

wealthy they may be, they usually live in the most penurious manner, and they will never by any chance show mercy to a debtor, so long as he shall have a penny left, or the chance of earning one. However, to make amends for their rapacity, they are in the habit of spending large sums now and then in works of charity. And, whatever faults there may be, they are most excellent men of business. Indeed, until quite lately, the good faith and honesty of a Nāttukōttai Setti were proverbial, and are even now conspicuous. The Nāttukōttai Settis claim to be a good caste, and asserted that they emigrated to this district thousands of years ago from a town called Kāveripattanam, in consequence of an intolerable persecution. But the other Settis will not admit the truth of their story, and affect to despise them greatly, alleging even that they are the bastard descendants of a Muhammadan man and a Kalla woman. The word Nāttukōttai is said to be a corruption of Nāttarasangkōttai, the name of a small village near Sivaganga. But this derivation appears to be doubtful." The name is usually said to be derived from Nāttukōttai, or country fort.

It has been said that "the Nāttukōttai Chettis, in organisation, co-operation, and business methods, are as remarkable as the European merchants. Very few of them have yet received any English education. They regard education as at present given in public schools as worse than useless for professional men, as it makes men theoretical, and scarcely helps in practice. The simple but strict training which they give their boys, the long and tedious apprenticeship which even the sons of the richest among them have to undergo, make them very efficient in their profession, and methodical in whatever they undertake to do."

Concerning the Nāttukōttai Chettis, Mr. P. R. Sundara Aiyar writes as follows.* "The first and chiefest aim of a Nāttukōttai Chetti is to make as much money as possible. He does not regard usury as a sin. As a little boy of ten or twelve, he begins to apply himself to business, learns accounts, and attends the shop of his father. As soon as he marries, his father gives him a separate home, or rather compels him to live separately, though often in the same house as his parents. This makes him self-reliant, and produces in him a desire to save as much money as possible. He is given a certain allowance out of the paternal estate, but, if he spends more, he is debited with the excess amount. Every one consequently tries to increase his stock of individual savings. Even the women earn money in a variety of ways. Every rupee saved is laid out at as high a rate of interest as possible. It is commonly stated that a rupee, laid out at the birth of a child at compound interest at 12 per cent., will amount to a lakh of rupees by the time he attains the age of a hundred. The habits of a Nāttukōttai Chetti are very simple, and his living is very cheap, even when he is rich. So strict are the Chettis in pecuniary matters that, if a relation visits them, he gets only his first meal free, and if he stays longer, is quietly debited with the cost of his stay."

The Nāttukōttai Chettis † are said to employ Kam-mālans, Valaiyans, Kallans, and Vallambans as their cooks. They are permitted to enter the interior of Hindu temples, and approach near to the innermost doorway of the central shrine. This privilege is doubtless accorded to them owing to the large sums of money

* Malabar Quart : Review, 1905.

† C. Hayavadana Rao, Indian Review, VIII, 8, 1907.

which they spend on temples, and in endowing charitable institutions. It is noted, in the Gazetteer of the Madura district, that "of the profits of their commercial transactions, a fixed percentage (called *magamai*) is usually set aside for charity. Some of the money so collected is spent on keeping up Sanskrit schools, but most of it has been laid out in the repair and restoration of the temples of the south, especial attention being paid to those shrines (*pādal petta sthalangal*, as they are called), which were hymned by the four great poet-saints, Mānikya Vāchakar, Appar, Tirugnāna Sambandhar, and Sundaramūrti." "The Chettis," Mr. Sundara Aiyar writes, "are believed to be the most charitable class in Southern India, and undoubtedly they spend the largest amount of money on charity. They set apart a fraction of their profits for charity. They levy rates among themselves for local charities, wherever they go. The income obtained from the rates is generally spent on temples. In new places like Ceylon, Burma, and Singapore, they build new temples, generally dedicated to Subramanya Swāmi. In India itself, they establish festivals in existing temples, and undertake the repair of temples. Immense sums have been spent by them recently in the renovation and restoration of ancient temples. We should not be surprised to be told that the amount spent within the last thirty years alone amounts to a crore of rupees. Being Saivites, they do not generally care for Vaishnava temples. And, even among Saiva temples, only such as have special sanctity, and have been sung about by the Saiva Nainars or Bhaktas, are patronised by them. They have devoted large sums to the establishment of comfortable choultries (rest-houses), feeding houses, Vēdic and recently also Sastraic pāthasālas (schools). They have established schools for the education of

the Kurukal or the priestly class. And, in fact, every charity of the orthodox Hindu type finds generous support among them."

It is recorded, in the Gazetteer of the Madura district, that the gōpurams of the Madura temple "have been repaired of late years at great cost by the Nāttukōttai Chettis. The northern tower used to consist only of the brick and stone-work storeys, and was known in consequence as the mottai (literally bald) gōpuram. Recently, however, a courageous Chetti, who cared nothing for the superstition that it is most unlucky to complete a building left unfinished, placed the usual plaster top upon it."

In recent years, the temple at Chidambaram has been renovated by the Nāttukōttai Chettis, who "have formed for this and similar restorations a fund which is made up of a fee of four annas per cent. levied from their clients on all sums borrowed by the latter. The capital of this is invested, and the interest thereon devoted exclusively to such undertakings."*

In 1906, the purificatory ceremony, or kumbabi-shēkam, of the Sri Pasupathiswara Swāmi temple at Karūr was performed with great pomp. The old temple had been thoroughly overhauled and repaired by the Nāttukōttai Chettis. The ceremony cost about fifty thousand rupees. Many thousands were fed, and presents of money made to a large number of Vaidiki Brāhmans. In the same year, at a public meeting held in Madras to concert measures for establishing a pinjrapole (hospital for animals), one of the resolutions was that early steps should be taken to collect public subscriptions from the Hindu community generally, and in

* Gazetteer of the South Arcot district.

particular from the Nāttukōttai Chettis, Gujarātis, and other mercantile classes.

Still more recently, the kumbabishēkam festival was celebrated at Tiruvanaikkaval, the seat of a celebrated temple near Trichinopoly, which was repaired by the Nāttukōttai Chettis at a cost of many lakhs of rupees.

By a traditional custom, the Nāttukōttai Chettis live largely by money-lending. They never serve under any one outside their own community. They either trade on their own account, or are employed as agents or assistants. The pay of an assistant is always calculated for a period of three years, and a portion thereof is paid in advance after a month's service. This the assistant invests to the best advantage. At the end of a year, a portion of the balance of the pay is handed over to him, leaving a small sum to be paid at the end of the contract period. His expenses for board and lodging are met by his employer, and he may receive a small share of the profits of the business. A man, on receiving an agency, starts on an auspicious day, and proceeds to a temple of Ganēsa, and to a matam (religious institution) containing figures of Ganēsa and Natēsa. After prostrating himself before the gods, he proceeds on his way. If he encounters an object of evil omen, he will not continue, and, if he has to journey to a distant spot, he will throw up his appointment. The accounts of the Nāttukōttai Chettis are audited triennially, an annual audit being inconvenient, as their business is carried on at various remote spots. The foreign business is said* to "be transacted by agents belonging to the caste, who receive a salary proportioned to the distance of the place, and also, usually, a percentage on the profits. They generally serve for three years, and

* Gazetteer of the Madura district.



NĀTTUKŌTTAI CHETTI CHILDREN.

then return, and give an account of their stewardship." The commencement of a fresh period of three years is made on an auspicious day called puthukanakkunāl (fresh account day), which is observed as a holiday. No business is transacted, and customers are invited, and receive presents of fruits, sweets, etc.

In connection with Nāttukōttai agencies, Mr. Haya-vadana Rao writes as follows.* "People of moderate means usually elect to go to distant places as agents of the different firms that have their head offices either at Madura or in the Zamindaris of Ramnād and Sivaganga. The pay of a local agent varies directly with the distance of the place to which he is posted. If he is kept at Madura, he gets Rs. 100 per mensem; if sent to Burma, he gets three times as much; and, if to Natal, about twice the latter sum. If an agent proves himself to be an industrious and energetic man, he is usually given a percentage on the profits. The tenure of office is for three years, six months before the expiry of which the next agent is sent over to work conjointly with the existing one, and study the local conditions. On relief, the agent returns directly to his head office, and delivers over his papers, and then goes to his own village. With this, his connection with his firm practically ceases. He enjoys his well-earned rest of three years, at the end of which he seeks re-employment either under his old firm, or under any other. The former he is bound to, if he has taken a percentage on the profits during his previous tenure of office. If the old firm rejects him when he so offers himself, then he is at liberty to enter service under others." It is said to be very rare for Nāttukōttai women to accompany their husbands to distant places.

* Indian Review, VIII, 8, 1907.

“In fact, the husbands have to visit their native places at long intervals, and make a felicitous sojourn in the company of their wives.”

The houses of the Nāttukōttai Chettis are spacious and substantial buildings all based on the same general plan. The front entrance opens into an oblong courtyard with a verandah all round, and rows of rooms at the two sides. At the farther end of the courtyard is an entrance leading into a backyard or set of apartments. Modern houses have imposing exteriors, and an upper storey. Married sons live in separate quarters, and every couple receive from their fathers a fixed yearly allowance, which may amount to twenty rupees and fifteen kalams of paddy. The sons may, if they choose, spend more, but the excess is debited to their account, and, at the time of partition of the estate, deducted, with interest, from their share.

It is noted by Mr. Hayavadana Rao that “the remarkable custom prevails amongst them that obliges all married members to cook separately and eat their meals, though they live in the same house. Even the widowed mother is no exception to this rule. Unmarried members live with their parents until they are married. Allotments of rice and other necessities are annually made to the several semi-independent members of the household. This custom has given rise to the commodious houses in which members of this caste usually reside.”

