

# The Marriage Ceremonies of the Malayalis of the Pachaimalais

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## Introduction

The Malayalis are a scheduled hill tribe found in the state of Tamil Nadu, India. The census of India (1961: Vol. IX, Part IX, Map 124) states that "The Malayalis are the most numerous of all scheduled tribes in Madras State. They are however found only in North Arcot, Salem and Trichirappalli districts. Salem district accounts for more than 75% of this scheduled tribe". The total number of Malayalis in Madras State in the 1961 census was 129,952. Most of them live in the Salem District, numbering 100,516. The population of this scheduled tribe in the Trichirappalli District was 8,801 in 1961. Literacy was a meagre 2.3%. This study is confined to the Malayalis who live in the Trichy district of the Pachaimalais.

## The *Pachaimalais*

The Imperial Gazetteer (1908: 26), while referring to the geography of Trichirappalli district, states, "A small rambling range of hills called *Pachaimalai* (Green Hills) which extends into Salem District lies in the north-west corner. . . ." The Pachaimalais attain a height of 2500 ft. above sea level and their length from north to south is roughly about 20 miles. The hills are covered with dense forests and the total rainfall is 28 inches per annum.

## The *Malayalis*: Their Origin

The Malayalis in Tamil Nadu are found mainly in the Kollimalais, Sheveroys and the Pachaimalais. According to their traditions, they were three brothers who came from Conjeevaram and each one settled in each of the three hills. Though there are several accounts about their exact origin, all agree that they came from Conjeevaram or Kan-

chipuram, a religious town in the Chingleput district in northern Tamil Nadu. Many elderly men in the Pachaimalais claimed that they were of royal descent from Conjeevaram. Edgar Thurston in "Castes and Tribes of South India" (1909: Vol. IV: 406) corroborated the same view when he wrote: "The word *Malayali* denotes inhabitant of the hills (*Malai*—hill or mountain). The Malayalis have not, however, like the Todas of the Nilgiris, any claim to be considered as an ancient hill tribe, but once a Tamil speaking people who migrated from the plains to the hills in comparatively recent times. . . . According to tradition, the Malayalis originally belonged to the Vellālan caste of the cultivators and emigrated from the sacred city of Kanchipuram (Conjeevaram) to the hills about ten generations ago, when Mohammedan rule was strong in India. When they left Kanchi, they took with them, according to their story, three brothers of whom the eldest came to the Sheveroy hills, the second to the Kollimalais and the youngest to the Pachaimalais".

#### Hamlets in the *Pachaimalais*

From the plains a steep climb of about five kilometers over the rising slopes of the Pachaimalais leads to the plateau where the Malayalis live. They live in thatched huts in small hamlets of about twenty households each. The terrain is markedly uneven, with ridges and slopes punctuating the entire plateau. In most places only terraced cultivation is possible.

They have divided themselves into three panchayats called *nādu* (country): *Kombai nādu*, (Western country) *Vannādu* (Northern country) and *Themparanādu* (Southern country). The total number of hamlets in the Trichy District of the Pachaimalais were 51, with a population of 8,801, composed of 4,512 males and 4,289 females, as according to the 1971 census enumeration.

#### The Social Hierarchy

A brief mention is necessary of the important aspects of their social hierarchy as it has an essential bearing on the marriage ceremonies. They have a three-fold stratification. The *Durai* (or the Govendan as he is now popularly called) occupies the top rung in the gradation. He is ritually important and consequently enjoys a higher social status conferred on him by heredity. The *durai's* presence is essential at every function. He acts also as their local leader. In every hamlet there is at least one family of the *durai*. The next position in the hierarchy is occupied by the *mooppan*. He functions as a mediator between the *durai* and the *kudippadai*, the common people. The *mooppan* is actually like a minister executing the wishes of the *durai* among the *kudippadai*, who

form the third and the last rung of the three-tier social hierarchy. The functions and duties of the *durai* and *mooppan* are also hereditary.

A speciality of this stratification is that it does not divide the community into closed caste or class groups as, other than during religious and social functions, they treat each other as equals. As one Malayali put it, "He wears the same 'Komanam' (narrow loin cloth) as we wear, and it is as dirty as ours, but still we have to obey him". (*Komanam* is the only dress they wear.)

