiled by the touch or by approach within a certain distance, of a Pulayan and bathes to be free from pollution. Further a Malayan stands at a less distance from the high castemen than the Pulayas or the Cherumas. The Valluva Pulayan of the Trichur Taluk fasts for three days, if he happens to touch a cow that has delivered a calf. He lives on toddy and tender cocoanuts. He has also to fast for three days after the delivery of his wife.

Food.—Rice, vegetables, fish and any quantity of toddy form their chief articles of food. Early in the morning they drink the remains of the *kanjy* or rice-water prepared during the previous night, while those in the southern parts are said to abstain from it. They take two meals a day and then greatly indulge in fish and toddy. When the rice is half boiled, fish and vegetables are put in and the mixture eaten. Sometimes when a Pulayan keeps watch in the fields at night, his wife catches some fish, gathers some vegetables, and gives him rice and curry in the field. If she fails to catch fish, she takes the boiled rice, salt and chillies and on her way she catches a fish or two which she puts inside the pot, and the Pulayan eats it with relish. The husband eats the food from the rice basket, and the wife from the pot. It is the privilege of the wife to eat the remains of what the husband has eaten. It often happens that they have nothing to eat on days on which they do no work and though they work hard, they often suffer from sickness and from want of food. Like all slaves they form evil habits of stealing, sensuality, drunkenness and vice which produce or increase suffering. Their lot is a hard one. In rural parts very

* The five gifts of a cow: milk, curds, butter, wine, dung as means of purification.

early in the morning, they may be seen going with a pot or leaf basket to their masters' houses for the remains of food and instructions for the day's work. They are kept toiling all day, manuring, planting, weeding and transplanting with the sun or rain beating upon their naked heads and often with their feet in the mire or water several feet deep. In the evening after their hard work, when they return to their huts hungry and fatigued, they have to prepare their food which consists of rice with some pepper and salt or perhaps some curry and before their meal is prepared it is about 10 o'clock or sometimes even later. They hunt for crabs, tiny fish, snails in the fields, the eggs of red ants or winged white ants or anything else they may get. They abstain from eating beef, and therefore rank above the Parayas. The Pula Cherumas, on the contrary, kill cows when they can afford to do so, to eat the beef and sell the hide. Instances of cow killing by the Parayas and Pula Cherumas are many in rural parts.

Dress, ornaments and games.—Males wear round the loins *mundus* which seldom extend below the knees and are worn until they fall to pieces. They wear a similar dirty cloth on their shoulders. Kanakka'Cherumas in the northern parts and Pulayas in the southern parts shave their heads clean, while the Era Cherumas, Konga Cherumas, and Pula Cherumas grow a tuft of hair on the top of their heads. They are seldom seen with any ornaments on. Women wear a *kacha*, a piece of cloth seven cubits in length, round the loins. They seldom cover their breasts. They wear a black thread round the loins to which is attached a strip of cloth to avoid any indecent exposure of their persons. The hair on the head is neither well parted nor oiled, but is merely tied into a knot pointing upwards and slightly inclined to the back of the head. The ear holes are sufficiently dilated to contain wooden plugs, by the side of which there is another small hole containing ten to fifteen small iron rings. These latter are seen among the Pulaya women of Chalakudi and not in other localities. A necklace of glass beads of European manufacture long enough to go several times is worn round the neck. Brass armlets, as many as a dozen, or more in number are worn round each arm. Sometimes they are so many as to extend as far as the elbow.



A Pulaya group.

Games.—The Pulayas are fond of music and dancing. Their musical instruments are the pipe and the drum. Their games appear to be connected in some way with their religious observances. Their favourite dance is the *Kole Kali* or club dance. A party of ten or twelve men, provided with two sticks, each a yard in length, stand in a circle, and move round, striking at the sticks and keeping time with their feet and singing at the same time. The circle is alternately widened and narrowed. It is an exciting game.

2. *Vatta Kali* is another kind of their wild dancing. This also requires a party of ten or twelve men, and sometimes young women also join them. The party move in a circle, clapping their hands while they sing a kind of rude song. This also appears to be exciting.

3. *Thattinmel Kali*.—Four wooden poles are firmly stuck to the ground, two of which are connected by two horizontal pieces of wood, over which planks are arranged. A party of Pulayas dance on the top of this to the music of their pipe and drum. This is generally erected in front of the Bhagavati temple, and the dancing takes place immediately after the harvest. This is intended to propitiate the goddess.

