

Family History

The basic unit of society is family. In many well established and ancient societies, family kinship up to seven generations was considered sacred. Some of the tribes were always prepared to keep up their tradition, social values, cultural heritage and economic status even at the cost of bloodshed. The inherent herd-instinct in man to find out the roots of his family is telling in the reports of certain such occurrences now and then appearing in the newspapers.

The origin of many Kudumbayogams now prevalent among Syrian Christians especially in Central Travancore wants research. Inspired by community feelings of oneness, they were to initiate the formation of such Kudumbayogams with a view to sharing and perpetuating their family culture, common interests, values and identity as an essential need of the age. The advertisement of family gatherings off and on coming in the newspapers under the column “Kudumbayogam” sheds light upon the liveliness and activities of many such ones among the Syrian Christians of all denominations. Of course, such Kudumbayogams are an asset to the community as they prosper mutual love and cordiality among the members and an atmosphere for helping one another, especially the needy. The very recollection of the brilliant traditions acquired through various spells of time, the occasional service and contributions sponsored to the surrounding society by Kudumbayogams inculcate the growth of inspiration and liveliness in the growing generations, Kudumbayogams can be considered an asset to the well being of society.

The Marattukalam Family In Changanacherry

The Marattukalam Family which settled in Changanacherry and made varied contributions working hand in hand with people of different religions, has now reached the eighth generation. During this period the number of members increased by God’s grace and a good many had to move to other parts of the country and the world to earn their living. Our families have settled in various areas of Changanacherry like Chethipuzha, Kadamanchira, Ithithanam, Thrikodithanam, Palakkulam, Venkotah, Madappally, Mamood, Palamattom and Kadayanikad; other places in Kerala like Thiruvananthapuram, Punalur, Muttar, Alappuzha, Thodupuzha, Kannur, Manjeri, and other parts of Malabar, Kottayam, Manganam, Kuzhimattom, Ayarkunnam, Vadakkancherry etc..., places outside Kerala like Chennai, Bangalore, Mysore, Mumbai, Kolkotta, Visakhapattanam, Nasik and foreign countries like the USA, Canada, Germany, England and the Gulf countries.

The family has been able to acquire a challenging tradition and fame in social, economic, political, educational and religious fields. There is even a Marattukalam Bazaar adjacent to the central junction of the town itself. At the entrance of this Bazaar the four storied “Marattukalam Buildings” stands high. Many business establishments of Marattukalam family flourish in this Bazaar. The colossal building complex in the Kavalam Bazaar adjacent to the central junction belongs to the Marattukalam family. Ruby Bakery, Maratt Medicals, Maratt Trades etc. owned by our family are very close to the central junction. Even though the grand buildings and complexes which house Indian Bank, Vachaparampil Jewellery, Philjo Corporation etc. near the central junction were constructed years ago, they remain artistic edifices even now. To the west of the central junction are houses with granary rooms and rented shops. Some plots and buildings owned by our forefathers near the central junction have been disposed off only recently. All these portray the envious growth and the celebrity that the Marattukalam family has in Changanacherry.

Faith in God

Atheistic movements have grown in recent times and are influencing politics. Even though a good number of Christians are members and co-travellers of such movements, it is heartening that none of our family has joined them or has become an atheist. The first Priest from this family, Fr. Thomman Thomas and the subsequent Jesuit priest Fr. Chacko S.J., after rendering meritorious services have gone to receive their eternal award. A CMI priest, Fr. George is now rendering edifying service in the Chanda Mission. There are a few nuns too who have offered their services to the Church.

Progress in Education

There are many in this family who have reached the higher rungs of the educational ladder and are rendering outstanding services as executive officers, IFS and IES and as engineers, doctors, technical experts, scientists, businessmen and industrialists in India and abroad. In addition, there are many graduates who serve in educational institutions and public offices. Many are undergoing higher education.

