

# Administration and Administrative Reforms in Travancore Princely State – An Historical Overview

**B.AMUTHA**, Ph.D. Research Scholar, Dept. of History, DDE, Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai – 625 021.

**Dr.S.PUSHPALATHA**, Assistant Professor & Head (i/c), Dept. of History, DDE, Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai – 625 021.

## Abstract

*The ruling house of Modern Travancore (1729-1949 C.E.) had crowned twelve rulers according to matrilineal system of inheritance that was the custom in the Royal Family. The first King Marthanda Varma (1729–1758) had spent all his life in battle to widen his territories and to bring some administrative reforms by imposing many taxes, without mercy on poor people, while the successors Rama Varma (1758–1798) and Balarama Varma (1798–1810) also had followed the same trend in taxation and strengthening the boundaries of Travancore during their reign. There was no well-known political reform during the reign of the Queens even if they took part in social reforms in Travancore. Swathi Thirunal Rama Varma, Uthradom Thirunal Marthanda Varma, Ayilyam Thirunal Rama Varma, Visakhram Thirunal Rama Varma and Sree Moolam Thirunal Rama Varma brought many administrative reforms by introducing vernacular and western education, strengthening the irrigation and land tenure systems for increasing food production, modifying the judicial systems to settle criminal and civil disputes, developing communication facilities, and inclusion of local people for legislations. The problems of Marumakkathayam inheritance of properties among Nairs and Vellalas were thrown out of the society, age-old Devadhasi system in temple was abolished and English Education was promoted by the Queen Sethu Lakshmi Bayi (1924–1931). The most important political reform of Chithira Thirunal Balarama Varma (1931–1949) was his bicameral administration wherein local people were included in the lower house for enactment of legislations. In this research paper an attempt has been made to the administration and administrative reforms of the rulers of Travancore Princely State.*

**Key words:** Political reforms, Princely state, Devaswom Board, Regulations, dextral silver conch, Nattukootams.

## Introduction

The ruling house of Travancore Kingdom, as far as most historians say, was consisting of a lineage of rulers descended from the later Cheras who ruled almost all the western coast of south India in 820 C.E. This ancient Hindu Royal Family, that had red flag with a dextral silver conch in the middle, ruled Travancore

more than two centuries. Padmanabhapuram and Thiruvananthapuram were their capital cities. Padmanabhapuram served as a capital from 1729 to 1795. Thiruvananthapuram served as a capital from 1795 to 1949. The kings, for its credit, were granted 19-gun salutes by the British Empire when they visited the Governor General or Resident's offices. Historians are of the opinion that the Travancore dynasty had originated from *Venad* Royal Family, the descendants from Chera Kingdom. A copper-plate of their period tells that *Shri Veera Kerala Chakravarthi* who was a chieftain from West Coast of south India had granted lands and privileges to Jewish and Christian traders who had visited to this region,<sup>1</sup> which makes out the point that *Venad* later became Travancore State under the reign of the Legend Marthanda Varma. The Travancore Princely State had been ruled by a lineage of twelve rulers from 1729-1949 C.E. who followed the typical matrilineal system of inheritance of for over 200 years. This paper attempts to trace the administrative reforms made by these rulers during their reign.

