SOCIOLOGY OF KERALA SOCIETY

COURSE CODE: M21SO03DE

Postgraduate Programme in Sociology
Discipline Specific Elective Course

SELF LEARNING MATERIAL

SREENARAYANAGURU
OPEN UNIVERSITY

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

The State University for Education, Training and Research in Blended Format, Kerala

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

Vision

To increase access of potential learners of all categories to higher education, research and training, and ensure equity through delivery of high quality processes and outcomes fostering inclusive educational empowerment for social advancement.

Mission

To be benchmarked as a model for conservation and dissemination of knowledge and skill on blended and virtual mode in education, training and research for normal, continuing, and adult learners.

Pathway

Access and Quality define Equity.

Sociology of Kerala Society
Course Code: M21SO03DE
Semester - III

Discipline Specific Elective Course
Postgraduate Programme in Sociology
Self Learning Material

(With Model Question Paper Sets)

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

The State University for Education, Training and Research in Blended Format, Kerala

Sociology of Kerala Society
M21SO03DE
Semester - III
Discipline Specific Elective Course
MA Sociology

SREENARAYANAGURU
OPEN UNIVERSITY

DOCUMENTATION

YouTube

Facebook

Instagram

Dear learner,

I extend my heartfelt greetings and profound enthusiasm as I warmly welcome you to Sreenarayanaguru Open University. Established in September 2020 as a state-led endeavour to promote higher education through open and distance learning modes, our institution was shaped by the guiding principle that access and quality are the cornerstones of equity. We have firmly resolved to uphold the highest standards of education, setting the benchmark and charting the course.

The courses offered by the Sreenarayanaguru Open University aim to strike a quality balance, ensuring students are equipped for both personal growth and professional excellence. The University embraces the widely acclaimed "blended format," a practical framework that harmoniously integrates Self-Learning Materials, Classroom Counseling, and Virtual modes, fostering a dynamic and enriching experience for both learners and instructors.

The university aims to offer you an engaging and thought-provoking educational journey. The Postgraduate Programme in Sociology naturally follows from the undergraduate programme. It mainly focuses on theories and practical applications. The programme uses vivid examples to make the subject interesting and relevant to learners. By combining academic content with empirical evidence, the programme becomes both unique and practical. The Self-Learning Material has been meticulously crafted, incorporating relevant examples to facilitate better comprehension.

Rest assured, the university's student support services will be at your disposal throughout your academic journey, readily available to address any concerns or grievances you may encounter. We encourage you to reach out to us freely regarding any matter about your academic programme. It is our sincere wish that you achieve the utmost success.

Regards,
Dr. Jagathy Raj V. P.   01-09-2024

Contents

Kerala Social Structure: Sociological View

BLOCK-01

Historical Background

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, learners will be able to:

♦ comprehend the historical and geographical factors that shaped the unique social structure of Kerala

♦ analyse the evolution of Kerala's political landscape

♦ evaluate the key social, cultural, and economic reforms that led to Kerala's development model

♦ examine the role of religion and caste in Kerala's socio-political history

Background

Kerala, a state on the southwestern coast of India, has a rich and complex history marked by its distinct geography, cultural diversity, and socio-political evolution. From ancient times, Kerala has been a hub for trade and cultural exchange, owing to its strategic position along the Arabian Sea. This unique geographical location not only isolated Kerala from much of the Indian subcontinent but also opened it up to influences from traders, invaders, and settlers from different parts of the world, such as Arabs, Jews, Chinese, and Europeans.

The Chera dynasty, which ruled Kerala from the 3rd century BCE (Before Common Era, is equivalent to "BC" (Before Christ) to the early medieval period, was instrumental in establishing Kerala as a significant player in the global spice trade. However, Kerala's political landscape was often tumultuous, marked by invasions from neighbouring kingdoms like the Cholas and Pandyas. Over the centuries, Kerala evolved into a feudal society, where the caste system was central in determining social and political power. The Namboodiri Brahmins, through their knowledge and influence over religious and political institutions, established dominance over the social order, shaping Kerala's rigid caste hierarchy.

The arrival of European powers, starting with the Portuguese in the 15th century, followed by the Dutch, French, and British, introduced new political, economic, and

religious dynamics to the region. The Europeans sought control over Kerala's spice trade and influenced its religious landscape, mainly through the spread of Christianity. The Portuguese, in particular, played a crucial role in converting sections of Kerala's population to Catholicism, which later led to religious conflicts and divisions within the Christian community. In the 19th and 20th centuries, Kerala witnessed a series of social reform movements to address the inequalities perpetuated by the caste system and improve access to education and property for marginalized communities. Leaders such as Sree Narayana Guru and Ayyankali championed the cause of the lower castes, advocating for social equality and the importance of education. The rise of the communist movement in Kerala, spearheaded by figures like E.M.S. Namboodiripad, leads to significant political changes and the introduction of land reforms.

Post-independence, Kerala emerged as a model state regarding human development, achieving remarkable success in literacy, healthcare, and social equality. The "Kerala Model" of development, characterised by high social indicators despite low economic growth, directly results from the state's progressive policies in land reform, education, and healthcare. However, Kerala faces challenges, including unemployment, economic stagnation, and migration, which require innovative solutions.

This unit will lead you to these historical, social, and political developments that have shaped modern Kerala, providing learners with an in-depth understanding of the state's unique trajectory.

Keywords

Communist movement, Kerala model, Social reform movements, Panchayati Raj, Khilafat movement

Discussion

1.1.1 Social Formation in Kerala

Kerala is located on India's southwestern coast, with the Arabian Sea to the east, Western Ghats to the west, Karnataka to the north, and Tamil Nadu to the south. Coastal lowlands, fertile midlands, and mountains separate the state. Kerala's lowlands are connected by backwaters, which include several lagoons, lakes, canals, estuaries, and the deltas of forty-four rivers. The midlands are abundant in cashew, coconut, areca nut, tapioca, banana, rice, pepper, sugarcane, and vegetable crops. The highlands are rich in

♦ *Historical significance*

tea, coffee, rubber, spice plantations, mist-clad hill stations, lush green tropical forests, waterfalls, unusual fauna, monuments, art forms, and festivals, earning our nation the nickname "God's own country."

During the British period, the state was divided into three administrative units: the Malabar region, a district of the Madras presidency directly under British rule, and Travancore and Cochin, which were tribute-paying states under the imperial control of the colonial government. The current state of Kerala was established on November 1, 1956, due to the linguistic reorganisation of states in India under the State Reorganisation Act of 1956.

Regarding population, the pre-Dravidian aborigines, such as Aryans, would be recognised as Kerala's first occupants. When applied in an ethnological context, the Dravidian phase, which was initially simply philological, seeks accuracy. Dravidians were quite familiar with agriculture. Division of work existed before the arrival of the Aryans, but it was not seen as a role in societal prejudice. The strict segmentation of the population into castes was conspicuously absent. The dignity of employment was restored everywhere, and individuals enjoyed significant social freedom and quality; caste and social exclusivity were unknown. Almost all historians agree there was no caste-based social stratification in the early Christian ages.

♦ *Division of work*

1.1.1.1 Historical Backgrounds

History offers us a glimpse into human societies' evolution, successes, and failures. While history documents the events that shaped humanity, historiography examines how historians have written, analysed, and interpreted history. The study of Kerala's history has evolved over the years, with early historical writings focusing on mythological and literary accounts, while modern scholarship seeks to reconstruct Kerala's past using rigorous academic methodologies.

♦ *Evolution of human societies*

Kerala's early historical accounts were often mythological, with works like the Mushaka Vamsa Kavya and various local ballads providing insight into the state's past. Mushaka Vamsa Kavya, composed by Atula, the court poet of the Mushaka kingdom of Ezhimala, chronicles the kingdom's history from its founding to the reign of Srikanta in the 11th century. Though written in Sanskrit, it is an invaluable literary source for reconstructing the political and social history of early Kerala. The *Vadakkan Pattukal* (Northern Ballads) and *Thekkan Pattukal* (Southern Ballads) are other important sources that provide a glimpse into the heroism of Kerala's medieval warriors and the social mores of the time. These

♦ *Mythological narratives*

ballads narrate the adventures of figures like Aromal Chekavar and Thacholi Othenan in the north and reflect the region's cultural and political dynamics.

1.1.1.2 Granthavaris and Historical Records

Granthavaris's temple and royal records collections are important historical documents that shed light on Kerala's administrative and social organisation during medieval times. Among the most notable are the Mathilakam Records, which detail the affairs of the Padmanabha Swamy Temple in Thiruvananthapuram. These records offer insights into the region's temple management, royal decrees, and social interactions.

♦ *Medieval period*

Other significant granthavaris include those associated with the Zamorins of Kozhikode, highlighting this dynasty's political and economic dominance in northern Kerala. Additionally, records from the Nilampur Kovilakam, Peruvanam Temple, and Pattazhi Temple provide glimpses into the local governance systems, religious practices, and feudal structures of the time.

The Payyannur Pattola, another critical source of historical information, documents events in northern Kerala and adds to our understanding of the interactions between local chieftains, temples, and regional powers.

1.1.1.3 Keralolpathi

The *Keralolpathi* is a traditional Malayalam work that narrates the mythological origins of Kerala. Composed in the 16th century, it is divided into three main parts, detailing the creation of Kerala by the sage Parasurama, the reign of the Perumals, and the conflicts involving the Zamorins. For a long time, *Keralolpathi* was considered a primary source of historical knowledge about Kerala.

♦ *Myth and history*

However, modern historians view *Keralolpathi* as a blend of myth and history. While some aspects of the text, such as its descriptions of local customs and the administrative structures of medieval Kerala, are supported by other historical sources, other elements—such as the claim that Parasurama reclaimed Kerala from the sea—are recognised as mythological. Nevertheless, *Keralolpathi* remains a vital text for understanding how Keralites viewed their history in the ear

1.1.1.4 Kerala Mahatmyam

The *Kerala Mahatmyam*, a Sanskrit work from the Brahmandapurana, consists of 100 sections with over 2,000

couplets. This text dates to the 18th century and provides an account of Kerala's religious and cultural history, focusing on legendary figures and events. It includes narratives of the early settlements of Keralites, the influence of Aryan Brahmins, and the introduction of Hindu deities.

1.1.1.5 Modern Historical Writings: Colonial Period

During the colonial period, a more scientific approach to history emerged in Kerala, with scholars focusing on documenting the political, social, and economic changes brought about by British rule. One of this period's earliest and most influential works is the 1878 *Malabar Manual* (1887), which provides a detailed account of the Malabar district under British administration.Logan's work covers a wide range of topics, including the geography, culture, and economy of the region, as well as the customs and practices of the local population. Unlike earlier historians, his approach was to document the area from a neutral, administrative perspective rather than glorifying local rulers. Logan's manual remains a foundational text for studying Kerala's history, particularly for its insights into the Nair territorial structure and the Moplah uprisings.

Other significant works from this period include K.P. Padmanabha Menon's *Kochirajya Charitram* (1868), which documents the history of the Cochin royal family, and Shankunny Menon's *A History of Travancore* (1878), which chronicles the political history of the Travancore kingdom. Though focused on the ruling dynasties, these works provide valuable historical data and laid the groundwork for modern Kerala historiography.

1.1.1.6 Gazetteers and the Documentation of Kerala

Gazetteers, which are geographical dictionaries that provide comprehensive information on a region's social, political, historical, and economic aspects, played an essential role in documenting Kerala's history during the colonial period. The Kerala State Gazetteer, initiated in the 20th century, provides a wealth of data on Kerala's culture, geography, and governance. District-level gazetteers for regions such as Alappuzha, Palakkad, and Kottayam also serve as crucial resources for historians and scholars.

The Travancore State Manual by Nagam Aiyya (1906) and the Cochin State Manual by C. Achuta Menon (1911) are gazetteers that document the history and governance of Kerala's princely states. These manuals offer detailed accounts of the administrative systems, legal codes, and social customs that shaped Kerala in the early 20th century.

1.1.1.7 Pachu Muthathu's Contribution

In 1867, Pachu Muthathu wrote *Thiruvitamkur Charithram*, one of the earliest attempts to document the history of Travancore. This work drew from government records, local ballads, and granthavaris to provide a historical account of the Travancore kingdom. Muthathu's approach to history emphasised the virtues and character of notable figures, and his work laid the foundation for future historians in Kerala.

1.1.1.8 Shankunny Menon's Legacy

Shankunny Menon's *A History of Travancore* (1878) marks a turning point in Kerala historiography. It catered to the growing demand for historical works among English-educated readers in colonial Kerala. Menon's history focused on political figures and events, documenting the reigns of Travancore's rulers and their interactions with the British.

♦ *Historical narrative construction*

Although Menon relied on local legends and traditions without written records, his work is valuable for its detailed recounting of Travancore's political history and early engagement with European powers. Menon's work set the stage for more scientific approaches to history in Kerala, and his use of sources such as government records, copper plates, and inscriptions marked a significant step forward in historical scholarship.

1.1.2 Factors of Social Formation

Various factors, including geography, migration, and religious influence, have shaped Kerala's social structure. Kerala's social formations do not conform neatly to the four-fold Chaturvarnya (caste system) traditionally observed in many parts of India. Instead, the state's social hierarchy developed distinct characteristics, with notable communities such as the Nayars and Ezhavas forming major social groups.

♦ *Religious influence*

1.1.2.1 Caste and Sub-Caste Structures

Kerala's caste system is complex, with multiple sub-castes evolving around the main caste groups. The Scheduled Castes and Tribes, while often grouped, do not share enough common cultural traits to be considered a single social unit. Social mobility in Kerala has historically been influenced by caste, with lower-caste groups adopting the cultural practices of higher castes to elevate their social status.Caste plays a significant role in Kerala's social and political life. Despite modernisation and reforms, caste affiliations still influence political alliances, economic mobility, and social interactions. The ongoing caste dynamics in Kerala illustrate how traditional social structures continue to shape the state's modern political framework.

♦ *Social mobility and caste*

1.1.2.2 Cultural Evolution and Reform Movements

Distinct cultural identity

The cultural and religious landscape of Kerala has evolved significantly over the centuries. Influenced by both Aryan and Dravidian traditions, as well as by contact with Arab traders and European colonisers, Kerala developed a unique cultural identity. The Tamil-speaking peoples of Kerala established a sophisticated civilisation over two millennia ago, independent of the Aryan north. The Sangam texts and foreign sources from this period refer to the whole of South India as Tamilakam, highlighting the region's shared linguistic and cultural heritage. Over time, Kerala developed its distinct culture, incorporating elements from Aryan, Arab, and European influences. The region's religious practices also evolved, with the rise of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity, and Islam contributing to Kerala's rich religious diversity.

1.1.2.3 Brahminical Influence and the Social Structure

Goverance and social life

The establishment of Brahmin colonies in Kerala during the 9th century significantly influenced the region's social structure. These Brahmin settlements, often centred around temples, were strategically organised with institutional and ideological backing. The Brahmins, particularly the Namboodiri Brahmins, became powerful due to their extensive knowledge of religious scriptures and involvement in temple administration. They used their authority to shape religious and secular matters, becoming key figures in Kerala's governance and social life. The rise of the Kulasekharas marked the final phase of Brahmin dominance in Kerala. The Kulasekhara kings, who ruled between the 9th and 12th centuries, were ardent supporters of Brahmanism, and during their reign, numerous temples were constructed, further solidifying Brahmin influence. As advisors to the kings, the Namboodiris became central to Kerala's power structure, overseeing religious and political matters.

Integration of power and religion

By the 12th century, Kerala had evolved into a feudal society, with local rulers (Naduvazhis) administering various regions. The Brahminical moral order was central to the governance of these local rulers, who relied on Brahmin advisors for guidance on legal and political matters. Customary law, or Desamaryada, governed much of Kerala's social and legal systems, and Brahmin jurisprudence played a crucial role in shaping these traditions.

1.1.2.4 Portuguese and Dutch Influence

The arrival of the Portuguese in the late 15th century marked the beginning of European intervention in Kerala. Vasco da Gama's landing at Kappad near Calicut in 1498 opened the doors

to European colonisation. The Portuguese sought to control the lucrative spice trade, particularly the trade in pepper, which had made Kerala a hub for global commerce.

The Portuguese established trading posts and fortified settlements along the Malabar Coast, most notably at Cochin. Their influence, however, was not purely economic. They also sought to spread Christianity, leading to significant religious changes in the region. The Portuguese influence waned by the mid-17th century when the Dutch replaced them as the dominant European power in Kerala.

The Dutch East India Company, which arrived in Kerala in 1663, focused primarily on trade. The Dutch had a lasting impact on Kerala's economy and society, but like the Portuguese, their influence was eventually replaced by the British, who became the dominant colonial power in the region by the late 18th century.

1.1.2.5 Religious Diversity and Conflict

Kerala's religious landscape has always been characterised by diversity. Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity, and Islam have all shaped the state's cultural and spiritual identity. Hinduism was the dominant religion in Kerala from ancient times, but the arrival of Buddhism and Jainism during the early centuries of the Common Era brought new ideas and practices to the region. The influence of Buddhism and Jainism waned by the end of the first millennium, but their legacy continued in Kerala's art, architecture, and religious practices. The emergence of Christianity in Kerala is traditionally linked to the arrival of St. Thomas, one of the apostles of Jesus Christ, in the 1st century CE. The Syrian Christians of Kerala, also known as St. Thomas Christians, trace their origins to this early Christian community.

Islam arrived in Kerala through Arab traders in the 8th century, and it quickly spread, particularly in the northern parts of the state. The Cheraman Perumal tradition holds that the last ruler of the Chera dynasty was converted to Islam and travelled to Mecca, a story that, while not historically verifiable, reflects the early presence of Islam in Kerala. The Mappila Muslim community, concentrated in Malabar, played an essential role in Kerala's maritime trade and military history, particularly as naval commanders (Kunjali Marakkars) in the Zamorin's fleet.

Religious conflict has occasionally marred Kerala's otherwise peaceful coexistence of different faiths. One of the most significant religious conflicts occurred in the 17th century when a section of the Catholic Church in Kerala broke away from the Roman Catholic Church, forming the Jacobite Syrian Church. This schism was

partly a response to Portuguese attempts to impose Latin Catholic rites on Kerala's Syrian Christian community. Over the centuries, Kerala's Christian communities have continued to evolve, with new denominations such as the Marthoma Syrian Church emerging.

1.1.2.6 The Rise of Social Reform Movements

♦ *Role in social upliftment*

The 19th and early 20th centuries saw the rise of social reform movements in Kerala, driven by the growing awareness of caste inequalities, social injustices, and religious oppression. These movements were instrumental in reshaping Kerala's social structure and fostering greater equality.One of the most critical figures in Kerala's social reform movement was Sree Narayana Guru, a spiritual leader and social reformer who challenged the caste-based discrimination prevalent in Kerala society. Narayana Guru's teachings emphasized the oneness of humanity and the importance of education and self-respect for all individuals, regardless of caste. He founded the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP), crucial in uplifting the lower castes, particularly the Ezhava community.

♦ *Advocacy for dalit rights*

Other significant reformers include Ayyankali, who fought for the rights of the Dalits, particularly in securing educational opportunities for the oppressed classes, and Chattambi Swamikal, who advocated for social equality and spiritual awakening. These reformers laid the foundation for Kerala's progressive social policies, which would later be institutionalized through land reforms and educational initiatives.

1.1.2.7 Land Reforms and Economic Changes

♦ *Addressing inequality*

The post-independence period in Kerala was marked by sweeping land reforms that addressed the deep-rooted inequalities in land ownership and agriculture. The Kerala Land Reforms Act of 1969 was a landmark legislation that abolished tenancy and granted ownership rights to former tenants, dismantling the feudal landholding system that had dominated Kerala for centuries.

♦ *Transformation of agrarian economy*

Under the land reforms, large estates were broken up, and the surplus land was redistributed to landless peasants. This not only improved the economic conditions of the rural poor but also transformed Kerala's agrarian economy. Land reforms and investments in education and healthcare contributed to the rise of what is now known as the "Kerala Model" of development, characterised by high human development indicators despite relatively low per capita income.

1.1.2.8 Nationalist Movements and Independence

♦ *Active participation*

Kerala played an active role in India's independence movement, mainly through its involvement in the Khilafat Movement and the Salt Satyagraha. The Khilafat Movement aimed to protect the Ottoman Caliphate and became a rallying point for Hindu-Muslim unity in Kerala. Leaders like M. P. Narayana Menon and K. Kelappan were instrumental in mobilising the people of Kerala against British rule during this period.The Salt Satyagraha of 1930, led by Mahatma Gandhi, significantly impacted Kerala. Local leaders such as K. Kelappan and T. R. Krishnaswami Iyer organised satyagrahas in places like Calicut and Payyanur, where volunteers marched to break the Salt Law. The British authorities met the protests with violent repression but helped galvanise the independence movement in Kerala.

♦ *Formation of peasant association*

Kerala's nationalist movement also focused on local issues, particularly the rights of the peasantry and labourers. The Karshaka Sanghams (Peasant Associations) that emerged in the 1930s worked to address the grievances of the rural poor, particularly in the Malabar region. The national movement gained further momentum after the Second World War, and by 1947, Kerala, like the rest of India, was ready for independence.

1.1.2.9 The Library Movement

♦ *Intellectual and cultural development*

The library movement in Kerala was essential to the state's intellectual and cultural development. It began in the early 19th century, with the establishment of the Trivandrum Public Library in 1829, one of the oldest libraries in India. Over the decades, public libraries were established in major cities and towns, including Ernakulam, Kottayam, and Quilon. In 1945, the All Travancore Grandhasala Sangham was founded to promote the development of libraries in Travancore. The movement expanded rapidly, and by the time of Kerala's formation in 1956, there were more than 5,000 libraries across the state. The Kerala Grandhasala Sangham (Kerala State Library Council), which now oversees public libraries, was reorganised in 1989 under the Kerala Public Libraries Act.

♦ *Expansion and accessibility*

The library movement played a significant role in fostering literacy and education in Kerala, contributing to the state's reputation for high educational standards and widespread literacy. Libraries became centres for learning, debate, and social reform, and they continue to be essential institutions in Kerala's intellectual life.

1.1.3 The Kerala Model of Development

Kerala's post-independence trajectory has often been described as the Kerala Model of Development, a unique socio-economic development strategy that has garnered attention both in India and internationally. This model is characterised by high human development indicators, including high literacy rates, life expectancy, and low infant mortality, despite having relatively low per capita income compared to other Indian states. The success of the Kerala Model can be attributed to several factors, including land reforms, investment in public education, and a robust healthcare system. The reforms implemented in the 1960s and 1970s redistributed land to the landless and small farmers, reducing economic inequality and increasing agricultural productivity. Public investment in education, particularly the emphasis on universal literacy, contributed to Kerala's high literacy rate, which stands at over 94%, one of the highest in India.

♦ Socio-economic development

Kerala's healthcare system, focusing on primary and public health infrastructure, has also played a crucial role in the state's development. Kerala has some of the best health indicators in the country, including a life expectancy of over 75 years and a low infant mortality rate. This achievement is mainly due to the state's emphasis on accessible healthcare services for all sections of society. However, the Kerala Model is not without its challenges. The state's economy has faced unemployment, out-migration (particularly to the Gulf countries), and a growing dependency on remittances from the diaspora. Additionally, while social indicators remain high, Kerala's industrial growth has been slower than other Indian states, leading to a lack of job opportunities for its highly educated workforce.

♦ Human development indicators

1.1.4 Migration and the Kerala Diaspora

Migration has been a defining feature of Kerala's socio-economic landscape, particularly in the post-independence period. The first significant wave of migration occurred in the 1960s and 1970s when many Keralites, particularly from the Muslim and Christian communities, began migrating to the Gulf countries for better economic opportunities. The Gulf Boom of the 1970s and 1980s saw a massive outflow of labour from Kerala to countries such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Oman. This migration was driven mainly by the demand for skilled and semi-skilled labour in the Gulf's construction and service sectors. Over the decades, remittances from the Gulf have become vital to Kerala's economy, contributing significantly to household incomes, real estate investments, and local businesses.

♦ Socio-economic landscape

The impact of the diaspora on Kerala's economy and society has been profound. Remittances have helped improve living standards for many families, contributing to better education, healthcare, and housing. However, the reliance on remittances has also created vulnerabilities, particularly during periods of economic downturn in the Gulf region. The COVID-19 pandemic, for example, highlighted the risks associated with an over-reliance on remittances, as many migrant workers lost their jobs and returned to Kerala.

♦ *Economic resilience*

1.1.5 Cultural Renaissance in Kerala

In the 19th and 20th centuries, we witnessed a cultural renaissance in Kerala, marked by the growth of Malayalam literature, theatre, and performing arts. This period was characterised by a revival of Kerala's traditional art forms and the emergence of modern cultural expressions. One of the most influential figures during this time was Changampuzha Krishna Pillai, a romantic poet whose works embodied the spirit of the Malayalam literary renaissance. His poetry, particularly the iconic work *Ramanan*, captured the imagination of the Malayali public and continues to be celebrated as a landmark in Malayalam literature. In the realm of theatre, the modern Malayalam theatre was shaped by playwrights like N.K. Achary, Kavalam Narayana Panicker, and G. Sankara Pillai. Their works brought a new depth to Kerala's theatrical traditions, blending folk and classical forms.

♦ *Literary renaissance*

Kerala's classical and folk arts also experienced resurgence during this period. Classical dance forms such as Kathakali and Mohiniyattam gained prominence as part of the state's cultural identity. Kathakali, a form of dance-drama that evolved in the 17th century, is known for its elaborate costumes, facial expressions, and highly stylized gestures. It continues to be one of Kerala's most iconic art forms. Folk arts such as Theyyam, Padayani, and Pulikali also underwent a revival, with increasing efforts to preserve these traditions as part of Kerala's cultural heritage. These forms of ritualistic performance, rooted in Kerala's rural communities, are still celebrated today, particularly during festivals and temple ceremonies.

♦ *Performing arts*

1.1.6 The Role of Women in Kerala's Social Transformation

Kerala's social reforms and progressive policies have played a crucial role in improving the status of women in the state. Historically, Kerala's matrilineal system, known as Marumakkathayam, provided women with a unique social position compared to other parts of India. Women had greater control over

♦ *Matrilineal system*

property and were often the heads of the household in matrilineal communities such as the Nairs. However, the decline of matriline in the 20th century led to significant changes in women's societal roles.

The rise of social reform movements in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, led by figures such as Sree Narayana Guru and Ayyankali, brought attention to women's issues, particularly concerning caste-based discrimination and lack of access to education. Women's participation in the labour force and public life increased, especially after the land reforms and the spread of universal education. Kerala's high literacy rate, which includes a significant increase in female literacy, has been one of the critical drivers of women's empowerment in the state. Education has enabled women to enter various professions, including medicine, law, and education. Today, women in Kerala have higher labour force participation than the national average, although there are still gaps in specific sectors.

♦ Influence of social reform movements

♦ Increased participation in public life

Women's political participation has also seen significant growth. Kerala has produced several prominent female political leaders, including former ministers and members of the legislative assembly. Despite these gains, challenges remain, particularly in addressing issues such as gender-based violence, wage disparities, and the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles in various sectors.

1.1.7 Kerala's Educational System

Education has been a cornerstone of Kerala's development, and the state is often hailed as a model for other regions in India. Historically, Kerala had a strong tradition of learning, with schools attached to temples, mosques, and churches providing religious education and instruction in local languages. However, it was during the British colonial period that the foundations of Kerala's modern education system were laid. The efforts of missionaries, particularly in Travancore and Cochin, contributed significantly to the spread of modern education in Kerala. The introduction of English-medium schools, alongside local initiatives to promote education among the lower castes, created the conditions for widespread literacy. By the early 20th century, education had become one of the primary concerns of social reformers, who sought to extend learning opportunities to marginalized communities, including women, Dalits, and other disadvantaged groups.

♦ The efforts of missionaries

The post-independence period saw Kerala's state government actively invest in education. The state prioritized universal literacy and primary education, making schooling accessible to all sections

of society. Government programs ensured that even the most remote areas had access to schools, with a strong emphasis on improving the quality of education. By the 1970s, Kerala had achieved near-universal literacy; today, the state boasts one of the highest literacy rates in India. In addition to primary and secondary education, Kerala has developed a strong network of higher education institutions, including universities, colleges, and technical institutes. The state's commitment to education has been a critical factor in its social and economic development, enabling Kerala to produce a highly skilled workforce.

Despite these successes, challenges remain. The state's education system faces issues related to the employability of graduates, with many highly educated individuals finding it difficult to secure jobs in the local economy. This has led to a phenomenon known as "educated unemployment," where individuals with advanced degrees struggle to find work that matches their qualifications. Efforts are underway to address these challenges through curriculum reforms, vocational training, and partnerships with industries

1.1.8 Caste and Class Relations in Modern Kerala

Despite the progressive social reforms of the 19th and 20th centuries, caste and class play significant roles in Kerala's society. Historically, Kerala's caste system was rigidly hierarchical, with Brahmins (Namboodiris) and other upper-caste groups, such as the Nayars, occupying the top of the social order. Dalits and other marginalized communities, including the Ezhavas, were often excluded from social, religious, and economic life.

Social reformers like Sree Narayana Guru, Ayyankali, and Chattambi Swamikal fought to challenge these inequalities, advocating for greater access to education, property rights, and political participation for lower castes. These movements led to significant changes in Kerala's caste system, particularly after the land reforms of the 1960s and 1970s, which redistributed land and reduced the economic power of upper-caste landlords.

Today, caste-based discrimination is less overt, but it persists in more subtle forms. Caste identities continue to shape social interactions, political alliances, and economic opportunities, particularly in rural areas. While Kerala is often seen as a state that has transcended caste divisions, class inequalities, particularly in terms of access to resources and opportunities, remain a challenge. A sharp division between the formal and informal sectors characterises Kerala's economy. While many people work in agriculture, construction, and other labour-intensive industries, the

♦ *Government programs*

♦ *Educated unemployment*

♦ *Marginalized communities*

♦ *Caste in equalities*

♦ *Public sector*

state also has a highly educated middle class working in the public sector, education, and professional services. The gap between these two groups has created tensions, notably as economic growth has slowed in recent years.

Despite these challenges, Kerala remains a relatively egalitarian society compared to other Indian states. The state's social safety nets, including programs for the elderly, disabled, and marginalized communities, have helped mitigate some of the inequalities caused by class and caste divisions.

1.1.10 Political Landscape and Governance

♦ *Political mobilization*

Kerala's political landscape is known for its vibrant democracy and active civic participation. The state has a unique political culture characterised by a high level of political awareness, frequent political mobilization, and a strong tradition of coalition politics. Kerala's political parties, particularly the dominant coalitions—the Left Democratic Front (LDF) and the United Democratic Front (UDF)—have shaped the state's governance and policy direction for decades.

♦ *Political environment*

The LDF, led by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI (M)), and the UDF, led by the Indian National Congress, have alternated in power since the formation of the state in 1956. This system of alternating governments has created a dynamic political environment, with both coalitions focusing on different aspects of governance. The LDF, with its roots in socialist ideology, has traditionally emphasised land reforms, labour rights, and public services, particularly in education and healthcare. The UDF, while also committed to social welfare, has focused more on economic development, infrastructure, and industrial growth

♦ *Political awareness*

Kerala's decentralised governance model, introduced through the People's Plan Campaign in the late 1996s, has been a critical factor in its success. This model allows for local self-governance through elected village councils (panchayats), empowered to make regional development, healthcare, and education decisions. This participatory model has improved governance by bringing decision-making closer to the people and ensuring that local needs are addressed more effectively. A high level of political awareness and active civic engagement also characterises Kerala's political culture. The state has a tradition of mass movements, protests, and strikes, with political parties, trade unions, and student organisations playing a prominent role in shaping public discourse. This active civic participation has ensured political leaders remain accountable to their constituencies.

However, Kerala's political landscape is not without challenges. The state has seen a rise in political violence, particularly between rival party cadres. Additionally, issues such as corruption and bureaucratic inefficiency continue to affect governance. Despite these challenges, Kerala's political system remains one of India's most robust and inclusive.

Summarised Overview

This unit explores the complex socio-political history of Kerala, tracing its evolution from ancient times to post-independence. The historical context begins with Kerala's strategic location along the Arabian Sea, which enabled it to become a central player in the global spice trade during the reign of the Chera dynasty. This geographical advantage, however, also made Kerala a target for invasions by neighbouring kingdoms and attracted the attention of European colonial powers such as the Portuguese, Dutch, and British, all of whom sought control over Kerala's lucrative spice trade.

Kerala's social structure was deeply influenced by the rigid caste hierarchy, with the Namboodiri Brahmins exerting control over both religious and political matters. The matrilineal system of inheritance, Marumakkathayam, was another unique feature of Kerala's social organization, providing women with more rights in property ownership compared to other parts of India. Religious diversity also played a crucial role in shaping Kerala's social fabric, with Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam coexisting, although not without tensions, particularly after the arrival of European colonialists.

The 19th and 20th centuries saw the emergence of social reform movements aimed at dismantling the entrenched caste system and advocating for the rights of marginalized communities, particularly the Ezhavas and Dalits. Leaders like Sree Narayana Guru and Ayyankali pushed for greater access to education, property rights, and social mobility for lower castes. These movements laid the groundwork for the political changes that followed.

The rise of the communist movement in Kerala, led by E.M.S. Namboodiripad and others, marked a significant shift in the state's political landscape. The communist government's policies on land reform, education, and healthcare have had lasting effects on Kerala's development, helping the state achieve high literacy rates, low infant mortality, and improved social equality. Despite modest economic growth, this "Kerala Model" of development has been widely studied for its emphasis on human development.

However, challenges remain, including economic stagnation, unemployment, and migration to Gulf countries. Despite these issues, Kerala remains a model for social equity, public health, and participatory democracy in India.

Self-Assessment

1. What are Granthavaris?

2. Name two leaders associated with the Khilafat Movement in Kerala.

3. Describe Kerala's political culture, focusing on civic participation, political awareness, and coalition politics. How has this culture contributed to the state's governance?

4. In what ways has the migration of various communities influenced the development of Kerala's social structure? Provide historical examples to support your response.

5. Evaluate the contributions of leaders like K. Kelappan and M. P. Narayana Menon to the nationalist movement in Kerala.

6. Compare and contrast the religious diversity in Kerala with that of other Indian states.

7. Discuss the main features of the Kerala Model of development and how it differs from the development models of other Indian states.

8. Discuss the significance of Kerala's geographical location in shaping its history, particularly in terms of trade, cultural exchange, and political isolation.

Assignments

1. Analyse the role of the Namboodiri Brahmins in shaping Kerala's caste-based social structure and their influence on the political and religious spheres.

2. Examine the impact of European colonial powers on Kerala's economy, culture, and religious diversity during the 15th to 19th centuries.

3. Evaluate the contributions of social reformers like Sree Narayana Guru and Ayyankali in transforming Kerala's caste system and promoting social equality.

4. Critically assess the significance of the communist movement in Kerala's political and social reforms, particularly in land redistribution and education policies.

5. Explain the challenges faced by Kerala's economy in the post-independence period, with particular reference to migration, unemployment, and dependency on remittances.

Suggested Readings

1. Nair, P. K. P. (1972). *Nair Service Society, Chairman* (Malayalam, Part I). Changanacherry.

2. Oommen, T. K. (1984). *Social Transformation in Rural India*. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House.

3. Soman, C.R. (Eds.) (2007). *Kerala Fifty Years and Beyond*. Thiruvananthapuram: St.Joseph's Press.

References

1. Cherrian, P.J (Eds.). (1999). *Perspectives in Kerala History*. Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala Gazetteers.

2. Desai, M. (2005). *Indirect British Rule, State Formation and Welfarism in Kerala, India, 1860- 1957. Social Science History*. 29 (3): 457-88.

3. Panicker, K.M. (1960). *A History of Kerala 1498-1801*. Annamalai Nagar: The Annamalai University.

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

UNIT 2

Political and Economic Structure

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, learners will be able to:

♦ understand the political and economic structures of medieval Kerala

♦ analyse the development and characteristics of the Janmi system

♦ evaluate the social and legal structures that governed land relations among different social groups in medieval Kerala

Background

Kerala's political and economic history during the medieval period offers a fascinating glimpse into the development of unique socio-economic systems and regional power structures. Kerala, geographically distinct with its coastal plains, Western Ghats, and rich river valleys, became a fertile ground for agricultural expansion, complex land ownership patterns, and thriving trade networks. Medieval Kerala was marked by the rise of the Naduvazhi system, a political and economic framework centred on local chieftains (Naduvazhis) who wielded considerable power over land and people. This system developed against the Chera kingdom's influence and the consolidation of Brahminical authority. The Naduvazhi chiefs controlled vast stretches of land and played a critical role in establishing legal codes and social norms to regulate land ownership and labour relationships. The land was primarily distributed among temples, Brahmin landlords, and Naduvazhi lords, leading to a hierarchical agrarian society.

During the later Chera period (9th to 12th century), a hereditary land ownership system emerged, later known as the Janmi system. The *Janmi* (landlord) held a hereditary right to the land, while the tenant farmers or Kudiyans worked the land under varying levels of tenancy rights. The consolidation of Janmi rights, supported by legal frameworks such as *Kaccams (Kacham)* and local customs like *maryadai(Customary laws)*, reinforced the hierarchical social structure. Temples held significant land holdings and exerted substantial influence, contributing to a socio-religious power dynamic. The rise of the Janmi system also coincided with the growth of trade networks along the Malabar Coast. Kerala's strategic location in the Indian Ocean trade network made it a vital hub for East and West

trade. Ports like Kollam, Kodungallur, and Kozhikode facilitated the exchange of spices, textiles, and forest products. The prosperity of these ports attracted traders from Arab nations, China, and Europe, establishing Kerala as an integral part of the global trade network. This trade-based economy contributed to the development of a cash economy and the emergence of multiple social groups engaged in diverse occupations. Artisan communities like the *Kammalars* and coastal communities like the *Mukkuvars* thrived alongside agricultural labourers. The social and economic complexity of medieval Kerala was further shaped by expanding agricultural activities into forested areas and establishing localised property rights.

Medieval Kerala's socio-economic landscape resulted from evolving political power structures, legal frameworks, land tenure systems, and international trade relations. Understanding these aspects provides valuable insights into the development of Kerala's unique social hierarchy and economic activities.

Keywords

Naduvazhi, Janmi system, Agrarian society, Labour relations

Discussion

1.2.1 Development of the Naduvazhi System and Rights of Naduvazhi

♦ *Landlord tenant relationship*

Kerala's traditional land system is referred to as *Janmi-Kudiyan-Sampradayam* or *Janmam-Kanam-Maryada*. Janmi, Kudiyan, and Maryadai refer to landlord-tenant relationships and rights. A *Janmi* holds a *Janmam* right (a hereditary right) to the land. He does not owe services to an overlord or payments to keep his autonomy. When a *Janmi* transfers his land, the new owner gains legal ownership and must pay rent or dues. Sometimes, for political or financial reasons, a *Janmi* might voluntarily serve an overlord, temple, or chief. During the later Chera period, a stratified agrarian society arose between the 9th and 12th centuries, forming the *Janmam* rights. Agrarian villages and Brahmin hereditary rights over wet fields became established. Rulers and *Naduvazhis* granted land and privileges to temples and Brahmins, making them significant landowners. Historian Kesavan Veluthat noted that other regional records did not include the usual *prasastis* (eulogies) before the *danasasanas* (land grants).

The establishment of the Chera kingdom around the 9th century saw the opening of river valleys and land clearing for agriculture, according to Veluthat. Both large and small tenants cultivated *Janmi* owned lands. By the 12th century, the hierarchy of land rights was led by the *Naduvazhi* chief, followed by uralar (landowners and temple trustees), *karayalar* (tenants and intermediate landlords), *kudiyar* (settled tenant farmers), and *adiyar* (slave labourers). *Kaccams* helped maintain the power of landowners over tenants. Epigraphs indicate that temples owned extensive lands. Nambudiri Brahmins and other leaders inherited their lands as *Janmam* rights through patrilineal or matrilineal succession.

- ♦ *Land rights hierarchy*

With the growth of Janmam rights, Kaccams emerged to support land management. However, after the 12th century, Kacham imposed by temple authorities became less common. A new class of leaseholders called pattakkar emerged, leasing land from the Janmi in exchange for a share of the output (pattam or varam). The expansion of the Janmam tenure also led to changes in tenant relationships. Kudiyar came to represent different types of tenants, while adiyar or al (bonded labourers) remained attached to the land. Estates were divided into Devaswam (temple-owned), Brahmaswam (Brahmin-owned), and Cherikkal (owned by Naduvazhi lords).

- ♦ *Janmam rights*

Historian Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai argues that Kerala's democratic and egalitarian nature was disrupted during the "Hundred Years War" between the Cheras and the Cholas in the 11th century. This conflict led to the consolidation of land in the hands of a few Brahmin landlords, resulting in Kerala's unique Janmi system. Temple inscriptions reveal the Brahminical nature of agrarian societies centred around temples during that period.

- ♦ *Land consolidation*

According to the Keralolpathi legend, the land in Kerala was established by Parasurama and gifted to Brahmins. Veluthat argues that while the legend hints at Kerala's land relations, it should not be taken literally. The tradition suggests a dual system, with Brahmins holding higher rights (Janmam) and tenant farmers holding lower rights (Kanam). Significant rice-growing lands were under Brahmin communities with temples at their centres, including Brahmaswam and Devaswam lands.

- ♦ *Keralolpathi legend*

The Keralolpathi tradition defines the Kanam and Janmam systems, which historian Veluthat disputes as an accurate description of Kerala's land tenure patterns. The narrative hints at a two-tier system, with Brahmin lords holding higher rights (Janmam) and tenant farmers holding lower rights (Kanam). Brahmin communities controlled large rice-cultivation areas

- ♦ *Keralolpathi tradition*

known as Brahmaswam lands. The term "attiperu" referred to their hereditary title over such lands. Institutions and individuals were sometimes granted special privileges (vituperate) over lands, further adding to the complexity of land ownership.

♦ *Intermediary leaseholds*

Donald R. Davis Jr. explored medieval Kerala's legal practices, noting that terms like attiperu and Janmam were used interchangeably. The records frequently referred to intermediate leaseholds, such as itaiyitu or kilitu, granted to intermediaries in exchange for loans or security. In the post-Chera period, terms like otti (veppu) and panayam became common, often referring to mortgage arrangements. The labourers tied to the land were also mentioned in these records, indicating the continuity of bonded labour relations.

♦ *Tenants' responsibilities*

In the post-Chera period, we witnessed shifts in land relations, particularly with the introduction of kiliyakkam, which reinforced the Janmi's rights, and maryadai, which laid out the tenants' responsibilities. Unlike early medieval Kaccams, maryadai lacked a standard form and varied according to local customs. Local authorities (nattumaryadai), known as naluper, played a crucial role in resolving disputes. This localisation of land rights and duties reflected the decentralisation of political and economic power after the fall of the Chera kingdom when Naduvazhi Swarupams began ruling various parts of Kerala.

♦ *The cultivation*

The cultivation of new areas, particularly along the Western Ghats, suggested the formation of new Janmam rights and demographic groups such as farmers. Kerala's hilly terrain contributed to the growth of autonomous communities that evolved into local authorities with their kiliyakkam (thrill eagerness) and maryadai (respect or honour). Late medieval Kerala was dominated by large matrilineal joint families holding extensive lands. International trade also influenced Kerala's cash economy, with mortgages becoming more common during the 14th to 16th centuries. Properties were often mortgaged for one to twelve years, with payments made in cash or kind.

Kerala's land system reveals a dynamic interplay of rights, responsibilities, and social structures that evolved significantly over the centuries, profoundly influencing the region's agrarian landscape and societal organization.

1.2.1.1 Production and Exchange

The Malabar Coast was a central hub of the Indian Ocean trade network in the Middle Ages. Trade connected the Chinese coast with the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea through Malabar and Ceylon.

Commerce peaked in the 13th and 14th centuries but was later transformed by European companies. Malabar had three main commercial networks: long-distance international trade, overland trade, and local trade. Records from the later Chera or Perumal period provide details on industry and commerce, indicating local markets (angas) traded in goods such as salt, pepper, ginger, cardamom and tamarind. Major trading ports included Kodungallur and Kollam.

The growth of the Indian Ocean Network in the 11th century led to increased shipping from West and Southeast Asia. Malabar's unique geography made it a strategic point for gathering spices and forest products traded along the Mediterranean and Red Sea routes. Due to this trade expansion, ports like Ezhimala, Kozhikode, and Kollam grew. These ports connected the coastal regions to markets across the Arabian Sea and facilitated the transport of goods such as pepper, ginger, cardamom, and textiles.

Malabar was renowned for its pepper cultivation, which attracted foreign traders. Arab merchants like Yaqut-al-Hamawi and Al-Quazwini noted the abundance of pepper, while Venetian traveller Marco Polo mentioned pepper and ginger cultivation. The Portuguese traveller Duarte Barbosa observed different varieties of ginger grown across Kerala. Coconut and areca nut trees also provided stable incomes, while the forests supplied valuable timber and aromatic woods.

Chinese accounts noted Kerala's vast areca nut plantations and abundant forest resources. The trade routes linked the production zones with market hubs. Historical texts identify four types of trading centres: large international trade expos, interior marketplaces, small bazaars, and rural exchange nodes. Historian K.N. Ganesh identified three exchange processes: local barter, organised trade with funds, and informal transactions.

The coastal communities relied on fishing, salt manufacturing, and coconut products during this period. Historical records mention the links between resource areas and market hubs along the Malabar Coast. Arab traders called Malabar the "country of pepper," a reputation that medieval writers like Ibn Battuta echoed. The ports exported spices like pepper, ginger, and cardamom to Arab nations. Historian Ragava Varrier has examined Kerala's connections with China and explored the cultural and economic exchanges. Chinese records describe visits to Kerala ports and the introduction of new technologies and goods.

Medieval Kerala also witnessed the introduction of coins by the Naduvazhis of Kozhikode, Kochi, and Venad, although their

circulation was limited. Coins such as Panam, minted locally, were used in regional and overland trade, further integrating Malabar into the global maritime network.

1.2.1.2 Labour Activities and Multiple Economies

Historian K.N. Ganesh explains that agricultural expansion into forested areas near the coast led to significant changes in Kerala's agrarian economy. By the 17th century, cultivation had spread into the Western Ghats. This expansion was driven by the emergence of Naduvazhi Swarupams, which mainly focused on cash crops like pepper and coconut. Kerala's diverse landscape allowed pepper to be planted on hill slopes, while coconut thrived in sandy coastal soils.

♦ *Agricultural expansion*

This agricultural expansion indicated the establishment of new Janmam rights and the emergence of new leaders in interior regions. Non-Brahmin leaders also gained prominence. The region's topography supported autonomous, isolated communities with localised property rights. Fertile areas attracted competing chiefs, giving rise to a military class supported by local agricultural production.

