

BRITISH-TRAVANCORE RELATIONS UPTO 1947

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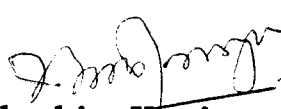
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that this thesis 'BRITISH-TRAVANCORE RELATIONS UPTO 1947' submitted for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the University of Calicut is a bonafide record of research carried out by SUGEETHA B., under my supervision and guidance. No part of the thesis has been submitted for any degree, diploma, or other title before.

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ABBREVIATIONS

For	-	Foreign
Pol	-	Political
Proc	-	Proceedings

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INTRODUCTION

Sugeetha. B “British-Travancore relations upto 1947 ” Thesis. Department of History , University of Calicut, 1997

INTRODUCTION

British-Travancore Relations is a classic example of British colonial policy in India. Travancore, the erstwhile princely state which now forms part of the Kerala State, had close relations with the British. Scholars like Shungoony Menon, Nagam Aiya and Velu Pillai have written in detail the history of Travancore, but as they were attached to the court of Travancore in various capacities, their writings naturally have a bias towards the royal house. As their works were written when British were paramount in India, they also could not express their views freely. Further British relations with Travancore and its impact upon the economy, polity and society of Travancore have not been properly evaluated. The books published in connection with the history of Travancore deal with political history only. Even in political history, there is scope for further study. Likewise the contributions made by the missionaries to social conditions in Travancore have not received adequate attention from historians of Travancore. The development and changes in British policy towards Travancore have not been properly studied.

The English presence in Travancore had begun in the beginning of the 17th century. It was in this year (1644) that the English had obtained a foothold at Vizhinjam from Unni Kerala Varma (1631-1661). The English erected there a factory for trade in the spices of the country. This was the earliest English factory in Travancore. In 1684 they obtained permission from the Rani of Attingal to erect a factory at Anjengo.

The English came to Travancore as traders in pepper and other spices. But later on their commercial aims gave way to political ambition which led to their interference in the political affairs of Travancore.

The English who came to Travancore with the specific intention of procuring pepper and other spices entered into treaties and agreements with the rulers and established settlements. The economy of Travancore during this period had become gradually more and more dependent on trade with the Europeans. The native rulers had no liquid money. The appearance of foreigners with money and the great demand for pepper induced the natives to be friendly with the Europeans. Native rulers began to grant trading facilities to foreigners in return for presents.

By the second half of the 17th century, Malabar Coast had become a Cynosure of all European powers who came to India for trading activities. Among them the English came into prominence in Travancore. The first treaty concluded between Travancore and the English was the treaty of 25th April, 1723 signed between Martanda Varma, the Prince of Neyyattinkara by order of the King of Travancore and Alexander Orme, the chief of Anjengo Factory. This treaty was a milestone in the early relations of Travancore with the English. The policy of the British at that period was to keep off all local quarrels. But soon they found that without supporting the ruler against his rebellious chieftains, they may not get sufficient pepper and other spices for export.

In 1729 Martanda Varma ascended the throne of Travancore. During his reign, when internal troubles increased, the British helped him by providing arms and ammunition. But, Martanda Varma being so diplomatic, later changed his trade policy. After the overthrow of his enemies he held back pepper and other goods in which the British traded on this coast. This new trade policy was detested both by the merchants and the English. In

exasperation at the ever-dwindling supply of pepper, the English factors curtailed the supply of arms and other warlike stores, badly needed by the King. This led to mutual recriminations. On 13th August, 1748, the Anjengo Factors observed that the good old days of free trade had gone for ever. Ramayyan Dalva, the Minister told the Anjengo factors that in no uncertain terms in April 1750 that His Majesty is determined to keep this branch of trade in his hands, having been at a very great expense in the late wars. The English complained against this new policy and demanded for its withdrawal. But the king made full use of the monopoly by demanding more war materials for a limited supply of pepper. Whenever the British supplied arms, they reminded the king to supply more pepper. Thus, the policy of Martanda Varma was basically a mercantile policy. In the beginning the English were not in a position to break with Travancore.

Martanda Varma was followed by Rama Varma, a weak ruler compared to his predecessor. The political developments during the period brought Travancore and the English very close. The close friendship and alliance of the Raja of Travancore with the English East India Company made

Travancore a strong force in Kerala.

The expansion of the Mysorean Kingdom into Malabar and Cochin raised a threat to the security of Travancore. By giving refuge to the Rajas and chieftains of Malabar, who were raising revolts in the country, Rama Varma of Travancore had earned the hostility of both Haidar and Tipu. Further, by permitting English troops to march through his country to attack Mysore territory and by sending his own army in support of British forces, he had earned the eternal enmity of Mysore rulers. In the treaty of Mangalore (1784), Travancore was mentioned as the "friend and ally" of the company. But in the Treaty of Seringapatnam (1792), Travancore was not even mentioned, though her armies fought along with British troops in Malabar and Coimbatore region, and her Dewan Raja Kesavadas did yeoman service in settling the Rajas and chieftains of Malabar. In the partition of territories gained from Mysore, Travancore's case was not even considered. Further, after the war was over, ignoring the great services rendered by Travancore, the Madras Government demanded that the entire cost of the war should be met by Travancore, as the war was fought on her account.

With the fall of Tipu, the English had become the

strongest power in South India. The Nawab of Carnatic was under their thumb. Malabar belonged to them. Cochin and Travancore were their dependent allies. Mysore, though still under Tipu was reduced in size and power. The English therefore could assume supreme power in South India.

The year 1795 was important and eventful in the commercial as well as political history of Travancore. It was in this year, Travancore and the British entered into a treaty which was humiliating to Travancore. In this treaty, the English included such provisions as they thought necessary and advantageous to their commercial prospects. Travancore was required to supply 3000 candies of pepper annually to the Company. In order to secure the whole supply of pepper Travancore produced, the English insisted on affixing the Company's seal on the warehouses of Travancore. This step was highly provocative. It clearly showed that apart from its commercial hold, the company was effectively implementing its political hold over Travancore. This encroachment upon the sovereignty of Travancore culminated in the signing of yet another treaty in the year 1805.

This treaty inaugurated a new chapter in the history of

British-Travancore relations. It made Travancore completely subservient to the Company in foreign affairs and crippled her freedom even in internal affairs. As external defence was taken over by the Company the state became completely dependent on the British. Thus the treaty of 1805 perpetuated the influence of the British Government and tightened its grip over Travancore.

In the beginning, of the 19th century, the chief interest of the British in Travancore was to establish their control over the state "On a permanent basis." To enforce the conditions of treaties and engagements the British appointed a political agent (Resident) who represented them.

The Company, for the first time, sent out a political agent as a medium of communication between the Maharaja and the Madras Government. Originally the commercial Resident acted as the political agent, but since the conclusion of the Treaty of 1805 a separate Resident was appointed for the purpose. Governor General Wellesley's letter dated 16th January 1799 required the Resident to impress upon the Maharaja and his minister the necessity of placing without delay the whole military force of Travancore in a forward state of preparation, for effectively co-operating with the

Company's armies in the event of hostilities with Tipu again. Col. Macaulay was appointed as the first political agent in 1800 A.D. He tried to impose the policies of the British Government in Travancore for about one decade. Travancore was brought under the iron grip of the Company by the manoeuvring of Macaulay. During his Residency far-reaching changes were introduced in the political, social, religious and administrative spheres of Travancore.

The court of Travancore on the eve of Macaulay's arrival was dominated by a hostile group which worked against the interference of the English East India Company in the internal affairs of the state. They succeeded in eliminating the influence of Raja Kesava Das, the Dewan of Travancore, whom they believed to be a supporter of the English. Following the death of Raja Kesava Das, Wellesley directed the Maharaja to appoint a new Dewan in consultation with Major Bannerman, the Political Resident in Travancore. Thus during the period of Balarama Varma all rights, even the appointment of officers were carried out in consultation with the British Resident. This was more evident in determining the successor of Balarama Varma.

During the period of the Dewanship of Velu Tampi, the

tribute to the Company had fallen into arrears. The British demanded the immediate payment of the tribute. But the Raja could not remit the whole amount at once. The Resident was of the view that the Raja's difficulty was mainly due to the diversion of his resources in the maintenance of the Carnatic Brigade. The Maharaja objected the proposal to disband the Carnatic Brigade on the ground as it was part of the court paraphernalia and therefore could not be dispensed with.

The British felt that there was no reason for the non-payment of subsidy and threw the entire blame on Velu Tampi, the Dewan of Travancore. Earlier, Macaulay and Velu Tampi were on the best of terms, but they quarrelled on the question of the payment of subsidy arrears. When Velu Tampi found that he could not persuade Macaulay to reduce the heavy subsidy he organised a revolt, with the support of Paliyat Achan of Cochin. The British suppressed the revolt with an iron hand. With the defeat of Velu Tampi, Travancore completely came under British control. Its ruler accepted humiliating terms on March 1st, 1809 and the state was allowed to continue as a separate subordinate political entity, under the British. By all possible means,

the future security of British interests in Travancore was ensured permanently. The state was brought rigorously under the subsidiary alliance and opposition to the British rooted out by adequate punishment to the hostile elements in the state.

During the reign of the two Ranees, the Company cleverly elevated their status from that of an ally into that of the sovereign power. During the period between 1798 and 1858 there was a drastic change in the policy of the British. They claimed sovereignty over the native rulers and made the kingdoms fully dependent on the British.

From the time of Marquis of Hastings upto the Mutiny all the Governors General were convinced that the assumption of direct rule by the Company over these areas was the only solution to the deteriorating situation in native states. So, a policy of intervention developed by which the Company assumed rights to regulate succession, to refuse or recognise adoption, to suggest methods for better Government and in general to advise the rulers.

By the Charter Act of 1833, the Company became an agency to carry out the administration of India. This Act

provided for a single Central legislative Council instead of three. Now the Governor-General-in-Council was authorised to legislate for the whole territory under the British Company. A code of Civil and Criminal Laws, which was to be effective throughout the British territories in India, was also provided. The Charter Act of 1833 marked the beginning of the Indian Legislature. Slavery was abolished. The policy of free trade was introduced by ending the Company's trade monopoly. The Act removed all disqualifications for Indian Nationals seeking higher posts. It centralised the whole administration. It was able to turn its whole attention to the problem of peace and to develop the future policy. As far as the princely states were concerned this change in the character of the Company resulted in highhanded interference in the internal affairs of the princely states by the Residents. Thus the period between 1840-60 witnessed the culmination of the process of systematic interference by the Residents in the internal affairs of the kingdom. This was the cause of the strained relations between Swati Tirunal and the British Resident Cullen.

The policy of the British, to treat all people

irrespective of caste or creed and the efforts of the missionaries led to the removal of the civil disabilities of the lower classes. The education given by the missionaries made the low caste people politically conscious. Consequently, the traditional Travancore society underwent substantial changes. The efforts of the missionaries to persuade the British Government to annex Travancore into British India on grounds of misgovernment did not succeed. Lord Dalhousie also sought the support of the Court of Directors for the annexation of Travancore on grounds of mal-administration. But whenever the British planned to annex Travancore into British India, it was diverted by some other new problems.

Till the great India Rebellion, the British had followed a policy of annexation whenever there was any fear of native states combining against them. But after the great Indian Rebellion, the British realised the folly of pursuing a policy of unnecessary interference in the administration of the Princely states. With the take over of the administration by the Crown the policy of annexation and treating the rulers of native states as possible enemies of the British was given up. The princes were assured that

their rights, dignity and honour would be respected and it was declared that Indians would be treated on a par with all other subjects of the Crown. This new policy of the British in India resulted in favour of Travancore and this policy continued until the independence of India in 1947.

RELATIONS BETWEEN
TRAVANCORE AND THE ENGLISH
EAST INDIA COMPANY 1729-1758

Sugeetha. B “British-Travancore relations upto 1947 ” Thesis. Department of
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CHAPTER I

RELATIONS BETWEEN TRAVANCORE AND THE ENGLISH EAST INDIA COMPANY 1729-1758

In the second half of the 18th century Travancore was one of the principal states in South India. During this period the country was divided into a number of petty states which were suspicious of one another. This was a period of chaos and confusion in the history of Travancore. The Pillamar and Madampimar established themselves as a powerful force in the country and they were supported by the Yogakkar*. The last years of Rama Varma (1721-1729) were full of wars and tumults caused by the rebellious conduct of the Pillamar. Regarding the troubled conditions in Travancore, the Anjengo factors wrote to their superiors that what they faced was "a scanty crop of pepper, wars and tumults in the country and these are likely to increase everyday".¹ It was at this period that Martanda Varma came to the throne,

* The Pillamar and Madampimar established themselves as a powerful force in public life of the state and they were supported by the Yogakkar (the trustees of the Padmanabha Swami temple at Trivandrum). In short the feudal elements had the upperhand in the affairs of the state at that time.

¹ Ibrahim Kunju, A.P., Rise of Travancore - A Study of the Life and Times of Martanda Varma, p.15.

following the death of Rama Varma in 1729. In addition to the internal problems, there were also the fear of invasion by neighbouring countries which compelled him to seek the assistance of the English East India Company.

In the 16th century the neighbouring country of Madura was a flourishing country, and Travancore was then a dependency on that State.² About the middle of the 18th century the Nayak kingdom of Madura had reached the last stage of political disintegration, on account of internal corruption and feudal anarchy.³ Travancore taking advantage of this situation, separated itself from their dominion and became an independent kingdom.⁴

The reign of Martanda Varma, witnessed momentous changes in the history of Travancore. The competition among the Dutch, the French and the English companies for monopoly of trade in spices produces by Kerala reached the climax during this period. The Dutch, like their predecessors - the Portuguese, were not willing to follow the market. They wanted to obtain their requirements of spices at very low

² Major Herber Drury, An account of Travancore and Fra Bartolomeo's Travels in that country, p.168.

³ Ibrahim Kunju, A.P., op. cit, p.1.

⁴ Major Herber Drury, op. cit.

rates below market prices, by enforcing agreements entered into with the princes, long before the competition for spices had begun and prices began spiralling up. Dutch records are replete with complaints about the infidelity of the Kerala kings and people in carrying out agreements.⁵ When Travancore attempted to bring the Tavalis under control, the Dutch interfered on the side of the Tavalis. But they failed to back up their interference with sufficient military force.

The policy of the English at that period was not to interfere in local quarrels. But within a few years they found it impossible to keep away from local quarrels. By supporting one prince against another in their mutual disputes, the whole of India came under their control. Ralph Fitch was the first Englishman who set foot on the soil of Malabar. He arrived at Cochin as early as 1588.⁶ This visit did not have much practical significance. The first real contact was made in 1616, when King James I of

⁵ Ibrahim Kunju, A.P. op. cit, p.1.

⁶ Prasad, R.C. Early English Travellers in India, p.26.

England sent an Ambassador, Sir Thomas Roe, to the court of the Mughal Emperor, Jahangir.⁷

In 1612, the English built their first factory in India at Surat. In the latter half of the 17th century the English East India Company acquired the island of Bombay and in 1657 Bombay superseded Surat as the chief settlement of the English on the west coast of India.⁸ Another important European power, the French, also established a factory at Surat in 1668.⁹ They also founded trading posts at Mahe on the Malabar Coast in 1725 and Karaikkal on the Coromandel Coast in 1739. India thus became a theatre of conflict between the European powers. Of these powers, it was the English who eventually managed to embark upon an era of political expansion in the Indian sub continent.¹⁰

Thus, by the second half of the 17th century, the Malabar coast had become a cynosure of all the European powers who came to India for trading activities. More than anything else this was due to the fact that the coast was

⁷ Rajendran, N. Establishment of British Power in Malabar, p.23.

⁸ Keith, A.B. A Constitutional History of India - 1600-1935, p.73.

⁹ Ishwari Prasad, India in the 18th Century, p.65.

¹⁰ Ibid.

the world's largest supplier of pepper.¹¹ The earliest known treaty between Travancore and the English East India Company is believed to have been concluded in 1683.¹² They settled a factory at Anjengo in Attingal territory. There are difference of opinion among scholars about the year of settlement of the factory at Anjengo. Many are of the opinion that it was in the year 1684.¹³ A.P. Ibrahim Kunju has said that we have no contemporary source of information to confirm the statement because the early records of the Anjengo factory have been destroyed by fire.¹⁴ The English Factory Records so far published (1618-84) do not give any clue to the date of establishment of the factory. A footnote to volume III of the English factories in India (New series) mentioned that the Anjengo factory was established in 1694. However from the records available in connection with the matter we can come to the conclusion that the Queen of Attingal sent an invitation to the English Company in 1678.¹⁵ In the year 1688 two places Rettorah and Brinjan in

¹¹ Manohar Malgonkr, Kanhoji Angrey, p.150.

¹² Col. J. Biddulph, The Pirates of Malabar, p.272.

¹³ Walter Hamilton, The East India Gazeteer, p.54.

¹⁴ Ibrahim Kunju, A.P. 'Umayamma Rani, 1677-1684', Journal of Kerala - Studies, March, 1975.

¹⁵ Letter from Calicut to Surat, 6th Feb, 1678, Surat Factory Records Vol. 107.

the Attingal territory were selected as Factory sites.¹⁶ In 1690, the Rani of Attingal gave permission to the English Company to erect a fort at Anjengo.¹⁷ The English secured the monopoly of pepper trade in Attingal in 1693. The fort was completed by about 1695 and Anjengo became a flourishing centre of trade.¹⁸ The acquisition of Anjengo was really a gain to the English, for the place commanded the line of water communication to the north and provided ample facilities for trade. It also provided a convenient foothold from where the English East India Company could extend its sphere of influence in South and Central Kerala.¹⁹

The Rani of Attingal at this time was Asvati-Tirunal Umayamma.²⁰ The Attingal kingdom was the maternal house of the Rajas of Travancore. It is said that the eldest son of the eldest Rani of Attingal was the heir apparent to the throne of Travancore. Attingal was absorbed in the Venad Kingdom by Martanda Varma.

¹⁶ Rajendran, N. op. cit., p.44.

¹⁷ William Logan, Malabar, Vol. I, p.341.

¹⁸ Col. Biddulph, op. cit., p.271.

¹⁹ Sreedhara Menon, A. A Survey of Kerala History, pp.260-61.

²⁰ Anjengo Factory Records 1705-49, Vol. I, p.5.

In 1684, John Child ordered the Company to get as much pepper as the Queen could supply, and the Queen welcomed this encouragement.²¹ The sudden interest of the English in the Queen of Attinga's country and the Queen's positive attitude towards them was viewed with suspicion by the Dutch. They warned the English to keep away from Attingal as they claimed to possess exclusive trade contracts with not only the queen of Attingal but also with the Raja of Travancore.²² So the English had to contend with the Dutch to obtain a share in the pepper trade. Exclusive possession of pepper became a fixed point in the Dutch policy and they were reluctant to allow the English any part of it. They tried their best to depress the English trade wherever possible.²³ The growing rivalry between the Dutch and the English put an end to the state of comparative peace in Malabar especially in Attingal kingdom which was known to produce the finest pepper in the world.²⁴ Owing to the abundant supply of pepper the Rani of Attingal was called the "Pepper Queen".

²¹ Sir Charles Fawcett, The English Factories in India (New Series), Vol. III, p.xi.

²² Anjengo Factory Records, 1705-49, Vol. I.

²³ John Bruce, Annals of the Honorable East India Company, p.194.

²⁴ Manohar Malgonkar, op. cit, p.150.

Both the English and the Dutch wanted a monopoly of the spice trade and to achieve this objective they decided to improve their political and military policies towards Travancore. However, the English were not still sure of their relative strength to impose a treaty terms upon the Queen of Attingal. They thought that after the fortification was over, they could press for signing a treaty.²⁵ On account of the high-handedness of the Dutch, the Queen was quick to catch hold of the opportunity provided by the English to find a new opening to dispose of her pepper knowing fully well that the English were at loggerheads with the Dutch. Thus the trade policy of the Queen underwent a change which was favourable to the English. That is why she sent an invitation to the Surat Council.²⁶ Though the offer was tempting, the English had to countenance Dutch claims and their stiff opposition. The British wanted to avoid war in the region because they thought that peace was essential to carry on trade profitably.

²⁵ Factory Records - Miscellaneous, John Goldenborough to John Brabourne, 27th July, 1693, p.41.

²⁶ Sir Charles Fawcett, op. cit, p.365.

The Dutch were determined to leave no stone unturned to oust the English from Attingal country. Few months later the Queen once again sent signals to the English Factory at Calicut for a settlement.²⁷ Two Englishmen, Daniel Acworth and Travers were sent to the Queen who promised them protection and free trade.²⁸ They purchased pepper and decided to construct a warehouse in the territory of the Queen. The English were not prepared to back out of Attingal. So, the Dutch denied passports to the Queen's subjects which became a disadvantage to commerce²⁹ of the country in the hope that the natives would become ware of the English and force them to leave the country. But the Queen had other ideas in her mind which went against the Dutch expectations. The English factors had excellent reasons, for locating their factory at Anjengo.³⁰ It was easy for them to get hold of spices from the country by way of river. Thus the English succeeded over the Dutch in establishing trade monopoly in Anjengo.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Anjengo Factory Records, p.7.

²⁹ Anjengo Factory Records, 1705-1749, Vol.I, p.6.

³⁰ Ibrahim Kunju, A.P. op. cit, p.86.

In 1721, there was an uproar in the affairs of Anjengo Factory. The factors at Anjengo under the chief factor Gyfford had antagonised the local population by their corrupt practices and overbearing conduct but they had been keeping the Rani of Attingal in good humour by sending her costly presents every year. The agents of the Pillamar who were exercising sway over the area demanded that the usual presents due to the Rani be delivered to them for transmission to her. Those who demanded assured that they came to demand it by the Queen's order and offered their receipt for it in her name. But Gyfford, the Chief, thinking that if the presents were sent they would never reach Her Highness as the power of the Ettuvittil Pillamar were just then on the ascendant. So Gyfford accompanied by a group of Englishmen proceeded to Attingal to hand over the present to the Rani in person. They were all cut down by the local people. The real culprits behind the incident were the Pillamar* , who greatly resented the help provided by the factors to suppress them. Though Velu pillai tries to exculpate the Pillamar from complicity in the incidents, their role is definitely proved by contemporary English

* Ettuvittil Pillamar were originally the heads of the local Nayar Militia.

records.³¹ The rebels then proceeded to Anjengo and laid siege to the fort which was defended by Gunner Ince. This attack ended only with the arrival of reinforcements from Tellichery. The Anjengo revolt is important in the sense that it was the first organised revolt against the British in Kerala. Following its failure, the English and the Rani entered into an agreement under which the Company was to be compensated for all the losses sustained during the attack on Anjengo and was also to be given the sole monopoly of trade in pepper as well as the right to erect factories in places of their choice.

The resolution taken by the Honourable Company on learning of this massacre is thus expressed in an 'ola' written by the Travancore Raja to Alexander Orme* on 15th August 1723: "owing to the loss sustained by the Honourable Company in the capture of Attinga and the money and artillery, which the enemies robbed, the Honourable Company have resolved, in spite of money expenses, to put down the enemies and subject the country to the King, we are ready to

³¹ Ibid., p.87.

* Alexander Orme was the Chief of the Anjengo Factory.

do anything without fail, and wish to know when must we come there with our army".³²

The responsibility of restoring amicable relations with the Raja of Travancore fell on the shoulders of Alexander Orme. In September, 1722, he entered into a treaty with the Rani of Attingal. The main terms of the treaty were:

1. The ring-leaders in the attack on Gyfford were to be punished and their estates to be confiscated.
2. The Rani was to reimburse the Company for all the losses caused by the attack on Anjengo.
3. The Company was to have exclusive right to the pepper trade and be empowered to build factories in the Rani's dominions wherever they pleased.
4. The Rani was to return all arms taken in the outbreak and furnish timber to rebuild the church that had been burnt.
5. The Company was expected to supply soldiers to the Queen, to carry on war against her enemies.

The Rani gave permission to the English to open factories anywhere in her country. But the British felt

³² William Logan, Collection of Treaties & C., part I, No. III.

that it would be a loss if new factories were opened with corrupt officers. Midford who followed Gyfford was called back and in his stead, Alexander Orme was appointed as the Chief of Anjengo.

Within a few days after the Anjengo outbreak, Aditya Varma, Raja of Travancore died. Rama Varma (adopted from Kolattunad) became the King. His two sisters had been adopted into the Attingal Swarupam. The eldest Princess gave birth to Anizham Tirunal Martanda Varma, who became the prince of Neyyattinkara and 'Elaya Raja' of Travancore. He tried to liberate the Rani of Attingal from the clutches of the Madampis. For that he requested English help. Alexander Orme entered into an agreement with the Rani according to which they got permission to open a factory at Edava²⁰ on 19th March 1726.

The political condition of Travancore just before the accession of Martanda Varma to the throne was tumultuous. The country was witnessing an unprecedented crisis created by both internal and external problems. Internally Ettuvittil Pillamar were attempting to assert their supremacy whereas the King and his nephew, the heir

²⁰ Ibid. Pt. I, No. XIV.

apparent, were opposed to them. The King having little authority over these men, they rose in power and importance and gradually became lords in their villages. The country was solely under the despotic rule of the Ettuvittil Pillamar.³⁴ These Pillamar usurped, power of the Raja. Likewise the members of Ettarayogam, were also opposed to royal interference in the affairs of the temple. The Rajas tried for a long time to gain ascendancy and to keep in subordination these Pillamar and Yogakkar but with little success.³⁵ Martanda Varma was more diplomatic than his uncle Rama Varma (1721-1729). He understood the necessity of having steadfast alliance with a powerful foreign power, and the choice fell on the English.

Martanda Varma was permitted by his uncle to ally himself with the English and the Nayaks of Madura to secure assistance from them for suppressing the rebellious pillamar. He realised that the superior western military discipline and artillery wing of the English could be put to effective use against the enemies of the State. Thus, on 25th April 1723, Martanda Varma as the prince of Neyyattinkara on

³⁴ Justin Wilson, A. 'Rise and Fall of Ettuvittil Pillamars in Travancore', Journal of Kerala Studies, Vol. V, December, 1978.

³⁵ Padmanabha Menon, K.P. History of Kerala, Vol. I, p.256.

behalf of the king of Travancore entered into an agreement with the English at Anjengo. This treaty which laid the foundation of friendship between Travancore and the English East India Company, was signed between Martanda Varma as the prince of Neyyattinkara the acknowledged representative of the Raja of Travancore and Alexander Orme the commander of Anjengo. In the same year Alexander Orme formally communicated to the Raja the Company's willingness to render all help to him in supressing the power of the Pillamar and the Madampimar.

The main provisions of the treaty were:

1. The Company was allowed to erect a fort at Colechal under the orders of the King of Travancore who should bear the expense of construction of the fort and also pay for the people placed in it.
2. The Company was to supply the artillery and munitions of war for the fort.
3. The Company was permitted to build a mint for coining fanams. In addition, Travancore agreed to remain in league and friendship with the Honourable Company.³⁶

³⁶ Willaim Logan, Collection of Treaties & C, Pt. I, p.9. No.XI.

This was the first treaty negotiated by the English East India Company with an Indian state. As a result of this treaty the Company's position on the coast improved and their trade in pepper and spices developed rapidly. They supplied artillery and received pepper, cardamom and other spices in exchange. This treaty assured the military superiority of Travancore in the region while the English benefited from it. By another agreement signed on 15th August 1723, the Raja of Venad promised to compensate for the loss suffered as a result of the revolt.³⁷ Thus the year 1723 was a mile-stone in the early relations of Travancore with the English.

Depending on the goodwill of Travancore, evinced by the treaty of 1723, the English were gradually improving their trade. But this process had its occasional ups and downs.³⁸ The internal dissensions, apart from affecting the trade development, had threatened even the very existence of the English. They were conscious that they could not hope for any change in their favour unless the tumultuous political situation became normal. According to Orme "upon the whole

³⁷ Ibid, No.XII.

³⁸ Kusuman, K.K., A History of Trade and Commerce, p.107.

the Company cannot depend on any trade in either Attinga or Travancore till these troubles are over."³⁹

The Company adopted a pragmatic approach which suited their interest. They offered unflinching support to Martanda Varma to settle the internal disturbances.⁴⁰ At a consultation held on 31 August, 1739, it was decided to rush assistance in accordance with the desire of the Chief. This was the only policy that could be followed in the peculiar circumstances of the period. The Company desired internal tranquility which was indispensable for an unobstructed trade with the natives.⁴¹

Martanda Varma's determined policy of expansion of his territories made a major clash with the Dutch inevitable. A Dutch force equipped with artillery landed at Kulaccal and put up a stockade there. In the famous battle at Kulaccal (10 August, 1741) the forces of Martanda Varma won and drove out the Dutch from Kulaccal. The Dutch had so far maintained their prominent position in Malabar without suffering any serious reverse. Martanda Varma ignored their

³⁹ Ibid., p.208.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

position as the arbiters in Malabar politics and continued his annexationist policy without minding the protests of the Dutch.

