

houses, palaces and castles, parks, gardens, open temples and halls, natural arbours etc. made by Maya. There live the Asuras, the Dānavas (a class of Asuras-demons) the nāgas (serpents) and others, with their families, with happiness and comfort. Chirping birds, pigeons, parrots, docile parrots etc. always play there with their inseparable mates. Trees bearing sweet fruits, plants covered with fragrant flowers, arbours with creepers growing thick, beautiful houses floored with white marble, and so many other things giving pleasure and comfort are seen there in plenty. In these things the Pātāla surpasses heaven. Daityas, Dānavas and the Nāgas (the Asuras and the serpents) are the dwellers of these worlds. They lead a happy and pleasant life with their families enjoying all sorts of comfort and luxury." Pātāla, one of the seven divisions of the world is described as follows :

"This is the region of the Nāgas (the serpents). At the root-place of this region there is a particular place having an area of thirty thousand yojanas. Viṣṇu Kalā who has the attribute of 'tāmasa' (darkness) lives there under the name 'Ananta'. The real Ananta or Ādiśeṣa is the radiant embodiment of this Kalā. The daughters of the Nāga Kings are of fair complexion and very beautiful, with clean body. They use perfumeries such as sandalwood, aloewood, saffron, etc."

In this description, the words Daityas, Nāgas, Ananta, Sandalwood, aloewood etc. and the mention of natural beauty should be paid particular attention to. From the Rāmāyaṇa we can understand that the Āryas referred to the Drāviḍas as Asuras, Rākṣasas (Giants) etc. History says that the Nāgas were the early inhabitants of Kerala. The ancient word 'Ananta' denotes Trivandrum (Tiru-Ananta-puram). The temple of Śrī Padmanābha at Trivandrum answers to this description. The perfumeries such as sandalwood, aloewood (cidar) etc. are the wealth of Kerala. On the whole the description of Pātāla fits well with that of Kerala. So it is not wrong to infer that the description of Pātāla in the Purāṇas is entirely about Kerala in all its aspects.

4) *The Primitiveness of Kerala.* From the portions of Purāṇas given below it could be ascertained that Kerala had an independence of its own from the very ancient days.

(1) Among the Kings who attended the Svayaṁvara (marriage) of Śaśikalā, the daughter of the King of Kāśī, such as, the King of Kuru, King of Mādra, King of Sindhu, King of Pāncāla, Kings of Karṇāṭaka, Cola and Vidarbha, there was the King of Kerala also. (Devī Bhāgavata, Skandha 3).

(2) When describing the various places in the Southern part of Bhārata, names such as Dramiḍa, Kerala, Mūṣika, Karṇāṭaka etc. occur in the Mahābhārata. So it is to be understood that when Vyāsa wrote Bhārata, there was the kingdom of Kerala and that it was separate from the country of Drāviḍa. (M.B. Bhīṣma Parva, Chapter 9).

(3) "Kārtavīryārjuna took his majestic seat in the midst of Cola, Kerala, Pāṇḍya and other Kings of the countries under the sea, who were standing round him to pay homage to him." (Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, Chapter 54).

(4) It is mentioned in Agni Purāṇa, Chapter 277, that a King named Gāndhāra was born in the dynasty

of Turvasu the brother of Yadu, and that from Gāndhāra were born the powerful families of the Gāndhāras the Keralas, the Colas, the Pāṇḍyas and the Kolas.

(5) In Mahābhārata, Ādi Parva, Chapter 175, it is mentioned that the people of Kerala were considered as barbarians by the North Indians.

(6) In Bhāgavata, Skandha 10, it is mentioned that the Kings of Cola, Pāṇḍya and Kerala, from South India, had reached the capital city of Vidarbha to take part in the Svayaṁvara (marriage) of Rukmiṇī.

(7) Mention is made in Mahābhārata, Vana Parva, Chapter 254, Stanza 15, that in his conquest of the countries, Karṇa had conquered Kerala also.

(8) It is mentioned in Mahābhārata, Sabhā Parva, Chapter 31, that Sahadeva, one of the Pāṇḍavas, conquered the Keralas and the Kerakas. It may be noted that the Kerakas are different from Keralas.

(9) Vālmīki mentions the countries which could be seen by the monkeys who were sent to the South by Sugrīva to search for Sītā.

Nadīm Godāvarīm caiva

Sarvamevānupaśyata /

Tathavāndhrān ca Pauṇḍrān ca

Colān Pāṇḍyān ca Keralān. //

"You could see the river Godāvari and beyond it the countries of Āndhra, Pauṇḍra, Cola, Pāṇḍya and Kerala."

This is a proof of the primitiveness of Kerala.

(10) The King of Kerala had given Yudhiṣṭhira, as presents, sandalwood, pearls, Lapis Lazuli etc. (M.B. Dākṣiṇātyapāṭha, Sabhā Parva, Chapter 51).

In several other Purāṇas also, mention about Kerala occurs.

5) *The ancient administration of Kerala.* Parimelazhakar, a Saṅga poet who was a great expounder of "Tirukkural", has stated that from the beginning of the world the three kingdoms, Cera, Cola and Pāṇḍya had existed. Though there is a bit of exaggeration in this statement, there are enough proofs to say that a long time before the birth of Christ, Kerala was under a systematic rule. In 'Tolkāppiyam' the first grammatical work in Tamil mention is made about the administration of Kerala. Megasthenes, a traveller of 4th century B.C. has stated about the rule of Kerala :

There were five councils called the Pañcamahāsabhās (the five great councils) to help the Cera Kings. It is stated that these councils were formed by the King Utiyan Cera of the Trkkāṇā fort. Besides these five councils there was an advisory Committee, of which, the priest of the King, the Chief Minister, Chief of the spies and the Chief Revenue officer (Kāviṭi) were members.

For convenience of administration the country was divided into tarakkūṭṭas (groups of houses—villages) and Nāṭṭukkūṭṭas (Districts—group of villages). Taras (villages) were ruled by four elders (Kāraṇavas). Four villages formed a Nālpāḍu (group) of four. Four Nālpāḍus formed a Kazhaka (a division of the country with a chief temple within it) and four Kazhakas formed a Perumkazhaka (greater Kazhaka). Perumkazhaka was also known as Trkkala. The assembly hall of trkkūṭṭa is called Koṭṭil. This hall was erected generally beside the temple. The chief officer of the temple was the chairman of the trkkūṭṭa (assembly of the people). When a trkkūṭṭa is assembled, sixtyfour elders of the "taras", the "accas" (officers) of Kazhakas,