♦ *Local agricultural production*

Late medieval Kerala saw the expansion of a cash economy supported by trade money. Key trade ports like Kozhikode and Kollam remained economically independent, hosting merchants from Arab nations, China, and Europe. Arabs dominated trade in Kozhikode, while merchant groups managed Kollam's ports independently. Market centres (angadi) developed around temples, providing venues for locals and traders to exchange goods. Evidence from the post-Perumal period indicates that the Nairs were the primary agriculturalists in many regions. They emerged as significant groups in Kerala's village communities. The period also saw interconnected power structures, including the Naduvazhi Swarupams, Brahmin temples, village communities, and trade centres. Social groups such as kammalar artisans, Ilavar toddy tappers, and Pulayar labourers became vital components of Kerala's social and economic fabric.

♦ *Late medieval Kerala*

Medieval inscriptions describe the division of settlement areas into vayal (paddy fields), karai (uplands), and kadu (forest). Historian Raghava Varrier, in his study of village registers, identified key occupational groups such as blacksmiths, carpenters, bronzesmiths, goldsmiths, folk medicine practitioners, and weavers. He noted that all medieval nadus (local communities) were agrarian, with paddy fields dominating the central regions.

♦ *Medieval inscriptions*

Northern Kerala saw a more even distribution of garden lands, suggesting diverse land usage.

1.2.2 Origin of the Janmi System and Janmi-Kudiyan Relations

During the medieval era, the Janmi system significantly shaped Kerala's society. The land-owning Brahmin class held significant power and influence. The term "Janmi" is thought to derive from Janmam (meaning "birthright" or "life period"). Historian Elamkulam suggests that the term initially referred to the hereditary nature of temple trusteeship, which later evolved into land ownership.

The origins of the Janmi system can be traced back to the Sangam period, where private property is mentioned, although not in its later complex form. Tradition claims that Parasurama gifted land to Brahmins, but modern historians question this narrative. Elamkulam attributes the rise of landlordism to the 11th-century Chola-Chera conflict. This conflict left temples under the care of the Nambutiri Brahmins, who gradually gained control over large tracts of temple-owned lands (Brahmaswam and Devaswam).

The social and economic relations that emerged were characterised by material wealth and established social status. Temples were central to this feudal economy, and "feudalism" is often applied to medieval Kerala, albeit in a different sense from the European or Indian context. Despite the absence of large-scale land grants, the Nambutiri-Nair alliance shaped Kerala's medieval social structure. Elamkulam described medieval Kerala as a society ruled by these two classes.

Janmi system profoundly influenced medieval Kerala's social and economic landscape, intertwining land ownership, religious authority, and social hierarchy. The evolution from temple trusteeship to land ownership underscored the increasing power of the Brahmin class, particularly the Nambutiris. This system, rooted in historical narratives and conflicts, reflected a unique form of feudalism distinct from European models, characterised by complex relationships between landowners, cultivators, and artisans. The alliance between the Nambutiris and Nairs further solidified a social structure prioritising material wealth and social status, shaping Kerala's identity and governance during this pivotal era. Ultimately, the Janmi system shaped economic practices and entrenched social hierarchies that would influence the region's history for centuries.

Summarised Overview

This unit explores medieval Kerala's political and economic structures, focusing on the Naduvazhi system and the development of the Janmi system. The Naduvazhi system emerged during the later Chera period (9th to 12th century), establishing local chieftains as the principal authority figures in land ownership and management. These Naduvazhis held sway over land rights, supported by legal codes called *Kaccams* and local customs. The consolidation of power led to the establishment of hierarchical social structures, with Naduvazhis at the top, followed by *uralar* (temple trustees), *Karayalar* (intermediate landlords), *kudiyar* (tenant farmers), and *adiyar* (slave labourers) at the bottom.

The rise of the Janmi system signified a shift towards hereditary land ownership, with *Janmis* holding significant control over land while varying tenancy rights bound tenant farmers. Legal frameworks and localised customs, like *maryadai*, helped reinforce this system, leading to complex landlord-tenant dynamics. Temples owned extensive lands, further strengthening the influence of Brahmins in the socio-economic fabric of medieval Kerala. Economic activities were also shaped by Kerala's strategic location along the Malabar Coast, which served as a significant hub in the Indian Ocean trade network. Trade routes connected Kerala's ports with regions across Asia, facilitating the exchange of spices, textiles, and forest products. Ports like Kollam, Kodungallur, and Kozhikode emerged as thriving centres of commerce, attracting traders from Arab nations, China, and Europe. This period saw the development of a cash economy and the rise of multiple social groups engaged in diverse occupations.

Labour and economic activities in medieval Kerala were characterised by agricultural expansion, particularly along the Western Ghats. The spread of cultivation, especially for crops like pepper and coconut, reflected the establishment of new *Janmam* rights and the emergence of new leaders and demographic groups. Localised property rights, joint family systems, and trade networks formed Kerala's unique social and economic landscape.

Self-Assessment

1. Name the two parties of the Naduvazhi system.

2. What are the primary tasks and powers of Naduvazhi within the local administration?

3. Define Naduvazhi system.

4. List any two types of revenue for the Naduvazhi system.

5. Compare the roles of different social groups in medieval Kerala's economy and labour activities.

6. Describe the main characteristics of Kerala's agrarian society during the later Chera period.

7. Explain how the geographical features of Kerala influence the development of localised property rights and economic activities.

8. Illustrate the Janmi-Kudiyan relationship that existed in the Kerala society.

Assignments

1. Explain the Naduvazhi system's prevalence in Kerala society and discuss its development and significance in medieval Kerala and how it shaped the social structure of Kerala society.

2. Describe the concept of the Janmi system and explain its role in shaping land-lord-tenant relations in medieval Kerala.

3. Investigate the existing legal codes (Kaccams) and customs (maryadai) that supported the land ownership structure of Kerala society and explain the impact of these customs on people's daily lives during Medieval Kerala.

4. Explore the role of temples in the socio-economic structure of medieval Kerala and how it impacted the socio-cultural development of Kerala society.

5. Explain the trading systems prevalent in Kerala society and the impact of the Indian Ocean trade on Kerala's economy and culture during the medieval period.

Suggested Readings

1. Menon, S. A. (1972). *Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai*. Sahitya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society.

2. Nair, S. K. T. P. (1981). *A tragic Decade in Kerala History*. Trivandrum: Kerala Historical Society

3. Saradamoni, K. (1980). *Emergence of a Slave Caste: Pulayas of Kerala*. New Delhi: People's Publishing House.

4. Schneider, D.M. & Gough, K. (1961). *Matrilineal Kinship*. California: University of California Press.

5. Singh, K.S (Eds.). (2002). *People of India – Kerala*. Chennai: Affiliated East West Publishers.

6. Soman, C.R. (Eds.) (2007). *Kerala Fifty Years and Beyond*. Thiruvananthapuram: St.Joseph's Press.

References

1. Desai, M. (2005). Indirect British Rule, State Formation, and Welfarism in Kerala, India, 1860–1957. *Social Science History*, 29(3), 457-488.

2. Deshpande, S. (Ed.). (2014). *The Problem of Caste*. New Delhi: Orient Blackswan.

3. Oommen, T. K. (1984). *Social Transformation in Rural India*. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House.

4. Cheriyan, P. J. (Ed.). (1999). *New Perspectives on Kerala history*.Dale, S. (1980). *Mappilas of Malabar*. Oxford University Press.

5. Panicker, K. M. (1960). *A History of Kerala 1498–1801*. Annamalai Nagar: The Annamalai University.

6. Ramachandran, R., et al. (2005). *History of Medieval Kerala*. New Delhi: Pragati Publications

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

UNIT 3

Caste System

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, learners will be able to:

♦ understand the origins and nature of the caste system in Kerala

♦ explain the various theoretical perspectives on the caste system in Indian society.

♦ analyse the intersection of caste and disability in Kerala

♦ evaluate the effectiveness of government measures and grassroots activism in addressing caste-based discrimination

Background

The caste system in India has historically played a significant role in shaping social, economic, and political structures in the century. The system, rooted in Hindu traditions, divides society into hierarchical groups based on birth. Traditionally, the four main categories are Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras, each assigned specific roles and duties. This division was further expanded into numerous sub-divisions called Jatis, which reflected occupation, social status, and ritual purity.

In Kerala, the caste system evolved uniquely, influenced by the region's social and religious practices. The social structure primarily consisted of Brahmins, Shudras, and those classified as Avarna (outside the traditional four-fold Varna system). Over time, this led to a rigid social hierarchy, with Brahmins enjoying privileges while Shudras and Avarna groups faced severe restrictions and discrimination. Untouchability, in particular, affected the lives of Avarna communities, who were excluded from many aspects of social and religious life.

The impact of caste discrimination extends beyond social exclusion to affect access to education, employment, and opportunities for social mobility. Efforts to reform the caste system have been ongoing, with leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and social reformers advocating for the rights of marginalised communities. Despite these efforts, the heritage of caste-based discrimination persists in various forms.

In recent years, attention has also been drawn to the intersection of caste and disability, highlighting the compounded marginalisation faced by Dalits with disabilities. Cultural beliefs associating disability with past Karma have contributed to the exclusion of these individuals from mainstream society. They face barriers in accessing education, healthcare, and employment, resulting in a cycle of deprivation and limited opportunities for social advancement.

Addressing caste-based discrimination requires a multi-faceted approach, combining legal reforms, social activism, and government initiatives. Kerala has seen progress, with increased awareness of caste-based injustices and proactive measures to promote equality. However, challenges remain, particularly in rural areas where traditional practices are deeply entrenched. Continued efforts are essential to eliminate caste-based disparities and ensure equal opportunities.

Keywords

Caste system, Sanskritisation, Endogamy, Disability, Social hierarchy

Discussion

The caste framework in India is an ancient system of social stratification that categorises individuals into hierarchical groups based on birth. Traditionally, Hindus are divided into four main categories: Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras, each assigned a specific role and duty. Initially, this system aimed to maintain social order and ensure that every group contributed to society in an organised manner. However, it also leads to significant social inequalities, with the upper castes enjoying privileges and the lower castes, especially Dalits, facing severe discrimination and exclusion. Despite legal measures to abolish caste-based discrimination, its impact persists in various aspects of Indian society, affecting social interactions, access to education, and employment opportunities. Understanding the caste system is crucial for addressing India's ongoing social justice and equality challenges.

In theory, caste and democracy represent opposing values. Caste is hierarchical, with birth determining an individual's status, supported by religious scriptures, priests, and ceremonies.

The upper castes have traditionally enjoyed privileges in religion, economics, education, and politics, while customary rules separate people based on birth and gender. Some regulations are harsher for women and Shudras but softer for men and Brahmins. In contrast, a democratic political system prioritises individual freedom and equality, promoting the rule of law. In such a system, no one is above the law, regardless of their position. The Indian democratic framework, as the Constitution outlines, upholds liberty, equality, and fraternity.

1.3.1 Introduction to Caste System

The word is derived from the Latin 'Castus', which means 'pure' and the Portuguese word 'Casta', which means race, lineage or pure stock. But 'Caste' was not used in its Indian sense till the seventeenth century. The Indian use is the leading one now, influencing all other uses. As the Indian idea of caste was vaguely understood, this word was loosely applied to the hereditary classes of Europe resembling the caste of India, who kept themselves socially distinct. The Portuguese used this word to denote the Indian institution, as they thought such a system was intended to maintain blood purity.

♦ Hereditary

On the one hand, the learner is used to describe in the broadest sense the total system of social stratification peculiar to India. On the other hand, it is used to denote four more or less distinct aspects of this system. That is varna, jati. Careless use of the English word 'caste' has been the source of considerable confusion. Manu distinctly says that there are only four varnas, Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Shudra & there is no fifth varna, while he admits of over fifty jatis. According to Manu, Varna is divided into four parts, and the castes are grouped into them. Later scholars pointed out that even Manu confuses jati with varna. The confusion is that the Brahmin can be called a varna and jati. According to Risley, "A caste may be defined as a collection of families or groups of families bearing a common name; claiming common descent from a mythical ancestor; human or divine, professing to follow the same hereditary calling; and regarded by those who are competent to give opinions as forming a singly homogenous community. The name generally denotes or is associated with a specific occupation. A caste is almost invariably endogamous in that a member of the large circle denoted by the common name may not marry outside that circle, but within the circle, there are usually some smaller circles, each of which is also endogamous".

♦ Collection of families

Béteille has defined caste 'as a small and named group of persons characterised by endogamy, hereditary membership and a specific style of life which sometimes includes the pursuit by a tradition of a particular occupation and is usually associated with a more or less

- *Endogamy*

distinct ritual status in a hierarchical system. M. Senart defines caste as a close corporation, in theory at any rate rigorously hereditary; equipped with a specific traditional and independent organisation including a chief and a council, meeting on occasion in assemblies of more or less plenary authority and joining together at specific festivals; bound together by common occupations, which relate more particularly to marriage and food and questions of ceremonial pollution, and ruling its members by the exercise of jurisdiction the extent of which varies, but which succeeds in making the authority of the community more felt by the sanction of specific penalties and above all by final, irrevocable exclusion from the group.

- *Status group*

Majumdar & Madan define caste thus: "If some people constitute a group not because of physical togetherness but because they have some common interests and common ways to do things, as a consequence of which stratification of society into higher and lower group emerges, then their groups may be called as status groups. If a status group is open to entry, that is, if anybody can become its member by fulfilling certain pre-requisite conditions, like obtaining a degree, paying an admission fee, or earning a particular income, then the status group may be called a class. If the recruitment is not free, that is, if a status group is not open to anybody, but only those its members who have certain ascribed attributes, which others cannot acquire, then it is called a caste."

1.3.2 Theories of Origin of Caste System

- *Peculiar culture*

As is evident from the various definitions given above, caste in India is a social institution deriving sanction from and intimately interwoven with the Hindu religion. Membership of a caste is compulsory and not a matter of choice. A person is born into it. It is practically impossible for individuals to change their caste. Each caste boasts of a peculiar cultural tradition and tries to preserve it tenaciously. The customs by which it lives are generally different in some respects from those of any other caste and are sometimes in marked contrast to those of any other caste. The caste system provides the individual caste member with rules that he must observe regarding food, marriage, divorce, birth, initiation and death.

- *Complex nature*

Caste sanctions and strictures still govern all social, religious and economic activities. It was evident that such a system of social stratification divides society into thousands of small, hereditary, and endogamous groups, each with distinctive sets of customs and practices, forming a hierarchy. Each such caste group is associated with one or more traditional occupations and is related to the other using an elaborate division of labour. The caste system on which the conventional order of the Hindu society is based is believed

to have been of immemorial antiquity. The complex nature of the caste structure is evident from the fact that, even after a century and a half of painstaking research into the history and function of the social system, we do not possess any conclusive explanation of the circumstances that might have contributed to the formation and development of this unique system in India. As commented by D.N. Majumdar, there are as many theories regarding the origin of the caste system today as there are writers on the subject.

a) The Divine Origin

It may be pointed out that most religious authorities, Shastra and Puranas, have advocated the divine origin of the caste system. So, the general feeling among the Hindus is that it has been established by the order of God or at least by his wishes, and so it should be religiously followed. As per the 'Purusha Sukta' in Rig Veda, the people belong to four main castes (varnas) constituting the four body parts of the purush (the creator). The Brahmin was his (pursha's) mouth, and the Rajanya (Kshatriya) was his arms. The Vaisya was his thigh, and the shudra sprang from his feet. This view has also been expressed in most Dharma-Shastras, smirities and Puranas. Manu, whose pronouncement is cited as an authority, also supported this view. He further asserted that different castes arose as a series of crosses, first between the four varnas and then between their descendants and also by degradation due to the non-observance of sacred rites.

♦ Four varnas

b) Karma and Transmigration

Then there is the theory of karma and transmigration of the soul, which seeks to justify the caste system. The various conditions of men, the highest, the middling, and the lowest, are caused by karma. One's status in life is determined by one's actions (karma) in past incarnations. Whatever a man enjoys or suffers is a result of his actions. His evil actions would bear bitter fruit, whether overtly or covertly.

c) Occupational Theory

Occupational theory propounded by Nesfield (1885) advocates occupation as the lone factor for developing this system. According to him, before this system, the priesthood was not the exclusive monopoly of Brahmins. Later, when hymns and rituals became more complex, some people, including the Brahmins, became specialised. Due to the importance of sacrifices, such people became more respected. Later, they made this occupation

hereditary. After this, other sections of people also organised themselves to secure privileges. They did this in self-defence and imitated the people they held in high esteem. Slater, in his book, '*Dravidian Elements in Indian Culture*' emphasises the fact that caste is more potent in southern than in northern India and suggests that caste arose in India before the Aryan invasion as a result of occupations becoming hereditary and marriages being arranged by parents within the society of the standard craft because sexual maturity developed early and trade secrets were thus preserved. As a result of magic and religious ceremonies, exclusive occupational groups were built up, and marriage outside became prejudicial and contrary to practice.

♦ *Occupation and previlege*

The Aryan invasion strengthened a tendency to associate differences of colour and a tendency for castes to be placed in a scale of social precedence. He also maintains an order of priest magicians in the pre-Aryan society of India. Denzil Ibbetson explains caste as arising from a combination of tribal origins, functional guilds and a 'levitical religion' and lays great stress on the tribe. The turning point in the career of a tribe comes when it abandons its wild and romantic life and adopts a particular occupation as its principal method of economic subsistence. This is the guild stage in caste history, and it is common during some period or other of economic progress for all peoples in the world. The formation of guilds of occupational groups naturally led to the recognition of the skills and importance of the various guilds. In medieval times, the guilds vied with one another for predominance following their economic status, exercising various degrees of pressure on the country's social life. The exaltation of the priestly guild was soon followed by the priests insisting on the hereditary nature of their occupational status, and this led to the formation of endogamous units, as more and more of the guilds wanted to conserve the social status and privileges they enjoyed and to secure these permanently for the members of the guild. Later, various other guilds followed suit, and a hierarchical organisation established itself. Chappel and Coon trace the origin of castes to the absorption of aboriginal types, and they also explain the formation of new castes about the emergence of new occupations.

♦ *Justifying caste system*

d) Tribes and Religious Theory

From very early times, there has been a gradual and silent change from tribes to caste. This change has occurred in some ways, and it is believed that most of today's lower or exterior castes were formerly tribes. Risley has mentioned four processes by which the transformation of tribes into castes is affected. The processes are:

1) The leading men of an aboriginal tribe, having somehow got on in the world and become independent landed proprietors, managed to enrol themselves in one of the more distinguished castes.

2) Some aborigines embrace the tenets of the Hindu religious sect, becoming Vaishnavas and giving up their tribal name.

3) Claiming an origin of remote antiquity, is distinguishable by its name from any of the standard and recognised.

4) A tribe of aborigines, or a section thereof, gradually converted to Hinduism without abandoning their tribal designation. Risley mentions the case of the Bhumij of Western Bengal, a pure Dravidian race who lost their original language and now speaks only Bengali.

1.3.3 Nature of relationship

The relationships are social and embedded in economic institutions and cultural dimensions of caste-based societies. Under the caste system, social groups are ascribed based on birth, and they typically determine where a person can socialise, what kinds of rights and duties they have, or what types of opportunities are open to them. Relationships within caste are defined by hierarchy, social mobility, inherited duties to resist unions, intermingling among communities, etc.

Let us look at a few of the components regarding relationships that are affected by caste:

a) Social Hierarchy

Caste systems are frequently arranged in a hierarchy, with various castes commanding varying degrees of social status, prestige, and authority. These differences usually affect:

- ♦ **Interpersonal Interactions**: Superiors interact with inferiors in a style that demonstrates and reinforces the power imbalance. The subcastes can be found in different social, economic, and even religious settings where the higher to lower castes have authority.

- ♦ **Endogamy (Marriage within Caste)**: Relationships, particularly marriages, mostly remain confined to the same caste, showcasing an element of societal purity and evaporation of bonds between castes. Inter-caste marriage may be stigmatised or even met with social ostracisation (or worse) in more conservative environments.

◆ **Patron-Client Relationships**: Where higher castes sometimes patronise lower castes, these arrangements are often asymmetrical, further cementing hierarchies.

b) Segregation and Interaction

◆ **Physical and Social Segregation**: In numerous caste-based societies, mainly seen in the Indian subcontinent, people from distinct castes may inhabit different areas of a city or town (e.g., separate quarters) with stringent regulations regarding where they can converge together (e.g., village entrances; no communal seating arrangements in public places or temples; taboo exercises).

◆ **Ceremonial and Religious Roles**: Some castes may have the right to perform particular rituals or ceremonies, resulting in a relationship based on duty rather than kinship. For instance, those who ascended to the priest (or ritual specialist) castes may have contact with lower caste people strictly within religious settings.

c) Social Status and Mobility

◆ **Limited Social Mobility**: This also extended to personal relationships, resulting in few social interactions with people from other castes and re-enacting the caste idea among themselves.

◆ **Caste and Economic Relations**: Economies, for example, specific castes were designated agricultural activities while some specialised in trade or administration. The caste also impacts professional bonds, where people may choose careers and jobs depending on their caste.

d) Discrimination and Stigma

◆ **Untouchability (Dalit Discrimination)**: Those associated with the lowest casts of Hindu society, especially Dalits (historically referred to as "untouchables"), face social exclusion from mainstream Indian society. They face social exclusion as often they are not allowed to interact with members of higher castes, and violent abuse may also follow this.

◆ **Stigmatisation**: Caste-based relationships historically possess stigma and prejudice that span centuries.

Higher castes may discriminate against them for lower castes and vice versa.

e) Solidarity within Caste Groups

♦ **Caste-Based Solidarity**: Solidarity can be a significant experience inside a caste group, as individuals care for each other, pool resources, and act as the primary sources of information and moral support in social, economic, and legal dealings. Such solidarity is usually the key in a society where the State of caste membership determines entitlements to resources, social capital, and legal rights.

♦ **Caste-Based Political Movements**: A timeline of India's recent decades provides a glimpse of the phenomenon of caste-based political movements as tools for the groups that suffer from discrimination and lack of rights to express and fight for the needed changes. These movements have consequently brought about new interactions and relationships within and between the castes, such as being politically linked to a caste or members of different castes uniting around a particular idea, threatening the existing statuses.

f) Cultural and Symbolic Relationships

♦ **Rituals and Traditions**: The caste system has been a driving force in cultural practices, even food, such as cuisine choices and rites or customs. These issues of boundaries that the caste system creates are typically embodied in the relationships built through their rituals. For instance, some dishes might be deemed sacred or pure following the particular caste, and inter-caste eating might be limited or forbidden.

♦ **Caste Identity**: In most cases, the person's caste is a significant factor in forming their identity. Creating a framework of culture through which individuals view themselves and others becomes the source of one's self-concept as a caste member among a people.

g) Contemporary Changes

♦ **Legal Frameworks and Rights**: Contemporary societies in countries such as India have "legal frameworks" that have highlighted caste-based discrimination in the sense that they have applied the forms

of positive action, reservations, and laws against untouchability and caste-based violence to it. As a result, the form of caste-based relationships has gradually changed, but the deeply-rooted biases and systemic inequalities often remain.

♦ **Urbanisation and Education**: People in the cities with higher educational levels are less likely to get bonded with the caste-specific characteristics that formerly limited relationships, and their unifying has become much more possible. Nevertheless, sometimes personal and professional connections get the effect of caste acknowledgement because, in some urban places, it still holds a tight grip on people's hearts.

1.3.4 Caste-based Disabilities in Kerala

In Kerala also, as elsewhere generally in India, the caste-based disabilities were a function of the intersection between the social hierarchy instituted by the caste system and the systemic exclusion and discrimination that people from the lower castes, especially Dalits, had been conventionally subjected to. Social and economic disabilities, along with a part of the cultural disabilities amongst the lower castes, do not restrict themselves to the conventional understanding of physical and mental disabilities but also extend to the denial of access to resources, opportunities, and social participation based on caste identity.

Key Caste-Based Disabilities in Kerala:

a) Social Exclusion and Segregation

♦ **Untouchability and Stigmatisation**: Historical evidence of Dalits in Kerala has been replete with instances of acute social exclusion and segregation, wherein the Dalits were constructed as "untouchable." Therein lies a social disability in which public spaces, temples, wells, and sometimes even public services were not made available for their use.

♦ **Social Isolation**: The members of the Scheduled Castes used to be socially isolated, residing in segregated colonies. In rural areas, remnants are still traceable as a part of caste-based residential segregation. This resulted in a reduction of social interactions and opportunities to network with other groups.

♦ **Ritual Purity and Impurity**: A good deal of the caste-based discrimination that took place in Kerala, especially against Dalits, pertained to the question of "ritual purity." Some rituals and ceremonies had been reserved for higher castes; lower castes, including Dalits, were usually excluded from the events of a cultural and religious nature, thereby creating a sense of inferiority and exclusion from the social fabric of the community.

b) Economic Disabilities

♦ **Limited Economic Opportunities**: People of lower castes were doomed to lowly tasks or tasks that were demeaning by nature, such as cleaning, agricultural work, or working with animal products. This economic subjugation plunges people into states of poverty that may be long-lasting and mobility very limited. These caste-based economic disabilities manifest themselves in restricted access to education, property, and financial resources for people hailing from lower castes.

♦ **Exploitation and Wage Inequality**: Dalits and other lowly ranked castes have been habitually, especially in Kerala, as in the case of most parts of India, to exploitative labour relations. They were being paid much lower wages, had worse conditions of employment, and had a lack of favourable prospects in the labour market.

♦ **Exclusion from Land Ownership**: Caste-based disabilities in the past also denied land and property ownership to lower castes, particularly Dalits. Traditional landholding patterns favoured the higher castes, excluding Dalits and lower castes from owning land to accumulate capital.

c) Educational Disabilities

♦ **Barriers to Education**: Traditionally, Dalits and other lower castes were denied formal education in Kerala or made to study in separate, inferior schools. In many parts of Kerala, Dalits were also barred even from entering schools or public buildings like libraries by the upper caste.

♦ **Discrimination in Education**: Even after Dalits gained access to education, they were not spared from caste-based discrimination at the hands of teachers and peers

alike. Lower-caste children were abused physically and psychologically, impeding their progress in acquiring an education and, ultimately, personal development.

Inadequate representation in higher education-Despite reforms, lower-caste people still face significant obstacles to higher educational and professional opportunities. This has led to the severe underrepresentation of Dalits and other marginalised castes in institutions of higher education, in crucial public and private positions of power, and as well-to-do citizens.

d) Political and Civic Disabilities

♦ **Political Exclusion**: Dalits and other lower castes in Kerala have long been at the receiving end of political marginalisation. They were denied the right to participate in local-level governance and were often excluded from political decision-making processes. This, therefore, was a civic disability wherein they were suppressed and did not have a right to advocate for their rights in any democratic process.

♦ **Violence based on Caste**: Though Kerala is considered a highly progressive state for literacy and social development, caste-based violence and discrimination are not at all dead. The oppression of the Dalits manifests in caste-based violence, which may take the form of physical assault, sexual violence, or even murder. These acts, apart from directly causing harm to the victims, also reinforce the disability of caste-based oppression in the social structure.

e) Health Disabilities

♦ **Poor Health Due to Limited Access to Health Facilities**: Traditionally, Dalits have been denied health facilities in addition to having unsanitary conditions around them. Though Kerala maintains the highest standard of public health compared to other parts of the country, caste-based discrimination negatively affects access to health in this State. The Dalits and other scheduled castes still face problems in accessing medical treatment services and are more liable to reside in areas with fewer health facilities.

♦ **Lower Life Expectancy**: Intersections of caste-based economic, educational, and social marginalisation have made Dalits in Kerala suffer worse health outcomes. Generally, they have lower life expectancy and higher rates of malnutrition, preventable diseases, and maternal mortality.

f) Psychological and Cultural Disabilities

♦ **Internalised Caste Oppression**: The psychological effects that the caste system has on the people-especially those from lower castes-is what is generally termed internalised oppression. Such internalised oppression can lead to a general reduction in self-esteem, feelings of powerlessness, and a generalised loss of cultural identity. Those who have been marginalised because of their caste at times can internalise these negative stereotypes, making it challenging for them to come out of such stereotypical feelings.

♦ **Cultural Disablement**: This is the restriction of Dalits and other lower castes in Kerala from taking part in secular religious, cultural, and social activities. Many Dalits have been deprived of opportunities to participate in temple festivals, religious functions, and public events, which caused cultural alienation.

Efforts to Counter Disabilities Based on Caste

Kerala has been labouring to eliminate caste disabilities for more than a century and has done so with considerable success through:

♦ **Social Reforms**: Sree Narayana Guru, Vagbhatananda, and Ayyankali were social reformers who challenged the caste system in Kerala. These social reformers fought for the rights of the Dalits and worked to eliminate caste barriers in education, religious practices, and social spheres.

♦ **Land Reforms**: The State of Kerala had taken land reform measures in the 1950s and 1960s to redistribute land to provide access to landless Dalits. These reforms provided economic independence to some of the impoverished sections of society.

♦ **Affirmative Action and Reservations**: Kerala has had affirmative action policies of reservations for Dalits, Adivasis, and other backward classes in education and

government employment. The fruit of these policies has been seen in increasing representation and access to opportunities for these communities.

♦ **Education and Literacy Campaigns**: To some extent, high literacy rates in Kerala are contributed by state-sponsored campaigns toward the improvement of education among poorer sections. Despite opposition, there have been efforts to make education reach Dalits and other lower castes simultaneously.

Summarised Overview

This unit explores the origins, nature, and implications of the caste system in Kerala. The caste system in India is an ancient social structure that divides society into hierarchical groups based on birth. Traditionally, it includes four primary categories: Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras. In Kerala, this framework developed distinctively, focusing on the Brahmin-Shudra divide and the classification of others as Avarna. This system led to severe social exclusion and discrimination against lower castes, especially the Avarna groups. Theoretical approaches to understanding caste include attributional perspectives, which focus on fixed characteristics like endogamy and taboos, and interactional perspectives, which examine the dynamics between castes in specific social contexts. Scholars like M. N. Srinivas introduced the concept of Sanskritisation to explain how lower castes adopt the customs of higher castes to improve their social standing. Despite the theoretical rigidity, historical evidence suggests some flexibility in the caste system, with individuals occasionally rising in status due to religious or political achievements.

The intersection of caste and disability presents unique challenges in Kerala. Dalits with disabilities face compounded forms of marginalisation stemming from cultural beliefs linking disability to past Karma. This results in limited access to essential resources, healthcare, and social opportunities, creating a cycle of deprivation. Empirical studies reveal a higher prevalence of disability among Dalits, yet they receive inadequate support from government programmes due to a lack of awareness and accessibility. Efforts to combat caste-based discrimination in Kerala include grassroots activism, government initiatives, and policy measures. Notable examples include student-led protests against caste-based discrimination in educational institutions. Activists have also advocated for more inclusive cultural spaces, challenging traditional norms that exclude Dalits from participating in classical art forms.

In conclusion, while Kerala has made progress in addressing caste-based inequalities through legal reforms and social activism, challenges remain. Traditional practices are still prevalent in rural areas and the intersection of caste and disability requires targeted interventions. Continued efforts are essential to promote social justice and ensure equal opportunities for all, irrespective of caste or disability.

Self-Assessment

1. List two different types of social stratification.

2. What are the primary factors for determining caste identity?

3. Define the caste system.

4. Define caste discrimination.

5. Describe how modern Indian law deals with caste discrimination.

6. Explain the primary elements that influenced the creation of castes in ancient Indian society.

7. Illustrate how occupational specialisation has influenced the evolution of various castes.

8. Elaborate on the most common ideas on the origins of the caste system, such as the race theory and occupational theory.

Assignments

1. Explain the historical development of the caste system in Kerala and its impact on social hierarchies and the social structure of the society with suitable examples.

2. Discuss the concept of Sanskritisation and its relevance to understanding the evolution of castes in Kerala. How does the idea of Sanskritisation impact the caste structure of Kerala society?

3. Investigate how the intersection of caste and disability contributed to the marginalisation of people in Kerala. Provide suitable examples to support your answer.

4. Discuss and distinguish between the theoretical approaches to studying the caste system in Kerala and how it has impacted the evolution of the caste system.

5. Evaluate the role of government initiatives and grassroots activism in addressing caste-based discrimination in Kerala.

Suggested Readings

1. Nambiar, O. K. (1963). *Kunjalis of Calicut*. Asia Publishing House.

2. Kusuman, K. K. (1973). *Slavery in Kerala. Kerala Historical Society*.

3. Mathew, K. S. (1983). *Cochin and Portuguese Trade with India in the 16th century*. Manohar Publishers & Distributors

References

1. Panicker. K. N. (2021). *Caste in Kerala*. Primus Books

2. Rammohan, K. T. (2009). Modern Bondage: Atiyaayma in post-abolition Malabar. In J. Breman, I. Guerin, & A. Prakash (Eds.), *India's unfree workforce: Of bondage old and new*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

3. McPherson, K. (1993). *The Indian Ocean: A History of People and the Sea*. Oxford University Press.

4. Devika, J. (2008). *Individuals, Householders, Citizens: Family Planning in Keral*a. New Delhi: Zubaan.

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

Dynamics in Kinship and Family

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, learners will be able to:

♦ understand the historical evolution and significance of the joint family system and Marumakkathayam inheritance in Kerala

♦ analyse the impact of modernisation, legal reforms, and socio-economic changes on family dynamics in Kerala

♦ evaluate the social, economic, and legal implications of transitioning from matrilineal to patrilineal inheritance systems

♦ examine the role of cultural and religious practices in shaping kinship patterns and family structures in Kerala

Background

Cultural, social, and economic factors have long shaped the structure and dynamics of families in India. Traditionally, the joint family system, where multiple generations lived together, was the cornerstone of Indian society, especially among Hindus. It was not just a residential arrangement but a socio-economic unit that fostered collective welfare and interdependence. The joint family served as a support system in agricultural and non-agricultural contexts, where the pooling of resources and shared responsibilities were crucial for social and economic stability. However, in the past few decades, modernisation, urbanisation, and industrialisation have significantly changed family structures in India. The transformation in family structures is not uniform across the country but reflects regional variations influenced by local traditions, legal reforms, and socio-economic developments. In Kerala, for example, the Marumakkathayam system of inheritance, a unique matrilineal system, played a crucial role in shaping family and social dynamics. This system primarily followed by the Nair community and other related groups, traced kinship and inheritance through the female descent. The Marumakkathayam system was not just a method of inheritance but also a social structure that regulated relationships, property rights, and gender roles.

However, the emergence of Western education and the introduction of modern legal frameworks in the 19th and early 20th centuries led to significant changes in Kerala's social fabric. Influenced by reformist leaders and rational thought, communities began questioning traditional practices and sought to establish more precise and equitable laws. The Nair Regulation Act of 1925 marked a turning point by replacing the traditional joint family structure with an individualistic system, emphasising personal ownership and patrilineal inheritance. These reforms were not limited to the Nair community but inspired other groups to push for similar changes. The transition from joint to nuclear family structures and from matrilineal to patrilineal inheritance had far-reaching implications for Kerala's social, economic, and gender relations. The breakdown of traditional family structures led to the dissolution of joint property holdings, changes in gender roles, and increased emphasis on individual rights and responsibilities.

Today, understanding Kerala's kinship and family dynamics requires exploring these historical shifts, the socio-economic forces driving them, and their implications for contemporary society. Examining the evolution of family systems in Kerala provides valuable insights into the intersection of tradition and modernity and the ongoing quest for social and gender equity.

Keywords

Joint family system, Marumakkathayam, Kinship patterns, Nair Regulation Act of 1925

Discussion

1.4.1 Joint Family System

♦ *Joint family*

The concept of a joint family, where multiple generations live together under one roof, is a deeply entrenched social institution in Indian society, particularly among Hindus. The joint family system is valued for fostering a sense of collective welfare, interdependence, and shared responsibilities among its members. It traditionally included a patriarch, his sons with their families, and unmarried daughters, reflecting a hierarchy based on age and authority. The joint family system functioned as a residential and economic unit, pooling resources and labour to sustain livelihoods, particularly in agrarian communities. It was crucial in transmitting family values, customs, and social norms.

Despite ongoing changes by modernisation, industrialisation, and urbanisation, the joint family continues to be a cornerstone of Indian cultural norms and values. Modern influences have, however, led to gradual shifts in family structures. Processes such as increased social mobility, urban migration, and the emergence of individual aspirations have contributed to the rise of nuclear families. Still, the joint family remains an aspirational ideal in many communities. In a traditional joint family, the household often expands when a son marries and brings his wife into the family fold. This expansion, commonly called "fusion," contrasts with the opposite process of "fission," where a family splits into smaller units. Sociologists like Nicholas, based on studies in rural West Bengal, observed that families often split not due to conflicts but to practical reasons such as growing financial needs, the desire for autonomy, or difficulties in managing large households. The separation is a functional adaptation to changing circumstances and does not necessarily signal a breakdown in familial ties.

Family structure

The studies of I. P. Desai in Gujarat reveal that a complex interplay of internal and external factors shapes family structures in India. Desai noted that families could maintain joint characteristics even when members lived separately through a mutual support network and shared responsibilities. He argued that the nuclear family pattern in India is not the dominant norm, as many families strive to preserve elements of jointness despite physical separation. Desai's research highlighted the significance of property ownership, intergenerational obligations, and social customs in sustaining these bonds.

Mutual support and shared responsibilities

Religious communities and social classes across India also exhibit common patterns in family dynamics. Joint families are more prevalent among agricultural and commercial classes, where shared economic interests strengthen family cohesion. Kapadia's studies in western India indicated that even nuclear families often retain some aspects of jointness by relying on extended family networks for emotional and financial support. While such families may no longer share a single household or live under one roof, they uphold mutual bonds, rights, and duties beyond the immediate nuclear unit. In this sense, the nuclear family—though physically separated—remains deeply interconnected with the more extensive extended family network. These connections are not just social but also emotional and financial. Whether living nearby or far apart, family members often continue to offer each other support through caregiving, shared resources, or emotional encouragement. This extended form of family solidarity ensures that the responsibilities and obligations of care, inheritance, and mutual assistance persist, even if the traditional joint family model no longer holds. In

Cohesion and Support

a study conducted in 1982, Ishwaran found that joint families comprised 56.24% of the households in a village, while nuclear families accounted for 43.76%. Ishwaran observed that villagers interpreted jointness broadly, linking it with a reliance on extended kin networks. This reliance on kin reflects deeply rooted cultural beliefs that regard the extended family as an ideal social unit. Joint families are reinforced by social, religious, and economic factors, making them resilient institutions despite external pressures.

Changes in family structures

The modernisation of Indian society has led to significant changes in family structures. Increased social mobility, migration to urban areas, and changing economic conditions have contributed to the gradual rise of nuclear families. However, this shift towards smaller family units does not necessarily indicate a complete break from traditional values. Shared values, cooperation, and emotional bonds are central to family dynamics. Even in nuclear families, support systems often extend to the broader kin group, highlighting the enduring significance of joint family values and mutual support mechanisms.

1.4.2. Marumakkathayam: Origin and Reasons for Disintegration

Social structure

The Marumakkathayam system, a distinctive feature of Kerala's social structure, traces kinship and inheritance through the female line. Unlike patriarchal systems where property is inherited through sons, Marumakkathayam follows a matrilineal framework in which property is passed down through sisters' children, mainly nephews. This unique system coexisted with the patriarchal Makkathayam system in some communities, creating a dual inheritance framework that catered to different social groups and needs.

Regulating relationships

Historically, the Nair community adhered strictly to Marumakkathayam, and other communities, such as Mappilas and some Christian groups, adopted elements of this system through prolonged contact and shared residency. The Nair community's adherence to Marumakkathayam was rooted in its role in maintaining social order, securing property rights, and regulating social relationships. It reinforced the authority of the female line within Tarawads (large joint family households), where the eldest male relative (Karanavan) acted as the family property manager.

Shifting social contexts

Over time, the system faced challenges due to inherent economic inefficiencies and shifting social contexts. Marumakkathayam's reliance on large extended families often led to financial strain, as increasing dependents reduced each member's available resources. While wealthier Tarawads managed to maintain stability, less affluent ones struggled to sustain themselves, leading to growing disparities

within the community. Additionally, the system's emphasis on collective property ownership and matrilineal inheritance did not align with broader socio-economic trends that increasingly favoured individual ownership and smaller family units.

♦ *Traditional practice*

The traditional practice of Sambandham further complicated inheritance and family dynamics within the Marumakkathayam system. Sambandham was a form of marriage that did not involve formal marital contracts or exclusive commitments. Instead, relationships were based on social customs, and men and women could have multiple partners. While this arrangement preserved property within the Tarawad, it created ambiguity around inheritance and legitimacy, leading to disputes over rightful heirs and complicating property management.

♦ *Marumakka thayam system*

The introduction of Western education and rational thought in the 18th century triggered a social awakening among the Nairs. Reformist leaders like V. Ramakrishna Pillai and Mannath Padmanabhan critically questioned traditional practices and advocated for change. Influenced by these leaders and exposure to new ideas, Nair society began to seek reforms to address the socio-economic challenges posed by the Marumakkathayam system. The Travancore Nair Samajam, established in 1905, led efforts to bring about more precise inheritance laws and abolish outdated customs detrimental to the community's progress.

♦ *Traditional joint family structure*

The Nair Regulation of 1925 was a landmark legal reform introducing significant changes to the community's social structure. This regulation marked the transition from the traditional joint family structure to a more individualistic inheritance system called Makkathayam. It granted inheritance rights to non-Nair men married to Nair women, restricted polygamy, and established monogamy as the legal norm. By introducing individual property rights, the regulation facilitated the breakdown of the joint family structures associated with Marumakkathayam.

♦ *Patrilineal inheritance systems*

The shift from Marumakkathayam to Makkathayam had far-reaching implications for the Nairs of Travancore and other communities in Kerala. The legal reforms inspired other groups, such as the Ezhavas and Vellalas, to push for similar changes, contributing to the broader social restructuring of Kerala's caste and class dynamics. The transition led to the breakdown of joint family structures, encouraging the rise of nuclear families and patrilineal inheritance systems.

The breakdown of traditional joint families also led to the dismantling the Janmi landholding system, which had previously concentrated land ownership in a few influential families. As

♦ *Individual property rights*

individual property rights gained prominence, marginalised groups found new opportunities to assert their rights and challenge traditional hierarchies. Additionally, the reforms redefined gender relations by granting women more excellent agency in inheritance and property rights, aligning with broader movements for gender equality and social justice. In conclusion, the shift from Marumakkathayam to Makkathayam was part of a broader transformation in Kerala's social, economic, and legal landscape. The reforms, driven by internal movements and external influences, reshaped the state's family structures and laid the groundwork for a more equitable social order. This transition reflected a growing recognition of the need for individual ownership, gender equality, and social justice in a rapidly modernising society.

Summarised Overview

The unit examines the dynamics of kinship and family structures in Kerala, focusing on the evolution of the joint family system and the Marumakkathayam inheritance system. The joint family system, prevalent throughout India, was a socio-economic unit where multiple generations lived together and shared responsibilities. Despite the ongoing shift towards nuclear families, the joint family remains an important cultural ideal, fostering values of interdependence and mutual support. In Kerala, the Marumakkathayam system provided a unique matrilineal framework where kinship and inheritance were traced through the female descent.

Over time, socio-economic changes, modernisation, and the spread of Western education challenged traditional family structures. Reform movements gained momentum in the early 20th century as community leaders advocated for more precise laws and equitable inheritance practices. The Nair Regulation of 1925 marked a significant legal reform, shifting from a matrilineal joint family structure to an individualistic, patrilineal inheritance system known as Makkathayam. This regulation granted new inheritance rights, restricted polygamy, and replaced traditional joint property holdings with individual ownership.

The transition from Marumakkathayam to Makkathayam had far-reaching implications for Kerala's social and economic landscape. The breakdown of traditional joint families paved the way for the rise of nuclear families and changes in gender relations. While the Marumakkathayam system emphasised communal ties and collective property ownership, the Makkathayam system shifted focus towards individual rights and personal property. This shift was part of a broader trend towards modernisation and social restructuring, driven by internal reform movements and external influences.

The reforms also inspired other communities in Kerala to push for similar changes, contributing to a redefinition of caste and class dynamics. The dissolution of joint family

structures facilitated the dismantling of traditional power hierarchies, leading to increased emphasis on social mobility and individual empowerment. These changes continue to influence family dynamics in Kerala, highlighting the tension between traditional values and modern aspirations for equality and justice.

Self-Assessment

1. Identify any two characteristics of the joint family system.

2. Define joint family.

3. Discuss how urbanisation and globalisation changed India's traditional joint family system.

4. Explain the Marumakkathayam system's historical origins and how it influences inheritance and family relations in Kerala.

5. Describe the social, economic, and legal reasons contributing to the Marumakkathayam system's collapse in modern society.

6. Explain how the Marumakkathayam system represents matrilineal traditions in specific Kerala groups and how this affects gender roles.

7. Discuss how kinship relationships affect social organisation and identity in mixed families.

Assignments

1. Discuss the traditional role and significance of the joint family system in Kerala society and explain the major factors that contributed to the decline of the joint family system in Kerala.

2. Explain the concept of Marumakkathayam, its impact on kinship and inheritance in Kerala, and its contributions to the joint family system in Kerala.

3. Investigate how modernisation and legal reforms contributed to the breakdown of the Marumakkathayam system and its impact on property rights in Kerala.

4. Evaluate the significance of the Nair Regulation of 1925 in reshaping family and inheritance structures in Kerala and the decline of the Joint family system with suitable examples.

5. Compare and contrast the Marumakkathayam and Makkathayam systems regarding their social and economic implications with suitable examples.

Suggested Readings

1. Menon, P. K. K. (1993). *History of Freedom Movement in Kerala*. Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala Historical Society.

2. Narayanan, M. G. S. (1991). *Perumals of Kerala*. New Delhi: Kerala Historical Society.

3. Panikkar, K. M. (2000). *History of Kerala*. New Delhi: National Book Trust.

4. Varier, R. & Gurukkal, R. (2000). *A Cultural History of Kerala*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press

5. Rendell, Y. (Trans.). (1983). *Religion and ideology in Kerala*. Centre de Recherches Socio-Religieuses. Kollam: D.K. Agencies.

References

1. Deshpande, S. (Eds.). (2014). *The Problem of Caste*. New Delhi: Orient Blackswan.

2. Varier, R. M. R. (1995). *Village communities in pre-colonial Kerala*. Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala Historical Society.