In the battle of Kulaccal a number of Dutchmen were captured as prisoners. The most distinguished among them was D'Lannoy who was made a general (popularly called Valiya Kappitan) of Martanda Varma's army. This battle shattered the dream of the Dutch conquest of Travancore. Now the path of northward expansion was clear for Martanda Varma and he started before long the campaigns for the annexation of the weak northern principalities. The continued successes of Martanda Varma convinced the Dutch that they could not get further concessions from Travancore. By refusing to accept the conditions proposed by the Raja in the hope of gaining more concessions the Dutch lost what they yearned most in Travancore viz., the monopoly of pepper trade. The English were exploiting the situation. The cordial policy followed by the English at Anjengo secured for them monopoly in pepper trade which had been the main concern of the Dutch in Travancore. To regain the trade monopoly the Dutch were prepared to come to an agreement with Travancore at any cost. As Moons observed in his Memoir that they learnt the

lessons from the ruinous war with Travancore that it was not expedient to entangle the Company in another war, the expenses of which were always certain, but the issue uncertain.⁴² Since the defeat in 1741, the Dutch had adopted a commercial policy which was different from the traditional one. Till 1741 they were in the habit of sticking onto treaty privileges and conditions irrespective of the changes that had taken place in the country.⁴³ The battle of Kulaccal compelled them to take a practical view of trade practices. Pressed by circumstances the Dutch decided to pay higher prices for pepper which created a scarcity for pepper for the English. By this policy the Dutch wanted to take revenge upon the English who were supporting Travancore. The increase in price had cast an adverse effect on the Company's trade, and the pepper store had become very lean. Therefore the Chief seems to have thought of changing the policy so far pursued by them. This is evident from a letter he wrote to Krishna Annavi* exploring the current price he was expecting.⁴⁴

⁴² Galletti, A. The Dutch in Malabar, p.108.

⁴³ Kusuman, K.K. Op.cit. p.120.

* He was an officer in the commercial department of the Government and a confidant of Martanda Varma.

⁴⁴ Anjengo Consultations, Vol. II-B (1749-50), p.7.

Martanda Varma's victory over the Dutch gave satisfaction to the Anjengo factors. In July 1743, the additional troops received from Tellicherry, were sent back. They had hopes of an amicable settlement between the Dutch and Travancore. Hitherto Martanda Varma was liberal to the merchants. They continued to transact business in the traditional line i.e., dealing with the merchants directly. The king thought it prudent not to offend the merchants as well as the English, on whose help he had to lean heavily for crushing his enemies. Moreover, he was in need of arms and the support of the English, for he was preparing to conquer and annex the neighbouring northern principalities, who were in league with the Dutch. To meet this continued confrontation with his enemies, he decided to take over the control of the trade in pepper. He utilised this product as a powerful lever for obtaining war materials, which were constantly required in the wars with his enemies.⁴⁵ Rules were framed and established for the guidance of commercial department and proclamations were issued, legalising the

⁴⁵ Kusuman, K.K., op. cit, p.109.

monopoly of all such articles by the Sirkar and prohibiting all private dealings in them.⁴⁶

The new trade policy of Martanda Varma was detested both by the merchants and the English. The English complained against this new policy and demanded for its withdrawal. But the King made full use of the monopoly by demanding more war materials for a limited supply of pepper. The Company however was able to counteract, to some extent, by supplying or withholding arms to induce Travancore to supply pepper regularly. On all occasions when arms were supplied, they reminded the King of the necessity to supply more pepper. Thus, it was a 'pepper for gun' policy which dominated the reign of Martanda Varma.

When Krishna Annavi visited Anjengo, Richard Bouchier, the Chief, revealed that by implementation of the new policy "the Company's trade was absolutely ruined"⁴⁷ Martanda Varma who was badly in need of weapons, made many liberal terms to the British. Because, he understood that the only foreign power who could satisfy his needs was the British. On 25th July, 1744, he informed Bouchier that he would supply the

⁴⁶ Shungoony Menon, A History of Travancore, p.166.

⁴⁷ Anjengo Consultations, vol. I, p.6.

entire pepper of his country from Neyyattinkara to Paravur and the same would be delivered at the Banksauls of Viliinjam, Anjengo and Idava.⁴⁸ Thus Martanda Varma tried to exact the maximum from the English by offering them trade facilities in Travancore, which he denied to other foreign traders.⁴⁹

On 14th November, 1744, the King visited Anjengo and "made several offers of the whole produce of the country, both pepper and cloth, to the Company, provided they would protect the seacoast, that no Europeans should invade them that way".⁵⁰ This suggestion was important in view of the fact that despite occasional complaints and misunderstanding Martanda Varma was confident of the dependability of the English to entrust them with the vital responsibility of defending the sea coast of his dominions from the attack of foreigners. This was also the time when the troubles in the north was mounting to an alarming degree which necessitated immediate attention.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Ibid., p.7.

⁴⁹ Kusuman, K.K. op. cit., p.113.

⁵⁰ Anjengo Consultations, vol. I, p.28.

⁵¹ Kusuman, K.K. op. cit. p.114.

The French were also interested in the pepper trade of Travancore. Their ships were occasionally seen in the important coastal centres of trade, and their presence was consistently objected to by the English.⁵² By the middle of 1751, when Travancore had its hand full with the war in the North, Martanda Varma sought French help to end the war expeditiously. He wrote in August, 1751, "The English who were our friends have forsaken us and are helping the enemy. We cannot write the indignities we have suffered from them. We have sought as long as we could, but now need your protection". The French hoped to exploit the situation and established some factories in Travancore. It seems that as early as 1743, Martanda Varma was convinced that he could not entirely depend upon the French help. Therefore, when he concluded the treaty of 1743 with the Dutch against whom he had earlier sought French help, it was provided that the Dutch would assist him in repelling French aggression. Thus, Martanda Varma was not reluctant to receive the help of any foreign country if he thought it necessary.

On 15th August 1753 the treaty of Mavelikkara was signed. By this treaty the English were to be left

⁵² Ibid.

undisturbed in their factories at Anjengo, Edava and Viliinjam, but Travancore was not to give further encouragement to the English or footing in its territories for any other European power. In return the Dutch were to take their hands off all political disputes. They were to renounce all their engagements with other Malabar princes, particularly with those against whom Travancore wanted to go to war. If any European power attacked the Raja, the Dutch Company was to give their support both by land and sea. The Dutch were to supply Travancore with war materials annually to the value of Rs.12,000 at cost price; and Travancore in return should sell to the Dutch a stipulated quantity of pepper at certain fixed rates both from the territories then in the possession of Travancore and from those which he might conquer afterwards.

Before the actual ratification of the treaty the Dutch tried to ensure Cochin against invasion by Travancore by inserting a clause that "should the Raja of Cochin be attacked by Travancore such was to be considered equivalent to war". But Martanda Varma was not prepared to go further than to give an oral promise that "Travancore should live in friendship with the Raja of Cochin provided he gave no cause

to the contrary" which meant nothing more than that Travancore would remain friendly only as long as she chose to attack her. The ninth clause of the treaty was that the Company should renounce all alliances with the other Chiefs and nobles of Malabar with whom His Highness might desire to wage to war and should not give asylum to any such persons. They had to surrender all pretensions to political authority and content themselves as a mere commercial Corporation. The treaty of Mavelikkara was thus a betrayal of their allies.

After crushing the forces of feudalism and anarchy in Venad Martanda Varma turned his attention to the conquest of the neighbouring principalities with a view to enlarge the boundaries of his kingdom. His first act was to assume direct control of the Attingal estate and thus prevent the Attingal Tamburatis from entering into independent transactions with foreign powers. After taking over the territory of Attingal, he demanded the English that the annual present usually paid to the queen should be handed over to him. With the help of the English Martanda Varma renewed military operations against the Quilon Raja.

The Dutch sent their remaining troops in support of the Kayamkulam Raja who invaded Travancore territory as far as Kilimanur. Martanda Varma immediately mobilised all available troops with arms and ammunition which he procured from the English at Anjengo and French at Mahe and hastened north to meet the advancing Kayamkulam forces. The Kayamkulam troops put up a gallant resistance for sixty-eight days, but finally were forced to surrender and the fort was captured. The retreating army was chased to his own capital and was forced to sign a treaty according to which the Kayamkulam Raja was to cede a major part of his territory and become a tributary of Travancore, paying an annual tribute of Rs.1000/- and an elephant.⁵³ Dissatisfied with the political submission and the newly imposed commercial restriction, the northern principalities rose in revolt. This compelled Travancore to seek more weapons from the English who agreed on condition that the King should assist the Company in case of an attack from the French.⁵⁴ In 1747, Monsieur, the French Chief of Mahe, requested the Raja of Travancore to provide refreshments to the crew of French ships visiting shortly the coast of Travancore. The

⁵³ Raja, P.K.S. Medieval Kerala, p.190-191.

⁵⁴ Anjengo Consultations, Vol. I, p.174.

King directly sent a copy of the letter to the Chief of Anjengo, in order to win the confidence of the English. This act revealed the fact that the Raja had no consideration for the French.

The competition between the Dutch and the English for establishing trade monopoly in Travancore helped to increase the price of pepper. The Dutch tried to counteract the English influence by raising the price of pepper. The price offered by the Dutch attracted Travancore, and Annavi informed the English of the latest trend and wanted them to follow the Dutch.⁵⁵ But the Chief refused. Annavi informed the English "you say you cannot raise the price of pepper and still want to have a large quantity and you want to raise the price of your arms, this is not the method to procure pepper."⁵⁶

When the French vessels touched Kulaccal, the Chief made it clear that "it would be highly resented both by the Government of Bombay and the Company at home".⁵⁷ At the same time he thought it necessary to employ men to cruise both in

⁵⁵ Kusuman, N.K. op. cit., p.117.

⁵⁶ Anjengo Consultations, vol. I, p.171.

⁵⁷ Ibid., vol. II-A, p.36.

the south and north of Anjengo with strict orders to seize any vessel moving with pepper and bring them to the settlement.⁵⁸ This was a serious threat to the trade of Travancore, and hence Krishna Annavi informed the Chief that if this sort of activities were continued, Travancore would switch over the trade by the land route by which it could conduct its trade unmolested.⁵⁹ On 8th May, 1748, the Dutch commodore of Cochin wrote a letter to the Chief of Anjengo in which he had expressed the Dutch willingness to cooperate with the English in cornering the French vessels.⁶⁰ This new development was a matter of anxiety for Travancore because Travancore was seeking English assistance against the Dutch. The Dutch policy was capable of enhancing the position of the English, whom, if they wanted, could use their good offices to bring an amicable settlement between the Dutch and Travancore.⁶¹ But the unpleasant memory of the past prevented these powers to come closer and effect a change in their commercial and political relations.⁶² Even if the alliance was pushed forward and the plan of harassing

⁵⁸ Ibid., p.46.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p.48.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Kusuman, K.K. op. cit., p.118.

⁶² Ibid., p.119.

the French vessels was implemented, it would have brought about two major consequences to the disadvantage of the English. First, the alliance with the Dutch, the enemy of Travancore, would have pushed the latter into the hands of the French; secondly, it would have meant greater expenditure for the Company. In short the English were not in favour of a rupture with Travancore. What they wanted was an unrestricted trade in the country.⁶³

Bourchier retired from the Chiefship of Anjengo on Feb. 1st, 1750 and Thomas Byfield took charge as the new chief. Immediately after the assumption of office he adopted a policy of exploiting the discontent of the merchants, whose freedom had been curtailed greatly by the pepper monopoly by the state. The aggrieved merchants put feelers to explore the attitude of the Company for a secret understanding and supply of pepper to the mutual benefit of the Company and themselves.⁶⁴ The Anjengo officials thought it opportune to accept the offer and implement it in the most confidential manner.⁶⁵ Throughout his career, Martanda Varma was able to carry out his policy of 'pepper for arms' which was aimed at

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid. p.122.

⁶⁵ Anjengo Consultations, vol. II-B, p 67

creating a unified and enlarged state and maintaining it against external aggression and internal disturbances.⁶⁶ In this venture he was supported by the English. Of all the foreigners with whom he came into contact, it was the English who helped him in attaining his objectives. At the same time he tried to secure favourable trade terms from them also in return for the spices his country produced.⁶⁷

In Feb. 1750, Canda Sahib invaded the Tirunelveli district and occupied the Venad possessions beyond the Ghauts. The Angengo Factors reported in February. "The twenty-fourth the Naiques forces took from the king of Travancore Towall (Tovala) which they keep and have since marched into Cotaa (Kottar): the king at present has got with most of his forces into Cookelene (Kulkulam) Fort".⁶⁸ The Naique forces - the armies of Canda Sahib, entered Nancinad by the way of Aruvamoli pass and took possession of Nagarkoil, Sucindram and the rich industrial town of Kottar. Hearing of the invasion, the Travancore army defending Attingal against the confederate forces of Quilon,

⁶⁶ Kusuman, K.K. op. cit, p.124.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p.125.

⁶⁸ Letter, Vol. IV, p.33 (quoted by Ibrahim Kunju, A.P. in Rise of Travancore, p.79).

Kayamkulam and the Dutch, hurried to the south "but meeting with some advices from the king" returned. With his hands full with the war against the confederates, Martanda Varma could not meet this challenge in the South. Therefore he deputed Ramayyan to negotiate a settlement with Canda Sahib. Ramayyan succeeded in inducing the withdrawal of the invading forces "by rich presents".⁶⁹

The English and the French East India Companies supporting their respective candidates, the struggle between Muhammad Ali and Canda Sahib soon developed in to a veiled struggle between the companies for the mastery of the Carnatic. By 1751 Canda Sahib, with French help, was generally recognised as the master of the Carnatic. He had appointed three officers to manage the southern districts. One of them, Muhamad Mainach, generally known as Moodemaiah, captured Valliyur, Kalakkad and the adjoining districts belonging to Venad. Martanda Varma who still had his troubles in the Northern principalities,⁷⁰ was unable to forestall this sudden development.

⁶⁹ Ibrahim Kunju, A.P., op. cit, p.80.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

Muhamad Ali, who had become undisputed master of the Carnatic on the death of Canda Sahib, decided to bring back Tirunelveli under his effective control. He despatched a considerable force under Mahfuzkhan and Col. Heron to the South. The consternation which this news of the Nawab's troop movements created in the mind of the Raja of Travancore, was so serious that he besought the Anjengo Factors to despatch a token contingent to take possession of his eastern possessions, "which otherwise he was apprehensive would fall into the enemy's hands".⁷¹

On receipt of this news, Martanda Varma protested in March, 1755, to the Madras Council, through the English factors at Anjengo, that "he is apprehensive they have designs of entering his country". He asserted that such a move would be "a violation of the friendship and good understanding that has so long subsisted between the Hon'ble Company and him".⁷²

Thereupon the Madras council cautioned Col. Heron, Commander of the English forces with Mahfuz Khan, to be

⁷¹ Ibid. P.81.

⁷² Military Consultations (1755), p.60. (Quoted by Ibrahim Kunju, A.P., Rise of Travancore, p.81).

particularly carefully that no damage was done in Travancore territory. Though the Nawab contended that "the said Rajah is one of the Polygars of this country", the Madras council observed "We do not look upon him in the light of a Polygar of the Nabob but as a prince quite independent: it matters not whether by right or increase of power".⁷³ They also pointed out that "he is now grown so powerful that is most prudent to keep fair with him as well as prevent the hurt he might do to the Company's affairs on the other coast as in consideration of the weight he would add to the Nabob's enemies in the Trichnopoly country were he to be provoked to enter into alliance with them."⁷⁴

In spite of heated exchange of words, occasional seizure of pepper-laden, secret transactions, etc., the relations between the English and Martanda Varma, were, in general satisfactory. To the English he was courteous and kind, proving true to his agreements.⁷⁵ Martanda Varma hoped for continued friendly relations with the English, and he made a proposal in which he promised the entire trade of his

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Nolan, E.H. History of the British Empire in India, vol. II, p.160.

Kingdom in pepper, cloth, cassia, etc., in return for a defensive alliance with them.⁷⁶ Still, when he offered the English, says Nolan, "the exclusive trade of all the pepper and cloth produced in his dominions not required for its own consumption refused".⁷⁷ After a brilliant and enviable career of three decades Martanda Varma passed away in 1758. It was his undaunted courage and diplomacy which enabled him to fulfil the historic mission of unifying Travancore into a single political unit. In attempting the political unification, he had to crush the nobility of the country. He took over the control of commerce which strengthened his hands both financially and politically. His political sagacity enabled him to leave a strong and well-knit kingdom to his successor.

The one important fact that became clear from the relation between Travancore and the European Companies is that Martanda Varma made use of the products of his country as a lever to extract from the companies the maximum assistance they could provide in arms and ammunition, which he so badly needed in his wars against his enemies.⁷⁸ The

⁷⁶ Anjengo Consultations, vol. II-B, pp.139-40.

⁷⁷ Nolan, E.H. op. cit, p.160.

⁷⁸ Ibrahim Kunju, A.P. op. cit, p.97.

was largely responsible for all his achievements. The English wished Travancore must be under the control of a powerful king because they thought that their demands could be met only by a strong king.⁷⁹

Eventhough the English East India Company was a friend and ally, Martanda Varma never gave them an upper hand either in local politics or in commerce. Thus at the close of the reign of Martanda Varma, the English at Anjengo was always ready to help Travancore.

⁷⁹ Sankaran Nambutiripad, E.M. Kerala Charithram Marxist Veekshanattil (Mal.), p.68.

TRAVANCORE-MYSORE-BRITISH RELATIONS

Sugeetha. B “British-Travancore relations upto 1947 ” Thesis. Department of History , University of Calicut, 1997

CHAPTER II

TRAVANCORE-MYSORE-BRITISH RELATIONS

Rama Varma, who is known in history as 'Dharma Raja' was the successor of Martanda Varma. It was during his period that the Mysore rulers, Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan, attacked Travancore, which brought the country into closer relations with the British. His reign witnessed vast changes in the prestige of the Company. It gradually transformed itself, making use of the troubled political situation in different parts of South India, from the position of a commercial concern into a political power. The military assistance received by Travancore from the English in order to face the Mysorean threat, forced the State to accept a subsidiary force of the British which later determined the destiny of the country. Rama Varma had rendered considerable assistance to the English forces in their fight against Tipu. But the British never paid attention to this service. They expressed their thanks only through letters.

The circumstances under which Haider Ali's interference was first invited to Kerala affairs was the aggression of

the Zamorin against the territories of Palakkatt Accan in the year 1758-59. From the beginning of Haider's career, his object had been the conquest and consolidation of the entire south including the Carnatic on the east coast and the Malabar kingdoms on the West coast.¹ Haider turned his attention to Malabar in 1765. Haider's hostility towards Travancore started when Haider Ali was the Faudjar of Dindukal in the years 1750-51. Martanda Varma, the ruler of Travancore requested military aid from Haider Ali, to suppress the revolting northern principalities which he had recently conquered.

Haider was willing to offer his assistance and he made preparations. But when these Chiefs of the disaffected provinces knew the Maharaja's request for help from Haider Ali, they surrendered. So there was no need of making use of Haider's proffered help. Haider had written to the Maharaja, saying that his troops were ready and asking why His Highness did not call for their aid. The Maharaja informed Haider Ali that his country was fortunately then enjoying tranquility and that the assistance asked for and

¹ Ibrahim Kunju, A.P., Mysore-Kerala Relations in the 18th Century, p.2.

so readily granted, was not needed. Haider demanded compensation for the arrangements made by him which was not paid and this partly explains Haider's stiff attitude towards Travancore. Thus was sown the first seed of enmity between Mysore and Travancore.²

During the period of Rama Varma, Kalakkad in the Tinnevely district across the Ghauts became a bone of contention between Travancore and the Carnatic. Kings of Travancore were in possession of the districts of Kalakkad and Chengotta for a considerable period. The Nawab now laid claim to these districts and overran them. It resulted in a series of conflicts along the borders and some of the major military campaigns were fought in Travancore territory across the Ghauts. The Raja placed the matter before the English and was of the opinion that if the Company would act promptly, the Nawab will give up these places to him.³ He offered the Company two thousand candies of pepper annually without fail and permission to erect a flagstaff at Brinjhon (Vizhinjam). He promised to give sixty thousand fanams and

² Shungoony Menon, P., A History of Travancore, p.159.

³ William Logan, A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Other Papers of Importance, No.CIXVI, p.113.

one elephant yearly besides, the usual amount paid by him, to the Nawab also.⁴

The English East India Company persuaded the Travancore Raja to sign an agreement with the Nawab acknowledging his supremacy. Accordingly, the Raja agreed that he will by no means whatever in future, do anything contrary to the will and pleasure of the Nawab and will ever remain in obedience and alliance with him. He agreed to send sufficient extra forces whenever required to punish Hyder Ali. Hereafter, the enemies and friends of the Nawab will be treated as the enemies and friends of the Raja also.⁵ In short the Raja of Travancore accepted the overlordship of the Nawab of Carnatic and agreed to pay peishcush to him. In return he got Chengotta and the undisputed possession of Kanyakumari. These agreements were made under the initiative of the British, who befriended both Travancore and the Carnatic.

It was the military support given by the British that enabled the Nawab to conquer the southern districts and defeat Travancore forces in the conflicts with the Nawab's forces. If the British did not support the Nawab, he would

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., No. CXXXIX, p.119.

not have succeeded against Travancore. Thus the British were playing a double role in the quarrel between the Nawab and the Raja of Travancore. It resulted in forcing the Raja to conclude a humiliating treaty with the Nawab. However, the British succeeded in their plan without straining their cordial relations with both the Nawab of the Carnatic and the Raja of Travancore.

In 1766, Haider's relations with the Madras Government were much improved. They had even prevailed on the Nawab to be on good terms with him. When the Madras Government published on 3 March the Mughal Farman granting the sarkars to the Company, Haider congratulated them.⁶ Above all he proposed a defensive alliance with them. It was assured that if such an alliance was formed, both Mysore and the Carnatic would be safe from the invasions of the Nizam and the Marathas.⁷ On the defensive alliance, which Haider had proposed and which alone would have brought him nearer to the Government, they thought it was disadvantageous to them

⁶ Haider to Madras, Cons. 9 June 1766, Madras Military and Secret Proceedings, Range 151, Vol. 55, p.342 (quoted by Sheik Ali, British Relations with Haider Ali, 1760-1782, p.48.).

⁷ Sinah, N.K., Haider Ali, p.155.

for any assistance they shall send him must have a greater effect than a body of cavalry sent to the Nabab.⁸

When Haider took Calicut in 1766, the representatives of the Dutch Company met him and demanded that, the Raja of Cochin should be left undisturbed. But Haider insisted on payment of tribute by the Cochin Raja as a token of his allegiance.⁹ The Cochin Raja for fear of attack by Haider agreed to accept Haider's demand and paid two lakhs of rupees and three elephants.¹⁰

After overrunning Malabar and bringing Cochin under his control Haider Ali wanted to bring Travancore also under Mysore. Meanwhile the Dutch power had declined. The Maharaja with the help of a Brahmin bureaucracy and a mercenary army and foreign experts like De Lannoy had made Travancore a very powerful state on the Malabar coast.¹¹

The Cochin Raja accepted the suzerainty of Haider Ali. But the Raja of Travancore refused to accept the demand of

⁸ Instructions to Bouchier, Cons. 18 July 1766, M.M.S.P. Range 251, Vol. 56, p.471. (quoted by Sheik Ali, British Relations with Haider Ali, 1760-1782, p.52-53.

⁹ Sheik Ali, B., British Relations with Haider Ali, 1760-1782, p.48.

¹⁰ Sinah, N.K., op. cit, p.155.

¹¹ Ibid., pp.152-153.

Mysore because of the English support he got and on the ground that as he was already a tributary to Nawab Muhammad Ali of the Carnatic, he could not give tribute to Haider Ali also.¹² Haider had told Moens to collect a sum from Travancore and to give him in person reported by Moens.¹³

Again, when Haider demanded 200,000 ducats and ten elephants, he refused to comply with these demands. So in order to fulfil his desire of conquering Travancore, Haider Ali made military preparations in 1768.¹⁴ But it was averted by the discovery of the intention of the English who were on a war-path against Mysore.¹⁵ This led to the withdrawal of the army ready for attacking Travancore. Failing in his attempt to secure a free passage through the Dutch territory of Cranganore towards Travancore, Sardar Khan, the Mysore General, captured the fort of Cranganore and the next few months were spent in skirmishes with the Dutch around

¹² Anjengo Diaries, dated, Factory, 1764-66, Vol. XII, 1217, pp.86-90.

¹³ Galletti, A., The Dutch in Malabar, p.154.

¹⁴ M.M.D.L.T., History of Haidersah, pp.93-94.

¹⁵ Joint Commissioner's Report, para 21 (quoted by C.K. Kareem, in Kerala under Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan, p.49).

Cerruvay and Cranganore.¹⁶ Meanwhile Haider Ali came into an open conflict with the English and the Nawab of Carnatic.

In the first Anglo-Mysore war, the English, Marathas and the Nizam of Hyderabad jointly tried to defeat Haider Ali. But the military skill and diplomacy of Haider Ali helped him from a great disaster.¹⁷ Mysore succeeded in breaking the triple alliance of the English, Marathas and the Nizam. Haider Ali sent Tipu Sultan as his special envoy to the Nizam on June 11, 1767. Tipu carried on the diplomatic negotiation so successfully that the Nizam honoured him with a Khilat.^{*18} At last Mysore forces dashed to Madras and encamped before the Fort St. George and compelled the East India Company to conclude peace with Haider Ali.

The terms of the treaty were not favourable to the English. In article 1 of the treaty, the Raja of Travancore was included as friend and ally of the British. The treaty omitted the Nawab's name for the protection of whose

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Kabir Kausar, Secret Correspondence of Tipu Sultan, p.3.

* Robe of honour.

¹⁸ Ibid.

interest the war was undertaken. The deliberate omission of his name reveals the intensity of the rivalry between Haider and the Nawab. When we examine the records relating to the treaty of 1769, we find that the Madras Government at no stage was willing to abide by its terms. There was a provision in the treaty "that in case either of the contracting parties shall be attacked, they shall mutually assist each other to drive the enemy out". But when the Marathas attacked Haider Ali later the English failed to help him.¹⁹ This alienated Haider Ali from the English. The failure of the British to supply military stores to Haider caused further ill-feeling. Another treaty was concluded in 1770,²⁰ by which it was arranged that the British were to have a factory at Onore for pepper and sandalwood and an exclusive right was given to the Company for purchasing the entire quantity of these articles.

Meanwhile important developments had taken place in Cochin and Southern Malabar. Haider had demanded two lakhs of rupees and a few elephants from the Raja of Cochin.²¹

¹⁹ Aitchison, C.U., A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries, Vol. IX, No. III.

²⁰ Ibid, No. IV.

²¹ Ibrahim Kunju, A.P., op. cit, p.18.

When the Cochin Raja consulted the Raja of Travancore, he persuaded the Raja of Cochin to accept the suzerainty of Mysore, so that a buffer state between his and Haider Ali's Malabar possessions would be created. The Raja of Travancore provided money to the Cochin Raja to pay the tribute to Haider Ali. He indulged in inciting rebellions in Malabar with the help of fugitive princes and chiefs to whom he had given shelter with a view to keeping the Mysoreans fully engaged in the internal problems of Malabar.²²

While Haider was engaged in his distant expeditions and at times suffering reverses, his lieutenants in Malabar were in constant alarm. Then came the British expedition to Mangalore. Madanna the Mysore governor of Malabar informed the chiefs that Haider was going to give up Malabar if the chiefs re-imbursed the expenses he had incurred.²³ The Malabar chiefs paid the price willingly and purchased "a dream of independence".²⁴

²² Foreign, Miscellaneous, S.No.56, Part I, Voucher No.4, p.69.

²³ Sinah N.K., op. cit, p.154.

²⁴ Ibid., pp.154-155.

Soon Haider Ali's officers broke with the Dutch on the question of Chettuvai, a sandy spit of land separated from Kodungallur only by the river, which they had conquered from the Zamorin. Sardar Khan occupied Chettuvai on the ground that the territory belonged to the Zamorin and called upon the Dutch authorities to submit the revenue accounts of the territory. When the Dutch protested, Sardar Khan replied that his master desired to live in friendship with the Company and so desired free passage across the Company's territory and past Cochin in order to attack Travancore and if not, friendship was out. This clearly showed that Haider Ali's objective was to advance on Travancore.

The Dutch immediately set about fortifying the northern tip of the island of Vaypin, to prevent the enemy from crossing over from Kodungallur. On the completion of the fortification called Ayacotta, some Travancore troops were also entertained in its defence. Thereupon the Nawab's forces got ready to attack the new fortifications but were prevented by the arrival of a Dutch battleship.²⁵

The Dutch Commandeur, Moens, now sent a deputation to the king of Travancore to persuade him to make a joint

²⁵ Ibid. p.19.

effort to prevent the extension of Mysore territory. The King declared his willingness in checking with united force the further advance of the enemy, but he could not take the offensive against him, as he had not yet been attacked by the Nawab. As the king of Travancore did not move in the matter, Governor Moens, tried his best to get Haider "make up things with the Company". But Haider did not pay heed to these overtures and was on the look out for an opportunity to attack Travancore.²⁶

Haider Ali attacked Malabar again in 1774. The Zamorin of Calicut with his family took shelter in Travancore. When Haider came to know about it, he turned his attention against Travancore. But the Dutch did not allow them to pass through their territories because they did not get the permission from Batavia. At the same time the Dutch asked the Travancore Raja whether they were willing to join them in defensive activities against Haider Ali. The Dutch Governor of Malabar proposed an alliance with Travancore but the Raja of Travancore declined it on the ground that he was bound by the terms of the alliance entered into by him with the English East India Company. If he did it, it would be

²⁶ Ibid.

prejudicial to the terms of the treaty of Madras. Even though the Raja made preparations to protect the border of his territory, he was not willing to join the Dutch in that matter.