## **Establishment of the Travancore Kingdom**

### **Administration of Anizham Tirunal Marthanda Varma**

The King Marthanda Varma (1729-1758), an architect of Travancore Kingdom, spent his whole life to expand the small *Venad* province into an independent princely state and his mission was completed, as he was dreaming from his childhood onwards, in 1755, with his friends and chieftains like Arumugam Pillai Dalavay, Thanu Pillai Dalavay, Ramayyan Dalavay and Marthanda Pillai Dalavay.<sup>2</sup> In fact, Travancore was a small country, stretching from Edava in the north to Aaralvaimozhi in the south, when Marthanda Varma came to throne in 1729, the territories of which were further extended by wars with nearby countries. Kollam was annexed with Travancore after defeating the King of Kollam in 1731, who was actually another member of *Venad* family, and made him to sign a treaty that his country would be of Travancore after his death. But the Kollam king was put in house prison in Valikokkal Palace that was guarded with an army headed by Dalavay Arumugam Pillai.<sup>3</sup> In 1741, King Marthanda Varma defeated the Dutch army during the war at Colachel and created European styled army with the help and direction of De Lennoy, who was the captain of Dutch army just defeated, and native Nairs were already in his army. With this sizable army of 50,000 battalions, that King attacked Kayamkulam, Thekkumkur, Vadakumkur and Purakaud and annexed them with Travancore.<sup>4</sup> He then captured the Ambalapuzha, Changanachery, and Kittayam in 1753 and Karakuppam, Alangad and Kochi in 1755. Thus, the Travancore Kingdom was extending from Kanyakumari in the south to Kayankulam in the north, which was bounded in the east by Pandya Kingdom.<sup>5</sup> After conquering hostile chieftains of adjacent provinces, he bestowed the whole Travancore Kingdom to his Almighty the Lord Padmanabhaswamy, the deity of Padmanabhapuram palace, in January 1750, and then, after placing his sword before the idol, announced that from that day onwards he would be an agent of the deity.<sup>6</sup>

Though he was a mighty warrior and established a kingdom, in his governance, he had no soft corner towards the subjects, which could be understood from heavy taxes imposed on people during his rule.<sup>7</sup> To sustain the European styled army, he had collected money from the people in the form of taxes in whatever way and wherever it could be possible. Nambudris and Brahmins were given priority in his administration, so that they occupied top position in hierarchy.<sup>8</sup> Tax collecting duty and judicial enquiry were given to Nairs and Vellalas who were local landlords of villages. To setup regular accounts, the King surveyed all the lands in 1751, within his territory and issued pattavu for the landholders who were owners of the land or plantation in 1754.<sup>9</sup> Water harvesting projects were carried out to supply irrigation for growing cash crops including spices but maximum tax was levied for agricultural produces. Taxes were also levied for wearing cloths above waist and wearing cloth below the level of knees, wearing foot wares, using umbrella, using walking sticks, fetching water on hip, riding on horse or bullock cart, wearing silver or gold ornaments, having mustache, fetching water from well, etc., as a consequence of which poor low caste people, who could not afford them in time, were insulted and treated badly by the tax collectors.<sup>10</sup>

### **Administrative Reforms of Karthika Thirunal Rama Varma**

The *Karthika Thirunal Rama Varma* (1724–1798) succeeded his uncle Marthanda Varma in 1758. During his period the administrative structure was channelized. He appointed Marthanda Pillai as *Valiya Sarvathikariakar* (Dewan). He was the Dewan from 1756 to 1763. Under his Dewanship, the Kingdom was divided into three divisions, viz., *Vadkayamuham* (north Travancore), *Padinjaraymukham* (western Travancore) and *Theckaymukham* (south Travancore). All divisions were under the direct control of Dewan. Further, each of the division was sub-divided into districts administrated by a *Sarvathikariakar* and each district was again sub-divided into *Maniums*, *Adhikarams* and *Proverthies*, which were under the direct administration of *Manikarens* (district administrators), *Adhikaries* (taluk administrators) and *Proverthikars* (village administrators).<sup>11</sup> After strengthening the administration of state, the King ordered his Dewan Marthanda Pillai to proceed with his army to the north under the command of De Lennoy and in that war Cochin was liberated and Zamorin's Calicut province was caught in 1761. Then, the King erected the well-known *Nedum Kotta* (Northern Defense-Line of Travancore) that became a major obstacle in Tipu Sultan's attempt to conquer Travancore. It was a great strategy adopted by the king to defend his domain. The territorial disputes, for which Travancore was in quarrel with the Nawab of Arcot, were ultimately settled when the Maharaja paid a large sum of money and some territories, on the compulsion of the higher officials of British East India Company, to the Nawab, for which the Nawab handed over lands in Shencottah and Cape Comorin, which were not parts of Travancore at that time.<sup>12</sup> Hyder Ali Khan of Mysore invaded Malabar for the second time in 1766 for seizing the Zamorin's province again; this time the Cochin Raja who could not resist him ran away with his family and committed suicide, but Ali's attempt was deceitfully prevented by the King for the disbursement of Rs. 12 lakhs.<sup>13</sup> Two years after that incident, in 1788, Tipu