Economic Scene

It was at a time when Changanacherry had no industry to boast of that the late Kuncheria T. Marattukalam started the huge factory ‘Ruby Rubber Works’ as a forerunner of business expansion in the town. The locality is now known as Ruby Nagar. The industry established many attractive showrooms of higher rank in all important cities and towns all over the country for the sale of its various products. This institution that provided employment to thousands

raised the reputation of the family. All his brothers were its Managing Partners. They were the people who ran the famous Kerala Boat Service till it was nationalized. Gradually they emerged as holders of famous estates in Kerala at Nelliampathy, Mampad, Akalapuzha, Payyoli and Manimala. Now their successors are engaged in running reputed enterprises in the field of agriculture and industry in places like Mysore, Nilambur, Bangalore and Chennai etc. Turning the leaves of this book, you will come across many other adventurous souls from our family.

The Realm of Politics

The political activities of Changanaherry were at first centered round the municipal administration. In those golden days, the Municipality of Changanacherry was a stage adorned by men of dignity, nobility and education. Sri. Thomas T. Marattukalam who was the Managing Partner of Ruby Rubber Works, an active worker of the Indian National Congress and the President of the Changanacherry constituency, served as Municipal Chairman for a pretty long period. It is really a matter of pride that other seven members of the family served as Municipal councillors in different periods. Sri Thomas Kuruvilla, who has been a politician from his younger days, has earned fame as an ideal Congress worker and trade union leader. Hailing from the Muttar branch and settled in Chidambaram in Tamilnadu for a long time, Sri. Mathew T. has served as a Councillor in Chidambaram Municipality.

Social, Cultural and Artistic Fields

This family has begotten some geniuses who have led from the front in the social, cultural and artistic fields. A world famous person in this field is the late Fr. Chacko S.J. (Jesuit Priest). He is the author of many religious books in English which maintain a lofty standard. There are many precocious geniuses in our family who have exhibited their aesthetic skill in dancing, music and histrionics.

Our forefathers have made many contributions to the development of the town of Changanacherry. The best example is the Marattukalam Bazaar in the heart of the town. The road situated in the plot worth several lakhs of rupees has been donated by the members of our family to the Changanacherry Municipality.

Immigration to Changanacherry

It was during a critical era that hastened the political, social and cultural transformation in the whole of Kerala, when our ancestor Chacko Thomman came with his family to settle down in Changanacherry. The Kerala of today was then three different regions: Travancore, Kochi and Malabar. During the

latter half of the eighteenth century, a sense of terror and panic was prevalent in the minds of the people of Kerala, especially in the northern parts because of the battles for expansion and power by the feudal princes, the continual military movements of Hyder Ali and his son Tippu Sultan to annex parts of Kerala, the planned manoeuvres with cannon from the Portuguese, the Dutch and the English in Kerala, their attacks on princes, the division and petty quarrels among the land lords of the regions. Both the invasions of Hyder Ali were restrained to the Malabar area. But his son Tippu's invasion in 1795 came as near as Alwaye via Kodungallore, Paravur and Kochi. He devastated everything in his way, sowed seeds of terror in the minds of princes as well as the common people. To save their lives, they had to flee south. The kings of Travancore were then quite happy to provide them with all help and receive them with open arms.

The Syrian Christians of those times enjoyed respect and honour on a par with Hindus of the higher strata of society in Kerala. As it is clear, the first Syrian Christians of Kerala were converts from the higher strata of Hinduism, especially the Brahmins. There were Christian and Jewish colonies in Kodungallur. As we know, our Apostle St. Thomas landed in Kodungallur and founded churches in Pazhoor, Kokkamangalam, Kodungallur, Kottakkavu (Paravur) and other places. Thus in these areas the Christians received the faith directly from St. Thomas and in course of time the places were thickly populated with their successive generations. Among them, two families, Kalliankal and Valliankal lived in the street adjacent to the Kottakkavu church. Legend has it that consequent on Tippu's attack, these two families who lived in close neighbourliness left everything behind and fled to Travancore in order to protect their faith along with the princes and many others via Kuttanad region. They settled at centres like Alappuzha, Champakkulam, and Pulincunnoo. It is said that the Valliankal family settled at Pulincunnoo. Tradition claims that two among them, our ancestor Chcko Thomman **and his brother came** to Vazhappally in Changanacherry and settled down in **two** different places there. Vazhappally, then, was an important cultural center of Changanacherry.