In August 1776, Haider Ali once again pressed the Kings of Cochin and Kodungallur to make a contribution towards his military expenses. The king of Cochin sent ambassadors to the Nawab at Seringapatam to impress upon him the need for giving up the additional levies. The amount of contribution was reduced. The king of Cochin was asked to pay four lakhs of rupees as 'Nazar' and 1,20,000 rupees as annual tribute. The King of Kodungallur was to contribute 1,20,000 rupees as nazar and 20,000 rupees towards the annual tribute. The Kodungallur Raja was asked to pay the amount through the Cochin Raja.

Rama Varma, the successor of Martanda Varma, continued his hostile activities against Haider Ali and showed definite inclination towards the English. He allowed the English army to pass through his territory on their way to attack Mahe, the French possession in Malabar, in the year 1778, ignoring the protest registered by the Dutch.²⁷

²⁷ Kareem, C.K., Kerala under Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan, p.76.

Acknowledging this service of the Raja, the Select Committee recorded, "the Raja of Travancore allowed the Honourable Company's army to pass through his territory and gave abundance of food and provisions for them". "I know very well that you are the most sincere friend of the English in India", wrote Col. Humberstone, to the Raja of Travancore, "I shall let the Governor and council know the services rendered by you especially to the army led by me."²⁸ On October 20, 1776, the Maharaja wrote to the Governor, Fort. St. George, Madras that Haider Ali's army attacked the Dutch fort of Cranganore and "some shells fell close to my fort", and requested help from the Company. When the Second Anglo-Mysore war broke out, the Raja actively helped the English by sending two battalions of his soldiers and aiding the Nair rebels of Malabar to create disturbances in that area.²⁹ For these useful services the English insisted on including him as 'a friend and ally' of the Company in the first article of the Treaty of Mangalore which was concluded in the year 1784.³⁰

²⁸ Colonel Humberstone to the Raja of Travancore, March 27, 1782, quoted in Ibid.

²⁹ Kareem, C.K, op.cit, p.77.

³⁰ Logan, op.cit.Part I, No. IXCIII.

So Haider could enter Travancore only by a new way through Cochin. The King of Cochin was neither included in the Madras Treaty nor was a friend of the British. So, the Cochin Raja had to accept the suzerainty of Mysore and give a sum of 4 lakhs and four elephants in addition to 1½ lakhs rupees as annual tribute in token of vassalage every year.³¹ The Raja of Travancore informed the British about the unjustifiable demands of the Mysoreans and their warning of attacking Trvancore continuously.

Following the death of Haider Ali, his son, Tipu Sultan became the ruler of Mysore without any opposition. He continued the war with the British. On 11th March 1784 the Treaty of Mangalore was signed and the Second Anglo-Mysore War came to an end.³² The treaty was signed by three commissioners on behalf of English East India Company and Tipu Sultan.³³ The Commissioners while returning to Madras informed the Raja that the Hon'ble Company and the Nabob Tipu Sultan had concluded and signed a treaty. They added "the Company did not on this occasion forget your fidelity and the steady friendship and attachment you have

³¹ Shungoony Menon, op. cit, pp.174-5.

³² Secret Proceedings, May 13, 1784.

³³ For. Pol. Secret Proc. No. 96 A, pp.2765-66.

uniformally shown in every situation and you are expressly named and included in the treaty as their friend and Ally, and as such we can assure you on the part of the Company that your intrests and welfare will always be considered and protected as their own".³⁴

Thus Malabar again came under Tipu and a peaceful atmosphere existed upto the Third Anglo-Mysore war.³⁵ In another way it will be correct to say that the British had taken this Travancore problem as a weapon for fulfilling their desire to suppress Tipu - the Tiger of Mysore. Tipu's policy towards Travancore was more diplomatic than the policy adopted by Haidar. Instead of the aggressive methods of Haider, Tipu approached Travancore with a friendly and compromising attitude.³⁶ Tipu's aim was to win the Raja of Travancore by settling the disputes peacefully. He wrote to Rama Varma "I have come to know from the Cochin Raja that you are a good man and an able ruler. Since you are an intelligent man, you must be aware of the fact that how my friendship with you would be helpful to arrange all things

³⁴ Military Sundry, Vol. 3rd, Letter to the Raja on 22 March, 1784.

³⁵ Military Sundry, Commission to Tipu Sultan.

³⁶ Kerala History Association, Kerala Charitram, (Mal.), Vol.I, p.584.

in future. I am sending my representatives with some gifts. Please accept them.³⁷ Rama Varma on the other hand, confident of English support "not only ignored the friendly overtures of Tipu but also continued his hostile activities breaking thereby the provisions of the Treaty of Mangalore. So, during Rama Varma's period Mysore-Travancore relations presented a different picture.

The Raja of Travancore purchased the Cranganore and Pallipuram forts from the Dutch in 1789 to prevent the incursions of the Mysorean army. The Maharaja thought it advisable to purchase these forts from the Dutch and ordered Dewan Kesava Pillai to open negotiations with them. The Raja sent letter to the Dutch commander explaining the details about the forts.³⁸ The Dutch Governor consulting Dewan Kesava Pillai, as to the best methods of stopping Tipu's forces, at last resolved to sell the two forts to Travancore. The Maharaja had long wished to obtain these forts, and applied about a year before to Sir Archibald Cambell, Governor of

³⁷ Mathilakam Records, Curuna, 1308, Ff.74-75.

³⁸ Agreement to purchase Cranganore and Ayakkotta from the Dutch (Appendix B in Mysore-Kerala Relations in the 18th Century, by A.P. Ibrahim Kunju).

Madras for permission to negotiate their purchase.* But Archibald expressed his disapprobation of the measure. After that gentleman had left India, the Raja wrote to his successor Mr. Holland, briefly observing that he had completed the purchase of these forts with the concurrence of the British Government. In such circumstances there appeared on the part of the Raja more deceit than honour.³⁹

Tipu also wanted to buy these forts. The Dutch however were not willing to sell these forts to Tipu Sultan, as they were afraid that it might endanger their position at Cochin. They thought of making the best use of a bad situation by selling the forts to Travancore. In May 1789, when Powney, wrote to the Madras Government that Tipu was preparing to attack Kodungallur which was of the great importance to the defence of Travancore, Mr. Holland, the then Governor of Madras informed him that the Company's troops are to be employed only for the defence of the Raja's own country and that he must urge the Raja to be extremely cautious in his conduct during the present situation and on no account to

* Letter from the Raja of Travancore to Sir Archibald Campbell, Governor of Fort St. George, dated 8th June, 1788.

³⁹ Dhar, G.N. (ed.), Authentic Memoirs of Tipu Sultan, p.27.

afford Tipu Sultan a pretext for invading the Travancore country.⁴⁰

On receipt of the news of the purchase of the forts, Holland wrote to the Raja reprimanding him: "I cannot approve of your having entered into a treaty with the Dutch for the extension of territory without the consent of this Government. This very impolitic act makes you liable for forfeiture of the Company's protection, for you cannot expect that they will defend a territory of which you were not possessed when their troops were sent into your country and which have since been obtained without their consent". Lord Cornwallis, the Governor-General expressed his regret and disapprobation of the conduct of the Raja in concluding political negotiations without the previous sanction of the power on which he depended for support. He wrote to the Madras Government that the Raja should be helped only if Tipu attacked him without provocation, but "should he provoke Tipu by making collusive purchase of forts or places in territories of one of his tributaries . . . he will justly draw Tipu's resentment upon himself and at the same time forfeit all right to the Company's friendship or

⁴⁰ Military Consultations, Vol. 129c, p.1447.

interference in his favour".⁴¹ Lord Cornwallis suspected Powney, the English Resident at the court of Travancore of having suppressed the truth and condemned his conduct "in having adopted the ideas of the Raja in the matter of the purchase of the places".

The Maharaja tried to justify his position. He wrote to the Governor of Madras that he had secured the approval of Sir Archibald Campbell, the preceding Governor, for the purchase of the forts; that the forts in question were situated only a gunshot from the boundary of his country, and were in consequence important to its security.⁴² Sir Archibald Campbell had not only not approved the purchase of the forts, but had definitely dissuaded the Raja from it.* The Madras Government believed that the forts were places of no strength, and the Raja himself acknowledged that "there is not the slightest benefit or advantage accruing to me from the possession of Ayacotta or Cranganore"; nevertheless

⁴¹ Military Consultations, Vol. 131B, pp.2659-61.

⁴² Ibrahim Kunju, A.P., op. cit, p.43.

* Sir Archibald Campbell had, when questioned about it by the Court of Directors stated that he neither countenanced nor advised the Raja the purchase of Cranganore and Aycotta, (Cobbett's Parlimanetary History, vol. XXVIII, pp.1302-3. quoted by A.P. Ibrahim Kunju, in Mysore-Kerala Relations in the Eighteenth Century, p.43).

he purchased them to prevent "Tipu should of a sudden possess himself of them".⁴³

The Maharaja claimed that the Dutch paid no tribute to Cochin. To prove this point he produced an affidavit from Governor Van Angelbeck stating that the Dutch Company had an absolute right to dispose of the forts, for which "they never paid any tribute . . . to the Cochin King, Tipu Sultan or to any other king".⁴⁴ But this Dutch claim was contrary to facts. The Portuguese and the Dutch after them paid the Cochin Raja annually half the customs collections from Cochin.⁴⁵ This clearly shows that the Dutch recognised the Raja's sovereignty over the forts and territories held by them. In consequence, Tipu was well within his rights to object to the sale of two forts to Travancore.⁴⁶

Further the assertion of the Raja of Travancore that he had ascertained the title of the Dutch to sell the forts in question, previous to the purchase,⁴⁷ was also not correct.

⁴³ Cobbett's Parliamentary History, vol. XXVIII, p.1292 (quoted by Mohibbul Hassan Khan, Tipu Sultan, p.161).

⁴⁴ Military Consultations, Vol. 133A, F.19.

⁴⁵ Regional Archives, Ernakulam, Miscellaneous Correspondence, List LXIA, No.10.

⁴⁶ Ibrahim Kunju, A.P., op. cit, p.44

⁴⁷ Military Consultations, Vol. 133A, F.4.

The Raja made enquiries in this regard only after the Governor General had objected to the purchase of the forts. We find in a letter on 23rd December, 1789 the Raja enquiring of the Dutch Commandeur at Cochin, regarding the Dutch rights over the two places.⁴⁸

It is clear from the letters which the Raja wrote to the Dutch Commandeur. In a letter received at Cochin on 25th July, 1789, the Raja wrote: "We have sent Kesava Pillai there to impress upon the Admiral the necessity to do the needful in the matter of Kodungallur and Munampam. As long as these two places are in the possession of the Company, Tipu will proceed against us. Tipu without taking measures against us, our ally, the English Company will not move in the matter. If these two places are in our possession, he will not proceed against them; the English will attack him on the ground that he had broken the treaty with them. It is on this account that we are writing to the Admiral".⁴⁹ It is clear from this correspondence that the transfer of the

⁴⁸ Historical MSS. Vol. III, No.47 (vide, appendix B), Regional Archives, Kozhikode.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

two forts was a collusive act between the Dutch and the Raja of Travancore to involve the English in a war with Tipu.⁵⁰

On 21st September 1787 the Raja of Travancore wrote to the Company regarding the possibility of Tipu's invasion of Travancore and requested the Company to send back his troops stationed in Tinnevely. But Cornwallis believed that Tipu would not invade Travancore. The Travancore Raja took steps for procuring more arms from the Company in order to resist the invasion of Tipu. On 28th Feb, 1788 the Raja wrote to the Company to send one thousand stand of arms.⁵¹ Moreover the Raja requested the Company to protect him from Tipu and applied for two battalions of sepoy. The Travancore Raja wrote, "I am a good friend of the Company. I rely upon the assistance of the English against an attack from Tipu".⁵²

Tipu attacked Travancore on 29th December 1789⁵³ and 6th March and 12th April 1790. Throughout the fighting the subsidiary force remained as passive spectators of all these

⁵⁰ Ibrahim Kunju, A.P., op. cit, pp.44-45.

⁵¹ Krishnan Nadar, G., Socio-economic background of the Military History of Travancore-Kerala-India, p.43.

⁵² Ibid., p.44.

⁵³ Translation of a letter from the Raja of Travancore to the Resident Mr. Hutchinson received on 2 January, 1790. (British Library, Oriental and India Office Collections).

disasters and depredations on the ground that they received no order from the Madras Government. If they had helped to defend the breeches, Tipu would never have taken the Lines so easily. The Dutch declared that the conduct of the battalions was disgraceful to the British Nation.⁵⁴

In May, 1790 Tipu Sultan established his army on the other side of the Periyar river, committing atrocities on all sides and burning the homes of the rich and the poor. And then the monsoon broke with great severity. Tipu Sultan was forced to retreat to his own country on hearing that Lord Cornwallis had contracted an alliance with the Marathas and the Nizam and attacked Mysore.

In all these wars with the Mysoreans the policy of the British was so diplomatic that they tried to defeat the Mysoreans by using the wealth and regiments of Travancore. At the same time the British made Travancore Government fully subservient to the British. Mysore rulers were the only strong enemy of the British in South India. So, the British always tried to destroy Mysore rule from South India. But they very skilfully acted as if they were

⁵⁴ Poona Residency Correspondence, Vol. III, No.106 A, A letter from Robert Taylor, Chief of Tellichery, 12th May, 1789.

fighting for the protection of Travancore from Mysorean invasion. The British won in their attempt to make the Raja feel that Travancore escaped from Mysorean attack only because of the support of the British. The British exploited the weakness of the Raja for increasing the trade facilities and the rights of the Company. From the stage of humble merchants and friend and ally they became the paramount power. The British officers were in the habit of rendering advice and training to the native armies, but it was denied to Travancore. Subsequent events proved that it was a pre-planned policy by the Madras Government to reduce the Raja to a mere dependent status.⁵⁵ During this period the position of Travancore was extremely critical and the only friend Travancore had were the English.

The period of ten yers from 1789-1799 was a crucial period in the history of Anglo-Travancore relations. This period became one of the most decisive epochs in the history of South India, through the establishment of British hegemony in its pivotal parts. The English East India Company which emerged as the paramount colonial and imperial power in South India reduced local rulers into subservience

⁵⁵ Lee Warner, The Protected States of India, p.177.

like the Nawab of the Carnatic, the Sultan of Mysore, the princes of Malabar and the Nizam of Hyderabad by the end of eighteenth century. The Dewan of Travancore, Raja Kesavadas was a well-wisher of the English East India Company and had great faith in their growing power. The Company in return held him in high esteem.⁵⁶ It was Raja Keasvadas, who had actually saved the country from the grasp of a powerful enemy like Tipu Sultan by strengthening the alliance with the East India Company.⁵⁷

The Company's demand for increased subsidy was against all the expectations of the Raja. The additional demand of the Company further worsened the financial position of the State and the Raja was forced to impose several taxes upon the people against all precedents and raise a large amount. The Maharaja revealed his helplessness in a letter to his minister Kesava Das, "I have not in any way bound myself to contribute to the expenses of the war yet the Company presses for payment. I have raised loans and paid 14 lakhs yet they make further demands. My previous debts remain unpaid. I have raised money by collecting unusual taxes. I

⁵⁶ Sobhanan, B., 'Tragic End of Raja Kesavadas and His Family', Journal of Kerala Studies, Vol. VI, Sept. 1979.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

never was in such anxiety and distress before. The Company cares more for money than for their friends."⁵⁸

However, the Maharaja's friendship for the Company was never shaken. He appealed to Lord Cornwallis, the Governor General to persuade the Company's authorities at Madras to stop further demands for money on the ground of his past meritorious and sincere services. On 21st September 1793 he submitted a memorial tracing his cordial relations with the Company that "it may prove as a bulwork of friendship for the present and future ages may tend to the protection of his honour, his respect and his power during his period and for his family after him."⁵⁹

Subsequent to the Treaty of Seringapatam, the war-clouds had finally cleared and the Maharaja of Travancore requested the Madras government to withdraw the English troops. The English authorities however pointed out the advantages of stationing an English army in Travancore and gave suggestions to the President for a treaty with the

⁵⁸ Sir. Madhava Rao, T., Tiruvitamkur Caritram, (Mal.), pp.150-51.

⁵⁹ For. Pol. Cons. Proc, 25 Nov. 1793, F.11817.

State.⁶⁰ Having convinced of the need of an English alliance the Maharaja agreed for a treaty of perpetual alliance with the English to protect the State from internal disturbances and external aggression. Thus a treaty was signed at Anjengo on 17th November, 1795.⁶¹ Wellesly believed that the preservation and improvement of British influence in Travancore was of the greatest importance to the interest and security of the Company's Government in India and so he proposed modification of the treaty of 1795 in the light of his general policy of subsidiary alliance in India.

The year 1795 was important and eventful in the commercial as well as political history of Travancore. It was in that year that a major treaty was made between the English East India Company and Travancore, which imposed several limitations on the sovereignty of the latter. In this treaty the English included such provisions as they thought necessary and advantageous to their commercial prospects. The question of affixing Company's seal on the warehouses of Travancore incensed the Dewan who took it as an encroachment on the commercial rights of Travancore. By

⁶⁰ Sankaran Kutty Nair, T.P., A Tragic Decade in Kerala History, pp.23-24.

⁶¹ William Logan, op.cit., Part II, XCVIII.

the agreement between Abercromby and the Maharaja, Travancore was bound to supply 3000 candies of pepper annually to the Company. The Company could receive as much pepper from Travancore. This was behind the suggestion to affix the Company's seal on the warehouses of Travancore but it was highly provocative and unwarranted. They cleverly used the provisions of the treaty for preventing the entrance of foreigners in Indian market and politics. Likewise, Travancore also was not allowed to enter into any trade relations with foreigners other than the English. Apart from the commercial supremacy the Company was gradually but effectively establishing its hold over Travancore politically. Thus, this treaty laid the foundation of British-Travancore relations firmly.

TRAVANCORE-BRITISH RELATIONS SINCE 1795

Sugeetha. B “British-Travancore relations upto 1947 ” Thesis. Department of History , University of Calicut, 1997

CHAPTER III

TRAVANCORE-BRITISH RELATIONS SINCE 1795

In the eighteenth century, it had been a settled principle of British Government not to meddle with the religious and social customs of the country. But at the beginning of the 19th century the chief interest of the British in Travancore was to establish their relations with the state "on a permanent basis".¹ With this aim in view they entered into a few treaties with Travancore. In 1813 missionary enterprise displayed great activity. This change had its political effects also. Thereafter missionary bodies more constantly interefered in the affairs of the country.

Rama Varma, the successor of Martanda Varma, in order to support the Malabar Chieftains against Mysore, had sought the assistance of the English to train his own army. The Madras Government instead of sending officers for the purpose, agreed to station two battalions of the Company's army in Travancore for its defence at the king's expense.²

¹ Aitchison, A Collection of Treaties Engagements and Sanads Relatings to India and Neighbouring Countries, Vol. X, p.130.

² Yesudas, R.N., British Policy in Travancore, 1805-1859, p.11.

Powney became the first British representative in Travancore followed by major Bannerman and Col. Macaulay.

It was the threat of Mysorean invasion which paved the way for British supremacy in Travancore. The Travancore troops had fought along with the troops of the Company in December, 1781, for the reduction of the factory of Tuticorin from the Dutch. Similarly in March the Raja of Travancore issued an order to his troops to march against Cochin in conjunction with the Company's troops.³ Though the Mysorean attacks led by the French man Lally were fierce, Col. Macleod repulsed them all. Travancore helped the British in their war with Mysore. A Travancorean force of 2000 men was already on its way to Calicut. But when news arrived of the death of Haider on December, 12, 1782, Tipu left for Seringapattam.

Early in 1788 Tipu went to Dindukal to transform it into a base for an invasion of Tirunelveli and Travancore. In 1790, disregarding the articles of the treaty with the English of 1784, Tipu attacked Travancore.⁴ Then the English

³ Krishnan Nadar, G, Socio-economic Background of the Military History of Travancore-Kerala-India, p.43.

⁴ Minutes of Evidence taken before the Select Committee on the Affair of East India Company, Vol. VI, p.212.

East India Company entered into a war with Mysore on the ground that Travancore was one of their allies. Travancore actively took part in the Third Anglo-Mysore War and her forces under Dewan Kesava Pillai, won signal victories. It was in recognition of his meritorious services rendered by him that the Governor-General Lord Wellesly conferred on the Diwan the title 'Raja Kesavadas'.⁵ In March 1789 Cornwallis formed an alliance with the King of Travancore by which the latter agreed to pay for two battallions of Madras sepoy to defend his Kingdom. The troops were to be stationed within the Travancore border.⁶

The attack on Travancore by Tipu led Lord Cornwallis to declare war against Tipu and enter into an alliance with the Marathas and the Nizam of Hyderabad against the aggressor. On 1st June 1790, an offensive and defensive alliance was entered into between the above parties, to punish Tipu and to deprive him of all means of disturbing the general tranquility in future. It was stipulated that the combined forces had to supply the British with ten thousand cavalry when required after the declaration of war. This treaty was

⁵ Sreedhara Menon, A., Survey of Kerala History, p.242.

⁶ Pameela Nightingale, Trade and Empire in Western India, p.46.

executed at Panugal on 14th of July, 1790.⁷ In 1792, in the battle of Seringapatam Tipu Sultan was defeated and Travancore was saved from annexation. And the Company began to spread its tentacles to reduce independent Travancore into a dependent state.⁸

In September 1793, the Raja requested the Supreme Government to conclude a permanent treaty for the defence of the country against foreign enemies. Tipu was still powerful. His alliance with the French and their victories in Europe alarmed Rama Varma and the English. So they concluded a treaty in 1795 by which the English agreed to defend Travancore in return for an annual payment, both in peace and war. The Raja had to meet the expenses of three battalions of sepoy together with one Company of European artillery and two Companies of lascars.⁹ The proposed treaty was signed between Jonathan Duncan, Governor of Bombay, on behalf of the Governor General of India on the one part and the Raja of Travancore on the other. After the conclusion

⁷ Ganguly. D.C, (ed.), Select Documents of the British Period of Indian History, p.26.

⁸ Yesudas. R.N, op.cit., p.12.

⁹ William Logan. A, collection of Treaties, Engagements and other papers of importance relating to British affairs in Malabar, ii. XCVIII.

of this treaty, Travancore became the protected ally of the British.

Almost all provisions of the treaty were favourable to the British to establish their supremacy over the affairs of Travancore Article II provided that any power or state near or remote by sea or land, shall without aggression on the part of the Raja of Travancore, attempt or begin hostility and war upon the country of the said Raja or of his successors under such circumstances, the expulsion of and the protection of the country against such enemies rest with the Company's Government. This provision was intended to make sure the authority of the British upon Travancore. Article III provided that the Raja must pay a sum equivalent to the expense of three battalions of the company's soldiers both in peace and war. Through this provision, the Company could maintain its army without any expense. In article VII, it was stipulated that when the Company shall require any aid of his troops to assist them in war, the reigning Raja should furnish such numbers as may be in his power, from his regular infantry and cavalry.

By the Treaty of 1795 pepper contract became a perpetual one, but it was subject to such modifications as

to price, quantity, etc, which was to be settled between the Company and the Government of Travancore. This treaty also contained provisions for the expulsion of all foreigners other than the English. However, the treaty did not contain any clause enabling the Company to interfere in the internal affairs of Travancore.

Sir. John Shore recommended that at the same time the Bombay Government should revise its pepper contract with the Raja and by paying the market price for pepper make sure that the contract was fulfilled.¹⁰ The additional demand of the Company further worsened the financial position of the state and the Raja imposed several taxes upon the people against all precedents and raised a large amount. The Raja revealed his helplessness in a letter to his minister Raja Kesavadas that he has collected unusual taxes to make payment to the British, Eventhough he tried his best to be friendly with the British, the Resident demanded more and more money beyond the expectation of the Maharaja. Thus with great dissatisfaction, Maharaja Rama Varma died on 17th February, 1798 after a long reign of forty years. He was succeeded by Balarama Varma on 18th February, 1798. From

¹⁰ Pameela, Nightingale. op.cit., p.112.

the very beginning he was reluctant to seek the guidance of the minister Raja Kesavadas, because he thought that all the distresses and turmoils in the reign of his uncle were the result of the Diwan's intimacy with the English. In 1798 Travancore made payment towards the subsidy. It was the first payment after the conclusion of the permanent treaty of 1795. Subsequent to the Treaty of Seringapatam, the war-clouds had finally cleared and the Maharaja of Travancore requested the Fort. St. George Government to withdraw the English troops. The English authorities then pointed out the advantages of stationing an English army in Travancore. Lord Wellesley became the Governor-General of India in 1798. Then the political situation in India was very delicate and even critical. The British had to face danger from the Nizam, the Marathas, Tipu Sultan and the French.

On 1st September, 1798 Lord Wellesley requested the Raja's co-operation for placing the entire Travancore military force at the disposal of the Company in the event of hostilities with Tipu Sultan.¹¹ Major Bannerman, the Resident at the court of Travancore was instructed to

¹¹ Foreign Political Consultations Proceedings, 10th September, 1798, Ff. 1577-8.

persuade the Raja and his minister to join the English side in the impending war. During the Fourth Anglo Mysore war, Travancore liberally aided and assisted the Company. Governor-General Wellesley believed that the preservation and improvement of British influence in Travancore was of the greatest importance to the interests and security of the British Government in India. Therefore he proposed the modification of the Treaty of 1795 in the light of his general policy of subsidiary alliance in India. On the question of modification of the treaty with the Company Raja Bala Rama Varma was strongly opposed to any new arrangements. At this time Governor-General Wellesley deputed Col. Maculay as Resident to Travancore with the express purpose of enforcing the provisions of the Subsidiary Alliance Scheme in Travancore also.¹²

The demise of Maha Raja Rama Varma, was followed by various circumstances unfavourable to the maintenance of cordial relations that had long subsisted between Travancore and the Company's Government.¹³ The fall of Tipu Sultan in 1799 removed the formidable danger to which Travancore had

¹² Minutes of Evidence taken before the Select Committee of the Affairs of the East India Company, Vol.VI, p.226.

¹³ Ibid.

been long exposed. From a more powerful neighbour, headed by a restless chief, Mysore came under the control of the Company. This led Travancore to think that she was no longer in need of any active support or protection of the Company. This change in the attitude of Travancore towards the Company can be seen in the later policy of Travancore.¹⁴

The desire of the Raja, after the fall of Tipu Sultan, to establish relations with the French and the Dutch alarmed the English. Resident Macaulay feared that the Raja was well disposed to the French, and that a political negotiation had been opened with him by the French.¹⁵ These changes prejudicial to the interest of the Company convinced the Resident of the necessity to tighten the grip of the English over Travancore.

When Balarama Varma ascended the throne in 1799, the political situation in Trvancore had become worse. He did not possess the ability to grapple with the difficulties which beset his throne. His Dewans or ministers were removed by violence or death. It was only by the timely interference of the British Resident that a stop was

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

temporarily put to such unwarrantable proceedings. A hostile group headed by Samprati Kuncunilan pillai and Jayantan Sankaran Nambudiri was formed and they gained ascendancy over the new Maharaja and began to influence the conduct of affairs. They charged Kesava Pillai the Dewan of the late Raja, who was in the eyes of the English "a Dewan of uncommon ability and worth", with joo paradising the interests of Travancore by his collusion with the English.¹⁶ This hostile clique kept Kesava Pillai away from the Raja in order to sever the close and cordial relations between Travancore and the English.

Kumaran Tampi, the brother of Kesava Pillai, informed Murdock Brown, an English private merchant that Samprati Kuncu Nilan Pillai was "constantly dinning into the ears of the Raja that the late Dewan by his dealings and connections with the English had ruined the country that all the distresses they felt were entirely owing to him."¹⁷

Disgusted at the Company's interference in the internal affairs of Travancore, the Raja appointed Jayantan Sankaran

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Foreign Secret Consultations Proceedings, dated, 17th May, 1804, Ff. 1535-6.

Nabudiri as Valiya Melaluttu Pillai or finance minister, Mattu Tarakan, a wealthy Syrian Christian from North Travancore was also included in the inner circle of the Cabinet. Thus in spite of the earnest wish which the Governor-General Lord Wellesly expressed that an efficient ministry should be formed,¹⁸ the triumvirate of ignorance, profligacy and rapacity came to rule the destinies of this principality. The Company was least sympathetic towards the ministry on the ground that it was hostile to the interests of the Company.

