

NOTE

KERALA : THE HOMELAND OF THE MALAYALEES, was the title of a book in Malayalam which I wrote in 1947 and which was published in the beginning of 1948. The first part of that book traced the history of Kerala down to the establishment of British authority and covered the "same ground as is covered by Chapters II, III and IV and partly Chapter V of the present book. The second part of that book described the transformations in Kerala's social order which British rule brought about; that is covered by Chapters V and VI of the present book. The third part traced the origin and development of the National Democratic Movement of Kerala and covered the same ground as Chapters VII, VIII, IX and X of the present book.

Being the first effort to apply the general principles of Historical Materialism to the National Democratic Movement of Kerala, that book was bound to suffer from various discrepancies. I was myself conscious of the limitations of my attempt and hence, in my preface to that book, invited criticisms and suggestions from the public. Various friends offered those criticisms and suggestions to me, some of which took the form of polemical articles in the press. These criticisms and suggestions, as well as the general discussion that has been taking place during the last four years in the ranks of the Communist Party regarding the character, stage and class forces of the democratic revolution in India, helped me to see the inadequacies and fallacies of the various generalisations made by me in the original book. I, therefore, decided to completely revise it. The result of that revision is now being presented to the non-Malayalee public.

While writing the original book, I was seriously handicapped by the fact that there was not, to my knowledge at the time, anything in the authoritative works of Historical Materialism which would give the clue to the crucial problem of the history of Kerala—how and why the matriarchal family has continued to exist in Kerala down to the 20th century while it was superseded in all civilised countries in the cen-

turies before Christ? My book could not give a satisfactory solution to the problem. Since the publication of that book, however, I was able to study certain contributions by British Marxist historians (Thomson, Christopher Hill, Gordon Childe, etc.) on the problem of the replacement of the matriarchal by the patriarchal family in Greece and some other countries (in the columns of the *Labour Monthly* and *Modern Quarterly*). The study of these articles, together with a re-study of Engels' *Origin of the Family* and Marx's *Letters on India*, helped me to revise the understanding which formed the basis of the earlier parts of my book.

It was in the midst of this that Com. Stalin's celebrated work, *On Linguistics*, appeared and revolutionised scientific thought. His new teachings regarding Basis and Superstructure, the fact brought out by him that, far from being merely a mirror of the basis, the superstructure does very often act independently of the basis, and even influences the transformation of the basis, struck me as the guiding line for the student of Kerala's history whose job it is to explain such a mysterious phenomenon as the co-existence of the matriarchal family and a militarist-feudal State in mediaeval Kerala. This helped me to further revise my understanding.

Needless to say that the result of these revisions, as set out in the following pages, will evoke bitter criticism on the part of the champions of the traditional history of Kerala. It is natural that, rejecting, as I am doing, the basic understanding of both the Dravidian and Aryan schools of the traditional history of Kerala, I would be attacked by both. I would naturally welcome these attacks, since it is necessary for the proletarian point of view of history to come into conflict with the ruling class point of view. I am sure that, in exposing these ruling class points of view of history, I would have the cooperation of dozens of Marxist students of Kerala's history.

I would also welcome fraternal criticisms of Marxist historians of the point of view set forth in the following pages. I need not say that it is only through the process of intense discussion among Marxists that a correct understanding can be developed on the problems of Kerala's history.

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