3. Veluthat, K. (2000). *Brahmin Settlements in Kerala*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

4. Schneider, D. M., & Gough, K. (1961). *Matrilineal kinship*. California: University of California Press.

5. Soman, C. R. (Eds.). (2007). *Kerala Fifty Years and Beyond*. Thiruvananthapuram: St. Joseph's Press.

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

Socio-Cultural Formations in Kerala

BLOCK-02

UNIT 1

Socio - Cultural Elements

Learning Outcomes

After reading this unit, the learner will be able to:

♦ comprehend the historical backdrop of international trade and its socioeconomic as well as cultural significance to the society of Kerala

♦ analyse the historical process and causes of the migration of Brahmin settlements and how it paved the way for the emergence of feudal era and landlordism in Kerala

♦ evaluate the cumulative impacts of these factors on the socio economic and cultural evolution of Kerala society

Background

The dynamic interaction among trade, Brahmin settlements, the feudal system, temple landownership, and the Kalari system engendered a multifaceted socio-economic and cultural fabric in Kerala. Trade activities facilitated prosperity and external influences, the presence of Brahmin settlements introduced novel religious and cultural aspects, the feudal system organised societal structure, temples serving as landlords amalgamated religious and economic roles, and the Kalari system offered a method of defense and physical education. Profound comprehension of these interconnected components is imperative in elucidating the historical progression of Kerala society.

Keywords

Trade, Brahmin settlements, Landlordism, Kalari system, Feudalism

Discussion

2.1.1 Foreign Trade

During the early medieval period, India established extensive trade connections with various regions across the globe, leading to its emergence as a significant center for foreign trade. Initially, the control over India's trade was held by the Muslims, but this authority was later overridden by the Portuguese. Gujarat, Goa, Calicut, Cochin, Quilon, among others, were identified as crucial ports that facilitated India in welcoming foreign traders. Vijayanagara empires granted complete freedom of movement and property ownership without discrimination based on religious beliefs, thereby attracting a large number of merchants to the city. India's foreign trade possesses a deep-rooted legacy from its early historical epochs.

During the colonial period, significant transformations transpired as European nations such as England exerted dominance over India's economic landscape. The attainment of independence in 1947 ushered in a novel epoch marked by the implementation of import-substitution strategies. Subsequently, in 1991, policies advocating economic liberalisation were introduced to facilitate the opening up of India's economy, consequently fostering heightened levels of globalisation. India has emerged as a formidable economic entity, engaging in the exportation of a diverse array of goods and services worldwide. The challenges of trade imbalances and strained diplomatic relations with various nations stand as formidable hurdles that necessitate resolution. The historical narrative of India's foreign trade underscores the nation's capacity to evolve in response to evolving circumstances.

2.1.1.1 History of Foreign Trade in Kerala Society- An Overview

Kerala was a major trading destination from prehistoric times to the eras of the Arabs and the Europeans. The literary works of the Sangam period, such as poems and literature, the objects such as plates, bowls, and pottery found at various archaeological sites, and the Roman gold coins discovered in south India are all evidence of past foreign trade. The prosperity of Kerala society was reliant on the sea and maritime trade. Historically, trade has mostly occurred through the waterways. They served as gateways for communication and trade. Also, they used passes or gaps to make interaction with Kerala easier. The foreigners, including Christians, Muslims, Jews, and Parsees, arrived here by following

the sea route and made their first presence here. Between the year 3000 BCE and the year 3rd century CE, Kerala was the primary exporter of spices.

♦ Trade in Medieval Kerala

In medieval Kerala, commercial centers might be divided into long-distance overland trade, long-distance foreign trade, and regional or local trade and markets. The important role that merchant guilds and commercial companies played in the social and economic life of the era was one of its most remarkable aspects. The fact that the dues paid by merchants included a reference to the slave trade (alkasu) indicates how common the system was.

2.1.1.2 Contributions of Foreign Trade to Kerala Society

♦ Trade with Arabs

The Arabs, positioned as intermediaries, established dominance over trade by 600 BC. Over time, various civilisations began to engage in trade with India, particularly through Kerala. The trading connections significantly impacted the cultural, religious, and social facets of Kerala, as well as the local architectural styles. Their arrival in Kerala predates the 4th century BC. The exclusivity and dominance of the Arab traders in the maritime trade in the Malabar region (Early historians and explorers commonly referred to modern-day Kerala as Malabar) was facilitated by the decline of the Chola kingdom. Nomadic Arabs and ancient Phoenicians are believed to have been among the earliest to arrive in Kerala for the purpose of engaging in Spice trade.

♦ Spice trade

A variety of spices and aromatic herbs, such as black pepper, turmeric, dried ginger, cardamom, cinnamon, cloves, as well as timber from rosewoods and sandalwood, were abundant in the region of Kerala. Historically, it is hypothesized that the Phoenicians and Arabs were among the initial groups to transport these valuable herbs and spices to distant territories. The primary driver behind the influx of Arab traders to Kerala was the lucrative spice trade. Gradually, they forged robust commercial connections and eventually settled in the area, enriching the multicultural fabric of Kerala. The aromatic herbs and oils found in this area were utilised for medicinal purposes, embalming practices of rulers and affluent individuals, as well as beauty enhancement for women and religious rituals.

The merchants from Arabia who relocated to Malabar, identified as Hadrami Sayyids, provided assistance to the indigenous Muslim community during their resistance against the British colonial rule and the higher echelons of the Hindu caste system. Consequently, the dominance of Islamic societal structures increased gradually, resulting in a gradual decline of the hierarchical Hindu social order.

The process of religious transition was relatively uncomplicated, involving formal approval from the mosque's religious leader, public declaration of the *Shahada* (belief in oneness of God and declare Muhammad as the messenger of God), adoption of an Islamic name, and adherence to Muslim customs and traditions instances of coerced conversions within the Malabar locality were exceedingly rare. The Hadramis demonstrated a profound reverence for the local customs and traditions, thereby fostering amicable relationships with the indigenous population. This interaction has facilitated the establishment of urban hubs in Malabar by the Arab Diaspora, who introduced essential goods and services crucial for societal development. Within the *Ulemas*, the Thangals, a subset linked by lineage to the Prophet's family, held a distinguished position as religious instructors and propagators. The commercial activities of the Arab diaspora, notably the Hadramis, have significantly influenced the evolution of the Mappila community.

Numerous Arab traders made the decision to establish residence in Kerala and intermarried with the local population. This led to the emergence of the Muslim Mappila community. Mappila Muslims, like the upper caste Hindu community of Malabar, also followed Matriliny. This practice signifies their adaptation to local customs. The matrimonial arrangements observed among Malabar Muslims were influenced by the temporary marriage system known as muta, whereby Arab merchants would form unions with local women, often from lower castes. These unions typically lasted for the duration of their trade ventures, after which the merchants would return to their hometowns or travel to other ports. The children born from these unions were raised by their mothers within the Islamic cultural framework.

The Arab influence significantly enriched the cultural landscape of Kerala through the introduction of their language, literature, art, music, and culinary practices. The utilisation of the Arabic Malayalam script, a derivative of the Arabic script, is prominent in transcribing the Mappila dialect of Malayalam. The Mappila literary tradition encompasses a diverse range of genres including ballads, folk songs, poems, and narratives that portray the Islamic heritage and historical narratives of the Mappilas. The Mappila culture represents a fusion of Arab and Keralite traditions, encompassing unique folk songs (Mappila Pattu, Vattapattu) and dance forms (Oppana, Kolkali, Duffmuttu) that have garnered widespread acceptance within Kerala society. The musical traditions of the Mappila community have been shaped by the influence of Arabic melodies and rhythms, incorporating instruments like the harmonium, tabla, and violin. The culinary practices of the Mappila people represent a fusion of Malabar and Arabian cooking styles.

The adoption of attire such as lungi, turban, and Yemeni knife by the Mappila from Hadramis underscores the cultural exchange between the two groups.

In Kerala, the Arabs played a pivotal role in spreading the teachings of Islam, with the establishment of the Cheraman Juma Majsid marking the first mosque in India. Following the Shafi'i school of Islamic jurisprudence and adhering to the Sunni branch of Islam, the Arabs in Kerala maintained a particular religious tradition. Through the establishment of educational institutions, charitable organizations, and political movements, the Arab community has significantly contributed to the social development of Kerala.

The substantial trade relationship between Kerala and the Roman Empire has been extensively recorded in foreign narratives and Chronicles authored by classical Greek and Roman scholars. Friar Jordanus elaborated on the extensive spice trade between Kerala and the Romans, while Niccolo Conti, an Italian traveler, highlighted the thriving commerce of Ginger, pepper, and cinnamon at the port of Kollam. Various types of coins have been unearthed from different regions of Kerala, including Roman coins discovered from Eyyal in Thrissur district and other parts of the state, indicating the prevalence of commercial activities. During those times, the Greeks and Romans engaged in significant trade with Kerala, with cardamom, cinnamon, ginger, turmeric, and pepper being among the spices mentioned by Dicordies, a Greek scholar. Pattanam is believed to be the fabled port of Muziris or Mucciri Pattinam, referenced in ancient Greek and Roman texts, as well as in Sangam literature dating back to the era before the Common Era.

The Greek interaction occurred at a period when the indigenous people excelled in various fields such as engineering, carpentry, architecture, and mathematics. The Greeks had little to offer themselves during this time. Pliny the Elder, in his work Naturalis Historia (AD 77), described the ships from the Malabar Coast, as excellently crafted, with the wood used for construction known for its durability and resistance to decay. Greek words found a place in Kerala's cultural sphere mainly in mythology. Eventually, trade with the Greeks diminished as Arab traders monopolised trade through the Mediterranean route, and by the time the Portuguese discovered an alternative route, the Greeks had lost their previous dominance in trade. The history of Roman spice trade during the Middle Ages is obscured by various factors. Although evidence is scant, it is unclear whether the Romans truly monopolised the spice trade.

♦ *Emergence of Islam religion in Kerala*

♦ *Trade with Greek and Romans*

♦ *Socio cultural contributions of Greek and Romans*

Jews have been an integral part of Kerala community since ancient times, with traditions suggesting they arrived on the Kerala coast in 68 AD to escape religious persecution. Among the three major Jewish communities in India, the Kerala Jews, commonly known as Cochin Jews, are the oldest, residing in the city of Cochin in South India for approximately 2500 years.

The Jewish community in Kerala made significant contributions to social and economic fabric of Kerala society. Until the 15th century, Jews held a prominent position within society and established a trading monopoly uncontested. Jewish traders, referred to as 'Radhanites', engaged in maritime and overland travel between the Mediterranean and China in the 9th century, making stops at ports along the Malabar Coast. In 1568, the Jewish newcomers, known as pardesis, constructed a synagogue adjacent to the maharaja's palace in Cochin. They embraced the Malayalam language and wholeheartedly embraced Kerala's customs and traditions.

Residing among the Hindus of Kerala, it is understandable that Jewish traditions, with their multifaceted nature, may have assimilated elements from the host culture. The adaptation of Kerala Jews to the ritual behaviors and symbols of high-caste Hindus was a significant development, facilitating their integration into the surrounding society without complete assimilation. The Jews adopted the Hindu practice of placing a tali around the bride's neck, a ritual carried out by female relatives of the groom, typically his sister, amidst the exuberant cheers of women. Divorce was not handled through a civil tribunal, but rather marriages were dissolved by refunding the amount stipulated in the ketubah or marriage document. The Cochin Jews' adjustment to the Indian milieu is apparent in their ritual use of Hebrew mirroring the Hindu use of Sanskrit, dietary restrictions, and the removal of footwear in the synagogue. Their practices, such as endogamy, sacred language usage, adherence to dietary laws, and concern for family purity involving the avoidance of menstruating women, serve as points of convergence between Jewish and Hindu principles.

While fully integrated into Indo-Kerala society, they were influenced by Hindu and Christian customs and beliefs, including the emphasis on lineage purity, wedding traditions, and canopies. They have assimilated the traditions and behaviors of the local populace unlike Muslims and to some extent Christians, they have embraced the local language for their prayers and devotional hymns. Upon their arrival in Kochi, a marshy land, the Jews transformed it into a bustling trading hub, engaging in extensive commercial activities. They pioneered forward trading and money lending, establishing a significant presence in banking.

The economic prosperity of Kerala was primarily attained through extensive trade with Western Asia and China. Kerala enjoyed a thriving trade relationship with China during this era. Chinese traders introduced goods such as China pottery and China jars that are still in use today. Kerala exported items like pepper, cardamom, coconut, and areca nut to China, while importing silk, porcelain, copper, mercury, tin, and lead from China. Trade with China facilitated the arrival of copper and bronze vessels used in palaces, temples, and Taravads. Ports like Pandalayini, Calicut, and Quilon emerged as key trade hubs with China. Ibn Battuta's records attest to the significant Chinese trade presence in Calicut. The China vessels frequented ports in Malabar such as Quilon, Calicut, and Eli. Those intending to stay in India during the monsoon season would dock at the harbor of Pandalayini. Ibn Battuta mentions coconut, areca nut, pepper, and bananas as products of Malabar.

The trade between China and Kerala influenced the social and economic fabric of Kerala, with the demand for spices like pepper leading to its widespread cultivation. The Chinese trade not only facilitated the exchange of goods but also had a significant impact on the social and economic structure of village communities in Kerala. The culinary impact of Chinese trade is evident. The Cheenachatti, a deep, thick, and circular cooking pot integral to Kerala cuisine, is known as the Chinese pot in Malayalam. The influence of Chinese food on our cuisine is noticeable, with dishes like Koyukkattas and dumplings resembling dim sum, and noolputtu being our version of noodles. Cultural exchanges between Kerala and China mutually enriched both regions.

The arrival of the Portuguese marked the first European presence in Kerala. Vasco da Gama's landing in Kappad, Calicut in May 1498 was a significant event in Indian and Kerala history. Their primary objective was commercial expansion, driven by the allure of pepper from Malabar. The Portuguese greatly impacted various sectors of Travancore society. Albuquerque initiated trade with Kollam and established a factory there in January 1504. The growth of Kollam as a township created new employment opportunities.

Traditional social structures in Kerala underwent significant changes due to Portuguese influence, aiming to reform the outlook and behavior of the Malayalees. By marrying Malayali women, the Portuguese promoted cohesive family life in Kerala, emphasizing paternity, respect, and encouraging widow remarriage. Their presence ended the Arab trade monopoly, especially in Malabar, introducing new food habits like bread, biscuits, and cake. The Portuguese made substantial contributions across different

♦ *Trade with China*

♦ *Socio cultural contributions of China*

♦ *Trade with Portuguese*

segments of Malabar society, providing avenues for entertainment, like folk drama such as Chavittunadagam. The arrival of Catholic missionaries in the 16th century added new dimensions to the history of the lower strata of Malabar society. Many lower-class individuals converted to Christianity, aiding the missionaries in spreading their religious teachings. They established hospitals, schools, and destitute homes in Portuguese occupied towns, along with composing dictionaries to facilitate the study of Malayalam. The Portuguese missionaries played a pivotal role in modernizing Kerala and influencing economic, political, social, and cultural spheres.

The Dutch entered Kerala with the aim of engaging in trade. Situated close to Thalassery in 1725, they took control of Mahi. Subsequently, the English found themselves confronted by the competition from the French. Along the Malabar Coast, the French established trading ports that had a significant impact on the social, cultural, and economic facets of the region. They also set up ports and warehouses that facilitated trade between Kerala and Europe. Through the documentation of their experiences in Kerala by French scholars and travelers, valuable insights into the culture, traditions, and social practices of Kerala were provided. Additionally, the French played a role in education by founding schools and promoting literacy. The French displayed a general tolerance towards local customs and religious practices. Despite the relatively short-lived presence of the French in Kerala compared to other colonial powers, their contributions made a lasting impression.

2.1.1.3. Contemporary Foreign Trade Scenario in Kerala Society

Kerala has long been acknowledged as a center of commercial activity and trade, with a rich history of maritime trade dating back centuries, positioning it as a significant contributor to India's trade balance in the present day. The economic landscape of the state of Kerala encompasses a diverse array of sectors, such as agriculture, fisheries, textiles, spices, coir, tourism, IT, IT-enabled services, healthcare, and manufacturing. Furthermore, the state is home to a substantial and influential diaspora that is dispersed globally. Ranging from high-quality tea and spices to handloom textiles, seafood, ayurvedic products, and IT services, Kerala presents a varied range of export prospects spanning numerous industries.

A key asset of Kerala lies in its proficient workforce, supported by a high literacy rate and well-educated population, which forms a solid foundation for industries reliant on knowledge. The human capital of Kerala is distinguished by its adeptness in English,

adaptability, and entrepreneurial acumen, rendering it an attractive choice for export-driven enterprises seeking a skilled labor force. Infrastructures in Kerala are robust, featuring modern ports, well-connected road networks, and a dependable power supply, which collectively facilitate seamless trade connections. The state's strategic proximity to international shipping routes, alongside its well-established logistics framework, streamlines the movement of goods efficiently, guaranteeing prompt deliveries to global markets.

2.1.2. Spread of Brahmin Settlements

The examination of available inscriptions and literary sources assists individuals in formulating a plausible hypothesis concerning the migration of Brahmins. The region of Kerala, during its existence as a component of ancient Tamizhakam, primarily consisted of isolated settlements. Over time, numerous waves of migrants made their way to Kerala, where they undertook the task of clearing forests for agricultural purposes and establishing settlements. It is postulated that Brahmins gradually arrived in Kerala in small groups at different junctures. Equipped with superior iron tools, the Brahmins played a pivotal role in forest clearance and agricultural activities, consequently leading to the proliferation of settlements. Although the Western Ghats posed a barrier to migration, Brahmins managed to traverse to Kerala by utilizing mountain passes.

♦ Migration of Brahmins

The initial Brahmin settlements in Kerala were situated between the Bharathapuzha and Periyar rivers, with a preference for coastal areas possessing fertile soil suitable for paddy cultivation. These early settlements were closely linked with the advancement of agriculture in Kerala. As time progressed, Brahmins transitioned into full-time priests, leading to the emergence of a new class of agricultural laborers who worked in the fields owned by the Brahmins. The local rulers extended their patronage and assistance to the Brahmins, thereby bolstering their societal status. The proliferation of temples in the region was intricately intertwined with Brahmin settlements. With the expansion of agricultural activities, the Nambudri Brahmins gradually relinquished direct involvement in agriculture and delegated farming duties to other individuals. The advancement of agriculture resulted in surplus production, enabling Brahmins to assume the role of landlords who subsisted on the surplus yield. They achieved ritualistic and social dominance within the societal framework. By aligning themselves with local rulers, Brahmins conferred legitimacy upon state power, thereby securing patronage from the ruling authority. It was against this backdrop that Brahmins initiated the construction of temples in proximity to their settlements. Initially, these temples served as

♦ Brahmin settlements in Kerala

religious establishments. However, over time, they evolved into socio-economic entities rather than purely religious centers. The temples functioned as pivotal community hubs in Kerala.

By the 9ᵗʰ century, the prestige of Brahmins associated with temples had exerted significant influence over the state power of Perumals. Historical evidence, such as puranic references, Greco-Roman literature, Tamil Brahmi inscriptions, etc., indicate that Kerala was not an unknown territory to the north even prior to the Christian era. The literary works of the Sangam era, which were nearly contemporaneous with the aforementioned references, portrayed Kerala as an integral component of the social and cultural entity known as Tamilakam. One of the renowned Brahmin settlements in Kerala, known as Cellur, is revered in tradition as one of the northernmost settlements and possibly among the earliest ones. This settlement can be identified in Sangam literature as a center of Vedic practices, intertwined with a rich tradition associated with Parasurama. This evidence suggests that the process of Aryan Brahmin migration to and settlement in Kerala commenced as early as the Sangam era.

• *Brahmin influence*

The Brahmin caste, rising to prominence in society, established dominance at the top of the feudal hierarchy, thus shaping the socio-cultural landscape in this region. Being situated in one of the northern most Brahmin settlements in Kerala, Chellur likely served as a key point of contact with Hindu Brahminical culture, influencing the societal evolution in Kerala over the centuries to follow.

• *Feudal dominance*

Historically, the Brahmins in Kerala were known to have inhabited 32 villages, as documented in the *Keralolpatti*. These settlements were distributed between various rivers and regions, as outlined below:

1) Between Perumpula and Karumanpula

2) Between Karumanpula and Curni

3) Between Curni and Cape Comorin

Every Nambudiri Brahmin can trace their lineage back to one of these original 32 villages. The impact of these Brahmin settlements in medieval Kerala can be examined from two perspectives: the evolution of existing settlements and the establishment of new ones. By the time of the Chera Kingdom's establishment in Mahodayapuram, the significant Brahmin settlements in Kerala had already taken form. Historical records indicate the emergence of additional settlements beyond the initial 32 traditional ones,

• *Brahmin settlements*

creating a network of such Brahmin communities across Kerala with temples at their core. Serving as bastions of upper-caste Brahminical ideologies and institutions, these settlements laid the foundation for Kerala's Brahminical social order. Even following the decline of the Chera Kingdom, the expansion of Brahminical settlements persisted. However, noteworthy changes occurred in the structure and governance of both old and new Brahminical settlements between the 12th and 16th centuries. These settlements evolved into a class of non-agrarian landowners overseeing a peasantry organised into semi-autonomous agrarian corporations.

The rise of Brahmin landlordism marked the inevitable outcome of historical progression, positioning Brahmins as landlords with authority over vast land holdings, tenants, and numerous servants, thus enjoying feudal privileges and holding a revered sacerdotal role at the pinnacle of societal hierarchy. Their supremacy significantly influenced the future social and cultural development in Kerala.

Feudal hierarchy

2.1.2.1 Emergence of Feudal Era-Temple as Landlord

Emergence of temples

The elevation of temples and Brahmin settlements were intricately linked, especially in the establishment of extensive corporations. Temples played a divisive role in the socioeconomic and religious aspects of life in Kerala. They functioned as a means for more efficient extraction of surplus from the agricultural sector. The temples possessed significant wealth in the form of vast quantities of gold and land. The temples were known for providing loans and also operated as financial institutions. From the Sangam era, when the initial Brahmin settlement was founded in Kerala, to the end of the 10th century, when the region was heavily dotted with Brahmin settlements, Kerala underwent significant social changes.

Role of Temples

The temples accumulated wealth not only in gold but also from various other sources, such as gold payments for certain lands. The provision of loans by the temples indicates their role as a banking institution, influencing the economic life of the populace in this manner. In addition to daily expenses, there were fortnightly expenditures, including those for organizing the devdasi festival. The temples also contributed to expanding agriculture in tribal areas and strengthening landlord dominance. Through this expansion, the temples facilitated the breakdown of tribal society and its restructuring as a caste-based society. The proliferation of agrarian settlements managed by temple-based corporations of landowners, along with the rise of numerous warrior households as centers of lineage chiefs, were key developments. Temples served as hubs for education, culture, and economic endeavors

of the community. Hence, temples held a distinctive position in the social and religious fabric of society. Indeed, temples acted as institutional mechanisms for coordinating landed households and corporate entities, emerging as major agrarian hubs in South India.

♦ *Brahmasvom and Devasvom lands*

Land was deemed the most valuable form of wealth, symbolizing power and status within society. Brahmins were the predominant landowners, controlling a significant portion of cultivable land in the form of brahmasvom and devasvom. The evolution of Brahmin landlordism in Kerala was based on three key principles:

- ♦ The elective democratic nature of the Sabha or uralar within the larger unit of ur: urar or urkuttam.

- ♦ The existence of a larger body called nattukuttam, linked to hundred organizations and holding authority over urukoottam and Sabha of the uralar.

- ♦ Changes in the composition and structure of these bodies due to the "*Noottandu yudham*" and subsequent dominance of the Nambuthiri Brahmins.

♦ *Janmi system*

According to Kunjan Pillai, the term 'janmi' signifies the trustee's role. Initially, individuals of high stature were appointed for a specified duration. Subsequently, it became customary for them to hold the position indefinitely. The concept of "janmam" (lifetime) entitlement signifies a trustee's perpetual ownership rights to assets. The practice of designating lawful heirs of a trustee as their successors originated during the *Noottandu yudham*, thereby establishing Trusteeship as a hereditary position. In the 12th century, Brahmin trustees emerged as influential landowners.

♦ *Brahmin landlordism*

Despite scholarly debates, Kunjan Pillai's arguments concerning the *Noottandu yudham* and the emergence of Marumakkathayam lend credence to his hypothesis on the origins of Brahmin landlordism in Kerala. Large areas of land were enclosed by Brahmin cooperatives, leading to the imposition of their dominance on the social and economic aspects of life by steadfast individuals. The settlers in Kerala, through Brahmin cooperatives' gradual acquisition of extensive land, managed to exert control over the region's social and economic spheres. By the 12th century, the Brahmins had solidified their position as the dominant group, even persuading royal families that only individuals of Brahmin descent could be noble rulers. They effectively established a caste system that placed them at the top of the social hierarchy.

The medieval feudal system in Kerala exhibited a structured

hierarchy of caste and land rights. Nairs and their subgroups held kanam lands, while Ezhavas, Syrian Christians, and Moplahs possessed Verumpattom lands. Agrestic slaves included pulayas, cheruman, parayars, among others. Until 1800, land in Kerala was primarily owned by four types of janmis: Rajas, temples, naduvazhis, and nambuthiri Brahmins. The Raja's entitlement to cultivated land was limited to Rajabhogam, often denying Brahmins access to agricultural lands. They would grant cultivable lands to Brahmin poets and scholars for temple-related rituals and festivities.

Often, temples were granted the authority to impose taxes on specific villages, with some instances where temple committees held higher status than kings and feudatories. Detailed accounts of daily and seasonal rituals performed at the temples were documented, specifying each functionary's entitlement during festivals like Onam, highlighting social stratification. The practice of distributing land based on service tenure, with certain professions being hereditary, had already commenced. Temples undertook public services like hospitals, banks, and education, with the administration of properties owned collectively by Brahmin settlements, known as devaswom, falling under the village council's jurisdiction. Over time, these councils' communal structure transitioned to individual family dominance for various reasons. These individuals, who also managed extensive temple assets as brahmaswoms, oversaw the resources of temples.

The allocation of a portion of the recently acquired riches of the temple served various purposes, notably covering the expenses associated with the regular Pujas. The records clearly indicate a daily occurrence of five pujas. In addition to these rituals, there was also the symbolic bathing of the deity and the ceremonial perambulation of the inner prakaram. Originally established as a place of worship, the temple evolved into a hub for numerous social engagements.

The advancement of Brahmin settlements, both spatially and socially, contributed to their escalating impact on political and economic arenas. Ultimately, it is discerned that these traits stemmed from an economic groundwork, culminating in economic supremacy. They wielded authority over all societal establishments, tailoring them to sustain their wealth and security. This initiation marked the commencement of the Aryanisation process, molding society and politics for centuries with its structures of social hierarchy, feudal land ownership, traditions, beliefs, etiquette, and cultural norms.

2.1.3. Kalari System

The Kalari, in ancient Kerala, was an educational institution where students were instructed in academic studies and martial arts. Nevertheless, the emphasis on military training in Kalaris was due to the influence of the Nambudiris, who were known for their intellectual prowess.

♦ *Kalari*

The Nambudhiri landlords and local rulers established warrior groups to protect their lives and possessions, leading to the emergence of Warriors in society. Kerala housed the Kalari system, offering training in various weapons such as spears, swords, and daggers. Throughout Kerala's history, the Kalari played a significant role, particularly during the Middle Ages, by imparting military skills and discipline akin to Spartan training to the youth. The term Kalari is also mentioned in Sangam literature, specifically in Akanananuru and Purananuru, which detail the use of weapons like Spears, Shields, bows, and silambam during that era. Each village's Kalari was under the authority of a deity known as Paradevatha or Bhagavathi, usually associated with the village's Bhagavathi temple.

♦ *Kalaripayattu*

Kalaripayattu played a vital role in shaping the warriors of feudal Kerala, who were highly respected for their combat skills. The conflicts between rival kingdoms such as the Chera and Chola further underscored the significance of Kalaripayattu in military tactics. The dedicated practice of young individuals in their village Kalaris contributed to Kerala's reputation as a breeding ground for formidable warriors. In a 16th century account, Barbosa Duarte, a Portuguese explorer, narrated his observations of Nair's military training in Kalaripayattu during his visit to Kerala

Summarised Overview

This unit provides an insight into the interconnected historical components that influenced the structure of Kerala society, encompassing trade, Brahmin settlements, the feudal system, temple landownership, and the Kalari system. Kerala's advantageous coastal positioning facilitated extensive maritime trade links with regions such as the Roman Empire, Arabian Peninsula, and subsequent European powers.

The spice trade, notably in pepper, generated considerable prosperity and cultural interactions, positioning Kerala as a cosmopolitan center. The influx of Brahmins to Kerala in the early medieval era introduced Vedic customs and Sanskrit civilisation. Brahmins founded influential settlements and assumed pivotal roles in religious, societal, and political domains.

The feudal system took shape, with local chiefs and landlords overseeing land and assets, establishing a stratified society. Authority became concentrated within aristocratic lineages, as peasants cultivated the land under diverse tenancy arrangements. Temples in Kerala, endowed with extensive properties, emerged as significant economic entities. These properties were farmed by tenant cultivators, temple operations and impacting local economies.

Self-Assessment

1. What is the name of the merchants from the Arabic region in the Middle East who relocated to Malabar ?

2. In which year the Portuguese arrived in Kerala?

3. What is *Kalarippayattu*?

4. Define Janmi.

5. Explain Marumakkathayam system.

6. Discuss Kalari system.

7. Briefly discuss the history of foreign trade in Kerala.

8. Critically analyse the emergence of Brahmin settlements and feudal era temples in Kerala.

Assignments

1. Write a note on the contributions of each foreign traders during the historical times to Kerala society and analyse the legacies of that trade relation in the contemporary Kerala society.

2. Discuss the cultural transformation of Kerala society during the migration of Brahmins to Kerala society.

3. Compare and contrast the feudal era in Kerala society with the feudal systems in other parts of the country.

4. Discuss the economic role of temples and how it contributed to the development of Kerala society.

5. Give a note on historical and contemporary status of kalari system in our society.

Suggested Readings

1. Panicker, K.N. (1997). *Studies in Traditional Kerala*. Trivandrum: College Book House.

2. Panicker, K.M. (1960). *A History of Kerala 1498-1801*. Annamalai Nagar: The Annamalai University.

3. Prakash, B. A. (Ed.). (2004). *Kerala's Economic Development: Performance and Problems in the Post-Liberalisation Period*. Sage.

4. Ramachandran, R. et. al. (2005). *History of Medieval Kerala*. New Delhi: Pragati Publications.

5. Veluthat, K. (1978). *Brahman Settlements in Kerala: Historical Studies* (First edition).

References

1. Balakrishnan, A. (2019). Brahmin Settlements and the Land Tenure System of Kerala. *History Research Journal*, 5(6), 2652-2679.

2. Cherrian, P.J (Eds.). (1999). *Perspectives in Kerala History*. Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala Gazetteers.

3. Kunju, A. P. I. (1975). *Studies in Medieval Kerala History*. Trivandrum : Kerala Historical Society.

4. Menon, A. S. (1979). *Social and Cultural History of Kerala*. Jullandhar: Sterling.

5. Mohamed, K. M., & Mohammad, K. M. (1999). Arab Relations with Malabar Coast from 9th to 16th Centuries: Vol. Vol. 60. *Indian History Congress.*

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

Role of Religion

Learning Outcomes

After reading this unit, the learner will be able to:

♦ comprehend the notion of religion as well as the sociological perspectives regarding religion

♦ examine the influence of Dravidian religious ideologies on customs and practices of Kerala society

♦ elucidate of the dominant religions within Kerala society

Background

Kerala is renowned for its abundant cultural heritage and religious diversification. The locality has served as a crucible for a variety of religious customs, encompassing ancient Dravidian rituals, Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam. Delving into the significance of religion in Kerala offers insights into the distinctive socio-cultural framework and historical progression of the state. Religion assumes a pivotal role in the societal and cultural milieu of Kerala. The annals of the state are characterised by the cohabitation and interplay among diverse religious factions, fostering a lively and diverse society. Religious ceremonies, rites, and sacred sites constitute an essential component of Kerala's ethos, exerting influence on various facets of daily life such as art, literature, and social norms.

Before the emergence of major world religions, the indigenous Dravidian faith held sway among the initial denisens of Kerala. Jainism and Buddhism, originating in Northern India, permeated Kerala circa the 3rd century BCE through commerce and migration. Hinduism stands as the predominant faith in Kerala, deeply entrenched in the state's ethos and customs. The Bhakti movement, which swept through India during the medieval era, left a profound imprint on Kerala. Each faith has enriched the opulent cultural mosaic of the state, mutually impacting and being impacted by others. This unit endeavors to furnish students with a thorough comprehension of the historical evolution, cultural amalgamation, and contemporary pertinence of these religious beliefs in Kerala.

Discussion

2.2.1. What is Religion?

At its most fundamental level, religion involves a belief in the influential power of the supernatural. These convictions are evident across all societies, with seemingly limitless variations. Nearly always, a belief in the supernatural includes the notion that supernatural forces exert some degree of influence or control over the world. Religion is commonly described as a community's organised response to the supernatural. Despite the presence of movements that refute or overlook supernatural matters, they exhibit belief and ritual systems akin to those grounded in the supernatural. Nonetheless, conjecture and discourse form the basis for theories on the origin of religion. Although religion is a globally prevalent phenomenon, interpretations of it vary among individuals. Disagreement persists regarding the essence of religion.

♦ *Sociological definitions of religion*

Sociologists have yet to formulate a satisfactory elucidation of religion. Emile Durkheim, in his work *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, characterises religion as a coherent system of beliefs and practices concerning sacred entities, namely those designated as distinct and off-limits. MacIver and Page partly define religion as implying a connection not solely between individuals but also between humanity and a superior entity. Ogburn views religion as an orientation towards superhuman authority. According to Max Muller, religion represents a cognitive faculty or inclination that enables humans to comprehend the boundless. Two main theories, animism and naturism, were put forward to explore the question of the origins of religion.

♦ *Animism*

Belief in spirits is a concept deeply explored by EB Taylor in his renowned work, *Primitive Culture*. Taylor's thesis on animism introduced a significant distinction between magic, religion, and science within this context. Animism, as he defines it, pertains to a particular form of religion where individuals perceive spirits in all encompassing objects. The ancient practice of animism, according to Taylor, is primarily demonstrated through the veneration of

ancestors. It was understood by early humans that deceased ancestors transition into spirits, who could either be benevolent or malevolent.

To secure protection, offerings were presented periodically to these ancestral spirits, a custom referred to as ancestor cult or ghost worship in primitive societies. Taylor posits that early humans lacked the ability to differentiate between living and non-living entities, leading them to believe that all objects, animate or inanimate, possessed a life force and spirit akin to that found in humans. This realisation prompted the worship of various natural elements such as rocks, trees, and streams, further expanding the concept of soul and spirit to encompass all aspects of their surroundings.

♦ *Naturism*

Naturism denotes the conviction in the supernatural capabilities of natural forces. The theories of naturism were formulated by Andrew Lang and Max Muller. According to Max Muller, the earliest form of religious rituals is rooted in naturism. He posits that naturism is primarily founded on the sensory encounters of individuals, from which logical deductions are predominantly drawn. These sensory encounters aid individuals in discerning between living and non-living entities. Hence, religion is essentially an outcome of sensory experiences. Humans, out of admiration and necessity, revered the formidable powers of nature such as the Sun, the Moon, the air, and water, without which human existence would be utterly unattainable. Naturism represents humanity's reaction to the profound impact and awe-inspiring aspects of nature on their emotions.

2.2.1.1 Religions in Kerala Society

♦ *Religious tolerance*

Religious discrepancies in the demographic characteristics are evident across all facets of the Kerala landscape, primarily stemming from social, cultural, and historical factors. The role of religion has been fundamental in shaping Kerala's societal structure. Kerala's cultural foundation has always been rooted in religious tolerance. In addition to indigenous faiths such as Jainism, Buddhism, and Hinduism, external religions like Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Zoroastrianism found a conducive environment in Kerala for their propagation and advancement.

♦ *Dravidian customs*

The inhabitants of ancient Kerala adhered to Dravidian customs that were not grounded in any specific religious doctrine, encompassing a blend of rituals and observances. Jainism, Buddhism, and Brahmanism made their way into Kerala long before the Christian era. These faiths gradually attracted followers from the local populace. Nevertheless, the people were broad-

minded in their approach, displaying no aversion to worshipping at Jain or Buddhist sites while also participating in Vedic rituals. Over time, these religions thrived within a liberal and inclusive society framework, leaving an enduring mark on cultural landscape of Kerala society.

2.2.1.2 Dravidian Religion

A significant number of scholars have associated the pre-Dravidian people with the Jungle tribes and castes, showcasing religious beliefs that warrant thorough examination. The prevalence of totemism suggests that the Dravidian race might have already embraced totemistic beliefs prior to contact with the pre-Dravidians. Despite uncertainties, it can be inferred that the reverence shown by the pre-Dravidians towards their totemic animals and plants stemmed from a belief in Spirit life, a common trait among primitive societies worldwide. The Dravidians continued to uphold this belief in a spirit realm, albeit in a more elaborate manner, indicating its widespread acceptance among them.

- ♦ *Totemism*

- ♦ *Dravidian spirituality*

Understanding the extent of influence of the pre-Dravidians on these beliefs and concepts poses a challenge. The genesis and overall nature of Dravidian religion can be linked back to a belief in spirits and a deep-seated fear of the adversities they can bring. Notably, there is no established priesthood associated with this belief system, and those performing priestly duties are not restricted to any specific hereditary group. Spirit worship is pervasive among the Dravidian communities and castes in the southern region of India, with a diverse array of spirits being venerated, often in the form of mother Goddesses.

- ♦ *Dual nature of worship*

Dravidian spirit worship is dual-fold in nature. On one hand, there exists a belief that every village is encircled by malevolent spirits constantly seeking to inflict illnesses and misfortunes on the populace. These spirits are thought to lurk in various places, such as the tops of palm trees, caves, rocks, ravines, and chasms, waiting to harm unsuspecting individuals. Conversely, village deities are revered for their role in safeguarding the community from such malevolent forces, protecting against diseases, crop failures, and other calamities that may befall the villagers. The worship of these deities does not involve expressions of gratitude or love, and ceremonies are often sporadic, with occasional daily offerings. The prevailing attitude towards the village deity tends to be one of non-interference unless faced with misfortune, which is interpreted as a sign of the deity's displeasure, necessitating appeasement efforts.

Each village deity has a designated sacred abode, typically represented by an image, a nondescript stone, or another symbolic object. Some deities may have a modest shrine dedicated to them, where annual festivals are held, often featuring animal sacrifices as a significant ritual. Sacrifice holds a central place in this cult, with the deity being appeased only by the offering of a living creature. The ceremonies associated with their feasts typically spanned several days, culminating in the sacrifice of animals such as buffaloes, sheep, goats, and pigs. Originally, the sacrificed animal was not viewed as a gift but rather as a member of the totem tribe and the embodiment of the spirit to be revered, imbuing the entire ritual with profound significance.

Ancestral veneration is prevalent in the majority of Dravidian religious practices. The veneration of trees and serpents appears to primarily aim at ensuring the continuity of offspring. The term "Animism" encompasses the array of superstitions observed among Indigenous tribes worldwide. Ailments and various misfortunes are often attributed to supernatural entities, prompting the engagement of wizards to appease the malevolent spirits through appropriate offerings. These practitioners are sought out for promoting successful harvests, causing harm to adversaries, or interpreting omens related to potential courses of action. Distinguishing when an individual transitions from being an animist to embracing Hinduism proves challenging, as Hinduism and animism are not necessarily mutually exclusive belief systems.

2.2.2. Jainism

Jainism, one of the most ancient religions globally, embodies the enduring indigenous shramanic culture that predates the Vedas themselves. The teachings propagated by arhats are referred to as arhat Dharma, the original name of the Jain religion. The Jain tradition, similar to Hinduism, has a long history, dating back to ancient times and notably to the era of Tirthankar Rishbhadev. Jainism has significantly contributed to the strengthening and evolution of the Indi an way. Jain doctrine eschews the worship of individuals, instead venerating the inherent qualities of a soul that has attained the status of Jain by shedding karmic veils through knowledge, intuition, and spiritual power. Similar to Buddhism, Jainism is a non-theistic belief system that does not recognise the existence of a creator deity.

Jainism embraces a pluralistic worldview with an infinite number of individual souls. Liberation (moksha) in Jain philosophy entails achieving a perfected, luminous, and blissful soul devoid of physical form and actions. The religious tenets of Jainism elucidate

♦ *Jain Philosophy*	nine truths or realities (nav-tattva): soul (jiva), non-soul (ajiva), merit (punya), sin or demerit (papa), inflow of karma (asrava), stoppage of karmic matter (samvara), bondage (bandha), shedding of karmic matter (nirjara), and liberation (moksha).
♦ *Soul (jiva)*	The concept of Jiva revolves around a conscious entity that varies from one individual to another. The jivas are considered to be limitless in number. The soul not only enjoys the consequences of Karma (bhokta) but also plays an active role in worldly matters, being accountable for both good and bad deeds.
♦ *Non-soul (ajiva)*	In contrast, Ajiva represents the opposite of Jiva and consists of substances such as Dharma, adharma, Akash, pudgala, and Kala. Among these, the first three substances (medium of motion, medium of rest, and space) are formless, while the fourth substance, matter, is characterised by qualities like touch, taste, color, and smell.
♦ *Merit (punya)*	Merit, known as Punya, stems from positive and religious actions, which can manifest in nine different forms. These various forms essentially represent different ways of engaging in charitable activities.
♦ *Sin or demerit*	On the other hand, Sin or demerit, also referred to as Evil, plays a significant role in binding the Jiva. Inflicting harm on or causing the death of living beings is considered a grave sin that leads to severe consequences.
♦ *Inflow of karma (asrava)*	The influx of Karma, termed as Asrava, symbolizes the flow of Karmic material into the soul. Just as water enters a boat through a hole, Karmic matter flows into the soul through asrava, influencing the nature of activities as either meritorious (Shubha) or demeritorious (ashuba).
♦ *Stoppage of karmic matter (samvara)*	Stoppage of Karmic matter, known as Samvara, involves the cessation or control of the inflow of Karmic material into the soul. This can be achieved through self-discipline (gupti), restraint in movement (samiti), adherence to virtues (dharma), contemplation (anupreksha), overcoming challenges, and following monastic practices.
♦ *Bondage (bandha)*	Bondage, or Bandha, occurs when the Jiva unites with pudgala (soul with non-soul particles) due to factors like wrong beliefs, attachments, carelessness, passion, and activities.
♦ *Shedding of karmic matter (nirjara)*	Shedding the Karmic matter, referred to as Nirjara, entails the elimination, drying up, or destruction of accumulated Karma through a process of destruction and burning.

♦ *Liberation (moksha)*

Liberation, or Moksha, represents the highest stage of spiritual accomplishment, wherein the soul is liberated from Karmic matter after eradicating all causes of bondage. It signifies a state of peace, unwavering faith, complete knowledge, and the attainment of siddhi. Moksha is achieved through cultivating right faith, right knowledge, and right conduct.

♦ *Jainism in Kerala*

The growth of Jainism in Kerala can be divided into two distinct phases. The initial phase occurred in the seventh and eighth centuries CE. Subsequently, with the advent of the Bhakti movement, Jainism transitioned into a phase characterised by temple construction and the worship of images, particularly yakshas and yakshis, resembling features of a popular cult. During the second phase, Wayanad experienced an increase in Jain migrants escaping persecution and turmoil in Karnataka, leading to the emergence of several small settlements that maintained connections with each other. The establishment of 12 streets in Panamaram and the creation of new angadi exemplify the significant role played by Jains in the early medieval economy of Kerala.

♦ *Decline of Jainism and Budhism*

The later dominance of Hinduism negatively impacted both Jainism and Buddhism. Numerous Jain Basthis and Buddha viharas were targeted and converted into Hindu temples. The conversion of many rulers from Jainism and Buddhism to Saiva and Vaishnavite sects further contributed to the decline of these religions, although some individuals continued to adhere to the Jain tradition. Abundant relics and research findings provide evidence of Jainism's existence in Kerala, including structural remnants of Jain temples and various images of tirthankaras, sasana devatas, yakshas, and yakshinis discovered across different regions of Kerala.

♦ *Brahmanical influence*

Kerala is home to numerous bhagavathi temples where, in some instances, yakshinis have been reinterpreted as bhagavathi. These female deities were popular and had a significant following among women devotees. Initially a Jain hub, Kallil temple now houses a statue of Padmavati, the yakshini of Parsvanatha, concealed under a bronze disc, after coming under Brahmanical influence. Several other Jain centers in Kerala also exhibit strong Brahmanical characteristics, indicating a merging of Brahmanism with declining Jainism during the medieval period and suggesting Jainism predates Brahmanism in the region. Apart from yakshinis, the Jain pantheon includes sixteen vidyadevis, with Srutadevi or Sarasvati holding a prominent position.

Jainism consists of two main sects: digambara and svetambara. The historical evidence and iconography point towards the

digambara sect being more prevalent in Kerala. The digambara sect constitutes the majority of Jains in Wayanad district, while in Kozhikode and Mattancherry (Ernakulam district), svetambara Jain temples have been constructed more recently by the Gujarati Jain communities in these areas. In contrast, the Jain temples in Kanyakumari, located on the border of Thiruvananthapuram district, typically feature relief images, while the Jain temples in Wayanad contain both free-standing images and relief images. Through archaeological research and the discovery of Jain Thirthankara idols and Sasanadevatas in numerous temples across Kerala, it is evident that Jain settlements once existed in nearly all districts of the region. However, over time, Jainism experienced a decline in Kerala, possibly due to the absence of royal support or the resurgence of Hindu customs. The waning influence of the Hoysalas may also have contributed to the decline of Jainism in the southern region.

♦ *Jain Temples*

2.2.3. Buddhism

Buddhism originated in India around the late 500BCE through the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, a prince who later became known as Gautama Buddha, signifying 'enlightened one'. The followers of Buddhism hold ceremonies in honor of Buddha, regarding him as an enlightened individual rather than a deity or manifestation of one.

The primary foundation of belief and observance for Buddhists lies in the Dharma, which encompasses the teachings of Buddha. A majority of Buddhists adhere to the Four Noble Truths and adhere to the Eightfold Path. Buddhists also conform to regulations and teachings that govern their respective communities or sanghas. Despite the presence of diverse Buddhist traditions, the fundamental teachings of Buddha Sakyamuni are universally embraced, emphasizing the impermanence of worldly entities, the influence of past deeds (karma) on individuals, and the possibility of rebirth in various forms. Notions regarding rebirth may differ among distinct traditions and societies. The core tenets of Buddhism, shared across all schools, are rooted in the Four Noble Truths:

♦ *Philosophy of Buddhism*

- ♦ Human existence is characterised by mental and physical anguish and discontent (dukkha)

- ♦ The root cause of dukkha is identified as self-centeredness and the yearning for possessions like wealth and authority

- ♦ Attainment of nirvana, a mental state transcending desires and suffering, constitutes the resolution of dukkha

♦ An individual achieves nirvana by adhering to the Eightfold Path.