This ministry turned their attention towards the collection of arrears of revenue urgently. Defaulters were severely punished. In the course of their exactions they summoned Velu Tampi the Ex-Tahasildar of Talakkulam who failed to pay the taxes promptly. He had gone into premature retirement.¹⁹ He excited the people of his locality by narrating the oppressive measures of the ministry. Velu Tampi exhorted the people by declaring that "these outside Nambudiries had nothing to lose, however badly the country is governed. The injury and disgrace of

¹⁸ Shungoony Menon.P, A History of Travancore, p.293.

¹⁹ Ramanatha Aiyer. S, Progressive Travancore, p.141.

it all is for our king and his subjects. The state of affairs was therefore to be corrected.²⁰

Velu Tampi revolted against the bureaucratic misrule with the help of 'Nattukuttam'. He compelled the Raja to dismiss his unpopular ministers. He succeeded in this revolt. Ayyappan Cempaka Raman pillai was appointed as the next Dewan. Velu Tampi the organiser of the revolt was appointed as Mulaku Matissila Sarvadhi Karyakkar.²¹ These appointments were approved by Major Bannerman, the Political Resident in Travancore. In 1801, Velu Tampi was appointed as Dalawa.

The leaders of the revolt wanted the subversion of the British power and influence in Travancore and the assassination both of the Dewan and the Resident.²² When the news of the insurrection reached Fort William, Lord Wellesley immediately asked the Madras Government to insist on a modification of the treaty of 1795, so that British forces could be used to aid the Raja in quelling internal

²⁰ Velu Pillai. T.K, Travancore State Manual, Vol.II, p.451.

²¹ Miscellaneous Historical Records, Vol.III, Ola, 2.

²² Col. Munro to the Chief Secretary to Government, Fort. St. George, dated 7 March 1818. Foreign Political Proceedings, Fort William, 17 July 1818. No.20, F.25.

commotions as well. At the same time the Madras Government decided to increase the subsidy. The Dalava tried his best to get the amount of the subsidy reduced and the king was bitterly hostile to the very question of revision of the treaty.²³ The subsidy fell into arrears and the English suggestion to reduce the Nair Brigade provoked a rebellion in 1804.²⁴ The original cause of the dissatisfaction of Nair Brigade was a reduction in their allowances. Though the Raja restored the allowances, the revolt violently continued. Before the suppression of the revolt, intelligence was also received by the Resident of a projected expedition from the French against Travancore. The judicious and active conduct of the Resident, the resolution of the British officer commanding the Carnatic Brigade in the service of the Raja and the firmness of the Dewan Velu Tampi, who had fled to the Resident for protection when the revolt broke out, led to the suppression of the rebellion and the establishment of peace. The Raja was highly gratified by the mission of British troops for the support. The Dewan pledged himself to adhere to his last breath to that system of measure which should receive and merit the

²³ Minutes of Evidence taken before the select committee in the affairs of the East India Company, Vol.Vi, p.227.

approbation of the Governor General.²⁵ This paved the way for the conclusion of a new treaty in 1805 which established British paramountcy over Travancore. British domination became evident in all branches of the administration and the state lost initiative and independent action.²⁶ This was a treaty of subsidiary and defensive alliance.²⁷ Thus after some five years of resistance Travancore also fell a victim to the subsidiary system of Wellesly.

In 1801, the Resident and the Dewan had made a joint attempt to secure the consent of the Raja for the subsidiary alliance. Macaulay tried by pointing to a possibility of French invasion of British Indian territories but he found the Raja was least moved by his tactics. Then he threatened him, with the annexation of Travancore to British Indian territory. But the persistent opposition of the Raja forced the Resident to reduce the proposed increase in the annual subsidy from ten lakhs to eight lakhs. Still there was no basic change in the opposition of the Raja.

²⁴ Robbin Jeffrey, The Decline of Nayar Dominance, p.5.

²⁵ Minutes of Evidence taken before the select committee in the affairs of the East India Company, Vol.I, p.227.

²⁶ Yesudas. R.N, op.cit., p.15.

²⁷ Minutes of Evidence taken before the select committee in the Affairs of East India Company, p.227.

The Maharaja continuously resisted the conclusion of a new treaty with the Company both publicly and privately. But his opposition proved futile before the Resident as the Treaty was signed at the initiative of the Dewan Velu Tampi, to which neither Balarama Varma, the king nor the majority of officials of the court agree. Velu Tampi supported Maculay because he had realised that when almost all important states in India had accepted the subsidiary alliance of Wellesly, it would be useless to plead for equality with the English in India any more.²⁸

All provisions of this treaty were drawn in favour of the British. Two of the most important clauses of the agreement were, viz. (1) if the subsidy fell in to arrears, the Governor General in Council was permitted to take over the administration of such part or parts of the Raja's territories as would "discharge the subsidy amount" and (2) the Raja agreed to abide by the advice of the Company's officers for the improvement of the administration.²⁹ Through these provisions apart from commercial supremacy, the

²⁸ Sankaran Kutty Nair. T.P, A Tragic Decade in Kerala History, p. 69.

²⁹ Aitchison. C.U, op.cit., Vol.X, p.135-36.

Company gradually, but effectively, stabilised its hold over Travancore politically also.

The Raja should pay annually to the Company a sum equivalent to the expense of one regiment of native infantry in addition to the sum now payable for the force subsidised by the third article of the subsidiary Treaty of 1795. The said amount was to be paid in six equal instalments from the first day of January 1805. If it becomes necessary for the Company to employ a larger force than that which was stipulated for in the preceding article, to protect the territories of the Maharaja against attack or invasion. His Highness agreed to contribute jointly with the Company towards the discharge of the increased expenses.

The Maharaja was to be guided by a sincere and cordial attention to the relations of peace and amity established between the English Company and their allies. He should abstain from any interference in the affairs of any state in alliance with the English Company. No communication or correspondence with any foreign state should be held by the Raja without the previous knowledge of the Company. Again His Highness stipulated and agreed that he would not admit any European foreigner in to his service without the

concurrence of the Company. His Highness promised to pay at all times the utmost attention to the advice of the English Government with regard to economy of his finances, the better collection of his revenues, the administration of justice, the extension of commerce, the encouragement of trade, agriculture and industry or any other subjects connected with the advancement of his interests.

Clause nine of the treaty stipulated that, it had become the duty of the British Government to call the Raja's attention, in the most serious manner to the manifold abuses prevailing in his dominion to urge an enlightened policy. The Raja was also informed, that in carrying out any such reforms the assistance of the Resident was available.³⁰

The conclusion of this subsidiary alliance and the subsequent loss of political independence was detrimental to the trade interests of the kingdom also. The financial administration of the kingdom was another important factor in the British relation with Travancore. This treaty gave the Governor-General in Council power to bring part or parts of the kingdom under their direct management to ensure the

³⁰ East India, TRAVANCORE order by the House of Commons to be printed 6th August 1859-Paper Relating to the Recent Disturbances in Travancore, p.32.

regular payment of the subsidy. The Raja had to pay utmost attention to the advice of the British in matters of economy of finances and the collection of revenues. Virtually it was a surrender of the sovereignty to a colonial power.

This treaty inaugurated a new chapter in the history of Travancore British relations. January 12th, 1805, changed the course of the history of the state. The subsidiary system set up under the treaty of 1805, meant to implant the suzerainty of the British over the state. Col. Maculay, the Resident, felt that the attitude of Travancore towards the British was becoming cold and indifferent. This treaty was intended to perpetuate the influence of the British Government and tighten its grip as much as possible.³¹ It made Travancore completely subservient to the Company in foreign affairs and crippled her freedom even in internal affairs. It reduced Travancore, hitherto an equal ally to the position of a subordinate power. As the external defence was taken over by the Company, the state became completely dependent on the British. In internal affairs the friendly advice of the Resident soon became, in effect,

³¹ Panikkar, A.K. 'The Travancore Rebellion-1809'. Journal of Indian History, Vol. XLVII, April-1969.

the imperative commands of a paramount power.³² Thus apart from commercial supremacy the Company was gradually, but effectively stabilising its hold over Travancore politically also.

By this treaty Travancore was bound to pay eight lakhs of rupees as subsidy to the Company. The amount was so exorbitant that it created excitement and alarm in the minds of all. The Raja found it impossible to bear the increased burden imposed by the new treaty. The apprehensions created by the new treaty and the insistence of the Resident, bordering on coercion, to clear the arrears of tribute, set even trusted friends like Velu Tampi, into thinking that the Company was not at all considerate to the well being of the state and its people. The haughtiness and intemperate language of the Resident estranged the Dalawa from him. The Dalava was forced to concert measures for an open rebellion against the British in defence of the King and the country.

Though Travancore lost initiative and independent action by the treaty of 1805, she enjoyed complete liberty to formulate any policy to which the English had no

³² Sankaran Kutty Nair, op.cit., p.65.

objection. And it was this treaty which helped to change the face of the state and leave a distinctive mark on her history. John Strachey wrote, "in place of constant anarchy, and bloodshed, we have given to her peace, order and justice, and if our Government were to cease, all the miseries from which she had been saved would inevitably and instantly return."³³

By signing the treaty, the policy of the British was to cut off the growth of the state. By this treaty Travancore was not allowed to enter into any trade relations with foreign nations other than Britain. There was also provision in the treaty for the dissolution of native militia. Thus this treaty laid the foundation of British supremacy in Travancore.

This subsidiary system disarmed the country and placed British protectorate over it. It deprived the king of taking any measure or of forming any confederacy against the British. His troops may be directed against any of the principal states of India without hazard to disturbing the tranquility of the Company's possessions. Col. Munro who

³³ John Strachey, India, Its Administration and Progress, pp.212-13.

was later the Resident-Dewan of Travancore pertinently remarked that "a state that purchased security by the sacrifice of independence of national character- and of whatever renders a people respectable." The Resident interfered in to the day-to-day administration of the state to an extent that the normal functioning of administration was rendered impossible. "I can therefore have no doubt," wrote Munro, "that the subsidiary system must everywhere run its full course, and destroy every Government which it undertakes to protect."³⁴

Karl Marx had very aptly summed up the effects of the subsidiary alliance system: "As to the native states, they virtually cessed to exist from the moment they became subsidiary or protected by the Company. If you divide the revenues of a country between two governments, you are sure to cripple the resources of one or the administration of both... the conditions under which they are allowed to retain their apparent independence are, at the same time, the conditions of permanent decay and of utter inability of improvement." Munro wrote, further that "the simple and

³⁴ Grover. B.L, & Sethi, B.R, Studies in Modern Indian History, pp. 98-99.

direct mode of conquest from without is more creditable both to our armies and to our national character than that of dismemberment from within by the aid of subsidiary force."³⁵

The annual subsidy of eight lakhs of rupees stipulated by the new treaty was a great strain on the resources of the state and the Raja found it difficult to fulfil the commitment. The payment of subsidy, therefore fell into arrears. The Dewan and the Raja repeatedly entreated the British Government to write off the arrears and reduce the annual subsidy, without avail. On the contrary, Col. Maculay pressed for the immediate payment of the arrears, threatening punitive action in case of non-compliance.

In 1808, compelled by the resident, Raja cleared a part of the arrears by borrowing money and pledging jewells to Sahukars "I am so harassed and molested, wrote the Raja to the Governor General, both by Sahukars and by Col. Macaulay that my food and my sleep are embittered to me." The Company however continued their pressure for the prompt supply of the pepper according to the contract.

³⁵ Ibid.

In his imperialistic attitude Col. Macaulay even threatened, "to lay hold of that minister and throw him" to the Valiyatura surf who would not pay heed to his advice. In another letter Macaulay described Velu Tampi as a temporising equivocating, prevaricating and marauding boy. Towards the end of 1808 A.D, the subsidy had fallen into large arrears and the Resident peremptorily demanded payment. The Maharaja and the Dewan stated that the revenues of the country were incapable of supporting such a heavy burden of meeting the expenses of four battalions of the Company's troops and requested for a reduction in the subsidy. In reply the Resident recommended the disbandment of the Carnatic Brigade by which a saving of 1½ lakhs of rupees might be effected. The Maharaja regarded the dismissal of the Brigade highly derogatory to his position. The resident thought that the Dewan intentionally increased arrears to the Company. On the other hand Velu Tampi lost his confidence upon the British.

The strained relations between the Resident and the Dewan resulted in the insurrection of January, 1809. Whatever might have been the reason for the friction it cannot be denied that the insurrection was to a certain

extent due to the tactlessness of Macaulay, the exorbitant demand the Company made upon Travancore at his instance, and the coercive tactics employed for concluding the new treaty.³⁶ Velu Tampi had all along been a good friend of Col. Macaulay. He hoped that the Resident could certainly wish well by the state. When he pleaded for a reduction in the high subsidy the Resident insisted on its payment in full. Not only would he not reduce a pie but would insist on its payment at the appointed dates.

Thus Travancore was in a whirl pool of political manoeuvring, intrigues and confusion. The King was not responsible for the deplorable situation created by the evils inherent in the subsidiary system. The situation further deteriorated by the domineering attitude of Col. Macaulay. The fear that the Dewan could summon a large mass of people against the British alone saved Travancore from immediate annexation.

The assertion of the British historians that the rupture between the Dewan and the Company was on account of the non-payment of the subsidy is an over simplification.

³⁶ Parameswara Pillai. V.R, Velu Tampi Dalava, (Mal), pp.120-25.

The nature of the subsidiary alliance, which gave ample opportunities for the Resident to interfere in the administration and indirectly control the Governmental machinery in the state created wide areas of conflict between the executive officers of the state and the British representatives.

After finding that it is not possible to be on good terms with Macaulay, Velu Tampi and Paliyat Accan combined together and proposed to murder him. For this purpose Velu Tampi strengthened forts and stored up arms and ammunition. Their plan was, the garrisons at Alleppy and Parur were to unite and make an attack of Fort Cochin and murder Macaulay. At the same time another force was to attack the British garrison at Quilon. The two armies were to march simultaneously to their respective destinations in covered boats. Maculay soon discovered the aim of these preparations of the Dalawa and immediately wrote to he Madras Government for reinforcement.³⁷

Velu Tampi pretended great alarm at these active measures and begged permission to resign his office and

³⁷ Nagam Aiya.V, Travancore state Manual, Vol.1, p.433.

retire to the Company's territories. Agreeably to this request arrangements were made for his removal from Alleppy to Calicut on the 28th December 1808 and a sum of money was advanced for his expenses. Owing to the alleged fears of the Dalwa that his person was not safe in Travancore, a large force was also got ready at Alleppey to escort him, thereby weakening the force stationed at the Residency.³⁸ Open hostilities began with an attack upon the Residents house at Cochin at midnight on 28th December 1808.

By realising the danger, the Resident with the help of a confidential clerk under him managed to escape in a recess in the lower chamber, the door of which was not easily distinguishable from the exterior wall. The insurgents searched every part of his residence and spent that night by tilling domestic servants attached to it. At day break they beheld a British ship enter the harbour and other ships were seen at a distance making for the port. They immediately retreated to Travancore much disappointed, thus affording Col. Macaulay an opportunity to get on board the ship that had just arrived at the harbour with part of the

³⁸ Ibid.

reinforcements from Malabar.³⁹ The disappointment affected Velu Tampi deeply, but there was no helping it. He encouraged the men as much as he could and proceeded to Quilon to make the best of the bad step he had taken. Maculay who escaped accidentally reported the matter to the Governor of Madras and requested to send more troops. Meanwhile Tampi united the forces camped at different places and attacked the British camped at Quilon. But General Chalmers easily defeated the Travancore army.

The tactless and domineering attitude of the political Resident Co, Macaulay made matters worse and culminated in the Rebellion of Velu Tampi. Eventhough Velu Tampi failed in his attempt, in order to stimulate the people, he issued Kundara proclamation. He went to Kundara, and issued the famous Kundara Proclamation on 14th Janurary, 1809. Velu Tampi exhorted the people by delaring that "it is the nature of the English to get possessions of countries by treacherous means, and should they obtain ascendancy in Travancore, they will put their own guards in the palaces, sircar buildings and the fort gates, destroy the royal seal, do away with honorific palanquins and other distinguishing

³⁹ Ibid., p.434.

marks, suppress the Brahminical communities and worship in pagodas, make monopolies of salt, get low caste people to inflict heavy punishments for slight faults, put up crosses and Christian flags in pagodas, compel intermarriages with Brahman women without reference to caste or creed and practise all the unjust and unlawful things."⁴⁰

As several revolts occurred about this time in the different parts of South India, the British Government decided that such a state of affairs should not be allowed to develop in future. Col. St. Leger with his force encamped near the Aramboly pass on the 6th February 1809. The pass defended by formidable lines consisting of a number of small well-built bastions each mounting two or three guns and connected by a strong wall masonry. On the morning of the 10th February, Major Welsh, one of the commandants, succeeded in taking the whole lines with very little resistance and loss of life, having during the previous night climbed the southern fortified hill which was defended by 50 pieces of canon and 10,000 men. The Travancore troops fled in all directions and Velu Tampi himself fled back to

⁴⁰ Ibid., p.437.

Trivandrum.⁴¹ The British force advanced into the interior parts of Travancore.

In spite of the failure of the revolt, Velu Tampi is one of the great figures of the early phase of the freedom struggle. In his attitude, there were strong components of both democracy and nationalism. He had become the minister of Travancore after having led a successful popular revolt against bureaucratic misrule and forced the ruler to concede the demands of the people. The famous Kundara Proclamation of 1809 in which he called upon the people of Travancore to revolt against the humiliating domination of the British is a great document. He sums up the evils of colonial imperialism and the threat it holds to the autonomy of the people.

This revolt of 1809 is one of the earliest of the anti-British movements in South India for overthrowing the British. But it is a fact that the revolt did not produce the desired effect.⁴² The English historians wanted to justify their actions. Quite naturally they minimised the havoc wrought on them by the rebellion of 1809. It is a

⁴¹ Ibid., p.441.

⁴² Sankaran Kutty Nair. T.P, op.cit., p.60.

common factor that local grievances take a political complexion where foreign rule exist. When the foreign government tries its suppression, such revolts, instead secures public attention and eventually become the means of casting away the foreign element from the body politic.⁴³ However, at the time when nationalism was non-existent the only course open for whetting anti-British feeling was to appeal to the religious sentiments of the majority community, viz., the Hindus. This was the strongest also the weakest point of the proclamation.⁴⁴

The rebellion of Velu Tampi resulted in crippling the freedom of action of the Raja and disarming the people and the kingdom. In the revolt of 1809, Velu Tampi got the support of a section of the people to fight against the British.⁴⁵ The English East India Company at the end of the 18th century had shifted its chief interest from trade to "ruling for profit." It had become apparent that revenue would be more profitable than commerce, which was hindered by the lack of imports required in India and by the severe

⁴³ Chaudhuri. S.B, Civil Disturbances during the British Rule in India, p.21.

⁴⁴ Kusuman. K.K, The Abstention Movement, p.1

⁴⁵ Chaundhari. S.B, op.cit., pp.132-7.

competition.⁴⁶ In the south, as well as in some other parts of India, Company officials not only issued proclamations on the eve of annexation assuring the people that they had no intention of interfering in "the free exercise of their religion", but once annexation had taken place proceeded to make enquiries and to develop what they considered were the most effective methods of safeguarding Hindu and Muslim religious endowments and of seeing that rituals and ceremony were properly and regularly conducted.⁴⁷ The rapid changes in the fortunes of the Company which in the short space of fifty years obtained complete dominion over India.⁴⁸ Wellesley's aim was to consolidate British dominion in India, partly by absorbing the decadent and dependent rulerships like the Carnatic and partly by securing a general control over all native states by an extension of the subsidiary alliance system and thus to make the British power paramount in India. When Wellesley was recalled,

⁴⁶ Roland. E. Miller, Mappila Muslims of Kerala, pp.100-101.

⁴⁷ Oddie. G.A, 'The East India Company's religious policy and controversy over Temple court processions in Madras 1800-1836', Indo-British Review, Vol.XIII, No.I, Jan-June, 1987.

⁴⁸ Panikkar. K.M, Indian States and the Government of India, p.3.

Cornwallis was sent out to India pledged to reverse the policy followed by Wellesley.⁴⁹

Col. Macaulay pressed the King to appoint Ummini Tampi as the next Dalava. The King had no other way except to accept him, as Velu Tampi had hidden himself and English troops were camped in Kalakkuttam and Pappanamcode.⁵⁰ The new Dewan started negotiations with the Maharaja. The native forces were disbanded and the defence of the country was entrusted solely to the British subsidiary force. Velu Tampi realising the magnitude of the danger committed suicide instead of allowing the enemies to capture him alive. Ummini Tampi who succeeded Velu Tampi, was vindictive and cruel which made him unpopular, and he was removed as soon as Rani Gouri Lakshmi Bai became the Queen of Travancore. The Dalava's body was taken to Kannamula in Trivandrum where it was exposed on a gibbet. The treatment meted out to Velu Tampi's dead body was undoubtedly brutal and inhuman. It constituted one of the darkest chapters in the history of British rule in India. Even Lord Minto, the

⁴⁹ Mehta. B.N, 'Lord Wellesley's Policy and Its Reversal', Journal of Indian History, Vol.XXXII, part II, August, 1954.

⁵⁰ Siva Sankaran Nair K, 'Oru Cenkolinu Venti', Samskara Keralam, (Mal), April-June, 1993.

Governor-General, condemned Col. Macaulay for indulging in such an act of brutality. He wrote "the ends of justice and purposes of public security were attained by the death of the Dewan, and the prosecution of a vindictive policy when the object of it had ceased to exist, was repugnant to the feeling of common humanity and the principles of civilized Government."⁵¹ In the midst of these difficulties Balarama Varma died in November, 1810, leaving no male member in the royal family to succeed to the throne.⁵²

⁵¹ Sreedhara Menon.A, Kerala District Gazetteer-Trivandrum, p.216.

⁵² Ibid., p.218.

TRAVANCORE-BRITISH RELATIONS (1810-1829)

Sugeetha. B “British-Travancore relations upto 1947 ” Thesis. Department of History , University of Calicut, 1997

CHAPTER IV

TRAVANCORE-BRITISH RELATIONS (1810-1829)

Balarama Varma was followed by Rani Gauri Lakshmi Bai. She became the ruler because of the interference of the British. Otherwise, Kerala Varma who had been adopted by Balarama Varama would become the ruler.

Before the death of Balarama Varma Col. Munro had been appointed as the next Resident in Travancore (October 1810). While appointing him as the Resident of Travancore, Munro was informed of the conditions in which he was appointed to the post. In the despatch dated 23rd March, 1810, Falcolner, Chief Secretary to the Madras Government, wrote: "The nature of the past transactions and the existing state of affairs in that quarter render the situation of the Resident at the court of Travancore in a high degree important, difficult and delicate, and His Lord-ship in-council is satisfied that in selecting an officer possessing all the requisite qualifications for an office so arduous, he fully provides for the public interests in confiding the trust to you."¹

¹ Nagam Aiyar, Travancore State Manual, Vol. I, 449.

Dewan Nanupillai in his manuscript 'Sketch of Travancore', wrote about the affairs in Travancore, when Col. Munro assumed charge as Resident thus: "The maharaja Balarama Varma was the ruler, and Ummi Tampi, who had been appointed the Dewan in March, 1809, the premier. Corruption, abuse of power and irregularities pervaded the whole service. The country was deep in debt. The service was starved and the subsidy to the Hon'ble East India Company fell greatly in arrears, owing to serious financial embarrassment. Anarchy and maladministration were the order of the day. The minister's predominant passion was ambition which influenced him to a degree that he almost usurped the Raja's power. The inability of the ruling power so to administer the state as to avert financial difficulty in the payment of the subsidy, went so far as to evoke the threats of the paramount power that it would assume the direct management of the country for the security of the funds destined to such subsidy... The young prince of Mavelikkara was a favourite of the Maharaja and passed with the title one Elaya Raja, though in fact he was not the heir apparent. His antecedents were far from anything but irreproachable, as he had been suspected of connivance at, if not playing

second fiddle to the rebellion raised by Velu Tampi."² He has supported Velu Tampi.

When Vol. Munro assumed charge as Resident in Travancore in October, 1810, he found Maharaja Balarama Varama, a weak ruler, overshadowed by his Dewan, Ummuni Tampi. The finances of the state were in utter disarray owing to the large arrears of subsidy to the Company. In addition to this, the Madras Government now imposed a war indemnity of 1,89,877 pagodas, on account of the expenses connected with Velu Tampi's revolt. The Maharaja expressed his inability to pay so huge a sum but the Dewan assured the Company's authorities of the early liquidation of the arrears, in order to earn the favour of the Company.³ For this purpose, the Dewan advised the Raja to suspend the holding of Murajapam, one of the prestigious festivals in the sri. Padmanabha Svami Temple every 12 years, so that the savings could be utilised to pay off a part of the subsidy. This proposal created disaffection in the court, and even the Dewan's life was threatened. Kerala Varma the adopted son of the Raja created a strong party in the palace against

² Ibid.

³ Vijaya Mohan. T.K, 'Ummuni Tampi, the Dewan of Travancore', Journal of Kerala Studies, Vol.V, 1978.

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the Dewan.⁴ The Company's Government warned the Raja that any harm done to the Dewan would be considered an act of hostility against them.

One of the major problems that arosed on the death of the Maharaja Balarama Varma was about the succession. In 1789, the Raja adopted two princesses Bharani Tirunal and Attam Tirunal from the Kolattunad family. Bharani Tirunal later gave birth to two daughters. Ayilyam Tirunal Gouri Lakshmi Bai and Uttrtati Tirunal Gouri Parvati Bai in 1791 and 1810, respectively. So, on account of the absence of male heirs in the royal family, Balarama Varma had adopted Prince Kerala Varma of the Mavelikkara branch of the Kolattunad Swarupam on 22nd Cittirai 974. M.E.⁵ and his adoption rites (padi and padiyerram) were performed.⁶ The alleged support given to Velu Tampi by Kerala Varma and the machinations of Ummini Tampi, had made Col. Macaulay to enquire into the legitimacy of the adoption. After making some preliminary enquiries, he recommended that the prince

⁴ Velu Pillai. T.K, Travancore State Manual, Vol.II, p.499.

⁵ Matilakam Documents, 'Rajyakaryam Curuna', Ola, 128, quoted in (T.K. Velu Pillai, Travancore State Manual, Vol.II, p.228).

⁶ Kerala Varma was treated with consideration by the king and prince was styled Ilaya Raja (crown prince)

should be sent away from the court but the king refused to do so and insisted on Kerala Varma's continuance at the court. In the meantime Col. Macaulay retired and was succeeded by Col. Munro.

The first problem Munro had to face was the succession problem, Munro appears to have been determined to exclude Kerala Varma from succession. He wrote to H.H. Baber, Judge and Magistrate of North Malabar regarding the succession procedures in the country. Baber wrote back that the rule of descent in Malabar was not from father to son but through sister's son. In case of failure of male issues, it was usual to adopt a princess from some other family and the male child born of this adoption enjoyed the right to succeed to the throne.⁷

Apart from the report of Baber, Munro had obtained the opinion of the Principal Sastris, Pandits and senior state functionaries in Travancore. They unanimously submitted that Kerala Varma was duly adopted into the royal family by Balarama Varma. Munro who was wanted to eliminate Kerala Varma, threatened if an amicable solution was not

⁷ Letter from Baber to John Munro dated 1st December, 1810, para.4.

forthcoming, the Company would take over control over Travancore, whereupon the large number of emoluments and perquisites enjoyed by the Brahmins under the then Government would be lost. Then the Brahmins and other dignitaries changed their opinion and favoured the succession of Rani Gouri Lakshmi Bai.⁸

In spite of all the formalities which Munro undertook to decide the question of succession. He must have thought that the elevation of a prince, who was hostile to the English interests, which was proved by his support to Velu Tampi's revolt, would be dangerous in a strategically situated country as Travancore.⁹ The Resident must have thought that such a prince would be a hindrance in their attempt to keep their control over the state. Hence his attempt to instal a lady on the throne, who will be more amenable to English interests in the country became a reality. She expressed her obligation to the English in a speech made on her coronation ceremony. She said: "I had not expected even in my dreams that I would be called upon even

⁸ Letter from Munro to the Chief Secretary to Madras Government dt. 28th Novemeber, 1810.

⁹ Political Consultation. Letter from Munro to the Chief Secretary, dated 7.12.1810.

in my life to assume a Musnud which had been most worthily and deservedly occupied by my ancestors from time immemorial and latterly supported and protected under the auspices of the Honourable East India Company. . . I cannot do better than to place myself under the guidance and support of the Honorable East India Company, whose bosom had been an asslum for the protection of an infant like Travancore since the time Sri. Padmanabhaswamy had effected an alliance with a respectable company of the European nation. To you, Colonel, I entrust everything connected with my country, and from this day I look upon you as my own elder brother and so I need say no more."¹⁰ On the decision to raise Gouri Lakshmi Bai to the musnud, Kerala Varma was exiled to Malabar and later to Chingelpet. Thus, the succession question in Travancore was settled in keeping with English interests. During this period the policy of the British was openly to interfere in the internal affairs of the country by putting pressure where persuasion failed.

