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HOW EARLY WAS THE IDEA OF INDIA AS A NATION?

**A TENTATIVE DISCUSSION BASED ON THE MALAYALAM
TRAVELOGUE OF 18TH CENTURY, THE VARTHAMANAPUSTHAKAM**

Speaker

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How Early was the Idea of India as a Nation?

A Tentative Discussion Based on the Malayalam Travelogue of 18th Century, the *Varthamanapusthakam*

The 18th Century travelogue, *Varthamanapusthakam*, written by Paremakal Thoma Kathanar makes an important mention of the people of Veerapandiya Pattanam on the Coromandel region, acknowledging their identification with Paremakal and company from Keralam, because they are of the same *jathi* or they are all 'Indiacar'. This happens long before the end of the 19th century which is the period generally associated with the rise of nationalist sentiments in India. This work in progress presentation analyses the incident within the context of theoretical literature on the rise of nationalism. It is also analyzed in the immediate context in which the author makes a trip to Europe. He was accompanying Cariattil Ouseph Malpan who was sent by the Syrian Christian faction to petition the Pope against the discriminatory attitude adopted by the European Christian Missionaries. The incident at Veerapadiya Pattanam proves that there was already an idea of India and Indianness. The delegation from Kerala gets the opportunity in Europe to be inspired by the success of the American War of Independence. Some Goan Priests with whom they closely worked in Lisbon, came back and initiated a conspiracy against Portuguese domination in 1787, with the hope of allying with Tippu Sultan. Even with such opportunities, Paremakal did not venture into any such steps. He continued with the argument for self-rule confined to the Church and based upon 'Rite' or traditional Church practices. This argument cuts across the Indian Ocean to West Asia and the Chaldean Church for assistance and even leadership. Therefore this presentation comes to the tentative conclusion that the well-formed idea of India and Indianess were not conceptualised any further.



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