Buddhism in Kerala appears to have undergone a gradual process of integrating the evolving philosophical ideologies prevalent in the surrounding regions. Kerala, from a political perspective, was navigating through a period of uncertainty. In the initial three centuries of the Christian Era, trade activities were focused on ports along the littoral Tamilakam. The 4th to 6th centuries CE witnessed a shift towards Sri Lankan ports, which emerged as active trade hubs attracting commerce from the Indian Ocean. Cosmas, a figure from the 6th century CE, highlighted the intricate trade connections between the coast of Sri Lanka and the Malabar Coast. This surge in maritime trade and engagements with Sri Lanka likely played a role in sustaining Buddhism in Kerala, as traders and their guilds were significant benefactors of Buddhist monasteries.

♦ *Maritime trade and Budhism*

The presence of Buddhism in Kerala is discernible from the accounts in Si-yu-ki, compiled by the Chinese pilgrim Yuan Chwang (Xuanzang). The existence of Buddhist monasteries in this region even before Yuan Chwang's visit in the mid-7th century CE suggests a longstanding Buddhist presence. The political authority in the southern region often shifted between the Ay-Cheras and the Pandyas, leading to fluctuations in governance.

♦ *Buddhism in Kerala*

Despite Buddhism's decline starting from the 8th century CE, its presence endured until the 12th century CE. It is inaccurate to suggest that Buddhism vanished entirely from Kerala; rather, it merged with Hinduism, incorporating some of its elaborate rituals and worship practices. A notable example is the celebration known as Kettukazcha, which is linked to temple festivities. The rituals, processions, and other elements associated with popular Hindu worship in Kerala are believed to have originated from Buddhism. Additionally, there is a theory suggesting that Naga worship in Kerala might also be a remnant of Buddhist influence.

♦ *Influence of Buddhism*

Buddhist monks played a pioneering role in education, with viharas serving as educational institutions that fostered learning and knowledge. The term 'Ezhuthuppalli,' referring to elementary schools in Malayalam, appears to have roots in the Buddhist era, as Buddhists referred to their viharas as 'Pallis.' Over time, many temples evolved into centers of education. Furthermore, Buddhism influenced the artistic and literary development in Kerala.

♦ *Buddhist education influence*

It is essential to recognise the contributions made by ancient rulers to the proliferation of Buddhism in Kerala, leaving behind a lasting legacy. Although Buddhism ceased to be a practiced religion in Kerala centuries ago, its principles continue to resonate today.

This is evident in the teachings and actions of religious scholars and social reformers such as Sri Narayana Guru, Chattampi Swamikal, Brahmananda Sivayogi, Swami Vagbhatananda, and Swami Agamananda. While not explicitly endorsing Buddhism, their messages promoting non-violence, the elimination of desires, self-purification, the futility of rituals and idol worship, and the abolition of caste distinctions reflect the essence of Buddhist teachings. A significant aspect of Buddha's mission and his religion was the refinement of Hinduism. Kerala, once plagued by primitive religious practices and societal injustices, was transformed by the influence of Buddhism, with the contributions of rulers and scholars playing a pivotal role in this transformation.

Numerous prominent Hindu temples in contemporary times, such as the Durga temple in Thrissur district and the Kurumba Bhagavati temple in Kodungalloor, are believed to have originated as Buddhist shrines. The presence of Buddha images in Kunnathur and Karunagappalli Taluks of Kollam district, as well as in Mavelikkara and Ambalapuzha Taluks of Alappuzha district, serves as evidence of the prevalence of Buddhism in these regions. Among these images, the renowned Karumadikuttan near Ambalapuzha stands out.

2.2.4 Development of Hinduism

The introduction of Hinduism to Kerala was facilitated by the Brahminical immigrants. During the eighth century AD, Kerala experienced a peak in the process of Hinduisation due to the significant influx of Brahmins. Through intellectual debates, the Brahmin scholars engaged with the Buddhists and emerged victorious, thus solidifying the dominance of their religious beliefs and the Varna societal structure in Kerala. The essence of Hinduism, along with its inherent virtues and cultural expressions, has played a fundamental role in shaping the societal framework of Kerala.

The Hindu revivalism movement led by Sankaracharya of Kerala, along with his philosophy of Advaita Vedanta, stands as a distinctive contribution of India to the realms of philosophy and religious studies. Even today, the customs, traditions, temples, and celebrations continue to hold a central position in the daily lives of the people in Kerala. The roots of Hinduism can be traced back to the Indus River Valley in the Indian subcontinent, where ancient civilisations practiced various forms of religious worship. Hinduism stands as one of the most ancient religions, with historical evidence indicating its existence dating back 4,000 years.

By 1500 BCE, Hinduism had already achieved a high level of philosophical and religious sophistication, which has sustained

its presence through the ages. The Hindu faith, encompassing a rich tapestry of human civilisation, reflects a harmonious blend of diverse religious practices and beliefs. Numerous cultural influences, languages, and interpretations of the divine have contributed to the development and evolution of Hinduism. Within the vast spectrum of Hindu practices and beliefs, defining Hinduism presents a complex challenge.

Jainism, Buddhism, and Sikhism, three other major Indian religions, share historical and conceptual ties with Hinduism. In contrast to many other faiths, Hinduism lacks a single founder, definitive scripture, or universally accepted set of doctrines. Over its extensive history, Hinduism has been enriched by the teachings of diverse scholars and the compilation of numerous sacred texts. Consequently, some scholars view Hinduism not as a singular religion but as a way of life or a family of religions.

Originally used to denote a regional and cultural affiliation to South Asia, the term "Hindu" later evolved into a religious marker. By the 16th century, the term encompassed the non-Turkic and non-Muslim inhabitants of the subcontinent, highlighting shared cultural practices such as cremation rituals and culinary traditions. Many scholarly textbooks discussing the historical evolution of religions often dedicate considerable sections to this particular period of Hindu religious progression, with the most recent example being Professor Hopkins' comprehensive study of religious histories. Professor Hopkins meticulously highlights various religious aspects within the context of their traditional beliefs, encompassing physical entities such as Ghosts and Gods, ultimately leading to the development of sects devoted to Shiva and Vishnu.

The depiction of the divine entity in Hinduism is intricately woven into the sacred texts like the Vedas and Upanishads. This representation stems from a combination of observations, introspections, meditative practices, and spiritual contemplations, giving rise to diverse philosophical and theological discourses aimed at unraveling the essence of God. Within Hinduism, "Brahman" is elucidated as the singular, boundless reality, omnipresent, omnipotent, and transcending human comprehension. While Brahman may exist formlessly and attribute-less, it also manifests in tangible forms, asserting supremacy and transcendence. According to Hindu beliefs, the cosmos, the universe, and the Absolute are not distinct entities but rather facets of the same unified Brahman.

In Hindu theology, the concept of divine incarnation as an Avatar signifies the possibility of God assuming human form,

allowing individuals to develop personal devotion to multiple deities. Ancient scriptures portray Hinduism as a fusion of various theological frameworks including Monotheism, Monism, Pantheism, Polytheism, and Animism. Central to Hindu tradition is the notion that religious affiliation is inherited at birth, precluding the idea of conversion or voluntary selection. Offspring born to Hindu parents are inherently considered part of the Hindu faith, with a fundamental belief in the potential for individuals to embody aspects of the divine or strive for ultimate transcendence. The foundational principle of Hindu orthodoxy encapsulates the assertion "Aham Brahamasmi" (I am the supreme), emphasizing a personalised connection to the divine wherein God imparts revelations tailored to each individual's religious journey and convictions.

♦ *Divine incarnation*

2.2.4.1. Bhakti Movement

The Bhakti movement was a significant religious movement in medieval Hinduism aimed at instituting religious reforms across all societal levels through the practice of devotion for attaining salvation. This movement gained prominence in the eighth-century in south India, specifically in present-day Tamil Nadu and Kerala, before spreading towards the north. From the 15th century onwards, it expanded over east and north India, culminating between the 15th and 17th centuries CE.

♦ *Religious reformation*

Regionally, the Bhakti movement evolved around various deities such as Vaishnavism (Vishnu), Shaivism (Shiva), Shaktism (Shakti goddesses), and Smartism, with teachings delivered in local languages to ensure accessibility to the masses. Inspired by numerous poet-saints advocating diverse philosophical beliefs ranging from theistic dualism to absolute monism, this movement had limited influence in Kerala, particularly in the context of Hinduism-Islam reconciliation. During the Chola Imperialistic wars era, interaction with external influences ceased, leading to the propagation of the Krishna Cult by a succession of saints from the 13th to 17th centuries. While some consider this a Bhakti movement, its lack of political and social underpinnings raises doubts. These saints were primarily devotees of Srikrishna of Guruvayur.

♦ *Bhakti movement in Kerala*

According to PP Narayanan Nambudiri, Kerala did not witness a Bhakti Movement akin to Northern India, but rather nurtured a Bhakti cult that thrived in the region. This cult's roots in Kerala trace back to the Mother Goddess and Siva cults of the Indus Valley, possibly explaining why it is not termed a 'movement.' Initially manifesting through folk songs, Bhakti gained traction in Kerala before the evolution of the Malayalam language. These early songs extolled various deities, with Rama and Krishna being the most

♦ *Bhakti cult*

popular subjects in the 'pattuprasthanam' or song movement of Malayalam.

Kulasekhara Alvar, an 8th century Chera ruler and Vaishnava bhakti poet, penned works like the *Mukundamala* and *Perumal Tirumozhi*, which were later included in the Vaishnavite Bhakti canon. Despite claims suggesting his Kerala origins, historical sources indicate otherwise, as noted by Bharati Jagannathan. Cheeraman, the 12th-century poet who authored the *Ramacharitam*, is recognised as one of the earliest individuals to venture into literary endeavors in Malayalam, despite evident influences from Tamil and Sanskrit. Speculations regarding Cheeraman's background vary, with some suggesting royal lineage within the Venad ruling family, while others propose a more humble origin. In the *Ramacharitam*, the poet endeavors to instill a sense of righteousness through the character of Rama, believed to be an embodiment of Vishnu. Cheeraman's interpretation of a segment from the Ramayana is thought to aim at enlightening the common people. The phrase 'To enlighten those little folks on earth' stands out as a notable expression by Cheeraman, resonating as a guiding principle for subsequent Malayalam writers.

♦ *Literary endeavors in Malayalam*

The Bhakti movement underwent a schism, leading to the emergence of two distinct factions: the Alvaras, who venerated Lord Vishnu, and the Nayanaras, devotees of Lord Shiva. Both groups employed a blend of Sanskrit and Tamil in their devotional songs. The essence of *Ramacharitam* lies in the overarching divine presence of Vishnu, the central deity of Bhakti, which extends beyond just Lord Rama to encompass all characters, including Ravana. The narrative rejects a simplistic portrayal of good versus evil, transcending conventional dualities. The absence of a neutral ground or external judgment reflects the foundational principles of Bhakti, marking a departure from traditional norms. Cheeraman's literary pursuits in the early 12th century were impeded by various factors, such as the complex socio-political landscape, linguistic constraints, and the nascent stage of Malayalam literature. Consequently, the task of defining Kerala's literary identity fell upon the shoulders of Thunchathu Ezhuthachan, signifying a shift in literary continuity.

♦ *Alvaras and Nayanars*

2.2.5 Christianity

In relation to the life, mission, and martyrdom of the Apostle Thomas in India, there exists a multitude of evidence as per renowned historians worldwide. The Church Fathers, including Origen (186-254 AD.), document the Apostle's evangelistic endeavors in India and the inception of Christianity in the region during the initial

century of the Christian era. The enduring presence of Jews in India from ancient times likely influenced Apostle Thomas's journey to the region. The establishment of seven and a half churches by St. Thomas in South India stands as a pivotal aspect of the Christian faith's legacy in Malabar, symbolizing the illustrious tradition of the faith community he founded. These churches represent not mere structures but enduring symbols of the Apostle's spiritual legacy.

During the first century AD, a significant portion of the population in Kerala adhered to the Dravidian religion, which did not involve formal places of worship but rather nature temples known as Kavukal. The potential existence of a Christian prayer site at that time likely entailed a simple Cross positioned beneath a tree. In his work *History of Kerala*, the author K. P. Padmanabha Menon, highlights certain criticisms directed towards the St. Thomas tradition in Southern India. These criticisms question the plausibility of St. Thomas' presence in peninsular India, proposing instead that he primarily operated as an Apostle in Parthia, focusing on the North West rather than the South. Moreover, doubts are raised regarding the presence of Brahmins in early South India during the Christian era, challenging claims of St. Thomas converting individuals in this region due to the lack of historical evidence supporting such traditions. The historians argue that the well-known trade route could have facilitated St. Thomas' journey to India for the purpose of spreading the Gospel, particularly among the Jewish population of Malabar and the indigenous people.

Some aspects of the St. Thomas tradition are preserved in various traditional songs from Malabar, including *Ramban Pattu, Veeradyan Pattu* and *Margam Kali Pattu*, along with written historical records. These sources indicate that the people of Malabar maintained a substantial oral tradition surrounding St. Thomas, as evidenced by the content of these songs and documented accounts. Notably, ancient texts like *Thoma Parvam* and *Margam Kali* recount the events leading to St. Thomas' fatal encounter with Brahmins near a Kali temple in Mylapore on July 3rd, 72 A.D., resulting in his demise later that day. Corresponding narratives from Syrian sources further corroborate this longstanding Malabar tradition. The cultural exchange facilitated by trade relations between Malabar and other regions played a pivotal role in the introduction of Christianity to the area, signifying a notable transformation within the society. This shift towards Christianity, amidst the presence of ancient religions like Jainism, Buddhism, and Hinduism (as a way of life rather than a formal religion), brought significant alterations to the socio-cultural fabric of Malabar.

The advent of Christianity in Malabar, with its monotheistic doctrine centered around a single God, sparked substantial social upheavals and conflicts within the community. The introduction of Christianity, particularly its emphasis on a singular deity, instigated profound socio cultural changes in Malabar, challenging the prevailing caste system and reshaping societal norms.

Since its inception, the caste system has functioned as a harsh mechanism for upholding privileges among the elite classes and oppressing the lower ones. The upper echelons of society have consistently struggled to coexist with the lower strata, even in cases of conversion to Christianity. Individuals of high social standing have harbored aspirations of assuming roles such as priests or bishops within the Christian hierarchy. These individuals from privileged backgrounds have often resisted notions of equality advocated by the Church in both doctrine and practice. Over time, Christian principles have underscored themes of duality and fraternity under the umbrella of a singular benevolent deity. The Church has emphasised love, philanthropy, and egalitarianism through the teachings of the Bible. Central to Christianity is the concept of equality before a singular divine entity and the promotion of neighborly affection for the divine's sake. This emphasis has significantly diminished the deleterious impact of the historical inheritance from our predecessors, the Hindus.

The early followers of Christianity, known as St. Thomas Christians due to the apostolic activities of St. Thomas, gradually assimilated back into the traditional caste system despite their baptism. They clung to the belief that one's status as an authentic Christian hinged on birth, akin to being born into a Hindu caste as a Brahmin or Sudra, thus maintaining caste affiliation until death. The teachings of St. Thomas presented challenges in terms of clarity and relevance to the local populace, leading to Christianity being perceived merely as another caste within the broader spectrum of Hinduism. This period marked the onset of religious conflicts and the amalgamation of Hindu and Christian rituals and practices, blurring the lines between a monotheistic and polytheistic belief system.

Numerous Hindus opted for conversion to Christianity through the evangelistic efforts of St. Thomas, viewing it as a means to escape the shackles of the caste system and attain parity and respect in society. Consequently, there was a notable surge in conversions from Hinduism to Christianity. However, those transitioning from Hinduism to Christianity encountered significant challenges in altering their routines, ceremonies, and societal norms, prompting the emergence of an indigenous adaptation and ritual integration

within Indian Christianity. Christianity, upon its introduction, advocated for universal equality, recognizing all individuals as children of God. Many individuals from lower castes within Hindu society embraced Christianity to experience the dignity and equality promised by the Christian faith. The newfound parity between lower-caste and upper-caste individuals engendered socio-cultural and spiritual tensions in Malabar, culminating in instances of persecution and martyrdom of Christian missionaries. Christianity in the Indian context underwent multiple adaptations to align with prevailing social customs, leading to Christians being accorded elevated status within society.

2.2.6. Islam

Islam, a term of Arabic origin symbolizing submission, surrender, and obedience, embodies the essence of complete submission and obedience to Allah, hence its nomenclature. The alternate interpretation of the word, 'peace', underscores the idea that genuine peace of mind and body can solely be attained through submission and obedience to God. The foundational practices of Islam, known as the Five Pillars of Islam, constitute the fundamental and obligatory rituals observed by Muslims:

1. The declaration of faith

2. Ritual prayers

3. Almsgiving (Zakat)

4. Observance of fasting during Ramadan

5. Completion of the pilgrimage to Mecca, known as the Hajj.

Historically, the introduction of Islam to India occurred in Kerala through Arab traders engaging in commerce with the region, facilitated by the hospitable attitude of local rulers towards Muslim merchants. Notably, it was the Hindu rulers in Kodungallur who extended support for the construction of the first mosque in India, marking the spread of Islam to various regions across the country.

Divergent from the predominant narrative of conquest, Islam's arrival in Kerala was a consequence of trade, with scholarly research indicating that Arabian traders and sailors settled permanently along the south-western coast of India during the early stages of Islam. The intermarriage between Arab traders and local women resulted in the emergence of a community known as the 'Mappilas'. Over time, conversions from the Hindu faith, particularly among lower castes, contributed to the growth of Islam's followers in Kerala, comprising approximately 26.5% of

♦ *Islam in Kerala*

the state's population as per the 2011 Census of India. While the Mappilas do not represent the entirety of Kerala's Muslim populace, their demographic prominence has played a defining role in shaping the Muslim community's public presence in the state, characterised by distinct historical, geographical, and cultural factors.

Historically, it has been noted that they are primarily the offspring of the unions between Arab sailors/traders and local women. The Mappilas, as a community following the Islamic faith, had already established themselves there before their co-religionists arrived in India through the north-western route and dispersed throughout the Indian subcontinent, thereby earning the distinction of being the oldest Muslim community in South Asia. Geographically, their presence was mainly concentrated in the Malabar region, although a small percentage settled in other areas within and beyond the state.

♦ *Mappila coomunity*

Culturally, the Mappilas maintained a distinct identity from other Muslim communities in the Indian subcontinent, as their way of life evolved in conjunction with the local socio-cultural framework. Their religious practices were not influenced by the Indo-Persian Islam that shaped Muslim culture in most parts of India, with their traditional mosques resembling the design and materials used in the region's Hindu temples. The Islam practiced by the Mappilas, along with their embedded socio-cultural practices, facilitated their integration into the broader socio-cultural system, peaceful coexistence with Hindu neighbors, and the establishment of a unique position that did not provoke hostility from the general population or rulers during the pre-colonial era.

♦ *Mappila identity*

The Zamorins of Calicut, in particular, extended their patronage to the Mappilas, who reciprocated by supporting them against European imperial powers. This mutually beneficial relationship, according to most historians, not only ensured the survival of the Mappilas as a distinct religious community but also allowed them to thrive economically and religiously under non-Muslim rule for over eight centuries. However, the arrival of European imperial powers marked a turning point for the Mappilas, as they lost their trade dominance to the Portuguese and were forced to move inland, leading to significant economic repercussions. This period is considered the most traumatic in the history of the Mappilas.

♦ *Economic repercussions*

2.2.7. Role of Religion

Man can be distinguished from other animals from two perspectives: reason and religion. Human beings possess reason, unlike other animals, which is why they are referred to as "rational animals". Similarly, humans exhibit religious tendencies whereas other animals do not. Humans encompass both finite and infinite

- *Reason and religion*

- *Unseen entity*

- *Religious consciousness*

- *Social Dimension of Religion*

characteristics. During the early stages of human existence on Earth, individuals lacked knowledge about natural occurrences but were eager to understand them. They encountered various natural disasters such as storms, floods, and dangerous animals, leading them to believe in a higher power for assistance and support.

Fear and curiosity were the primary driving forces behind the development of religious inclinations among ancient people. They believed in the power of this unseen entity to guide them through birth, suffering, old age, and ultimately salvation. Sometimes, they perceived God as an object of affection and attempted to establish a connection through various forms like father, friend, beloved, and master. Hence, to combat ignorance and gain strength to face natural disasters, humans frequently relied on a fictitious entity, commonly referred to as "God" in religious contexts.

The realm of religious consciousness incorporates an emotional component comprising ideas, thoughts, and sentiments related to an individual's connection with God. These emotional and intellectual components are collectively known as the internal aspect of religion. Additionally, practical aspects such as rituals and ceremonies form a crucial part of religious practices.

Religion is essentially a personal affair, where individuals undergo religious experiences and hold firm beliefs in them. They personally encounter religious phenomena in their lives and believe that salvation can be achieved through religious deeds. Conversely, from a societal standpoint, the social dimension of religion holds greater significance and is emphasised by major world religions. Religion plays a vital role in fostering and sustaining social cohesion. The religion that accentuates this social dimension is often referred to as the religion of humanity, although this aspect is not conventionally acknowledged as religion. Scholars like Blackmar and Gillin, prominent sociologists, argue that communal worship is vital for the survival of any religious faith in the long term. They contend that a vibrant religion may lose its significance if its adherents cease to engage in collective worship. Just as religion, its institutions also wield considerable influence in social life. It is undeniable that various social institutions such as family, economy, and politics impact religious establishments. It is undeniable that religious institutions can exert influence on various other institutions. A crucial aspect of religion involves prayer, where individuals from different societal castes congregate in religious settings for worship. Through these practices, a sense of unity is fostered, leading to shared emotions and camaraderie among followers of a specific faith.

♦ *Role of religion in social control*

The external manifestation of religion plays a role in social regulation. Religious rituals and ceremonies continue to impact the behaviors and interactions of individuals in different spheres of society. Typically, individuals express their religious beliefs through ceremonial acts. Religion plays a pivotal role in shaping an individual's character, consequently influencing social dynamics. It instills a sense of communal values, guiding adherence to social norms, respect for elders, empathy towards others, and fulfillment of social responsibilities. In ancient times, religion wielded significant control over society by instilling fear of the divine, a trend that persists to this day. While historical records illustrate instances of religious conflicts leading to division and strife, religion also fosters a sense of unity by nurturing patriotic sentiments. Thus, religion serves as a mechanism for social order and cohesion.

Despite these positive aspects, religion harbors negative facets that warrant attention. Throughout history, religious discord has sparked conflicts and disunity within societies, exemplified by clashes between various religious factions such as Protestants versus Roman Catholics and Hindus versus Muslims. The prevalence of religious wars during the sixteenth century underscores the destructive consequences of religious fanaticism, often resulting in atrocities. Furthermore, religion has at times impeded the pursuit of intellectual freedom, as seen in the suppression of independent thinking during the medieval era.

♦ *Negative aspects of Religion*

Current communal tensions between different societal groups also highlight the detrimental effects of religious influences. Certain individuals exploit religion for personal gain, perpetuating conflicts and discord within communities. The pervasive nature of religious strife underscores the argument that the elimination of religion could potentially lead to societal harmony and peaceful coexistence. Instances of religious conflicts and riots across various regions and time periods further underscore the role of religion in fostering disharmony within societies.

Summarised Overview

Religion plays a pivotal role in shaping cultural, social, and individual identities, offering a foundation for comprehending the world, moral principles, community unity, and a sense of direction. It exerts influence on various facets of life, spanning politics, education, and social conduct. The Dravidian religion stressed the veneration of nature, ancestors, and local deities, elements of which later merged into Hinduism, particularly the worship of local deities.

Jainism and Buddhism represent ascetic sramana traditions advocating the achievable liberation from the cycle of rebirths and deaths (samsara) through spiritual and ethical practices. Hinduism later evolved as a Vedic religion encompassing diverse beliefs like karma, dharma, samsara (reincarnation), and moksha (liberation), impacting societal structure via the caste system and traditional family roles. Christianity, rooted in Monotheism, emphasises salvation through Jesus, the Trinity, resurrection, and eternal life, whereas Islam centers around Monotheism (Allah), the Five Pillars of Islam (Shahada, Salat, Zakat, Sawm, Hajj), and the Quran as a sacred scripture.

Functionalism regards religion as a social institution fostering social unity, stability, and significance, with Emile Durkheim highlighting its role in fostering collective consciousness. Conflict Theory, on the other hand, examines how religion can perpetuate social disparities and power dynamics, with Karl Marx viewing it as a tool for sustaining class oppression. In the context of Kerala, religion contributes to social coherence and cultural identity, with festivals and religious customs nurturing a sense of community and continuity.

Occasionally, religious dynamics mirror underlying social tensions, such as caste biases within Hinduism or inter-religious rivalries, yet Kerala's relatively progressive measures and social reforms have alleviated some of these conflicts. The subjective experiences of religious adherents in Kerala underscore the personal and communal significance of religious ceremonies, festivals, and doctrines, providing a framework for interpreting life events and social interactions. Kerala is renowned for its secular stance and inclusive policies, fostering harmony among diverse religious groups. Ultimately, religion in Kerala society is distinguished by a diverse array of beliefs and practices, a notable degree of syncretism, and a generally peaceful coexistence among various religious communities.

Self-Assessment

1. Who wrote the book *Elementary forms of Religious Life?*
2. *Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism* was written by?
3. What is *Moksha*?

4. What is religious consciousness?

5. Examine the features of Jain philosophy.

6. Discuss the role of religion in human life?

7. Critically analyse the philosophy of Budhism.

8. Briefly assess the development of Hinduism in India.

Assignments

1. Examine the diverse functions of religion within Kerala society and explore the ways in which religion enhances social cohesion, upholds moral order, and shapes individual identity. Use specific instances from various religious practices observed in Kerala to illustrate these concepts.

2. Illustrate the fundamental beliefs and customs of Jainism, and analyse the societal and cultural impacts of Jain principles such as non-violence and asceticism in India.

3. Examine the historical progression and decline of Buddhism in Kerala, identifying remnants of Buddhist influence that persist in Kerala's cultural and religious landscape today.

4. Analyse the repercussions of the Bhakti movement on Kerala's society, focusing on the teachings and contributions of prominent Bhakti saints.

5. Evaluate the impact of Christian missionary efforts on education and healthcare in Kerala, and assess how these endeavors have shaped modern Kerala society

6. Explain a significant religious festival in Kerala, such as Onam, Eid-ul-Fitr, or Christmas, and analyse how the festival fosters social cohesion and cultural identity within the community.

Suggested Readings

1. Berger, P. L. (2001). *Reflections on the Sociology of Religion Today*. Sociology of religion, 62(4), 443-454.

2. Durkheim, E. (2016). *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. In Social theory re-wired (pp. 52-67). Routledge.

3. Panicker, K.M. (1960). *A History of Kerala 1498-1801*. Annamalai Nagar: The Annamalai University.

4. Panicker, K.N. (1997). *Studies in Traditional Kerala*. Trivandrum: College Book House.

5. Tylor, E. B. (1958). *Religion in Primitive Culture*. Harper Torchbooks.

References

1. Alexander, C.P (1949). *Buddhism in Kerala*. Annamalai University.

2. Chatterjee, A. K. (1978). *A Comprehensive History of Jainism*. Firma KLM Private Limited

3. Nath, S., & Phil, M. (2015). *Religion and its Role in Society*. IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 20(11), 82-85.

4. Rice, B. L. (1927). Mysore Gazetteer (Vol. 1). Government Press.

5. Zachariah, K. (2016). *Religious Denominations of Kerala*. https://cds.edu/wp-content/uploads/WP468.pdf

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

Religious Pluralism and Religious Harmony

Learning Outcomes

After reading this unit, the learner will be able to:

♦ describe religious pluralism and elucidate its relevance in modern society

♦ explain the concept of religious harmony and its importance in maintaining social cohesion

♦ reflect on individual beliefs and predispositions towards various religions, as well as their impact on interpersonal engagements

Background

Religious pluralism and religious harmony are fundamental notions for comprehending the intricacies of societies that are both multicultural and multi-religious. This module delves into these notions, concentrating on their underpinning theories, practical consequences, and real-world uses. Religious pluralism denotes the acknowledgment and coexistence of numerous religious customs within a given society. It encompasses the acknowledgment and reverence of the assortment of religious convictions and rituals, cultivating an atmosphere where individuals and communities are able to openly manifest their religious devotion.

Religious harmony represents a condition of tranquil coexistence and collaboration among varied religious communities. This condition is marked by reciprocal respect, comprehension, and the absence of discord. In the contemporary globalised era, religious pluralism and harmony encounter a blend of challenges and opportunities. The movement of people, advancements in technology, and the prevalence of social media have heightened interactions among diverse religious factions, occasionally resulting in misinterpretations and disputes.

Religious Pluralism, Religious Harmony, Social cohesion, Communalism, Secularism

Discussion

2.3.1 Religious Pluralism

Definitions of Pluralism

The term 'Pluralism' can be delineated as a concept that advocates for communal and religious harmony among diverse communities. A society characterised by a collective sense of identity, encompassing various cultures, religions, festivities, and traditions, falls under the overarching umbrella of unity and cohesion. Numerous studies have been conducted analysing the concept of pluralism. In the contemporary era, pluralism plays a pivotal role in fostering peace and halting acts of terrorism, discrimination, and extremism. According to the Oxford Dictionary, pluralism is defined as 'the coexistence of multiple distinct groups within a single society, such as individuals from different races or various political and religious factions.' The Cambridge English Dictionary interprets pluralism as 'the presence of diverse individuals holding different beliefs and viewpoints within a shared societal framework.' In line with Merriam-Webster, pluralism is characterised as 'the quality or condition of being plural.'

Concept of Religious Pluralism

The concept of religious pluralism typically involves the recognition of two or more religious perspectives as equally legitimate or admissible. Beyond mere tolerance, religious pluralism acknowledges the existence of multiple avenues to connect with God or deities and is commonly juxtaposed with "exclusivism," which asserts that there is only one authentic religion or path to understanding God. Objantoro characterises religious pluralism as the 'existential recognition of the other as separate, without the ability to comprehend or assimilate them'. The idea of religious pluralism conveys the notion that all religions are legitimate or authentic in their unique beliefs, rituals, and customs, regardless of their distinct and profound disparities. Domenic (2007) posits that 'Pluralism essentially involves the notion that the world's religions are valid and equally sound in their conveyance of truths regarding God, the universe, and salvation'.

Durkheim's perspective regarding religion implied that a truly religious society could only support a single religion within its domain. According to his analysis, this phenomenon was evident in small-scale Aboriginal communities, where all individuals would congregate at specific times of the year to engage in religious rituals. Durkheim theorised that during religious practices, individuals were essentially paying homage to society itself, drawing from his observations of such communities. However, contemporary societies, especially postmodern ones, lack a dominant religion; instead, they exhibit a variety of religions, a concept known as religious pluralism.

Peter L Berger, functioning as a sociologist, focused his research on the concept of pluralism. In 2014, he authored the book *'The Many Altars of Modernity,'* which presented a sociological examination of the current religious landscape, devoid of any theological assumptions. At the onset of his career as a sociologist of religion, he aligned with the secularization theory, believing that modernity inherently leads to a decrease in religious beliefs. However, after more than two decades of research, he realised that this theory lacks empirical support. This realisation was not influenced by his personal religious views; rather, it was a result of the overwhelming evidence he encountered. Presently, the world is as religious as it has ever been, with some regions exhibiting even stronger religious fervor. Berger noted that this era characterised by pluralism carries significant implications for religion, albeit differing from those of secularism. Two forms of pluralism can be delineated. The initial form pertains to the coexistence of various religions and worldviews within a given society, a phenomenon not exclusive to contemporary times. The second form of pluralism involves the simultaneous presence of secular discourse alongside diverse religious discourses. Uniquely modern, this type of pluralism has a tendency to highlight the former, namely the coexistence of multiple religions and worldviews.

The Kerala society embodies a diverse array of cultures, languages, and faiths. To comprehend the religious diversity in our nation, it is imperative to delve into the historical roots of the myriad religious communities present in our society. The religious diversity in Kerala has persisted over an extensive period due to its rich historical background and the continuous influx and settlement of migrant communities. Alongside the indigenous cultural groups practicing various religions in Kerala, these migrant communities introduced their distinct religious beliefs, customs, and traditions. This amalgamation led to the coalescence of individuals adhering to different faiths, thereby laying the foundation of religious

pluralism in Kerala. Religious pluralism entails the presence of varied religious beliefs among individuals.

Religious pluralism in India embodies the coexistence of multiple religions since ancient times, with each religion encompassing diverse cultural, social, and ritualistic elements that transcend religious boundaries. These shared cultural and social facets are the result of prolonged interaction and accommodation among different religious groups based on regional, linguistic, ritual, and social proximities. Religious pluralism in Kerala not only serves as a factual reality but also permeates the beliefs, values, and social fabric of individual religions in India.

◆ *Shared religious coexistence*

Hindu nationalist groups strive to disrupt the religious diversity in Kerala. Initiatives in Kodungallur are designed to advance a Hindu dominance that excludes others. The state of Kerala showcases a blend of various faiths living together in harmony. The concept of harmony in theology fosters a shared comprehension and peaceful coexistence among different religions. The absence of conflict in Kerala's religious diversity is closely associated with its cultural identity. The construction of social groups' identity in Kerala is heavily influenced by the role of religion.

2.3.2 Religious Harmony

◆ *Concept of Religious harmony*

In a societal context, harmony typically pertains to "a state wherein individuals exhibit tranquility and alignment in their views, or when elements appear fitting or congruous." Religious harmony denotes the interaction among different faiths, characterised by acceptance, shared comprehension, mutual esteem, equitable religious practices, and collaboration within the societal and governmental domains. Consequently, adherents and authorities must collaborate diligently to uphold religious harmony in domains such as provision of services, administration, and empowerment.

◆ *Religious harmony in Kerala*

Kerala serves as a confluence where various ethnic and religious groups intermingle. Nowhere in India, or perhaps globally, can such levels of tolerance, cooperation, and religious harmony be observed as in Kerala. The state places great emphasis on religious unity, with Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam coexisting harmoniously without significant conflict. The population of thirty million consists of fifty-seven percent Hindus, with Christians and Muslims making up the remaining forty-three percent. Various religions in Kerala have contributed significantly to this environment. Influential religions such as Jainism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam have all left a lasting impact on Kerala's culture. Throughout the centuries, these religions have coexisted, mutually influencing each other's cultures.

Unlike other regions in India, Kerala has managed to avoid communal and religious disputes. Throughout history, Kerala has been characterised by a broad sense of tolerance and mutual respect among diverse communities residing in the region. An example of this religious tolerance can be seen in Kerala's capital, Thiruvananthapuram, where a Hindu temple, a mosque, and a cathedral stand adjacent to each other. The ancient rulers of Kerala did not discriminate based on religion, offering patronage to Hindus, Christians, Jews, and Muslims alike. Kerala has been a welcoming ground for missionaries of all faiths.

Communal harmony in Kerala

A notable aspect of religious distribution in Kerala is the widespread presence of each religious group across the state, fostering extensive inter-religious exchanges, shared languages, and cultural traditions. This has resulted in the formation of diverse cultural subgroups within each religion. Kerala is hailed as a model for peaceful coexistence among various religions and cultures. The state is famously known as "God's Own Country." Throughout history, Kerala has been a melting pot for people from diverse communities and cultures, with Kochi being home to India's oldest active synagogue and the oldest European church dating back to the 16th century.

Religious distribution in Kerala

Kerala epitomises religious coexistence rather than mere tolerance in a global context grappling with emerging forms of intense intolerance and aggression. The scarcity of interreligious conflicts is particularly noteworthy considering the diverse religious landscape; minor sporadic incidents deviate from the prevalent atmosphere of harmony and cohabitation. The various religious traditions in Kerala have adapted to incorporate and embrace neighboring faiths, as evidenced by the Hindu Edappara Maladevar Nada Temple featuring a shrine dedicated to Kayamkulam Kochunni, a revered Muslim figure from the 19th century. The people of Kerala, known as Keralites, primarily identify themselves as Indian Malayalis who communicate in the Malayalam language. While Kerala is not devoid of imperfections, it could serve as a paradigm for maintaining stability among multiethnic and multi religious communities over the long haul.

Malayali identity

2.3.2.1 Communalism- The Challenge of Religious Harmony

The positive connotation of the term communalism is emphasised in social science literature on a global scale. However, in the Indian context, communalism is associated with negative connotations leading to disastrous outcomes. According to Ratna Naidu, communal situations are characterised by tensions between culturally distinct yet geographically intertwined communities.

Concept of communalism

Communalism exhibits both positive and negative attributes. It serves to strengthen the common interests of a particular religious, caste, or other group, while simultaneously emphasizing the differences and even hostilities towards other groups.

♦ *Caste and communalism*

Communalism involves discriminating or advocating for interests based on religious affiliations, stemming from conflicting religious practices. The utilisation of symbols and institutions linked to religion, caste, or other social categories in political arenas is a mere reflection of communalism. This manifestation of communalism evolves into conditions that sustain its existence. It is important to note that not every use of symbols and institutions related to religion, caste, or other groups should be considered communal.

♦ *Sociological perspectives on Communalism*

Communalism is an ideology rooted in the socio-economic conditions of society, finding sustenance and perpetuation through traditional and contemporary structures. D P Mukherjee, the Indian sociologist, is considered a pioneer of numerous forthcoming contributions in the field of sociology regarding issues of communalism. He argues that a comprehensive understanding of tradition and its social structure is crucial in addressing what is commonly known as the communalism dilemma.

♦ *Louis Dumont's views on religion*

Louis Dumont, the indologist, scrutinised the correlation between religion and communalism, contending that the concept of communalism cannot be elucidated solely through an economic lens. According to Dumont, an in-depth grasp of communalism necessitates an understanding of the role of ideology within a society's traditions; and to fathom this role of ideology, one must grasp the fundamentals of social structure. An intrinsic linkage exists between these two components. Dumont critiques the Marxist stance on secularism, arguing that it establishes a fallacious causal connection. Sociologists have extensively examined religion.

♦ *Durkheim's theory of religion*

An eminent analysis of religion was conducted by Emile Durkheim, who authored the renowned work *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Within this publication, Durkheim posits that the concept of God is not a requisite element of religion; a religion devoid of a deity can exist. The pivotal characteristic of religion lies in its symbolic reinforcement of social cohesion. Rituals and belief systems constitute other defining attributes. Through this perspective, the confinement of religion to its rituals and belief in transcendent principles is advocated.

These manifestations validate communal principles without fostering communalism or negative sectarianism, and should not

encroach upon other domains of life. In contemplating resolutions to communalism, it can be asserted that within a multi-religious society committed to liberal democratic principles as enshrined in the constitution, secularization emerges as a pragmatic imperative. Secularization is indispensable for significantly diminishing the allure of communalism, authoritarianism, obscurantism, superstition, and similar phenomena.

2.3.3. Idea of Secularism in Kerala

"Secularism" is a political ideology that supports the division between religion and governmental affairs. It has been argued that Indian secularism mirrors Western secularism, but a thorough examination of our Constitution refutes this claim. Indian secularism differs fundamentally from its Western counterpart, as it emphasises not only the separation of church and state, but also places a significant emphasis on the concept of equality among different religions. The unique form of Indian secularism emerged from the amalgamation of pre-existing religious diversity in society and influences from the Western world. As a result, Indian secularism places equal importance on addressing internal religious issues as well as promoting harmony among different religions. It actively opposes the subjugation of dalits and women within Hinduism, the marginalisation of women in Indian Islam or Christianity, and any potential threats posed by the majority community towards the rights of minority religious groups. This distinction marks a key divergence from conventional Western secularism.

The presence of religious diversity by itself, as demonstrated by various scholars, does not present a hindrance to peace and stability. What truly matters for the occurrence of large-scale conflict and violence is not merely the extent of diversity, but rather the way in which it is structured, along with the influence of political figures. The Kerala Preservation of Secular Ethos and Prevention of Anti-Secular Activities Bill, a legislation aimed at upholding and reinforcing the secular values within society and deterring any forms of anti-secular behaviors, as well as other related objectives.

The Constitution, under Article 51A (E), mandates that every Indian citizen has the responsibility to foster unity and a sense of shared humanity among all individuals in India, transcending differences in religion, language, and region. Despite this constitutional directive, various regions including Kerala have witnessed the perpetration of acts that undermine secular values on both a large and small scale, resulting in the disruption of harmony, brotherhood, and the proliferation of violence, fear, and animosity. These activities have led to instances of personal harm, loss of life,

and destruction of property, thus necessitating the implementation of a law that mandates the State to execute initiatives promoting unity and brotherhood among the people of Kerala, irrespective of religious, sectarian, regional, or other distinctions. Furthermore, it is crucial to legally prevent any efforts to engage in or carry out activities that contravene the principles of brotherhood and harmony among the populace of Kerala, which are deemed as anti-secular.

♦ *Anti-Secular Activities*

The term "Anti-Secular Activities" encompasses any deeds or failures that contradict the constitutionally endorsed concept of secularism. Several incidents of communal unrest jeopardizing the solidarity of the populace in various parts of the State have been documented. Thus, it is imperative and urgent to suppress such harmful inclinations early on and instill a culture of mutual respect, which lies at the core of secularism, an integral element of the Constitution. Additionally, the legislation establishes an efficient mechanism for individuals to seek compensation in cases of harm, loss of life, or damage to property resulting from communal disturbances.

Summarised Overview

Kerala is acknowledged for its religious diversity, encompassing Hindus, Muslims, Christians, and smaller groups such as Jains, Buddhists, and Jews. The historical narrative of the state is characterised by the harmonious cohabitation of various faiths, a phenomenon frequently attributed to its longstanding trade relationships and cultural interactions with distant regions. The presence of religious pluralism in Kerala serves as a defining feature of its societal fabric, where a multitude of religious customs and convictions are not only acknowledged but also embraced. Kerala boasts a longstanding legacy of religious concord, wherein diverse religious communities coexist harmoniously, engaging in mutual festivities and cultural observances. This spirit of harmony is exemplified through inter-religious marriages, collective observance of festivals like Onam and Christmas, and the widespread tolerance towards diverse religious rituals. The principle of secularism in Kerala is evidenced by the state's unwavering dedication to maintaining a neutral position on religious matters in governance, all while upholding the right to religious freedom for all its inhabitants. Instances of communalism in Kerala, although less prevalent in comparison to other regions of India, occasionally manifest as isolated tensions and disputes among religious groups, often instigated by political motives or socio-economic disparities. Nonetheless, the robust civil society in the state, coupled with proactive initiatives by community leaders, frequently play a crucial role in alleviating communal frictions and reinstating peace.

Self-Assessment

1. Who wrote the book The Many Altars of Modernity?

2. Which concept is characterised as 'the quality or condition of being plural'?

3. Secularism.

4. Communalism.

5. Write a short note on Idea of secularism in Kerala.

6. Analyse the role of religious pluralism in maintaining social cohesion in society.

7. Discuss how communalism challenges religious harmony.

Assignments

1. Analyse the historical developments that have shaped the secular ethos of Kerala?

2. Assess the role of government in formulating policies and laws for promoting religious harmony and social cohesion in Kerala society.

3. Discuss the instances of communal riots happened in Kerala society.

4. Critically evaluate various factors or agencies playing the role in promoting communal violence in Kerala society.

5. Analyse how the cultural exchange due to globalisation and migration contributed to religious harmony in Kerala society.

Suggested Readings

1. Desai, A. R. (1985). *Caste and Communal Violence in Independent India*. Bombay: GGSMTP.

2. Durkheim, E. (2016). *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. In Social theory re-wired (pp. 52-67). Routledge.

3. Kumar, P. (Ed.). (1992). *Towards Understanding Communalism*. Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development.

4. Phillips, G. (2011). *Introduction to Secularism*. London: National Secular Society.

References

1. Bayly, S. (1984). Hindu Kingship and the Origin of Community: Religion, State and Society in Kerala, 1750–1850. *Modern Asian Studie*s, 18(2), 177-213.

2. Kumar, K. S. P. (2020). Plurality in Practice: Challenges and Prospects. *Artha Journal of Social Sciences*, 19(2), 21-35.

3. Melson, R., & Wolpe, H. (1970). Modernization and the Politics of Communalism: A Theoretical Perspectve. *American Political Science Review*, 64(4), 1112-1130.

4. P.K.B. Nair (1990), A Sociological Analysis of Communalism with reference to Kerala. Bidyut Chakraborty ed. *Secularism and Indian Policy*, p. 211.

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

UNIT 4

Development of Malayalam Language

Learning Outcomes

After reading this unit, the learner will be able to:

♦ examine the historical progression of the Malayalam language, encompassing its origins and changes throughout the ages

♦ comprehend the literary and cultural impacts made by Thunchaththu Ramanujan Ezhuthachan

♦ assess the contribution of Hermann Gundert to the advancement of Malayalam lexicography and grammar

Background

The Malayalam language boasts a rich and diverse historical background characterised by noteworthy literary and linguistic achievements. This section examines the progression of Malayalam, emphasizing the significant influences of Thunchaththu Ramanujan Ezhuthachan and Hermann Gundert, two individuals whose endeavors have had a lasting impact on the language. Malayalam originated from the ancient Tamil language, with its initial manifestations dating back to approximately the 9th century. Thunchaththu Ramanujan Ezhuthachan, commonly hailed as the progenitor of the Malayalam language, played a crucial role in molding its contemporary structure. Residing in the 16th century, Ezhuthachan is renowned for his seminal opus, "Adhyatma Ramayanam," written in a highly Sanskritized version of Malayalam. Hermann Gundert, a German missionary and linguist residing in Kerala during the 19th century, made significant contributions to the field of Malayalam linguistics.

Keywords

Malayalam language, Thunchaththu Ramanujan Ezhuthachan, Hermann Gundert, Lexicography, Literary analysis

Discussion

2.4.1. Language and Society

Language plays a crucial role in societal interactions across various cultures and historical periods. The dynamic between language and social interactions is bidirectional, with language influencing social behaviors and vice versa. Moreover, language serves as a tool for communication among individuals while also being a significant societal construct. The field of sociolinguistics, which explores the relationship between language and society, aims to elucidate how factors like class, gender, and race influence our linguistic practices. Renowned as the pioneer of contemporary linguistics, Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) viewed language as a form of social conduct.

2.4.1.1. Malayalam Language - An Overview

The linguistic family known as Dravidian encompasses over thirty languages predominantly spoken in Southern India. The individual credited with coining the term Dravidian to refer to this particular language family is Robert Caldwell. Among the prominent South Dravidian languages are Tamil, Malayalam, Kodagu, Toda, Kannada, and Tulu, with Tulu potentially being identified as the primary language within the South Dravidian group to have diverged. Kannada occupies the second position, followed by Kodagu, Toda, Koda, and others as the third, having branched off from the South Dravidian root.

The Tamil-Malayalam cluster is regarded as a singular language over an extensive period. Notably, Tamil and Malayalam exhibit similarities, suggesting a possible shared origin in a protolanguage labeled Proto Tamil Malayalam. In each linguistic community, languages have exhibited a propensity for transformation that permeates all individuals who communicate in that particular language. However, in the event of the disintegration of the community caused by migration, external invasion, or other extraneous influences, the alterations that originate or propagate within the linguistic community are unable to extend to the various subgroups. Consequently, the speech patterns within these communities deviate, leading to a breakdown in mutual comprehension.