When Munro came to Travancore in October 1810, he saw the country was in a state of anarchy and confusion, on account of the plots of rival factions, the evil effects of

¹⁰ Nagam Aiya, op.cit., Vol.I, pp.456-57.

the recent war, the heavy debts with which the sircar was burdened and the inability of the Government to cope with them.¹¹ The state had to pay a heavy debt to the Company towards the expenses incurred of the Madras Government consequent on the insurrection of Velu Tampi in 1808-9. Besides even the annual subsidy due to the Company had fallen into arrears.¹² According to the opinion of Munro, the country was full of abuses. This situation would be ameliorated, the attachment of the people secured and future commotions prevented by the justice, moderation and humanity of the Rani's government, acting under the immediate direction of the British Government.¹³

One of her earliest acts was the dismissal of the unpopular and corrupt Dewan Ummini Tampi and the appointment of Resident Col. Munro as Dewan also. His assumption of charge as Dewan, though sanctioned by the Madras and Bengal Governments, was disapproved by the Court of Directors, but by the time their despatch reached him only in 1814.¹⁴ His

¹¹ Mathew. I, 'Travancore a Hundred Years Ago', Kerala Society Papers, Vol.III, series.8.

¹² Yesudas, R.N., British Policy in Travancore, p.10.

¹³ Ibid., p.13.

¹⁴ Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyer, 'Col. Munro', Kerala Society Papers, Vol. II, Series 7, (November, 1931).

sole object in accepting the Dewanship also was to save the state from financial embarrassment and the resultant political annihilation. To the question put to him by the Select Committee of the House of Common as to whether Travancore would be better managed indirectly through a Dewan or directly by a Resident, he gave the following straight answer that while the native states retain possession of the Government of their territories it would be highly inexpedient that the Resident, should take charge of the administration; it is only in a case of great exigency that it would be necessary for the Resident to assume the direct management of affairs. He added that for the amelioration of the abuses existed and to secure the attachment of the people, direct interference of the British in the internal affairs of the country is essential.¹⁵ The Dewans during the period of the two Ranies with varying degrees drew their inspiration from and were profited by the advice given, the influence exerted, the example set, and even the fear infused by the Resident.

The Rani reposed full confidence in Col. Munro and the British Government. She stated that there was no other

¹⁵ Ibid.

institution or persons so truthful and justifiable as the English East India Company. Munro was ambitious and anxious to establish and maintain an efficient government and he worked hard to accomplish this objective. He sought to introduce in Travancore the system of administration which was in vogue in British India. The Rani also wished to establish the Government on a "solid basis of order, justice, moderation and good Government" and give protection to life and property to all classes of people.¹⁶ Munro also wanted to correct the abuses and corruption and kept the whole authority concentrated in his own hands.

Travancore became dependent on English East India Company even in its internal administration. But Munro treated Travancore as an ally.¹⁷ He defined his policy in the following words: "A severe and oppressive system of Government in Travancore had nearly destroyed the sources of its prosperity, and had imposed upon its inhabitants a character of immorality, idleness, deceit and turbulence

¹⁶ Col. Munro to the Chief Secretary to Government, Fort St. George dated Nagercoil, 7 March 1818 (Foreign Political Proceedings, Fort William, 17th July 1818, No. 20. F.30).

¹⁷ Rani to the Colonel, December, 1813 quoted in Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyar 'Col. Munro', Kerala Society Papers, Vol. II, November, 1931, Series 7, p.6.

which rendered them equally dangerous to their own Rajas and to the British power. Their history for many years exhibits a series of insurrections and crimes. The reformation of these evils has been a primary object of my policy."¹⁸

The combination of the powers of Resident and Dewan in Col. Munro gave him a free hand to use his zeal for social reform which was very much needed in Travancore.¹⁹ He stepped into the field of social reform to lay the foundation of a modern Travancore, entirely different from that of the past. He carried out reforms intended to lessen the power of local officers and leaders.²⁰ Then he built up a centralised form of administration conducted by the Dewan from headquarters with the co-operation of a staff of assistants of whom the most important were two Diwan Pishkars newly appointed.²¹ He withdrew the judicial functions from taluk officers, who had hitherto enjoyed

¹⁸ Col. Munro to the Chief Secretary to Government, Fort. St. George, dated Quilon 12 October 1812. (Foreign Political Proceedings Fort William, 10 January).

¹⁹ Yesudas, R.N., Col. John Munro in Travancore, p.13.

²⁰ Robbin Jeffery, The Decline of Nayar Dominance, p.6.

²¹ Nagam Aiya, op. cit., Vol. II, p.379.

civil and judicial powers. Munro renamed these officials as Tahsildars.²²

An important policy which Col. Munro pursued was to make the transaction of business both at the Huzur and subordinate offices as open and public as possible. Men of all parties were appointed to prevent their being united by common interest and check upon the proceedings of the authorities acting under the Resident.²³ In order to remove the confusion in administrative system, Munro abolished Pravartikars under him. The plan admitted of no evasion in complying with orders and the duties of Tahsildars being confined to the collection of land revenue. Thus Munro separated the revenue department from the judiciary in Travancore with commendable courage.²⁴ Munro also separated financial department from the Huzur. The former was invested with the function of maintaining a correct account of all receipts and disbursements, of examining and checking the expenditure of the state. He created the posts of a superintendent and a deputy superintendent of finances and ordered that no payments should be made from the treasury

²² Robbin Jeffery, op. cit.

²³ Yesudas, R.N., op.cit, p.22.

²⁴ Ibid.

without due authority and sanction. The bills for all payments with the exception of a few fixed charges should be prepared.²⁵

Munro had the distinction of being the most loved and venerated of the British Residents in Travancore. His idealism, resourcefulness in championing the cause of the common man and his extreme resentment against the privileges enjoyed by a few feudal barons were remarkable. Munro, the successor of Macaulay stood firm on the side of the missionaries. He was strong in his convictions and pledged himself to serve "the Almighty by spreading His Kingdom upon the earth".²⁶ Christianity receive great support and patronage at the official level during the dewanship of Col. Munro.²⁷

Munro was the first Resident who pleaded for the introduction of English education. He established schools at public expense in all the districts to impart English education.²⁸ He wrote, "The diffusion of English literature

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Velu Pillai, T.K., op. cit., Vol. I, p.726.

²⁷ Narayana Panikkar, R., History of Travancore, p.313.

²⁸ Parameswara Aiyer, S., op. cit.

among the people is one of the most effectual means of eradication of their errors, improving their minds and attaching them to the British Nation.²⁹ A well-organised system of education formed the basis for radical changes in future. This was essential for a society like the one which prevailed in 19th century Travancore. Education really changed the structure of society to make it more egalitarian. At the commencement of his government, Col. Munro launched a scheme of sending missionaries to train Syrian deacons and lads to start parochial schools.³⁰

Munro went a step further in urging the Company to adopt means for the establishment of Christianity on a firm basis. He was a far-sighted Englishman, who was deeply interested in the consolidation of British Power in India. And he perceived that the only practical way of raising the country from its miserable condition and of securing the blessings of good government lay in the firm establishment of British rule in the country.³¹

²⁹ Munro to Mar Thomas Metran, quoted in (C.M. Augur, Appendix, XVIII) 22 Dhanu, 991 M.E.

³⁰ William Logan, Malabar, p.208.

³¹ Yesudas, R.N., 'The English and the Christians of Kerala (1800-1826)', Journal of Kerala Studies, Vol. V, March, 1978.

The Christians of Kerala were in general loyal and therefore, Munro desired to attach them to British interests by giving them assistance and encouragement.³² In 1815, Munro issued an order permitting women converted to Christianity to cover their bosoms as obtained among Christians elsewhere and asked the local officers not to put obstacles on their wearing clothes over their breasts.³³ Munro, brought to an end a number of duties imposed upon the Christians.³⁴ A proclamation was issued in 1815 exempting Christians in Travancore from all duties and services connected with temples, uttupuras (feeding houses attached to temples for Brahmins) as well as requisitions of whatever nature connected with Hindu religion, and furnishing provisions to them and from rendering Uliyam (or gratuitous services) to the Government.³⁵

Munro also wanted the English authorities to liberalise their church, raise their social status, and to get help in

³² Ibid.

³³ Translation of a proclamation by Dewan Soopen Shangara Narayan to the Tahsildar of Kalkulam North District dated 13th Meenam, 990 regarding the inheritance of Christian converts and the dress of Christian women.

³⁴ Hunt, W.S., The Anglican Church in Travancore and Cochin, p.142.

³⁵ Letter to Col. Munro to the Most Reverend Mar Thomas Metran, dated 22 Dhanu 991 M.E., (in C.M. Augur, Appendix XVIII).

times of need. In his letter to the Chief Secretary to Government of Fort St. George, Munro emphasised: "Those measures would soon restore the Syrians to the high station which they formerly occupied, education and knowledge would advance their industry and exertions and the British Government would receive in their grateful and devoted attachment on every emergency the reward due to its benevolence and wisdom."³⁶

There are instances of Syrians occupying positions of trust in the Travancore Government prior to the advent of the British. It was Col. Munro, who for the first time, employed a few in the Sircar, in the judicial and some other departments. This proved the tolerant policy of the Government.³⁷ Munro requested the missionaries to forward to him applications for employment in the government services of applicants. He made this arrangement with a view to help the missionaries to establish intimate connection with the Christ. While separating the judiciary from among the Revenue Department, he prescribed regulations for their

³⁶ Political Consultations, Fort St. George, 27th October, 1818, F. 1832.

³⁷ Augur, C.M., Church History of Travancore, p.18.

conduct and recruitment to the posts of judges that they should be persons of satus and known probity.³⁸

He procured the appointment of Christian judges in the courts of Travancore and Cochin to the protection and respectability of the Christians. But Munro experienced difficulty in procuring respectable and honest men to fill the situations of Christian judges to the several courts. Therefore, he decided to appoint missionaries as judges. He wrote that the appointment of an English missionary to that office would be attended with advantages to the cause of Christianity by the protection which it would afford to the Christians and by the credit which the wiser and impartial conduct of the judge would reflect on the religion that he professed.³⁹ The appointment of Christian judges, said Munro, "is important to the ends of justice, by its checking the partiality of the Nairs and Brahmins, it is useful in ensuring protection and support before the courts to the Christians, lower classes and was also useful in serving as a channel of direct communication between the courts and the

³⁸ Mathew, I., 'Travancore a Hundred Years Ago', Kerala Society Papers, Vol. II, Series 8.

³⁹ Yesudas, R.N., loc.cit, Journal of Kerala Studies.

Resident.⁴⁰ The close connection of Munro with the Christians and the Christian missions formed one of the most important factors for the establishment of Protestant Christianity in Travancore on firm foundations.⁴¹ Thus Christianity received the greatest support and patronage at the official level during the Dewanship of Col. Munro.⁴²

The greatest achievement of Munro was that he laid the foundation of British Paramountcy in Travancore. He declared it to be the duty of the British to advance the happiness of all, to watch and guide the conduct both of the prince and people and lead them in the way most conducive to their mutual security and happiness.

One of the most important events during the period of Munro's dewanship was the take over of the Devaswams by the Government (1811). Several temples possessed enormous wealth and property which were mismanaged by the Uralar (Executive Committee of the Temples, which consisted of mainly Brahmins). The Temple lands were given on pattam to the

⁴⁰ Col. Munro to the Chief Secretary to Government, Fort. St. George dated Nagercoil 7 March 1818 (Foreign Political Proceedings).

⁴¹ Order from Col. Munro to the Sarvadhī Karyakkars of Trivandrum and Neyyattinkara dated 17 Dhanu 988 M.E. (1812).

⁴² Narayana Panikkar, R., op. cit, p.313.

tenants for making provision for goods and services to the temples. There was corruption in renting temple properties also. Munro's order regarding the take over, stated that it was by virtue of its right as Melkoyma that the Government was taking over the management of the temples, to prevent their mismanagement.⁴³ The fact the revenue collection from the temples rose from Rs.2802 in 1807 to Rs.446600 in 1812-13 clearly showed that there was serious mismanagement. But the real intention of Munro in the take over was to clear the long standing and heavy arrears of subsidy payable to the British Government. The Madras Government, while posting him as the Resident has pointed out the necessity of paying off the subsidy arrears at the earliest. By making use of the excess income from the Temples, Munro was able to pay off the subsidy arrears within a short time.⁴⁴ Thus the mismanagement of Temple funds by the Uralar was conveniently utilised by Munro to take over the properties of the temples.

⁴³ Col. Munro's decree dated 3rd Kanni, 987 ME (1811), Huzur Central Vernacular Records, Trivandrum.

⁴⁴ Resident Munro to the Chief Secretary, Fort St. George, dated 26.7.1811.

Munro found that the people suffered greatly on account of the several oppressive cesses and fines, without the knowledge of the Government and decided that they must be abolished for the prosperity of the country. He brought the sufferings of the lower classes due to unjust exactions to the notice of the Rani and pointed out to her the need for the abolition of such taxes. The Rani also thought it improper to continue the existing inequalities and wanted her subjects to be happy and prosperous. Munro ordered that no subordinate should impose any fine without his knowledge. As the Resident and Dewan of Travancore, he brought peace and prosperity, and introduced a progressive administration, which helped the Rani to attain eminence and popularity. He started a reformation in the ideals of administration which earned for him the people's gratitude. The imperishable name he left in their hearts for justice and probity made even the ignorant peasant call him "Munro Sahib."

One of the great administrative measures of the period was the Revenue Settlement of 1812. Munro had the holdings measured, their taxes ascertained and recorded in pattas

(title deeds) issued to the ryots, so that each land-holder may know the revenue for which he is liable.⁴⁵

He took away the military and judicial functions of Revenue officers. He established separate courts for each taluk to hear disputes about the amounts entered in the 'pattas'.⁴⁶

There were a number of treasuries in Travancore. It generated confusion in the accounts and there were chances for public servants for embezzlement. They used the public money for their own good. To prevent the evil Munro abolished the unwanted treasuries and arrangements were made for the formation of the public treasury into a separate department. This department was placed under a man of respectable character named Chidambara Pillai. He was ordered not to issue money without bills signed by the superintendent of the finance department and counter signed by the Resident.⁴⁷ He discouraged the issue of money except for urgent services in the taluks and directed all the

⁴⁵ Mathew.I, op.cit., Kerala Society Papers.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ R.N. Yesudas, op.cit., p.23.

collections to be sent to the Hazur Kacheri at which accurate accounts were kept.

Munro was confronted with a government which was feudal in character.⁴⁸ The powers of feudal chieftains formed a bar to the progress of Travancore. He was not reluctant even to use extreme methods to suppress the authority and association of local feudal chieftains, who exercised undisputed sway over the people.⁴⁹ Their arrogance, the domineering attitude, with their inborn hatred and overbearing manners towards the lower classes irritated Munro. He was averse to give undue prominence to any one class over the other. The Pidagaikkars or village leaders of South Travancore exercised more authority over southern districts than the government. This proved rather a scourge and a curse than a blessing. If the council discovered that any individual violated or trespassed his caste rules and limits, it took the law unto its own hands and brought him to judgement and carried out everything in a high-handed manner. There were instances in which even capital punishment was inflicted by this council. The people had to bow before these

⁴⁸ Ibid., p.15.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p.25.

Pidagaikkar when they passed through the country. One day, when Munro was staying at Udayagiri fort this council entered the fort without permission, with their drums beating. Munro ordered his escort to break all their drums and staffs. They were made prisoners. Thus was destroyed a feudal assembly which acted as a superior court judging the manners and usages, habits and customs of the different classes of people for a very long time.⁵⁰ He abolished this assembly and other village and caste assemblies.⁵¹

The most significant duty of a government was the proper administration of justice, till the beginning of the 19th century justice was not equally administered in Travancore. The Brahmins and the Nairs, the privileged classes of Travancore, were exempt from punishments, for ordinary crimes.⁵² But severe punishments were inflicted on the lower classes even for slight faults. Munro who stood for the welfare of the poor people asked them to take their complaints to him directly for decision. The cases referred to the Karyakkar were not properly enquired into and when the grievances were not redressed the complaints returned to

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Augur. C.M, op.cit., pp.569-71.

⁵² Dames. M.L, (Tr.), The Book of Durate Barbosa, Vol.II, p.31.

Munro for his decision. He said, I heard the complaints of the people every day, and they crowded to me in thousands with representations of the most serious injuries.⁵³ It was difficult for him to hear all complaints. So, he thought of establishing a sound system for the proper administration of justice free from the interference of the Karyakkars. His scheme was approved by the Pandits and the Rani. To onforce this scheme, principal and subordinate courts were established for the cognisance of all matters of civil and criminal nature, connected with the administration of justice. Principal court consisted of the Dewan and three judges of whom two were to be Brahmins and the third a Nair. Subordinate courts were to contain three judges, viz; two Brahmins and the third a Nair. Separate provisions were laid down for deciding the cases, criminal and civil. He introduced a regular and permanent judicial system in the state and devised fixed rules for the same.⁵⁴

The Rani felt great satisfaction at the measures adopted by Munro for the speedy decision of the complaints of the people and to award impartial justice. But she was

⁵³ Col. Munro to the Chief Secretary to Government, Fort. St. George, dated Nagarcoil, March, 1818, (For. Pol. Proc.).

⁵⁴ Ibid.

not in favour of the abolition of the trial by ordeal. Therefore a clause was inserted to the effect that trial by ordeal might be used in particular cases with the express sanction of Dewan.⁵⁵ He also established five Zilla courts and a court of appeal at Trivandrum. A Huzur court was also established for the trial and punishment of government servants. Munro says "the courts during the first year of their proceedings sentenced to death several Nairs of high rank for atrocious and cruel murders, which under old system would have gone unnoticed." Deportation was the severest punishment inflicted on the Brahmins. Complaints were received and acted upon speedily the people irrespective of their caste and position enjoyed the right to address the Dewan, a privilege they liberally exercised. Thus Munro effected a revolution with regard to the administration of justice in Travancore.⁵⁶

Munro had great concern for public officers and he considered their welfare as his welfare. Corporal punishment was introduced by Munro in the case of erring public servants and that also was to improve and not to

⁵⁵ Col. Munro to the Chief Secretary to Govt., Fort St. George dated Padanilam, 10th October 1811. F.89.

⁵⁶ Yesudas. R.N,op.cit., p.36.

destroy them. The servants so punished were not dismissed but were asked to continue and work on right lines.⁵⁷ These policies of Munro removed from the minds of the government servants who once exercised vast powers, the hatred towards the British and made them whole-heartedly support the British cause and submit before the new rulers willingly.⁵⁸

To Rani Lakshmi Bai of Travancore, Munro became the saviour who protected the state when it was in serious peril. She wrote: "you conciliated the attachment and respect of the people; you paid the debts of the state to the amount of more than twentyfive lakhs of rupees and you preserved inviolate all the ancient institutions for religious worship and public charity; you realised the duties of the state, and, materially increased its revenue without augmenting any imposts or taxes, and after accomplishing all these beneficial objects you obtained the authority of the Government according to my desire for the appointment of a Dewan pursuant to former usages."⁵⁹ Within a few years he had by cautious, enlightened, and liberal

⁵⁷ Nagam Aiya. V, op.cit., p.461.

⁵⁸ Yesudas. R.N, op.cit., p.39.

⁵⁹ Rani Lakshmi Bai to Col. Munro, July 1814. For. Pol. Proc., Fort William, F. 34.

policies thrust Travancore on a new course. His period was one of great activity and progress to which the people trace the origin of everything good in the state and considered it the golden age of Travancore. He used his power for the political and social regeneration of the state. To the people of Travancore he was a symbol of Travancore's social awakening and the outstanding spokesman of equality and freedom. He heralded a new society liberal, humanist and egalitarian. As an enlightened administrator, he had brought forward important reforms and changes in Travancore. Above all he was a man who, with all his mind and heart loved Travancore and her people. And they, in turn, were indulgent to him and gave him their love most abundantly and extravagantly.⁶⁰

After the modernisation of administration and the practical recognition of English as official language of the state, a number of English-educated Christians were appointed in the top offices of the state. In addition to these sircar services, a number of English educated Christians entered the profession of teaching, law, medicine and industry. The emergence of new economic forces, the

⁶⁰ Yesudas. R.N, Op.cit., p.57.

spread of English education and the impact of western ideas had considerably helped the Christian community. At the same time Nayers and other upper caste Hindus did not share in the new economic gains, as they lacked experience in trade, industry and commerce. The Christians did not have to face severe competition from the traditionally-privileged sections of society in the changed economic atmosphere. This accelerated their material advantage in Travancore. The Christians who controlled the entire banking business and printing press had practically monopolised trade, commerce and industry.⁶¹ All these factors helped Christians to produce a strong middle class in Travancore.

Munro was the first Resident who established the fact that a Resident had a mission to perform in an enlightened way. "The natural tendency and bias of the Government leads to cruelty and oppression and this must be counteracted by the moderate and wise, but vigilant form and unremitting exertion of the Resident's influence and counsels. On this depends in a great degree the efficiency of the whole system." His administration thus conferred numerous

⁶¹ Chandra Mohan, 'Christian Middle class and their fight for Civic Right in Travancore', in felicitation volume of Prof. L.M. Pylee.

benefits to the state and the people. Munro was a great administrative genius as well as a social reformer. His wide vision, penetrating insight into the problems of Travancore and a keen determination to solve them made him the father of progressive Travancore. He used his power for the political and social regeneration of the state. All arrangements towards that end were invariably explained to the rulers and received their consent and approbation before implementing them to avoid obstacles in the way.

Col. Munro who had laid down the duties of the office of the Dewan even in the earlier reign continued to give the new Regent his advice and support. She was served by native Dewans who followed in the foot-steps of Munro and tried their utmost to improve the administration. The period also saw the phenomenal increase in the Christian population as a result of the work of Christian missions which received the patronage of the British Resident and through him of the Rani.

During the regency of Rani Parvati Bai, Travancore became completely subservient to the British. Munro who relinquished the post of Diwan in 1814 continued to guide the administration of the State till he laid down the office

of the Resident in 1818. It was with his support she introduced many progressive reforms in Travancore. She discussed each and every aspect of the administration with Munro and obtained his consent. The suggestions made by Munro were passed without any deviation. Thus indirectly, at that time, the administration was carried on by the British.

According to the recommendation of Col. Munro, Raman Menon was appointed as Dewan. Earlier, it was decided to appoint Subbayan Sankara Narayana Aiyar as Dewan. But the decision of Col. Munro was put into effect. Here, the British interest was protected. Likewise at the suggestion of the Resident Captain Gordon of the Bombay Engineers was appointed as commercial agent at Alleppy. The Dewan criticised certain proceedings taken by Gordon. This led to a misunderstanding between the Dewan and the Resident. Dewan Peishcar Reddy Row, one of Col. Munro's dependents, took advantage of the opportunity and planned to oust Raman Menon and get the Dewanship for himself.⁶² Col. Munro suggested to the Rani to re-introduce Dalawa post and to appoint Raman Menon as Dalawa with reduced salary and powers. This reform

⁶² N~~o~~gam Aiya, op.cit., Vol.I, p.476.

came into effect in 1817. This incident showed the full control of the British upon Travancore. Raman Menon however resigned. Meanwhile, in the middle of 1819 A.D. Col. Munro retired and Col. McDowall was appointed as Resident in the same year. He came with a Brahmin protege, named Venkita Row, who was appointed as the Dewan Peishcar of Travancore. Diwan Peishcar Venkitta Row tried to ingratiate himself in to the good books of the new Resident. It was the fear that without the support of the Resident no one can become a Dewan or continue as a Dewan. Such was the situation at that time. Col. McDowall died in 1820 and Col. Mc Newall succeeded him as Resident. Dewan Peischcar Vencata Row who was only waiting for an opportunity to overthrow the minister with the help of Raman Menon worked for the Dewan's fall. In 1821 the dewan Reddy Rao accepted Sampur and vatakara two villages as jagir from the Rani. Venkata Rao pointed out it to the new Resident as improper and unbecoming as a responsible adviser to the sovereign. The resident was of the same view and after a careful investigation called upon the Dewan to surrender the jagir. This proved the fact that even the Dewans were under the control of the Residents.

Col. Munro wrote about the state of Christianity in Travancore to Madras Government in 1816 as follows: "The temporal situation of the Syrians has also been materially improved. I have frequently taken occasion to bring them to the notice of Her Highness the Ranee of Travancore; and her intelligent, liberal and ingenious mind has always appeared to feel a deep interest in their history, misfortunes and character. She is aware of the attention excited to their situation in Europe and her anxiety to manifest the sincerity of her attachment to the British Nation has formed, I believe, an additional motive for the kindness and generosity she has uniformly displayed towards the Syrians. She has appointed a considerable number of them to public offices, and presented the sum of 20,000 to the College at Kottayam as an endowment for its support."⁶³

In 1822, when Venkitta Rao was the Dewan, Christian missions were given full facilities to carry on their evangelising activities. Land and timber were supplied for the erection of churches. The London Mission Society was given all help to carry on its activities at Alleppey and Kottayam. A tract of land in Quilon district called 'Munro

⁶³ Ibid., p.476.

Turuth' (Island) was given for the specific purpose of promoting education among the Syrian Christians. Rani had done all these, not because of her liberal mind, but it was to satisfy British Government.

In 1817 Rani Parvati Bai informed the Madras Government that the re-organization of the Devaswams which was done by Col. Munro was working in an extremely satisfactory way.⁶⁴ She wrote to the Madras Government about the extremely satisfactory manner in which the reorganisation of Devaswoms was working in the state, and the Madras Government stated in reply that it gave them great pleasure to read that letter.⁶⁵

Rani Parvati Bai in her letter to Munro, gave a detailed account of the condition of the courts that existed in Travancore before the arrival of Munro in the country. "The complaints, the grievances and disputes of the people were heard and settled by the revenue officers whose decision were often not fair and afforded additional means

⁶⁴ Col. Munro to Chief Secretary to Govt., Fort. St. George, dated 7 March 1818. For. Pol. Proc., Fort William, 17th July 1818-No.20, Ff. 61-64.

⁶⁵ Document No.VII. Ulloor. S. Parameswara Aiyer, 'Col. Munro' Kerala Society Papers, Vol. II, Series 7.

of corruption, bribery and oppression, and as the revenue servants had neither leisure nor integrity to perform their duties as judges, the complaints of people increased every day."⁶⁶

Though many of the regulations and rules were promulgated at the instance of the Resident himself, there were several important measures which originated direct from Her Highness. There were occasions when the Rani did not agree with, and even found fault with the Colonel. On one occasion, when she heard of a rumour regarding some attempt on the part of the Colonel to put limitations on royal amenities, she wrote that she was the ruler of the state and that her wishes based on precedents must prevail.

Thus during the period of Rani Parvati Bai, no new developments took place in Travancore. The reforms introduced by Col. Munro, continued with out any deviation. It was at the time of these two Ranees, the British got the opportunity to tighten their grip on Travancore administration.

⁶⁶ Col. Munro to the Chief Secretary to Government, Fort St. George, dated Nagercoil. 7 March 1818, For. Pol. Proc. Fort William.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS BETWEEN
TRAVANCORE
AND THE COMPANY (1829-1860)

Sugeetha. B “British-Travancore relations upto 1947 ” Thesis. Department of
History , University of Calicut, 1997

CHAPTER V

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS BETWEEN TRAVANCORE AND THE COMPANY (1829-1860)

The political situation in Travancore in the early part of the 19th century was mainly determined by the relationship of the two Ranis with the English East India Company. The Company cleverly elevated their status from that of an ally into that of the sovereign power. Events between 1784 and 1834 showed that it was hardly possible to govern India from England; yet the influence of the Home Government on British Indian policy was profound. During the period, they claimed sovereignty upon Travancore and made the kingdom fully depend on them.

Dalhousie's policy of Doctrine of Lapse and the argument that the Company possessed the right to interfere in the internal affairs of the states helped to strengthen the British hold and weaken the powers of the Princes. In 1841, the Court of Directors enunciated the policy of not abandoning any occasion for accession of territory or revenue.¹ In the proclamation of Queen Victoria in 1857, it

¹ Elemkath, K.R., Dewan Nanoo Pillai, p.15.

was declared that they would rule India taking into consideration the feelings of all the people of India. Consequently by the Charter Act of 1858, when the Crown assumed the governance of India, the British followed the policy of consolidating the gains of the preceding century. But throughout the period the policy of the British government towards the princely states was evolved more by the exigencies of the time and circumstance rather than by the result of deliberate planning.²

With the accession of Swati Tirunal Rama Varma in 1829, commenced a period of tussle between the Raja and the Resident. The Raja was "a man of strong will and firm determination" and from the very outset he was anxious to choose his own Dewan, instead of being dictated to by the Resident. He was fortunate in receiving the kingdom from the hands of the Rani in the most flourishing condition, the result of the judicious administration of the last eighteen years by his mother, Rani Lakshmi Bai, and his aunt Rani Parvati Bai. Even though the Raja demanded the reduction of the subsidiary force stationed in Travancore, for various reasons he wanted to retain the Resident and his staff at

² Menon, V.P., Transfer of Power in India, p.1.

least for some more time to come". Three years later, the subsidiary force was withdrawn.³

The political situation and the policy of the British during this period is very significant. At this time, the period of alliance and the creation of Indian states may be said to have practically come to an end.⁴ But the period from the retirement of the Marquis of Hastings to the Mutiny is of great importance to Indian states as it witnessed the gradual growth of the authority of the Residents in the matter of internal administration. During this period, one of the administrative developments was that the Residents of the Company at Indian courts were transformed from diplomatic agents into controlling officers of a superior Government.⁵

The Resident's powers soon began to increase. They became virtually the rulers of the state. The firm conviction of the Governor General that the whole of India was bound in course of time to fall under the direct rule of

³ Stuart, A.J., M.C.S., Manual of the Tinnevelly District in the Presidency of Madras, p.