The Family Name Marattukalam

The family names were then related to the names of the places people came to settle down. Those names were accepted as house names too. Those who settled in Palathra were known as the people of 'Palathra'; those who settled near the Palam (bridge) came to be known as 'Palathinkal'; those who lived near the yard where coconut seedlings were grown as 'Thaikalam' and those who lived near Padanilam (field for Kalari and Yoga, for fight and local war) were

known as 'Padanilam'.

It was in the Marattukalam, paddy threshing yard of Maratt mother, in Vazhappally West (most of the people of Vazhappally lived there) that our **founding father first settled down.** Today our family name is abridged as 'Maratt' by many of our siblings. By the side of the paddy threshing yard, usually there was a big granary room and adjacent to it was an attached outhouse. We, having come to settle down in Marattukalam, our family name, according to the custom of the day, came to be known as 'Marattukalam'. Wherever the members of our family have settled down, it is heartening that all the branches have retained this family name. The land adjacent to the limitless expanse of paddy fields in the west, is the region of Vazhappally West. The barns and threshing areas of many a landlord and nobleman are even now seen in a row by the side of the paddy fields. They are named Pappadikalam, Padinjarekalam, Marattukalam, Thaikkalam, Nelpurakalam, Kallukalam, Mancherikalam, Chittettukalam, etc. Those who came to settle down in these yards as a result of immigration have come down to be known by the same house names.

Moving to Changanacherry Central Junction

Chacko Thomman did not venture to reside in Vazhappally for long. Perhaps the proximity to the Church and the market of Changanacherry prompted him to move to a plot where now the police quarters are situated. **The family which** settled down thereafter at Marattukalam in Vazhappally also accepted this house name. They are the members of 'Vazhappally Marattukalam' residing at Vazhappally now. These two families do not claim any blood relationship. For reasons unknown no member of our family is now residing at Vazhappally West. Of the Vazhappally Marattukalam nobody is in the central junction of Changanacherry too. We came to be known as 'Changanacherry Marattukalam' or 'Kavala Marattukalam'. As per the register of baptism from 1802 available in the Changanacherry cathedral (no earlier register is available) there is proof of our settling down at Vazhappally and moving to Thakadiyel. Thakadiyel was then the present central junction, adjacent areas and the site of the police quarters. Geevarughese was the fifth son of our father. Records show that he received baptism at Changanacherry from his residence at Vazhappally. It is recorded in the above mentioned register as follows: "Chingam 1819 – Annaikadavil Marattukalathil Thommi Achamma's son Geevarughese – 'head' – Koduppanayil Chacko". ('head' means Godfather). In those days Annaikadavu was the bathing ghat where the nomadic Annaais used to bathe and stay. Today, the locality is known also as Parekkadavu. Both are the same. From the lay of the land, it appears that the new Parekkadavu church is built on the site of Marattukalam. 'A.D. 1868 Meenam 31 on the day Thakadiyel Marattukalathil Ouseph Rosa was delivered of a son Scaria –

baptized the same day – Chacko and ditto Anna’. From the above register of baptism the date of birth of many of our forefathers can be found out. When our forefather lived at Vazhappally, the adjacent lands of higher level were mostly forests, the habitat of wild animals. Hence the parents did not send their children alone to other places. Our forefathers had a respectable position among the aristocratic and affluent Hindus of Vazhappally. It is said that the oil offered to the temple was touched by them for **sanctifying** and they were given ‘Anchekal and Koppu’ (gifts) from the temple. They were all observed as per the prevalent social rites. They were firm and courageous in everything related to their faith. There are various tales of adventure associated with this.

