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## MALAYALAM, SOUTH INDIA, KERALA - INFORMATION SHEET

### BACKGROUND

Kerala is the only State in India where untouchability as well as repression of *Harijans* is unheard of. The state of Kerala is one of the most literate and educated states out of the whole of India.

### LANGUAGE

Malayalam is one of the twenty-two official languages spoken in India by around 37 million people. It is spoken predominantly in the state of Kerala in Southern India.

### RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS

There are many different festivals which are celebrated in Kerala.

ONAM - The most popular is a harvest festival, celebrated during the month of August.

There are also a number of temple festivals of the Hindu religion including:

THRISSUR POORAM, DEEPAVALI, THIRUVATHIRA

Christian holidays such as CHRISTMAS and EASTER are also commemorated.

### SOCIAL CUSTOMS

For centuries Kerala's rich cultural heritage has developed its own unique art forms; particularly folk dances, music and drama. These traditional cultural activities occupy people's free time. Other activities include seeing films, playing sport, dancing or painting. Malayalam cinema is popular amongst other Indian cinema goers. Malayalam cinema has won many Indian and international awards.

### CUISINE

Kerala has a multitude of both vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes. The vegetarian dishes are due to the Hindu religion. As in the rest of Southern India, rice is a staple. Dishes which accompany rice include curries, vegetable dishes (*sambar*, *dahl* and *aviyahl*) and/or flat bread such as *porotta* or *pathiri*. Many of the curries are spicy and due to the abundance of coconuts, many dishes contain desiccated coconut or coconut milk. Food is often served on soft banana leaves and is eaten with the right hand.

### References:

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