2.4.1.2. Linguistic Theories on the Origin of Malayalam Language

Various scholars have proposed different theories on the

Language and social interaction

Dravidian languages

Tamil Malayalam linguistic relationship

origins of the Malayalam language. The first authoritative opinion on this matter was presented by Caldwell. AR Raja Raja Varma, Swaminatha Aiyar, Ullur S Parameswara Aiyar, Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, Gundert, K.M.Prabhakaravarier, and Namboodiri E.V.N are among the scholars who have articulated their perspectives on the genesis of Malayalam Language.

There are several prominent theories concerning the genesis of the Malayalam Language. One theory suggests Samskrithajanya vadham as the source means originated from Sanskrit. Another theory posits Swathanthravadham, which asserts Malayalam as an autonomous language directly descended from Proto Dravidian. A third theory, Upasagha vadham, proposes that Malayalam is a derivative of Tamil. A fourth theory, Misrabhasha vadham, points to a combination of Sanskrit and Malanaatu Tamil (a sentamil dialect). The Poorva-Thamizhu Malayalavadham theory suggests Malayalam emerged from Proto Tamil Malayalam.

2.4.2 Contributions of Thunchaththu Ramanujan Ezhuthachan to the Development of Malayalam Language

Thunchaththu Ramanujan Ezhuthachan, also known as Thunjath Ezhuthachan, is renowned for his pivotal role in the development of Malayalam language. His birth, approximately 450 years ago in the Malappuram district of Kerala, is shrouded in a blend of mythological narratives and historical facts. His extensive voyages in pursuit of knowledge culminated in his return to Thrikandiyur, where he had acquired mastery over the religious disciplines. Ezhuthachan's primary aim was to advocate for the inclusive essence of the language, aspiring to elevate it to a level of comprehension accessible to the common man. Despite the existence of earlier prominent writers like Cherushery, Thunjath holds a revered status as a symbol of cultural significance. There might have existed numerous keerthanas, namam, or japam, yet locating a household in Kerala devoid of a version of his Adhyathmaramayanam during periods of turmoil, illness, and scarcity proved to be unattainable. The extent of his impact on the literary sphere accessible to the general populace remains unquestionable.

He elevated the stylistic quality of the Malayalam language and tailored his compositions for the common folk, amalgamating positive elements with a pronounced emphasis on morality and adoration. His unparalleled contribution to the language via the Adhyatmaramayanam and Mahabharatham, as well as his substantial cultural influence, are undeniable. While there might have been erudite figures and poets preceding or succeeding him,

Ezhuthachan epitomizes the essence of Malayalam literature, notwithstanding the fact that his influence on the alphabet system's evolution remains somewhat ambiguous.

Until the era of Ezhuthachan, the scenario in Kerala was characterised by the teaching of the 30-letter Vattezhuthu as the Malayalam alphabet to the general populace by different Kalaries or schools. Alphabets similar to those found in Sanskrit (Grandhakshara) were likely utilized by scholars for composing their texts in Sanskrit. The employment of Sanskrit alphabets was restricted to Namboothiri priests and a select few eminent scholars. With the growing influence of Sanskrit on Malayalam, Vattezhuthu began to be commonly used for transcribing Sanskrit terms and other derivatives, albeit in a distorted manner. Terms such as Samhita, Ashtakam, Varggam, Anuvakom from the Vedas were transcribed as changatha, attam, vakkom, anam in Vattezhuthu, leading to discrepancies between the written and spoken words. This practice extended to literary works as well. Vattezhuthu was combined with Sanskrit letters from the Grandhakshara to represent crucial Sanskrit phonetics, especially in significant decrees or Shasanas. Some schools may have experimented with various amalgamations of Vattezhuthu and Grandhakshara, resulting in further confusion and lack of consensus.

♦ *Vattezhuthu*

The Bhakti movement significantly enhanced the Malayalam language, ushering in a new era of modernity. Its profound socio-cultural impact on the indigenous population of Kerala has endured steadfastly for nearly five centuries. The translations of Thunchaththu Ramanujan Ezhuthachan and other poets of the Bhakti cult, particularly in the 'kilipaatt' style, played a crucial role in instilling a sense of self-worth within a community that might have otherwise succumbed to the overwhelming influence of religious semantics. Presently, the literary works are revered as a sacred and integral part of every Hindu household and temple where Malayalam is spoken. Ezhuthachan's 'Adhyatma Ramayanam' kilipaatt exemplifies how language can serve as a catalyst for socio-cultural reevaluation and the promotion of spiritualism among the local populace. Over the years, successive generations have upheld this cultural heritage, with a notable resurgence in appreciation since the 1980s. This resurgence led to the transformation of 'Karkitaka' Maasam into 'Ramayana Maassam', a month dedicated to honoring and commemorating Ezhuthachan.

♦ *Contributions to Bhakthi movement*

The Malayalam rendition of the 'Adhyatma Ramayanam Kilipaatt' sparked a profound spiritual transformation throughout

the Malayalam-speaking region, enabling commoners to engage with the epic narrative for their spiritual fulfillment in their vernacular. The enduring impact of this transformation persists, with subsequent generations carrying forward the tradition of reciting the entire 'Adhyatma Ramayanam' over the course of a month in every Hindu household and temple. Through his endeavors, he significantly enriched the language and fostered the growth of the Bhakti movement among individuals of diverse denominations, transcending caste barriers within the Hindu community. The age-old Bhakti tradition experienced a resurgence following his introduction of the 'Kilipaatt', a novel literary form in the language that continues to enjoy popularity.

♦ *Adhyatma Ramayanam Kilipaatt*

He rendered the Ramayana text into the refined Malayalam 'kilipaatt' format, strategically incorporating appropriate Sanskrit phonetics known for their ability to impact the natural world. The rendition and explanation of 'Adhyatma Ramayanam Kilipaatt' served to acquaint Malayalam-speaking individuals with the timeless epic and draw them closer to the narratives and recitations of Ramayana. Among all literary works in Malayalam, none could surpass the popularity achieved by 'Adhyatma Ramayanam' kilipaatt authored by Ezhuthachan.

♦ *Importance of Ezhuthachan's literary works*

No other literary figure in Kerala has made such a significant contribution to the local language in order to attain a respectable status among the Dravidian languages as Ezhuthachan did. Ezhuthachan's literary works are renowned for their enchanting auditory impact, all of which eventually evolved into spiritual texts for the Malayali-speaking community, illustrating the evolution of the language that commenced with Cherusseri. He elevated all his literary compositions to the status of sacred verses during the process of translating them into the contemporary language. His iconic translation efforts and other literary inputs to the Bhakti Movement of Kerala reflected the traditional culture of Kerala and exuded the essence of the land. It appeared that Ezhuthachan was dispatched to rescue a community that could have otherwise been ensnared by the influences of foreign religions. He recognised the value of translations in aiding the common people in comprehending epics and puranas.

Admired by Sanskrit scholars and esteemed Brahmins of that period, the literary works of Ezhuthachan, who was born in a lower caste, along with the widespread acceptance of all his pieces among various sections of society, served as a prominent illustration of the misinterpretation of Brahmin dominance in the historical context of Kerala.

2.4.3. Contributions of Hermann Gundert to the Development of Malayalam Language

♦ *Gundert's linguistic endeavors*

Hermann Gundert, born on 4 February 1814 in Stuttgart, Germany, emerged as a missionary, scholar, and linguist, leaving a significant mark in the annals of Malayalam journalism by initiating the inaugural Malayalam newspaper, *Rajyasamacharam*, in 1847 from Illikkunnu, Thalassery. Upon arriving in Madras in 1836 at the age of 22 for missionary duties in India, Gundert eventually settled in Illikkunnu near Thalassery after traversing various locations in southern India, where he resided for two decades, making noteworthy contributions to Malayalam journalism and language. In addition to *Rajyasamacharam*, he introduced another periodical, Pashchimodayam, as a means to facilitate the dissemination of the Gospel and missionary activities, with his assistant Frederick Muller serving as the editor. Gundert's endeavors extended to compiling a Malayalam grammar manual, *Malayalabhaasha Vyakaranam* (1859), and participating in the translation of the Bible into Malayalam, in addition to his engagements in the domains of history, geography, and astronomy.

♦ *Gundert's legacy*

He penned approximately thirteen publications in Malayalam, including a rendition of the Old Testament from Hebrew and the New Testament from Greek, while the wealth of information gathered in Tellicherry is preserved at Tubingen University, Germany, under the *supervision* of Dr. Skaria Zacharia as *Thalassery Rekhakal.* Following his return to Germany in 1859, Gundert dedicated a decade to finalize the Malayalam-English dictionary. Despite his initial mission in Kerala, Gundert's legacy predominantly centers on his profound impact on the Malayalam language. Acknowledged with a statue in Thalassery, formerly known as Tellicherry, he breathed his last in Calw, Germany, on April 25, 1893.

♦ *Malayalam dictionary*

Notably, Gundert's dictionary not only encompassed Sanskrit and literary terms but also integrated vernacular phrases utilized by locals, including dialects specific to fisherfolk and indigenous communities. Another notable feat by Gundert was the enhancement of Malayalam through the introduction of punctuation marks akin to those observed in European languages, as prior to this development, sentences were inscribed continuously without any divisions, except for the symbol '|' denoting a full stop.

According to renowned linguist Dr. Scaria Zacharia, it was Gundert who played a crucial role in establishing the term Malayalam as the designated name for the language. Prior to his efforts, the language was referred to by various names such as

Keralabasha and *Malayalanama*. Gundert effectively promoted the term Malayalam through his literary works, thereby solidifying it as the standard denomination for the language. His notable literary contributions encompass works such as *Keralapazhama* (a historical account of the region, 1868), *Keralolpathi* (a work on the origins, 1843), and *Malayala Bhasha Vyakaranam* (a grammar text, 1851).

Gundert is also recognised for establishing the first Malayalam newspaper - *Rajyasamacharam*. Acknowledging the significant impact of the German scholar on the language, Professor Narayanan remarked, "If Ezhuthachan is revered as the progenitor of Malayalam, then Gundert should rightfully be acknowledged as the 'stepfather' (*valarthachan*)."

The documents housed in Gundert's collection can be categorised into three main groups: printed books, texts transcribed by Gundert himself or with the assistance of a scribe, and works in *Thaliyola*. The Tubingen University stands out as the sole institution in Europe offering Malayalam as an optional subject, and has established a dedicated Gundert chair. He endeavored to develop a methodical system of grammar for the language by utilizing approaches to Indic grammar that were not based on Sanskrit, viewing Malayalam as a derivative of either Proto-Tamil-Malayalam or Proto-Dravidian.

The utilization of punctuation marks such as full stop, comma, colon, and semicolon in Malayalam was first introduced by Gundert. A statue honoring Gundert's significant contributions to the Malayalam language now stands erected in Thalassery.

Summarised Overview

In conclusion, it can be affirmed that the progression of the Malayalam language highlights the significant contributions of Thunchaththu Ramanujan Ezhuthachan and Hermann Gundert in its evolution. During the 13th century, Malayalam emerged as an independent language characterised by distinct phonetic, grammatical, and literary attributes. Ezhuthachan's literary works are renowned for their aesthetic charm, religious ardor, and linguistic originality, serving as a source of inspiration for numerous Malayalam writers and intellectuals.

Gundert's scholarly endeavors offered a methodical framework for the language, integrating scientific and descriptive approaches that facilitated its preservation and dissemination. Ezhuthachan's amalgamation of classical Sanskrit texts with indigenous

vernacular customs sparked a cultural and literary revival in Kerala. Concurrently, Gundert's academic methodology introduced contemporary linguistic principles to the analysis of Malayalam, bridging the divide between conventional wisdom and modern scholarly rigor. The devotional writings of Ezhuthachan persist as a spiritual and cultural cornerstone, whereas Gundert's lexical and grammatical contributions have established the groundwork for contemporary Malayalam education and scholarly exploration.

Self-Assessment

1. Who is considered as the pioneer of Malayalam literature?
2. What is the name of the first Malayalam newspaper?
3. Define Bhakti Movement.
4. Explain Kilippatt.
5. Examine the relationship between Tamil and Malayalam languages.
6. What role did the Bhakti movement play in the development of the Malayalam.
7. Discuss the contributions of Thunchaththu Ramanujan Ezhuthachan to the development of the Malayalam language and literature.
8. Analyse the contributions of Hermann Gundert to the Malayalam language and society.

Assignments

1. Discuss the historical development of the Malayalam language and its differentiation from Tamil and other Dravidian languages.
2. Investigate the importance of Ezhuthachan's utilization of a highly Sanskritized version of Malayalam and its effects on the language and its literary works.
3. Analyse the contributions made by Hermann Gundert to Malayalam lexicography and grammar, including the main characteristics of his Malayalam-English dictionary and its role in the language's progression.
4. Compare and contrast the impacts of Ezhuthachan and Gundert on the Malayalam language, highlighting the differences in their methods and influences.
5. Examine how Ezhuthachan's fusion of Sanskrit and local traditions led to a cultural revival in Kerala.

Suggested Readings

1. De Saussure, F. (2004). Course in General Linguistics. *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, 2, 59-71.

2. Fishman, J. A. (1997). *The Sociology of Language. Sociolinguistics*, 25-30. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-25582-5_4

3. George, K. M. (1972). *Western Influence on Malayalam Language and Literature*. Sahitya Akademi.

4. Narayanan, M. G. S. (1972). *Cultural Symbiosis in Kerala*. Trivandrum: Kerala.

References

1. CK, Vincy. (2020). *Language and Society in Kerala: The Origin and Growth of Malayalam Language* (1300 CE TO 1800 CE) (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Calicut).

2. Pavel, C. I. (2024). *Hermann Gundert: Missions, Malabar, and the Making of Modern Malayalam*. Nodes of Translation, 75-96. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110787184-004

3. Sekhar, A. C. (1951). *Evolution of Malayalam*. Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute, 12(1/2), 1-216.

4. Shanmugam, S. V. (1976). *Formation and Development of Malayalam*. Indian Literature, 19(3), 5-30.

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

Social Transformation: Different Forces

BLOCK-03

UNIT 1

Kerala Under Colonialism

Background

Like many other nations India was also a colony of European power. The internal conflicts among Kingdoms, the technological superiority of Europeans and financial benefits of commerce enabled the European traders to gradually gain political and military influence and appropriate lands. Although all European powers controlled various regions of southern and eastern India, ultimately, they lost all their territories in India to the British, with the exception of the few outposts.

Kerala, a small piece of land in the peninsular end of India, bordered by Arabian sea and Indian Ocean, was easily accessible to the foreign powers as the major transportation was through sea route. Kerala was not under a single power during that period. Many minor kingdoms governed Kerala and the rivalry between these kingdoms paved the way for the flourishing of colonial powers. The navigator, Vasco Da Gama from Portugal was the first European to land in India through Calicut, Kerala. Earlier intention of invasion was purely trading monopoly and the spread of religion like Christianity. Followed by Portuguese came the Dutch, the British and the French. Except Britain all other nations had a short term in Kerala.

The colonial powers had a long-lasting impact on Kerala society. Economic, Political, Social and Cultural spheres of Kerala were influenced by Colonialism. Kerala society at that time was the centre of Caste inequalities and social evils like slavery which existed during that time. The European powers especially Britain during its reign brought many administrative reforms which resulted in a drastic change in the social sphere of the society.

Discussion

3.1.1 Colonial Control

♦ *Historical view*

Colonialism is a practice or policy of control by one nation over the people living in different areas or countries, often by establishing colonies and generally with the aim of economic dominance. Due to colonialism, the colonists were able to impose their cultural practices, economy and language, and spread their religion. Colonialism in history involved the subjugation of one nation by another nation and the conquering of the people of other nations. India was ruled by foreign powers, first by the Portuguese, then the Dutch, followed by the British. Each of these colonial powers left their marks on Indian society in a variety of ways. The first Europeans to come to India and the last ones to leave were the Portuguese. Colonial control. In Kerala, colonialism indeed made its presence felt by the slow transformation of the subjectivities of the colonised and creating new notions of civilization and progress.

♦ *Feudal Kerala*

Kerala was a feudal land with minor principalities governed by minor rulers. There was no centrally organised government. By the end of 15th Century Portuguese laid the foundation of colonialism in India and also in Kerala. A new era in the history of Kerala began with the arrival of Vasco da Gama in May 1498 at Kappad in Calicut. The Portuguese King Dom Manuel sent the Portuguese to Kerala with an immediate aim of economic and religious expansion.

♦ *Princely rivalry*

The rivalry between the princely kingdoms paved suitable conditions for their partial dream of conquesting India by subjection of local powers. The rivalry between Zamorin of Calicut and Raja of Cochin and Kolathiri on other side created favourable conditions. The local rulers expected to equip themselves with the foreign assistance to fight against their enemies. In order to safeguard the Portuguese the King appointed a full-fledged Viceroy of Portuguese possession in the East. Francisco d'Almeida was the first Viceroy to the East.

3.1.1.1 Economic and Social Consequences of Portuguese Rule

Change in trade monopoly

End of Arab monopoly in trade: The Portuguese influence was more in the field of Trade. It resulted in an end of the trade monopoly of Arabs in Malabar. They established trade centres in port cities of Kerala like Calicut, Cochin and Kollam and introduced new agricultural products and scientific agriculture.

Bungalow type of architecture

Emergence of new architecture: The ornamental architecture and the buildings of the bungalow type were introduced by the Portuguese on the Malabar coast.

Change in towns

Emergence of new towns: Several new towns came into existence and old towns decayed during the period of Portuguese trade contact.Thus Calicut, Cochin and Chaliyam grew in importance while Quilon and Cranganore languished.

Spice export

Popularisation of Kerala Spices: Spices like Cardamom, Pepper, Cinnamon were introduced in European markets, which increased its demand.

The introduction of gunpowder by the Portuguese revolutionised the technique of warfare by making the artillery the most important wing of the army. Christians and the Muslims found new avenues of employment in the artillery and also in the cavalry which had come into increasing prominence by this time as a wing of the army. The Nairs, the traditional fighting class, who had been trained to fight with sword and shield found themselves facing an entirely hopeless situation. Unable to cope with it, they had to face the threat of unemployment on a large scale.

Warfare revolution

Latinisation of Church

The St. Thomas Christians of Kerala followed the Syriac liturgy which was anathema to the Portuguese. The Portuguese considered it their duty to substitute the supremacy of the Pope of Rome over the Kerala Church for that of the Patriarch of Babylon and to replace the Syriac liturgy by the Latin liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church.

Control

Synod of Diamper (1599): An important event during the Portuguese period in Kerala Church was the Synod of Diamper (Udayamperur) convened in June 1599 with a view to extirpating and bringing the Christian community of the land under the supremacy of the Roman church.

Revolt at the Coonan Cross (1653): Synod of Diamper was short-lived, it was followed by a quarrel between Syrian Christians and Portuguese. The appointment of European Latin Bishops to the Syrian Diocese of Angamaly was opposed by Syrian

Christians. They demanded a Bishop of their own rite. In response a Bishop named Ahatalla was sent to Kerala. He was detained by the Portuguese on his way. Mass of Syrian Christians stormed the Portuguese Christian. The excited Syrians assembled in thousands in front of an ancient Cross in Mattancherry, tied a lengthy rope on it and holding on to it swore that they would never more obey the Latin Archbishop or the Jesuits. This is known in history as the 'Oath of the Coonan Cross'.

♦ *Latin Archbishop rejection*

The printing presses were set up at Cochin and Vaipicotta. The Chavittunatakam, the Christian counterpart of the Hindu Kathakali, originated and grew into a popular form of entertainment under the patronage of the Portuguese missionaries. The Dutch conquered the Portuguese strongholds in Ceylon and expelled them from that island in 1658. This was followed by the Dutch conquest of the Portuguese strongholds of Quilon (Kollam), Purakkad, Cochin and Cannanore. By 1663 the Portuguese flag ceased to fly in Kerala.

♦ *Printing presses in Cochin*

3.1.1.2 Arrival of the Dutch

The Dutch ousted the Portuguese and became the first Protestant nation of Europe to establish trade with Kerala. All began with the capture of Cochin from the Portuguese in 1663, Dutch East India Company formed in 1592 organised this mission. In 1603 it sent to India an expedition led by the Dutch Admiral Steven Van Der Hagen. The first political agreement between the Dutch and an Indian power was the treaty with the Zamorin on November 11, 1604.

♦ *Dutch trade in Kerala*

Marthanda Varma ascended the Venad throne in 1729 and crushed the dream of Dutch expansion. Marthanda Varma defeated the Dutch in 1741 in the famous battle of Colachel (Kanyakumari district) and he annexed to Travancore one after the other all the States in the neighbourhood. The action of Marthanda Varma shattered the Dutch dream of the conquest of Kerala. Dutch establishments at Quilon, Martha (Old name of Karunagapaly), Kayamkulam and Purakkad were absorbed in the kingdom of Travancore as a result of Marthanda Varma's conquests and the Dutch position was considerably weakened.

♦ *Battle of Colachel*

3.1.1.3 Consequences of Dutch Power

The functions of the Dutch administration in Kerala were clearly defined into political, military and ecclesiastical. The political functions included, among other things, the protection of commercial interests and were headed by the Commander and Council assisted by a hierarchy of officials. The Dutch made arrangements for the impartial administration of justice. Hospital for treatment of

♦ *Functions of Dutch administration*

leprosy in the coastal areas came within their sphere of influence. A hospital for Leprosy patients was opened at Pallipuram.

♦ *Import and Export*

The Dutch Company maintained two separate departments for carrying on trade viz., one for imports and another for exports. Among the items of import were sugar, copper, tin, lead, camphor, The main concern of the Dutch was to carry on trade with a view to obtaining the maximum profit. In addition to that cotton was also exported, particularly the fine piece goods made in Eraniel and Kottar. Cardamom was another item of export trade. Apart from the revenues derived from the import and export trade, the Dutch Company also received revenues from some of the estates which they either administered directly or farmed out to individuals. The Dutch also obtained revenue from the sale of tobacco and arrack as well as from the export of slaves.

♦ *Trade revival*

Trade was revived during the period of the Dutch. Agriculture was revived with scientific techniques. Under the Dutch auspices coconut cultivation flourished. Industries like salt manufacture and dyeing were introduced. Ports like Cochin, Quilon, Anjengo were revived.

♦ *Educational and cultural contribution*

The contribution towards the educational and cultural field was very less. No seminaries and educational institutions were built. The biggest contribution is the compilation of botanical work, 'The Hortus Malabaricus' under the patronage of Admiral Van Rheede which detailed the medicinal functions of plants and published from Amsterdam between 1678 and 1693. It was compiled with the support of native Ezhava physician's Itty Achudan three Saraswath Brahmin Ranga Bhat, Appu Bhat and Vinayaka Bhat.

♦ *Religious policy*

The Dutch followed a liberal policy of religion. They took the native Christians including the Latin Catholics under their protection, appointed them to important positions. They followed a policy of favouritism towards the Jews and Gowda Saraswats (Konkanis) who were the special targets of Portuguese tyranny. They respected the sentiments of Hindu population and avoided attacking Hindu worship places.

3.1.1.4 Arrival of the British

♦ *Treaty with Travancore*

Like the previous foreign powers Britain also came to Kerala with the intention of trade. Master Ralph Fitch was the first Englishmen who came to Kerala. The British entered into a treaty with the rulers of Travancore and Cochin conceding to them the status of vassals. Malabar was under the direct rule of the British. Though a number of wars and revolts were made against them, the British were able to suppress them quickly. This was mainly because of the lack of unity among the provinces.

Administrative Reforms Under the British

- ♦ *Changes in political structure*

The British rule brought about several changes in the political structure. The relationship between Landlord and tenant which was based on economic relations now transformed into an instituted category within the British political system. The British Legal system regulated the forms of property and inheritance, forms of rent and dues to landlords, etc. The collection of revenue was vested with Landlord or Janmi. The Janmis now developed into a 'parasitic' landlord class sustained by the British legal system and revenue regime, and the intricacies of the rent payments and other obligations of the cultivators were resolved into the simple tripartite grouping of the Verumpattakkar, Kanakkar and the Janmis.

- ♦ *Landholding forms*

The different forms of landholdings existing in temple lands, cash crop areas, forest lands and coastal regions were also formally brought under the division. In Travancore and Cochin also, the landholdings were simplified as temple lands, Sircar lands and Janmam lands and the tenancies were settled as 'Pattam' and 'Kanam'. The legal norms of the Government was the basis of the inheritance laws of these lands. Thus the litigations were settled by British law rather than local custom.

- ♦ *British plantation economy*

The British found immense possibility in Plantation and it emerged as a major source of income to them. Migratory movements from other parts of Madras presidency as well as the absorption of the labourers who were earlier bonded to the landlords, including the untouchable labourers formed the first generation of wage labourers in the plantations. Thus capitalism was born in agriculture, within the colonial context.

- ♦ *Traditional industries development*

Development of traditional industries like Coir, Fibre goods, Cashew, Handloom, Bricks and Tiles were encouraged. Transition into the industrial economy began without an agrarian revolution and necessitated by the needs of colonialism. It resulted in the creation of enterprises stuck in the middle between the classical manufactory and the factory system, where the relation between capital and wage labor came to be applied.

- ♦ *Infrastructural Development*

During this epoch, numerous educational institutions and hospitals were established. Infrastructure developed including railway lines, roads and bridges. Development in the field of transport was registered in the length of roads and waterways and in the bridges, canals, ports and harbours. The introduction of telegraph and increase in the number of newspapers opened up new frontiers in communications and mass media. Facilities like irrigation, schools, public health and sanitation also developed.

The social relationship between the landlord and tenant, cash crop farmers and labourers, plantation owners and labourers, capitalist and labourers in traditional industries and modern industries changed. All these were mediated by the British legal and revenue system introduced in British Malabar and the Subsidiary states with necessary variations and implemented by the executive, judicial and 'public service' arms of the state. This resulted in the formation of a 'middle class', which was not a homogeneous entity but was, in fact, a conglomeration of multiple class formations.

The educational policy followed by the British in Malabar, and also elsewhere in British India, was patterned after the recommendations of Macaulay's Minutes of 1835, which envisaged the propagation of western science and literature in India through the medium of English. Up to 1921 the emphasis in the British official policy was on the promotion of secondary and higher education (leaving primary education in complete neglect) which catered to the elitist and urban sections of the society.

Nature of trial and punishment depended on the caste of the accused. The British reformed this system of law and justice. In the new system unified punishment was given depending on the nature of the guilt. With this, the principle of equality before law irrespective of caste was established. Trial courts were started in different parts of Kerala. The British established a new judicial zone in Malabar with courts, subordinate courts, and *Darogha* Courts (native courts).

Modern medicine was introduced and its use increased during the British period along with Ayurvedic medicine. Smallpox vaccination was introduced in Malabar. Government hospitals were started in Malabar, Travancore and Cochin. The Travancore Government established a company to import modern medicine from England. The Nair caste followed the Matrilineal system in which the descendant is through women and succession of property was from mother to daughter. Families lived together in a house called *'tharavad'* with the head of the family *'Karanavar'*.

The British were appalled by this strange system where women were given so much choice and freedom. There was much demand to abolish these "outlandish" practices from society. The Malabar Marriage Commission was appointed in 1891 which gave its Report on this issue. The related discussions give ample evidence to the changes in Nairs' attitudes to their own traditional practices.

The Report states the problem of not finding a term to denote the man-woman relationship involved in the Sambandham practice (liaison relationships between Nambodiri men and Nair women).

♦ *Sambandham*

The initial difficulty was in the want of suitable and inoffensive English terms to denote the customary cohabitation of the sexes under the Marumakkathayam law and the cohabiting parties. They have been often referred to as 'paramour' for men and 'mistress' for women. Thus, the practice of Sambhandham appeared as a connection where either the party has no legal right or imposes no obligation on the man to marriage.

♦ *Status of women*

Status of women became the central question in nineteenth century British India because the colonial rulers and writers consistently condemned Indian religions, culture and society for their rules and customs regarding women. About the Hindu society James Mill remarked, 'nothing can exceed the habitual contempt which the Hindus entertain for their women'. The fact that the women were oppressed by the institution of caste and by feudal practices lent legitimisation to the colonised role as a civilising agent who would help liberate the downtrodden of which women were an essential category.

♦ *Emancipation of Women*

Within the liberal discourse the primary needs of women were located to be education or freedom from enforced 'widowhood', change in the 'outdated' manner of dress and so on. Behind the facade of emancipation is where the real battles of colonialism waged. There was a valorization of motherhood in its form, especially in discussions on the age of marriage, taking recourse to modern biology and the science of eugenics.

Summarised Overview

Colonialism is the practice of domination where one set of people is subjugated to the other. Due to colonialism, the colonists were able to impose their cultural practices, economics and language, and spread their religion. Colonialism in history involved the subjugation of one nation by another nation and the conquering of the people of other nations. India was invaded by foreign powers, first by the Portuguese, then the Dutch, followed by the British. Each of these colonial powers left their marks on Indian society in a variety of ways. The first Europeans to come to India and the last ones to leave were Portuguese. The objective of Portuguese invasion was trade monopoly and spread of Christianity. The Portuguese period in Kerala was short and during this period introduced many changes to the Kerala Society. The contribution towards the educational field was worth mentioning.

The Dutch who arrived in Kerala with the intention of trade monopoly and overpowering Portuguese also contributed to the development of the state. It was the British who made major administrative changes to the Kerala society. Abolition of Slavery, was a major

achievement to Kerala society. Establishment of legal institutions helped to ensure social justice to some extent. The unique form of kinship, Matrilineal Kinship existed among the Nair community in which the succession of land and all forms of transfer was through the female line. Sambandam, a form of marriage that existed among these communities was legalised and the matrilineal system of Kinship was abolished by the British. The development in the field of health, transportation, agricultural techniques all contributed to the overall development of the state of Kerala.

Self-Assessment

1. Who were the first Europeans to arrive in Kerala?

2. Who defeated the Dutch at the Battle of Colachel?

3. 'Synod of Diamper'.

4. 'Coonan Cross Oath'.

5. Discuss the impact of the Portuguese on Kerala's spice trade.

6. Examine the contributions of Dutch to Kerala's agriculture.

7. Examine the British influence on Kerala's social structure, particularly focusing on the changes in caste dynamics and the emergence of the middle class.

8. Discuss the political and economic consequences of Portuguese rule in Kerala.

Assignments

1. Examine the changes in social structure during the Portuguese rule.

2. Elucidate the contribution of Dutch to Kerala.

3. Reflect on the Matrilineal system of Kinship of Kerala.

4. Do you think the colonial powers had an inevitable contribution in reforming Kerala society? Elucidate with examples from administrative reforms.

5. List out the major reforms by the British in Malabar and compare it with the reforms in Cochin and Travancore.

Suggested Readings

1. Deshpande, S. (Eds.). (2014). *The Problem of Caste*. New Delhi: Orient Black-swan.

2. Osella, F. & Caroline, O. (2000). *Social Mobility in Kerala: Modernity and Identity in Conflict*. London: Pluto Press.

3. Oommen, T. K. (1984). *Social Transformation in Rural India*. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House.

4. Saradamoni, K. (1980). *Emergence of a Slave Caste: Pulayas of Kerala*. New Delhi:People's Publishing House.

5. Renjini, D. (2000). *Nayar Women Today: Disintegration of Matrilineal System and theStatus of Nayar Women in Kerala*. New Delhi: Classical Publishing Company.

References

1. Arunima. G. (2003). *There Comes Papa-Colonialism and Transformation of Matriliny in Kerala*, Malabar (1850-1940). New Delhi: Orient Longman Pvt. Ltd.

2. Menon, A.S. (2007). *A Survey of Kerala History*. Kottayam:DC Books.

3. Menon, A. S. (1979). *Social and Cultural History of Kerala*. Jullandhar: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd.

4. Desai, M. (2005). Indirect British Rule, State Formation and Welfarism in Kerala, India, 1860- 1957. *Social Science History*. 29 (3): 457-88.

5. Schneider, D.M. & Gough, K. (1961*). Matrilineal Kinship*. California: University of California Press.

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

UNIT 2

Socio-Religious Reform Movements

Learning Outcomes

After reading this unit, the learner will able to:

♦ evaluate the caste system prevailed in Kerala society

♦ familiarise with the major socio-religious and anti-caste struggles

♦ analyse the social transformation in the caste system of Kerala society

Background

You may be familiar with the caste hierarchy that existed in Indian society and their contemporary status. Every state in India experienced caste inequality one way or the other. Kerala is no exception. 19th Century Kerala society was called 'Mad House of Caste' by Swami Vivekanada.

Kerala society in the medieval period was not egalitarian. The evils of caste hierarchy were deep rooted. The upper caste enjoyed all sorts of civil rights and denied the same for the lower castes. This exemption from the public space made their conditions miserable. Hegemonic power of the upper caste squeezed the labour of dalits/lower castes.

Kerala witnessed many anti caste struggles and movements against this hegemony. Spread of education and advent of missionaries created social consciousness among educated youths. Kerala witnessed a strong renaissance movement. Emergence of social reform leaders like Sree Narayana Guru, Ayyankali and their movements helped to reach out to the marginalised castes and wipe out the social evils. The right to occupy the public space like roads, temples etc., irrespective of caste was achieved after great resistance like Vaikkom satyagraha, Guruvayur Satyagraha and finally came the Temple entry proclamation. There emerged a new social order in Kerala by the end of 19th and 20th century, resulting in the end of feudalism and dominance of the upper caste.

Discussion

♦ *Social reform movements*

Social reform is a subset of a wider social movement. They aim to eliminate malpractices, illogical beliefs, and ideals that cause people to suffer, and to replace them with rational principles and practices in social institutions and systems, resulting in a more just and healthy society. Superstitions, rituals, and beliefs were used as a tool to enforce hegemonic ideas of the upper class. Socio religious reform movement paved the way for increased self-esteem of the downtrodden section of the society.

♦ *Impact of reform movements*

Socio Religious reform movements in Kerala began as a result of these types of oppressions. The impact of this movement influenced all sections of the society. Many caste organisations came into existence challenging the existing system. The present social cultural situation of Kerala society was the success of the socio-religious reform movements. Let us go through the prevailed situation and role of the reform leaders in overcoming those conditions.

3.2.1 Kerala Society in 18ᵗʰ Century

♦ *Caste based hierarchy*

The social hierarchy based on caste and religion was deep rooted in Kerala society. Caste based hierarchy divided the mainstream society into two strata: upper caste or *Savarna* population who enjoyed all forms of privilege and population belonging to lower caste or *Avarnas* who faced all sorts of exploitation. Namboodiri Brahmins, Kshatriya, Nayars belong to upper castes and Ezhavas, pulaya, parayas were some of the lower castes.

Law and Order

♦ *Discriminating law*

Upper castes enjoyed many privileges. Law and order were separate for upper and lower castes. The punishments imposed on lower castes were terrible; at the same time upper caste who committed similar crimes were not so punished. Death penalty was imposed on lower castes even for petty crimes.

a. Untouchability

The most inhuman form of disparity named untouchability existed in Kerala society which has locally called "Pula '' or "teendal", that prevents touching of upper caste by lower caste. Similarly, its unapproachability which results in keeping a social distance. If a Savarna was touched by avarna he had all right to kill the former. Avarnas need to keep a particular distance and cover their mouth while talking to the savarna. Unwritten law to keep distance existed in kerala society, The Pulayan was to remain 10 paces from the Vettowan, the Parayan, the same distance from the Pulayan and the Nayadee, who was not a slave, but of a caste lower than the lowest of the slaves, 12 paces from Parayan.

- *Social distancing*

b. Other Inequalities

The lower castes were restricted from using the public roads, entering markets used by upper caste and even purchase of essential commodities. Entry to temples was also prohibited for the lower castes.

- *Denial of civil rights*

c. Advent of colonial power

The advent of colonial power influenced the social, political and economic structure of Kerala society. Missionaries who came to Kerala saw it as an opportunity to spread their religion. They provided education to all castes and prompted the people to question the existing social norms of the time. The native rulers were unable to stop them because they were under the protection of the British Government.

- *Colonial power influence*

3.2.2 Anti-Caste Struggle

The anti-caste movement reflected the struggle of Marginalised communities against the discriminatory practices based on caste. The anti-caste struggles were led by the caste associations. It largely was a response to the growth of opportunities to the lower castes in the new era of rapid modernization and commercialisation.

- *Inequalities based on caste*

The earlier lower caste movement used the colonial state as a mediating agency in Travancore and other parts of India. And thus, evident that they were not firmly anticolonial. In fact, they were often loyalists to the British arguing that they had a greater sense of justice than the princely states.

- *Not an anti-colonial struggle*

In contrast the workers movement of the 1930s and 1940s were anti colonial. The anti-caste struggles also shared Sanskritizing

tendencies, with leaders of the movements urging their followers to leave low status jobs like toddy tapping and to take on austere lifestyles, and refrain from wasteful practices.

3.2.3 Sree Narayana Guru (1856-1928)

Sree Narayana Guru was born to Madan Asan and Kutty Amma in Chempazhanthy, a village in Thiruvananthapuram district of Kerala. He belongs to Ezhava caste, a lower position within the Hindu caste system. From childhood he was attracted towards asceticism and lived in hermit for about eight years. Narayana Guru learned vedas, upanishads, Sanskrit, Hatha Yoga and other philosophies.

Guru questioned the then-existing Brahmanical hegemony and other inequalities in the society from very early ages. During those days Ezhavas and other lower castes faced many injustices which questioned their dignity and denied entry to the temple. Thus, he consecrated idols across Kerala where once Ezhavas as well as so called lower castes were not allowed to enter.

He was a follower of Advaita (the oldest school of Hindu orthodox philosophy centred around monism) and a deeply religious man in the traditional conservative sense. He communicated his principles in religious idiom and did not advocate setting up of a new religion or sect. He gave the famous slogan *"One caste, one Religion, one God for all men"*.

Literary Works

Guru's ideologies and messages were spread through his writings. It includes devotional songs, philosophical books, books of proclamations, prose and translations. He wrote various books in different languages like Malayalam, Sanskrit, Tamil etc.

Some of Guru's works are:

- ♦ *Adwaitha Deepika*
- ♦ *Athmopadesha Satakam*
- ♦ *Jati Mimamsa*
- ♦ *Jathi Nirnayam*
- ♦ *Darsanamala*
- ♦ *Kundalini pattu*
- ♦ *Janani Navaratna Manjari*
- ♦ *Arivu*

3.2.3.1 Aruvippuram Prathishta

In Kerala of that period, Ezhavas and other lower castes were denied entry to Temples. They were forbidden to walk along the public roads adjoining the temples. The higher castes who were allowed to enter the temple also need to keep the distance allocated to them. Distance of each caste from the holy shrine was prescribed with Brahmin standing nearest to the Sanctum Sanctorum. Even among the Brahmins the higher groups alone can perform puja and not all can consecrate idols.

◆ *Brahmin privileges*

A new era emerged on sivaratri day of 1888 when Narayana Guru established a temple dedicated to Lord Shiva in Aruvippuram against the existing caste based restriction of the period by installing a rock from Neyyar river. His act was questioned by Namboothiri Brahmins as it was their sole right to consecrate an idol of God. He replied that the idol he consecrated was Ezhava Shiva and not Namboodiri Shiva. Later in Kalavancode temple he consecrated a mirror instead of an idol which highlighted his philosophy that the divine was within the individual.

◆ *Idol worshipping*

3.2.3.2 Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana (SNDP)Yogam

SNDP was formed in 1903 with Guru as lifetime president to promote the upliftment of the oppressed section of the society. Dr. Palpu was the first Vice President and Kumaran Asan its secretary. The official mouthpiece of the Association was the literary journal *'Vivekodayam'* established in 1904, of which Asan served as an editor. Anyone from any caste was given the membership in the society. This was to disseminate the ideas of Sree Narayana Dharma among the masses and to uplift the downtrodden section of the society.

◆ *Caste organisation*

Gradually a shift occurred in the society as the Ezhavas gathered strength in number and social factors. SNDP addressed Ezhavas right to attend school, access to government jobs, temple entry, access to roads, etc. SNDP opposed the predominance of Brahmins and other upper castes. They established schools across Kerala to educate the community. They fought against social evils like *'Thalikettu Kalyanam'* (mock marriages) and *'Thirandukuli'* (Puberty celebration of girls) which were. prevalent among ezhavas. Guru exhorted the Ezhavas to avoid the consumption of alcoholic beverages.

◆ *Reforms by SNDP*

SNDP helped Ezhavas to increase their social status and to move up in the social ladder. What they achieved inspired all other castes below them and they followed it for their betterment and prompted higher castes to examine their customs.

◆ *Social Status of Ezhavas*

3.2.4 Ayyankali (1863-1941)

Ayyankali is a social reformer who fought against caste discrimination and worked for the upliftment of marginalised communities. Born to Ayyan and Mala in Venganoor village of Thiruvananthapuram district he belongs to the Pulaya caste who were considered as untouchables and faced many social evils. He fought against the humiliating customs and traditions. His struggles were intended for acquiring the right to access the public places, the right to education, the right to be involved in the economic processes and to secure social justice.

♦ *Biography*

♦ *Emancipation of Dalits*

Ayyankali worked for the social upliftment of the Dalits, that is to upgrade their socio-economic situations. Their living conditions were miserable and they were denied education. Dalit women were banned from using gold or such ornaments instead they wore stone ornaments. They were not allowed to cover the upper part of their body. Even though the public roads were legally opened to dalits they were restricted from entering the roads by upper castes who brutally punished them if entered. Public space was occupied by educated classes.

3.2.4.1 Major Agitations

Bullock Cart strike/ Villuvandi Agitation (1893)

♦ *Right to use roads*

The social activism of Ayyankali began with the fight for the right to use the roads either by foot or in vehicles(villuvandi) which was exclusive for the upper caste people. The right to wear clean white clothes, turbans etc, was also restricted to them, which shows the superiority of the upper caste over the lower caste. Ayyankali decided to overthrow these kinds of *Jatimaryada* (caste codes to be followed by lower castes). According to T.H.P Chentharassery, Ayyankali purchased a cart and a pair of bullocks and wore the attire which resembles the dress of the upper caste and drove a villuvandi (Bullock-cart) through the streets of Venganoor which was once a forbidden route for the lower castes.

♦ *Significance*

Ayyankali's fight for the freedom of Dalits gave importance to getting access to the public sphere and the first step towards achieving this was to attain the right to use public roads. For centuries the access to roads were denied to the depressed class by the hegemonic upper castes, which restricted the economic and social development of the lower castes. Villuvandi agitation was historic in the sense that it gave opportunity for the deprived to access the public sphere. Similarly, Villuvandi and turban represented the power and social status of the upper caste. White

clothes were not allowed for lower castes. Thus by using all these symbols of higher status he challenged the existing caste norms.

Kallumala Samaram or Perinad Lahala(1915)

♦ *Social dignity of women*

Ayyankali led the *Kallumala samaram* or Perinad Lahala in order to protect the social dignity of the lower caste women. Pulaya women were not allowed to wear upper body clothe and were supposed to wear bead necklaces as a sign of their caste. These stone ornaments were seen as the symbol of slavery and inferiority. The agitation was the direct response to the age-long tradition of having lower caste women wear ornaments made of stone and broken glasses.

Agricultural Labour Strike

♦ *Education of dalits*

In 1904 the Pulayas under the leadership of Ayyankali made efforts to start their own schools since they were denied entry into government schools. These schools had no black boards. Sand on the floor was the book and fingers the pencil. Thus, Dalits challenged the rule. Thus Ayyankali demanded for the education of dalits and started 'Kudi Pallikoodam'(school) for Dalits at Venganoor.(1905).

♦ *Emergence of agricultural labour strike*

In 1907 the government passed an order to admit Dalit children to schools. The path to school for dalits was still not free from thorns. When Ayyankali reached the Ooruttambalam School in Balaramapuram with Panchami, the 5-year-old dalit girl for admission, accompanied by his supporters it was opposed by the higher castes. An intense fight followed with both parties getting injuries. Upper caste people attacked and destroyed many Pulaya huts, and took away fowls, goats and bullocks. Many ran and hid in the fields to escape the wrath. Those who fought back were destroyed. This led to a major agricultural strike during which Ayyankali uttered *"If you don't allow our children to study, weeds will grow in your fields"*.

Ayyankali gave a call to Pulayas and other agricultural workers for strike in 1907. His was a historic call, for he had heralded the first agrarian strike in the history of the world.

The demands were:

♦ Make the employees permanent by giving pay during the off season when there is no work.

♦ Stop Involving workers in false cases

♦ End whipping of workers.

◆ Freedom of movement and Admission for children in schools.

Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangam (SJPS)

◆ *Upliftment of untouchables*

Inspired by the teachings of Sree Narayana Guru, in 1907 Ayyankali formed Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangam (SJPS) similar to SNDP. The main objective of this organisation was to bring the untouchables together and work for their upliftment. The low caste people worked for their masters day and night without a day's rest, thus Ayyankali instructed them to reduce the number of working days from seven days a week to six days a week. All the members should attend the weekly meeting of SJPS on Sundays. The meetings were held at hillsides or maidans as the meetings of lower castes were objected to by the higher castes. Classes were provided by the leaders to make them aware of their rights and duties and importance of education.

◆ *Journal of SJPS*

SJPS published a Malayalam monthly named *Sadhu Jana Paripalani* with Kali Chodhi Kuruppan as chief editor. It made Dalits conscious of their rights. After the death of Ayyankali, Sadhujana Paripalana Sangham merged with Samastha Thiruvithamkoor Pulayar Mahasabha at Trivandrum.

◆ *Upliftment of Harijans*

The Government of Travancore nominated him as a member of Sreemoolam Praja Sabha considering his contribution towards the upliftment of Harijans. He was the first among the Harijans to enjoy such a position. He raised many questions related to education, agricultural labourers, conditions of dalits etc., He pleaded for granting Purambokku land for labourers. Mahatma Gandhi gave him the title *'Pulaya Raja'*.

3.2.5 Vakkom Abdul Khadar Moulavi (1873-1932)

◆ *Muslim Renaissance*

The socio-religious movement in Kerala is not restricted to Hindu religion. Educated Muslim personalities raised their voice against inequalities. They tried to uplift the community through education and focussed on the education of women. The prominent figures of muslim reform movements were Makthi Thangal, Kunhammed Haji, E.K Moulavi, Vakkom Abdul Khader Moulavi and many more.

◆ *Biography*

Vakkom Abdul Khader Moulavi was a pioneer of muslim reform movements in Kerala. Born in the village of Vakkom in Thiruvananthapuram district of Kerala. He Mastered in Arabic, Urdu, Persian and Malayalam. He was deeply inspired by the revivalist attempts of Egyptian scholar Savant Rashid Rida and

subscribed to his magazine '*Al Manar*'. He was influenced by the reformist efforts of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and Shah Waliyullah of Delhi.