Development of the family in the town of Changanacherry

Subsequent events go to prove that our forefather Thomman was a farsighted man who could rise to any occasion. It was an era when a Christian society was shaping at Vazhappally. The feudal society was undergoing transformation in and around Changanacherry. Farm lands were being gradually registered in the names of the tenants. Majority of Christians were tenants. The authorities saw them as people who worked hard in the agricultural sector and sincerely toiled for the economic progress of the country. They got continued encouragement from the authorities. In addition to farming they evinced their talents in the field of commerce. They engaged themselves in the trade of hill produces from Pala, Kanjirappally, Ponkunnam etc. and became quite capable of controlling their destiny. The market of Changanacherry was founded by Velu Thampi Dalawa in 1805. The market expanded in due course with the increase in shops and bazaars. Having made financial gains from farming and trade, Thomman bought meadows at Thakadiyel near the church and the market and he settled down there permanently. The house then was situated at the site of the present police quarters. The house, well and the adjacent jack tree can be seen even now. The neighbours have been those of Olassa and Kavalam Puthuparampu. The branches of their families are still there. Thus Thomman and his five heroic children and their families came to be settled down in centers at Thakadiyel, Vezhakkat (now Morkulangara) and the places near the junction south and west of the Bishop’s Palace. They engaged themselves in large scale farming and business and became powerful men of high stature to be reckoned with, in the society around. They controlled the marketing of various hill products. If Changanacherry is the centre controlling egg marketing in the state, it was due to the effort of Sri M.T. Thomas and his sons who blazed the trail in this regard. The monopoly and control of egg marketing to outside Kerala was solely in their hands. In course of time, our forefathers became the owners of two hundred plots of land, paddy fields almost to the same extent and the lion’s share of commercial institutions in the

town, Vazhappally, Chethipuzha and areas near Parel Church. Our forefathers lived in large quadrangular buildings with courtyard and granary rooms in ancient aristocratic style. The photographs of a few houses that remain now are given in the history book. It is the comprehensive growth achieved by the unity and hard work of our ancestors, that was mainly responsible for the glory and renown of the Marattukalam family at Changanacherry. Many of our ancestors had the privilege to elect members to the Travancore legislative assembly. Only those who remitted Rs. 5 as revenue tax enjoyed this privilege. It may be noted at this juncture that the number of such voters in the whole state was then less than 2000. Even though the number of the members of the family residing in the town at present has dwindled due to the migration of many to the various parts of the world, they still perpetuate the glory of the family as a renowned community and illustrious fraternity.

Note: History of Maratukalam family was published by the Kudumbayogam in 1995. This is a presentation based on that book.

MARATTUKALAM KUDUMBAYOGAM & ITS FUNCTIONS

Herein is an attempt at giving an overview of the genesis, growth and the activities of Marattukalam Kudumbayogam from an historical perspective. “Kudumbayogam” as everyone knows is rooted among the Syrian Christians of Kerala especially those of Central Travencore. As the family becomes larger and the members settle elsewhere and far away, it is Kudumbayogam that serves as a platform for the members to be united in love and service. Though the Marattukalam family saw its beginning in Changanacherry in the beginning of the 19th century, a Kudumbayogam for the first time was instituted in the year 1905. At a time when several Kudumbayogams were in existence why it took so long for the Marattukalam Kudumbayogam to take shape is to be given thought. Probably a Kudumbayogam was there before 1905 itself; or else the need for a Kudumbayogam was not felt in the early stages of its growth as the family units lived in and around Changanacherry and to gather and work together on occasions like weddings, deaths and the like was not difficult. By the 20th century the family became quite large and its members settled down at far away places, the possibility and the occasions for communication and contact became few. This saw to the beginning of the Kudumbayogam in 1905. Nothing is known about its activities except a few hints on its office bearers. It lasted only for four years. The pressure of growth-related circumstances spurred a few elders of the family to begin anew a Kudumbayogam in 1955. By 1960 that too saw its end. The younger generations who were a part of that Kudumbayogam are active even today. According to them the flaws in its purpose, aim and the (improper) guidelines on its workings have been the reasons why it was short lived. For instance, a Kudumbayogam where hundreds of members took part always began with a lunch. It was pretty expensive for the head of the family who hosted it. Only a few willing rich could host such a Kudumbayogam. So later on no one came forward to host one. Gradually the activities of the Kudumbayogam slowed down. The desire to continue the Kudumbayogam was welling up in the younger generations. Learning a lesson from their experience they fashioned a new style of work and 1975 saw the resurgence of the Kudumbayogam. At this juncture it is befitting to remember with gratitude Mr. Antony Scaria and the late M.J. James the then leaders. For its activities a bye-law was codified. Expenses met individually was brought under control. Contributions from members, monthly fees, collection through raffle tickets and so on are the source of income for the day-to-day expenses of the revived Kudumbayogam. By this arrangement the one who hosts the Kudumbayogam is in no way burdened financially even for the annual gathering of the Kudumbayogam.