As concerning the origin of the Nāttukōttai Chettis, the following story is told. In ancient days, the Vaisyas of the lunar race were living in the town of Sānthyapuri in the Naganādu of the Jambudvīpa (India). They paid daily visits to the shrine of Vināyaka god made of emerald, and were traders in precious stones. They were

much respected, and led the life of orthodox Saivites, wore rudrāksha beads, and smeared themselves with sacred ashes. They were, however, much oppressed by a certain ruler, and emigrated in a body to Conjeeveram in the Tondamandalam country in the year 204 of the Kāliyuga. The king of Conjeeveram gave them permission to settle in his territory, and made grants to them of land, temples and matams. They stayed there for a very long time, but, being troubled by heavy taxes and fines, left this part of the country about 2312 Kāliyuga, and settled in the Chōla country. The Chōla king, being much impressed with them, bestowed on them the privilege of placing the crown on the head of a new ruler at his coronation. At this time, the town of Kāveripumpattanam is said to have been in a very flourishing state, and the north street was occupied by Vaisyas from other countries. Being unwilling to disturb them, the king made the new settlers occupy the east, west, and south streets. As a mark of respect, they were allowed to use flags with the figure of a lion on them, and use golden vessels (kalasam) in their houses. They all, at the instigation of the king, became disciples of one Isānya Sivachariar of Patāñjalikshetra (Chidambaram). About 3775 Kāliyuga, Pūvandi Chōla Rāja imprisoned several of the Vaisya women, whereon all the eight thousand Vaisya families destroyed themselves, leaving their male children to be taken care of by a religious teacher named Atmanadhachariar. In all 1,502 children were thus brought up, viz., 600 of six ways from the west street, 502 of seven ways from the east street, and 400 of four ways from the south street. Later on, Pūvandi Chōla fell ill, and, knowing his recovery to be impossible, sent for the Vaisya boys, and asked them to look after the coronation of his son

Rājabhushana Chōla. But they said that, as they were bachelors, they could not comply with his request. The king accordingly made them marry Vellāla girls. Those of the west street took as wives girls of the Karkaththar section, those of the east street girls of the Sōzhia section, and those of the south street girls of the Kāniyala section. The three groups became disciples of three different matams, viz., Tiruvārur, Kumbakonam, and Vānchium. In the year 3790, a dispute arose in connection with the right of priority in receiving sacred ashes between the Vaisya and true Vellāla women, and the former were made to become the disciples of a new guru (religious preceptor). About 3808, a Pāndya king, named Sundara Pāndya, is said to have asked the Chōla king to induce some of the Vaisyas to settle down in the Pāndya territory. They accordingly once more emigrated in a body, and reached the village of Onkarakudi on a Friday (the constellation Astham being in the ascendant on that day). They were allowed to settle in the tract of country north of the river Vaigai, east of the Piranmalai, and south of Vellar. Those from the east street settled at Ilayaththukudi, those from the west street at Ariyūr, and those from the south street at Sundarapattanam. Thus the Chettis became divided into three endogamous sections, of which the Ilayaththukudi and Sundarapattanam are found at the present day in the Madura district. The members of the Ariyūr section migrated to the west coast on the destruction of their village. The members of the Ilayaththukudi section became the Nāttukōttais. They, not being satisfied with only one place of worship, requested the king to give them more temples. Accordingly, temples were provided for different groups at Māththur, Vairavanpatti, Iraniyūr, Pillayarpatti, Nēmam, Iluppaikudi, Suraikudi, and

Velangkudi. At the present day, the Nāttukōttai Chettis are divided into the following divisions (kōvils or temples) and exogamous sub-divisions:—

1. Ilayaththūkudi kōvil—
 Okkurūdaiyar.
 Pattanasāmiar.
 Perumaruthurudaiyar.
 Kazhanivāsakkudaiyar.
 Kinkinikkudaiyar.
 Pērasendurudaiyar.
 Sirusēththurudaiyar.
2. Māththūr kōvil—
 Uraiṇūr.
 Arumbakūr.
 Manalūr.
 Mannūr.
 Kannūr.
 Karuppūr.
 Kulaththūr.
3. Vairavan kōvil—
 Sirukulaththūr.
 Kazhanivāsal.
 Marudendrapūram.
4. Iraniyūr kōvil.
5. Pillayaratti kōvil.
6. Nēmam kōvil.
7. Iluppaikudi kōvil.
8. Suraikudi kōvil.
9. Velāngkudi kōvil.

When Nāttukōttai Chettis adopt children, they must belong to the same temple division. An adopted son is called Manjanir Puthiran, or turmeric-water son, because, at the ceremony of adoption, the lad has to drink turmeric-water.* In villages where their main temples are situated, the temple manager is obliged to

* Indian Law Reports, Madras Series, XXIX, 1906.

give food to stranger Chettis, and charge for it if they belong to another temple division.

According to a variant of the story relating to the origin of the Nāttukōttai Chettis, "they were formerly merchants at the court of the Chōla kings who ruled at Kaveripattanam, at one time a flourishing sea-port at the mouth of the Cauveri, from which they emigrated in a body on being persecuted by one of them, and first settled at Nattarasankottai, about three miles north-east of Sivaganga."

By other castes, the Nāttukōttai Chettis are said to be the descendants of the offspring of unions between a Shānān and a Muhammadan and Uppu Korava women. Some of the peculiarities of the caste are pointed out in support of the story. Thus, Nāttukōttai men shave their heads like Muhammadans, and both men and women have the lobes of their ears dilated like the older Shānāns. Their girls wear necklaces of shell beads like Korava women, and the women delight in making baskets for recreation, as the Korava women do for sale. The caste is sometimes spoken of as Uppu (salt) Maruhira Chetti. The arguments and illustrations are naturally much resented by the Nāttukōttai Chettis, who explain the obnoxious name by the story that they were formerly very poor, and made a living by selling salt.

The Nāttukōttai Chettis have recourse to panchāyats (councils) in matters affecting the community. They have, Mr. Sundara Aiyar writes, "been at any rate till recently remarkable for settling their differences out of court. The influence of the elders in preventing litigation is very strong. They conciliate the disputants as far as possible and, after reducing the difference between them to a minimum, they often get their

signatures to an award, in which a blank is left to decide the still existing point of difference, the disputants agreeing, after putting in their signatures, to the mediators' filling in the blank, and deciding the dispute as they choose. We are afraid that this spirit of give-and-take is now unfortunately diminishing, and the arbitrament of the courts is more often resorted to than before." There are, among the Nāttukōttai Chettis, two forms of panchāyat, called madaththuvāsal mariyal (matam panchāyat) and kōvilvāsal mariyal (temple panchāyat), of which, at the present day, only the latter is in vogue. For every temple there is a manager, an assistant, and a servant called Vairāvi, who must be a Melakkāran. The aggrieved party lodges his complaint with the manager, who sends word to the leading men of the temple division concerned. The complainant and defendant are summoned to attend a council meeting, and the evidence is recorded by the temple manager. If the accused fails to put in an appearance, the Vairāvi is sent to his house, to take therefrom adavu (security) in the shape of some article belonging to him. In a recent case, a wealthy Nāttukōttai Chetti promised his brother's widow that she should be allowed to adopt a boy. But, as the promise was not fulfilled, she complained to the temple; and, as her brother-in-law did not attend the council meeting, the Vairāvi went to his house, and, in his absence, abstracted the adavu. This was regarded as a great insult, and there was some talk of the case going into court. Matters such as the arrangement of marriage contracts, monetary disputes, family discussions, and the like, are referred to the temple council for settlement. Final decisions are never recorded in writing, but delivered by word of mouth. Those who fail to abide by the decision of the council do not receive

a garland from the temple for their marriage, and without this garland a marriage cannot take place.

It is noted by Mr. Hayavadana Rao that each of the *kōvils* or temples "is managed by *Karyakārans*, who are nominated to the place by the local elders. These *Karyakārans* act as *Panchāyatdars*, and decide all civil cases referred to them. If a case is first referred to them, it may, if necessary, be carried over again to the established courts of the country. But, if once a case is first taken to the courts, they would not entertain it before themselves. They enforce their decrees (1) by refusing to give the garland of flowers at the marriage time, (2) by exercising the power of excommunication."

Every *Nāttukōttai Chetti* youth has to perform a ceremony called *Sūppidi* before marriage. On the *Karthika* day, when the constellation *Krithikai* is in the ascendant, he is taken on horseback to a *Pillayar* (*Ganēsa*) temple, where he worships, and whirls a bag of burning charcoal tied to a long string round his head. In front of the temple he burns a booth (*chokkapane*), which has been set up, and with the ashes his forehead is marked. On his return home, and at the entrance of *Nāttukōttai* houses which he passes, rice lamps are waved before him (*alathi*). In like manner, every girl has to go through a ceremony, called *thiruvādhirai*, before marriage. On the day of the *Arudrādarsanam* festival, she is bathed and decorated. A necklace of gold beads is placed on her neck instead of the necklace of glass beads (*pāsimani*), which she has hitherto worn. She proceeds, with a silver cup, to the houses where other girls are performing the ceremony, and bawls out:—

I have come dancing ; give me *avarakkai* (*Dolichos Lablab* beans).



JEWELRY OF NĀTTUKŌTTAI CHETTIS

I have come singing ; give me padavarangkai (*Cyamopsis* beans).

I have come speaking ; give me sorakkai (*Lagenaria* fruit).

Various kinds of vegetables are placed on the silver vessel, cooked, and distributed. Cakes, called dosai, are made in the house, and, during their preparation, holes are made in them by married women with an iron style. These cakes are also distributed, and it is taken as an insult if any individual does not receive one.

Every Nāttukōttai Chetti is said to have the inviolable right to claim the hand of his paternal aunt's daughter. This being so, ill-assorted marriages are quite common, the putative father being often but a child.* The marriage ceremonies commence with the giving of gold for the bride's neck. On an auspicious day, the bridegroom's party give a gold coin to a goldsmith, who beats it into a thin sheet, and goes home after receiving betel, etc. On the first day of the marriage rites, a feast is given to the bridegroom's family, and female ancestors are worshipped. On the following day, the presentation of the dowry (sireduththal) takes place. The presents, which are often of considerable value, are laid out for inspection, and an inventory of them is made. Perishable articles, such as rice, ghī (clarified butter), dhāl (*Cajanus indicus*), and fruits are sold. The bride's presents are taken to the house of the bridegroom, those who carry them being rewarded with betel, a silk fan, scent bottle, silk handkerchief, bottle of chocolate, a tin of biscuits, and a brass vessel. On the third day, garlands are received from the temples to which the bride

* C. Hayavadana Rao. *Loc. cit.*

and bridegroom belong. The bride's party go to the house of the bridegroom, taking on a tray a silk handkerchief and cloth, and in a silver vessel fifty rupees, betel, etc. These are presented to the bridegroom. This ceremony is called māppillai ariyappōthal, or going to examine the son-in-law. The next item on the programme is nālkuriththal, or fixing the day. The bridegroom's party proceed to the house of the bride, taking with them two cocoanuts wrapped up in a blanket, betel, turmeric, etc., as a present. The bride is bathed and decorated, and purangkaliththal is proceeded with. She stands by the side of her grandmother, and a Brāhman purōhit, taking up a few leafy margosa (*Melia Azadirachta*) twigs, touches the girl's shoulders, head, and knees with them, and throws them away. Her glass bead necklace is then removed. At the uppu-eduththal (salt carrying) ceremony, the bridegroom's party carry a basket containing salt, a bundle containing nine kinds of grains, and a palmyra scroll for writing the marriage contract on, to the bride's house. The sacred fire is lighted, and hōmam performed by the Brāhman purōhit. An old man, who has had a number of children, and belongs to a temple other than that of a bride, and the bridegroom's sister, then tie the tāli string round her neck. This string bears a large tāli, about seven inches long and four inches broad, and seventeen to twenty-three gold ornaments, often of considerable value. Some of them have very sharp points, so that accidents sometimes arise from the points sticking in the eyes of babies carried by women. For every day wear, the massive ornaments are replaced by a smaller set. Immediately after the tāli has been tied, the marriage contract (isagudi mānam) is written. Two copies are made, for the bride and bridegroom respectively.