### The Field Work

To begin with, very little literature is available on the Malayalis of Tamil Nadu. No scientific study had been made until the author made two visits to the Pachaimalais in 1973 and 1974. In 1975 a research student from the Department of Anthropology, University of Poona, made a study of the Malayalis in the South Arcot district. Before these studies were made, only passing references had been made in the Imperial Gazetteer (1908: 304) and in Edgar Thurston's *Castes and Tribes of South India* (Vol. IV, 1909: 406). Krishna Iyer and Bala Ratnam (1961: 168) have also written about the Malayalis, but this is far too brief to throw sufficient light on their social life. Stephen Fuchs (1973: 280) has fulfilled a long felt need for a comprehensive study on the aboriginals of India. He has dwelt on the Malayalis of South India in his most recent study of the tribes of India.

### The Marriage Ceremonies

Marriage has been recognised as being very important in the life history of an individual. It brings together two persons as husband and wife and establishes a new family which obtains social recognition and sanction through the traditionally approved marriage ceremonies. Marriage ceremonies thus attain crucial importance because they not only reflect the culture of the community but also crystallise it in proper perspective. Hence a study of these ceremonies can throw much light on the community as a whole and on its social aspects in particular.

### Types of Marriages

In the Pachaimalais child marriages are still practised. According to reliable informants, about two decades ago all marriages were solemnised when the bride and groom were below twelve years of age. With increasing contacts and inter-action with non-tribals and also due to a greater influence of government administration, the practice of child-marriage is dying fast, though the custom still persists. One reason offered by the tribals for child marriage was the overriding concern of

the parents about the future of their children. They wanted to be alive to see their children married off early. This type of marriage is called *Sellakalyanam* ('pet marriage' or 'favourite marriage').

Marriage by elopement was fairly common, though its incidence is on the decrease since a strong sense of guilt is being attached to elopements. This was not the case, however, fifty years ago, when it was an accepted practice. Elopement takes place if the parents of both the parties do not agree to the match, while the boy and girl are desperate to get married. Marriage by exchange is common, with two men marrying each other's sisters.

Marriage by service is resorted to when the bridegroom is unable to pay the required brideprice. When deliberations about the brideprice take place, it is decided that the bridegroom will work for the father-in-law for a certain number of years to compensate for the brideprice. When a family has only daughters, the eldest son-in-law usually stays with them to take care of their land and property. He later becomes the family head after his father-in-law retires from active work.

#### Preferential Marriage

Marriage within the same lineage is forbidden. Parallel cousins do not marry, but cross-cousins normally have to marry each other when both come of marriageable age. In case someone wants to break this custom when his/her cross-cousin is awaiting marriage, the aggrieved party has the right to demand marriage to their daughter or son. For instance, if a man is lame, custom binds his paternal aunt or maternal uncle to give him a daughter in marriage as no other parent would be willing to give their daughter because of his handicap. In quarrels between the mothers-in-law of the couple the ready remark is, "My son is not lame that I had to insist upon your daughter for marriage!".

#### *Nitchayadartham*

*Nitchayadartham* is the Tamil word for betrothal or engagement. When a suitable girl is known, either a cross-cousin, or some distant relative through friends or relatives, the bride-groom's family sends out ten men from the village to the house of the prospective bride. The father of the groom, if he is alive, always accompanies the party. The bridegroom never goes with them, though he will be asked to give his consent later.

Even if the prospective girl lives in the same village, the party of ten has to make the formal visit to her house. All those who go have to wear *dhotis* and a big turban of white cloth. On this particular day the turban has to be wound all over the head so that not even a single

hair on the head may be seen. No one definitely knows as to why hairs may not be seen on this occasion, but some Malayalis said that it was to ward off evil omens.

After reaching the prospective bride's house they are given mats to sit on the floor. The first thing that the visitors do is to ask for drinking water. It is understood by the host that the prospective girl has to bring the water and offer it to the seated guests. She becomes the object of observation in her bearing, looks and manners as she offers water in a *sembu* (a handy brass vessel). If the visitors are not satisfied after they had a good look at her, they ask for some more water, in order to have a second look. After the visitors have seen the girl well, the parents of the bride invite them to stay for dinner. If they decline dinner, it is a clear indication that they do not favour the girl. If the invitation is accepted, it means that the girl has been found suitable and that the match could be proceeded with. If and when they do have their dinner, the visitors are requested by the bride's parents to come again in two or three weeks' time on an auspicious day, for fixing up the bride-price.