4. Women perform a circular dance on the occasions of marriage celebrations.

Missionary work among the Pulayas.—The following information has been obtained through my correspondence with the Christian Societies in the State. In the Archdiocese of Verapoly, a few hundreds of cases of conversion of the Pulayas to Christianity take place every year, and the converts are given secular primary instruction. Their moral and religious instruction is attended to in a special manner. The Reverend A. E. David of the Church Mission Society of Trichur says:— We have been working among the Pulayas for the last thirty-five years in and around Trichur. There are two hundreds of Pulaya converts in two places, and they have been very much raised from their low state of degradation—their mode of living, their manners and

position they now occupy, are vastly superior to what their fellow-men enjoy. Many of their men, women and children are taught reading and writing, and their girls needlework also. One boy and girl have passed the Lower Secondary Examination, and this is the highest standard they have reached in education. There are some boys in the Upper Primary classes reading English. A school for them was started in a rural part, which went on well for sometime, but was owing to the opposition of the masters of the Pulayas abolished. In the Kunnankulam Pastorate, there are, I hear, twelve families of Pulaya converts consisting of thirteen men, eighteen women and twenty-five children, making a total of fifty-six persons in all". The Reverend P. J. Joshua says that as soon as a Pulayan becomes a convert, he is allowed unreservedly to mingle with the other Christians, who give him free entrance into their houses and in this respect they are more liberal and less superstitious than those in Cochin and Travancore. In the latter state, they have separate churches, but their attendance in other churches is freely allowed. The Pulaya converts are more decent and less uncleanly in their habits than other Pulayas. Their children are admitted into the schools and some of them are learning English and the Vernacular. They are poor and maintain themselves by cooly work; but have shown their aptitude for other kinds of work as well. One of them is a teacher, another a farmer on a small scale, a third a copper smith and a fourth is a masonry with a small number of coolies under him. The Reverend gentleman says, that if opportunities are given them of improving their talents, they will do good to the down-trodden community and to the Mission Societies that are ever doing their best to improve their condition.

Population.—The Pulayas with the various subtribes numbered at the last census 59,844; 28,814 being males and 31,025 females. The latter exceeded the former by 2,211. They form about 75 per cent. of the agrestic serfs and 11 per cent. of the Hindu population of the State. It is said, that if men or any other kind of animals were invariably mated early, and if their offspring were always reared with care, the produce would increase geometrically, and in no large number of generations, would occupy every habitable space.

But, as a fact, the number of inhabitants of most countries are kept stationary. There are certain influences which neutralize the tendency to increase. This can be well seen by exhaustively working out the history of twenty or thirty families. This may give us an idea of the age at which the members marry, the child-bearing age, the number of children (males and females), the cases and number of infant mortality. The necessary statistics from twenty-five families of the Pulayas and their subtribes were taken by me, from different parts of the State. The results of the investigations are given below.

Kanakka Cherumas.

Number	Age of mother	Children		
		Living		Dead
		Males	Females	
1	22—34	3	6	4
2	18—28	4	2	2
3	24—32	2	2	2
4	19	1		
5	2—34	2	4	8
6	24—30	1	2	2
7	20—32	2	4	2
8	19	1		
9	22—28	1	3	2
10	20—35	1	3	2
11	22—40	2	1	
12	20—30	3	3	4
13	21—25	2	1	1
14	22—24	2	2	
15	18—29	3	2	1
16	21—30	1	4	1
17	22—27		2	
18	19—32	1	4	2
19	24—40	3	1	
20	18—23		2	
21	23—38		1	4
22	25—42	1		
23	20—35		2	
24	19—26	1	1	
25	25—35	3	2	1

Number of women examined	25
Males alive	38
Females alive	54
Dead	33

Prevailing forms of disease.—Fever, dysentery, diarrhea, small-pox.

Era Cheramas.

Number	Age of mother	Children		
		Living		Dead
		Males	Females	
1	16—23	3	2	2 Fever
2	16—37	6	6	6 Do smallpox
3	18—24		3	
4	20	1		
5	18—25	1	3	2 Fever, measles
6	15—25	1	2	
7	18—26	2	4	2
8	19—30	3	2	1
9	18—27	2	1	1
10	22—30	1	4	1
11	19—25	2	2	2 Fever, Dysentery
12	22—24		2	
13	32—40	8	2	3
14	18—24	2	1	1
15	20—33	3	2	3
16	22—28	1	3	•
17	20—37	2	3	2 Fever, Diarrhoea
18	20—27	3	1	2
19	21—36	2	4	4
20	19—30	2	2	2
21	22—26	1		1
22	19			
23	27—35		2	
24	20			
25	26—37	2	3	2

Number of women examined	25
Males alive	43
Females alive	53
Dead	37