As an example of a marriage contract, the following may be cited: "This is written for the marriage celebrated on . . . between Subramanyan, the son of Okkurudaiyan Arunāchelam Chetti Ramanadhan Chetti and Valliammai, the daughter of Arumbākurudaiyan K. Narayana Chetti, both formerly of Ilayaththukudi, at the village of . . . The value of jewels given to the girl is . . . of gold; his dowry amounts to . . .; money for female servant . . .; sirattuchukram money . . .; free gift of jewels . . . This esaikudimanam was written by me at . . . Signed Ramanadhan Chetti." The bridegroom goes on horseback to a Pillayar temple where he worships, and then proceeds in procession through various streets to the bride's house, accompanied by his sister carrying milk in a vessel, and a cooly bearing a bundle of seed rice. At every Chetti house the procession halts, and coloured rice lights are waved before the bridegroom. At the entrance to the bride's house, he is met by the bride, whose sister-in-law pushes the couple against each other. Hence the ceremony is called māppillaikuidiththukāttal, or showing the bride to the bridegroom by pushing her. The couple are then conducted to a dais within the house, and wristlets made of cotton cloth are tied on by the purōhit. They exchange cocoanuts and garlands, and, amid the blowing of the conch shell (musical instrument) by women, the bride's mother touches the couple with turmeric, ashes, sandal, etc. On the fourth day, money called veththilai surul rupai (betel-roll money) is given to the newly-married couple by Chettis and the maternal uncles. A silver vessel, containing betel and two rupees, is given to the bridegroom by his father-in-law. The bridegroom usually carries on his shoulders a long purse of silk

or red cloth, called *valluvaippai*, into which he puts the betel and other things which are given to him. On the last day of the marriage ceremonies, toe-rings and wristlets are removed, and the bridal pair eat together.

In connection with pregnancy, two ceremonies are performed, called respectively *marunthidal* (medicine giving) and *thirthamkudiththal* (drinking holy water). The former is celebrated at about the fifth month. On an auspicious day, the sister-in-law of the pregnant woman, amid the blowing of the conch-shell by females, extracts the juice from the leaves of five plants, and gives to the woman to drink. During the seventh month the woman is given consecrated water (*thirtham*) from the temple. All first-born children, both male and female, have to go through a ceremony called *pudhumai* (newness). When they are two years old, on an auspicious day, fixed by a Brāhman *purōhit*, the maternal uncle of the child ties on its neck strings of coral and glass beads, to which ornaments of pearls and precious stones are added in the case of the wealthy. The child is further decorated with other ornaments, and placed in an oval wooden tray, which is held by the mother and her sister-in-law. They go round three times with the tray, and the child's aunt, taking it up, carries it round to be blessed by those who have assembled. Presents of money are given to the child by relations and friends, and the maternal uncles have to give a larger sum than the others. On the second or third day the coral and bead ornaments are removed, and, on the fourth day, the child, if a male, is shaved, and must thenceforth have the head clean shaved throughout life. "The story goes that, when the Chōla king of Kāveripattanam persecuted them, the members of this caste resolved not to shave their heads until they quitted his territories. When

they reached their new settlement they shaved their heads completely as a memorial of their stern resolution."* When a death occurs among the Nāttukōttai Chettis, news thereof is conveyed by the Thandakāran, or caste messenger. Those who come to condole with the bereaved family are received with outstretched hands (kai-nāttikolludhal). The head of the corpse is shaved, and it is washed and decorated. In front of the house a pandal (booth), supported by four *Thespesia populnea* posts, and roofed with twigs of *Eugenia Jambolana*, is erected. Beneath this the corpse is laid, and all present go round it thrice. While the corpse is being got ready for conveyance to the burning ground, the daughters and sisters of the deceased husk paddy (unhusked rice). On the way to the burning ground, the son carries the fire. If the deceased is a young boy or girl, the pandal is removed after the funeral; otherwise it is removed, on a Tuesday, Thursday, or Sunday, within four days. The Nāttukōttaïs restrict the name pandal to the funeral booth, the marriage booth being called kāvanam or kottagai. Even an ordinary shed set up in front of a house is not called a pandal, as the name is associated with funerals. On the day following the funeral, the bigger fragments of bones are collected by a barber, and given to the son, who places them in an earthen pot. A Pandāram offers fruit, food, etc., to the deceased. Eight days afterwards, a feast, at which meat is partaken of for the first time since the death, is given to the relations of the dead person, and their pollution is at an end. They may not, however, enter a temple for thirty days. On the sixteenth day after death, the final death ceremonies (karmāndhīram) are performed, and liberal presents of

* C. Hayavadana Rao. *Loc. cit.*

money, religious books, such as the Rāmāyana, Mahābhārata, and Periya Purānam, wooden spoons for domestic use, etc., are given to Brāhmans.

There are three matams, whereat the Nāttukōttai Chettis are initiated into their religion, at Pātharakkudi (or Padanakkudi) and Kila for males, and Tulāvur for females. They are Saivites, but also, more especially the women, worship such minor deities as Aiyandar, Munēswara, and Karuppan. They are also said to worship two village goddesses, called Sellattamman and Kannu-dayamman, at Nattarasankottai.

Nāttukōttai men have the lobes of the ears artificially dilated, but seldom wear ornaments therein. They frequently have a gold chain round the loins, and wear finger rings set with diamonds. The wives even of wealthy men wear a cheap body cloth, and do menial house work, such as cleaning the kitchen utensils. They plait baskets, and, in some houses, wheels for spinning cotton may be seen.

Like other trading classes in Southern India, the Nāttukōttai Chettis have a trade language of their own, which varies according to locality. In the city of Madras they have three tables, for annas, rupees, and tens of rupees respectively. Each of these is formed out of the syllables of certain words. Thus, the anna table is composed of the syllables of Tiripurasundari, the goddess at Madura, which is a great centre for Nāttukōttai Chettis. The syllables (in the inverse order), and their money equivalent are as follows :—

| | | | | | | |
|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|---------------------|
| Ri | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | $\frac{1}{2}$ anna. |
| Da | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | $\frac{3}{4}$ „ |
| Un | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 1 „ |
| Su | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 2 annas. |
| Ra | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 3 „ |

| | | | | | | |
|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|----------|
| Pu | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 4 annas. |
| Ri | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 8 „ |
| Ti | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 12 „ |

The rupee table is composed of the word Vēdagirīs-vararthunai, meaning with the help of Vēdagirīsvarar, the god at Tirukalikundram near Madras :—

| | | | | | | |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----------|
| Vē | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 1 rupee. |
| Da | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 2 rupees. |
| Gi | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 3 „ |
| Ri | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 4 „ |
| Ī | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 5 „ |
| Is | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 6 „ |
| Va | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 7 „ |
| Ra | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 8 „ |
| Ar | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 9 „ |
| Thu | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 10 „ |
| Nai | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 11 „ |

The tens-of-rupees table is made up from the word Tirukalikundram :—

| | | | | | | |
|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------------|
| Ti | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 10 rupees. |
| Ru | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 20 „ |
| Ik | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 30 „ |
| Ka | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 40 „ |
| Li | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 50 „ |
| Ik | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 60 „ |
| Ku | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 70 „ |
| In | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 80 „ |
| Ra | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 90 „ |
| Im | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 100 „ |

* An anna is sometimes called vanakkam ; a rupee is known as vellē (white).

Nāttupattan.—A section of Ambalavāsis. (See Unni.)

Nāttusāmbān.—Sāmbān (a name of Siva) is a title of some Tamil Paraiyans. Nāttusāmbān denotes a village Paraiyan.

Nattuvan.—Defined in the Madras Census Report, 1901, as “an occupational term, meaning a dancing-master, which is applied to males of the dancing-girl castes, who teach dancing.” At nautch parties, when the Dēva-dāsis dance, the Nattuvans play the accompaniment on the drum, bag-pipe, flute, clarionet, cymbals, etc. At the initiation of a Kaikōlan girl as a Dēva-dasi, her dancing-master seats himself behind her, and, grasping her legs, moves them up and down in time with the music. Some Ōcchans in the Tamily country, who teach dancing to Dēva-dasis, are also called Nattuvan.

Natuvili (middle).—A sub-division of Paraiyans in Travancore.

Navakōti (nine crores).—An exogamous sept of Dēsūr Reddi. A crore is one hundred lakhs, *i.e.*, 10,000,000.

Navalipitta (peacock).—A sept of Jātapu.

Navāyat.—The Navāyats or Navāyets are summed up, in the Madras Census Report, 1901, as “a Musalman tribe, which appears to have originally settled at Bhatkal in North Canara, and is known on the west coast as Bhatkali. The derivation of the name is much disputed. There are five sub-divisions of the tribe, namely, Kurēshi, Mehkeri, Chīda, Gheas, and Mohāgir. It takes a high place among Musalmans, and does not intermarry with other tribes.”

Of the Nevayets, the following account, based on the Saadut Nama, and conversations with members of the community, is given by Colonel Wilks.* “Nevayet is generally supposed to be a corruption of the Hindustanee and Mahratta terms for new-comer. About the end of the first century of the Hejira, or the early part of the

* Historical Sketches of the South of India, 1810.

eighth century of the Christian era, Hejaj Bin Yusuf, Governor of Irak, on the part of the Khalif Abd-al-Melik-bin-Merwan, a monster abhorred for his cruelties even among Musalmans, drove some respectable and opulent persons of the house of Hâshem to the desperate resolution of abandoning for ever their native country. Aided by the good offices of the inhabitants of Kufa, a town of celebrity in those days, situated near to the tomb of Ali, west of the Euphrates, they departed with their families, dependents, and effects, and embarked on ships prepared for their reception in the Persian Gulf. Some of these landed on that part of the western coast of India called the Concan; the others to the eastward of Cape Comorin; the descendants of the former are the Nevayets; of the latter the Lubbē. The Lubbē pretend to one common origin with the Nevayets, and attribute their black complexion to intermarriage with the natives; but the Nevayets affirm that the Lubbē are the descendants of their domestic slaves; and there is certainly, in the physiognomy of this very numerous class, and in their stature and form, a strong resemblance to the natives of Abyssinia. The Nevayets of the western coast preserved the purity of their original blood by systematically avoiding intermarriage with the Indians, and even with the highest Muhammadan families, for many centuries after the establishment of the Musalman dynasties of the Deckan. Even at this time there are some Nevayets whose complexions approach the European freshness. Their adherence to each other as members of the same family preserved their respectability; and they were famed at the Muhammadan courts of the Deckan for uniting the rare qualities of the soldier, the scholar, and the gentleman."

Nāvutiyan.—A synonym of Velakkattalavan.

Nāyādi.—In the Malabar Manual, the Nāyādis are briefly summed up as follows. "Of the Nāyādis, or lowest caste among the Hindus—the dog-eaters—nothing definite is known. They are most persistent in their clamour for charity, and will follow at a respectful distance, for miles together, any person walking, driving, or boating. If anything is given to them, it must be laid down, and, after the person offering it has proceeded a sufficient distance, the recipient comes timidly forward, and removes it."

The subjects, whom I examined and measured at Shoranūr, though living only about three miles off, had, by reason of the pollution which they traditionally carry with them, to avoid walking over the long bridge which spans the river, and follow a circuitous route of many miles. Eventually they had to climb, or be ignominiously hoisted over the wall of the bungalow. Ignorant of the orthodox manner of using a chair, the first victim of the craniometer, who had to sit while his head was under examination, assumed the undignified position with which Eton boys who have been swished are familiar. Measurements concluded, men, women, and children sat down on the grass to an ample feast. And, before they departed homeward, copious blessings were invoked on me, to a chorus composed of the repetition of a single shrill note, not unlike that of the first note of a jackal cry. To quote the newspaper account of my doings, which refers to the 'monograms' issued by me on matters ethnological: "In the evening the kind gentleman gave them a sumptuous treat of canji and curry, and gave them also copper coins, toddy, and arrack. The poor people left the place immensely pleased, and were safely escorted to the British side of the river from the Cochin territory."