Contribution to Journalism

♦ *Swadeshabhimani*

Moulavi was the pioneer in Malayalam Journalism. He used print media to circulate progressive ideas. He was the founder and publisher of 'Swadeshabhimani' newspaper. First issue came out on 19th January 1905 from Anjengo under the editorship of C.P Govinda Pillai. The books written by him include *Daussabah* and *Islam Matha Sidantha Samgraham* and he translated many works from Arabic language to Malayalam language.

♦ *Journals*

He published Journals like *Muslim* (1906). Through this he tried to persuade the community of the need to educate Muslim women. Through his journal Deepika, Moulavi published a series of translations of the Quran and also a brief commentary on it as the readers can easily understand the concept and its social relevance.

♦ *Islamika Dharma Paripalana Yogam*

Being a contemporary of Sree Narayana Guru, he was influenced by Guru and constituted *Islamika Dharma Paripalana Yogam* in 1918 along the lines of SNDP. *Islamika Dharma Paripalana Yogam* pioneered the spirit of unification of Muslims in Kerala and looked forward to a universal brotherhood of Muslims. He established *Thiruvithamkoor Muslim Mahasabha* and *Chirayinkeezhu Taluk Muslim Samajam* to uplift muslim community by insisting on free thinking.

3.2.6 Sahodharan Ayyappan (1889- 1968)

♦ *Biography*

K. Ayyappan was a social reformer, social thinker, orator, journalist and rationalist who contributed a lot to the socio-religious reform movement of Kerala. He was born in an Ezhava family in Cherai village of Ernakulam District of Kerala to ayurvedic physicians Kumbalathuparambil Kochavu Vaidyar and Unnoolyamma. Popularly known as 'Sahodaran Ayyappan'. He is considered as one of the founding fathers of the Trade Union in the state. Sahodaran Ayyappan was a widely respected figure due to his impeccable personal integrity and selfless social works. He was closely attached to Sree Narayana Guru which influenced his social reform activities.

Social Reform Movements

To fight against the caste system, Sahodaran Ayyappan formed an organisation named *Sahodara Sangam* (1917) a brotherhood association, a group of likeminded young minds. Under this

organisation he arranged the *Misrabhojanam* (community feast) in Cherai in which people from all castes dined together under one roof on 30 May 1917 to fight against the existing caste system. This was a revolutionary move even the conservative Ezhavas opposed the concept. The feast was attended by around two hundred people which included members from Pulaya Caste, a caste which was considered as untouchables in those days.

Sahodhara Sangam

Sahodhara Sangam tried to get rid of all the beliefs and customs that separated people into different sects on the basis of caste and religion, which restricted the people from inter-dining and inter marriages between them. Caste system was the most disruptive force in Kerala society. Sahodharan Ayyappan put emphasis on this aspect of caste and aimed at the destruction of the restrictions attached to inter marriage. Elimination of this taboo was as essential as that of inter dining to shake the foundation of the caste system. So inter-dining and inter-marriage were included among the objectives of the Sahodhara Sangham.

Contribution as a Journalist

Sahodharan Ayyappan was a rationalist and disbeliever of God. His editorials, essays and poems were exceptional classics in the respective fields. It was Sahodharan Ayyappan who set the standards and style of Malayalam prose and journalism. He developed rational prose, lucid and sensitive verse for the modern democratic era in Malayalam. His way of writing messages and themes are still relevant.

To disseminate his ideas, he published the magazine '*Yukthivadi*' under the auspices of Mithavadi C Krishnan. Sahodaran edited the journal *Yuktivadi* ('The Rationalist') from 1929 onwards. With the aim of radical reforms and upliftment of the oppressed class and to propagate his ideas. Sahodharan Ayyappan started the journal Sahodaran from Mattancherry. He modified the famous slogan of Sree Narayana Guru ' Oru Jati Oru Matham Oru Daivam Manushyanu' as 'Jathi Venda Matham Venda Daivam venda Manushyanu' (No Caste, No Religion, No God for Mankind).

3.2.7 Poyikayil Yohannan (1879-1939)

Poyikayil Yohannan also known as Poyikayil Appachan was a Dalit leader and social reformer from Eraviperoor village near Thiruvalla. He was the son of Kandan and Lechi who were the serfs of a noble Christian family. He belonged to the community

which faced subjugation from Upper caste Hindus and Syrian Christians. Even though born to a Hindu family he later converted to Christianity. It was common in those days for lower caste people to convert to Christianity to escape from caste inequalities. However, their status remained the same.

Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha (PRDS)

The major issue faced by the religious converts of that period was the question of identity. Poyikayil Yohannan himself was converted from Paraya to christianity and later deserted it due to inequality within it. Thus, he formulated PRDS in 1909 and from this period onwards he was known as Poyikayil Appachan or Kumara Gurudevan. Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha encompasses all sections of Lower castes irrespective of the sub divisions. As a social institution, PRDS prioritised the eradication of caste. Appachan integrated socio-cultural and religious discourse holistically, employing spirituality as a means of removing marginalisation, especially concerning the caste system. In the first half of the 20th century, new initiatives surfaced that aimed to uplift or reform caste practices without dismantling the caste hierarchy.

♦ *Question of caste identity*

Appachan used his songs as a tool to convey his ideology among his followers. He critised both Christianity and Brahmanism. He articulated that all human beings are children of the same parent which broke the concept of Brahma-based *Varna* system. He asked whether anyone could identify the *caste of their psyche*. He didn't merely criticise caste-based discrimination but criticised the foundational concepts of caste itself.

♦ *Songs as tools*

PRDS gave importance to the status of women in all sectors. PRDS had women priests and leaders who themselves conducted various congregations. This is a radical practice not only for that time but even for today. PRDS submitted a memorandum to the Travancore government demanding women representation in the Sree Moolam Popular Assembly in 1930.

♦ *Status of Women*

3.2.8 Anti Caste Movement

Caste movements can be defined as collective efforts by individuals and organizations to challenge the hierarchical caste system prevalent in the society and work towards social, economic, and political empowerment of marginalised communities. The anti-caste movement seeks to dismantle the hierarchical caste system, promote equality, and eradicate discrimination based on caste. It is set to create a society based on social justice and equality where identity will be valued based on their ability rather than the caste one is born to.

♦ *Challenging caste system*

3.2.8.1 Vaikom Satyagraha (1924-1925)

The Vaikom Satyagraha was an anti-caste satyagraha against the untouchability that existed in the society. The lower caste or so-called untouchables were denied the permission to enter the temple and public roads to temples. The Vaikom Mahadeva Temple of Vaikom was the focal point of the movement. Because of the predominance of higher caste access to temples was denied for the lower caste.

In the 1923 Kakinada session of the Indian National Congress T.K Madhavan presented a resolution highlighting the issue of untouchability that prevailed in Kerala society. This gave attention to the issue and the anti-untouchability movement got in the track. Anti-untouchability committee under the chairmanship of K. Kelappan was formed with T. K Madhavan, Velayudha Menon, N. Neelakantan Namboodiri and T.R Krishnaswamy Iyer as members. In February 1924 Kerala Paryadanam was conducted to spread the idea and encourage temple entry.

Vaikom March or Savarna Procession

Mahatma Gandhi felt that the support of the Upper caste was necessary for the success of Vaikom Satyagraha. A march of 'upper caste' Hindus who supported social change started a procession under the leadership of Mannath Padmanabhan from Vaikom on 1st November 1924 and reached Trivandrum, the state capital on 12th November 1924. With 25,000 signatures from 'forward caste' Hindus, the marchers presented Maharani Sethulakshmi Bai of Travancore with a memorandum calling for the opening of Vaikom's temple roadways to all castes. The resolution was defeated in the assembly. This led to a country wide uprising by boycotting upper caste temples. Later in 1925 prohibition was lifted to three of the four temple roads.

Vaikom Satyagraha was an instigation for the nationwide temple entry movement. The movement was to ensure the civil rights of the marginalised caste. It fought against the existing structural system.

3.2.8.2 Guruvayoor Satyagraha (1931-1932)

Seven years after the Vaikkom Satyagraha a peaceful protest was organised by the Kerala Congress Committee under the leadership of K. Kelappan at Guruvayur Temple. A resolution was passed by the KPCC meeting at Vadakara. It highlighted the need to abolish untouchability and the importance of temple entry and freedom of worship. Thus, they requested the trustee of Guruvayoor temple,

the Zamorin, to grant permission to all Hindus irrespective of caste to enter the temple. Neither the Zamorin nor the savarnas did not respond positively to the request. Hence the decision of satyagraha was made with the permission of Mahatma Gandhi.

♦ *Leadership and Participants*

On 1st November 1931, satyagraha began under the leadership of K. Kelappan. Other prominent leaders were A.K. Gopalan (Volunteer captain), Mannath Padmanabhan, P. Krishna Pillai and N.P Damodaran Nair. Organisations like Nair Service Society (NSS),Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam(SNDP), Yogakshema Sabha, Pulaya Maha Sabha supported the satyagraha.

♦ *Consequences*

Guruvayur satyagraha did not immediately result in the opening of the Guruvayur temple to all Hindus but this movement helped to create a strong public opinion in the country in favour of temple entry for all, and abolition of untouchability. The Guruvayur temple was finally thrown open to all castes in 1946. This paved the way for many private temples owned by savarnas and upper caste groups to open their doors to the public at large irrespective of caste or class.

3.2.8.3 Temple Entry Proclamation

♦ *Temple Entry Proclamation*

In 1932 the Maharaja of Travancore appointed a committee to review the temple entry. The Temple Entry Proclamation of 12th November 1936 was declared by King of Travancore Sree Chitira Thirunal Balarama Varma which opened the state-owned temples to lower caste Hindus. The declaration was a historic move. Despite caste and creed Hindus can enter any temple in the territory of Travancore. Mahatma Gandhi addressed the proclamation as '*Great Wonder of Modern Times*'.

♦ *Temple entry in Cochin and Malabar*

Initially the Travancore Temple Entry Proclamation did not influence the Maharaja of Cochin and Zamorin of Kozhikode as they opposed the entry of lower castes in temples. It was only on 22nd December 1947 temple Entry Proclamation declared in Cochin and came into force on 28th April 1948. In Malabar it was based on the Madras Temple Entry Proclamation on 12th June 1947.

Summarised Overview

The anti caste struggles and movements led by social reformers managed to end the caste based evils in Kerala society. The social reformers were successful in promoting social consciousness among the lower castes. Both upper castes and lower castes fought to ensure social justice. Social reformer Sree Narayana Guru led the anti caste struggle in Kerala and hence known as the Father of Kerala renaissance, he himself belongs to Ezhava caste, a lower caste in the caste hierarchy. Fortunately he was educated and started

questioning the oppression faced by the people of his community. He consecrated shiva shrine in Aruvippuram which was a turning point in the history of social reform. Under his auspices SNDP yogam was formed and his ideologies were spread through this organisation. Upliftment of the Ezhava community was the foremost aim of the organisation. Ayyankali belongs to the Pulaya caste and is himself the victim of caste discrimination. Ayyankali fought for the civil rights of the community. The lower castes were denied the use of public roads and his resistance against this was visible in his Villuvandi samaram. His anti caste struggle was taken forward through Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangam. Ayyankali was addressed as the 'Greatest son of India' by Indira Gandhi. The anti-caste movement was not limited to Hindu religion. Vakkom Abdul Khader Moulavi tried for the upliftment of Muslim community. Tried to empower the community through education. Moulavi was the pioneer of Malayalam journalism and the founder and publisher of Swadeshabhimani Newspaper. Sahodaran Ayyappan belonged to the Ezhava community and fought for the upliftment of the community. He arranged 'Misrabhojanam' for inter-caste dining and even the conservative Ezhavas criticised him for this act. Poyikayil Appachan a Dalit reform leader, who founded Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha spread the weapon of education and enlightenment.

Various anti caste movements resulted in ensuring the civil rights of the downtrodden. The lower caste people were denied permission to enter temples and even the access to temple roads were denied for them. Vaikkom satyagraha which got nationwide attraction and wide participation was the move to question the right of the lower caste to use the roads which led to Vaikom temple. These movements paved the way for the historic Travancore Temple entry Proclamation. This was a landmark victory of the anti-caste movements followed by the Temple entry proclamation of Cochin and Malabar.

Self-Assessment

1. Who was the founder of the SNDP Yogam?

2. Which social reformer led the Villuvandi agitation?

3. What is the significance of the Vaikom Satyagraha?

4. What is social reform?

5. Explain the significance of the Temple Entry Proclamation of 1936.

6. Briefly explain the role of Sree Narayana Guru in Kerala's social reform movement.

7. Analyse the impact of colonial rule on Kerala's social structure.

8. Critically examine the socio-religious reform movements in Kerala, highlighting the role of key leaders and their impact on society.

Assignments

1. Elaborate the significance of Caste based organisation in anti-caste struggles.

2. Examine the contribution of Sree Narayana Guru in the social reform movement of Kerala.

3. Mahatma Gandhi addressed the proclamation as '*Great Wonder of Modern Times*'. Which event is mentioned here? Substantiate the statement of Gandhiji.

4. Discuss the Vaikom satyagraha movement and how it transformed as a national movement.

5. Explain the role of Ayyankali in influencing the downtrodden.

6. Discuss the concept of Misrabhojanam and give in detail the response to the event of Misrabhojanam.

7. Examine the current social situation of Kerala society with respect to the social situations prevailed in earlier society.

Suggested Readings

1. Deshpande, S. (Eds.). (2014). *The Problem of Caste*. New Delhi: Orient Blackswan.

2. Menon, A. S. (1979). *Social and Cultural History of Kerala*. Jullandhar: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd.

3. Saradamoni, K. (1980). *Emergence of a Slave Caste: Pulayas of Kerala*. New Delhi:People's Publishing House.

4. Rendell, Y. (tran). (1983). *Religion and Ideology in Kerala*. Centre de Recherches Socio-Religieuses. Kollam: D.K. Agencies.

References

1. Mankekar, D. R. (1965). *The Red Riddle of Kerala. Bombay*: Manaktalas.

2. Desai, M. (2005). *Indirect British Rule, State Formation and Welfarism in Kerala*, India,1860- 1957. *Social Science History*. 29 (3): 457-88.

3. Narayanan, M. G. S. (1972). *Cultural Symbiosis in Kerala*. Trivandrum: Kerala Historical Society.

4. Yeilding, N. (2019). *Narayana Guru: A Life of Liberating Love*. DK Print world (P) Ltd.

5. C, Abhimanyu (1990). *Ayyankali*. Thiruvananthapuram. Department of Cultural Publication.

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

Educational Scenario in Kerala

Learning Outcomes

After reading this unit, the learner will able to:

♦ familiarise the traditional educational system in Kerala

♦ explain the role of Colonial powers and Missionaries in spreading education

♦ examine the role of democratic state in modernising education

Background

You are already familiar with the Kerala Model of Development. Kerala stands much ahead in terms of education, health, habitat etc., compared to other Indian states. The achievement in the field of Literacy and Primary education is worth mentioning. All this advancement in the field of education can be traced from its history.

It was Brahmins and other higher castes who monopolised education in Kerala. The lower castes, women and other religious communities were denied education. As they are backward in education, lower castes were oppressed and kept as slaves in many situations.

The foreign powers like the Portuguese, the Dutch and the Britain who invaded Kerala had their own role in promoting education. The Christian Missionaries who came to Kerala with an aim of spreading religion were the pioneers in the field of spreading education. They introduced printing presses and started publishing works which helped in the promotion of language and literature. Along with they started educational institutions where everyone was allowed without any discrimination like gender, caste, creed, etc.

Then Kings and rulers of Kerala also welcomed the missionaries as they promoted western education. In later periods the rulers took legal steps to promote education. Post formation of Kerala state in 1956 also resulted in promotion of the state's education which made Kerala state the first among the achievers in terms of literacy and education.

Discussion

♦ *Nature of learning*

The educational heritage of Kerala can be traced back to the then existing system of education. Schools and colleges were called *'Salais'* or *'Sala'* attached to temples. According to Sreedhara Menon, Salais were boarding schools intended exclusively for higher education of Brahmin youth and not for the general education of members of other communities. Free boarding, lodging, and tuition are provided from salais. Vedas, Sasthras were taught and discipline strictly enforced. Famous salais of the period are Kanthallur, Partivapuram and Thiruvalla. Salais declined by the thirteenth century and were replaced by a new educational system called 'Sabha Mutts' attached to temples. They were intended for the education of Namboothiri youth in vedas and shastras.

3.3.1 Role of Colonial Powers

♦ *Weapon of Education*

Western education began in Kerala with the advent of Christian Missionaries. Christian Missionaries believed that the introduction of western education in Kerala can help to wipe out all forms of existing evils. So, they started using the weapon of education. They tried to educate people by various means. They put forward the idea of freedom and equality among the people and it helped to bring many social changes like abolition of slavery.

♦ *Portuguese Contribution*

Jesuit Missionaries arrived in Kerala during the Portuguese period. Their main aim was to spread Christian faith.They started higher educational institutions and printing presses in Vypin and Kochi. The major methods of preserving knowledge and information in Kerala was writing on palm leaves and transcribing the same content on other palm leaves to hand them down to the next generation which was a very difficult task. Hence the establishment of printing presses marks the beginning of a new generation in letters and consequently, an enhancement in the educational activities which made publishing of books and magazines easier resulting in progress of language and literature.

The Dutch also contributed to the education field of Kerala. The Governor of Dutch Malabar Hendrik van Rheede compiled

a book ' *Hortus Malabaricus',* the encyclopaedia of the Plants of Kerala, with the help of traditional medical practitioners of Kerala like Itty Achudan. The name of each plant was given in Latin, Arabic, Sanskrit, and the Malayalam scripts also in this book and was published from Amsterdam.

♦ *Dutch Contribution*

The French were never an administrative power in Kerala. By the time they started to set their feet on the Kerala soil, the British drove them out of the land. They retained jurisdiction of Mahe, a coastal town in north Kerala. They established several elementary schools admitting children without consideration of religion, caste and race. The very few secondary schools they started were given instruction in French. Although they started well, they did not survive in Kerala to create a long-standing impact on educational development.

♦ *French Contribution*

Role of British in Modern Education

The foundation of education in Kerala was laid by the Portuguese but they could not expand it as they faced external intervention from Dutch and France. It was the British administration which modernised education further. They believed in enlightenment through education and it was given first priority.

♦ *Modernisation of Education*

The Malabar region did not benefit sufficiently from modern education started by the British. The reasons were :

a. Muslim indifference to English education. Malabar had a sizeable population of Muslims.
b. Malabar had the lowest ratio of Christians who were the proponents of modern education elsewhere in the State.
c. Third, Malabar did not have an indigenous leadership for competition in modern education as it was not a princely state.

♦ *Status of education in Malabar*

In Cochin region, with the concerted efforts of the churches and other groups, and individuals and with the support of the state government, modern education was felt as an achievable goal. By the time of Independence, Cochin had made nearly half of its people literate; and it also produced quite a good number of leaders with nationalistic awareness.

♦ *Status of education in Cochin*

3.3.2 Contribution of Missionaries

a. London Mission Society (LMS)

William Tobias Ringeltaube the pioneer of LMS started working

in the erstwhile South Travancore area in 1806. They started different forms of institutions like girls' school, boarding school, vernacular school, english schools, evening schools etc., Rev. Mead of LMS established several institutions for the education of girls and for industrial education in South Travancore. Most of the students came from poor and untouchable families, whose educational needs largely had been ignored by the government.

b. Church Mission society (CMS)

Thomas Norton, the first missionary of CMS, arrived in Alappuzha district in 1816. The Church Mission society (CMS) started school along with churches. They set up schools which taught grammar, girls' schools, seminaries, boarding school, colleges etc., CMS missionaries admitted pupils in their schools irrespective of caste and creed by 1836. With the help of the CMS missionaries, the Syrian Christians set up a College and a Seminary at Kottayam for training their priests. Kottayam has turned into a literary hub since then.

Rev.J Dawson was associated with the introduction of English medium schools. In 1818 he opened an English school at Mattancherry with aid from the Cochin government. In 1837 an English school was established in Thrissur.

c. Basel German Evangelical Mission (BEM)

Hermann Gundert was the first missionary of Basel German Evangelical Mission who arrived in 1836 in Malabar. He prepared the first English-Malayalam dictionary in 1872. In Malabar BEM started a primary school at Kallai Kozhikode in 1848. An English school for girls was started by Julie Gundert at Thalassery in 1856. They started school for both Christian and non-Christian boys and girls irrespective of caste and creed.

According to Manali Desai, Missionaries affected the Travancore's social policies in three ways: through the actual services they provided to the lower castes, such as education and health care which stimulated the state to respond; through the impact on the monarchy and upper caste populations and mass conversions to Christianity among the peasants; and finally, through the offering of an alternative worldview to the lower castes as well as the opportunity to exit from existing caste system through conversion.

Impact of Western Education

a. Introduced education as a discipline with a wide range of literary activities.

b. The contribution of Christian missionaries had a great impact on education and language. Their seminaries were sound educational institutions.

c. People became familiar with foreign languages like Portuguese, Latin and Greek and the cultures they represented.

d. They contributed to Malayalam language and to the enhancement of native education.

♦ Consequence of Western Education

e. The literary styles in translations and new works have become a base for the contributors of modern prose literature. Their grammar and lexicons have become an index for native linguists in matters of scientific approach to the intricacies of language treatment.

f. Their activities are a sound foundation to Kerala education. The British modernised it in its present form but the base was laid by the Portuguese.

3.3.3 Role of Rulers and Kings

Before the state reorganisation in 1956 Kerala was divided into three political divisions namely Travancore, Cochin and Malabar. Travancore and Cochin was under the indirect rule of the British and Malabar was under the direct control of the British under the Madras Presidency.

a. Education in Travancore

The education system in Travancore consisted of three branches: the vernacular schools, English schools and colleges. State involvement in the field of education began in 1817 when Rani Gouri Parvathi Bhai introduced free and compulsory education in Travancore under state control. Primary schools were started in villages where children between the age group of five to ten were taught.

♦ English schools and colleges

In 1834 an English school was started by Maharaja Swathi Thirunal at Thiruvananthapuram. In 1866 it was raised to the status of a college (nucleus of present University college). By 1850 The Diwan declared that at least one percent of state revenue would be spent on education which was increased during later periods.

Vernacular education

During the period of Diwan T Rama Rao, the Vernacular Education Department was set up. In 1871 grant in aid rules for private schools to impart vernacular education up to certain standards was set up.

Colleges

Technical schools were also opened. A Sanskrit College, an Ayurveda College, a Second Grade College for Women and a Law College were opened at Trivandrum. The publication of Oriental Manuscripts was undertaken under the auspices of a separate department. An Archaeology Department was also formed. Libraries and Reading Rooms were given liberal grants. A Reformatory was established for the education of juvenile delinquents.

b. Education in Cochin Presidency

Schools in Cochin

In Central Kerala, English high school was started in 1845, later raised as a college in 1875(Maharajas college). The Cochin Government's involvement in Education began by the late 1890s which resulted in the spread of western education.

Education code

Education Code was framed by the Government in 1911 which decided to provide grants in aid, consequently a large number of schools under private management emerged. The code was later revised in 1921. Higher education institutes were affiliated to the University of Madras.

c. Education in Malabar

Schools in Malabar

Malabar region was under the direct control of the British. The progress of education in this area was slow compared to the other two divisions. Involvement of the Government in education was very late compared to other divisions. Up to 1921 British promoted Secondary and higher education neglecting the primary education. Vernacular education was promoted only by 1921. Grants were issued by the Madras Government for the promotion of primary education. Private school was started at Kozhikode for the education of young princes of Zamorin's family and later upgraded to a college (Guruvayoorappan college).

English Education

Thus, English education flourished in all political divisions like Travancore, Cochin and Malabar with the support of state and also private agencies. Demand for higher education increased. Higher education institutes were affiliated to the University of Madras. This paved the way for the need of a new university in the Malayalam speaking area. Thus, University of Travancore was established in 1937 by the Government of Travancore.

With the merging of Travancore-Cochin in 1949 the colleges in Cochin area also came under University of Travancore. With the

formation of Kerala State in 1956 University of Travancore was transformed into the University of Kerala (1957). Later in 1968 University of Calicut was established covering northern districts of the state. New Universities were established hereafter namely Cochin University of Science and Technology (CUSAT), Mahatma Gandhi University, Kannur University, Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit in Kalady, etc. A new trend in the field of higher education is the emergence of private universities.

Universities

3.3.4 Role of Democratic State

After the formation of Kerala State in 1956 the role of social organisations and its leaders and elected government towards education is worth mentioning. The current system of education is a blend of policies and laws implemented by the elected governments at centre and state level. Immediately after the formation of the State there was regional disparity in terms of education. Malabar was much backward in terms of education compared to Travancore and Cochin. Government took many initiatives to overcome this and special preference was given to the area. New schools were introduced and existing ones upgraded.

Regional Disparity

To promote education, the Government provided free education by abolishing fees from primary to high school. Fees for primary classes were abolished by 1955-56 and for high school by 1960-61. Absolutely free education was introduced by 1969-70.

Free Education

Kerala Education Bill of 1957

The bill was published on July 7, 1957 by then education minister Joseph Mundassery. The bill contained 3 parts in which it discussed 30 clauses. The Bill aimed 'to provide for the development and better organisation of educational institutions in the State providing a varied and comprehensive education service throughout the State.'

Important policy decisions of the bill were:

♦ Elementary education was made compulsory and free of cost, the government will bear the expenses.

♦ For private/aided schools fee collected by managers should be deposited in the state exchequer.

♦ Salary of teachers will be paid by the government. Managers shall appoint teachers from the state public service list.

♦ State committee to advise the government in matters of education.

- ♦ Mid-day meals, Dress and Books for needy children will be provided by the state.

♦ *Education Bill*

However, the bill was opposed by opposition parties highlighting the interference of the state in private schools which climaxed in the *Vimochana Samaram* (Liberation struggle) that drove the Communist ministry out of power in 1959.

♦ *Major points of the bill*

The Bill became Act in 1958 and provided statutes regulating the physical and sanitary conditions of the school, office facilities, floors, windows, doors, roofs, dimensions of classrooms, ventilation, latrines and urinals and the safety of school equipment and appliances.

Summarised Overview

The traditional educational system of Kerala was attached with temples and schools and colleges were called 'Salais' or sala. After the decline of Salais there emerged Sabha Mutts. Admission to these schools were limited to Namboothiri youths. For the education of non-Brahmin youths there existed Ezhuthu Palli. Literary assemblies were conducted to test the competency of the educated.

With the advent of colonial powers the education system had a drastic change. The missionaries who came from Portugal had an aim of spreading religious ideology. Christian Missionaries believed that the introduction of western education in Kerala can help to wipe out all forms of existing evils. Thus they started schools along with churches. They introduced the printing press. The Dutch who followed started schools and admissions were given irrespective of caste and religion. The Governor of Dutch Malabar Hendrik van Rheede compiled a book ' Hortus Malabaricus', the encyclopaedia of the plants of Kerala.

Eventhough France was only active for a short time in Kerala they also started schools. Then came the British. It was the Portuguese who paved the way for education in a disciplinary form. The modern form of education was the contribution of the British. The education system once in the hands of upper castes were made available to all irrespective of religion and caste. The British policies ensured the vernacular schools in Kerala.

Different missionaries like the London Mission society (LMS) in Travancore, Church Mission Society (CMS) in Cochin and Basel Evangelical Mission Society(BEM) in Malabar area had a significant role in promoting education and thus bringing in social changes. Girls' education was promoted by the missionaries. The Kings and Rulers of three provinces played their role in legalising the education system. In 1817 free and compulsory education in Travancore under state control was introduced. The Cochin

Government's involvement in Education began by the late 1890s which resulted in the spread of western education. Education code was framed by the Government in 1911 which decided to provide grants in aid, consequently a large number of schools under private management emerged. Malabar region was under the direct control of the British. The progress of education in this area was slow compared to the other two divisions. Involvement of the Government in education was very late compared to other divisions.

After the formation of the state The Education bill was presented on 7 July 1957 by then education minister Joseph Mundassery. The bill was opposed by opposition parties highlighting the interference of the state in private schools which climaxed in the Vimochana Samaram (Liberation struggle) that drove the Communist ministry out of power in 1959. Kerala state stands in front in many of the educational features. This was because of the inevitable contribution of colonial powers, missionaries, various caste based organisations and private participation.

Self Assessment Questions

1. Which missionary started the first English school in Mattancherry?

2. Which Ruler of Travancore introduced free and compulsory education?

3. What was the main objective of the Kerala Education Bill of 1957?

4. What were the major reforms introduced by the Kerala Education Bill of 1957?

5. Briefly explain the role of Christian missionaries in the development of education in Kerala.

6. Discuss the significance of the University of Travancore.

7. Analyse the role of government and private institutions in shaping the educational landscape of Kerala.

8. Evaluate the effectiveness of government policies in addressing the challenges faced by the education system in Kerala.

Assignments

1. Compare and contrast the traditional education system and modern educational system in Kerala.

2. Do you think that Missionaries played an inevitable role in spreading education? Substantiate your answer.

3. Elucidate the contribution of London Mission Society in bringing social change in Travancore.

4. Evaluate the role of the British administration in education. How they implemented education in Travancore, Cochin and Malabar.

5. What were the changes in the education sector after state formation? And give the current status of education in the state.

Suggested Readings

1. Kooiman,Dick.(1989) *Conversion and Social Equality in India. The London Missionary society in South Travancore in the 19th century*.New Delhi:Manohar publications.

2. Menon, A. S. (1979). *Social and Cultural History of Kerala*. Jullandhar. Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd.

3. Panicker, K.N. (1997). *Studies in Traditional Kerala*. Trivandrum: College Book House.

4. Soman, C.R. (Eds.) (2007). *Kerala Fifty Years and Beyond*. Thiruvananthapuram. St.Joseph's Press.

5. Narayanan, M. G. S. (1972). *Cultural Symbiosis in Kerala*. Trivandrum. Kerala Historical Society.

References

1. Menon, A, S. (1982). *Legacy of Kerala*. Thiruvananthapuram: Govt. Press.

2. Cherian, P.J. (1999). *Perspectives of Kerala History the Second Millennium. Kerala State Gazetteer* Vol II Part II. Kerala Council for Historical Research. Thiruvananthapuram.

3. Ganesh, K. N. (2016). *Reflections on Pre-modern Kerala*. Cosmo Books.

4. Eapen, K. V. (1971). *A Study of Kerala History*. Kollett Publication.

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

UNIT 4

Formation of Modern Kerala and Political Movements

Learning Outcomes

After reading this unit, the learner will able to:

♦ analyse different socio-political movements in Kerala

♦ familiarise with the major peasant and working-class struggles

♦ examine the sequence of land reforms and its consequences

Background

You are already familiar with the Social structure of Kerala. The Kerala society faced a lot of challenges including the most heinous forms of caste discrimination. The marginalised people of the community were denied civil rights. That was the period when the lower castes could not raise their voice for the basic rights. The existing laws were framed in favour of the upper castes. By the entry of social reformers like Sree Narayana Guru, Ayyankali, the situation started changing slowly. These forms of resistance under the leadership of Social reformers created consciousness among the downtrodden people and helped in voicing their demands.

The demand for political needs also came to the limelight in the next phase of reform movements. The People started agitating to ensure equal opportunity for all castes and religion in Government service, for equal representation in Legislatures and against the authoritarian rule of Diwan and corrupted Government. Travancore, Cochin and Malabar, the three provinces of Kerala faced similar issues. The voice for demanding a united Kerala was running high.

The working class and peasant class faced a lot of bias during the period. The upper caste landlords and tax reforms of the Government were unfair. They were treated like slaves and they turned against the Government.

The ownership of land was vested with a few people. The peasants who have no ownership right over the land they work and faced arbitrary eviction from these lands thus the demand for land reforms which can ensure social justice was very high. These disturbances in Travancore, Cochin and Malabar lead to large public uprisings.

Keywords

Progressive movement, Social struggle, Peasant movements, Land reforms, Mobilisation

Discussion

3.4.1 Socio-Political Movements for Representation in Government

Social Reform Movements

Kerala society witnessed mass social reform movements which questioned the social practices like untouchability and other inequalities based on caste and traditions. Western Education and activities of Christian missionaries influenced Kerala society and resulted in the various social reform movements.

3.4.1.1 Political Movements in Travancore

a. Nivarthana Agitation

Cause and effect

Nivarthana agitation or Abstention movement was a protest held against the constitutional reforms of 1932. Earlier, seats in the legislative assembly were allotted on the basis of population strength. Ezhavas, Muslims and Christians feared that this may reduce their representation in the legislature. Thus they demanded representation based on numerical strength. This was initially not accepted by the government.The protesters formed an organisation named Samyuktha Rashtriya Samiti (Joint Political Congress) led by N.V.Joseph, T.M Varghese and C.Kesavan. They demanded the voters to abstain from the election held based on the new reforms.

Impact of the protest

The protest was statewide and C.Kesavan was arrested for his speech at Kozhencherry. He was tried for sedition and imprisoned for two years. At the same time, the Government appointed the Public Service Commission to ensure representation of backward classes in public services based on communal rotation and also widened the franchise by reducing the proper qualification. In 1936 it was formally announced that a specific number of seats were allowed to Ezhavas, Muslims and Christian communities. In the election held in 1937 candidates of the Joint Political congress won many seats.

3.4.1.2 Early Political Agitation in Cochin

As in Travancore, Cochin also witnessed political agitation in demanding a responsible government. Cochin District Congress Committee led the call for responsible government in Cochin. In 1937 a Political Conference was held at Trichur under the presidency of Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramiah. The talk of an agitation for responsible government in Cochin was in the air.

a. Cochin Praja Mandal

The Government of Cochin Act introduced dyarchy in Cochin. The Progressive section of Cochin were not satisfied with the decision. Thus for the achievement of responsible government a new organisation named Cochin State Praja Mandal was formed in Cochin in 1946.

♦ *Background*

Diwan A.F.W. Dixon decided to put down the proposed agitation. The first annual session of Praja Mandal was held in Irinjalakuda in January 1942. The move was banned by the Government but the meeting was held in secret. Some of the delegates were arrested who were later released. But the activities were halted.

♦ *Agitations*

The political activities of Cochin were revived as part of Quit India Movement. Many demonstrations were held by the Cochin Praja Mandal and several leaders were arrested. This gave far reach for the organisation. In the election held in 1945, 12 of the 19 seats were won by contestants of Cochin Praja Mandal. They raised their voice against the Government in the legislature.

3.4.1.3 Aikya Kerala Movement

The demand for Aikya Kerala or United Kerala spread across the state. Aiming to integrate Malabar, Cochin and Travancore into one territory. Malabar was under the direct rule of the British and Travancore-Cochin under the indirect rule. Formation of Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee(KPCC) is a landmark in demanding for integration.

♦ *Aim of the Movement*

♦ *Aikya Kerala Formation*

Initiation was taken by the Government of India to merge and integrate native states under the guidance of Sardar Vallabhai Patel. On 1 July1949 Travancore-Cochin was integrated which paved a positive sign for the formation of united Kerala. The Government of India decided to reorganise states on linguistic basis. Under States reorganisation Act of 1956 four Southern Taluks of Tovala, Agasteeswaram, Kalkulam and Vilavancode and a part of Shencottah Taluk were separated from Travancore-Cochin. Malabar district and Kasaragod taluk of South Canara

were added to Travancore-Cochin and a new state of Kerala was formally formed on 1st November 1956 with Governor as head of state.

3.4.2 Peasants and Working Class Movement

3.4.2.1 Kayyur Peasant Struggle

♦ *Political mobilisation of peasants*

Kayyur uprising is a series of incidents that happened in Kayyur village (Kasargod district). Kayyur was part of the Malabar presidency under the direct control of the British. It was the political mobilization of peasants who had no tenancy rights and were oppressed.

♦ *bonded labourers*

According to Rammohan.K.T, The bonded labourers were called 'atiyaal' or 'atiyaar' in Malabar. Literal meaning of Atiyaal or atiyaar is 'subordinated'. They belonged to the Pulaya or Paraya community and a low share of Ezhavas. They were bonded to upper caste jenmi. Number of atiyaal held by the jenmi depends on the area of land the jenmi owns. The Provincial and princely Governments of Malabar abolished trafficking of slaves. The 1940s witnessed caste based social mobility movements. Peasants started the movement against the jenmis or landlords.

♦ *Course of events*

A march was started from various parts of Kayyur on 28 March 1941 against the police brutality on the previous day. Subbarayan, a specially deployed police officer led the attack against the peasant who accidently came in front of the march. As the march was decided to be peaceful, nobody attacked him. Instead, he was made to carry a flag and march. During the march he tried to hit someone with the stick tied to the flag and tried to run away. His plan failed as another march approached in the opposite direction and he jumped into the Karyamkode river. In this case, four young peasant heroes known as the Kayyur communists- Madathil Appu, Kunhambu Nair, K.Chirukandan, and P. Abu Baker were executed on 29 March 1943 in the Cannanore Central Jail.

3.4.2.2 Punnapra-Vayalar Upheaval

Punnapra and Vayalar were villages in Travancore (present Alappuzha District of Kerala). A series of movements in 1946 held in these villages came to be known as Punnapra - Vayalar Samaram which began in Punnapra and ended in Vayalar. It was the result of an uproar created by the Labour class. Organised working class under the leadership of Communist Party of India led an armed revolt against the British.

♦ *Immediate cause*

In January 1946 Diwan Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer announced his proposal for constitutional reform making Travancore an independent country not joining the Indian Union based on the

American model. The state congress rejected the move. The slogan 'American Model Arabi Kadalil' spread in the air. The communist party led the protest in their stronghold Alappuzha district (Alleppey) against the autocratic rule of the Diwan and demanded a responsible Government. In October 1946 the movement became violent with a clash between police and protesters. Coir workers, Fishermen and agricultural labourers supported the movement. Martial law was declared in the area and Diwan himself assumed as the supreme commander of the military. Communist camp at Vayalar was attacked by police and military, workers who tried to resist but failed before the machine guns. On 27 October 1946 more than 150 persons lost their lives and many succumbed to injuries later. Many such incidents happened in other parts too as a result of which thousands lost their lives.

Nature of Movement

3.4.3 Land Reforms and Consequences

Land reform in general is defined as the redistribution of land from rich to poor. Broadly it includes regulation of ownership, leasing, sale and inheritance of land. Land reforms is an important process as it reflects the steps taken by the Government to ensure social equality as there existed unequal distribution of land. Land reform increased the percent of land holding of the peasants which gradually helped in bridging the gap between the rich and poor.

Redistribution of land

The two objectives of land reforms are economic and other social in nature. Economic aim was the condition to enhance agricultural production. And social aim was to reduce disparity in land distribution.

3.4.3.1 Land Reforms in Kerala

The history of land reforms of Kerala comprises all such reforms in Travancore, Cochin and Malabar. The lands in Travancore falls under either Pandaramvaka or Government lands or Jenmom (jenmi) lands owned by Brahmin Janmis(landlords). Dewaswom or non-Brahmin Jenmis were called Maadambi. Tenants have no occupancy rights over the land.

Jenmom land

Land Reforms in Pre-Independent Kerala Society

According to Kunjan Pillai, private ownership of land in Kerala began before the Sangam age. The owners were Pulayas, Idayas, Vedas and Valluvas either as cultivators or local chieftains. Patrilineal systems of inheritance were prevalent during that period. Land systems such as Brahmaswom (Brahmin owned) and Devaswom (temple ownership) came after 6th century AD when the ownership passed to Brahmins.

Caste hierarchy and land distribution

♦ Ownership of land

Under the influence of the Brahmin settlers, Hinduism became the most powerful religion. Temples began to be constructed which performed the all-in-one functions of school, library, seminary, theater and public park. When a temple was built it was usual to endow it with property the revenue from which would cover expenses of daily worship, festivals, schools and feeding places. Kings, Naduvazhis (governors) and even ordinary cultivators donated land to the temples. Management of temple property was vested with a council of uralar (local leaders)

- ♦ Janmam: Rajas, Brahmins, Temples and Naduvazhis

- ♦ Kanam: Nairs and sub groups of Nairs

- ♦ Verumpattom: Nairs, Moplahs (Muslim), Syrian Christians and Ezhavas

- ♦ Agrestic Slaves: Pulayas, Cherumars, Parayas and others.

3.4.3.2 Reforms after Formation of Kerala State

♦ Agrarian Bill

The first communist ministry of Kerala under E.M.S Namboodiripad introduced the Kerala Agrarian Relations Bill (1957) presented by the Revenue Minister K.R Gouri. According to T.K Oomen, the Bill intended the abolition of the Tenancy system, ceiling of landholding, distribution of surplus land, and enjoyment of rights of ownership over the homesteads. The economic objectives were redistribution of land, division of large holdings, waste land reclamation, streamlining the market distribution.

♦ Conditions of land holding

The Kerala Stay of Eviction Proceedings Act (1957) was passed to prevent eviction of tenants and Kudikidappukar (was a person who owned neither a homestead nor any land exceeding in extend three cents in any city or major municipality or five cents in any municipality or ten cents in any township as owner or tenant in which he could he erect a homesteads). The Kerala Agriculturists Debt Relief Act (1958) and the Kerala Compensation for Tenants Improvements Act (1958) were also important enactments. A crucial policy was the implementation of minimum wages to agricultural labourers.

3.4.3.3 The Kerala Agrarian Relations Act (1960)

♦ Redistribution of land

The Kerala Agrarian Relations Act (1960) was a revolutionary piece of land legislation which sought to fix a ceiling on the extent of land that could be owned by a family or adult married person and to distribute among the landless all the lands available in excess of the ceiling. The tenants were also given fixity of tenure, freedom from eviction and the benefit of fair rent to be fixed by Land Tribunals.

The Act was invalidated by the Kerala High Court in 1962, which resulted in the enactment of Kerala Land Reforms Act (1963). The Act bans the creation of fresh tenancies, confers on the tenant the right to purchase his owner's land and prescribes a ceiling in regard to the extent of land that can be owned by a family.

- It provided for the establishment of the Land Board and Land Tribunal for the implementation of its provision.

- Government lands, Land belonging to local authorities, leases of private forest, leases for non agricultural products, tenancies granted by limited owners, lands owned by universities, religious, charitable or educational institutions, were all exempted from the purview of the Act.

- Private forests, plantations, waste lands, commercial sites and sites of religious institutions were exempted from ceiling provisions.

Amended again in 1969, it abolished the Janmi system in Kerala and confers full rights of ownership on the tillers of the soil. Kerala has turned out to be one of the few states in India where the slogan 'Land to the Tiller' has become a reality. The series of land reforms introduced in Kerala since the latter half of the 19th century have helped in accelerating the pace of the social and economic progress of the State.

3.4.3.4 Consequences of Land reforms

Kerala society underwent tremendous change after the land reforms. The Kerala Land Reforms Amendment Act of 1969 made large numbers of landless people into owners of the land. Tenants became landowners, but more importantly, landless labourers were given the ownership of one-tenth of an acre of land on which their huts stood. Land reform in Independent Kerala comprised mainly three components: ownership rights to tenants, redistribution of ceiling surplus land and ownership rights of homestead land to agricultural labourers.

- Abode was distributed to thousands of people.

- Land leasing was announced to be unlawful.

- It brought an extinction to Janmis, who majorly collected leases for living.

- A few of the big farmers who used to cultivate on some of the lease lands became the owner of those lands.

◆ *Consequences of the Act*

- The ownership of the land was transferred to the lease-holders
- The excess land was sold by their owners

Summarised Overview

The socio-political movements for representation in Government services and legislatures- tried to achieve the goal of social justice. Even though the initial results of many of these efforts were not fully successful they succeeded in awakening the marginalised community and their consciousness.

The agitation for responsible Government was under the guidance of Cochin Prajamandal. The authoritative rule of Diwan and unlawful move of the Government was questioned and demanded for the merging of Travancore and Cochin and on 1st July 1949 the state of Travancore-Cochin was formed. The formation of Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee paved the way for the merging of Travancore-Cochin and Malabar. Aikya Kerala Movement demanded the formation of united Kerala. The state of Kerala was formed on 1st November 1956 based on the State reorganisation Act of Government of India.

This period also witnessed the uprising of Working class and Peasant class movements like Punnapra-Vayalar Upheaval and Kayyur uprising against the landlords or jenmis. The peasants faced insecurity of life and job under the landlord. They can be evicted from the land any time and oppressed labourers thus fought against these inequalities. The working class were considered as slaves as there were no labour laws. Even though the movement was suppressed brutally by the forces it succeeded in conducting an organised upheaval against the ruling class. Later these movements resulted in improving the living conditions of Peasants and Working classes.

Class and Caste were hand in hand during that period. Land ownership was in the hands of Upper castes. Demand for land reforms were raised from all corners of the state. Different tenancy Acts were passed from historical periods which resulted in changing the status of the downtrodden. They were protected from immediate eviction from farmsteads. After the formation of Kerala State The Agrarian Relations Bill was passed which resulted in tremendous change to the conditions of Peasants. The Janmi system was abolished and land was redistributed. Irrespective of caste and community anyone can purchase land if they have money.

Thus the human rights which we enjoy today is because of the efforts of these socio political movements. The advancement of the Kerala state in many fields is often compared to that of Developed nations.

Self-Assessment

1. Which organisation led the Nivarthana agitation?

2. Which Act abolished the Janmi system in Kerala?

3. What is the significance of the Punnapra-Vayalar uprising?

4. What are the main objectives of land reforms?

5. Explain the impact of land reforms on the socio-economic development of Kerala.

6. Evaluate the significance of the Nivarthana agitation in the history of Kerala

7. Critically examine the political movements that led to the formation of the state of Kerala.

8. Evaluate the impact of the Kerala Education Bill of 1957 on the development of education in Kerala.

Assignments

1. Compare and analyse the socio-political reform movements and their social significance in the Travancore, Cochin and Malabar region of Kerala.

2. Explain the significance of socio-political movements in reforming Kerala society.

3. Elaborate the effort for united Kerala.

4. Evaluate the role of peasants and working class in their agitation against the challenges and discrimination they faced. Substantiate your views with examples.

5. Discuss the land reforms in Travancore, Cochin and Malabar. How does it work for ensuring social justice towards the downtrodden?

Suggested Readings

1. Soman, C.R. (Eds.) (2007). *Kerala Fifty Years and Beyond*. Thiruvananthapuram:St.Joseph's Press.

2. Osella, F. & Caroline, O. (2000). *Social Mobility in Kerala: Modernity and Identity in Conflict*. London: Pluto Press.

3. Oommen, T. K. (1984). *Social Transformation in Rural India*. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House.

4. Isaac T.M, Tharakan PKM.(1986) *Sree Narayana Movement in Travancore, 1880–1939: A Study of Social Basis and Ideological Reproduction*. Working Paper 214. Trivandrum: Centre for Development Studies.