#### *Parisam* (Bride-Price)

*Parisam* is the Tamil word for bride-price. It is customary among the Malayalis to give bride-price, both in cash and kind. To fix up the bride-price, a few relatives and friends of the bridegroom, along with the father of the groom or in his absence another close relative, go again to the future bride's house. Again the turban is worn in such a way that no hair on the head is seen. While they are proceeding to the bride's house, the visiting party is sensitive to any evil omens that may cross their path. They will return home without going to the bride's house if they happen to meet on the way a widow or a black cat, or hear the barking of the barking deer, which abound in the forests of the Pachaimalais. The latter is considered particularly a very bad omen and they return home. If they manage to reach the house without any incidents, they are welcomed by the bride's parents and relatives and provided with mats to sit on.

Then follows an interesting conversation between the two groups. The bride's party asks the groom's party "What have you come for, relatives?"

The visitors answer:

"We have come to get milk from the house where there is milk".

The bride's father or a representative hands over a glass of milk, or if it is not available, a glass of starch water (filtered from cooked rice). The groom's party receives it and returns it back to the bride's father.

He gives it back again, this ceremonial giving and returning being repeated thrice. After the third time, the groom's party tastes a little of the 'milk'.

The members of the bride's household and relatives resume the symbolic and meaningful conversation by asking: "How does it taste, relatives?" for which two members from the bride-groom's party answer: "Like we ate honey and the flour of 'thinai' (a local millet) mixed together".<sup>1</sup>

Another two of the bridegroom's party give another answer to the same question: "Like we ate fruits and drank milk". And yet a third of the party says: "Like when a man and a woman came together".

A spokesman of the bridegroom's party which drank the 'milk' asks the bride's people:

"What is the price of 'milk', relatives?" The 'price' of 'milk' refers to the bride-price. Now is the time for the bride's family to name the bride-price. The bride's father says: "The price of 'milk' is Rs. 1,500/—"<sup>2</sup>

The bridegroom's father answers:

"Please reduce Rs. 500/—"

The bride's father then says, "The price of 'milk' is reduced to Rs. 1,000/—" The plea for reduction of the bride-price is entertained only thrice and whatever amount is reached at the end of the third reduction is the final bride-price. This does not mean that the groom's father can reduce the bride-price to a very insignificant sum. He has also to safeguard his prestige and social standing by giving as much bride-price as he can possibly afford.

Since bride-price has to be given also in kind, the assembled members decide, at this time, the amount of grain to be given. It amounts to at least three sacks of paddy, *thinai* or *samai* (the two local millets which are cultivated annually).

A few years before the research for this paper was done in 1973, the elders of Vannādu and Kombai came together to discuss the plight of the many families which could not afford to pay what locally could be considered a high bride-price. There were many marriages by service, this being the only way out if the young man could not afford it. The elders therefore decided to standardize the bride-price. For all ordinary citizens, it was fixed at Rs. 126/— whereas for the Govendan it was Rs. 150/—. The exact amount of grain, however, was left to the families concerned. The maximum amount was fixed at three sacks of any grain.

In the case of a widow's remarriage, the bride-price is given only in cash and never in grains. Possibly this is due to the grains being considered sacred. In India, widows have been traditionally considered

inauspicious, but among the Balahis of Central India (Stephen Fuchs: 1950 p. 152) she fetches a higher bride-price because of her experience in work.

Once the bride-price is fixed, the date for the wedding is also fixed the same day. All their marriages used to take place only on Thursdays and this happens so even now. Nobody could give a satisfactory explanation as to why weddings were held only on Thursdays, but an old man at Kamboor in Vannādu ventured to guess that it was on a Thursday that Lord Rāmā married Sita and that was why all marriages were solemnised on this day.

A part of the bride-price is sent to the bride's house a week in advance of the actual wedding day. The amount depends not only on the bride-groom's wealth, but also on the bride's beauty and attractiveness. As one informant said, "Like when you buy cows or bulls, if they are well proportioned and healthy, you have to pay more!". Accordingly, a pretty girl would be married by the highest bidder, subject to the rules of lineage exogamy and the approval of the parents concerned.

### The Wedding Day

The wedding usually takes place in the bridegroom's village. A *pandal* (a shady structure prepared out of interwoven bamboos and coconut palms) is prepared in front of the house of the bridegroom a day before the wedding. The same structure is prepared also in front of the house of the closest relative of the bride who happens to reside in the bridegroom's village. (One finds relatives in most of the villages in the same *nādu*, as the hamlets are small in size and everyone knows everyone else.) The main wedding ceremonies will take place only in this relative's house.