NĀYĀDIS.

When travelling on the public roads in Malabar or Cochin, one may observe a few ragged and dirty cloths spread near the road, with one or two copper coins on them ; and, at the same time, hear a chorus of monotonous stentorian voices at a distance of a hundred yards or more, emanating from a few miserable specimens of humanity, standing ghost-like with dishevelled hair, and a long strip of leaves tied round the waist, or clad in a dirty loin-cloth. The coins represent the alms given by the charitably disposed traveller, and the persons are Nāyādis. I am told that, near Kollatūr, there is a stone called the Nāyādi pārai, which is believed to be a man who was turned into stone for not giving alms to a Nāyādi.

The name Nāyādi is equivalent to Nāyattukar, *i.e.*, hunter. The Nāyādis are, in fact, professional hunters, and are excellent shots. The Nāyars, and other higher classes, used formerly to take them with them on hunting and shooting expeditions. But, since the Arms Act came into force, the Nāyādis find this occupation gone. They are also good archers, and used to kill deer, pigs, hares, etc., and eat them. These animals are now difficult to get, as the forests are reserved by Government, and private forests are denuded of their trees for use as fuel, and for house-building by a growing population, and for consumption on the railway. The suggestion has been made that the name Nāyādi is derived from the fact of their eating otters, which live in hill streams, and are called nir-nai (water-dog).

The approach of a Nāyādi within a distance of three hundred feet is said to contaminate a Brāhman, who has to bathe and put on a new sacred thread, to cleanse himself of the pollution. The Nāyādis, in fact, hold the

lowest position in the social scale, and consequently labour under the greatest disadvantage.

The Nāyādis live mostly in isolated huts on the tops of hills, and generally select a shōla, or glade, where there is a pond or stream. Some families live on the land of their landlords, whose crops they watch by night, to guard them against the attacks of wild beasts. Sometimes they are engaged in ploughing, sowing, weeding, transplanting, and reaping, the rice crop, or in plantain (banana) gardens. I take exception to the comparison by a recent author of the British Empire to the banana (*Musa*) throwing out aërial roots. The banyan (*Ficus bengalensis*) must have been meant.

The male members of the community are called Nāyādis, and the females Nāyādichis. The boys are called Molayans, and the young girls Manichis. Succession is in the male line (makkathāyam).

A thatched shed with palm-leaf walls, a few earthen pots, and a chopper, constitute the Nāyādi's property. He occasionally collects honey and bees-wax, and also the gum (matti pasai) from the mattipāl tree (*Ailanthus malabarica*), which, when burnt, is used as temple incense and for fumigating the bed-chamber. He receives toddy in exchange for the honey and wax, and copper coins for the gum, with which he purchases luxuries in the shape of salt, chillies, dried fish, tobacco, and liquor. He makes rough ropes from the malanar plant, and the bark of the kayyūl tree (*Bauhinia*). The bark is soaked in water, sun-dried, and the fibre manufactured into rope. He also makes slings of fibre, wherewith he knocks over birds, and mats from a species of *Cyperus*.

According to custom, the Nāyādi has to offer four ropes, each eight yards long, to every Nambūtiri illam,

and two ropes to every Nāyar house near his settlement, on the occasion of the Vishu and Ōnam festivals. In return he receives a fixed measure of paddy (rice). The ropes are used for tethering cattle, and for drawing water from the well. By a wise dispensation of the ancient local chieftains, to each Nāyādi is assigned a *desom* (portion of a parish), within which he enjoys certain privileges. And no Nāyādi has any business to poach on his preserves. The privileges are these. On birthdays, anniversaries, and festive occasions, the Nāyādi receives his share of curry and rice, tied up in an old cloth. When a person is sick, a black country-made *kambli* (blanket), with *gingelly* (*Sesamum*), mustard, turmeric, and cocoanut tied up in the four corners, is passed three times over the patient and presented to a Nāyādi, together with a palm umbrella, a stick, and a cucumber. This is called *kala-dhānam*, or offering to Yama, the god of death, whose attack has to be warded off by propitiatory offerings. The Nāyādi accepts the gifts, and prays for the long life and prosperity of the giver. Placing them before his own family god, he prays that the life of the sick person may be spared, and that the disease may not be transferred to him.

Like the Cherumans, the Nāyādis drink, but they cannot afford to buy as much toddy as the former, for the Cheruman works regularly for a daily wage. Monkeys, which are very troublesome in gardens, are shot down by the higher classes, and given to the Nāyādis to eat. Their dietary includes rats, mungoosees, pigs, deer, paraquets, the koel (cuckoo), doves, quails, fowls, paddy-birds, hares, tortoises, *Varanus* (lizard), crocodiles, and fish. They abstain from eating the flesh of dogs, cats, snakes, land-crabs, shell-fish, and beef. Among vegetables, the tubers of yams (*Dioscorea*) and *Colocasia* are included.

They produce fire by friction with two sticks of *Litsæa sebifera*, in the shorter of which a cavity is scooped out. They do not, like the Todas, put powdered charcoal in the cavity, but ignite the cloth rag by means of the red-hot wood dust produced by the friction.

When a woman is pregnant, she craves for the flesh of a monkey or jungle squirrel during the sixth month. During the seventh month, a ceremony is performed, to relieve her of the influence of devils, who may be troubling her. It is called ozhinnukalayuka. Abortion is attributed to the malign influence of evil spirits. To ward off this, they tie round the neck a magic thread, and invoke the aid of their hill gods and the spirits of their ancestors. They erect a special hut for delivery, to which the woman retires. When she is in labour, her husband shampoos his own abdomen, while praying to the gods for her safe delivery—a custom which seems to suggest the couvade. As soon as his wife is delivered, he offers thanks to the gods “for having got the baby out.” The woman observes pollution for ten days, during which her husband avoids seeing her. Any deformity in the child is attributed to the evil influence of the gods. On the twenty-eighth day after birth, the ceremony of naming the child takes place. The name given to the first-born son is that of the paternal grandfather, and to the first-born daughter that of the maternal grandmother. In the fifth year, the ear-boring ceremony takes place, and the operation is performed by the child’s uncle. A piece of brass wire takes the place of ear-rings. Girls wear a plug of wood in the lobes. The Nāyādichis do not, like the Cheruman women, wear bracelets, but have many rows of beads round their necks, and hanging over their bosoms.

When a girl reaches puberty, a Nāyādichi leads her to a tank (pond), in which she bathes, after a

pāndi, composed of several pieces of plantain leaf tied together, has been carried three or four times round her. She must not touch any utensils, and must abstain from touching her head with the hand, and, if the skin itches, the body must be scratched with a small stick.

Concerning a very interesting form of marriage, Mr. T. K. Gopal Panikkar writes as follows.* “A large hut is constructed of ‘holly’ and other leaves, inside which the girl is ensconced. Then all the young men and women of the village gather round the hut, and form a ring about it. The girl’s father, or the nearest male relative, sits a short distance from the crowd, with a tom-tom in his hands. Then commences the music, and a chant is sung by the father, which has been freely translated as follows :—

Take the stick, my sweetest daughter,
Now seize the stick, my dearest love,
Should you not capture the husband you wish for,
Remember, ’tis fate decides whom you shall have.

“All the young men, who are eligible for marriage, arm themselves with a stick each, and begin to dance round the hut, inside which the bride is seated. This goes on for close on an hour, when each of them thrusts his stick inside the hut through the leafy covering. The girl has then to take hold of one of these sticks from the inside, and the owner of the stick which she seizes becomes the husband of the concealed bride. This ceremony is followed up by feasting, after which the marriage is consummated.”

A photograph by Mr. F. Fawcett shows a young man with a ring hanging round his neck, as a sign that he was

still unattached. But he was soon about to part with it, for a present of a rupee enabled him to find a girl, and fix up a marriage, within two days.

Adultery is regarded with abhorrence, and there is a belief that those who are guilty of it are liable to be attacked by wild beasts or demons. On the occasion of the marriage of a divorced woman's son or daughter, the mother attends the festivities, if she receives a cordial invitation from her children. But she does not look her former husband straight in the face, and returns to her home the same evening.

When a man lies at the point of death, it is usual to distribute rice kanji to the people, who, after taking their fill, become possessed with the power of predicting the fate in store for the sick man. According as the taste of the kanji turns to that of a corpse, or remains unaltered, the death or recovery of the patient is foretold in their deep and loud voices.* The Nāyādis either burn or bury their dead. Several layers of stones are placed within the grave, and its site is marked by three big stones, one in the middle, and one at each end. The burnt ashes of the bones are collected, and preserved in a pot, which is kept close to the hut of the deceased. Pollution is observed for ten days, during which the enangan (relations by marriage) cook for the mourners. On the tenth day, the sons of the deceased go, together with their relations, to the nearest stream, and bury the bones on the bank. The sons bathe, and perform beli, so that the soul of the departed may enter heaven, and ghosts may not trouble them. After the bath, a sand-heap, representing the deceased, is constructed, and on it are placed a piece of plantain leaf, some unboiled rice, and karuka grass

* Malabar and its Folk.



NĀYĀDIS MAKING FIRE.

(*Cynodon Dactylon*). Over these water is poured twelve times, and the sons reverently prostrate themselves before the heap. They then return home, and cow-dung, mixed with water, is sprinkled over them by their relations, and poured over the floor of the hut. In this manner they are purified. Some time during the seventh month after death, according to another account, the grave, in which the corpse has been buried, is dug up, and the bones are carefully collected, and spread out on a layer of sticks arranged on four stones placed at the corners of a pit. The bones are then covered with more sticks, and the pile is lighted. The partially burnt bones are subsequently collected by the eldest son of the deceased, and carried to the hut in a new pot, which is tied to a branch of a neighbouring tree. This rite concluded, he bathes, and, on his return, the *adiyanthiram* (death ceremony) day is fixed. On this day, the eldest son removes the pot, and buries it by the side of a stream, near which a heap of sand is piled up. On this all the agnates pour water three times, prostrate themselves before it, and disperse. The ceremony is brought to a close with a square meal. Some time ago an old Nāyādi, who had the reputation of being a good shot, died. His son obtained a handful of gunpowder from a gun-license holder, and set fire to it near the grave, with a view to satisfying the soul of the deceased.

The chief gods of the Nāyādis are *Mallan*, *Malavazhi*, and *Parakutti*, to whom offerings of toddy, rice, and the flesh of monkeys are made. *Parakutti* it is who aids them in their hunting expeditions, bringing the game to them, and protecting them from wild beasts. If they do not succeed in bagging the expected game, they abuse him.

The Nāyādis are also ancestor worshippers, and keep representations of the departed, to which offerings

of rice and toddy are made during the Ōnam, Vishu, and other festivals. Beneath a mango tree in a paramba (garden) were forty-four stones set up in a circle round the tree. One of the stones was a beli-kal (beli stone), such as is placed round the inner shrines of temples. The remainder resembled survey stones, but were smaller in size. The stones represented forty-four Nāyādis, who had left the world. On the ceremonial occasions referred to above, a sheep or fowl is killed, and the blood allowed to fall on them, pūja (worship) is performed, and solemn prayers are offered that the souls of the departed may protect them against wild beasts and snakes. A Nāyādi asserted that, if he came across a tiger, he would invoke the aid of his ancestors, and the animal would be rendered harmless.