Sultan invaded Malabar and Coorg, and engaged a tactic that, if he wanted to stop the rebellion, the people in and around Seringapatnam should become Muslim converts. In 1789, Tipu Sultan gathered his army in Malabar and marched to invade Travancore,<sup>14</sup> but he could not succeed. After three months, once again he attacked *Nedum Kotta* and made breach of about 1 km length for the entry of his army into Travancore, whereupon Tipu's army had devastated the whole of northern Travancore and reached Alwaye and camped on the Periyar River. In his attempt, Hindu temples were destroyed and people were killed. In 1792, the then Governor - General Cornwallis came to assist Travancore in the war and Tipu was ridden up to his capital Seringapatnam.<sup>15</sup> After that war, a section of the East India Company force was retained in Travancore.

In the administration, Rama Varma brought out several reforms: (1) roads were constructed and sea routes were opened to facilitate trade and business in the state; (2) various new products were exported by Travancore during this reign; (3) ship building was started at Cochin; (4) gold coins like *Anantharayan Panam*, *Chinna Panam* and *Ananthavarahan* as well as silver coin *Chukrams* were for the first time minted in Travancore; (5) infrastructures like bridges and other public works such as canals were constructed around the capital at Thiruvananthapuram; (6) canals were developed for and infrastructure like bridges and other public works such as canals for irrigation; (7) gun manufacture was done with greater vigor; and (8) new palaces were constructed in different parts of the country.<sup>16</sup> Reasonable whispers often persisted that he had raised the taxes during the wartimes and then reduced after the war events, but he had much religious tolerance.

### Condition of Travancore Kingdom under Avittom Thirunal Balarama Varma

After the death of Rama Varma, Avittom Thirunal Balarama Varma ascended the Travancore throne on 18<sup>th</sup> February, 1798 and, after getting married to the daughter of his uncle Rama Varma, ruled the state up to 1810 C.E. Soon after crowning, he dismissed the Raja Kesavadhas from Dewanship and appointed Odiery Jayanthan Sankaran Nampoothiri (1798–1799), Velu Thampi Dalavay (1799–1809) and Oommini Thampi (1809–1811) as Dewans for administration of the state. Velu Thambi Dalavay, who was appointed instantly after dismissal of Jayanthan Nampoothiri, took full advantages of the King to control the Kingdom. In 1805, a unit of Travancore army mutinied against Velu Thampi Dalavay, so that he asked the help of the British Resident to crush the rebellion using the East India Company's troops.<sup>17</sup> Since the Resident did not go after Velu Thampi, he renegotiated a new treaty between Travancore and the English East India Company. The demands of the East India Company were higher than what the Dewan had expected and hence tension appeared between the Dewan and the East India Company Resident. In response to it, Velu Thampi Dalavay and the Dewan of Cochin together announced war with the East India Company and won in the first battle on 18<sup>th</sup> January, 1809. Little later, on 19<sup>th</sup> February, 1809, Colonel Leger led an army of the East India Company through the Aramboli Ghat and captured the forts of Udayagiri and Padmanabhapuram.<sup>18</sup> Having realized the risky situation, the king, who was actually not interested in the war, issued an order for arresting



Velu Thambi. Subsequently, after his arrest, most of the Nair battalions of Travancore had been disbanded as the Company came forward to save the king in cases of outside and inside belligerences.<sup>19</sup> The weak King died on 7<sup>th</sup> November, 1810. Full of hostilities with which the King had to struggle all the time made him ignore the reforms for administrative and social developments in Travancore state.

