

ON FOLK SOCIETY IN KERALA

PRILIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

With the immense developments in the study of folklore many new concepts and theories have made their way into it. Among them folk life and folk society are interesting instruments for study and investigation. Many scholars consider folklore as only a small subdivision in the vast domain of the subject designated folk life. According to them the material culture, beliefs and forms of organisation of society are as much, if not more of interest as the traditional items of folklore, i.e. their artistic creations. Thus a stage is fast reaching when no aspect of human life can be considered outside the purview of folkloristics.

From this concept of folk life arises the idea of folk society – the great repository for folklore. Historically speaking the concept of folklore in prior to that of folk society and folk life. These latter concepts are derived from the former, i.e. the expansion for the study of folklore. So the definition of folk society is congenitally related to the definition of folklore. And definition of folklore is a pretty tough order beset with many pitfalls and contradictions.

In many subjects a proper definition is almost half the work done. More so is a subject like folklore. Although the study of folklore after a chequered cover of about two centuries has come to its own as an independent discipline and is accepted as such in many prestigious centers of learning of like Indiana University in USA and Karnataka University in India, the period of its tutelage under other disciplines like literature, linguistics, social anthropology, art history and pre-history is not yet over.

The famous 21 definitions of folklore in Maria Leach's *Standard Dictionary of Folklore Mythology and Legend*¹ contributed by the outstanding authorities in the field open our eyes to the wide scope and sweet of the subject, but hardly helped us to delineate the definitive frontiers and points of departure.

The 'Good Saron compound, Folklore' was coined and introduced by the famous English antiquarian William Thoms in 1846