Whenever the Nāyādis labour under any calamity or disease, they consult the Parayan astrologer. And, when a woman is possessed by devils, the Parayan is summoned. He is furnished with a thread and some toddy. Muttering certain prayers to Parakutti and other deities, he ties the thread round the woman's neck, drinks the toddy, and the devil leaves her. When a person is believed to be under the influence of a devil or the evil eye, salt, chillies, tamarind, oil, mustard, cocoanut, and a few pice (copper coins) in a vessel are waved thrice round the head of the affected individual, and given to a Nāyādi, whose curse is asked for. There is this peculiarity about a Nāyādi's curse, that it always has the opposite effect. So, when he is asked to curse one who has given him alms, he does so by invoking misery and evil upon him. By the Nāyādi money is called chembu kāsū (copper coin), food elamāttam (exchange of leaves), and having no food nakkān illa (nothing to lick on). As a protection against

snake-bite, the Nāyādis wear a brass toe-ring. And, when engaged in catching rats in their holes, they wear round the wrist a snake-shaped metal ring, to render them safe against snakes which may be concealed in the hole.

The Nāyādis who live within the jurisdiction of the Kavalapāra Nāyar near Shoranūr wear the kudumi (front lock of hair), as there are no Māppillas (Muhammadans) to molest them. The Kavalapāra Nāyar was at one time an important chief, and directed all Nambūtiri jenmis (landlords) who held land within his jurisdiction to bind themselves not to let the land to Māppillas. Nāyādis of other parts are not allowed by the Māppillas to wear the kudumi, and, if they do so, they are taken for Parayans and professional sorcerers, and beaten.

Some Nāyādis have become converts to Christianity, others to Muhammadanism, and maintain themselves by begging for alms from Muhammadans. They are called Thoppyitta (cap-wearing) Nāyādis.

The priest of the Nāyādis is called Mūppan. His appointment is hereditary, and he enquires into all matters affecting the community, and can excommunicate a guilty person.*

Average height, 155 cm. ; nasal index, 86.

Nāyar.—"The Nāyars," Mr. H. A. Stuart writes,† "are a Dravidian caste, or rather a community, for we find several distinct elements with totally different occupations among the people who call themselves by this title. The original Nāyars were undoubtedly a military body, holding lands and serving as a militia, but the present Nāyar caste includes persons who, by hereditary

* This note is based mainly on articles by Mr. S. Appadorai Aiyar and Mr. L. K. Anantha Krishna Aiyar.

† Madras Census Report, 1891.

occupation, are traders, artisans, oilmongers, palanquin-bearers, and even barbers and washermen. The fact seems to be that successive waves of immigration brought from the Canarese and Tamil countries different castes and different tribes; and these, settling down in the country, adopted the customs and manners, and assumed the caste names of the more respectable of the community that surrounded them. This process of assimilation is going on even yet. Chettis of Coimbatore, for example, who settled in Palghāt and Valluvanād within living memory, have developed by this time into Nāyars. In the census schedules we find instances in which the males of a house affix the term Nāyar to their names, while the names of the females end in Chettichi. Gollas entering the country from the north have similarly, in course of time, assumed Nāyar customs and manners, and are now styled Nāyars. Again the rājahs and chieftains of the country sometimes raised individuals or classes who had rendered them meritorious service to the rank of Nāyars. These men were thereafter styled Nāyars, but formed a separate sub-division with little or no communion with the rest of the Nāyar class, until at least, after the lapse of generations, when their origin was forgotten. Nāyar may thus at present be considered to be a term almost as wide and general as Sūdra."

According to the Brāhman tradition, the Nāyar caste is the result of union between the Nambūdris with Dēva, Gandharva and Rakshasa women introduced by Parasurāma; and this tradition embodies the undoubted fact that the caste by its practice of hypergamy has had a very large infusion of Aryan blood. In origin the Nāyars were probably a race of Dravidian immigrants, who were amongst the first invaders of Malabar, and as conquerors assumed the position of the governing and

land-owning class. The large admixture of Aryan blood combined with the physical peculiarities of the country would go far to explain the very marked difference between the Nāyar of the present day and what may be considered the corresponding Dravidian races in the rest of the Presidency.*

In connection with the former position of the Nāyars as protectors of the State, it is noted by Mr. Logan † that "in Johnston's 'Relations of the most famous Kingdom in the world' (1611), there occurs the following quaintly written account of this protector guild. 'It is strange to see how ready the Souldiour of this country is at his Weapons : they are all gentile men, and tearmed Naires. At seven Years of Age they are put to School to learn the Use of their Weapons, where, to make them nimble and active, their Sinnewes and Joints are stretched by skilful Fellows, and annointed with the Oyle Sesamus [gingelly : *Sesamum indicum*]: By this annointing they become so light and nimble that they will winde and turn their Bodies as if they had no Bones, casting them forward, backward, high and low, even to the Astonishment of the Beholders. Their continual Delight is in their Weapon, perswading themselves that no Nation goeth beyond them in Skill and Dexterity.' And Jonathan Duncan, who visited Malabar more than once as one of the Commissioners from Bengal in 1792-93, and afterwards as Governor of Bombay, after quoting the following lines from Mickle's Camoens, Book VII—

' Poliar the labouring lower clans are named :
By the proud Nayrs the noble rank is claimed ;
The toils of culture and of art they scorn :
The shining faulchion brandish'd in the right—
Their left arm wields the target in the fight '—

* Gazetteer of the Malabar district. † Manual of the Malabar district.

went on to observe: 'These lines, and especially the two last, contain a good description of a Nayr, who walks along, holding up his naked sword with the same kind of unconcern as travellers in other countries carry in their hands a cane or walking staff. I have observed others of them have it fastened to their back, the hilt being stuck in their waist band, and the blade rising up and glittering between their shoulders' (Asiatic Researches, V. 10, 18). M. Mahé de la Bourdonnais, who had some experience of their fighting qualities in the field, thus described them: 'Les Nairs sont de grands hommes basanés, légers, et vigoureux: Ils n'ont pas d'autre profession que celle des armes, et seraient de fort bons soldats, s'ils étoient disciplinés: mais ils combattent sans ordre, ils prennent la fuite dès qu'on les serre de près avec quelque supériorité; pourtant, s'ils se voient pressés avec vigueur et qu'ils se croient en danger, ils reviennent à la charge, et ne se rendent jamais' (M. Esquer, Essai sur les Castes dans l'Inde, page 181). Finally, the only British General of any note—Sir Hector Munro—who had ever to face the Nāyars in the field, thus wrote of their modes of fighting:—

'One may as well look for a needle in a Bottle of Hay as any of them in the daytime, they being lurking behind sand banks and bushes, except when we are marching towards the Fort, and then they appear like bees out in the month of June.' 'Besides which,' he continued, 'they point their guns well, and fire them well also' (Tellicherry Factory Diary, March, 1761). They were, in short, brave light troops, excellent in skirmishing, but their organization into small bodies with discordant interests unfitted them to repel any serious invasion by an enemy even moderately well organised. Among other strange Malayāli customs, Sheikh

Zin-ud-din * noticed the fact that, if a chieftain was slain, his followers attacked and obstinately persevered in ravaging the slayer's country, and killing his people till their vengeance was satisfied. This custom is doubtless that which was described so long ago as in the ninth century A.D. by two Muhammadans, whose work was translated by Renaudot (Lond., 1733). 'There are kings who, upon their accession, observe the following ceremony. A quantity of cooked rice was spread before the king, and some three or four hundred persons came of their own accord, and received each a small quantity of rice from the king's own hands after he himself had eaten some. By eating of this rice they all engage themselves to burn themselves on the day the king dies or is slain, and they punctually fulfil their promise.' Men, who devoted themselves to certain death on great occasions, were termed *Amoucos* by the Portuguese; and Barbosa, one of the Portuguese writers, alluded to the practice as prevalent among the Nāyars. Purchas has also the following:—'The king of Cochin hath a great number of Gentlemen, which he calleth *Amocchi*, and some are called *Nairi*: these two sorts of men esteem not their lives anything, so that it may be for the honour of the king.' The proper Malayālam term for such men was *Chāver*, literally those who took up, or devoted themselves to death. It was a custom of the Nāyars, which was readily adopted by the Māppillas, who also at times—as at the great Mahāmakkam, twelfth year feast, at Tirunāvāyi †—devoted themselves to death in the

* The author of *Tahafat-ul-Mujahidin* or hints for persons seeking the way to God, as it is frequently translated, or more literally an offering to warriors who shall fight in defence of religion against infidels. Translated by Rowlandson. London, 1833.

† See Manual of the Malabar district, 164, sq., and Fawcett, Madras Museum Bull., III, 3, 1901.

company of Nāyars for the honour of the Valluvanad Rāja. And probably the frantic fanatical rush of the Māppillas on British bayonets, which is not even yet a thing of the past, is the latest development of this ancient custom of the Nāyars. The martial spirit of the Nāyars in these piping times of peace has quite died out for want of exercise. The Nāyar is more and more becoming a family man. Comparatively few of them now-a-days even engage in hunting." According to an inscription of the King Kulōttunga I (A.D. 1083-84), he conquered Kudamalai-Nadu, *i.e.*, the western hill country (Malabar), whose warriors, the ancestors of the Nāyars of the present day, perished to the last man in defending their independence.*

The following description of the Nāyars at the beginning of the sixteenth century is given by Duarte Barbosa.† "The Nairs are the gentry, and have no other duty than to carry on war, and they continually carry their arms with them, which are swords, bows, arrows, bucklers, and lances. They all live with the kings, and some of them with other lords, relations of the kings, and lords of the country, and with the salaried governors, and with one another. They are very smart men, and much taken up with their nobility. . . . These Nairs, besides being all of noble descent, have to be armed as knights by the hand of a king or lord with whom they live, and until they have been so equipped they cannot bear arms nor call themselves Nairs. . . . In general, when they are seven years of age, they are immediately sent to school to learn all manner of feats of agility and gymnastics for the use of their weapons.

* E. Hultzsch, *South-Indian Inscriptions*, III, 2, 1203.

† Description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar. Translation. Hakluyt Society, 1866.

First they learn to dance and then to tumble, and for that purpose they render supple all their limbs from their childhood, so that they can bend them in any direction. . . . These Nairs live outside the towns separate from other people on their estates which are fenced in. When they go anywhere, they shout to the peasants, that they may get out of the way where they have to pass; and the peasants do so, and, if they did not do it, the Nairs might kill them without penalty. And, if a peasant were by misfortune to touch a Nair lady, her relations would immediately kill her, and likewise the man that touched her and all his relations. This, they say, is done to avoid all opportunity of mixing the blood with that of the peasants. . . . These are very clean and well-dressed women, and they hold it in great honour to know how to please men. They have a belief amongst them that the woman who dies a virgin does not go to paradise."