On the wedding day, the *Kangāni* is despatched to the bride's house with the remainder of the bride-price. If the balance of the bride-price is not paid on this day, it is said that the bride's parents would not let the bride go for the wedding. The bride-price in cash is tied in a cloth bundle and presented to the mother of the bride. Other than currency notes, it should contain coins worth at least ten rupees. The mother opens the bundle and slips the contents down in the presence of the *Kangāni* and the guests. The resulting clatter of falling coins is supposed to portend good augury and bring prosperity to the new couple. Now that the complete bride-price has been received, the bride is sent for the wedding. Before leaving her home, she falls prostrate before her parents who give her a few words of advice amidst tears of parting.

Near the village boundary

In the meantime, a small ceremony takes place at the boundary of the village under a shady tree. The Govendan of the village, (properly the eldest of the Govendans residing in the village where the marriage takes place) has to be paid his respects. Three identical mats are laid under the tree. The Govendan sits on one mat, the Mooppan on another and a representative of the *Kudippadai* on the third. The ceremonial implications of their hierarchy becomes explicit here. A brass mug filled with water is placed in front of the three seated persons. A small fire is started in front of the three seated persons. Fire and water, the two opposite elements in nature, are said to symbolize the husband and wife and represent marriage. Two men bearing a musket each stand on either side of the seated people, with most of the villagers surrounding them as onlookers.

At a given time the two men simultaneously fire the muskets in the air. This could be interpreted as a two-gun salute to the Govendan. The empty muskets are then placed in front of him. This further indicates the honour given to their ritual head, the Govendan. The two musketeers then pour water from the container on the floor near his feet and fall prostrate in front of him. The Govendan blesses them saying " May you live prosperously " and presents a rupee each to them.

The drummers and musicians who have been engaged to play for the wedding come to the boundary of the village to fetch the Govendan, the musketeers and the other villagers back to the village. The Govendan will not rise from his seat till the drummers and the musicians arrive to escort him. Once the Govendan enters the bridal pandal, the girls and the women vie with each other to perform *ārati* to him. (*Ārati* is performed by moving a tray containing turmeric paste, rice grains, *kum kum* and flower petals in front of the person's face in circular motion from left to right. After circling thrice, the turmeric paste and *kum kum* are applied with the thumb on the forehead of the person being honoured or greeted.) The Govendan has to reciprocate the *ārati* by giving at least 25 paise (a quarter rupee) each on the spot to every girl and woman who did *ārati* to him. Naturally there is a scramble for doing *ārati* to the Govendan!

A Govendan told the author that he always went well prepared with sufficient quantities of change in coins for weddings because he knew he would need all of it. The last person to do *ārati* to the Govendan is a man from the bride's family, who invites him to preside over the other functions that follow.



### Praying to the Three Hills

As mentioned before, the Malayalis of the Pachaimalais believe that they have their ancestral brothers and sisters in the two neighbouring hills called Sheveroy and the Kollimalais.<sup>4</sup> Fraternal solidarity is expressed on wedding days towards their fellow tribals in the other hills. This is done by placing three betel leaves on a plate in the direction of the hills, and saying a word of prayer. Offering betel leaves symbolises invitation and welcome. Hence this ceremony expresses their desire to welcome their neighbouring brethren for the wedding. In fact all marriages are formally announced by a presentation of betel leaves and areca nuts to those who are to be invited.

### *Moy*

*Moy* is the traditional collection of formal cash gifts by the family which celebrates a marriage. Each family in the village as well as relatives of the couple from other villages have to offer *moy*, both to the bride's and the bridegroom's families. The amount presented by each person is carefully noted down and announced aloud to all those present. *Mozhithal* in Tamil means 'saying aloud' and the word *moy* is said to have derived from *moythal*, a degenerative of the word *mzhithal*. *Moy* is usually reciprocated by the bridegroom's family or the bride's family during weddings in any of the families of those who presented the *moy*.

### Invitation for the " *Moy* "

The Govendan is seated on a mat inside the *pandal*. In front of him five betel leaves are placed on a tray. Over each of these leaves, a 'Ball of flowers' (*pooppandhu*) is placed. The Mooppan and the Kangāni fall prostrate in front of the Govendan and invite him over to the bridegroom's house for the '*Moy*'.