⁴ Panikkar, K.M., The Evolution of British Policy towards Indian States, p.53.

⁵ Ibid., pp.57-58.

the Company found expression in many ways. The policy of internal reform to which Bentinck devoted his earnest attention gave him little time to the consideration of questions affecting Indian states and it was not till the time of Lord Auckland that a definite policy of annexation was laid down as a principle to guide the relationship of the Company with the princely states.

Cornwallis who had interefered in states affiars in the early part of his rule, argued for non-interference in his later letters and despatches.⁶ But it had soon to be given up. The inexorable necessities of self-defence led Lord Hastings to change the non-interference policy.⁷ By 1830, the policy of non-interference had been definitely given up.⁸ Instead of acting the role of an Ambassador, the Resident assumed the function of a dictator. He interfered even in their internal affairs, countenanced refractory subjects against them and made the most ostentatious exhibition of this exercise of authority.⁹ The Company, when they formed

⁶ Cornwallis to Lord Lake, Aug. 28, 30, 1805, 1st September 1806 Correspondence, edited by Ross, Vol. II, p.

⁷ Papers relating to war of 1819 presented to Parliament, Lord Hasting's Despatch.

⁸ Ruthna Swamy, Some Influences that Made the British Administrative System in India, p.588.

⁹ Basu, B.D., Rise of the Christian Power in India, p.35.

political alliances with the native powers, entered into treaties with them.

The early 20th century was a period of 'New imperialism'. England's 19th century role as "the workshop of the world" and increasingly as a major source of overseas capital investment must also be analysed in relation to her Indian empire. There was no one among the Indian rulers in the period between 1818 and 1857 who stood out as a statesman or even as a moderately able prince. It was not their fault. In all the states where the Company was accustomed to intervene in their internal affairs, they had systematically followed the policy of nominating the Dewans and maintaining them in authority. In Travancore and Cochin also the principle was officially laid down that the Rajas could not remove their Dewans without the sanction of the Madras Government. From the time of the Travancore Rebellion in 1809, to the time of Sir T. Madhava Rayar, the State Dewans were generally, agents of the Residents.¹⁰ The effects of this system were thus described by Sir. Henry Lawrence in an article in the Calcutta Review of Jan, 1848: "If ever there was a device for ensuring malgovernment, it

¹⁰ Panikkar, K.M., op. cit, pp.110-11.

is that of native ruler and minister both directed by a British Resident. Even when all the three are able, virtuous and considerate, still the wheels of government would hardly move smoothly."¹¹

The policies and future prospects of Travancore were at the mercy of the Residents.¹² It was at this period that General Cullen came to Travancore as Resident. The interference of the Company reached its climax at the time of General Cullen. Swati Tirunal was very unfortunate in his dealings with the paramount power. His decision to appoint his tutor Subba Row as Dewan met with opposition from Rani Parvati Bai and Col. Morrison, the Resident. Swati Tirunal without taking into account their disagreement, appointed Subba Rao as Dewan. This appointment was misrepresented to the Madras Government by the Resident, Col. Morrison. The unfavourable report of the Resident about the new ruler necessitated the visit of Lushington, the Governor of Madras. He observed: "Our relations with the state of Travancore therefore appear to us as they existed at the

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Pereira, J.E.A., 'Travancore, A Critical Survey and an Introspection into her future' in Sreedharan, K.P., (ed.), Travancore Re-born, p.29.

date of your most recent communications have been by no means satisfactory".¹³

Since the visit of the Governor, there arose certain differences of opinion between the Resident and the Raja. In 1837 on charges of corruption, Dewan Subba Row was removed from service and next year Venkita Row, the former Dewan, was appointed. But the new Dewan had the misfortune to fall out with Col. Douglas, the then acting Resident.¹⁴ So the dewan by knowing that it would be difficult to carry on the administration in the face of the Resident's displeasure, resigned his office in 1838.¹⁵ This showed that without satisfying the Resident's interests, no one could rule the Kingdom. The Dewan could not wield his power. The Ex-Dewan Subba Row was now reinstated as he enjoyed the confidence of Col. Douglas, the Resident. The self-conceit, of the Resident by changing the Dewan as and when he wished was to make certain their complete control upon the state.

¹³ The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala, The Regional Records - Survey Committee, Kerala State, Trivandrum, Vol. I, p.15.

¹⁴ Shungoony Menon, History of Travancore, p.420.

¹⁵ Velu Pillai, T.K., Travancore State Manual, Vol. II, p.

Swati Tirunal was very much worried by these events. The strained relations between the British and the Raja, took a serious turn during the Residency of Col. William Cullen. He came to Travancore in 1840. From the very beginning the Maharaja found a bitter enemy in General Cullen. Because of the deafness of Cullen, Swati Tirunal avoided interviews with him. So the Resident was angry with him. His feelings were embittered towards the Maharaja by the intrigues of Krishna Row, a close associate of the Resident which created more problems.¹⁶ Even then the Maharaja appointed Krishna Rao as Deputy Peishkar. But he wished to become Dewan by ousting Subba Row from office. He reported to the Resident that the Raja was solely acting on the advice of the Dewan.¹⁷ Cullen began to interfere in the day-to-day administration of the Kingdom. He began to find fault with the Dewan on various scores in order to remove him from office. The Resident wrote to the Madras Government that the Dewan had spent "unusual sums of money for unusual purposes" and introduced changes in the administration

¹⁶ Raja to Marquis of Tweeddale, Governor of Madras, 21 June 1843. Proceedings of Governor in Council 22 Aug, No.333 (Political Consultations, Vol. 370).

¹⁷ Letter from the Dewan of Cochin to the Resident enclosed in Resident's letter to Clark, 5 Jan, 1843 (Pol. Cons. Vol. 364).

without consulting the Resident, contrary to the earlier conventions.¹⁸ As a protest against the high-handed actions of the Resident, the Dewan resigned. The decision of the Resident and the Government of Madras on that issue once again proved beyond doubt that the Dewan of Travancore should enjoy the confidence of the Resident, if he wanted to continue in office.

The Raja promoted Krishna Row to the post of Dewan Peishkar. But the Resident was adamant. He was of the opinion that the presence of Subba Row in Travancore would really be an embarrassment to his successors, as he was influential in the palace and official circles.¹⁹ On the other hand Cullen defended his protege before the Madras Government. In official matters the Maharaja had been pushed into the background completely and Cullen's authority was absolute.²⁰ All Sirkar appointments required the Resident's approval.²¹

¹⁸ Resident to Thomas, Acting Chief Secretary to Government of Madras, 10th March, (Pol. Cons, Vol. 3720).

¹⁹ Proceedings of Governor in Council.

²⁰ Robbin Jeffery, The Decline of Nayar Dominance, p.43.

²¹ Shungoony Menon, op.cit., p.359.

The Resident demanded the removal of Subba Row from Travancore as early as possible. But the Raja did not want to insult his tutor. So the Raja dismissed Krishna Row and asked him to leave Trivandrum Immediately.²² In a letter to the Governor of Madras he severely criticised the activities of Cullen in Travancore and condemned the dealings of Krishna Row. He complained that the Resident's interference in the administration of the Kingdom was against the interest of the Raja.²³ Cullen was eagerly waiting for an opportunity to take revenge upon the King. So at this juncture, Cullen reported to the Madras Government that Subba Row was interfering in the administration of Travancore against British interests. The Madras Government admitted the complaints of Cullen and the Raja was asked to remove Subba Row permanently from Travancore.²⁴ The decision on this issue from Cullen as well as from the Madras Government once again revealed the fact that it is impossible to continue as a Dewan, if he disagreed with the orders of the Resident.

²² Raja to Marquis of Tweeddale, Governor of Madras, 21 June, 1843, (Pol. Cons. Vol. 370).

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Nagam Aiya, Travancore State Manual, Vol. I, p. 497.

Throughout this period, the Company stood forth as the suzerain who had the authority as well as the power to depose rulers and interfere in all details of internal administrations. It was clear that all the states in subordinate alliance surrendered their external relations to the Company. But even here a policy of interference developed, by which the Company assumed rights to regulate succession, to refuse or recognise adoption, to suggest methods for better government and in general to advise the rulers.²⁵ In the states closely allied to the Company, the political authorities regulated succession as a matter of practice. But in the states which were recognised to be in independent alliance, a different policy was followed. In such a State British Government did not pretend to have any right to control or regulate succession to the musnad.

Cullen not only managed British policy with Travancore but also initiated and interfered in its administrative policies. Almost all aspects administration, even to minute details were attended to by him. He even called for statements about the quantity of raw and boiled rice received by individuals from the Government. But the Raja

²⁵ Ibid., p.496.

wanted to administer the kingdom independently of the persistent interference from the Resident. He was not ready to surrender his rights to the British. However all his protests against the unbearable interference of the Resident, fell on deaf ears. Disgusted with this situation and oppressed by a feeling of blasted hopes, Swati Tirunal gave himself upto a life of pious meditation.

Swati Tirunal, was indignant at the ever increasing interference of Cullen. As his hatred towards the Resident increased day by day, his servants feared even to spell the name Cullen before him. It was at this period that Lord Hey, son of Madras Governor Marquis Twedale visited Travancore. The Maharaja by respecting the words of his father and brother allowed him to have a visit.²⁶ The Raja turned his attention to worship and prayers. Cullen exploited the silence of the Maharaja and unnecessarily interfered in the powers that came under the perview of the King.

The Raja was very adamant in his opinion that the Dewan should stand for the interest of the King and not of the Resident. This was evident, when Cullen was living in

²⁶ Shungoony Menon, op.cit., p.394.

Cochin in 1845, the Dewan Reddy Row who succeeded Subba Row made a tour to the northern districts of Quilon and Paravoor. He received many presents from Anantha Ramayyan, the Dewan of Cochin. When he returned to Trivandrum, the Dewan was ordered either to resign or to give an explanation. Following his resignation Sreenivasa Row was appointed as Dewan Peishkar. Sreenivasa Row failed as an able administrator as the financial position of the Kingdom was deteriorating. At this juncture, Cullen demanded the immediate payment of the arrears of subsidy. By realising the worsening situation, the Maharaja decided to put an end to all quarrels with Cullen. He called his brother, told him to appoint Krishna Row again for the progress of administration as well as the approbation of Cullen. The Raja told Krishna Row "from this day you are my servant not cullen's." This was his last appointment.

During the 18 years rule of Swati Tirunal, the relation between Travancore and the British centred round the question of paramountcy. The king as well as the Resident wished to be the sovereign of the kingdom. The rivalry between the king and the Resident, reached its climax when Cullen reached here. Before the arrival of Cullen, Swati

Tirunal introduced many remarkable reforms with the support of Residents. The people of Travancore, except the privileged classes, considered British rule as a divine dispensation. The people ceased to be interested in their state, in its glories, responsibilities and virtues or vices. The co-operation and cordiality of the people made the British consider Travancore the "most peaceful and least affected of our native allies."²⁷ Regarding the question of withdrawal of the subsidiary force from Travancore Col.Morrison wrote to the Madras Government: "These people indeed are in general attached to us, aware that it is only from our influence in the country that they can expect to be protected from the tyranny of their own Government..."²⁸

Swati Tirunal was succeeded by Utram Tirunal Marthanda Varma. He was a silent spectator to the tussle between Swati Tirunal and the Resident. He was not prepared to resist the interference of either the Resident or the Government of Madras in the affairs of Travancore when he became the ruler of the kingdom in 1847, he tried to avoid

²⁷ Col. Morrison, Report on the affairs of Travancore, Foreign political Consultations, 23 July, 1830, No.18.

²⁸ Report from Col. Morrison on the expediency of reducing the subsidiary force stationed in Travancore. For. Pol. Cons, 23 July, 1830, No.15.

confrontation with the Resident. So he confirmed Krishna Row as Dewan. Through a letter he expressed his willingness to listen to the "judicious counsel and advice of his esteemed friend Major General Cullen and the British Government."²⁹ This change of policy reduced the friction between the Resident and Raja.

During his reign the Resident, the Maharaja and the Dewan pulled together as a team. The result was that the administration went on smoothly. In 1850's in Travancore it was one thing to issue orders and another to have them carried out. Cullen's orders were continually flouted either by Krishna Row's machinations or impotence.³⁰ Regardless of what the Resident or Dewan ordered Sirkar servants did what they pleased.³¹ Cullen complained "I shall be obliged to insist on the suspension or dismissal of sirkar officials who wilfully neglect the Dewan's orders".³² The Madras Government later observed the degree of

²⁹ Raja to Marquis of Tweeddale, Governor of Madras, April, 1847, Cover file No.16020.

³⁰ Robin Jeffery, op.cit., p.43.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Cullen to Krishna Row, 25th May, 1853, Madras Residency Records, Vol.IX.

interference exercised by the representative of the British Government has now become so large as to fix the credit or discredit of the administration principally on the British Government.³³

The locality of Dewans became an issue during the period of Uttram Tirunal Marthanda Varma. The British Government wanted the Raja to absorb native talents into their service especially for the highest executive posts. The Raja on the other hand preferred to appoint Brahmins from outside the Kingdom, because of the bitter experience during the Dewanship of Raja Kesavadas and Velu Tampi. It was during their Dewanship, the country fell into British hands. This resulted in crippling the freedom of action of the Raja and disarming the people and the kingdom.³⁴ So it is quite natural for the Rajas of Travancore to prefer outsiders who had no roots in the kingdom. That was the reason why Swati Tirunal preferred Subba Row and marthanda Varma relied on T. Madhva Row. The policy of the British in

³³ Memorandum of Walter Elliott, n.d, Madras Political Proceedings, 15th March, 1859, Vol.XLIII, p.286.

³⁴ Chaudhuri. S.B, Civil Disturbance during British Rule in India, 1765-1857, pp.132-7.

supporting the appointment of native Dewans was to associate natives with the administration and thereby lessen the hostility and suspicion of the natives against the Company.

Following the resignation of Dewan Subba Row in 1842, the Resident strongly supported the claims of Dewan Peishkar Kesava Pillai. The Resident was against the appointment of Reddy Row as he foresaw that his appointment would lead to an influx of greedy Maratha Brahmins to Travancore. But the Government of Madras overruled the objections of the Resident and sanctioned the appointment of Reddy Row. This revealed the fact that the policy of the British Government towards Travancore was Mainly controlled by the Madras Government and not by the Residents.

The financial administration of the Kingdom was another important factor in the British relations with Travancore. By 1818, practically, the whole of India outside the Punjab passed under British authority. With the complete divorce of commercial activities, the Company became more and more interested in the development of India as a market for British goods and as a producer of raw material for British factories. The Company began to interest itself in the economic development of India.

According to the treaty of 1805, the Governor-General-in Council has the power to bring part or parts of the Kingdom under the direct management to ensure the payment of subsidy promptly. The advice of the British in matters of economy and the collection of revenue must be obeyed by the Raja. Actually this is the surrender of the important aspect of sovereignty to a colonial power. This loss of political freedom, affected the economic growth and financial prospects of Travancore. In 1847 Travancore was threatened with annexation for its disregard of the advice of the Government of Madras.³⁵ The Dewan used to advise the Raja to invest more money for the development of agriculture and they were interested only paying subsidy regularly to the Company to avoid the displeasure of the British. This naturally arrested economic growth.

Trade relations during the period, was connected with the political situation of the Kingdom. Marthanda Varma and Rama Varma had skilfully linked pepper trade with politics of their time to their advantage. The loss of political power by the treaty of 1805 was detrimental to the trade

³⁵ Despatches from England, 14 April, Vol.14. No.2.

interests of the kingdom also. Under weak rulers and incompetent Dewans the system of the Sirkar monopoly on pepper had deteriorated.

The Sirkar monopoly on pepper in Travancore was abolished in 1860. The history of the sirkar monopoly on pepper from 1743 to 1860 underwent three definite stages. From the inception of that system in 1743 up to the conclusion of the subsidiary alliance in 1805, the kingdom enjoyed monopoly in buying pepper from cultivators. From 1805 to 1813 the Kingdom retained its former position as the sole agency to collect pepper. At the same time the English East India Company emerged as the sole purchaser of pepper from the Government of Travancore. But the Charter Act of 1813 deprived the Company of its monopoly in Indian trade. This system underwent radical changes from 1813 to 1860 when the sirkar monopoly on pepper was abolished. The free-trade policy of the British Government compelled the kingdom to abandon its right of monopoly in pepper trade in 1860.

The sirkar monopoly on pepper had begun from the time of Marthanda Varma. Das Gupta says in the wake of the boom Malabar saw the remarkable expansion of the little state of Venad called Travancore, which established an iron monopoly

in all kinds of trade and changed the traditional ways of the coast.³⁶ By the rise of Travancore under Mathanda Varma, the English East India Company gained much. The English factory at Anjengo was the main purchaser of pepper. In the subsequent years Raja Kesava Das settled the finance and trade of Travancore in such a way as to enable him to play a leading role in the war against Mysore. Several commodities were brought under state monopoly and sold to the highest bidders. The English East India Company demanded that the expenses of their military force should be met either in cash or in pepper. In the pepper contract of 1793 between the Raja and the English East India Company it was agreed that the Raja should supply pepper to the Bombay Government for ten years in return for arms and European goods.³⁷

The initial phase of the new economic policy laid down by Travancore rulers excluded all foreigners to trade with the natives and all producers were asked to sell the products to the Government at cheap price. K.M. Panikkar

³⁶ Das Gupta, Malabar in Asian Trade 1740-1800, p.4.

³⁷ Mclean, Manual of the Administration of the Madras Presidency, Vol.II, p.35.

described that "the trade and economic policy of Travancore was a crude kind of state enterprise".³⁸

It was a gross exploitation of the people; but the cultivators did not realise the loss to them because the land tax collected from them was very low.³⁹ By the treaty of 1805, the state lost its initiative and independence in trade-relations. The English East India Company became the sole purchaser of pepper and the monopoly of pepper trade fell into their hands. The Charter Act of 1813 abolished the English East India Company's monopoly of Indian trade, which had moulded the character of Indo-British commerce for two hundred years. As an impact of this system private merchants now took the place of the Company in the organisation of British trade with Travancore. The Company became the promoter of free-trade.

The trade of British India had been freed by the charter Act of 1848. But Travancore did not come within the scope of this enactment as it was an Indian state. When the products of Travancore landed in British ports, were charged with import duty and vice versa. Gradually the

³⁸ Panikkar. K.M, A History of Kerala, 1498-1801, p.418.

³⁹ Mark Wills, 'On Landed property of India, The Indian Economist, 21 Jan. 1873, Vol.IV, No.2.

trade was shifted to Cochin.⁴⁰ As a result of this, the inconveniences and difficulties of the cultivator increased and their financial condition worsened. No purchase of pepper had been made from the cultivators from 1845 to 1849.⁴¹

William Cullen the Resident of Travancore brought the illegal traffic in pepper and tobacco to the notice of the Collector of Malabar and the Government of Madras.⁴² The Government of Madras also requested the Travancore Government to adopt measures for the suppression of smuggling either inwards or outwards.⁴³ They considered the existing system of monopoly as a practice which violated principles of free trade of the contemporary period. Thus it was clear that the Government of Madras was really interested not in maintaining the interests of the native kingdoms but only to safeguard British interests alone. When the Resident realised the real intentions of the

⁴⁰ Aitchison, C.U. A Collection of Treaties, Vol. X p.198.

⁴¹ Shungoony Menon, op.cit., p.416.

⁴² Resident to the Collector of Malabar, 6 April 1853, Cover file No.15121.

⁴³ Minutes of consultation Extract, 26 August, 1853, Cover file No. 15121.

Government of Madras, he began to insist on the abolition of Sirkar monopoly on pepper. So, the Resident wrote a letter to the Dewan of Travancore insisting on the expediency of abolishing the pepper monopoly altogether and immediately.⁴⁴ The Government of Bombay solicited the interference of the Government of India to procure the abolition or modification of the system of monopoly which prevailed in Travancore.⁴⁵ In order to assess the total production he called for a statement showing the quantity of pepper sold by the Travancore state and pepper smuggled into British Cochin.⁴⁶ By realising the gravity of the situation Dewan Krishna Row agreed to enhance the payment to the cultivators.⁴⁷ But Krishna Rao was against the abolition of Government monopoly on pepper as detrimental to the best interests of the sirkar.

Between 1844 to 1854 smuggling of pepper into British Cochin increased. The rise in price encouraged smuggling. In 1845 the Government purchased 6232 candies. In 1853-54 smuggling exceeded more than the quantity collected by the

⁴⁴ Resident to the Dewan, 20, Augu, 1855, No.15841, ~~15841~~.

⁴⁵ Bombay chamber of commerce to Government of India, 13 Sep. 1855, Cover file No. 15121.

⁴⁶ The Resident to the Dewan, 28 January, 1856.

⁴⁷ The Dewan to the Resident, 8 March, 1856.

Government i.e, 3385 candies and 2649 candies respectively. The question of abolishing sirkar monopoly continued during the Residency of Maltby also. In a personal interview with C. Traveledyan, he was asked the question of abolishing monopolies in Travancore.⁴⁸ He found that the quantity of pepper supplied between 1815 to 1853 was 4307 candies and the average from 1853 to 1857 was only 2224 candies. This showed that, the existence of Government monopoly on pepper had arrested its production and demoralised trade.⁴⁹ On the basis of a masterly report about pepper trade, he requested the Government of Madras to advise the Raja of Travancore to abolish sirkar monopoly on trade and to introduce 20 percent duty on export.⁵⁰ The Court of Directors considered that government monopoly on pepper was not profitable and oppressive to the people. So, they thought of abolishing the sirkar monopoly.⁵¹ The proposal put forward by the Resident was approved by the Government of Madras. In November 1860 the Government of Travancore issued a

⁴⁸ Bourdillon. A.J.D, A Brief Statement of the Principal Measure of Sir. Charles Traveledyan's Administration, Madras, p.57.

⁴⁹ Maltby. F.N, to Pycroft, No.14, 20 Feb, 1860, Coverfile No.15121.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Despatches from England, 17 Nov. 1860, Vol.16, No.20.

proclamation abolishing the sirkar monopoly and it was substituted by an export duty as envisaged in the order of the Government of India.⁵²

Thus during this period, through the policy of interference the Government of India, abolished the state monopoly of Travancore which they enjoyed since the days of Marthanda Varma. Through this, English East India Company could control the trade in Travancore. Even this policy of interference was not consistently followed. The Government of the Company watched with indifference misrule in many states. This is proved by the fact that from the time of the Marquis of Hastings up to the Mutiny all Governors-General were convinced that the assumption of direct rule by the Company over these areas was the only solution.⁵³ The lack of consistency in this policy, which at one moment would interfere in minute affairs of administration and at another leave the ruler free to do anything he chose, came to a close with the Mutiny. It was an epitaph written in blood of the chaotic, indefinite and contradictory policy pursued towards the states.⁵⁴ In the economic field the

⁵² Selected Proclamations, 1811-1939, pp.304-305.

⁵³ Panikkar. K.M, op.cit., pp.88-89.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p.89.

British rule was oppressive. As the majority of the people of Travancore were landless this exploitation did not affect them directly. The reforms introduced by the English made the people gradually conscious of their country and they came to believe that their economic difficulties resulted from the policy of the British.⁵⁵

The signing of the Treaty of 1788 between the Maharaja of Travancore and English East India Company,⁵⁶ prepared the ground for many social changes in the country. The most significant of them were the abolition of slavery and the movement for the right of women to cover their bosoms. In Travancore there were several slave classes like the Pulayas, Parayas, Vettuvas, etc, but the first constituted the bulk of the total slave population.⁵⁷ Women of higher castes, in case of association with men of low caste were invariably degraded to slavery and barred from their parental community. A low caste woman, allowing any improper intimacy with a Brahman, was sold to the Moplahs.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Yesudas. R.N, British Policy in Travancore 1805-1859, p.54.

⁵⁶ Minutes of Evidence taken before the Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company, 16th Aug, 1832.

⁵⁷ Kusuman. K.K, Slavery in Travancore, p.28.

⁵⁸ Francis Day, The Land of the Perumals, p.62.

In spite of the initiative of the Resident and the progressive attitude shown by the Travancore Government, the missionaries had to face many difficulties from caste Hindu community - who were fanatically opposed to any emancipatory measure. They were opposed to imparting education to the slave children. They could not tolerate the conversion policy encouraged by the missionaries.⁵⁹ At the same time they were not ready to accept the fact that it was the prevailing social inequalities and injustice which tempted the aggrieved slaves to think in terms of conversion which afforded them relief. The moment a Pulaya or Paraya left Hinduism and accepted Christianity, the convert would be freed from pollution rules. Therefore many thought in terms of conversion to relieve themselves from the tentacles of caste rules.⁶⁰

It was the missionaries who first raised their voice against slavery, they drew the attention of the public as well as the authorities about this evil. The British had influenced the people of Travancore through commercial and political fields. Their interference in the political

⁵⁹ Kusuman. K.K, op.cit., pp.54-55.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p.51.

affairs of Travancore in a way conducive to the redress of many social evils to which a large portion of the population was subjected. The political influence of Col. Munro during the period of Rani Lakshmi Bai, paved the way for several social reforms.

In 1847 the LMS and CMS missionaries presented a joint petition to the Maharaja Uttran Tirunal Marthanda Varma.⁶¹ It was General Cullen, the Resident of Travancore, who forwarded the memorandum to the king stating that slaves in Travancore were in a more degraded and miserable condition. So Dewan Krishna Row informed the Resident that His Highness was willing to ameliorate the conditions of slaves but that emancipation was too important to be considered at present.⁶² The King followed a statesman-like policy of moving slowly and cautiously.⁶³ In March 1848, the missionaries again petitioned, pointing out that legal recognition of slavery in British India have been withdrawn by Act V of 1843. In August Cullen wrote to the Dewan that "we ought to do

⁶¹ The Petition of British Missionaries to the King of Travancore, Document No.II in K.K. Kusuman's Slavery in Travancore.

⁶² Krishna Rao. V, to Cullen.

⁶³ Kusuman. K.K, op.cit., p.47.

something on the subject you know that my attention has been directed to it."⁶⁴

The Resident was very eager to see that the reform was carried out at the earliest. For this, he referred to the summary of an Act passed by Government of India in 1843 on slavery. No public office should after that date enforce any Decree or order of the court, or demand any rent or revenue by the sale of slaves. This meant, slaves could acquire and possess property like all other classes and that no person should dispossess them of such acquired property on the plea that they were slaves.⁶⁵

The Resident suggested that the Government should publicly disconnect itself with the perpetuation of slavery. During the period under Rani Lakshmi Bai, the poll tax had been abolished. But the tax levied on slaves was allowed to continue. The king still continued a hesitant attitude which prevented reforms of all kinds. The Madras Government was also very anxious about this matter.⁶⁶ At last the Travancore Government drafted a proclamation and it was sent

⁶⁴ Cullen to Krishna Row, 15 Aug, 1848, Travancore Government English Records, Coverfile No.286.

⁶⁵ Memorandum by Cullen, 12 March, 1849.

⁶⁶ Ibid.,

to the Resident for final approval. But the Resident was not satisfied with it as it was not drafted in accordance with his memorandum of 12th March, 1849. So, on 20th November 1852 the Dewan sent a revised draft, observing the guidelines laid down by the Resident, for the approval of the Resident. From this, it was apparent that, even the right of the king to issue a proclamation regarding his own subjects was curtailed by the Resident.

In May 1850, the Madras Government, instructed by the Court of Directors, called on Cullen to provide information about slavery in Travancore. The inquiries remained unanswered.⁶⁷ The continuous pressure of Madras Government and Resident, resulted in the historic proclamation of 1853 by which slavery was abolished in Travancore. While all these arrangements were going on, the missionaries made close relations with slaves in Travancore. They opened schools for slaves. Rev. Charles Mault wrote, "I have to fight their battles for them, for poor creatures, they are so degraded and oppressed that they can do nothing to withstand their oppressors. In most instances the slaves

⁶⁷ Madras Political Proceedings, 26th July, 1853.

are influenced by worldly motives to join us, but nevertheless they were brought under Christian instruction, and I greatly rejoice, for there is no other hope of their bettering their condition."⁶⁸ The missionaries tried to spread Christianity as soon as slavery was abolished. Both from the religious and altruistic point of view, the condition was favourable for the missionaries. But there was a storm of opposition from the caste Hindus who could not tolerate the ameliorative measures and conversion policies adopted by the missionaries.⁶⁹

The English-medium schools began to flourish from the time of Macaulay. His aim was apparent from a letter he had written to his father. It read: "Our English schools are flourishing wonderfully. The effect of this education ever remains sincerely attached to our religion. Some continue to adhere to it as a matter of policy and some embrace Christianity. It is my belief that if our plans of education followed up, there will not be a single idolator among the respectable classes of the state thirty years hence. And this will be effected without any effort to

⁶⁸ Rev. Charles Mault to the Foreign Secretary, 4 Feb, 1851.