### **Administrative Reforms of Gowri Lakshmi Bai**

Following the death of Balarama Varma, the princess Gowri Lakshmi Bai, who had rightly crossed 19 years of age, accessed the throne because of the reason that there was no competent male member in the family for ruling the state at that time, and because it was crucial to rule the state as regent until such a legal heir would be born to her. At first, the throne was denied for her because the prince Kerala Varma, her distant cousin, belonged to the Mavelikara Royal family, claimed to have the crown of Travancore, but it was without bias contested by the enthusiasts of Gowri Lakshmi Bai. For taking over the throne, Gowri Lakshmi Bai sent a document, emphasizing her claim on the throne by stating the indefensible grounds of Kerala Varma, to the British Resident Colonel John Munro. When the Resident, in the side of Gowri Lakshmi Bai, tried to solve this problem, Kerala Varma, who was almost convinced by her rights, relinquished her claim. As a final point, Gowri Lakshmi Bai was made the regent Maharani of Travancore on 15<sup>th</sup> April, 1811.<sup>20</sup>

Without delay after crowning, the Maharani had dismissed the Balarama Varma's last Dewan Ummini Thambi and appointed Colonel John Munro as the Dewan of Travancore in June 1811. The Dewan Col. Munro, after noticing widespread corruptions in government because of accumulation of administrative and judicial powers in the hands of the Proverticars (village officers), Kariakkars (Taluka officers) and the district officials, enlightened the Queen to deprive their judicial powers and to establish separate District Courts in districts for hearing criminal disputes. Consequently, five District Courts at Padmanabhapuram, Mavelikara, Trivandrum, Vaikam and Alwaye were established in 1811, each of which had two judges from Nair or Christian community and a Brahmin Sastri. In addition, a Huzhur court was also established to hear the disputes of Government servants. The revenue department was cleaned of corruption for smooth revenue collection. The autocracy and bullying to which the people were subjected by these officers were altogether put aside by this reform. The police force was reorganized, based on the request of the Dewan, to take over the functions of *Nattukootams* in villages and to assist the law courts. Arrangements were made to send all the official reports for the visualization of the Queen twice in a month regularly. Trade policies were improved for enhancing the export of tobacco, betel-nuts, cashews and others. By a Royal Proclamation, taxes imposed on males of all castes, capitation tax, taxes on festivals, and taxes on inheritance of property were abolished. Corruption and mismanagement prevailed in more than 300 large temples. Hence, the temples were brought under the administrative control of the direct government by establishing a Devaswom Board, which cleared of unpleasantness and corruption from the temples. By a Royal Proclamation of 1812 C.E., the Queen abolished the purchase and sale of all slaves and granted them independence excepting those attached to the soil for agricultural purposes.