On reaching the bridegroom's house, the Govendan gives the first *moy*. It is always in the form of cash, amounting from one rupee to ten or more rupees, as the case may be. After this the village elders invite the Govendan to apply sandalwood paste on himself. On wedding days sandalwood paste is applied liberally on the bare chest, hands, foreheads and cheeks. Besides serving as a gesture of honour, it is also a very cooling lotion in the summer months when weddings usually take place. Following the lead given by the Govendan, all the elders and the boys apply sandalwood paste on their person. By this time it is late evening and dinner will have been prepared jointly by the women-folk who attend the marriage.

### Festive Dinner

The festive marriage dinner is cooked by the women of the village near the edge of the hamlet's houses. Stones are placed in triangular positions and big vessels are used for cooking. All the necessary items for the dinner like rice, vegetables and cereals are supplied by the bridegroom's family.

The custom was to slaughter one or two pigs for every wedding since pork was the main dish of the festive meal. Nowadays there are several tribals who do not eat pork<sup>5</sup> of the domestic pigs and therefore to accommodate them and some non-tribal friends from the plains, pork is generally not served at wedding meals. This is observed more strictly in the villages on the periphery of the hills which have maximum contact with the people in the plains. In the interior, however, pork is still served for the weddings.

Meals are ready by about 9 p.m. and again the Kangāni and Mooppan fall prostrate before the Govendan and invite him to have his wedding dinner. The Govendan and his brothers and all those who are Govendans in the marriage party sit down first for meals inside the pandal. No Mooppan or Kangāni or commoner may join them. The dinner is served on banana leaves placed in front of each person. All the other men sit for the next serving to have their meals. Only men are allowed to serve. The women can have their dinner only after all men have had theirs. The bride removes the banana leaves after every batch of diners have had their meals. The couple to be married do not sit in the pandal and eat with everyone else. They have it inside the house.

### Tying of the ' *Thali* '

The meals over, all the people assemble in the bride's pandal for the actual wedding ceremony which is the tying of the *thali*. There are two *urals*—mortars (for husking the *sāmai*, *thinai* or paddy) which when inverted become stools for sitting. The couple sit on these two stools facing the people, the bridegroom on the right and the bride on the left. In front of them are kept two branches of *arasu* tree (' *Ficus Religiosa* ') and bamboo, on a pot. *Arasu* symbolizes the man and bamboo the woman. By about midnight it is time for the wedding to take place and the Govendan takes two garlands and gives one to the bridegroom who garlands the bride and the other to the bride who garlands the bridegroom.

### The *Thali*

*Thali* is a piece of gold medal inscribed either with the name of the husband or the figurine of a goddess. It is threaded into a string which is coloured yellowish with turmeric paste. In the case of a Govendan marriage, only a gold chain should be used in the place of the thread for the *thali*. The tying of the *thali* is the most sacred ceremony and it makes them man and wife. The Govendan takes the *thali* after garlanding and says thrice to the bride and bridegroom:

“ Kattuna Mangaliam  
Kāmātchiammāl Māngaliam ” (The *thali* to be tied  
(may it be) like the *thali* of Kāmātchi)  
(Kāmātchi is the name of their important Goddess.)

He then hands the *thali* to the bridegroom who ties it around the neck of the bride, with drummers beating their drums loudest at this moment. With this, the wedding has taken place and now they are husband and wife.

### Blessings from the Elders

The village elders come one after another in front of the new couple and say a few words of blessing. Some women sing a long song in a form of greeting the couple. This is traditionally sung at all weddings and various symbolisms are used to convey good wishes and prosperity to the newly-wedded couple. Nature, which abounds in the Pachaimalais, provides the themes for the greetings. One such song can be translated like this:

“ Spreading like the banyan tree  
Extending roots like the field grass  
Flourishing like the *Punga* tree  
And flowering profusely like the tamarind  
May you shoot up, like the *Moosi* tree  
And grow heavenward like the bamboo. . . .”

The last person to greet the couple as the singing is in progress is always a pregnant woman. Perhaps it signifies the collective wish for future fertility.

For the rest of the night there is *therukkoothu*. *Theru* means ‘street’ and *koothu* is the colloquial word for ‘play’ or ‘performance’. The ‘street play’ is the only form of entertainment for the tribal folk (until cinema had started attracting them to the plains in the past few years). These plays take nearly six months to compose and learn by

heart. Themes are taken from the Rāmāyanā, Māhābharatā or from local folk tales like Nallathangā—a popular Tamil tale about a virtuous woman.