⁶⁹ Mackenzie. G.T, Christianity in Travancore, p.51.

proselyties, without the smallest interference with religious liberty, by natural operation of knowledge and reflection. I heartily rejoice in the project."⁷⁰ So, the education provided by the British was a blessing as well as a curse to Indian society.

The English noticed that even after the proclamation, the system of slavery continued. On one such complaint raised by the Governor-in-council the Dewan replied that the parties involved in the transaction were men who were perfectly unaware of the recent proclamation. From this the English presumed that the proclamation had not been seriously taken by the authorities, who had failed to do necessary propaganda on its importance. Again, the Resident conveyed the disapprobation of the Madras Government on the selling of free persons at Eraniel.⁷¹

The English had specific views and a comprehensive scheme with regard to the emancipated slaves. They were given a protective hand to look after them in the interim

⁷⁰ Extract from the minutes of Consultations dated 11 July 1854, Document No. XXI in K.K. Kusuman's Slavery in Travancore.

⁷¹ Resident's letter to the Dewan dated 12 Aug, 1854, Document No. XXII, Ibid.

period. There was considerable pressure and persuasion on Travancore for rectifying its deficiencies as well as creating the necessary atmosphere for the maintenance of the emancipated. It was this persistent pressure on the part of the Resident which moved the King further to rescind the first proclamation and issue another in its place. This was done on 24 June 1855.⁷²

These reformist activities, resulted in the conversion of many people into Christianity. The low-caste converts were given many advantages. The missionaries had been claiming privileges enjoyed by the high caste Hindus to the converts also.⁷³ When Cullen finally replied to the Madras Government in August, he attacked the missionaries in a guarded way for allowing themselves to be used by their adherents and for thus rocking the Travancore ship of state.⁷⁴ As a result of these missionary activities, the high-castes became aware that a new weight had been placed on the social balance in Travancore.⁷⁵ The English were very

⁷² Robbin Jefferey, op. cit, p.47.

⁷³ Ibid., p.48.

⁷⁴ Kusuman. K.K, op.cit, p.51.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p.53.

particular to see that the new proclamation was made known to the public at large. So, three months before the issue of the proclamation of 1855, the Resident, after reading the draft had instructed the Dewan to give wide publicity to it⁷⁶ Constant vigilance and keenness of this kind on the part of the English made a deep impact upon Travancore and the officers began to show unprecedente interest in the welfare and progress of the once suppressed classes.

It was seen from the records that the State Government was showing a progressively keen interest in noting the progress of the low classes, though the impetus for the same, came from the English. Similarly the Dewan of Travancore seems to have prepared a questionnaire on the condition of the lower classes, and it was sent for the officials of various divisions, for replies. Though the name of the Dewan or of the officials who replied to the questionnaire is not stated, such a typical questionnaire with replies was found among the records of correspondence related to slavery.⁷⁷ By the close of the English education they understood the hollowness of caste distinctions and

⁷⁶ Ibid., p.57.

⁷⁷ Ibid., Document No.XLVIII.

barriers. Thus British interference in favour of the depressed classes resulted in many social reforms that silently headed towards a confrontation with the authorities in the thirties of 20th century.⁷⁸

One of the important social movements in Travancore was the Upper cloth Agitation. It was the feudal set up of the second half of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth centuries that gave birth to this social revolt.⁷⁹ The social customs that existed in Travancore made a large section of the people of Travancore more slaves of the dominant classes. The superstitions of the people had given the Brahmins upper hand in the society.⁸⁰ Women of any status who refused to expose their breasts before the Brahmins were looked upon by them as immodest.⁸¹

The results of the domination of the Nairs, who formed the vast majority of officials are described by Col. Munro in his elaborate report submitted to the Madras Government on 7th March 1818. No description can produce an adequate

⁷⁸ Kusuman. K.K, Abstention Movement, p.11.

⁷⁹ Yesudas. R.N, People's Revolt in Travancore, p.5.

⁸⁰ Ward and Conner, Geographical and Statistical Memoir of the Travancore and Cochin States, from July 1816 to end of the year, p.93.

⁸¹ Yesudas. R.N, op.cit., p.10.

impression of the tyranny, corruption and abuses of the system full of activity and energy in everything mischievous, oppressive and infamous, but slow and dilatory to effect any purpose of humanity mercy and justice."... On the part of the people, complaint was useless, redress, hopeless, they had only one remedy that was bribery...."⁸²

The Government of Travancore actually did nothing to ameliorate the sufferings of the lower castes up to the establishment of British domination. The power of the Raja was absolute but he acted on the advice of the Brahmins, a divinity in human form.⁸³

With the beginning of British influence and the spread of christianity and western education, the low caste people began to think of themselves as human beings, having the same rights and freedom enjoyed by the caste Hindus.⁸⁴ They began to show this dissatisfaction with native laws and customs. This dissatisfaction was reflected through many

⁸² Minutes of Evidence taken before the select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company, VI. Political, 16th Aug. 1832.

⁸³ George Norton, Rudimentals, pp.287-88.

⁸⁴ Ward and Conner, Memoir of the survey of the Travancore and Cochin State, Vol.I, p.98.

rebellious for rights, the most important of them being the "Upper cloth Movement."

When Col. Munro was the Resident-Dewan in Travancore, he issued an order. "I have heard that the women of Elavas and such other low castes who have embraced christianity have been prevented from covering their bosoms; but as I have granted my permission to the women converted to christianity to cover their bosoms as obtains among christians in other countries, you will take steps that there be no obstacles put to the women converted to christianity wearing clothes over their breasts."⁸⁵ Ignoring this order, officers oppressed the converted Christians for wearing upper-clothes. But the people continued it by enduring cruelties. Munro issued another order which was a warning of punishment to the officers who failed in enforcing the order.

The persecution of the Christians reached its climax between 1840 and 1860, when General Cullen was Resident.⁸⁶ On 11 April 1855, the Government received a petition from

⁸⁵ Augur. C.M, Church History of Travancore, Appendix, P.I.

⁸⁶ Nagam Aiya. V, op.cit., Vol.I, p.386.

Mr. White house, a missionary, that one Madan Pillai and his brother Chitambaran Pillai had cruelly beaten and tortured one Arumeinayagam, the slave of the former, for attending a Christian place of worship.⁸⁷ The Government directed that the Resident should conduct an investigation.⁸⁸ Cullen reported that Whitehouse, living in the extreme south of Travancore, cannot possibly know much about the general state of the country. He says that because of the interference of the missionaries, the slaves had become insubordinate and unmanageable.⁸⁹

The missionaries protected their converts from the exploitation of upper castes. But their role as 'political missionaries' elicited severe criticism from the Resident and the Government of India. During that period the ambition of missionaries in Travancore was to act as a channel of communication between the Christian converts and the Government of Travancore. The Resident and Dewan not only thwarted the ambition of the missionaries but also ridiculed their pretensions. But the Court of Directors who

⁸⁷ Whitehouse's original complaint, dated April, 2nd, 1855.

⁸⁸ The Chief Secretary to the Resident, Political Department. No.188, dated 4 May 1858.

⁸⁹ Letter from the Resident, dated 28th June 1855.

had always to reckon with the pressure of evangelical lobby in England, recognised them as intermediaries between the Christian converts and the Government of Travancore. These missionaries wanted to annex Travancore to British India. Rev. Mead indirectly pointed to the Company's authorities at home the need for annexation and it was the ultimate remedy for all the evils. He wrote, "the Society will, I hope endeavour to obtain justice for our Christian missionaries and their converts, who are in alliance with the English East India Company."

The attitude of the Christian missionaries and their interference in the political field showed that their selfish aim was spreading Christianity. Their objective was to scuttle any administration that did not dance to their tune. They exerted pressure not only on the Madras Government, but also through Members of Parliament on the Home Government. It is true that they claimed to be champions of the poor and down-trodden people, but they took up the cause of their Christian brethren. They tried to abolish slavery from this soil but those who got relief from slavery were recruited to their own plantations as wage-earners. Thus they were converted into civilized slaves.

It can be seen that the liberation of slaves was not due to any sympathy for the unfortunate beings. They had a profit-motive in encouraging the Shannars to wear jackets. The cloth for the jackets was imported from England. From 1860 to 1900, the value of import of Manchester cloth rose from 96 lakhs sterling to 27 crores sterling.⁹⁰ This policy was a profitable one because they took home the raw materials at a lower price and returned the textile goods at higher prices. So the missionaries encouraged large-scale conversion with the expectation of increasing the consumption of European goods among the converts.⁹¹

The missionaries complained against the oppression to the Government of Madras as they considered the English powerful to extend them protection.⁹² Rev. Mead painfully wrote in his report that the object of the native Government was to discourage and defeat attempts to propagate the Truth, and to compel the people who are now coming to light to return to the gloom of heathenism⁹³ The Madras Government forwarded the petition to General Cullen to investigate and

⁹⁰ Chopra. P.N, all, A New Advanced History of India, p.555.

⁹¹ Minutes of Evidence on East India Company's Affairs, 1813.

⁹² Yesudas. R.N, 'The English and the Christians of Kerala 1800-1836 Journal of Kerala Studies, March, 1978.

⁹³ Mead's letters quoted in Augur. C.M, op.cit., p.897.

report upon the allegations contained in them. A cold war between the missionaries and Cullen followed. Cullen was not against Christianity or propagation of that faith in Travancore. Instead of confining to their duty, they plunged into politics. The missionaries being foreigners, were under the supervision and control of the Resident. Cullen unlike his predecessors never liked the interference of the missionaries in the administration.⁹⁴ He could not tolerate the division of British authority in Travancore. This was the reason for Cullen's hatred towards the missionaries.

Cullen received many petitions from Hindu Nadars. The missionaries were in favour of British interference in the affairs of Travancore. Rev. Baylis wrote: "I confess, I see little hope of the sirkar being willing to allow the women of Shannar, and such castes, the privilege of dressing decently by covering their breasts, unless constrained by the interference of the British Government and I confess too that I long to see that Government to interfere".⁹⁵ Cullen was against innovations in the existing system and suspected

⁹⁴ Resident to Whitehouse, 18 March 1843, Pol. Cons, Vol.366.

⁹⁵ Letter from Rev. Baylis to the Resident dated Neyyur, Jan, 10, 1859, English Records.

the missionaries of attempting to unsettle the existing political arrangements in the Native state of Travancore.⁹⁶

Cullen wrote to T. Pycroft, Chief Secretary to Government, Fort St. George, that "I regret to report that there is a very disturbed state of feeling at present in the south of Travancore on a matter of caste, i.e., as to the kind of dress to be worn by the women of the different castes."⁹⁷ In another letter he wrote that "the present disturbances are to be traced to the dissatisfaction of the landed proprietors on the emancipation of their slaves announced by proclamation of 1855."⁹⁸ When the British came to know about this state of affairs in Travancore, an order was issued by T. Pycroft Chief Secretary, dated Jan 27, 1859, instructing General Cullen to be careful to give no countenance to the idea that the British Government recognises any inclusive distinction, or the right of any set of men to prevent others from following in all matters of social or domestic life, such course as they may see fit,

⁹⁶ Letter from the Resident to the Dewan of Travancore dated Trivandrum, Jan, 1859.

⁹⁷ Fort St. George Political Consultations, 1st Feb, 1859, Letter from Cullen to Pycroft, Esq. Chief Secretary to Government.

⁹⁸ Fort St. George, Political Consultations, 15 March, 1859.

of social or domestic life, such course as they may see fit, provided it be not repugnant to public decency and morals."⁹⁹ This order shows the policy of the British in this matter. They did not want to support either high caste or low caste directly. But they pretended that they were the 'Protectors' of all people and through it they tried to achieve both in political and economic fields.

The report of the Dewan regarding the origin, development and suppression of the revolt was forwarded to the Madras Government. This Government requested General Cullen to inform it of the steps he had taken in furtherance of the instructions conveyed to him on 27th Jan, 1859.¹⁰⁰ The Resident was also informed that the degree of interference which for many years in the past had been exercised by the representative of the British Government in the affairs of Travancore is so large and its administration gratefully rests with the British Government and it has thereby become their duty to insist upon the observance of a system of toleration in a more decided manner than they would be at liberty to adopt if they had merely to bring their influence

⁹⁹ Order of T. Pycroft, Chief Secretary, dated Jan, 27, 1859.

¹⁰⁰ Minutes by the President, dated May 7, 1859, quoted in R.N. Yesudas, Peoples' Revolt in Travancore, p.151.

to bear on an independent state.¹⁰¹

The Government of India relied on the report of their representative, who was the man on the spot. They thought that when such a social problem arises, their interference was unwanted. But later, under their persistent pressure the Government of India changed their earlier stand. Meanwhile, the rule of English East India Company came to an end by an order in 1859 in which the Nadar women got the right to cover the bosoms decently. By another proclamation of 1865 Ezhava women were also allowed to cover their bosoms

Resident Cullen wanted to extend the benefits of the proclamation to all classes of people, but the Travancore Government took no steps in that direction immediately. The revolt was continued by the Ezhavas, who were prohibited from covering their bosoms even after the proclamation of July 1859. The breast cloth agitation was partially successful and it indicated the rising assertiveness of the lower castes against an unjust social order.

After the breast cloth disturbance was over the Madras Government felt the necessity of improving the efficiency of

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

the Travancore administration, and to remove caste disabilities and to reform the State's commercial laws. Indeed, during post-Mutiny period, intervention in Native states to improve their administration became a moral imperative of British policy. Yet as Cullen's experience showed, there were manifold ways for a willing sirkar to destroy, or avoid, policies which it disliked. The Madras Government realised that the unnecessary and unwarranted interference of the Resident was a discredit to the British. They advised the new Resident Maltby to respect the legitimate authority of the Raja and remove the obstacles in exercising his powers. The Resident was asked to take measures for giving the Raja a great amount of influence in the administration of this country than has hitherto been conceded to him. This was the result of the post-Mutiny policy of the British Government. Cullen's resignation and the appointment of Maltby, as Resident closed a chapter and opened a new era in the history of Travancore-British relations.

Thus, the political, social and economic reforms of the British were laid down by keeping the British interests in India. By abolishing state monopoly on pepper, they weakened

the position of Travancore king in trade. Hindu community was strong in Travancore society. The missionaries pretended that they were the protectors of low caste people. And through conversion, they tried to divide the unity of Hindus in Travancore. The breast cloth movement was a device by which the British tried to apply pressure over Travancore. While the peoples' revolt was going on, the Madras Government continuously enquired the Resident about the possibility of annexation. In 1846-7 the Court of Directors asked the Government of Madras to proceed according to article V of the treaty of 1805. They accused Travancore of disregarding the advice of the Resident. The second move for annexation was initiated by the missionaries. Really the threat of annexation was a blessing in diaguise to Travancore. All these reforms helped to improve the progress of Travancore. However, the British were not able to annex Travancore, because at that time there were many rebellions in several parts of British India. People of Travancore were also aware of the situation very well. So the British thought that it would not be favourable to them to annex Travancore to British India in such a critical moment.

BRITISH IMPACT ON TRAVANCORE

Sugeetha. B “British-Travancore relations upto 1947 ” Thesis. Department of History , University of Calicut, 1997

CHAPTER VI

BRITISH IMPACT ON TRAVANCORE

The British who ruled India for about hundred and fifty years, influenced almost all major fields of activity in Travancore. Among all the people with whom Travancore had the opportunity to come into contact it was the English who made their presence felt by posterity through the influence they exercised in the political and commercial fields.¹ The British impact on the economy and society of Travancore was inter-related. The improvement of social status led to the development of agriculture and they paid attention to plantation of each crops.

The economic impact of British rule on Indian society is very significant. The economic policies of the British led to the rapid transformation of urban economy into a colonial economy. Colonial exploitation of Travancore society may be divided into three stages. In the first stage (1767-1813) the East India Company followed the policy of acquiring monopoly over the country's trade. During this stage their policies ruined Indian trade. The weavers were

¹ Kusuman, K.K., Slavery in Travancore, p.44.

compelled to supply textile goods at uneconomic prices. During the second stage, (from 1813 to the middle of the 19th century) to sell their manufactured goods, particularly textiles, the Company imposed a one-way free trade policy. While no duty or nominal duty was imposed on British manufactures, heavy duties were imposed on Indian manufactures.² In the third stage (from 1850's onwards) the British capitalists began to engage in plantations, mining, etc.

The British conquest led to the decline of native cottage industries, the consequences of which was extreme poverty both in the rural and urban sectors. The material conditions of the peasants and artisans deteriorated and they steadily sank into poverty.³ The aims and objectives of Britain in the early phase of its rule were to make native states subserve her political, economic and strategic needs. To fulfil these objectives, it was imperative that India be brought under the hegemony of a monolithic political administration. The British admirably succeeded in their effort in this direction and established a system which

² Chopra, P.N., et al., A New advanced History of India, p.555.

³ Gupta, R.N., Conflict and Harmony, p.4.

politically and administratively unified India.⁴ In the second half of the 18th century the Industrial Revolution brought profound changes in the social, economic and political structure. It also brought great impact on British policy in general and her policy towards India.⁵

The economic condition of Travancore underwent radical changes under the impact of the West. The establishment of British rule brought the country into the arena of the world market.⁶ The arts and crafts of the land fell into decay and the consistent policy of commercial and economic exploitation relentlessly pursued by Britain impoverished the masses. But British writers argued that what the country lost in one field was amply compensated by gains in other fields. If the British were responsible for the decay of the old handicrafts, wrote Percival Spear, they made possible the development of mechanised industry and brought the country within the orbit of world economy.⁷ An American

⁴ Kamekar, 'Impact of British colonial policy on Indian Society Relating to education in Western India during the 19th century' in Ray, N.R. (ed.), Western Colonial Policy, Vol. II, p.3

⁵ Ibid., p.6.

⁶ Sankaran Nambudiripad, E.M., Kerala: Past, Present and Future, p.74.

⁷ Percival Spear, The Oxford History of Modern India, p.7.

economic historian Daniel Thorner was of the opinion that the most significant change was the transformation of the rural economy which resulted from the introductions of new land system and the development of commercial agriculture. The British writer Barbara Ward, suggested that British rule "launched but did not complete the process of economic modernization".

Most of land in Travancore was held under Sirkar Pattam tenure which gave the Sirkar rights of a Jenmi. The tenants could never hypothecate or sell their land for payment of rent and the government experienced great difficulty in collecting its dues. Dewan T. Madhava Rao realised that if the ryots were to become prosperous and the state was to receive an increased revenue, what was essential was to regulate and reform the agrarian system and accordingly a series of new measures were adopted.⁸

Two important reforms were introduced in the field of agriculture during his time. The first of these agrarian reforms was Pandarappattam Proclamation of 1865 A.D. By this Act the Sirkar enfranchised the lands and made them

⁸ Balachandran, C.N., Special change in Nayar community since 1865 - with particulr reference to Travancore, p.4.

heritable and transferable, thus inducing the ryots to put in the best effort to improve the land.⁹ This Proclamation granted full ownership rights to the holders of sirkar pattam land held by Nayars. By this proclamation a land value of Rs.1.5 crores was created. The measure probably affected most Nayar Taravads. Holders of sirkar pattam land suddenly acquired a windfull of saleable, mortgageable land. Now land was capable of providing cash for education or for the performance of costly ceremonies like the 'talikettu Kalyanam'.

The second important measure was the Jenmi-Kudian Proclamation of 1867. The Jenmis claimed their right to evict the tenants and recover the lands on repayment of the amount received by them. This act on the part of the Jenmis was not at all conducive to agricultural improvement and prosperity and hence the proclamation of 1867 was issued. It declared that if the tenants paid the stipulated rents and other customary dues they should not be evicted. A tenant could be ejected only if he withheld payment for twelve years continuously. In cases, of restoration of the

⁹ Sreedhara Menon (ed.), Kerala District Gazetteers - Trivandrum, p.224.

land to the Jenmi the tenant is entitled to get compensation for his improvements. These two proclamations improved the condition regulating the relationship between the State and the Ryot and the Jenmi and the Ryot. The proclamation gave tenants security of tenure and virtually automatic renewal of lease without enhancement, at the end of twelve years. These proclamations ended the influence of Jenmis.¹⁰

The British were not able to plant coffee, tea, etc., without the right on the land permanently. It was in this situation, the British capitalists tried for permanent right on land. As a result of this proclamation, a number of estates arose. The introduction of permanent right on land, free exchange, etc. helped the Europeans and other joint stock companies to invest more money in coffee, tea and rubber plantations.

The above two proclamations of 1865 and 1867 have been described by Dewan T. Madhava Rao as "the Magna Carta of Travancore ryots" but it is doubtful whether these measures conferred by substantial benefit on the tenant. Following the annexations by Marthanda Varma, Jenmis of Travancore

¹⁰ Abraham Koshy, Raja T. Madhava Rao and the Modernisation of Travancore Administration, unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Kerala University, p.324.

were fewer in number than in British Malabar. They lost their economic leverage against their tenants, who whether Nayers, Syrians and even Izhavas gained independence or room for manoeuvre which was unique in Kerala. The land reforms not only won the approval of British Government but made Travancore an area of many thousand small proprietors and secure tenants.¹¹

The Pattan Proclamation helped to accelerate the decay of the taravads. Many suits were filed for the partition of the taravads. Only after repeated court decisions refusing to grant partition, the number of suits decreased. This trend combined with the Nayar's failure to profit from wider economic development of the times brought forth a comparison between their contemporary position and the position they had once enjoyed in the past "Golden age" when Nayars had passed their lives in contended and prosperous taravads. For establishing their political supremacy they thought that they should do away with the prevailing system of inheritance.¹²

¹¹ Robbin Jeffery, The Decline of Nayar Dominance, p.90.

¹² Abraham, Koshy, A., op. cit, p.324.

In the second half of the 19th century, the earlier rural framework of India weakened by the new land systems and was shattered by the spread of commercial agriculture, the production of crops for sale rather than for consumption.¹³ Commercial agriculture, grew partly because of the recurring need of the peasants for money to meet the mounting demands made on them by the government and the landlords. Another reason was the fact that such a development was welcome to the British authorities. As commercial agriculture spread, the old practices associated with a self-subsisting economy declined. In some districts the peasants shifted over completely to cash crops and had to buy their feed stuffs from dealers.¹⁴

By the middle of the 19th century, Britain had passed through the Industrial Revolution. British industries were then the most prosperous in the world and they kept on expanding. British manufacturers clamoured for raw materials and sought good markets in which to dispose of their finished products.¹⁵ To produce crops for market the peasants required credit, and they turned to the money-

¹³ Daniel Thorner, The Transformation of Rural Economy, ,p.55.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

lender, who came to occupy a place of unprecedented importance. The new conditions opened up a golden age for the money lender. From the middle of the 19th century the price of land rose rapidly, thereby encouraging the money-lender to broaden his operations. He began to take over the peasant's land and rent it out. The money-lenders grew in number and in wealth.¹⁶

Following in the footsteps of their predecessors, the British felt no need to penetrate to the villages so long as their economic surplus was successfully suckled out through the traditional machinery of revenue collection. Consequently whatever administrative changes were made to the top of the structure of revenue collection and were geared to the single aim of making the collection of revenue more efficient.¹⁷

The British introduced two major land revenue and tenurial systems: one the Zamindari system and the other the Ryotwari system. Under the Zamindari system, old tax farmers, revenue collectors possessing some, but not all, of the rights of private property in land. Under the Ryotwari

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Bipan Chandra, Freedom Struggle, p.6.

system the Government collected the revenue direct from the individual cultivators, who were recognised in law as the owners of the land they cultivated. But their rights of ownership too was limited by the temporary nature of the land revenue settlement and by the high rate of revenue demanded, which often they could not pay.¹⁸

Whatever the system, it was the peasant cultivators who suffered. They were forced to pay very high rents and for all practical purposes functioned as tenants-at-will.¹⁹ The greatest evil that arose out of the British policies with regard to Indian agricultural economy was the emergence of the money-lender as an influential economic and political force in the country. Because of the high revenue rates demanded and the rigid manner of collection, the peasant cultivator had often to borrow money to pay taxes. In addition to paying exorbitant rate of interest, when his crops were ready, he was invariably forced to sell his produce cheap. The chronic poverty of the peasant compelled him to borrow from the money-lender especially in times of droughts, floods and famines. The money-lender on the other

¹⁸ Ibid., p.18.

¹⁹ Ibid.

hand, could manipulate the new judicial system and the administrative machinery to his advantage.²⁰

Therefore, it is not surprising that in course of time the money-lender began to occupy a dominant position in the rural economy. In both the Zamindari and Ryotwari areas there occurred a large transfer of land from the hands of the actual cultivators to the hands of money-lenders, merchants, officials and rich peasants. This led to landlordism becoming the dominant feature of land relationship all over the country.²¹

The impact of British rule led to the evolution of a new structure of agrarian relations that was extremely regressive. The new system did not at all permit the development of agriculture. New social classes appeared at the top as well as at the bottom of the social scale. There arose landlords, intermediaries and money lenders at the top and tenants-at-will, share-croppers and agricultural labourers at the bottom. The new pattern was neither capitalism nor feudalism. It was a new structure that

²⁰ Ibid., p.19.

²¹ Ibid.

colonialism evolved. It was semi-feudal and semi-colonial in character.²²

If the economic development of the country was mainly Britain's work, its profits had gone mainly into British pockets and the country had been impoverished by the steady "drain" of wealth to Britain.²³ The pre-colonial 18th century rural economy of India was generally a robust one, partly because the state regime of this period was directly and constructively involved in the promotion of agrarian production and this robustness continued well into the colonial age.²⁴

Nationalist historians assumed that the imposition of British rule in the middle of the 18th century affected the economic as well as the political field of India. In 1800, Indian capital and skills were laid out in commodities such as indigo, silk, sugar and cotton, and Indian merchants seemed set to continue their control, though dependent role in the mercantalist economy of the Company.²⁵ Within a

²² Ibid.

²³ George Wood Cock, Kerala: A Portrait of Malabar Coast, p.221.

²⁴ Burton Stein, The Making of Agrarian Policy in British India - 1770-1900, p.5.

²⁵ Ibid, p.7.

generation all that changed. The high ground of those trade was engrossed by the Company and its satellite managing agencies, and Indian merchants and bankers were pressed back upon real estate investment and the hazards of petty usury and localised exchange. No fundamental change in policies can account for this. Neither the presumed imposition of utilitarian doctrines postulated by the economic historian, Eric Stokes,²⁶ nor the extension of 'free-trade' doctrine. One of these was a change in the structure and interests of the London Directors of the Company, which in turn influenced by the new 'private trade' enthusiasm among the Directors of the Company,²⁷ and implemented in its clearest form by Bentinck's modernization of transport and banking during his governor-generalship (1828-34).²⁸

Nineteenth century saw the development of plantations and the establishment of Kerala's first industries through European initiative. Soon after the British annexation of Wynad from Mysore Murdoch Brown started the first coffee plantation at Anjarakandi.²⁹ In Travancore an Englishmen

²⁶ Eric Stokes, The English Utilitarians and India, p.

²⁷ Philips, C.H., The East India Company, 1784-1834, pp.273-76.

²⁸ Stein, Eighteenth Century India, pp.23-6.

²⁹ George Wood Cock, op. cit, p.221.

William Huxham started planting coffee on the hills east of Quilon in the late 1830s when the price of coffee was rising rapidly in the United States.³⁰ General Cullen, the British Resident in Travancore (1840-1860), himself being an amateur planter, took great interest in popularising the coffee plantation in the state. The pioneer of coffee cultivation on a large-scale in Travancore was John Granti, an enterprising planter from Scotland.³¹

The plantation industry exerted great influence on the life of the people. An increase in the demand for labour led to corresponding increase in wages. Higher wages induced higher prices. To the European planter castes was no bar to the recruitment of low caste labour and social out-caste like the Pulayas, Parayas and Vetas obtained employment in the plantations. The native Christians educated by the Protestant missionaries served the European planters as clerks, accountants, overseers and managers. And these people in course of time acquired small plantations of their own and thereby improved their economic status and social position. The export of coffee revived trade at some of the

³⁰ Edwin, P.G., 'British Impact on Kerala', Journal of Kerala Studies, Vol.V, March 1978, part I.

³¹ Samuel Mateer, Native life in Travancore, p.225.

ports, and gave employment to various people in its curing, sizing and packing.³²

The manufacture of coir and coir products from coconut fibre provided livelihood for tons of thousands of families in Kerala. During 1860s on the banks of the canals at Alleppey weaving establishments were built for housing the big wooden handlooms for the large scale manufacture of coir matting. The industry was one of the mainstays of Kerala economy for a long period when there was a great demand in England for cheap and durable floor covering.