## Administrative Reforms of Uthrittathi Thirunal Gowri Parvathi Bai (1815–1829)

The Gowri Lakshmi Bai's successor was her sister Gowri Parvathi Bai (b.1802 AD). The circumstance in which her crowning occurred was too decisive because she was barely thirteen years old when her elder sister Gowri Lakshmi died in 1815, and, being the only female of the Royal House, she needed to rule the country on behalf of her nephew Swathi Thirunal Rama Varma, the heir of the throne. For assisting in ruling, she was counselled by Rajaraja Varma (her brother in law) and by her husband Raghava Varma of Kilimanoor Royal family. Besides this, she also advised, like her elder sister, to follow wholeheartedly the judicial counsels of the Resident Colonel Munro,<sup>21</sup> and hence, as the Queen was at the tender age, the Resident's responsibility on the state became two-folds. After accessing the Travancore throne, the Queen appointed Sanku Annavi Pillai as Dewan in 1815 but he was dismissed within two months because of his unworthiness for Dewanship. When the Queen asked the opinion of Colonel Munro, he suggested Raman Menon, the Judge of Huzhur Court of Travancore, for the Dewanship and hence he was appointed as Dewan. In 1817, Raman Menon was discountenanced from Dewanship and Reddy Rao was appointed as Dewan in September, 1817. He successfully reigned as Dewan till the year 1821. Another important event occurred in 1819 was that Colonel Munro was transferred from his office and Resident Col. McDowell came to his place as the British Representative of Travancore. After that Dewan Reddy Rao was freed in 1821 and Venkata Rao continued the Diwanship from 1821 to 1830. By the proclamation of 1<sup>st</sup> Karthigai (17<sup>th</sup> November, 1815), the poll-tax and other unjust taxes were abolished (taxes for wearing ornaments of gold and silver, tile roofs for houses, construction of houses, thatched houses, cattle, holding umbrellas, having palanquins, having horses and bullock carts, etc). In 1818, Travancore entered in a trade treaty with Ceylon for trading tobacco on certain terms and prices and in the subsequent year the Queen established Nair Brigade consisting of about 1200 soldiers. In 1821, the Queen, as the Dewan Venkata Rao requested her, granted a general remission of tax arrears, which won for her the good will of the people.<sup>22</sup>

## Administrative Reforms of Swathi Thirunal Rama Varma

The next ruler was *Swathi Thirunal Ramavarma* (b.1812 C.E.) whose coronation took place in 1829 and he continued to rule the country till 26<sup>th</sup> December, 1846. Soon after his accession, the King had shifted the secretariat from Kollam to Thiruvananthapuram, which of course enabled him to observe the government affairs in close vicinity.<sup>23</sup> In 1007 M.E. (1831 C.E.), the King established Munsiff's courts for disposal of petty civil cases and police cases, for which a munsiff from the British India was appointed in each court, as a solution to avoid injustice by local magistrates.<sup>24</sup> One year after that, Huzhur court was abolished and, instead of that, Zilla courts were established in each district and a code of regulations was framed in the British style for hearing the cases in 1834. In order to curtail corruption in the government, he directly

controlled the administrations in all departments. In 1836, for the first time, census was conducted in Travancore and thereby it was understood that the population of Travancore at that time was 1, 28,068.

### **Administrative Reforms of Uthram Thirunal Marthanda Varma**

The immediate successor of *Swathi Thirunal Ramavarma* was *Uthram Thirunal Marthanda Varma* (b. 1814 AD), who ruled over the state from 1846 to 18<sup>th</sup> August 1860. In 1842, the British Government enacted the Anti-slavery Act<sup>25</sup> that prohibited the purchase and sale of slaves throughout India, which was not enforced in Travancore for a few years so that when Christian missionaries requested the King, through the Resident, to complete emancipation of all slaves in Travancore, he readily accepted it and ordered through a proclamation to release all the government slaves free in 1855.<sup>26</sup> The boundary between Tirunelveli and Travancore on Shengottah side, which had been a serious problem since long back, was settled in 1851. In the subsequent year, the severe famine which happened due to failure of rainfall and agriculture had pushed the situation worse wherein the Government had to raise the taxes to purchase paddy from other provinces.<sup>27</sup> The Government abolished monopolies on pepper, tobacco, etc. to enhance trade. In order to reduce the work burden of Dewan, in 1856 the King had divided the whole of Travancore into two districts, each of which was put under the direct administration of Peishkar, and then in 1859 the state was divided into four districts (Padmanabhapuram, Trivandrum, Quilon and Sheratallay).<sup>28</sup> A communication addressed to the Lord Harris, dated in November 1855, reveals that the King was mostly not in support of public, on whose ground the Maharaja was inquired by the British Government; this is a clear witness for his rule that neglects social reforms in Travancore.