Often two or three groups compete with each other in dramatising different plays, trying to attract the attention and applause of the audience. Only men take part in the *therukkoothu*, and it takes place in front of the wedding pandal of the bride's house. The actors who excel in music, dance or dialogue are accorded recognition and honour. Incidentally, all plays are locally composed by men who have long experience in the art. It is amazing that a play lasting two or three hours is composed and learnt completely by heart, without the use of writing or reading aids which came to them only very recently.

When the plays come to an end in the early morning hours, the bridegroom presents Rs. 5/— and one *dhoti* to the director of the play while the bride gives Rs. 3/— and one *dhoti* to him.

In the morning the next day the newly-married couple is taken by the drummers around the village after which the bride is taken to the pond or well which provides drinking water to the hamlet.<sup>6</sup> The bride fills one *sembu* with water and brings it to her husband's house. The bringing of water from the village pond is the last of the ceremonies of the wedding. The garlands which the couple wore for the wedding will be hung on the bamboo pole and displayed in front of the house. It is never thrown away.

After the bride brings water to her husband's house, the couple leave the same day to the bride's house for *seer* or the special wedding feast meant for the bridegroom. After three days of feasting there, they return to the bridegroom's house, the bride being accompanied by two of her best friends. These friends stay with the bride for ten days and return to their respective homes, leaving her to fend for herself in her new home and new surroundings.

### Conclusion

It is interesting to note that the marriage ceremonies of the Malayalis of the Pachaimalais run very much parallel to those of the non-tribals in the plains in the same district. A similar study by the author on the Marriage Ceremonies of the Christian Paraiyans of Kumbakonam Area, which falls in the same Trichy District, (Roche, P., 1977) shows that the Christian Paraiyans also have the *moy*, *thali*, *pandal* and the collective cooking of the festive dinner. However, the Malayalis have their dinner before the wedding takes place which is most uncommon in these parts. The symbolic conversation that takes place in the bride's house and their ancestral relationship with their kith

and kin in the Sheveroys and Kollimalais, as brought out in their ritual, markedly differentiates their ceremonies. Covering their heads with the turban while going to the bride's house and the evil omen of the barking deer also seem to be peculiar to them.

Regarding their claim to a non-tribal and high caste origin, it is pertinent to state that they worship *Ādi Sivan* (The Primeval Siva) and their deities are strikingly similar to those of the Hindu pantheon. Their most sacred temple at Keezhkkarai in the interior of the Pachaimalais, dedicated to Ādi Sivan, has an outer temple, housing the seven *Vāhanās* (Vehicles of the Gods), preserved in life-size clay images, viz, Lion, Bull, Peacock, Elephant, Horse, Big Rat and the Pig. The architecture of the temple and its surroundings are not much different from other temples of the caste Hindus. All these factors substantiate their claim that they are non-tribal in origin but only recently took to the hills and settled down to agriculture and pastoralism as their main occupation. But their keen interest in hunting shows that they were till recently hunters and food gatherers. Shifting cultivation is still practised in some parts of the hills though the government is taking serious steps to check it.

That the marriage ceremonies could constitute some of the best indicators of a society's past, its present structure and cultural affinities is best proved in the case of the Malayalis of the Pachaimalais. It establishes their close, though now defunct, ties with their brethren in the other hills and their own peculiar social stratification which is emphasised most evidently during the marriage ceremonies.

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#### NOTES

1. It must be added that the mixture of honey (which they gather from the forest

with great skill) with the flour of the 'thinai' is a favourite food of the tribals. This has also been mentioned so in classical Tamil poetry as '*Thenum thinai māvum*'.

2. 1 US \$=8 Indian Rupees.

3. In olden days, the Govendan had to come on horseback to this spot from the house, along with the Mooppan. At present this is not practised as they do not have horses anymore.

4. This belief is reciprocated by the tribals living in those hills as well, and this has been confirmed by a study carried out by a student of anthropology from the University of Poona in his unpublished M.A. thesis.

5. All Malayalis relish the pork of wild pigs. They go in groups for periodic hunts in the forests, armed with their muskets. Good marksmen are highly regarded even if they are young.

6. Although recently the district administration has dug a few wells in some hamlets of the Pachaimalais, most of the Malayalis still draw their drinking water from the many small ponds that dot the entire hilly plateau.