Writing in the eighteenth century, Hamilton states * that "it was an ancient custom for the Samorin (Zamorin) to reign but twelve years, and no longer. If he died before his term was expired, it saved him a troublesome ceremony of cutting his own throat on a public scaffold erected for that purpose. He first made a feast for all his nobility and gentry, who were very numerous. After the feast he saluted his guests, went on the scaffold, and very neatly cut his own throat in the view of the assembly. His body was, a little while after, burned with great pomp and ceremony, and the grandees elected a new Samorin. Whether that custom was a religious or a civil ceremony I know not, but it is now laid aside, and a new custom is followed by the modern Samorin, that a jubilee is

* *New Account of the East Indies*, 1744.

proclaimed throughout his dominion at the end of twelve years, and a tent is pitched for him in a spacious plain, and a great feast is celebrated for ten or twelve days with mirth and jollity, guns firing night and day, so at the end of the feast any four of the guests that have a mind to gain a crown by a desperate action in fighting their way through thirty or forty thousand of his guards, and kill the Samorin in his tent, he that kills him succeeds him in his empire. In Anno 1695 one of these jubilees happened, and the tent pitched near Ponnany, a sea-port of his about fifteen leagues to the southward of Calicut. There were but three men that would venture on that desperate action, who fell on, with sword and target, among the guards, and, after they had killed and wounded many, were themselves killed. One of the desperadoes had a nephew of fifteen or sixteen years of age that kept close by his uncle in the attack on the guards, and, when he saw him fall, the youth got through the guards into the tent, and made a stroke at his Majesty's head, and had certainly dispatched him if a large brass lamp which was burning over his head had not marred the blow, but, before he could make another, he was killed by the guards, and I believe the same Samorin reigns yet."

It is noted by Sonnerat* that the Nāyars "are the warriors; they have also the privilege of enjoying all the women of their caste. Their arms, which they constantly carry, distinguish them from the other tribes. They are besides known by their insolent haughtiness. When they perceive pariahs, they call out to them, even at a great distance, to get out of their way, and, if any one of these unfortunate people approaches too near a Nair, and through inadvertence touches him, the Nair has a right

* Voyage to the East Indies, 1774 and 1781.

to murder him, which is looked upon as a very innocent action, and for which no complaint is ever made. It is true that the pariahs have one day in the year when all the Nairs they can touch become their slaves, but the Nairs take such precautions to keep out of the way at the time, that an accident of that kind seldom happens." It is further recorded by Buchanan * that "the whole of these Nairs formed the militia of Malayala, directed by the Namburis and governed by the Rajahs. Their chief delight is in arms, but they are more inclined to use them for assassination or surprise, than in the open field. Their submission to their superiors was great, but they exacted deference from those under them with a cruelty and arrogance, rarely practised but among Hindus in their state of independence. A Nair was expected to instantly cut down a Tiar or Mucuai, who presumed to defile him by touching his person; and a similar fate awaited a slave, who did not turn out of the road as a Nair passed."

Nāyar is commonly said to be derived from the Sanskrit Nāyaka, a leader, and to be cognate with Naik, and Nayudu or Naidu. In this connection, Mr. L. Moore writes † that "if a reference is made to the Anglo-Indian Glossary (Hobson-Jobson) by Yule and Burnell, it will be found that the term Naik or Nayakan, and the word Nayar are derived from the same Sanskrit original, and there is a considerable amount of evidence to show that the Nayars of Malabar are closely connected by origin with the Nayakans of Vijayanagar.‡ Xavier, writing in 1542 to 1544, makes frequent references to men whom he calls Badages, who are said to have been

* Journey through Mysore, Canara, and Malabar, 1807.

† Malabar Law and Custom, 3rd ed., 1905.

‡ *Vide* R. Sewell. A Forgotten Empire (Vijayanagar), 1900.

collectors of royal taxes, and to have grievously oppressed Xavier's converts among the fishermen of Travancore.* Dr. Caldwell, alluding to Xavier's letters, says † that these Badages were no doubt Vadages or men from the North, and is of opinion that a Jesuit writer of the time who called them Nayars was mistaken, and that they were really Nayakans from Madura. I believe, however, that the Jesuit rightly called them Nayars, for I find that Father Organtino, writing in 1568, speaks of these Badages as people from Narasinga (a kingdom north of Madura, lying close to Bishnaghur).‡ Bishnaghur is, of course, Vijayanagar, and the kingdom of Narasinga was the name frequently given by the Portuguese to Vijayanagar. Almost every page of Mr. Sewell's interesting book on Vijayanagar bears testimony to the close connection between Vijayanagar and the West Coast. Dr. A. C. Burnell tells us that the kings who ruled Vijayanagar during the latter half of the fourteenth century belonged to a low non-Aryan caste, namely, that of Canarese cow-herds.§ They were therefore closely akin to the Nayars, one of the leading Rajas among whom at the present time, although officially described as a Samanta, is in reality of the Eradi, *i.e.*, cow-herd caste.|| It is remarkable that Colonel (afterwards Sir Thomas) Munro, in the memorandum written by him in 1802 ¶ on the Poligars of the Ceded Districts,

* Father Coleridge's Life and Letters of St. Francis Xavier.

† History of Tinnevely.

‡ Coleridge's Xavier.

§ Burnell. Translation of the Daya Vibhaga, Introduction. *Vide* also Elements of South Indian Palæography (2nd ed., p. 109), where Dr. Burnell says that it is certain that the Vijayanagar kings were men of low caste.

|| *Vide* Glossary, Report of the Malabar Marriage Commission, p. 2, and Day's Land of the Permauls, p. 44.

¶ Fifth Report of the Committee on the affairs of the East India Company, II, 499, 530. Reprint by Higginbotham, Madras.

when dealing with the cases of a number of Poligars who were direct descendants of men who had been chiefs under the kings of Vijayanagar, calls them throughout his report *Naique* or *Nair*, using the two names as if they were identical. Further investigation as to the connection of the Nayars of Malabar with the kingdom of Vijayanagar would, I believe, lead to interesting results." In the *Journal of the Hon. John Lindsay* (1783) it is recorded * that "we received information that our arms were still successful on the Malabar coast, and that our army was now advancing into the inland country ; whilst the Nayars and Polygars that occupy the jungles and mountains near Seringapatam, thinking this a favourable opportunity to regain their former independence, destroyed the open country, and committed as many acts of barbarity as Hyder's army had done in the Carnatic."

"Some," Mr. N. Subramani Aiyar writes in a note on the Nāyars of Travancore, "believe that Nāyar is derived from Nāga (serpents), as the Aryans so termed the earlier settlers of Malabar on account of the special adoration which they paid to snakes. The Travancore Nāyars are popularly known as Malayāla Sūdras—a term which contrasts them sharply with the Pāndi or foreign Sūdras, of whom a large number immigrated into Travancore in later times. Another name by which Nāyars are sometimes known is Malayāli, but other castes, which have long inhabited the Malayālam country, can lay claim to this designation with equal propriety. The most general title of the Nāyars is Pillai (child), which was once added to the names of the Brāhman dwellers in the south. It must, in all probability, have

* *Lives of the Lindsays.* By Lord Lindsay, 1849.

been after the Brāhman changed their title to Aiyar (father), by which name the non-Brāhman people invariably referred to them, that Sūdras began to be termed Pillai. We find that the Vellālas of the Tamil country and the Nāyars of Travancore called themselves Pillai from very early times. The formal ceremony of paying down a sum of money, and obtaining a distinction direct from the Sovereign was known as tirumukham pitikkuka, or catching the face of the king, and enabled the recipients to add, besides the honorary suffix Pillai, the distinctive prefix Kanakku, or accountant, to their name. So important were the privileges conferred by it that even Sanku Annavi, a Brāhman Dalava, obtained it at the hand of the reigning Mahārāja, and his posterity at Vempannūr have enjoyed the distinction until the present day. The titles Pillai and Kanakku are never used together. The name of an individual would be, for example, either Krishna Pillai or Kanakku Rāman Krishnan, Rāman being the name of the Karanavan or the maternal uncle. A higher title, Chempakaraman, corresponds to the knighthood of mediæval times, and was first instituted by Mahārāja Marthanda Varma in memory, it is said, of his great Prime Minister Rāma Aiyyan Dalawa. The individual, whom it was the king's pleasure to honour, was taken in procession on the back of an elephant through the four main streets of the fort, and received by the Prime Minister, seated by his side, and presented with pān-supāri (betel). Rare as this investiture is in modern times, there are many ancient houses, to which this title of distinction is attached in perpetuity. The title Kanakku is often enjoyed with it, the maternal uncle's name being dropped, *e.g.*, Kanakku Chempakaraman Krishnan. Tambi (younger brother) is another title prevalent in

Travancore. It is a distinctive suffix to the names of Nāyar sons of Travancore Sovereigns. But, in ancient times, this title was conferred on others also, in recognition of merit. Tambis alone proceed in palanquins, and appear before the Mahārāja without a head-dress. The consorts of Mahārājas are selected from these families. If a lady from outside is to be accepted as consort, she is generally adopted into one of these families. The title Karta, or doer, appears also to have been used as a titular name by some of the rulers of Madura. [At the Madras census, 1901, Kartākkal was returned by Balijas claiming to be descendants of the Nāyak kings of Madura and Tanjore.] The Tekkumkur and Vadakkumkur Rājas in Malabar are said to have first conferred the title Karta on certain influential Nāyar families. In social matters the authority of the Karta was supreme, and it was only on important points that higher authorities were called on to intercede. All the Kartas belong to the Illam sub-division of the Nāyar caste. The title Kuruppu, though assumed by other castes than Nāyars, really denotes an ancient section of the Nāyars, charged with various functions. Some were, for instance, instructors in the use of arms, while others were superintendents of maid-servants in the royal household. Writing concerning the Zamorin of Calicut about 1500 A.D., Barbosa states that "the king has a thousand waiting women, to whom he gives regular pay, and they are always at the court to sweep the palaces and houses of the king, and he does this for the State, because fifty would be enough to sweep." When a Mahārāja of Travancore enters into a matrimonial alliance, it is a Kuruppu who has to call out the full title of the royal consort, Panappillai Amma, after the presentation of silk and cloth has been performed. The title Panikkar is derived from pani, work.

It was the Panikkars who kept kalaris, or gymnastic and military schools, but in modern times many Panikkars have taken to the teaching of letters. Some are entirely devoted to temple service, and are consequently regarded as belonging to a division of Mārans, rather than of Nāyars. The title Kaimal is derived from kai, hand, signifying power. In former times, some Kaimals were recognised chieftains, *e.g.*, the Kaimal of Vaikkattillam in North Travancore. Others were in charge of the royal treasury, which, according to custom, could not be seen even by the kings except in their presence. "Neither could they," Barbosa writes, "take anything out of the treasury without a great necessity, and by the counsel of this person and certain others." The titles Unnithan and Valiyathan were owned by certain families in Central Travancore, which were wealthy and powerful. They were to some extent self-constituted justices of the peace, and settled all ordinary disputes arising in the kara where they dwelt. The title Menavan, or Menon, means a superior person, and is derived from mel, above, and avan he. The recipient of the title held it for his lifetime, or it was bestowed in perpetuity on his family, according to the amount of money paid down as atiyara. As soon as an individual was made a Menon, he was presented with an ola (palmyra leaf for writing on) and an iron style as symbols of the office of accountant, which he was expected to fill. In British Malabar even now every amsam or revenue village has an accountant or writer called Menon. The title Menokki, meaning one who looks over or superintends, is found only in British Malabar, as it was exclusively a creation of the Zamorin. [They are, I gather, accountants in temples.]