### **Administrative Reforms of Ayilyam Thirunal Rama Varma (1860–1880)**

Ayilyam Thirunal Rama Varma was the ruler of Travancore Kingdom from 18<sup>th</sup> August 1860 to 30<sup>th</sup> May 1880. In the second year of his reign (1861) when the state had just recovered from intensive famine of 1860, the King travelled to all areas within his territory to make a keen survey personally to know various produces of the soils and wants of the people therein, which would certainly be useful for his policy changes to correct debts and negligence in his government. In the same year, *Sirkar Anchel* (postal service) was opened for public use throughout Travancore. By a proclamation of 1030 M.E., the Government had extended the duration up to 1035 M.E. to remit the previous tax arrears of different kinds to make the people relaxed. By the year 1862-63, Travancore government removed the fiscal restriction on inter-portal trade between Travancore and British Government and thereby earned Rs. 40,000 through increased trading opportunity.<sup>29</sup> In the same year (1038 M.E.), the existing judicial system was reorganized in such a way that (1) District courts invested with civil and criminal powers were created as substitutes for Zillah courts in each of the four districts and each court would have one side for hearing civil cases and another side to hear criminal cases, (2) the Civil and Criminal Procedure Codes were adopted to refer cases in Travancore courts,

and (3) the Indian Penal Code that was enacted by the Government of India in 1860 was immediately adopted to Travancore as its provisions were suited to the customs, which created social relief among the people to enable them to feel their equity before the law.<sup>30</sup> A Regulation of 1040 M.E. allowed qualified lawyers to plead in the courts. In 1865, the Maharaja declared that all pattom lands would be private, inheritable and salable property thence on and two years after that he declared through a notification that tenants would there from enjoy their land continuously. By the year 1041 M.E., the Maharaja sanctioned rupees 20,000/- per year for initiating vernacular schools throughout the state and girls schools and Arts Collage at Trivandrum were also started. Six Government Hospitals were started at district Head Quarters for the benefit of the people and vaccination was carried out in full swing.

### **Administrative Reforms of Visakham Thirunal Rama Varma**

Visakham Thirunal Ramavarma had accessed the throne of Travancore on 7<sup>th</sup> June, 1880, and continued his reign till 4<sup>th</sup> August, 1885. In 1880, immediately after crowning, he issued Royal Warning to people for remitting the tax arrears and other dues left unpaid for long time, to the Government, by which the government had earned about nine lakh rupees.<sup>31</sup> His Highness had introduced tapioca cultivation in Travancore for increasing food production and hence tapioca became very popular poor men's food in this state even today. For reorganization of police force that was associated with functioning magistracy, a Regulation IV of 1056 M.E., which would separate the police force from magistracy, was enacted in 1880. The number of judges in Sadar court was raised from 3 to 5 including a chief justice and four Pusnie judges and for settling disputes of Hindus, a pandit was appointed in each court. By a meeting held in Trivandrum in March 1883, opinion of the Government was explained to landlords and co-operation from public was solicited. Regulation III of 1058 was enacted for land registration relating to boundary markings, which empowered the officials to settle the boundary disputes in Travancore.<sup>32</sup>

### **Administrative Reforms of Moolam Thirunal Rama Varma (1885–1924)**

The next ruler of Travancore Princely State was Moolam Thirunal Rama Varma, who was installed in the musnud of Travancore on 4<sup>th</sup> August 1885 and he continued to rule this province till 7<sup>th</sup> March 1924. In 1061 M.E. (1885), immediately after accession, the King issued two proclamations, one regarding the land survey and settlement of various issues concerned with it and the other is about inquiry into conditions of land holders and service tenures for rearrangements of service and economic conditions.<sup>33</sup> Regulation II of 1061 M.E. (1885) authorized a single judge of High Court for sitting as vacation judge in the hearing of civil cases. Regulation IV of 1061 M.E. authorized the execution in decrees of Travancore in Civil courts of British India and Cochin State. It also prescribed some qualifications for lawyers and Munsiffs being in work with the courts. Regulation I of 1074 M.E. provided a general Penal Code for Travancore, which repealed the existing Indian Penal Code and the Whipping Acts introduced to the state according to Regulation II of