5. Mankekar, D. R. (1965). *The Red Riddle of Kerala.* Bombay: Manaktalas.

References

1. Cherian P.J, *Perspectives on Kerala History*, Gazetteers Department, 1999.

2. Ganesh, K. N. (2016). *Reflections on Pre-modern Kerala.* CosmoBooks

3. Eapen, K. V. (1971). *A Study of Kerala History*. Kollett Publication.

4. Menon, A.S.(2007). *A Survey of Kerala History*. Kottayam:DC Books.

5. Desai, M. (2005). Indirect British Rule, State Formation and Welfarism in Kerala, India,1860- 1957. *Social Science History*. 29 (3): 457-88.

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

Contemporary Kerala: Prospects and Challenges

BLOCK-04

UNIT 1

Kerala Model of Development- A Critique

Learning Outcomes

After reading this unit, the learner will be able to:

♦ understand the developmental evolution of Kerala

♦ critique the existing model of development in Kerala

♦ assess the developmental needs of Kerala

Background

Kerala as a state came into existence in 1956 by integrating the former princely states of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar district of the British presidency of Madras. Kerala is one among the 29 states of India, a tropical land spread across 38863 sq km. It constitutes the southwestern tip of the Indian subcontinent. Though it covers only 1.18% of the total area of India, it supports about 3.43% of the total population of the country.

Kerala remains to be an example in independent India as to how power of public action can lead to the improvement of the well being of the people and transform social, political and cultural conditions. Comparatively Kerala has always been in the threshold of development with the state being compared to Sweden in terms of the living conditions as determined by the Human Development Index.

Even though the state has been able to develop and provide for the basic welfare of its citizens, a fact remains to be questioned is the economic feasibility for all its developmental needs as the state doesn't clearly have an income generating sector. The state has made strides in this area with new investments and visions in the name of developmental projects like Vizhinjam port. But thus far how has the state capitalised its needs and taken care of the welfare aspects of its citizens?. In this unit we shall explore how the state has fared so far from a social, economic and political perspective and how this has led to the formation of a Kerala model of development. How the state has managed so far?

Discussion

4.1.1 Socio-Economic and Political History of Kerala

♦ *Unique identity*

The state of Kerala holds a unique profile among the other 28 states of India. Why is that so? The state of Kerala has always been able to provide and maintain a higher standard of living in comparison to the other states. This is visible in the high life expectancy at birth, low birth and death rate, low infant mortality rate, literacy rate, etc. The following table showcases the basic profile of the state of Kerala.

Profile of the state of Kerala 2024 (Government of Kerala)

Area	**38,863 sq. km.**
Capital	Thiruvananthapuram
Language	Malayalam
District	14
Population	3,34,06,061
Males	1,60,27,412
Female	1,73,78,649
Density (Persons per sq.km)	860/sq.km
Urban population	1,59,34,926
Sex Ratio (Females per 1000 males)	1,084
Literacy	94.0%
Males	96.1
Females	92.1

♦ *Exemplary*

Kerala, a state located in the southwestern region of India, is often regarded as one of the most developed states in terms of human development indicators, despite its relatively low-income levels compared to some of its counterparts. It is known for its high standards in education, healthcare, and quality of life, often referred

to as the "Kerala Model" of development. This socio-economic profile provides a detailed view of the state's economic, social, and demographic characteristics.

4.1.1.1 Geography and Demographics

Kerala lies on the Malabar Coast of India, bordered by the Arabian Sea in the west and the Western Ghats in the east. Population of Kerala according to the Ministry of Statistics, as of July 2024 is 35,967,000 or 35.97 million making it the 15th most populous state in India and least populous in South India. The population density is about 860 persons per square kilometer. Urbanisation, Kerala has a high level of urbanisation, with around 47.72% of the population living in urban areas as per the State Urbanisation Report. Major cities include Thiruvananthapuram (the state capital), Kochi, Kozhikode, and Thrissur. Kerala has the highest sex ratio in India with approximately 1,084 females for every 1,000 males (Census 2011), indicating a relatively balanced gender ratio. Literacy Rate, Kerala boasts the highest literacy rate in India, with a literacy rate of 94% (as per the 2011 Census). This is the result of a strong emphasis on education in the state.

4.1.1.2 Economic Indicators

Kerala's Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) was ₹8.6 trillion (approximately $110 billion USD) in 2022-23, with a per capita income of ₹2.6 lakh ($3,300 USD) in the same period. The state's GDP growth rate has been moderate, with significant contributions from services and remittances. Considering the three prime sectors (Agriculture, Industrial and Service) of an economy, Agriculture plays a vital role in Kerala's economy, though its share in the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) is decreasing. Major crops include rubber, coconut, spices (such as cardamom and pepper), and rice. Kerala is the largest producer of rubber in India. Kerala's industrial base is relatively small compared to other states, with key sectors being food processing, textiles, and handicrafts. Kerala has a few Special Economic Zones (SEZs) aimed at promoting industrial growth. The services sector dominates Kerala's economy, with a significant contribution from tourism, healthcare, IT, and education. Kerala has emerged as a key hub for the IT and business process outsourcing (BPO) industries. Remittances has to be a sepearte mention as it holds dominant in the state due to the large diaspora particularly in the Middle East. Remittances from Keralites working abroad form a significant portion of the state's economy. In 2022, remittances amounted to over `1 lakh crore, contributing to more than 30% of Kerala's GSDP. Considering the employment aspects of the state, Kerala's unemployment rate is

♦ *Profiling*

♦ *Economic measures*

generally lower than the national average, although unemployment among the youth remains a concern. The state has a high level of underemployment due to the mismatch between available jobs and the skill sets of the labor force.

4.1.1.3 Social Indicators

The social wellbeing of a state can be accounted for by considering the general well being of the citizens of the state which is inclusive of the healthcare system, education and social welfare policies. Firstly healthcare, Kerala is recognized for its robust healthcare system, which is credited with achieving high life expectancy (around 77.2 years for men and 77.9 years for women). The state has low infant mortality rates and high maternal health standards. The state's healthcare system is a mix of public and private services, with widespread access to healthcare facilities. Secondly education, Kerala's education system is regarded as one of the best in India. The state has a high gross enrollment ratio in primary, secondary, and tertiary education. The literacy rate of 96.2% is supported by widespread access to primary and secondary education, with a strong public education system. Kerala also has numerous institutions of higher learning, including Medical, Engineering, and Management colleges. Thirdly social welfare, The state has a well-developed social welfare system, with various safety nets such as the Old Age Pension, Public Distribution System (PDS), and financial aid for disadvantaged communities. Kerala's social indicators are among the best in India, with good outcomes in terms of life expectancy, child health, and maternal care.

♦ *Social welfare*

4.1.1.4 Quality of Life and Human Development

Human Development Index (HDI) - Kerala ranks at the top in the Human Development Index (HDI 2022) among Indian states, owing to its high achievements in education, health, and income. The state's HDI score is comparable to that of some developed countries.Quality of life is measurable through HDI but apart from the indicators of HDI, housing, poverty and inequality in the state and environmental sustainability can also be good measures to understand well being of the citizens of the state. Kerala has made significant strides in housing, with most of its population enjoying access to basic housing and infrastructure facilities. Housing programs, such as the "Life Mission" for providing housing to the homeless, have helped address issues related to shelter. As for poverty and inequality, Kerala has relatively low poverty rates compared to other Indian states, although the state does face challenges related to income inequality, particularly in rural areas. The state has reduced poverty through effective social programs,

♦ *Standard of living*

though inequality persists. Recently Kerala has been prone to more natural calamities; this holds testament to the environmental decline of the state. Kerala is highly vulnerable to climate change, particularly due to rising sea levels and heavy monsoon rains, which frequently cause floods and landslides. The state has made efforts toward sustainable development and renewable energy initiatives. But strides have to be made in this as the state is increasingly at risk.

4.1.1.5 Cultural and Social Identity

♦ *Heritage*

Kerala is culturally diverse, with various religious and ethnic groups living harmoniously. The state has significant populations of Hindus, Christians, and Muslims, and a history of religious tolerance and communal harmony. The state has a rich cultural heritage as well, including classical art forms such as Kathakali and Mohiniyattam, and the famous Kerala mural painting style. It is also home to a vibrant literary tradition, with Malayalam being the predominant language.

4.1.1.6 Governance and Political Landscape

♦ *Political landscape*

Kerala has a strong tradition of political activism and has been a forerunner in left-wing politics in India. It has alternated between Left Democratic Front (LDF) and United Democratic Front (UDF) governments over the years, often fostering a high level of political engagement among its citizens. Kerala has implemented effective decentralised governance through local self-governments, particularly Panchayats (rural) and Municipalities (urban). This has helped promote local development and improve basic services at the grassroots level. Kerala is often seen as a state that has made significant strides in improving governance transparency, reducing corruption, and increasing accountability. The Right to Information Act has been effectively implemented in the state.

4.1.1.7 Challenges

1. Aging Population: Kerala is experiencing demographic transition, with a rapidly aging population. This poses challenges for the state's labor market, pension systems, and healthcare infrastructure.

2. Youth Unemployment: Despite high educational attainment, Kerala faces issues related to unemployment. The mismatch between qualifications and available jobs is a growing concern.

3. Environmental Vulnerability: Kerala is susceptible to natural disasters such as floods and cyclones, which have had

devasting impacts on the economy and infrastructure in recent years.

4. Fiscal Health: Kerala's fiscal health is under strain, with high levels of public debt, largely due to state government expenditure on welfare programs and subsidies. The state's reliance on remittances and federal grants also makes it economically vulnerable.

Kerala stands out in India for its high levels of social development and quality of life, driven by a combination of strong governance, high literacy rates, effective healthcare systems, and the significant contributions of its diaspora. While the state has made remarkable progress in human development, it faces challenges such as youth unemployment, an aging population, and environmental risks. Despite these challenges, Kerala's socio-economic profile remains a model for sustainable and inclusive development in the Indian context.

4.1.2 Kerala Model of Development

A case study of select issues with reference to Kerala was conducted by the Centre for Development Studies (CDS) at Thiruvananthapuram with the help of the United Nations. The results and recommendations of this study is what later came to be known as the 'Kerala Model'. This model showcased an equitable growth which emphasised land reforms, reduction in poverty, access to education and child welfare. K.N Raj, an economic professor was the man behind this study. The Centre for Developmental Studies was started by him in Thiruvananthapuram in 1971 at the request of the then Kerala Chief Minister C Achutha Menon. Even though the study that delivered the terminology was carried out by K.N.Raj, he did not coin the term. It was popularised by Amartya Sen and Jean Drez. Amartya Sen stated that "India does not need to look elsewhere for development pointers as there is much that India can learn from Kerala's development experience. Kerala despite its low income level has achieved more than even some of the most admired high growth economies and what Kerala had achieved with very low per capita income and growth is so remarkable".

The Kerala model of development can be seen as a combined effort and set of practices adopted by the government of Kerala to achieve better productivity, high life expectancy, low infant mortality rate, low birth and death rate, significantly lower population growth rates, increased life expectancy and access and availability of better health care facilities, virtual elimination of many communicable diseases, etc. Even though the state has a lower per capita income, still the state is compared with many developed nations.

The development of Kerala as we see now took place in three stages namely the slow growth rate, static growth rate and high growth rate. The slow growth rate was the time in the beginning when new policies were being formed and applied along with this there was the five year plans as well but this had no impact overall. The second stage, that is the static growth rate is the middle stage which was a stagnant period. The third stage, that is the high growth rate, after 2000 is when major advancements were being made in the fields of infrastructure such as construction, gas, electricity, water and other areas like banking, and real estate. Still sectors like agriculture and manufacturing industries needed more attention as they had proven not to be the strongest suit in the state. The following are the prime features of the Kerala model of development:

♦ *Stages of growth*

- ♦ It aims to provide quality life standards in contrast to the low per capita income

- ♦ A planned approach and set of resource distribution programs have really helped in shaping the growth prospects of the state.

♦ *Features of Kerala Model*

- ♦ Increased people's participation on the political fronts and a dedicated team working actively towards promoting high life standards

- ♦ The democratic structure of the society allowing for mass activism and a very committed bunch of people have considerably paid off well

- ♦ The state has a high human development index among the other states with a score of 0.782 which is compared to the developed nations

- ♦ Reverence towards the infant mortality rate, population growth rate, higher life expectancy of the people and advanced health care facilities.

♦ *Service sector*

Over the years the state has evolved to higher levels which is visible in the health sector, education sector and the human development index. The health care system and infrastructure has evolved over the years with more medical institutions and highest population bed ratio among the states. This has had a huge impact on the health care system. The state runs nutrition programs and approximately 99% of the deliveries are in hospitals. The life expectancy and birth rates are at a stable level as well. Education is another prominent scale to access Kerala's development; education is given priority as it is visible with the state having the highest literacy rate in India. A large number of students attend school on

a day to day basis and large investments are made in public and private institutions to ensure education is on par with the present needs and changes. Kerala is the first state to have ICT enhanced education with smart classrooms in all public schools. The state being ranked number one in the school education quality index as per NITI AAYOG in 2019 is testimonial of this. Last but not least the human development index is an indication of how far developed the state is as the state has scored 0.782 which is high in comparison to other states and even other countries.

4.1.3 Challenges of Kerala Model of Development

Even though the state has had remarkable triumphs in human and social development, the overall growth performance of the state has been in accord with that of the nation and sometimes has even surpassed it but even with such triumphs there have been several failures in stark contrast to the success in human development. Five challenging areas can be identified which we will discuss further in the following content.

♦ *Areas of challenge*

First – Kerala has had historical advantage in the form of favorable initial conditions to this the added governmental measures helped make it possible for the state to achieve success in human development and be ahead in the all India scenario. This public action was made possible by social reforms, radical politics and the emergence of an active public sphere and social economy which created an effective political demand for human development.

♦ *Historical factor*

Second - the process of human development did contribute to the growth process through a demographic transition that helped to reap a premium in per capita growth in income to the extent of one percent per annum compared to the national performance in per capita growth.

♦ *Per capita*

Third - when looking at growth performance in terms of per capita GDP, the first phase of this sixty-year trajectory (1960–1961 to 1986–1987) was not only underwhelming when compared to the national average but also verging on stagnation. But a few years after the national economy's growth accelerated, growth began to pick up. This was mostly caused by the growing remittance flow to Kerala's economy, which was made feasible by the country's working-age population migrating in significant number— particularly males—to work in the Gulf countries, a region of West Asia. That is to say, the process of human development that results in the movement of educated individuals may have played a role in the Kerala economy's better growth performance during its Second Phase (1987–1988 to 2019–20).

♦ *Growth by remittance*

♦ *Service sector*

Fourth - the construction and service sectors took the lead in the increased growth performance. As a result, the manufacturing, agricultural, and related sectors, sectoral contributions were diminished and the sectoral growth performance of the Kerala economy became even more lopsided. As a result, there was a significant shift in the workforce's employment from the primary sector to the construction and service sectors in Kerala.

♦ *Unemployment or underemployment*

Fifth – from an employment perspective this pattern of growth could not address the problem of unemployment especially that of the educated unemployment. Unemployment among the younger generation was high and increasing. But when unemployment is measured as those seeking work and not seeking work, the situation is a challenging one with the increasing proportion of women in the category of out of work and education which is labor underutilization essentially. The problem was more dominant among the younger generation. Such a high rate of underutilization despite the high human development and high economic growth along with an advanced stage in demographic transition is nothing short of a massive failure.

4.1.4 Criticism of Kerala Model of Development

The Kerala model of development has faced severe criticism on many fronts. Here are some of them:-

1. The Kerala Model has failed to provide employment opportunities to several people and this has forced people to work overseas.

2. The per capita income of the state is low and hence a lot of infrastructures have been built by borrowing funds. This leads to added instability.

3. Although the female literacy rate is good, still the number of women entering into governance is not yet achieved. Women are still restricted from achieving higher financial status.

4. Infrastructure is available and built without being used.

5. People are forced to live in crowded areas, as the rich keep getting richer and the poor keep getting poorer.

4.1.5 Kerala at Present

Kerala faces several economic challenges, with fiscal sustainability being a critical concern. Following are some key points highlighting these challenges:

1. Fiscal Deficits

Welfare schemes

Kerala has consistently recorded fiscal deficits, driven by high public spending on social welfare programs, salaries, and pensions. While these investments have improved health and education indicators, they strain the state's finances and limit fiscal space for infrastructure development and economic initiatives.

2. Revenue Generation

Income

The state's revenue generation is inadequate to meet its expenditure needs. While Kerala has a robust tax structure, including Goods and Services Tax (GST) and excise duties, the revenue base remains narrow. The heavy reliance on taxes from specific sectors, such as tourism and remittances, exposes the state to economic shocks.

3. Public Sector Wages and Pensions

Government sector

The public sector is a significant employer in Kerala, resulting in high wage bills. Additionally, a growing pension liability from an aging workforce exacerbates fiscal pressure. Managing these costs without compromising public services is a crucial challenge for the state.

4. Dependence on Central Grants

Fiscal allocation

Kerala relies on central government transfers and grants to fund many programs. While this dependency can help cushion fiscal deficits, it also creates uncertainty and limits the state's autonomy in financial planning.

5. Investment in Infrastructure

Limitation

Despite strong social indicators, Kerala's infrastructure development has lagged. Insufficient investment in transportation, energy, and technology hampers economic growth and job creation, further complicating fiscal sustainability by limiting the state's economic base.

6. Debt Levels

Borrowing

Kerala's debt-to-GDP ratio is concerning, driven by persistent borrowing to finance deficits and fund social programs. High debt levels pose risks to fiscal sustainability, potentially leading to higher interest payments that could crowd out essential public spending.

7. Economic Diversification

♦ *Lack of diversification*

The state's economic model has historically focused on services, particularly tourism and remittances. The lack of diversification into manufacturing and other high-growth sectors limits job creation and revenue potential, hindering fiscal resilience.

8. Unemployment and Underemployment

♦ *Employment*

Despite high literacy rates, unemployment remains a significant issue, particularly among youth. This underemployment results in lost potential tax revenue and increased social welfare expenditures, further straining the budget.

♦ *Restructure*

To enhance fiscal sustainability, Kerala must address these economic challenges by improving revenue generation, diversifying its economic base, and managing public sector costs. Strengthening infrastructure investment and fostering a conducive environment for private sector growth are also essential for achieving a more balanced fiscal framework that supports both social welfare and economic development.

Summarised Overview

The Kerala Model of development emphasises human welfare over mere economic growth with a special focus on high literacy, healthcare, and social equity. The prime features or standout of this model are universal access to education and healthcare, poverty reduction, gender equality, and de-centralisation of governance. What has been challenging to the Kerala model has been the declining workforce as in aging population, youth unemployment, over-reliance on remittances, and environmental vulnerability. Criticisms against the Kerala model have been low industrial growth, inadequate job creation despite high educational levels, and a growing fiscal deficit. Despite these issues, the model remains a unique example of prioritizing human development over traditional economic metrics, though its long-term sustainability is debated. Unless the state can manage to grow its industrial sector and generate wealth this might not be functional in the long run anymore.

Self-Assessment

1. What are the main features of the Kerala Model of Development?

2. How does Kerala's focus on human development differ from other states in India?

3. Discuss the role education play in the Kerala Model of development.

4. How has Kerala achieved such high literacy rates compared to the national average?

5. In what ways has decentralised governance contributed to the success of Kerala's development model?

6. What are the major challenges Kerala faces in terms of youth unemployment despite high literacy rates?

7. What criticisms have been levelled against the Kerala Model of Development?

8. Discuss the history behind the Kerala Model of Development.

9. Discuss the views of Amartya Sen on the Kerala Model of Development.

Assignments

1. Recently Kerala has been more prone to natural calamities. In view of this assess what are the environmental challenges Kerala faces, and how do they affect its development model?

2. Kerala is witnessing increasing migration. In view of this how is Kerala addressing its aging population and the potential strain it could put on social services?

3. Elaborate as to how has the lack of industrial growth affected Kerala's economic development and job creation?

4. Discuss what lessons can other Indian states or developing countries learn from Kerala's development approach?

5. What role do remittances play in Kerala's economy, and how does it impact its development model?

6. How sustainable is the Kerala Model of development in the long term, given its reliance on welfare programs, remittances and growing fiscal deficit?

Suggested Readings

1. Singh, K.S (Eds.). (2002). *People of India – Kerala*. Chennai: Affiliated East West Publishers.

2. Soman, C.R. (Eds.) (2007). *Kerala Fifty Years and Beyond*. Thiruvananthapuram: St.Joseph's Press.

References

1. https://cds.edu/wp-content/uploads/WP-510-ProfKannan.pdf Kerala 'Model' of Development Revisited A Sixty-Year Assessment of Successes and Failures K. P. Kannan.

2. https://library.fes.de/libalt/journals/swetsfulltext/11220652.pdf. The `Kerala Model' of Development: Development and Sustainability in the Third World GOVINDAN PARAYIL.

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

UNIT 2

De-Centralisation and People's Planning

Learning Outcomes

After reading this unit, the learner will be able to:

♦ explore about the historical overview regarding de-centralisation and peoples planning

♦ analyse the benefits of having local governance in the state

♦ examine the impact of de-centralisation and peoples planning in the state

Background

The concept of de-centralisation in Kerala goes beyond the mere transfer of power from central authorities to local bodies; it embodies an innovative approach to inclusive governance, local empowerment, and community-driven development. The origins of de-centralisation in Kerala can be traced back to the social and political movements in the early 20th century that aimed to empower marginalized groups and address local issues. The rise of the Indian independence movement and the subsequent struggle for social justice provided a fertile ground for Kerala's unique political landscape, where the Left Democratic Front (LDF) and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)) began to play a key role in shaping local governance policies.

The formal de-centralisation of governance in Kerala began in earnest in 1993, when the 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Indian Constitution mandated the establishment of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs). These amendments empowered local governments, such as Panchayats (village, intermediate, and district level) and Municipalities, to take on more significant roles in planning, budgeting, and implementing welfare programs. However, the real shift toward participatory, bottom-up governance came with the People's Planning Campaign in 1996.

The de-centralisation and People's Planning movement in Kerala has redefined how local governance can function effectively, ensuring broad-based community participation in decision-making processes. By empowering local governments and citizens, Kerala has demonstrated that decentralised governance can contribute to more inclusive, accountable,

and sustainable development. Despite the challenges, the experience of Kerala offers valuable lessons in how de-centralisation can be implemented to bring about meaningful social and economic change.

Keywords

Local governance, Devolution, Democracy, Panchayats, Deconcentration

Discussion

4.2.1 De-centralisation : Definition, Types and Features

De-centralisation occurs when power is transferred from central and state governments to local governments. With de-centralisation the numerous problems and issues at the local level can be solved there itself as people partaking will have better knowledge about the problems in their localities. It calls for democratic participation as people can participate directly in decision making at the local level. In the case of a diverse country like India bureaucratic and administrative affairs cannot be managed solely on the basis of two tiers as India has states that are the size of some European countries. Thus, bureaucratic power partaking in India required one more level of government, beneath that of the state legislatures which brought about a third level of government and so our constitution perceived the need for de-centralisation .

♦ *Power relation*

De-centralisation is a political process whereby administrative authority, public resources and responsibilities are transferred from central government agencies to lower level organs of government or non-governmental bodies such as community based organisations, third party nongovernmental organisation or private sector actors. Conceptually important distinctions can be made among deconcentration, devolution, delegation, privatisation.

1. Deconcentration - in which political, administrative and fiscal responsibilities are transferred to lower units within central line ministries or agencies

2. Devolution - in which sub-national units of government are either created or strengthened in terms of political, administrative and fiscal power.

3. Delegation, in which responsibilities are transferred to organisations that are 'outside the regular bureaucratic structure and are only indirectly controlled by the central government.

4. Privatisation - in which all responsibility for government functions is transferred to nongovernmental organisations (NGO)

This transfer can involve the power to decide the allocation and distribution of public resources, the power to implement programmes and policies and the power to raise and spend public revenues for the same and or other purposes. These three powers can be broadly classified into political, administrative and fiscal de-centralisation .

Political De-centralisation – in this there is a transfer of power and policy from the central government to local governance mechanisms such as lower level assemblies and local councils which have been elected to power in a democratic fashion.

Administrative De-centralisation – In this form the responsibility of planning and implementation is placed at the hands of locally situated civil servants who are under the jurisdiction of the elected local governments.

Fiscal De-centralisation – the local governments are authorized to accord substantial revenue and expenditure at the local level.

Democratic de-centralisation implies more than the downward delegation of authority. Crucially, it entails a system of governance in which citizens possess the right to hold local public officials to account through the use of elections, grievance meetings and other democratic means. Democratic de-centralisation can be defined as meaningful authority devolved to local units of governance that are accessible and accountable to the local citizenry, who enjoy full political rights and liberty. It thus differs from the vast majority of earlier efforts at de-centralisation in developing areas, which go back to the 1950s, and which were largely initiatives in public administration without any serious democratic component.

Features of De-centralisation *:*
- ♦ popular control of policy makers, both by regular elections and by the pressure of social interest groups;

♦ the institutionalisation of all adult citizens in voting (i.e. one person, one vote);

♦ political freedom in the eyes of the state;

♦ policy decisions made on the basis of majority rule.

4.2.2 Historical and Political Background of De-centralisation in India

In India, the process of de-centralisation was conceptualised long back since the pre-independence era. The Constitution of India provided for Village Panchayats in the Directive Principles of the Constitution. Article 40 of the Constitution provided that, 'the State shall take steps to organize village panchayats and endow them with such power and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government.' Although many state governments attempted to translate this Directive Principle into practice by enacting necessary legislation and creating Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), but with limited success. Against this background, the need for providing a firm Constitutional status for PRIs became necessary.

The Government of India introduced the concept of democratic decentralisation for the good governance and development of rural and urban areas at the grassroots level. To deal with poverty and sustainable development of the country, the key component is decentralisation of power in which the authority for some functionality and resources is taken from the state government and given to the local government.

In 1992, the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act provided for the transfer of power to popularly elected local governments, a crucial step towards the decentralisation of power. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act introduced Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). This was not a new concept; it had been in existence since centuries in other forms bearing different name like Gram Panchayat. Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) are responsible for the development of the rural areas. The 74th Constitutional Amendment Act was introduced for the development of the urban areas where municipal bodies have the power and authority to plan for economic development and implementation of schemes.

Through the amendment of the Constitution a devolution of authority occurred and resources were given to local governments on a permanent basis. The state government does not give the authority to gather tax from the public to the local government, but the state government funds them, handles tax, and provides staff so

margin notes:

♦ *Article 40*

♦ *Grassroot governance*

♦ *73rd & 74th Amendment*

♦ *Devolution of authority*

that they can carry out their responsibilities. Local government, which includes panchayats and municipalities, is a state subject. Consecutively, power and authority have devolved to panchayats and municipalities at the discretion of states.

♦ *Responsibility of local self government*

Even with de-centralisation the problem at the local levels remains untouched, from which we can conclude that the state government has the authority to handle local governance. A study conducted by the Fourteenth Finance Commission shows that authority and power for five basic responsibilities – mainly sanitation, water supply, communications and roads, streetlight provision, and community asset management – have devolved into local self-government. According to the Constitution, panchayat and municipality elections should be held every five years.

4.2.2.1 Historical Context of De-centralisation in Kerala

♦ *Social and political movements*

The origins of de-centralisation in Kerala can be traced back to the social and political movements in the early 20th century that aimed to empower marginalised groups and address local issues. The rise of the Indian independence movement and the subsequent struggle for social justice provided a fertile ground for Kerala's unique political landscape, where the Left Democratic Front (LDF) and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)) began to play a key role in shaping local governance policies.

♦ *Beginning of de-centralisation*

The formal de-centralisation of governance in Kerala began in earnest in 1993, when the 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Indian Constitution mandated the establishment of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) and Urban Local Bodies (ULB). These amendments empowered local governments, such as Panchayats (village, intermediate, and district level) and Municipalities, to take on more significant roles in planning, budgeting, and implementing welfare programs. However, the real shift toward participatory, bottom-up governance came with the People's Planning Campaign in 1996.

4.2.2.2 People's Planning Campaign

♦ *Participatory governance*

The People's Planning Campaign of 1996 was a landmark initiative in Kerala, launched under the leadership of the then Left Democratic Front (LDF) government, with E.K. Nayanar as the Chief Minister. This initiative aimed to transform the governance model by moving away from top-down bureaucratic control and creating a participatory process where local communities were given a significant role in planning and decision-making.

The campaign sought to decentralise financial resources and planning powers to local bodies, enabling them to take ownership of development in their areas. This shift empowered local governments to identify their specific needs, set priorities, and create detailed plans for development that directly reflected the aspirations and challenges of their communities.

Key features of the People's Planning Campaign included:

♦ **Decentralised Planning**: Local governments, particularly Panchayats, were encouraged to form planning committees and prepare detailed plans for development based on local needs and priorities. This involved direct consultation with local communities through Gram Sabhas (village assemblies) and Ward Sabhas (neighborhood assemblies).

♦ **Participatory Budgeting**: A significant portion of the state's budget was devolved to local governments, allowing them to allocate resources according to local priorities.

♦ **Transparency and Accountability**: The planning process was made open to public scrutiny, with citizens actively involved in decision-making, implementation, and monitoring.

♦ **Capacity Building**: Local bodies were provided with training to manage funds, implement projects, and carry out planning effectively.

The success of the People's Planning Campaign was reflected in the broad participation of communities in the planning process, the emergence of more responsive and accountable local governance, and improvements in human development indicators such as literacy, health, and sanitation.

The following are the key achievements and impact:

1. **Local Empowerment**: By transferring substantial decision-making powers to local bodies, the de-centralisation process ensured that communities became key actors in the development of their regions. Local governments were empowered to address problems in a more targeted and efficient manner.

2. **Inclusive Development**: People's Planning Campaign of the state helped bridge the gap between the government

and marginalised groups, ensuring that development policies reached the poorest and most underserved sections of society. Local bodies prioritized projects that focused on poverty alleviation, infrastructure, education, health, and sanitation.

3. **Women's Participation**: One of the most notable aspects of de-centralisation in Kerala was the active participation of women in local governance. The state reserved 50% of Panchayat seats for women, resulting in the emergence of female leaders in local governance. This has contributed to more inclusive decision-making and the prioritisation of issues affecting women and children.

4. **Innovative Projects**: The decentralised planning process led to the implementation of numerous innovative local development projects, including participatory irrigation management, school infrastructure improvements, healthcare projects, and environmental conservation initiatives.

5. **Strengthened Democracy**: The system of regular consultations through Gram Sabhas and the transparent implementation of plans fostered a culture of democracy at the grassroots level. People were not just passive recipients of government services but active participants in the development process.

4.2.3 Evaluating the Impact of De-centralisation in Kerala

In both scale and design, the de-centralisation reforms that were introduced in Kerala in 1996 represent an ambitious effort to build local democracy. The impact of the reforms carries important lessons for our understanding of de-centralisation, and even more importantly of democratic deepening.

In Kerala, decentralised planning that followed the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments and enabling enactments in the State in 1994 started off as the People's Plan Campaign and progressed with institutionalisation at different levels. The important landmarks during the 9th Five Year Plan include:

Transfer of powers, functions, institutions and staff to local governments initiated in October 1995 and completed by July 2000; the transferred officials were given a dual responsibility and accountability to both the Panchayati Raj Institutuion (PRI) and the line Departments for execution of their respective plan programs;

Adoption of a separate budget document exclusively for Local Self Governments (LSGs) (since February 1996) and the

♦ *Local governance*

♦ *Uniqueness of 9th five year plan*

♦ *Dual responsibility*

introduction of a formula for allocation of Plan funds (Grants in aid) among LSGs;

♦ *Expenditure*

Decision to devolve 35% to 40% of the plan funds to local governments announced in July 1996; around 90% of this was devolved with the condition that at least 30% should be spent on Productive sectors, not more than 30% should be invested on Infrastructure and at least 10% should be earmarked for Development programs for Women;

♦ *Mobilisation and participation*

Launching of the People's plan Campaign in August 1996 with multi-pronged socio-political mobilisation and sensitisation of people with effective participation of organisations like Kerala Sasthra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP); this was being associated with institution-building at different tiers and levels;

♦ *Sen committee*

Restructuring of the Kerala Panchayat Raj Act and the Kerala Municipality Act in 1999, based on the recommendations of the Committee on De-centralisation of Powers (known as Sen Committee);

♦ *Fiscal matters*

Submission of First and Second State Finance Commission Reports in February 1996 and January 2001 respectively, reviewing the financial position of Local Self Governments and making recommendations therein.

De-centralised planning in the State operated mainly through the following institutions and instruments;

♦ *Devolution*

Grama Sabha: People's participation in de-centralisation was sought to be ensured mainly through meetings of the Grama Panchayat ward level Grama Sabha, chaired by the ward member. Ten per cent of the voters of the ward constitute the quorum; The officials of Grama Panchayat and implementing departments are required to attend the Grama Sabha meetings. The Block level Grama Sabha consisting of Grama Panchayat Presidents and Block Samiti members and the District level Grama Sabha consisting of Grama Panchayat Presidents, Block Panchayat Presidents and District Panchayat members were meant to vertically integrate plans.

♦ *Group formation*

Neighborhood Groups (NHGs): Envisaged as a sub-system of Grama Sabha, an NHG (Ayalkoottam) would be formed as an association of 20-25 women members to identify women from among themselves to form Self Help Groups (SHG) for carrying out the Women Component Plan (WCP).

Resource Persons: About 600 Key Resource Persons at the State level, about 10000 District Resource Persons at the district level and

♦ *Training to lead*

about one lakh Local Resource Persons at the Grama Panchayat level were recruited both from the Government and outside, representing various disciplines. Resource Persons were to take lead in training programmes and to spearhead the Plan campaign. Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA) co-ordinates the training activities of Local governments.

♦ *Preparation*

Development Seminar; Based on Grama Sabha recommendations, a one day development seminar would be held every year at the Panchayati Raj Institutuion level to which experts, elected members, representatives nominated by the Grama Sabha, to discuss the draft annual plan document of the Panchayati Raj Institutuions, suggest the broad priorities of development projects and select members of Task Forces (Working Groups).

♦ *Working groups*

Task Force; Presently known as 'Working Groups' were to translate the demands and recommendations of Grama Sabhas and development seminars into viable, technically acceptable projects. For each local body, there were about 8 –12 Task Forces/working groups dealing with different sectors. Each working group would be headed by an elected Member and convened by specified government official.

♦ *Standing committee*

Committee System; All Grama Panchayats, Block Panchayats and Zonal Panchayats would have Standing Committees; each assigned with certain subjects. The Standing Committees were to be co-ordinated with a Steering Committee consisting of the President, Vice President of the Panchayat and the chairpersons of the Standing Committees. Panchayats were free to constitute sub-committees to assist the aforesaid committees. There was also provision for Joint Committees between neighbouring Local Governments.

♦ *Threefold role*

Expert Committees; There would be Expert Committees (evolved from Voluntary Technical Corps) at block and district levels drawing expertise from and outside the Government. Expert Committees would have a three-fold role; providing technical advice to Panchayati Raj Institutuions, technically vetting projects of Panchayati Raj Institutuions and giving technical sanction for works, wherever required.

♦ *Approval*

District Planning Committee; All Panchayati Raj Institutuion plans in the district would be submitted to District Planning Committee, which would give formal approval to them. Neither District Planning Committee nor Expert Committees would have the power to alter the priorities fixed by Panchayati Raj Institutuions, but could only ensure that the Guidelines were followed.

♦ *Apex level*

State Level Coordinators; At the apex level, the State Planning Board, co-ordinates with the Department of Local Self Government and takes the lead in decentralized planning at different tiers by issuing guidelines and observing compliance and progress. There was a State Level Expert Committee too, to vet the District Panchayat plans.

♦ *Delimiting*

State Election Commission: Apart from the conduct of Local body elections, the State Election Commission has been empowered to delimit the wards of Panchayati Raj Institutuions for elections and to disqualify the defectors.

♦ *SFC*

State Finance Commissions: The 1st State Finance Commission was constituted in 1994 and the 2nd in 1999. The 1st State Finance Commission submitted its report in February 1996. However, the formula used for inter-se distribution of plan fund was not the one given by the State Finance Commission, but was evolved by the Working Group of State Planning Board in 1997.

♦ *Grievance mechanism*

Ombudsman: Ombudsman is a high-powered institution consisting of judicial dignitaries formed to check malfeasance in local governments in the discharge of developmental functions.

♦ *Facilitating local governance*

The People's Planning initiative in Kerala, aimed at enhancing participatory governance through de-centralisation , has been widely celebrated for its successes in local development. However, it has also faced significant setbacks that warrant a balanced analysis, particularly concerning financial limitations and political issues.

1. Financial Limitations

♦ **Resource Constraints:** Local self-governments often grapple with inadequate financial resources. Despite the constitutional mandate for de-centralisation , the transfer of funds from the state government has been inconsistent, limiting the ability of local bodies to implement projects effectively.

♦ **Dependence on State Funding**: Many local governments rely heavily on grants and allocations from the state, which can be subject to political priorities and budgetary constraints. This dependence can hinder local autonomy and the capacity to address specific community needs.

♦ **Inefficient Revenue Generatio**n: Local bodies face challenges in generating revenue through taxes and fees. Limited taxation powers and bureaucratic ineffi-

ciencies can restrict their financial independence, impacting the sustainability of development initiatives.

2. Political Issues

♦ **Partisan Politics**: The de-centralisation process has sometimes been influenced by political party dynamics, leading to favoritism and uneven development across regions. Local governments may prioritize projects based on political affiliations rather than community needs.

♦ **Conflict Between Local and State Governments**: Tensions between local self-governments and the state administration can arise, particularly when state policies clash with local priorities. This can result in bureaucratic hurdles and delays in project execution.

♦ **Capacity Constraints**: While People's Planning emphasizes community participation, local bodies often lack the technical expertise and administrative capacity to manage complex projects. This gap can lead to ineffective implementation and disillusionment among citizens.

♦ **Limited Accountability**: In some instances, the accountability mechanisms intended to ensure transparency in local governance may not function effectively. This can result in corruption and mismanagement, undermining public trust in the decentralized system.

3. Social Cohesion and Inclusivity

♦ **Marginalisation of Vulnerable Groups**: Despite the goals of inclusivity, marginalized communities may still face barriers to participation in the planning process. Gender disparities, caste dynamics, and socio-economic inequalities can limit the voices of those most in need of support.

♦ **Conflict and Division**: In certain areas, local governance can exacerbate existing social divisions or create new conflicts, particularly when resource allocation is perceived as inequitable. This can lead to tensions that undermine community cohesion.

While People's Planning in Kerala has made significant strides in promoting decentralised governance and participatory

development, the challenges of financial limitations and political issues cannot be overlooked. Addressing these setbacks is crucial for realizing the full potential of de-centralisation. Strengthening the financial autonomy of local governments, enhancing capacity-building initiatives, and fostering a political culture that prioritizes collaboration over partisanship are essential steps toward more effective and equitable governance. By tackling these issues, Kerala can move closer to achieving its goals of inclusive and sustainable development through People's Planning.

♦ Inclusive & fulfilling

The following demonstrate the effect of de-centralisation in Kerala, let us have a look at the notable achievements made by select panchayats in the state :

1. Thalappalam Grama Panchayat (Plassanal, Kottayam District) has been recognised for its effective participatory planning and community involvement. The panchayat focused on improving local infrastructure, including roads and drainage systems, through community participation. They implemented a "participatory budgeting" process, where residents could voice their needs and prioritize projects. This approach led to enhanced transparency and accountability, resulting in increased citizen trust in local governance. The improvements in infrastructure contributed to better connectivity and increased economic activities, particularly in agriculture and small businesses, thereby elevating the overall quality of life for residents.

♦ Effective participatory planning

2. Kondotty Panchayat (Malappuram District) has been proactive in addressing issues of health and education through decentralised governance. The panchayat established a local health initiative that included regular health camps, maternal health programs, and awareness campaigns on hygiene and nutrition. They also set up a system for monitoring school attendance and performance, engaging parents and teachers in the process. These initiatives significantly improved health indicators and educational outcomes in the region, demonstrating the effectiveness of local governance in addressing community-specific needs.

♦ Health and education

3. Cherthala Panchayat (Alappuzha District) has been notable for its environmental sustainability initiatives. The panchayat launched a "green panchayat" program, promoting waste management and organic farming practices. They established local composting units and encouraged community participation in cleanliness drives. Additionally, they supported local farmers in transitioning to organic methods, enhancing both sustainability and market access. These efforts not only improved local environmental conditions but also boosted the income of farmers through

♦ Environmental sustainability

organic produce, fostering a sense of community ownership and responsibility toward sustainable practices.

♦ *Tourism*

4. Munnar Panchayat (Idukki District) has successfully harnessed tourism for local development. By developing local tourist infrastructure, including homestays and eco-tourism initiatives, Munnar engaged the community in preserving its natural resources. The panchayat organized training programs for locals on hospitality and sustainable tourism practices. This initiative led to an increase in local employment opportunities and income, while also promoting cultural heritage and environmental conservation, showcasing the potential of tourism as a tool for sustainable development.

♦ *Women empowerment*

5. Kalpetta Panchayat (Wayanad District) Kalpetta Panchayat focused on empowering women through self-help groups (SHGs). The panchayat facilitated the formation of numerous SHGs, providing training in various skills such as handicrafts, agriculture, and entrepreneurship. These groups received microfinance support, enabling women to start small businesses. Empowering women economically has led to improved family incomes and enhanced decision-making roles for women in households and the community, promoting gender equality and social empowerment.

♦ *Impact*

These examples illustrate the tangible impact of de-centralisation in Kerala through the effective functioning of panchayats. By engaging communities in the planning and implementation of local development initiatives, Kerala has demonstrated that decentralized governance can lead to significant improvements in health, education, infrastructure, and economic opportunities, reinforcing the state's reputation as a model for participatory governance.

Summarised Overview

Kerala's stint with de-centralisation was initiated through the People's Plan Campaign in 1996. It marked a significant shift in governance by transferring power and resources to local self-governments. This de-centralisation aimed to enhance democratic participation, improve service delivery, and address local needs more effectively. A key outcome of de-centralisation has been the empowerment of local bodies such as panchayats, municipalities, and corporations, which gained increased control over planning, budgeting, and implementation of development projects. This enabled them to address local priorities, including infrastructure, education, health, and social welfare. The participation of citizens, particularly women and marginalised communities, improved significantly. The Kudumbashree initiative, a women's self-help network, played a vital role in empowering

women economically and socially through de-centralized governance. De-centralisation also contributed to improving service delivery in areas like healthcare, education, and sanitation. Kerala's local governments were able to address specific community needs, and this led to tangible improvements in human development indicators, such as infant mortality rates and literacy levels. However, challenges remain. Local bodies sometimes lack adequate financial and technical capacity, and there have been concerns about the efficient use of resources and political interference. Despite these issues, Kerala's de-centralisation is widely seen as a successful model, promoting participatory governance, social equity, and localised development, with positive long-term implications for inclusive growth and service delivery across the state.

Self-Assessment

1. Define de-centralisation.

2. What do you mean by political de-centralisation ?

3. State any two impact of people's planning?

4. In your own words state what do you mean by people planning campaign of 1996?

5. Discuss the historical context of de-centralisation in Kerala.

6. What are the features of de-centralisation ?

Assignments

1. Discuss the historical context prevalent in the nation and state that led to de-centralisation .

2. Identify the local governance mechanism in your area and assess its efficiency in terms of governance.

3. Elaborate on the 73rd and 74th amendments that made possible for de-centralisation in India.

4. Evaluate if peoples planning campaign has been able to provide better governance with peoples participation.

Suggested Readings

1. Singh, K.S (Eds.). (2002). *People of India – Kerala*. Chennai: Affiliated East West Publishers.

2. Soman, C.R. (Eds.) (2007). *Kerala Fifty Years and Beyond*. Thiruvananthapuram: St.Joseph's Press.

References

1. Decentralisation in India Challenges and Opportunities https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/in/decentralisation_india_challenges_opportunities.pdf

2. Chakraborty, P., Chakraborty, L., & Mukherjee, A. (2016). De-centralisation in India: History, Laws and Politics. In *Social Sector in a Decentralized Economy: India in the Era of Globalization* (pp. 24–44). chapter, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

3. Decentralisation in India: Poverty, Politics and Panchayati Raj, Craig Johnson. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08cf240f0b6497400154e/wp199_print.pdf

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

UNIT 3

Demographic Trends and Patterns

Learning Outcomes

After reading this unit, the learner will be able to:

♦ analyse about the composition of the population of the state

♦ identify and assess the uniqueness of the demography of the state

♦ critically assess the demography of the state

Background

Kerala's demographic and cultural roots stretch back to the early Dravidian civilizations. The state is believed to have been part of ancient kingdoms like the Cheras, one of the early Dravidian dynasties that ruled over the region in antiquity. The Chera Kingdom had extensive trade relations with the Roman Empire and the civilizations of the Middle East and Southeast Asia, leading to the influx of foreign cultural influences. Kerala's demographic history saw significant changes during the European colonial period, which began in the 16th century with the arrival of the Portuguese, followed by the Dutch and the British. These powers shaped Kerala's socio-economic structures and brought in influences that continue to shape the state's demographics today. Kerala's demographic features and historical evolution make it distinct from other Indian states. Its demographic specialty can be attributed to its high literacy rates, progressive social structures, unique cultural identity, and significant religious diversity. Kerala as we see it evolved to be so due to the events and elements that it interacted with in the due course of time. This has had lasting effects in the social, cultural, political, economic and religious avenues of life which is now visibly portrayed in the demography of the state that is on par with certain European countries making it a model of development for the nation. In this unit we shall specifically assess the demographic factors that contribute to this uniqueness.

Keywords

Development, Human Development Index, Social development, Progress, Census, Population

Discussion

4.3.1 Population Profile of the State

♦ *Demography*

According to the Census of India 2011, the population of Kerala was 33,406,061, or 2.76 per cent of India's population. Of the State's total population, 48 per cent population are males and 52 per cent are females. The decadal growth rate of Kerala's population was 4.9 per cent, the lowest among Indian States. Among the districts of the State, Malappuram has the highest growth rate (13.4 per cent), and Pathanamthitta has the lowest growth rate (-3.0 per cent). Idukki also has a negative growth rate (-1.8 per cent). The growth rate of population is lower in six southern districts (Idukki, Kottayam, Alappuzha, Kollam, Pathanamthitta and Thiruvananthapuram) than in other districts of the State. Kerala's density of population as per 2011 census is 860 persons per sq. km. Thiruvananthapuram is the most densely populated district (1,508) while, Idukki is the least densely populated district (255). Density of population increased in all districts between the Censuses of 2001 and 2011, other than in Pathanamthitta and Idukki.

4.3.2 Fertility Rate

♦ *TFR*

The fertility rate, specifically the Total Fertility Rate (TFR), refers to the average number of children a woman is expected to have during her lifetime, based on the current age-specific fertility rates. The TFR is a critical indicator that helps gauge population growth and demographic transitions in a region. A TFR of 2.1 children per woman is generally considered the "replacement level" fertility, which is the level at which a population exactly replaces itself from one generation to the next, without migration. In Kerala, the fertility rate has declined significantly over the years, making it one of the lowest in India, and comparable to many developed countries.