"There are numerous sub-divisions comprised under the general head Nāyar, of which the most important,

mentioned in vernacular books, are Kiriyaṃ, Illaṃ, Svarupaṃ, Itacheri or Idacheri, Pallichan, Ashtikkurichchi, Vattakātan, Otatu, Pulikkal, Vyapari, Vilakkitalavan, and Veluthetan. Of these Ashtikkurichchi and Pulikkal are divisions of Mārān, Vyapari is a division of Chettis, and Vilakkitalavan and Veluthetan are barbers and washermen respectively.

“The chief divisions of Nāyars, as now recognised, are as follows :—

1. Kiriyaṃ, a name said to be a corruption of the Sanskrit griha, meaning house. This represents the highest class, the members of which were, in former times, not obliged to serve Brāhmins and Kshatriyas.

2. Illakkar.—The word illaṃ indicates a Nambūtiri Brāhman's house, and tradition has it that every illaṃ family once served an illaṃ. But, in mediæval times, any Nāyar could get himself recognised as belonging to the Illaṃ division, provided that a certain sum of money, called adiyara, was paid to the Government. The Illakkar are prohibited from the use of fish, flesh, and liquor, but the prohibition is not at the present day universally respected. In some parts of Malabar, they have moulded many of their habits in the truly Brāhmanical style.

3. Svarupakkar.—Adherents of the Kshatriya families of Travancore. The members of the highest group, Parūr Svarupaṃ, have their purificatory rites performed by Mārāns. It is stated that they were once the Illakkar servants of one Karuttetathu Nambutiri, who was the feudal lord of Parūr, and afterwards became attached to the royal household which succeeded to that estate, thus becoming Parūr Svarupakkar.

4. Padamangalam and Tamil Padam were not originally Nāyars, but immigrants from the Tamil

country. They are confined to a few localities in Travancore, and until recently there was a distinctive difference in regard to dress and ornaments between the Tamil Padam and the ordinary Nāyars. The occupation of the Padamangalakkār is temple service, such as sweeping, carrying lamps during processions, etc. The Tamil Padakkār are believed to have taken to various kinds of occupation, and, for this reason, to have become merged with other sections.

5. Vāthi or Vātti.—This name is not found in the Jatinirnaya, probably because it had not been differentiated from Mārān. The word is a corruption of vāzhti, meaning praying for happiness, and refers to their traditional occupation. They use a peculiar drum, called nantuni. Some call themselves Daivampatis, or wards of God, and follow the makkathāyam system of inheritance (in the male line).

6. Itacheri or Idacheri, also called Pantaris in South Travancore. They are herdsmen, and vendors of milk, butter and curds. The name suggests a relation of some kind to the Idaiyan caste of the Tamil country.

7. Karuvelam, known also by other names, such as Kappiyara and Tiruvattar. Their occupation is service in the palace of the Mahārāja, and they are the custodians of his treasury and valuables. Fifty-two families are believed to have been originally brought from Kolathanād, when a member thereof was adopted into the Travancore royal family.

8. Arikuravan.—A name, meaning those who reduced the quantity of rice out of the paddy given to them to husk at the temple of Kazhayakkuttam near Trivandrum, by which they were accosted by the local chieftain.

9. Pallichchan.—Bearers of palanquins for Brāhmins and Malabar chieftains. They are also employed

as their attendants, to carry their sword and shield before them.

10. Vandikkāran.—A name, meaning cartmen, for those who supply fuel to temples, and cleanse the vessels belonging thereto.

11. Kuttina.—The only heiress of a Svarupam tarwad is said to have been a maid-servant in the Vadakketam Brāhman's house, and her daughter's tālikettu ceremony to have been celebrated in her master's newly-built cowshed. The bride was called kuttalachchi, or bride in a cowshed, and her descendants were named Kuttina Nāyars. They intermarry among themselves, and, having no priests of their own, obtain purified water from Brāhmins to remove the effects of pollution.

12. Matavar.—Also known as Puliyattu, Veliyattu, and Kāllur Nāyars. They are believed to have been good archers in former times.

13. Otatu, also called Kusa. Their occupation is to tile or thatch temples and Brāhman houses.

14. Mantalayī.—A tract of land in the Kalkulam taluk, called Mantalachchi Konam, was granted to them by the State. They are paid mourners, and attend at the Trivandrum palace when a death occurs in the royal family.

15. Manigrāmam.—Believed to represent Hindu recoveries from early conversion to Christianity. Manigrāmam was a portion of Cranganore, where early Christian immigrants settled.

16. Vattaykkatan, better known in Travancore as Chakala Nāyars, form in many respects the lowest sub-division. They are obliged to stand outside the sacrificial stones (balikallu) of a sanctuary, and are not allowed to take the title Pillai. Pulva is a title of distinction among them. One section of them is engaged

in the hereditary occupation of oil-pressing, and occupies a lower position in the social scale than the other."

The following list of "clans" among the Nāyars of Malabar whom he examined anthropometrically is given by Mr. F. Fawcett * :—

| | |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| Kiriyattil. | Vangilōth. |
| Sudra. | Kitāvu. |
| Kurup. | Pallichan. |
| Nambiyar. | Muppāthināyiran. |
| Urāli. | Viyāpāri or Rāvāri. |
| Nalliōden. | Attikurissi. |
| Viyyūr. | Manavalan. |
| Akattu Charna. | Adungādi. |
| Purattu Charna. | Adiōdi. |
| Vattakkād. | Amayengolam. |

"The Kurup, Nambiyar Viyyūr, Manavālan, Vengōlan, Nelliōden, Adungādi, Kitāvu, Adiōdi, Āmayengolam, all superior clans, belong, properly speaking, to North Malabar. The Kiriyattil, or Kiriyam, is the highest of all the clans in South Malabar, and is supposed to comprise, or correspond with the group of clans first named from North Malabar. The Akattu Charna clan is divided into two sub-clans, one of which looks to the Zamorin as their lord, and the other owns lordship to minor lordlings, as the Tirumulpād of Nilambūr. The former are superior, and a woman of the latter may mate with a man of the former, but not *vice versā*. In the old days, every Nāyar chief had his Charnavar, or adherents. The Purattu Charna are the outside adherents, or fighters and so on, and the Akattu Charna are the inside adherents—clerks and domestics. The clan from which the former were drawn is superior to the latter. The Urālīs are said to have been masons; the Pallichans manchil

* Madras Museum Bull., III, 3, 1901.

bearers.* The Sūdra clan supplies female servants in the houses of Nambūdiris. The Vattakkād (or Chakkingal : chakku, oil press) clan, whose proper *métier* is producing gingelly or cocoanut oil with the oil-mill, is the lowest of all, excepting, I think, the Pallichan. Indeed, in North Malabar, I have frequently been told by Nāyars of the superior clans that they do not admit the Vattakkād to be Nāyars, and say that they have adopted the honorary affix Nāyar to their names quite recently. There is some obscurity as regards the sub-divisions of the Vattakkād clan. To the north of Calicut, in Kurumbranād, they are divided into the Undiātuna, or those who pull (to work the oil-machine by hand), and the Murivechchu-ātune, or those who tie or fasten bullocks, to work the oil-machine. Yet further north, at Tellicherry and thereabouts, there are no known sub-divisions, while in Ernād, to the eastward, the clan is divided into the Veluttātu (white) and Karuttātu (black). The white have nothing to do with the expression and preparation of oil, which is the hereditary occupation of the black. The white may eat with Nāyars of any clan ; the black can eat with no others outside their own clan. The black sub-clan is strictly endogamous ; the other, the superior sub-clan, is not. Their women may marry men of any other clan, the Pallichchan excepted. Union by marriage, or whatever the function may be named, is permissible between most of the other clans, the rule by which a woman may never unite herself with her inferior being always observed. She may unite herself with a man of her own clan, or with a man of any superior clan, or with a Nambūtiri, an Embrāntiri, or any other Brāhman,

* A manchil is a conveyance carried on men's shoulders, and more like a hammock slung on a pole, with a flat covering over it, than a palanquin.

or with one of the small sects coming between the Brāhman and the Nāyars. But she cannot under any circumstances unite herself with a man of a clan, which is inferior to hers. Nor can she eat with those of a clan inferior to her; a man may, and does without restriction. Her children by an equal in race and not only in mere social standing, but never those by one who is racially inferior, belong to her taravād.* The children of the inferior mothers are never brought into the taravād of the superior fathers, *i.e.*, they are never brought into it to belong to it, but they may live there. And, where they do so, they cannot enter the taravād kitchen, or touch the women while they are eating. Nor are they allowed to touch their father's corpse. They may live in the taravād under these and other disabilities, but are never of it. The custom, which permits a man to cohabit with a woman lower in the social scale than himself, and prohibits a woman from exercising the same liberty, is called the rule of anulōmam and prati-lōmam. Dr. Gundert derives anulōmam from *anu*, with *lōmam* (*rōmam*), hair, or going with the hair or grain. So *pratilōmam* means going against the hair or grain. According to this usage, a Nāyar woman, consorting with a man of a higher caste, follows the hair, purifies the blood, and raises the progeny in social estimation. By cohabitation with a man of a lower division (clan) or caste, she is guilty of *pratilōmam*, and, if the difference of caste were admittedly great, she would be turned out of her family, to prevent the whole family being boycotted. A corollary of this custom is that a Nambūtiri Brāhman father cannot touch his own children by his Nāyar consort without bathing

* Tarvād or taravād, a marumakkathayam family, consisting of all the descendants in the female line of one common female ancestor.

afterwards to remove pollution. The children in the marumakkatayam family belong, of course, to their mother's family, clan, and caste. They are Nāyars, not Nambūtiris. The Nāyars of North Malabar are held to be superior all along the line, clan for clan, to those of South Malabar, which is divided from the north by the river Korapuzha, seven miles north of Calicut, so that a woman of North Malabar would not unite herself to a man of her own clan name of South Malabar. A Nāyar woman of North Malabar cannot pass northward beyond the frontier; she cannot pass the hills to the eastward; and she cannot cross the Korapuzha to the south. It is tabu. The women of South Malabar are similarly confined by custom, breach of which involves forfeiture of caste. To this rule there is an exception, and of late years the world has come in touch with the Malayāli, who nowadays goes to the University, studies medicine and law in the Presidency town (Madras), or even in far off England. Women of the relatively inferior Akattu Charna clan are not under quite the same restrictions as regards residence as are those of most of the other clans; so, in these days of free communications, when Malayālis travel, and frequently reside far from their own country, they often prefer to select wives from this Akattu Charna clan. But the old order changeth everywhere, and nowadays Malayālis who are in the Government service, and obliged to reside far away from Malabar, and a few who have taken up their abode in the Presidency town, have wrenched themselves free of the bonds of custom, and taken with them their wives who are of clans other than the Akattu Charna. The interdiction to travel, and the possible exception to it in the case of Akattu Charna women, has been explained to me in this way. The Nāyar woman observes pollution for three days during

menstruation. While in her period, she may not eat or drink with any other member of the taravād, and on the fourth day she must be purified. Purification is known as māttu (change), and it is effected by the washerwoman, who, in some parts of South Malabar, is of the Mannān or Vannān caste, whose *métier* is to wash for the Nāyars and Nambūtiris, but who is, as a rule, the washerwoman of the Tiyan caste, giving her, after her bath, one of her own cloths to wear (māttu, change of raiment) instead of the soiled cloth, which she takes away to wash. Pollution, which may come through a death in the family, through child-birth, or menstruation, must be removed by māttu. Until it is done, the woman is out of caste. It must be done in the right way at the right moment, under pain of the most unpleasant social consequences. How that the influential rural local magnate wreaks vengeance on a taravād by preventing the right person giving māttu to the women is well known in Malabar. He could not, with all the sections of the Penal Code at his disposal, inflict greater injury. Now the Nāyar woman is said to feel compelled to remain in Malabar, or within her own part of it, in order to be within reach of māttu. My informant tells me that, the Vannān caste being peculiar to Malabar, the Nāyar women cannot go where these are not to be found, and that māttu must be done by one of that caste. But I know, from my own observation in the most truly conservative localities, in Kurumbranād for example, where the Nāyar has a relative superiority, that the washerman is as a rule a Tiyan; and I cannot but think that the interdiction has other roots than those involved in māttu. It does not account for the superstition against crossing water, which has its counterparts elsewhere in the world. The origin of the interdiction to cross the river southwards



AKATTUCHARNA NĀYAR.

has been explained to me as emanating from a command of the Kōlatirri Rājah in days gone by, when, the Arabs having come to the country about Calicut, there was a chance of the women being seized and taken as wives. The explanation is somewhat fanciful. The prohibition to cross the river to the northwards is supposed to have originated in much the same way. As bearing on this point, I may mention that the Nāyar women living to the east of Calicut cannot cross the river backwater, and come into the town." It may be noted in this connection that the Paikāra river on the Nilgiri hills is sacred to the Todas, and, for fear of mishap from arousing the wrath of the river-god, a pregnant Toda woman will not venture to cross it. No Toda will use the river water for any purpose, and they do not touch it, unless they have to ford it. They then walk through it, and, on reaching the opposite bank, bow their heads. Even when they walk over the Paikāra bridge, they take their hands out of the putkuli (body-cloth) as a mark of respect.