1056 M.E. Further, separate laws were introduced for wills, negotiable instruments, guardians, wards, lepers, printing presses, Hindu religion, endowments, dynamite, prevention of cruelty to animals, etc., under the presidentship of Krishnasamy Rao.<sup>34</sup> By the Regulation II of 1063 M.E., the Government established Travancore Legislative Assembly consisting of five officials and three non-officials with Dewan as Ex-officio president, which was at that time a bold step for asking the opinions of local people regarding the Bills, which were only sanctioned after approval of the Assembly, passed by the government.<sup>35</sup> If any Bill was sanctioned before the approval of the Assembly, it would be valid only for six months. It was later changed into the Sree Moolam Popular Assembly, which was the first legislature in Indian history having elected members. In fact, it was the first bold step that included local people in the legislations and it was not reported from any other provinces of India. Royal Proclamation of 1887 C.E. removed the charge levied from subjects for inheritance of properties to anybody according to Marumakkathayam system of inheritance or Makkathayam system of inheritance according to their castes.

In 1069 M.E., a Town Improvement Committee was organized under which a sanitary department that worked for better sanitation in towns was organized. In 1070 M.E., all workers attached to temples and Oottupuras were released from compulsory works for food. In the same year, a registration department was established so as to work based on the latest British Indian Act. In 1073 M.E., the State Life Insurance Scheme was launched for helping the people to save their lives. To appreciate the accomplishments during his reign, the British rewarded Moolam Thirunal Maharaja with the grant of 21 guns salute.

### **Administrative Reforms of Pooradam Thirunal Sethu Lakshmi Bai**

The Moolam Thirunal Maharaja was succeeded by Pooradam Thirunal Sethu Lakshmi Bai who came to throne of Travancore on 6<sup>th</sup> September, 1924 and her regency continued till 6<sup>th</sup> November, 1931. During 1100 -1104 M.E., new cultivable lands were developed and brought under cultivation, by which numerous landless farmers got land for cultivation under preset terms and conditions of the Government.<sup>36</sup> In 1102, tenants were also freed from the Uooliyam service of supplying Vari and Njavara paddy to the palace, and Dhannappullu for-feeding cattle in Ampalappula. Regulation of 1100 M.E. was passed to declare any area as village which had to be administered by village panchayats, each of which consisted of two-third of elected members and one-third of nominated members. Such panchayats were charged with both compulsory and optional duties along with taxation. By the year 1103 M.E., new roads were constructed for transportation and the railway lines were broadened; after getting favourable public opinion, the Government threw open all the roads for the approach of Avarnas, which was the first step ever taken in Indian Province where high castes were in the belief that if an Avarna approached them they would be polluted. The long-standing tradition of Marumakkathayam was put aside, after thorough discussion with opposing schools of opinions, through the Nayar Act of 1100 M.E. which was enacted by the Queen and the same trend was also put in use in the Nanchinad Vellala Regulation VI of 1101 M.E.<sup>37</sup> By 1096 M.E., the Government prohibited further

inclusion of Dhasis in temples either by adoption or voluntary contract, but dhasis remained associated with the temples, which was completely abolished in 1105 M.E. when the Government sanctioned the complete discontinuance of the system.