Even the financially not sound families too now come forward to host meetings such as annual, general body and different committee meetings in their homes. This can be cited as the prime example of the success of the new style of the Kudumbayogam. Previously, as the change of leadership was not insisted on by rule, the leadership may remain in the hands of a few indefinitely. As per the new bye-law one person cannot remain in office for more than two years. There is no monopoly. The emergence of the youth in the Kudumbayogam activities has energized and enlivened it. Of course, young blood has its own vitality always.

To ensure active participation from its members, they are indirectly compelled to come over to the Kudumbayogam. One way to do so is to respect them giving them consideration as “active members” and give heed to their suggestions. Only the active members can become office bearers. Thus, the Kudumbayogam is blessed with members who are selfless, service-minded and dedicated.

Prior to 1975, the Kudumbayogam had only annual meetings. There were no monthly gatherings. This long interval between meetings was a hindrance in fostering the bond among the members of the family. A remedial measure taken was to have at least one gathering every month. Now the members have the opportunity to meet and nurture their love and work together in friendship. In short, the opportunity availed of by the Kudumbayogam once in a year is now enjoyed every month. This has greatly helped in achieving the goal set by the Kudumbayogam.

In the annual meetings ladies in the family also are encouraged to participate. As a new venture they are given preference in the arts and sports competitions as well. As a result, now, the ladies too show interest and liking to the Kudumbayogam activities.

For any organization or institution to exist for a long period of time, the next generation has to be moulded to shoulder responsibilities. Keeping this in mind a number of programmes are organized for the children of the family. In the arts and sports competitions conducted by the Kudumbayogam they are given more consideration. In the competitions more items are set apart for them. Both girls and boys are active in this. The “Kudumbachampion” every year is bagged by the children. To train them to take up the responsibilities of the Kudumbayogam in the future, they are taught the basics of the activities of the organization through “Balayogam”. The Balayogam members are found to be active in the Kudumbayogam activities later in life.

The other major areas of activities the Kudumbayogam concentrates on are given under:

Families that are not sound financially are helped in times of need like marriage, education, funeral, aid for trade and commerce, building houses, medical aid and the like; organize educational tours for entertainment as well as learning, prepare the history of Marattukalam family and publish it. Keep the record of the births, deaths, marriages and such important events in the family. Conduct programmes to improve the athletic, artistic and intellectual abilities of the members. For this, competitions are organized and trophies and cash awards instituted in memory of their late beloved ones. The Kudumbayogam keeps a detailed record of every member in the family and renews it from time to time, keeps photographs of different functions related to Kudumbayogam's annual celebrations. Holy Mass and Divine office are offered for the eternal rest of the deceased members of the family. It also helps the unemployed in the family find employment. For this an employment register of the ones who need employment and the ones who are ready to give employment is maintained. In emergencies the Kudumbayogam helps members find people willing to donate blood. For this also a blood group register is maintained. Kudumbayogam encourages those who excel in studies with scholarships and awards. Members who take part in all the meetings are felicitated with prizes.

The Kudumbayogam activities that saw a new beginning in 1975 moves on smoothly. This success can be attributed to the new style of functioning. Our Kudumbayogam is a model for several other "Kudumbayogams" in Changanacherry today. But for the hard work, dedication and steadfastness put in by the office bearers of yester years this success could not have been possible. We can scale heights if the dedication and hard work continues from all quarters. Let us pray that the Lord showers his blessings upon us to do so.