The complexity of the sub-divisions among the Nāyars in North Malabar is made manifest by the following account thereof in the Gazetteer of Malabar. "There are exogamous sub-divisions (perhaps corresponding to original tarwāds) called kulams, and these are grouped to form the sub-castes which are usually endogamous. It is quite impossible to attempt a complete account of the scheme, but to give some idea of its nature one example may be taken, and dealt with in some detail : and for this purpose the portion of Kurumbranād known as Payyanād will serve. This is the country between the Kōttapuzha and Pōrapuzha rivers, and is said to have been given by a Rāja of Kurumbranād to a certain Ambādī Kōvilagam Tamburātti (the stānam or title of the senior lady of the Zāmorin Rāja's family). In

this tract or nād there were originally six stānis or chieftains, who ruled, under the Rāja, with the assistance, or subject to the constitutional control, of four assemblies of Nāyars called Kūttams. Each kūttam had its hereditary president. In this tract there are seven groups of kulams. The highest includes twelve kulams, Vengalat, Pattillat, Viyyūr, Nelliōt, Atunkudi, Amayangalat, Nellōli, Nilanchēri, Rendillat, Pulliyāni, Orakātteri, and Venmēri. Of these, the Pattillat and Rendillat (members of the ten and members of the two illams or houses) affix the title Adiyōdi to their names, the last three affix the title Nambiyar, and the rest affix Nāyar. Of the six stānis already mentioned, three, with the title of Adiyōdi, belong to the Vengalat kulam, while two of the presidents of kuttams belonged to the Pattillat kulam. The younger members of the stāni houses are called kidavu. It is the duty of women of Viyyūr and Nelliōt kulams to join in the bridal procession of members of the Vengalat kulam, the former carrying lamps, and the latter salvers containing flowers, while the Rendillat Adiyōdis furnish cooks to the same class. Pattillat Adiyōdis and Orakātteri Nambiyars observe twelve days' pollution, while all the other kulams observe fifteen. The second group consists of six kulams, Eravattūr, Ara-Eravattūr (or half Eravattūr), and Attikōdan Nāyars, Tonderi Kidāvus, Punnan Nambiyars, and Mēnōkkis. All these observe fifteen days' pollution. The third group consists of three kulams, Tacchōli to which the remaining three stānis belong, Kōthōli, and Kuruvattānchēri. All affix Nāyar to their names, and observe fifteen days' pollution. The fourth group consists of three kulams, Peruvānian Nambiyars, Chellādan Nāyars, and Vennapālan Nāyars. All three observe fifteen days' pollution. The name Peruvānian means great or

principal oil-man ; and it is the duty of this caste to present the Kurumbranād Rāja with oil on the occasion of his formal installation. The fifth group consists of the three kulams, Mannangazhi, Paramchela, and Pallikara Nāyars, all observing fifteen days' pollution. A member of the first-named class has to place an āmanapalaga (the traditional seat of Nambūdiris and other high castes) for the Kurumbranād Rāja to sit on at the time of his installation, while a member of the second has to present him with a cloth on the same occasion. The sixth group consists of four kiriyams named Patam, Tulu, Manan, and Ottu respectively, and has the collective name of Rāvāri. The seventh group consists of six kulams, Kandōn, Kannankōdan, Kotta, Karumba, Kundakollavan, and Panakādan Nāyars. All observe fifteen days' pollution, and the women of these six kulams have certain duties to perform in connection with the purification of women of the Vengalat, Pattillat, and Orakatteri kulams. Besides these seven groups, there are a few other classes without internal sub-divisions. One such class is known as Pāppini Nāyar. A woman of this class takes the part of the Brāhmini woman (Nambissan) at the tāli-kettu kalyanam of girls belonging to the kulams included in the third group. Another class called Pālattavan takes the place of the Attikurissi Nāyar at the funeral ceremonies of the same three kulams."

In illustration of the custom of polyandry among the Nāyars of Malabar in by-gone days, the following extracts may be quoted. "On the continent of India," it is recorded in Ellis' edition of the Kural, "polyandry is still said to be practiced in Orissa, and among particular tribes in other parts. In Malayālam, as is well known, the vision of Plato in his ideal republic is more completely

realised, the women among the Nāyars not being restricted to family or number, but, after she has been consecrated by the usual rites before the nuptial fire, in which ceremony any indifferent person may officiate as the representative of her husband, being in her intercourse with the other sex only restrained by her inclinations; provided that the male with whom she associates be of an equal or superior tribe. But it must be stated, for the glory of the female character, that, notwithstanding the latitude thus given to the Nāyattis, and that they are thus left to the guidance of their own free will and the play of their own fancy (which in other countries has not always been found the most efficient check on the conduct of either sex), it rarely happens that they cohabit with more than one person at the same time. Whenever the existing connexion is broken, whether from incompatibility of temper, disgust, caprice, or any of the thousand vexations by which from the frailty of nature domestic happiness is liable to be disturbed, the woman seeks another lover, the man another mistress. But it mostly happens that the bond of paternity is here, as elsewhere, too strong to be shaken off, and that the uninfluenced and uninterested union of love, when formed in youth, continues even in the decline of age."

In a note on the Nāyars in the sixteenth century, Cæsar Fredericke writes as follows.* "These Nairi having their wives common amongst themselves, and when any of them goe into the house of any of these women, he leaveth his sworde and target at the door, and the time that he is there, there dare not be any so

* The Voyage and Travell of M. Cæsar Fredericke, Merchant of Venice, into the East Indies and beyond the Indies (1563). Translation. Hakluyt Voyages, V, 394.

hardie as to come into that house. The king's children shall not inherite the kingdom after their father, because they hold this opinion, that perchance they were not begotten of the king their father, but of some other man, therefore they accept for their king one of the sonnes of the king's sisters, or of some other woman of the blood roiall, for that they be sure that they are of the blood roiall."

In his "New Account of the East Indies, (1727)" Hamilton wrote: "The husbands," of whom, he said, there might be twelve, but no more at one time, "agree very well, for they cohabit with her in their turns, according to their priority of marriage, ten days more or less according as they can fix a term among themselves, and he that cohabits with her maintains her in all things necessary for his time, so that she is plentifully provided for by a constant circulation. When the man that cohabits with her goes into her house he leaves his arms at the door, and none dare remove them or enter the house on pain of death. When she proves with child, she nominates its father, who takes care of his education after she has suckled it, and brought it to walk or speak, but the children are never heirs to their father's estate, but the father's sister's children are."

Writing in the latter half of the eighteenth century, Grose says* that "it is among the Nairs that principally prevails the strange custom of one wife being common to a number; in which point the great power of custom is seen from its rarely or never producing any jealousies or quarrels among the co-tenants of the same woman. Their number is not so much limited by any specific

* Travels to the East Indies.

law as by a kind of tacit convention, it scarcely ever happening that it exceeds six or seven. The woman, however, is under no obligation to admit above a single attachment, though not less respected for using her privilege to its utmost extent. If one of the husbands happens to come to the house when she is employed with another, he knows that circumstance by certain signals left at the door that his turn is not come, and departs very resignedly." Writing about the same time, Sonnerat * says that "these Brāhmans do not marry, but have the privilege of enjoying all the Nairresses. This privilege the Portuguese who were esteemed as a great caste, obtained and preserved, till their drunkenness and debauchery betrayed them into a commerce with all sorts of women. The following right is established by the customs of the country. A woman without shame may abandon herself to all men who are not of an inferior caste to her own, because the children (notwithstanding what Mr. de Voltaire says) do not belong to the father, but to the mother's brother; they become his legitimate heirs at their birth, even of the crown if he is king." In his 'Voyages and Travels', Kerr writes as follows. † "By the laws of their country these Nayres cannot marry, so that no one has any certain or acknowledged son or father; all their children being born of mistresses, with each of whom three or four Nayres cohabit by agreement among themselves. Each one of this confraternity dwells a day in his turn with the joint mistress, counting from noon of one day to the same time of the next, after which he departs, and another

* Voyage to the East Indies, 1774 and 1781.

† R. Kerr. General History and Collection of Voyages and Travels, 1811, History of the Discovery and Conquest of India by the Portuguese between the years 1497 and 1525, from the original Portuguese of Herman Lopes de Castaneda.

comes for the like time. Thus they spend their time without the care or trouble of wives and children, yet maintain their mistresses well according to their rank. Any one may forsake his mistress at his pleasure ; and, in like manner, the mistress may refuse admittance to any one of her lovers when she pleases. These mistresses are all gentlewomen of the Nayre caste, and the Nayres, besides being prohibited from marrying, must not attach themselves to any woman of a different rank. Considering that there are always several men attached to one woman, the Nayres never look upon any of the children born of their mistresses as belonging to them, however strong a resemblance may subsist, and all inheritances among the Nayres go to their brothers, or the sons of their sisters, born of the same mothers, all relationship being counted only by female consanguinity and descent. This strange law prohibiting marriage was established that they might have neither wives nor children on whom to fix their love and attachment ; and that, being free from all family cares, they might more willingly devote themselves entirely to warlike service." The term son of ten fathers is used as a term of abuse among Nāyars to this day.* Tīpū Sultān is said to have issued the following proclamation to the Nāyars, on the occasion of his visit to Calicut in 1788. "And, since it is a practice with you for one woman to associate with ten men, and you leave your mothers and sisters unconstrained in their obscene practices, and are thence all born in adultery, and are more shameless in your connections than the beasts of the field ; I hereby require you to forsake these sinful practices, and live like the rest of mankind." †

* Wigram, *Malabar Law and Custom*, Ed. 1900.

† T. A. Kalyanakrishna Aiyar, *Malabar Quart. Review*, II, 1903.