### **Administrative Reforms of Chithira Thirunal Balarama Varma (1931–1949)**

The last ruler of Travancore Princely State was Chithira Thirunal Balarama Varma who ruled the state from 6<sup>th</sup> November, 1931 to 1949. In 1108 M.E. (1932), the first Bicameral Legislature, consisting of *the Travancore Sree Chitra State Council* (Upper House) and *the Sree Moolam Assembly* (Lower House), was established for reducing political power of the Sree Moolam Assembly; the *Sri Chitra State Council* had 37 members while the Sree Moolam Assembly had 72 members.<sup>38</sup> The Dewan was the President of both the Houses and the Assembly elected its own Deputy President once in four years. This bicameral system continued to function till September 1949 when the Travancore was merged with Cochin State and united into the Indian Union. In 1933, when the Shree Chithira Assembly could vote on the budgetary demands, a Public Accounts Committee was created for having an effective legislature, but the Ezhavas, Christians and Muslims who were fearing that the new committee would help them to secure only fewer numbers than the Nairs abstained from voting with the intension that it would be better dividing the seats based on population size of the castes. What the consequence was that the Government finally accepted their demand and hence a community based reservation was made for the appointment of Travancore Government Services.<sup>39</sup> Soon after the event of Vaikom Satyagraha, the Maharaja felt that there had been an increasing support for the entry of low caste people into temples administrated by the Government, which urged him to set up a *Temple Entry Enquiry Committee* on 25<sup>th</sup> November 1932 under the presidentship of V.S. Subramania Aiyar.<sup>40</sup> After critical examinations, the Maharaja finally signed the Temple Entry Proclamation on 12<sup>th</sup> November 1936, which was subsequently published in an extra-Ordinary Gazette. That proclamation abolished the ban on Dalits from entering Hindu temples because of the cruel practice of untouchability.<sup>41</sup>

After the India's independence on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1947, the Chithira Thirunal Maharaja had been ruling his Kingdom as an independent country<sup>42</sup> even if there were many negotiations between the policy makers of India and Travancore Kingdom, and after several rounds of talks in 1949 the Chithira Thirunal Maharaja agreed to merge Travancore into the Union of India, for which Indian Union had proposed that Chithira Thirunal would be the first Rajpramukh of the Travancore-Cochin Union from 1<sup>st</sup> July, 1949 onwards.<sup>43</sup> He had continued as Rajpramukh till 1<sup>st</sup> November, 1956 when Kerala state was formed by uniting the Travancore-Cochin Union together with Malabar.

## Conclusion

In the political history of Modern Travancore (1729-1949 C.E.), its throne was inherited to twelve rulers according to matrilineal system of inheritance that was the custom in the Royal Family. The first King Anizham Thirunal Marthanda Varma had spent all his life in battle to widen his territories and to bring some administrative reforms by imposing many taxes, without mercy on poor people, while the next King Karthika Thirunal Rama Varma and Balarama Varma also had followed the same trend in taxation and strengthening the boundaries of Travancore during their reign. There was no political reform during the reign of the Queens even if they took part in social reforms in Travancore. Swathi Thirunal Rama Varma, Uthradom Thirunal Marthanda Varma, Ayilyam Thirunal Rama Varma, Visakham Thirunal Rama Varma and Sree Moolam Thirunal Rama Varma brought many administrative reforms by introducing vernacular and western education, strengthening the irrigation and land tenure systems for increasing food production, modifying the judicial systems to settle criminal and civil disputes, developing communication facilities, and inclusion of local people for legislations. The problems of Marumakkathayam inheritance of properties among Nairs and Vellalas were thrown out of the society, age-old Devadhasi system in temples was abolished, and English Education was promoted by Queen Sethu Lakshmi Bai. The most important political reform of Shri Chithira Thirunal Balarama Varma was his bicameral administration wherein local people were included in the lower house for enactment of legislations. Soon after the Vaikom Satyagraha, ban on temple entry was removed. Thereby low castes were allowed to enter into temples. Above all caste based reservation was made for the appointment of Travancore Government Services during the reign of Chithira Thirunal Balarama Varma. All the administrative and social reforms introduced in the Travancore Princely State had far reaching effects. Today's administration has roots in those changes of Travancore Samasthan. In general, the Kings had given much emphasis to administrative reforms while Queens gave much emphasis to social reforms in Travancore during their reigns.

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