♦ *Fertility rate of Kerala*

Kerala is the only State in the country with high total fertility rate among educated women, according to the Sample Registration System Statistical Report 2020. In Kerala, the rate of fertility is 0.2 among the illiterates compared to the fertility rate of 1.5 among literate women. The total fertility rate of Kerala in both categories is 1.8, according to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS 5) 2019-21. In 2020, the infant mortality rate was about six deaths per 1,000 live births. Infant mortality is measured by the number of deaths of children under one year of age per 1,000 live births.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Kerala had relatively high fertility rates, similar to many other states in India, with the TFR exceeding 5

children per woman. However, by the 1990s, the fertility rate in Kerala had begun to plummet, reaching levels far below the national average. As of recent data (2020-2021), Kerala's fertility rate stands at around 1.7 children per woman, which is significantly lower than India's national average of approximately 2.0. The dramatic decline in fertility rates in Kerala began in the late 1970s and continued into the 21st century, reflecting a rapid demographic transition that has often been compared to that of developed countries. This decline is largely attributed to a combination of social, economic, and cultural factors that distinguish Kerala from other regions in India.

◆ *Trajectory*

Factors Contributing to the Decline in Fertility Rate:

1. **High Levels of Literacy and Education:**

One of the most important factors contributing to Kerala's low fertility rate is its high literacy rate, particularly among women. Kerala has one of the highest female literacy rates in India, exceeding 92%. Educated women tend to marry later, have better access to information about reproductive health, and often prioritize smaller family sizes. Education also leads to increased participation in the workforce, which in turn delays childbearing and reduces the overall number of children a woman might have during her lifetime.

◆ *Influence of education*

2. **Healthcare and Family Planning**

Kerala has an advanced healthcare system compared to many other Indian states, with widespread access to maternal and child health services. The state government has also been proactive in promoting family planning and birth control measures since the 1970s. Contraceptive prevalence is higher in Kerala than in most other parts of India, and the public health infrastructure ensures that both urban and rural populations have access to family planning services. This has contributed significantly to reducing unintended pregnancies and lowering the fertility rate.

◆ *Aspects of health and planning*

3. **Cultural and Social Norms**

Kerala's unique socio-cultural landscape, influenced by progressive social movements, has fostered an environment where smaller family sizes are both accepted and encouraged. Kerala's matrilineal traditions in certain communities, along with strong land reforms and welfare policies, have created a society where women play a central role in family decision-making, including reproductive choices.

◆ *Social practice*

4. Economic Factors

Kerala has a high Human Development Index (HDI) compared to other states in India. Economic factors such as employment opportunities, urbanisation and income levels have played a crucial role in reducing the fertility rate. In urban settings, where cost of living is higher, families often prefer fewer children due to economic considerations. The migration of a large portion of Kerala's population, particularly men, to the Gulf countries for employment has also delayed marriage and childbearing for many families.

5. Social Welfare Programs and Government Initiatives

Kerala's government has historically invested in social welfare programs aimed at improving living conditions, healthcare, and education. These programs have created a population that is better informed and more empowered to make decisions about family size. Initiatives like free public education, widespread immunization programs, and health awareness campaigns have had a direct impact on reducing both infant mortality and fertility rates.

Implications of Low Fertility Rate:

6. Aging Population

While Kerala's low fertility rate has led to a population stabilization, it has also resulted in a rapidly aging population. The proportion of elderly people in Kerala is one of the highest in India. This demographic shift poses significant challenges in terms of healthcare, social security, and workforce availability. The dependency ratio, which measures the number of non-working (dependent) individuals relative to the working-age population, is rising, creating economic pressures on younger generations.

7. Labor Force and Economic Growth

With fewer young people entering the workforce, Kerala is likely to face challenges in maintaining economic growth. A shrinking labor force may also impact sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and services, which rely heavily on a steady supply of labor. This could further drive migration, both internal and external, as people seek opportunities in other regions.

8.   Pressure on Social Services

An aging population will require increased expenditure on healthcare, pension schemes, and elder care services. This could put additional pressure on Kerala's social welfare programs, which have traditionally been strong but may struggle to meet the growing demand.

4.3.3 Mortality Rate

The mortality rate, both in terms of general death rates and infant mortality rates, provides crucial insights into the overall health of a population. Mortality rate refers to the number of deaths in a given population during a specific period, usually expressed per 1,000 individuals. It is one of the most fundamental indicators of public health and overall societal well-being. There are different types of mortality rates that are used to assess health outcomes, including:

♦ *Birth and death*

- Crude Death Rate (CDR): The total number of deaths per 1,000 people in a population.

- Infant Mortality Rate (IMR): The number of deaths of infants under one year of age per 1,000 live births.

- Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR): The number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births.

Kerala has consistently performed well across these indicators, exhibiting one of the lowest mortality rates in India. Over the last few decades, Kerala has witnessed a steady decline in its mortality rates. The crude death rate (CDR) in Kerala has remained low compared to the national average, hovering around 6 to 7 deaths per 1,000 population, while the national average is closer to 7.3.

♦ *Kerala Model*

More significantly, Kerala has one of the lowest infant mortality rates (IMR) in India, at around 6-7 deaths per 1,000 live births, compared to the national average of 28 (as per 2021 data). These low mortality rates reflect Kerala's long-standing focus on health, education, and social development, which has improved the overall quality of life and longevity of its citizens.

Kerala's mortality rates are significantly lower than the national average and far lower than states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh, which have much higher mortality rates. For example, the infant mortality rate in Uttar Pradesh is about 50 per 1,000 live births, compared to Kerala's 6-7. Similarly, maternal mortality rates in Kerala are among the lowest in the country, whereas states with poorer healthcare infrastructure experience much higher rates. These differences highlight the effectiveness

♦ *Low mortality rate of Kerala*

of Kerala's social policies and healthcare system in comparison to other parts of the country, where factors such as poverty, lack of healthcare access, and poor education continue to drive higher mortality rates.

Factors Contributing to Low Mortality Rates in Kerala

1. Advanced Healthcare System

Kerala's healthcare system is one of the most developed in India. The state has a robust network of public health facilities, including primary health centers, community health centers, district hospitals, and a wide range of private healthcare providers. This extensive infrastructure ensures that people, even in rural areas, have access to basic and specialized healthcare services. High immunization coverage, widespread availability of maternal and child health services, and proactive health policies have contributed significantly to reducing mortality rates.

2. High Literacy Rate and Education

Kerala's high literacy rate, especially among women, has played a pivotal role in improving health outcomes and reducing mortality rates. Educated populations are better informed about health practices, hygiene, and preventive care, which directly impacts mortality. The state's focus on female education has led to better reproductive health, improved family planning, and greater awareness of child healthcare, all of which have contributed to lower infant and maternal mortality.

3. Effective Public Health Programs

The state government's emphasis on public health initiatives has had a profound impact on reducing mortality rates. Programs aimed at maternal and child health, vaccination campaigns, control of communicable diseases, and health awareness campaigns have helped reduce deaths from preventable causes. Kerala's long-standing focus on primary healthcare ensures early detection and treatment of diseases, which helps in lowering mortality rates.

4. Access to Clean Water and Sanitation

Kerala has been successful in providing access to clean drinking water and sanitation facilities to a large part of its population. The availability of clean water and improved sanitation practices have led to a reduction in waterborne diseases, which are a major cause of infant and child mortality in many other parts of India.

5. Strong Social Welfare System

Kerala's unique model of social development, often referred to as the "Kerala Model," places a strong emphasis on social welfare. The state's social security systems, including pension schemes, food distribution programs, and health insurance for the poor, contribute to better living standards and health outcomes, which in turn lower mortality rates. Welfare programs for the elderly have also improved life expectancy by providing financial and healthcare support.

6. High Life Expectancy

Kerala boasts the highest life expectancy in India, which currently stands at around 75 years for men and 78 years for women. This is a testament to the state's successful public health interventions and overall quality of life. High life expectancy, combined with low mortality rates, underscores Kerala's demographic advantage in terms of health outcomes.

4.3.4 Migration and Malayali Diaspora

The migration of Keralites (or Malayalis) has reshaped the socio-economic landscape of Kerala and has had profound effects on the communities in which they have settled. Migration from Kerala has a long history, dating back centuries, when Kerala was part of ancient trade routes linking the region to the Middle East, Europe, and Southeast Asia. However, large-scale migration in the modern sense began in the mid-20th century, coinciding with the oil boom in the Gulf countries in the 1970s. This period marked the beginning of what would become one of the largest migrations from India to the Middle East, where millions of Malayalis moved in search of better economic opportunities.

♦ *Resettling for upliftment*

While migration within India to cities like Mumbai, Delhi, and Bangalore has also been a significant trend, it is the Gulf migration that has defined the Malayali diaspora's identity on the global stage. Today, the Malayali diaspora is spread across various countries, including the Gulf states, the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and even parts of Southeast Asia and Africa.

♦ *Malayali diaspora*

The Gulf region, particularly countries like Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Oman, Kuwait, and Qatar, hosts the largest concentration of the Malayali diaspora. According to estimates, over 2.5 million Keralites live in the Gulf states. These migrants range from construction workers and domestic workers to highly skilled professionals in sectors such as healthcare, education,

and finance. The Gulf migration is predominantly temporary, with workers returning to Kerala after completing their employment contracts. However, many Malayalis have spent decades in the Gulf, contributing to the region's development while maintaining strong ties to Kerala through remittances and regular visits. North America and Europe is the second most sought destination. Over the past few decades, the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom have become popular destinations for Malayalis, particularly for professionals in fields such as information technology, healthcare, and academia. The United States, in particular, has a sizable Malayali population, with a strong presence of professionals such as doctors, nurses, engineers, and scientists. In the United Kingdom, Malayalis are concentrated in cities such as London, Birmingham, and Manchester, where they have established vibrant communities, particularly in healthcare and education. Canada, with its open immigration policies, has also attracted many Malayalis, especially those seeking permanent residency and better quality of life. In addition to the Gulf, North America, and Europe, Malayalis have migrated to various other regions, including Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, and parts of Africa. In many of these countries, Malayalis have established successful communities, often excelling in professional fields and contributing to the local economy.

♦ *Keralites across the globe*

Impact of Migration on Kerala:

1.   Economic Impact

One of the most significant effects of migration on Kerala is the inflow of remittances. Remittances from the Malayali diaspora, particularly from the Gulf states, have played a crucial role in the state's economy. According to reports, remittances to Kerala account for nearly a third of the state's GDP, making it heavily reliant on migrant labor for economic stability. These remittances have fueled growth in sectors such as real estate, education, healthcare, and consumer goods. Migration has also contributed to the development of infrastructure, with many Malayalis investing in homes, businesses, and public projects back in Kerala. However, the over-reliance on remittances has also led to concerns about the sustainability of this economic model, particularly as the Gulf economies diversify and reduce their dependence on migrant labor.

♦ *Remittance*

2.   Social Impact

Migration has brought about significant social changes in Kerala. Families of migrants often enjoy better standards of living due to the income generated by overseas employment. This has led to improvements in healthcare, education, and housing. However, the

absence of family members, particularly men, for extended periods has also created social challenges. Many households in Kerala are "left-behind families," where women take on the role of head of the household, managing both domestic and financial responsibilities. Additionally, migration has influenced cultural changes, with a blend of global and local practices emerging in Kerala society. The exposure to different cultures has broadened perspectives, leading to changes in lifestyle, consumer behavior, and social norms.

3. Demographic Changes

The large-scale migration of young and working-age individuals has contributed to demographic changes in Kerala. The state has an aging population, with a growing proportion of elderly people who remain in Kerala while the younger generation works abroad. This has placed pressure on social services, particularly healthcare, as the elderly population requires greater care and support.

4. Return Migration

A significant number of Malayalis return to Kerala after spending years or even decades abroad. Return migration has both positive and negative implications. On the positive side, returnees often bring with them financial capital, skills, and experiences that can contribute to local development. Many returnees invest in businesses, real estate, and education, contributing to Kerala's economy. However, return migration also presents challenges, particularly in terms of reintegration. Returnees may face difficulties in finding employment that matches their skills, and the social adjustments to life in Kerala after years abroad can be challenging.

4.3.5 Replacement Migration

Replacement migration is a concept referring to the migration of people to a country or region to offset declines in population size, working-age population, or to counteract the effects of aging populations. This form of migration is considered necessary when a country's native population is either declining due to low fertility rates or aging to the extent that it threatens economic productivity and social welfare systems.

The idea of replacement migration has gained prominence in recent decades, particularly in regions like Europe, Japan, and parts of Asia, where fertility rates have dropped below the replacement level of 2.1 children per woman (the level needed to keep a population stable in the absence of migration). With fewer

young people entering the workforce and a larger proportion of the population reaching retirement age, many countries face the challenge of sustaining economic growth and maintaining pension systems.

Key Aspects of Replacement Migration

1. Compensating for Population Decline: In countries with low fertility rates, the native population may not produce enough births to replace those dying. This can lead to population decline. Replacement migration aims to bring in enough migrants to maintain the population at a stable level.

2. Counteracting Aging Populations: As life expectancy increases and birth rates decrease, the proportion of older people in the population rises. A higher dependency ratio (the number of retirees compared to the working-age population) can strain pension systems, healthcare, and social services. Migrants, particularly young and working-age individuals, can help replenish the labor force and support the aging population.

3. Economic Sustainability: Replacement migration is often viewed as a way to ensure that there are enough workers to maintain economic productivity, support public services, and pay taxes, which are critical for the sustainability of social security systems.

4. Social and Political Challenges: While replacement migration can be a solution to demographic issues, it also raises social, political, and cultural concerns. Large-scale migration can lead to challenges in integrating migrants, potential social tensions, and debates over national identity, citizenship, and immigration policies.

Examples of Replacement Migration

1. Europe: Many European countries, such as Germany, Italy, and Spain, have low fertility rates and aging populations. These countries have looked to migration as a way to replenish their labor forces and support their pension systems. For instance, Germany's intake of refugees in recent years has been partly motivated by the need for younger workers.

2. Japan: Japan is facing one of the most severe demographic crises due to a declining birth rate and an aging population. Despite its reluctance to allow large-scale immigration,

the country has been exploring ways to bring in foreign workers through temporary work permits and residency programs to address labor shortages.

3. The United States: The U.S. has historically relied on immigration to maintain its population growth and labor force. Even though its fertility rate has been declining, migration has helped sustain a relatively stable population size and economic growth.

4.3.5.1 UN Study on Replacement Migration

The United Nations conducted a study in 2000 titled "Replacement Migration: Is It a Solution to Declining and Aging Populations?" which looked at countries like France, Germany, Italy, Japan, South Korea, the Russian Federation, and the United States. The study examined how many migrants would be needed to counteract population decline, the shrinking workforce, and the aging population. It concluded that in most cases, extremely high levels of immigration would be required to maintain the population size and support aging societies, highlighting the challenges of relying solely on migration as a solution.

♦ *Solution to demographic challenges*

Replacement migration is seen as one potential solution to the demographic challenges of low birth rates and aging populations, particularly in developed countries. However, it is not a straightforward fix, as it comes with challenges related to integration, social cohesion, and policy design. While migration can help fill labor shortages and support aging populations, it is usually part of a broader strategy that includes policy measures to encourage higher fertility rates, improve productivity, and adjust social systems to cope with demographic changes.

♦ *Strategic*

Summarised Overview

Kerala's fertility rate has steadily declined over the years, falling below the replacement level of 2.1 children per woman. This is due to several factors, including high literacy rates, improved healthcare, widespread use of family planning, and an emphasis on education. The fertility rate in Kerala, currently around 1.8, is one of the lowest in India, contributing to population stabilization but also raising concerns about aging demographics in the future. Kerala has one of the lowest mortality rates in India, reflecting its strong healthcare infrastructure, high literacy levels, and extensive public health initiatives. The crude death rate is around 6-7 deaths per 1,000 people, while the infant mortality rate is as low as 6-7 per 1,000 live births, significantly below the national average. These low mortality

rates have led to longer life expectancy, with Kerala experiencing a shift toward an aging population. Migration is a major feature of Kerala's socio-economic landscape, with millions of Malayalis moving abroad, particularly to the Gulf region, in search of better job opportunities. The migration, especially to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, started in the 1970s and continues to be a crucial economic driver, with remittances making up a substantial portion of Kerala's GDP. Malayali migrants also live in countries like the U.S., U.K., Canada, and Australia, working in fields such as healthcare, engineering, and education. While migration has boosted Kerala's economy, it has also contributed to the state's aging population and "left-behind" families. Replacement migration, which refers to using immigration to counteract population decline and support aging societies, is becoming relevant for Kerala. With its declining fertility rate and growing elderly population, Kerala may need to explore replacement migration to maintain its workforce and support economic growth. However, Kerala has not yet fully embraced large-scale inward migration as a solution, though return migration and internal migration from other Indian states may help address some demographic challenges.

Self-Assessment

1. Define replacement migration.
2. How does migration affect the economic well being of the state?
3. 'The fertility rate among the educated women is higher in contrary to the national stats', discuss?
4. Give an example for replacement migration.
5. List the factors impacting the low mortality rate in Kerala.
6. Discuss the factors contributing to the decline in fertility rate in Kerala.
7. What do you mean by total fertility rate?
8. Explain the characteristics of Malayali diaspora and migration?

Assignments

1. Is replacement migration a solution for aging and declining population? Discuss.
2. Assess and discuss the unique placement of Kerala with regard to its mortality and fertility rates.

3. Prepare a report on the migrants and malayali diaspora, trace its history and identify the contemporary challenges.

4. Discuss the different types of mortality rates that are used to assess health outcomes.

Suggested Readings

1. Menon, A, S. (1982). *Legacy of Kerala*. Thiruvananthapuram: Govt. Press.

2. Soman, C.R. (Eds.) (2007). *Kerala Fifty Years and Beyond*. Thiruvananthapuram: St.Joseph's Press.

3. Zachariah, K.C, et al. (2002). *Kerala's Gulf Connections*. Thiruvananthapuram: Centre for Development Studies.

References

1. Menon, A. S. (1979). *Social and Cultural History of Kerala*. Jullandhar: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd.

2. Singh, K.S (Eds.). (2002). *People of India – Kerala*. Chennai: Affiliated East West Publishers.

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

UNIT 4

Subaltern Struggles for Land in Kerala

Learning Outcomes

After reading this unit, the learner will be able to:

♦ understand subaltern struggles for land in Kerala

♦ analyse the historic land struggle of the marginalised in Kerala

♦ have a holistic understanding about the land struggle

Background

The subaltern struggles for land in Kerala have been a significant aspect of the state's social and political history, particularly in the context of its agrarian structure and the fight against social inequality. These struggles are deeply rooted in the broader land reform movements and peasant revolts that have shaped the state's socio-political landscape, particularly in the mid-20th century. The subaltern classes, including lower castes, landless laborers, and marginalised communities, have historically fought for land rights as a means of achieving economic security, social dignity, and political power.

The subaltern struggles for land in Kerala are part of a larger movement for social and economic equity. While significant progress was made through the land reforms of the 20th century, challenges remain for marginalised communities, particularly tribal groups, who continue to face exclusion from land ownership. These struggles highlight the intersections of caste, class, and economic inequality, underscoring the ongoing fight for a more inclusive and just society in Kerala. In this unit we shall explore two such mass struggles that were monumental in the history of the state.

Keywords

Land reforms, Tribal struggle, Government, Displacement, Marginalised, Ownership

Discussion

4.4.1 Historical Context

♦ *Dominance and subordination*

Prior to independence, Kerala's agrarian system was highly hierarchical, dominated by upper-caste landlords and large landholders. Most of the agricultural land was concentrated in the hands of the upper castes, while lower-caste and marginalised communities, including Dalits and tribal groups, worked as tenants or landless laborers. They were subjected to exploitative practices such as high rents, forced labor, and eviction without notice. The subaltern classes, including the lower castes and tribal communities, had little or no access to land ownership, and this exclusion reinforced their social and economic marginalisation. The Namboodiri Brahmins, Nairs, and Syrian Christians controlled vast tracts of land, while lower-caste communities like the Ezhavas and Dalits were relegated to menial labor without land rights.

4.4.1.1 Peasant Movements and Land Reforms

♦ *Class Consciousness*

The struggle for land rights became more organized in the early 20th century as various peasant movements emerged, fueled by rising consciousness among the marginalised classes. These movements were often led by socialist and communist groups that advocated for land redistribution and tenant rights.

♦ *Political intervention*

One of the key moments in the subaltern land struggles was the rise of the communist movement in Kerala, particularly in the 1930s and 1940s. The Communist Party of India (CPI) played a central role in mobilising peasants and agricultural laborers to demand fair land tenure, lower rents, and ultimately land ownership. The Punnapra-Vayalar uprising (1946), a significant peasant revolt in the princely state of Travancore, exemplified the fierce resistance against feudal landlords and the state.

♦ *Land reform*

After Kerala's formation in 1956, the communist government, led by E.M.S. Namboodiripad, implemented radical land reforms. The Kerala Land Reforms Act of 1963 and its amendments aimed to redistribute land to the landless, provide security to tenants, and eliminate intermediaries such as landlords. The reforms abolished tenancy and placed a ceiling on land ownership, allowing the redistribution of surplus land to the landless laborers. While these reforms were hailed as a major success in curbing feudal exploitation, their implementation was uneven, and many subaltern communities, especially tribal groups, continued to face marginalisation.

4.4.1.2 Tribal Struggles for Land

While land reforms benefited a section of the landless, particularly lower-caste peasants, many tribal communities in Kerala remained excluded from land redistribution. Tribals, or Adivasis, who traditionally lived on forest land, faced alienation due to the encroachment of settlers, government development projects, and commercial exploitation of forest resources. This resulted in the loss of their ancestral lands and their displacement to impoverished conditions.

The tribal struggles for land intensified in the late 20th century. One of the most notable movements was the Muthanga agitation in 2003, where tribal communities occupied land in the Wayanad district to demand the return of their forest lands, which had been promised to them under land reform laws but never implemented. The movement was met with violent repression by the state, but it highlighted the continuing land alienation faced by Kerala's tribal communities.

4.4.1.3 Contemporary Struggles and Land Rights Movements

The subaltern struggle for land in Kerala continues to be relevant in contemporary times, with marginalised communities still fighting for access to land, particularly in rural and tribal areas. The Ekta Parishad Movement, led by activists advocating for land rights, and local organisations like the Adivasi Gothra Mahasabha, have been at the forefront of these struggles.

Despite Kerala's achievements in land reform and social development, issues such as unequal land distribution, displacement of tribals, and the encroachment of agricultural land by commercial interests persist. The ongoing struggles for land among the subaltern classes reflect not only economic deprivation but also the broader fight for social justice and dignity.

4.4.2 Muthanga Land Struggle: A Fight for Adivasi Land Rights

On February 19, 2003, sounds of gunshots echoed through the forest of Muthanga in the Wayanad district of Kerala as the area witnessed men in uniform setting fire to the tents and huts set up by the Adivasis, who were fighting for the land that was promised to them by the State Government. Today, 16 years later, life hasn't changed much for many of these tribal families, who took part in the agitation in 2003.

The Muthanga land struggle, which took place in 2003, is one of the most significant movements for land rights in Kerala,

highlighting the continued marginalisation and displacement of tribal communities in the state. This struggle was led by the Adivasi Gothra Mahasabha (AGM), an organisation that represents the interests of Kerala's indigenous or tribal (Adivasi) people, particularly in securing their rightful land ownership. The movement was sparked by the failure of successive governments to fulfill promises of land redistribution to tribal communities, and it brought to light the deep issues of land alienation, state neglect, and the ongoing fight for Adivasi rights in Kerala.

◆ *Systematic marginalisation and displacement*

Kerala, despite its achievements in social development and land reforms, has a long history of tribal land alienation. The Adivasis, who traditionally lived in forest areas, relied on land for their livelihoods and cultural identity. However, colonial policies, followed by post-independence development projects, settlements, and the expansion of agricultural land, led to the systematic dispossession of Adivasi lands.

◆ *Mainstream and excluding*

In the late 20th century, tribal communities in Kerala were largely marginalised, with high levels of poverty, lack of land ownership, and poor access to education and healthcare. The Kerala Land Reforms Act in the 1960s and subsequent land distribution programs did not adequately address the needs of Adivasi communities, who were often excluded from the benefits of these reforms.

◆ *Unequal distribution*

In 1975, the Adivasi Land Rights Act was passed, mandating the distribution of land to tribals in Kerala. However, this act was poorly implemented, and despite decades of promises from political leaders, Adivasis remained landless and marginalised. The lack of enforcement of land rights and continuing encroachment on tribal lands led to growing frustration among Adivasi communities.

◆ *Encroachment*

4.4.2.1 Formation of the Adivasi Gothra Mahasabha (AGM)

In the late 1990s, a group of Adivasi activists, led by C.K. Janu, formed the Adivasi Gothra Mahasabha to advocate for the rights of tribal people in Kerala, particularly their land rights. The AGM organised various protests, demanding the allocation of land that had been promised to the Adivasi communities. In 2001, after a prolonged hunger strike and protests organiaed by the AGM, the state government promised to distribute land to Adivasis within 90 days. However, this promise was not kept, further fueling resentment and the determination of tribal communities to take more direct action.

◆ *Tribal land rights*

4.4.2.2 The Muthanga Occupation

In January 2003, after repeated delays and unfulfilled promises

by the government, Adivasi families under the leadership of the AGM decided to occupy forest land in the Muthanga Wildlife Sanctuary in Wayanad district. Around 1500 Adivasi families set up camps in the sanctuary, claiming the land as their own, citing their ancestral rights and the government's failure to provide them with alternative land as promised.

♦ *Displacement*

The Muthanga land occupation was a direct action meant to force the government to address the long-standing issue of tribal landlessness. The Adivasis, who were primarily dependent on land for agriculture and survival, saw this as a necessary step to reclaim their dignity and livelihood.

♦ *Forcing bureaucracy*

4.4.2.3 Government Response and Violence

The occupation of Muthanga quickly drew national attention, as it symbolised the larger issue of land struggles faced by tribal communities in India. However, the state government, led by the then Chief Minister A.K. Antony, took a hardline stance against the occupation, arguing that the occupation was illegal and that the sanctuary land could not be distributed.

♦ *National attention*

On February 19, 2003, the police were ordered to forcibly evict the Adivasi families from the Muthanga Wildlife Sanctuary. The operation turned violent, leading to clashes between the police and the Adivasis. In the ensuing violence, a tribal man, Jogi, was shot dead by the police, and a police constable also lost his life. The incident led to widespread outrage, with human rights organisations and activists condemning the brutal response of the state.

♦ *Forceful and violent*

The Muthanga struggle brought into sharp focus the contradictions in Kerala's social and political landscape—on one hand, the state is celebrated for its progressive policies, but on the other, it failed to address the historical injustices faced by its indigenous communities.

♦ *Questioning progressive*

4.4.2.4 Aftermath and Impact

The Muthanga land struggle did not immediately result in the redistribution of land to Adivasis. Instead, the violent suppression of the movement led to widespread criticism against the Kerala government, with many accusing it of failing to uphold the rights of its most marginalised communities.

♦ *Bypassing rights of the marginalised*

However, the Muthanga struggle did serve to raise awareness about the plight of Adivasis in Kerala. It exposed the state's failure to implement its land reform policies effectively, particularly for indigenous groups. The movement also strengthened the resolve of Adivasi communities and led to continued activism for their land rights in the years following the incident.

♦ *Plight of Adivasis in Kerala*

In the aftermath of the Muthanga struggle, the AGM and other organisations continued to press the government for land redistribution. While some progress has been made, with limited amounts of land being distributed to tribal families, the issue of Adivasi land rights in Kerala remains far from resolved.

♦ *Unresolved*

4.4.2.5 Legacy of the Muthanga Struggle

The Muthanga land struggle remains a powerful symbol of the fight for tribal rights in Kerala. It highlighted the deep-seated issues of land alienation, government apathy, and the marginalisation of Adivasi communities. The movement, led by figures like C.K. Janu, continues to inspire land rights activism in Kerala and beyond.

♦ *Symbolic*

For the Adivasi communities, the struggle for land is not just about economic security, but also about reclaiming their cultural identity and autonomy. The Muthanga struggle showed that despite decades of land reform policies, marginalised communities in Kerala, particularly Adivasis, continue to face challenges in securing their rightful place in society.

♦ *Cultural identity*

The Muthanga land struggle was a defining moment in Kerala's land rights movement. It brought to the forefront the ongoing challenges faced by the Adivasis in securing land ownership and challenged the state to address its shortcomings in implementing land reforms. While the struggle was met with violent repression, it remains a key chapter in the broader fight for social justice and indigenous rights in India. The struggle for Adivasi land rights in Kerala continues, with the legacy of Muthanga serving as a reminder of the ongoing need for equitable land distribution and the protection of marginalised communities.

♦ *Tribal land ownership*

4.4.3 Chengara and Arippa Land Struggles: Voices for Land and Dignity

The Chengara and Arippa land struggles are two significant movements in Kerala's recent history, centered around the demand for land rights and the struggle of marginalised communities, including Dalits, Adivasis, and landless laborers. Both movements are emblematic of the broader issue of land alienation and the failure of land reforms to deliver justice to Kerala's most vulnerable groups. These struggles not only highlight the fight for land as a source of livelihood but also expose the deeper structural inequalities in the state's social fabric.

♦ *Land Struggle of marginalised*

4.4.3.1 Chengara Land Struggle

The Chengara struggle, which began in August 2007, is one of the largest and most prolonged land rights movements in Kerala. It

was primarily led by Dalits, Adivasis, and other landless laborers who had been systematically marginalised from land ownership despite Kerala's earlier land reforms.

Kerala's much-praised land reforms, implemented in the 1960s and 1970s, were intended to redistribute land to the landless, abolish tenancy, and place a ceiling on land holdings. While these reforms were successful in breaking the feudal landownership system, they largely bypassed Dalits, Adivasis, and other marginalised communities. Many of these groups remained landless or were given land that was either unsuitable for cultivation or far too small to be economically viable.

The Samastha Kerala Dalit Adivasi Samara Samithi (SKDASS), led by Laha Gopalan, spearheaded the Chengara movement. It demanded not only land but also recognition of the basic rights and dignity of the most oppressed communities in Kerala.

4.4.3.2 The Occupation of Chengara Estate

In 2007, over 5,000 landless families occupied the Harrison Malayalam Rubber Estate in Chengara, located in Pathanamthitta district. The land, owned by the Harrison Malayalam company, had been leased to the company by the government for plantation purposes. However, much of the land was either underutilised or had been allowed to go fallow. The families set up temporary shelters and began living on the land, demanding that it be redistributed to them for farming and livelihood purposes.

The key demands of the protesters were:

- Distribution of a minimum of 5 acres of land to each landless family.

- Recognition of their right to cultivate and live on the land.

- Reforms to provide the basic necessities such as access to water, education, and healthcare.

4.4.3.3 Challenges and State Response

The Chengara occupation continued for over two years, during which the protesters faced immense hardships. The movement was largely peaceful, but tensions rose as the estate management, local authorities, and labor unions affiliated with political parties opposed the occupation. Laborers working on the estate, fearing job losses, also resisted the occupation. There were reports of physical attacks on the protesters and blockades that prevented supplies of food and medicine from reaching the families.

The government's response was indecisive. While some political leaders expressed sympathy for the landless, there was little action to address their demands, and the state ultimately refused to allocate the estate land to the protesters. The movement also received widespread media attention, polarising public opinion on the issues of land distribution and the rights of marginalised groups.

4.4.3.4 Outcome

After years of protest and negotiation, the Chengara struggle did not result in the full realisation of the protesters' demands. However, in 2009, the government offered land in various parts of the state to some of the families involved in the struggle. Yet, many families rejected the offers because the land provided was either uncultivable or located far from basic amenities like schools and healthcare. Despite not achieving their complete goals, the Chengara movement succeeded in bringing national and international attention to the landlessness and poverty of Dalits and Adivasis in Kerala, exposing the limits of the state's earlier land reform programs.

4.4.4 Arippa Land Struggle

The Arippa struggle, which began in 2012, was another major land rights movement led by marginalised communities in Kerala, particularly focusing on the issues of landlessness among Dalits and Adivasis. Arippa is a forest area located in Thiruvananthapuram district. Similar to Chengara, the landless Dalits, Adivasis, and other marginalised communities had been excluded from earlier land reforms and were living in extreme poverty. Many were forced to work as daily wage laborers, with no permanent access to land or housing. In the 1980s and 1990s, a significant portion of Kerala's tribal population had been displaced due to government projects and encroachments, leading to rising unrest among these communities.

The Kerala Dalit Federation (KDF) and the Adivasi Gothra Mahasabha (AGM), which had been active in the Muthanga land struggle earlier, took the lead in organising the Arippa movement. The protest focused on the long-pending demand for land redistribution to the landless, as well as addressing the state's neglect of its most marginalised groups.

4.4.4.1 The Occupation of Arippa Forest Land

In December 2012, over 1,000 landless families occupied around 60 acres of forest land in Arippa, setting up temporary huts and claiming the land for cultivation. These families consisted of Dalits, Adivasis, and other marginalised groups, many of whom had been displaced by earlier land policies or had never been granted land despite being landless.

The protesters chose the Arippa forest area because it was government-owned land that had been lying unused for years. Their demands were similar to those of the Chengara struggle:

- Allocation of land to each landless family for cultivation and housing.

- Legal recognition of their right to live on the land.

- Provision of basic amenities like water, electricity, and education.

4.4.4.2 State Response and Struggle for Survival

The government initially responded with negotiations but was unwilling to grant the demands of the protesters. The land occupation continued for several months, during which time the families faced severe hardships, including a lack of food, clean water, and sanitation. The protesters also faced legal action, with the government declaring the occupation illegal and ordering their eviction.

Like Chengara, the Arippa struggle became a symbol of the broader issue of land inequality in Kerala. Despite Kerala's reputation as a socially progressive state, the Arippa struggle exposed the persistence of landlessness and poverty among Dalits and Adivasis. The movement also highlighted the limits of land reform policies that had failed to fully reach the most marginalised sections of society.

4.4.4.3 Outcome

While the Arippa struggle did not immediately lead to large-scale land redistribution, it did prompt some political leaders and activists to call for more inclusive land policies. The government made small offers of land to a few families, but these offers were widely seen as inadequate. Like the Chengara struggle, Arippa became a key point of reference in the debate over land rights in Kerala.

Both the Chengara and Arippa land struggles are significant in Kerala's history as they represent the ongoing struggle of marginalised communities, particularly Dalits and Adivasis, to gain access to land, a critical resource for their economic survival and dignity. These struggles highlight the gaps in Kerala's land reform policies and the continued exclusion of certain groups from the benefits of those policies.

The land rights movements in Chengara and Arippa did not achieve their immediate goals but succeeded in raising national

Marginal notes (left column):

- *Allocation of unused governmental land*

- *Unresponsive government*

- *Land inequality*

- *Recognizing need for inclusive land policy*

- *Selective exclusion*

♦ *Advocacy for land rights of the marginalised*

consciousness about the deep-rooted issues of inequality and landlessness. They also inspired continued activism and advocacy for land rights in Kerala, pushing for a more inclusive and equitable approach to land distribution that addresses the needs of the most marginalised sections of society. These movements underscore the ongoing relevance of land as a tool for both economic empowerment and social justice in India.

Summarised Overview

The subaltern struggles for land in Kerala reflect the ongoing fight of marginalised communities—particularly Dalits, Adivasis, and landless laborers—for land rights and social justice. Despite Kerala's celebrated land reform programs, many of these groups have remained excluded from the benefits of land redistribution, fueling several major land movements over the years. The Muthanga struggle was initiated by Adivasi communities demanding the return of their ancestral land in the Wayanad district. Organised by the Adivasi Gothra Mahasabha (AGM) under the leadership of C.K. Janu, over 1,500 Adivasi families occupied the Muthanga Wildlife Sanctuary. They sought land promised to them by the government, which had failed to deliver on its commitments. The protest led to violent clashes with the police, resulting in the death of an Adivasi man and a police officer. This movement exposed the continued marginalisation of Adivasis and the state's neglect in addressing tribal landlessness. The Chengara struggle involved over 5,000 landless families, mainly Dalits and Adivasis, who occupied the Harrison Malayalam Rubber Estate in Pathanamthitta district organised by the Samastha Kerala Dalit Adivasi Samara Samithi (SKDASS), the protesters demanded land for cultivation and housing. Despite facing opposition from estate workers and local authorities, the movement persisted for over two years. Although the government offered small plots of land to some families, the struggle highlighted the inadequacy of land reform policies in addressing the needs of Kerala's marginalised communities. In 2012, Dalit and Adivasi families, organised by the Kerala Dalit Federation (KDF) and Adivasi Gothra Mahasabha, occupied forest land in Arippa (Thiruvananthapuram district), demanding land for the landless. The protesters, facing severe poverty and marginalisation, sought legal recognition of their land rights and access to basic amenities. Although the government responded with some small land offers, the struggle underscored the persistent issue of landlessness among Kerala's subaltern groups. The Muthanga, Chengara, and Arippa land struggles represent ongoing efforts by Kerala's marginalised communities to secure land rights, a crucial element for their economic and social empowerment. These movements brought national attention to the gaps in Kerala's land reform policies and the continuing exclusion of Dalits, Adivasis, and the landless from equitable land distribution. While not all goals were achieved, these struggles continue to inspire activism for land and social justice in Kerala.

Self-Assessment

1. Briefly state in your own words what is Muthanga land struggle?
2. What were the demands raised by the protestors of Chengara?
3. What were the challenges faced by the protestors of Muthanga land struggle?
4. Discuss the state response towards the Chengara struggle.
5. Explain the outcome of the Arippa land struggle.
6. Discuss the circumstances that led to the formation of the Adivasi Gotra Mahasabha.
7. Discuss the land struggle faced by the marginalised in the state of Kerala.

Assignments

1. Identify a news clipping from the time of the Muthanga land struggle assess the news and report about the land struggle.
2. "The Muthanga, Chengara, and Arippa land struggles represent ongoing efforts by Kerala's marginalised communities to secure land rights, a crucial element for their economic and social empowerment", Discuss?
3. "The land rights movements in Chengara and Arippa did not achieve their immediate goals but succeeded in raising national consciousness about the deep-rooted issues of inequality and landlessness", in view of this statement evaluate as to why these movements failed to succeed?
4. In your opinion are the state mechanism built to repress the land struggle of the marginalised if so why and how is the state continuing to do so?

Suggested Readings

1. Panicker, K.M. (1960). *A History of Kerala 1498-1801*. Annamalai Nagar: The Annamalai University.
2. Singh, K.S (Eds.). (2002). *People of India – Kerala*. Chennai: Affiliated East West Publishers.
3. Cherrian, P.J (Eds.). (1999). *Perspectives in Kerala History*. Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala Gazetteers.

References

1. Jayadevan, T.N & Venugopal, B.K. (Eds.). (1988). *Glimpses of Kerala*. Thiruva-nanthapuram: Kerala: Dept. of Public Relations.

2. Menon, A, S. (1982). *Legacy of Kerala*. Thiruvananthapuram: Govt. Press.

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

THIRD SEMESTER MA SOCIOLOGY EXAMINATION
M21SO03DE: SOCIOLOGY OF KERALA SOCIETY
(CBCS - PG)
SET-1

Maximum Time: 3 Hours   Maximum Marks: 70 Marks

Section A
Objective Type Questions

Answer any 10 questions. Each question carries 1 mark   (10×1=10 marks)

1. What are *Granthavaris*?

2. Who were the two main groups involved in the *Naduvazhi* system?

3. Which social reformer led the *Villuvandi* agitation?

4. What is *Kalari* System?

5. Who was the founder of the *SNDP* Yogam?

6. Which organization led the *Nivarthana* agitation?

7. What is *Moksha*?

8. Who defeated the Dutch at the Battle of *Colachel*?

9. Which missionary started the first English school in Mattancherry?

10. Which Ruler of Travancore introduced free and compulsory education?

11. Which Act abolished the *Janmi* system in Kerala?

12. What is the name of the first Malayalam newspaper?

13. Who is considered as the pioneer of Malayalam literature?

14. Who wrote the book *The Many Altars of Modernity*?

15. Write any two types of social stratification?

Section B
Very Short Answer Questions

Answer any 5 questions. Each question carries 2 marks   (5×2=10 marks)

16. What is the significance of *Keralolpathi*?

17. *Naduvazhi* system.

18. What is religious consciousness?

19. Explain 'Synod of Diamper'.

20. What were the demands raised by the protestors of *Chengara*?

21. Vaikom Satyagraha

22. What is the Temple Entry Proclamation of 1936?

23. Adivasi Gotra Mahasabha

24. Coonan Cross Oath.

25. What is *Kilippatt?*

Section C
Short Answer Questions

Answer any 5 questions. Each question carries 4 marks   (5×4=20 marks)

26. Examine Kerala's agrarian society during the later Chera period.

27. Write a short note on the Caste-based Disabilities in Kerala.

28. Discuss the impact of the Portuguese on Kerala's spice trade.

29. Evaluate the role of Christian missionaries in developing education in Kerala.

30. Discuss the *Nivarthana* agitation in the history of Kerala.

31. Explain the outcome of the *Arippa* land struggle.

32. Describe the role of government and private institutions in shaping the educational landscape of Kerala.

33. Analyse the role of *Ayyankali* in influencing the downtrodden.

Section D
Long Answer/Essay Questions

Answer any 3 questions. Each question carries 10 marks   (3×10=30 marks)

34. Explain the *Janmi-Kudiyan* relationship that existed in the Kerala society.

35. Critically examine the theories of the origin of the Caste System.

36. Explicate the political and economic consequences of Portuguese rule in Kerala.

37. Analyse the impact of colonial rule on Kerala's social structure.

38. Discuss the land struggle faced by the marginalized in the state of Kerala.

39. Evaluate the factors impacting low mortality rate in Kerala?

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

QP CODE: ………

Reg. No : ……….................
Name : ………………...

THIRD SEMESTER MA SOCIOLOGY EXAMINATION
M21SO03DE: SOCIOLOGY OF KERALA SOCIETY
(CBCS - PG)
SET-2

Maximum Time: 3 Hours   Maximum Marks: 70 Marks

Section A

Objective Type Questions

Answer any 10 questions. Each question carries 1 mark   (10×1=10 marks)

1. Who wrote *Thiruvitamkur Charithram?*

2. Who were the two leaders associated with the Khilafat Movement in Kerala.

3. Who established the *Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam*?

4. In which year did the Portuguese arrive in Kerala?

5. Who is the author of *Ramanan*?

6. What are the primary tasks and powers of *Naduvazhi* within the local administration?

7. Identify any two characteristics of the joint family system

8. What are the four categories of Varna system?

9. When is Reading Day (*Vaayanaa dinam*) celebrated?

10. What are the primary factors for determining caste identity?

11. *Janmi's* of Kerala belonged to which caste?

12. Write an example of Feudal system in Kerala.

13. State any one feature of Kerala Model Development.

14. Who started *Pallikoodam* in Kerala?

15. State an impact of Peoples planning?

Section B

Very Short Answer Questions

Answer any 5 questions. Each question carries 2 marks   (5×2=10 marks)

16. Describe *Shankunny Menon's* Legacy.

17. What do you mean by political decentralisation?

18. Explain replacement migration

19. Define caste system.

20. What is meant by Social Hierarchy?

21. Discuss the Marumakkathayam system.

22. Explain the philosophy of Budhism.

23. Evaluate the Karma and Transmigration theory.

24. What do you mean by people's planning campaign of 1996?

25. Write a short note on the Idea of secularism in Kerala.

Section C

Short Answer Questions

Answer any 5 questions. Each question carries 4 marks   (5×4=20 marks)

26. Evaluate the major challenges in Kerala faces in terms of youth unemployment despite high literacy rate?

27. Analyse the Library Movements in Kerala

28. Examine the role of different social groups in medieval Kerala's economy and labour activities.

29. Discuss the concept of Sanskritisation and its relevance to understanding the evolution of castes in Kerala.

30. How does migration affect the economic well being of the state?

31. Describe Patrilineal inheritance systems.

32. Explain the characteristics of migration.

33. Examine the contributions of leaders like *K. Kelappan* and *M. P. Narayana Menon* to the nationalist movement in Kerala.

Section D

Long Answer/Essay Questions

Answer any 3 questions. Each question carries 10 marks   (3×10=30 marks)

34. Examine the Rise of Social Reform Movements in Kerala

35. Briefly explain the significance of the communist movement in Kerala's political and social reforms, particularly in land redistribution and education policies.

36. Critically analyse how the geographical features of Kerala influence the development of localised property rights and economic activities.

37. Discuss the historical context of de-centralisation in Kerala?

38. Analyse the factors contributing to the decline in fertility rate in Kerala?

39. Discuss the contributions of *Thunchaththu Ramanujan Ezhuthachan* to the development of Malayalam language and literature.

സർവ്വകലാശാലാഗീതം

വിദ്യയാൽ സ്വതന്ത്രരാകണം
വിശ്വപൗരരായി മാറണം
ഗ്രഹപ്രസാദമായ് വിളങ്ങണം
ഗുരുപ്രകാശമേ നയിക്കണേ

കൂരിരുട്ടിൽ നിന്നു ഞങ്ങളെ
സൂര്യവീഥിയിൽ തെളിക്കണം
സ്നേഹദീപ്തിയായ് വിളങ്ങണം
നീതിവൈജയന്തി പാറണം

ശാസ്ത്രവ്യാപ്തിയെന്നുമേകണം
ജാതിഭേദമാകെ മാറണം
ബോധരശ്മിയിൽ തിളങ്ങുവാൻ
ജ്ഞാനകേന്ദ്രമേ ജ്വലിക്കണേ

കുരീപ്പുഴ ശ്രീകുമാർ

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

Regional Centres

Kozhikode
Govt. Arts and Science College
Meenchantha, Kozhikode,
Kerala, Pin: 673002
Ph: 04952920228
email: rckdirector@sgou.ac.in

Thalassery
Govt. Brennen College
Dharmadam, Thalassery,
Kannur, Pin: 670106
Ph: 04902990494
email: rctdirector@sgou.ac.in

Tripunithura
Govt. College
Tripunithura, Ernakulam,
Kerala, Pin: 682301
Ph: 04842927436
email: rcedirector@sgou.ac.in

Pattambi
Sree Neelakanta Govt. Sanskrit College
Pattambi, Palakkad,
Kerala, Pin: 679303
Ph: 04662912009
email: rcpdirector@sgou.ac.in

Sociology of Kerala Society

COURSE CODE: M21SO03DE

SGOU

YouTube

Sreenarayanaguru Open University
Kollam, Kerala Pin- 691601, email: info@sgou.ac.in, www.sgou.ac.in Ph: +91 474 2966841