Plantations and primitive industries introduced by foreign entrepreneurs created a serious challenge to the economy of Travancore by concentrating their attention more on cash crops than on food crops. Even before the advent of the Europeans Kerala's economy was noted for its concentration on cash crops and simple industrial products for export. During the portuguese and Dutch periods the production of pepper and other spices was stepped up to meet the ever-increasing demand for those commodities in the world market. But under British rule "the disproportion in the economy became most pronounced". The tendency to

³² Ibid., p.237-238.

concentrate on cash crops at the expense of food crops prevented Kerala from attaining self-sufficiency in the matter of food. This situation, as George Wood Cock has rightly pointed out "is not only the most important cause of Kerala's recent food crisis, it has also produced an economy exceptionally sensitive to change in living patterns elsewhere in the world and to competition in any of its special areas of cultivation."³³

British rule produced a deep impact on social life of the Indian people. Nehru argued that the British indeed had been agents of 'progress, but quite unconscious agents'. By their conscious policies, he charged, they had "encouraged and consolidated the position of the socially reactionary groups in India and opposed all those who worked for political and social change". In the beginning the policies of the colonial government encouraged social reform efforts to modernise Indian society in order to enable economic penetration of the country and the consolidation of British rule.³⁴

³³ Edwin, P.G., loc. cit.

³⁴ Bipan Chandra, op. cit., p.27.

The establishment of foreign domination over the economy, politics and culture of the country caused the loss of Nation's freedom. This loss of freedom however, made the people aware of the need for the people's united action against foreign domination. While correctly accusing the British rulers of using the caste, communal and other forces of disruption, the nationalists admitted that it was the character of Indian society existing through the ages that made it possible for the British rulers to divide the country on the basis of caste, religion, community, tribe, language, etc. British rulers of India wanted to transform India in the image of Britain. With this view, they made many socio-religious reforms. The British abolished practices like Sati, female infanticide, slavery and so on.³⁵ In Hindu India, religion played such a dominant role in the lives of men that there was no area in personal or social life which could be called "really secular". This was the position when the British conquered and began to rule India. But an emerging socio-political philosophy which the conquerors brought to India i.e. democracy which combines

³⁵ Subrahmanian, N., 'The impact of caste and community on the lives of the people of India', Proceedings of XXX Session of Institute of Historical Studies.

freedom with equality.³⁶ The new intellectual and political stirrings among the people also led to movements for social change. But the most powerful forces for social change arose when the lower castes and women themselves became conscious of their depressed condition and began to struggle for the remodelling of society.

Social change in Kerala under British rule was revolutionary both in its nature and extent. The contact with the British produced tensions, conflicts and revolts in the traditional society of Travancore. The greatest shock to Kerala's traditional society came with British colonialism, which imposed foreign rule, and drained local economy for the profit of British investors. Despite the many negative features of British rule, the long conditioning of Kerala's people to take worthwhile outside ideas did help them benefit in some ways. Land reforms, educational expansion, and the easing of caste indignities, all took place in Travancore where British political and economic interests were protected by the local monarch.³⁷

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Richard W. Franke & Barbara H. Chasin, Kerala Development through Radical Reform, p.51.

In the early 19th century, many evil practices existed in society which reduced the major section of the people into more slaves. Feudalism and caste system placed heavy burdens on the different sections of the people.³⁸ This feudal set-up of the society led the Nambudiri landlords to become idle and pleasure-loving. Not only landed-properties but also women became Parasurama's gift to them with the beautiful dancing girls in the temples. These places of prayer and worship were turned into centres of sensual indulgence. Hence chastity was not considered as must for women and no female needed to cover "her breast".³⁹

The rigid caste system which separated the upper castes from the lower castes, made social life of the vast majority of the people miserable. Till recently the custom of the lower caste women going to the Nambudiri illams removing the upper garments was strictly observed.⁴⁰ The rights and privileges enjoyed by the Brahmins obstructed the growth of society. Their prejudiced mind and conservative outlook prevented them from doing anything to improve social

³⁸ The Regional Record Survey Committee, The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala 1600-1885, Vol. I, p.54.

³⁹ Elamkulam, Kerala Caritratile Irulatanja Etukal, (Mal), p.160.

⁴⁰ Ravindran. T.K, Asan and Social Revolution in Kerala, p.XIII.

relations. This created economic, intellectual and cultural stagnation. In other words, they were the primary cause for the decline of the country and its social freedom. In short, the Brahmins were more a burden to society than a useful part of it.

A medieval society is the worst form of feudalism prevailed and a society in which most of the people were reduced to the position of slaves and social out-castes suddenly found itself exposed to western influences and the effect was remarkable. The impact of western culture, Nehru observed, "was the impact of a dynamic society, of a modern consciousness, on a static society wedded to medieval habits of thought, which however sophisticated and advanced in its own way, could not progress because of its inherent limitations."⁴¹

Some have viewed the emergence of socio-religious movements as a contribution of the missionaries to Indian cultural life while others have ascribed the development of modern ideas exclusively to the influence of western

⁴¹ Jawaharlal Nehru, Discovery of India, p.291.

education.⁴² The liberal administration of Madhava Rao was fully aware of the sentiments of British government. The right to wear upper cloth was extended to all classes and castes in 1865, Uliyam (forced labour) and abolished in 1865 and in 1870 the right to move freely on public roads was granted to all castes.

The missionaries made the first attempt to educate the people. They worked for the emancipation of low caste people. The great improvement that was brought to the low caste women the right to cover their bosoms in an example of the fervour for missionaries. The activities of the missionaries formed the nucleus from which radiated many a political and social reform slowly but steadily. This was intermixed with indigenous efforts made by the enlightened ones.⁴³

The missionaries were the outside forces that roused the Travancore society from the traditional lethargy. They succeeded to a great extent in accelerating the movement for

⁴² Bhattacharya, B.C., 'Development of Social and Political ideas in Bengal, 1858-1885', unpublihsed Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1934, p.13, quoted by K.N. Panikkar in his presidential address of Indian History Congress.

⁴³ Nagam Aiya. V, Report on the Census of Travancore, Vol. I, p.472.

social reform. The impact made by the missionaries on the society of Travancore at a time when nationalism was unborn, far outweighed the number of followers they managed to attract into their fold.⁴⁴ The missionaries taught the people that their problems could be remedied by social action. It gave Christianity a means to convert people and the missionaries made use of their supporters to oppose the policies which stood in the path of progress. The impact of western culture in Travancore was the birth of a dynamic society with a modern consciousness. The activities of the Christian missionaries and the introduction of western education aroused the depressed classes. They became intensely aware and zealous of the need for securing social liberties like social equality, equal rights, etc. They had improved their condition socially and economically by proper education and reforms introduced in society by the missionaries and by their own social reformers. Education and Christianity had given the Nadars hope for an escape from their sufferings under the domination of the Nayar

⁴⁴ Paulose, E.M., The Protestant Missionaries and Social Reform in Travancore, 1806-1865, p.80.

landlords.⁴⁵ With their English education, the converted Christians began to oppose the injustice and oppression which they had been experiencing from the privileged classes.⁴⁶

The privileged upper classes wished to maintain their superior positions in the Government and society. The rulers of Travancore, however, were in favour of reforms and for ameliorating the sufferings of the lower castes. But the privileged classes succeeded in preventing the missionaries from securing substantial reforms. Thus with the advent of the Christian missionaries a new chapter was opened in the history of South Travancore.⁴⁷ The English were very particular to see that the new proclamation (1812) was made known to the public at large. So, three months before the issue of the proclamation of 1812, the Resident, after preparing the draft had instructed the Dewan to give wide publicity to it.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Robert L. Hardgrave, 'The Breast Cloth Controversy: Caste Consciousness and Social Change in Southern Travancore', Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol. V, June 1968, No.2.

⁴⁶ Shungoony Menon. P, History of Travancore, p.505.

⁴⁷ Mahadevan Nadar, 'The Breast Cloth Agitation of South Travancore', unpublished M.Phil dissertation submitted to Calicut University, 1980.

⁴⁸ Kusuman, K.K., op. cit, pp.5-7.

The proclamation of 1812 forbade the purchase and sale of slaves other than those attached to the soil for purposes of cultivation. Those who violated this proclamation were liable to confiscation of their property and even banishment from the country. Though slave trade was prohibited, slavery as an institution continued for a few years more. Christian missionaries entered the field and intensified their agitation for the total abolition of slavery in the state. In 1843, the Government of India passed an Act (Act V of 1843) depriving slavery of its legal status by providing that the civil courts could not take cognizance of claims to slaves preferred whether by Government or by private owners.⁴⁹ Though the act applied only to British India, it gave an impetus to the anti-slavery movement in Travancore spear-headed by the Christian missionaries.

The abolition of slavery in Travancore under British rule was probably the most important economic change, a measure which was undertaken in response to the humanitarian principles which were then current in England. The abolition

⁴⁹ Malley, Modern India and The West, p.74.

of slavery was the first important step towards the establishment of a new social order.⁵⁰

Under pressure from the British Government, the system of service based on payment of wages was introduced. The poll-tax and other vexatious duties levied on the low caste people were also abolished. The Protestant missionaries played a crucial role in the eradication of many of these social evils. Ringeltaube, a German missionary, who laboured in South Travancore during the first quarter of the 19th century, represented the grievances of the Shannar converts to the British Resident. On the 29th June 1814 Ringeltaube received an official communication from Resident Munro that the Shannar converts were exempted from the poll-tax.⁵¹ In course of time, the exemption granted to the Christians were extended to all the members of the Shannar and Ezhava communities irrespective of religious differences.⁵²

The consolidation of British power marked the end of Nayar dominance in Kerala. The Nayars were a martial class

⁵⁰ Edwin, P.G., loc. cit.

⁵¹ Augur, C.M., Church History of Travancore, p.574.

⁵² Edwin. P.G, loc.cit.

of people and before the advent of Europeans they enjoyed vast political and military authority. As a result of the peace and security provided by the establishment of Pax Britannica certain communities which were distinguished for their martial spirit lost their employment. In Kerala this transformation had the most adverse effect on the Nayar community. Most of the Chieftains in Kerala belonged to this highly privileged class and under British rule innumerable rights enjoyed by them were liquidated.⁵³

The missionaries brought certain new concepts and spiritual values also. A notable result of the influence of western thought on Hindu mind was that their inherent vigour and spirit was aroused. It produced a number of reformers, saints and teachers who, remaining within the essential framework of Hindu tradition, became the prime cause for a renaissance and flowering of the abiding values of Indian culture.⁵⁴

The break up of the joint family system through changes in the laws of inheritance was another consequence of British rule. The younger generation under the influence of

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Paulose, op. cit, p.83.

western ideas developed individualistic tendencies and clamoured for their share of the family estate through partition. The resultant subdivision and fragmentation of holdings had its serious repercussions on the socio-economic structure of society. At the same time the abolition of slavery and other social evils and the extension of educational facilities to children in the lower strata of society, narrowed down the gulf between the high and low. Encouraged by the protection given by the British authorities and the Christian missionaries the under-dog began to assert itself and demand equality with the privileged classes.⁵⁵

The colonial authorities were led to put checks on the process of modernization in India when they observed its consequences. Even a limited amount of change, produced social groups which opposed imperialism. The colonial authorities were, therefore, caught on the horns of another dilemma, the very transformation needed to make India a paying colony endangered colonial rule by producing at the

⁵⁵ Edwin, P.G., loc. cit.

same time the social forces of nationalism that led to a struggle against colonialism.⁵⁶

The society of Travancore during the 19th century witnessed the abolition of Janmi system, Devadasi system, Marumakkathayam system, etc. Untouchability also prevailed in the society. All these evil practices were eliminated through the efforts of the British. Before the advent of British rule, women occupied an inferior position in society and were like "dumb-driven cattle".⁵⁷ British officials and Hindu reformers urged some of these modifications for the benefit of women like prohibition of infanticide (1795), abolition of Sati (1829), legalisation of widow remarriage (1856) and Age of Consent Act (1891).⁵⁸

In Travancore caste habits were mixed up with social and pecuniary interests.⁵⁹ The caste system was conceived in terms of traditional agrarian society. Even though it provided order, it was strained by economic changes. The native Shanner Christians migrated to Ceylon. The

⁵⁶ Bipan Chandra, op. cit, p.15.

⁵⁷ Pratima Asthana, Women's Movement in India, p.5.

⁵⁸ Jana Matson Everett, Women and Social Change in India, p.144.

⁵⁹ Minutes of the President, 28 Feb. 1859, Parliamentary Papers, pp.11-12.

missionaries assisted them to cross the straits and their introduction letters to the planters offered them 'high wages' in cash compared to the low wages in kind in their native place. They saved the money as capital, for business and trade. This new economic position changed their standard of living and released them from the economic dependence of the native landed class. Their release from the obligations of servility and their concomitant rise in economic status aroused both antagonism and jealousy among higher castes.⁶⁰

Both the high caste and low caste women were the victims of the customs, practices and laws of a male-dominated society.⁶¹ In high castes, while men were at liberty to have contacts with women of other castes, women were expected to preserve their chastity.⁶² Likewise widow remarriage was not allowed among the high caste people.⁶³

⁶⁰ Robert L. Hardgrave, loc.cit.

⁶¹ Gladstone, 'Nineteenth Century Mass Movement in South Travancore', Indian Church History Review, Vol. X, No.1, 1976, p.61.

⁶² Nambudiripad, E.M.S., Atmakatha, (Mal.), p.228.

⁶³ Premnath, V.M., Keralattile Atimakal, (Mal.), p.97.

No education was given to the women in the early years of the 19th century. While the low caste girls had no access to education, the upper class were not expected to study.⁶⁴ The missionaries were the first to think in terms of imparting education to women and the first girls' school was started by them at Nagercoil, in 1819.⁶⁵ They thought that education is one of the means to raise the status of women in society. After a few years of tireless efforts girls' schools were established at Trivandrum, Quilon, Santhapuram and Neyyoor. The girls were imparted both religious and secular instruction and were given training in some small scale industry like embroidery, lacemaking, knitting, sewing and spinning cotton. They were also taught writing, reading, arithmetic and geography.⁶⁶ The Government of Travancore was averse to come into conflict with the missionaries owing to its regard for the paramount power and hesitated from taking active measures against them.

English education enabled the unprivileged women to realise the need of upper cloth. They decided to fight for

⁶⁴ Narayana Panikkar, History of Travancore, p.287.

⁶⁵ Gladstone, J.W., 'Charitable Society of South Kerala', Women for Women Souvenir, 1977, p.7.

⁶⁶ Yesudas, R.N., The History of L.M.S. in Travancore, p.135.

the elimination of their grievances. The economic change, education and Christianity had given them hope for an escape from their distresses under the dominance of the Nair landlords.⁶⁷ The Government of Madras stood firmly in favour of low caste women. They were of the view that the provisions in the circular order of May 1814 and the proclamation of 1829 were "unsuited to the present age and unworthy of an enlightened prince".⁶⁸ When the new Governor, Sir Charles Trevelyan assumed office in March 1859, he strongly criticised the attitude of the Government of Travancore. He held that "nothing short of entire removal of all restrictions leaving the females to dress as they think fit will satisfy the Government both here and at home."⁶⁹ At last the Government of Travancore yielded to the pressure of the British and agreed to grant perfect liberty to wear upper cloths.

The missionaries stood against child marriage and forced the parents to allow their daughter to remain unmarried till the age of 14.⁷⁰ With the assistance of the

⁶⁷ Hardgrage, loc. cit.

⁶⁸ Pycroft to Resident, 27 Jan, 1859, coverfile No.2115.

⁶⁹ Quoted in Wood's Letter to the Government of Madras, Despatches from England, (Pol.), Vol. 16, 24 July, 1860.

⁷⁰ John abbs, Twenty-two years in Travancore, p.169.

missionaries the supporters formed an organisation for widow remarriage.⁷¹ On getting the report of the missionaries, the Home Department of the Government of India issued a circular asking all local Governments for their opinion on 'infant marriage and enforced widowhood'. This was the first step taken by the Government which led to a legislation. Many of the social evils had been changed just because the Christian missionaries were able to present the matter through the British Residents. This reveals the supremacy of the British in the affairs of the state. Although (with one or two exceptions) missionaries had no official standing under British rule, members of the major Protostant missionary organisations took it upon themselves to document the supposed abuses and corruptions of native heathen society.⁷²

Thus the British played a dominant role in the history of social reform in Travancore. The parties involved in the struggle for developing the socio-economic position of women had their own interests. The missionaries wanted to spread Christianity. So they made use of the opportunity to fulfil

⁷¹ The Indian Evangelical Review, July 1874, Vol. I, No.5, p.380.

⁷² Susan Bayly, Saints, Goddesses and Kings: Muslims and Christians in South Indian Society 1700-1900, p.241.

their aims. The Company in London continuously enquired to the Resident of Travancore about the sale of cloth, if the low caste women also began to wear upper cloth. The British viewed every change in Travancore with a business mind so as to make as much profit as they could. The king of Travancore even though proclaimed orders in favour of low caste people, they were forced to pass regulations because of the influence of British Residents. Western education stimulated the high caste women to come forward out of the four walls of the 'Illam' and many of them actively participated in the struggle for freedom along with men and Christian women.

One of the most important consequences of British rule was the progressive decline and destruction of urban and rural handicraft industries. The ruin of the indigenous industries and the absence of other avenues of employment forced thousands of craftsmen to crowd into agriculture. Thus, the pressure of population on land increased.

But India's traditional handicraft export had come to a virtual stand still owing to the Company's exploitative policies and what was more important was that the British did not allow India to export goods that would compete with Britain's home industries, for e.g. textiles. British rule

and its impact on India created conditions for the rise of a powerful anti-imperialist movement and for unification of the Indian people into a nation.

The educational policy of the British on Travancore was a part of their general educational policy towards India. There was an alarming increase of illiteracy early in the British period. British educational policy in Travancore falls into three different periods. In the first period they tried to promote traditional literature and culture. In the second period importance was given to higher education with English orientation, promotion of western knowledge by means of English knowledge. In the third period study of English and vernaculars of the land was sought to be encouraged. It began with Sir Charles Wood's Education Despatch.

The beginning of educational activities in Travancore culminated in the appointment of a Committee for the establishment of a University in 1917. A hundred years before Government had earmarked an allotment for vernacular schools in the districts. In 1867 a Director of Vernacular Education was appointed. As a result so many vernacular

schools were opened in different parts of the country. By 1883, there were 663 schools with 35,558 pupils in them.⁷³

The need for initiating steps to encourage the education of girls was realised as early as 1863 A.D. Restrictions on the admission of Pulaya boys and girls in Government Schools were removed in 1911-12.

In 1837 there were 15 educated girls among the Nadars of South Travancore. In 1840, in the two mission districts of Nagercoil and Neyyur, out of 7,540 children under education, 998 were girls. A Sircar girls' school was founded in 1864.⁷⁴ The Holy Angel's convent opened a High school for girls at Trivandrum in 1880 and in 1888 the school secured the honour of being the first girls' school in South India, which presented students for the matriculation examination of the Madras University.

In Travancore the first step for the introduction of western education and learning was done by Ringeltaube. He started the first English school in Travancore in 1806. In the course of ten years he established several schools for

⁷³ University of Kerala, Silver Jubilee Volume, (1963, TVM), p.5.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

poor children, Christian as well as non-Christian in which free education was given irrespective of caste and creed.⁷⁵ These educational institutions started by Ringeltaube began to shed light on the life of the people and instructed them of their rights, liberty and equality.

Rev. Charles Mead who followed Ringeltaube also encouraged western learning. This missionary of London Mission Society, founded a Seminary in Nagercoil in October 1819.⁷⁶ Here they taught English, Malayalam, Tamil, Sanskrit and instruction was given in religious and useful knowledge. The efforts of Mrs. Mault to start lace industry became a great help for the poor Christian women. Mr. Mead gave so much importance to the printing press, that he calls it, "a valuable but necessary appendage to a missionary establishment".

An English school named Christian Davil school was started in Trivandrum as early as 1821. Mr. John Roberts who came to teach in this school became the Headmaster of the English seminary at Nagercoil. In 1834, Swathi Thirunal, the Maharaja of Travancore visited the seminary

⁷⁶ ~~Augur.~~ C.M, op.cit, p.721.

and invited him to establish himself in the pay and under the auspices of the Travancore Government at Trivandrum. He was permitted to receive scholars for his own private advantage. Thus, it is evident that the rulers of Travancore who got western knowledge encouraged education.

The year 1835 was an important land mark in the history of the country. In that year the Company's Government decided to introduce English education and western knowledge in the country. It opened the door to the introduction of western literature, science and technology in Travancore. Resolution of 7th March 1835 declared that the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science and that available funds should be henceforth employed in imparting to the native population knowledge of English literature and science through the medium of English language.⁷⁷

From this time the Government began to open schools and colleges for imparting western knowledge in the English language. The impact of western culture in Travancore was, a dynamic society with a modern consciousness. The most

⁷⁷ Mrs. Seema Sinha, 'Turning points in Indian History during the first half of the 19th century', Journal of History and Culture, December 1988, Vol. 2, No.2.

lucid exposition of the liberal ideas which lay at the root of the demand for English education is to be found in a letter which Raja Ram Mohan Roy wrote in December, 1823, and forwarded to Lord Amherst, the Governor General, through R. Herber, Bishop of Calcutta. It contains a strong protest against the Government proposal to establish a Sanskrit school under Hindu Pandits. Ram Mohan expressed the uselessness of such an institution in the following words:

"This seminary can only be expected to lead the minds of the youth with grammatical niceties and metaphysical distinctions of little or no practical use to the possessors or to society."⁷⁸ He pointed out at length how the young students of this seminary would merely waste a dozen years of the most valuable period of their lives by acquiring the niceties of Sanskrit grammar, speculative philosophy of Vedanta, absolute interpretations of vedic passages in Mimamsa, and subtleties of the Nyaya sastra. He then continued ". . . the Sanskrit system of education would be the best calculated to keep this country in darkness . . ." ⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 'History and Culture of the Indian People, Vol. IX, British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance, Part II, p34.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

Therefore the Government should sow the seeds all over the country, of that type of learning which can remove the darkness of ignorance and makes a man fit for administration and other public activities. It is necessary to establish an English school for this purpose in every village.⁸⁰

The Christian missionaries regarded the liberal education imparted through English schools as the most fruitful means for the conversion of Hindus to Christianity by making them conscious of their superstitions. Macaulay himself wrote to his father "It is my firm belief that if our plans of education are followed up, there will not be a single idolater among the respectable classes, thirty years hence."⁸¹ Macaulay's famous speech on this subject "having become instructed in European language, Indians may, in some future age, demand European institutions", and concluded by saying that "whenever it comes, it will be the proudest day in English History".⁸² Major General Lionel Smith was of opinion that western education would make them "feel the value of governing themselves", and therefore "the effect of imparting education will be to turn us out of the country".

⁸⁰ Ibid., p.36.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid., p.37.

Opposite views were entertained by others that English education was the only means of reconciling the Indians to British rule.

The general policy of the East India Company was to encourage traditional learning in India by giving pecuniary aid, and not to interfere with education or to suggest alternative methods, for fear that this might contravene the policy of religious neutrality".

Madhava Rao established a successful system of fee paying government English and vernacular schools. He won a good name with British government for himself and the Travancore sirkar.⁸³ The activities of the missionaries in the 1850s offered new resources to low castes. It was because of the education received the princes Ayilyam Tirunal and Visakham Tirunal acquired a keen insight into the kind of administration which would win the approval and applause of British Government.⁸⁴ A family anecdote recounts that in 1860 Ayilyam Tirunal having laid the foundation stone for the Maharaja's college, returned to the palace and

⁸³ Robbin Jeffery, op.cit, p.70.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p.72.

addressed his brother-in-law, "well, Tampi, I have just laid the foundation stone for anarchy".

Madhava Rao brought western education to high castes while the missionaries gave it to Syrians and the low castes. Schools opened for low caste people by missionaries were fully under their control. Through this they could influence the low caste people easily. In the year 1865 far reaching changes were introduced in the field of education in Travancore. The Maharaja's College started functioning in 1873.

At the close of the 19th century western education and ideas were spreading throughout Travancore. The Nayers who took to western education studied English literature and political thought with emphasis on individual liberty and freedom. Such studies helped to propagate an 'individualism' incompatible with the 'communality' of the old Tarawad.⁸⁵ College educated Nayers stood for reform in the existing practices.

The East India Company originally did not have any educational policy or programme of its own. The policy of

⁸⁵ Ibid., p.81.

mother country might have influenced the East India Company in shaping their attitude towards education of Indians. Even in England the first Government grants for education were given only in 1833. According to the Report of the Education Commission in 1882, the attitude of the Company to the indigenous schools was one of indifference, dictated by the policy of religious neutrality and exigencies of finance.⁸⁶

Gradually the idea began to develop that the responsibility of imparting education to the natives of India lay upon East India Company. It is said that it became patent to some thoughtful men that their domination in the country could not last long unless education was diffused among natives.⁸⁷ Charles Grant and Wilber force were two important figures who argued for the cause of imparting education in India by the British Government.⁸⁸ Wilber Force argued that the natives could be freed from errors and superstition and could be prepared for Christian knowledge by education. Grant declared strongly in favour of English

⁸⁶ Report of the Indian Education Commission 1882, p.62.

⁸⁷ Major Basu, B.D., History of Education in India under the Rule of the East India Company, p.5.

⁸⁸ Sharp. A, Selections from Educational Archives of India Records, Part I, Delhi, 1965.

languages as the vehicle for imparting western ideas or as he called them "our superior lights".⁸⁹

The advantages of English education in Travancore were immeasurable. It laid the foundation of many progressive ideas such as sovereignty, democratic state, scientific and rationalist culture in the country. It gave access to modern English literature and forged the weapon of modern rationalism. In its struggle against serfdom and hierarchic medieval social structure based on the principle of heredity, it proclaimed the doctrine of individual liberty.⁹⁰ It also helped to create a rich scientific and technological culture. The emergence of modern natural science and engineering also helped the country to become a model state.

The English educated people who studied English democratic literature and principles came forward to rebel against social evils such as caste untouchability, slavery etc. They also fought against authoritarian social philosophies which sought to enslave the individual and suppress his free initiative. These educated men thought in terms of freedom and free existence. This gave the Indian

⁸⁹ Ibid., part I, p.17.

⁹⁰ Desai, A.R, Social background of Indian Nationalism, p.160.

nationalist movement, the off-spring of the colonial status of India under the British rule, a democratic objective.⁹¹

In short the progressive role of modern education can be proved by the fact that almost all leaders of economic, political, social, religious or cultural belonged the English-educated intelligentsia. A well organised system of education forms the basis for radical changes in future.⁹² This is especially true for a society like the one which prevailed in the 19th century Travancore. It is in this context that the beginnings in the field of education made by the missionaries became valuable.

Education really changed the structure of society to make it more egalitarian. Knowledge of reading and writing transformed the whole society. The depressed classes became conscious of their miserable condition and the need to improve their lot. Even when the Government hesitated to admit children of the low castes in its schools, it was the missionaries who made the beginning of admitting students into their schools regardless of caste distinctions. This was an eye-opener to the Government and later it was

⁹¹ Ibid., p.161.

⁹² Paulose. E.M, op.cit, p.85.

compelled to open schools for lower castes too. It finally helped for the improvement of the moral and material condition of the low-caste people.

The spread of modern education was very limited. For nearly one hundred years it failed even to compensate for the ruin of the traditional educational system. If the foreign Government neglected primary and school education, it turned hostile to higher education. As many of the educated Indians began to use their recently acquired modern knowledge to analyse and criticise the imperialist and exploitative character of British rule and to organise an anti-imperialist political movement, the British administrators began to press continuously for the curtailment of higher education. The Government, of course failed in its efforts to check the growth of higher education, because once started, popular pressure kept it going even though there was a continuous deterioration in the quality of education.

A few other aspects of education arising out of its colonial character should be noted. One was the complete neglect of modern technical education which was the basic necessity for the rise and development of modern industry.

Another was the emphasis on English as the medium of instruction in place of the regional language. This not only prevented the spread of education among the masses but also created a wide linguistic and cultural gulf between the educated and the masses. Government's refusal to allocate adequate funds for education gradually reduced the educational standards to an extreme low level. The students had to pay fees in schools and colleges. So, education became a virtual monopoly of the middle and upper classes and the city- and town-dwellers.

The emphasis on science and education was the result of a growing realisation that scientific knowledge was crucial to the progress of the country and to the development of modern thought and culture. Working within the constraints of its colonial needs, the British Government was neither interested in imparting scientific knowledge nor in encouraging higher pursuits of scientific studies by natives. The intellectuals were aware of this Governmental indifference and were sharply critical of it.

There were several attempts made by the people to arouse an interest of science, disseminate scientific knowledge and promote scientific studies. As the nature of

socio-economic developments during the 19th century, did not produce the necessary preconditions for science and mass education, these educational ideas had no real social relevance. They, therefore, remained merely as Utopian dreams. Moreover, the dependence of the intellectuals on the colonial states' initiative for the implementation of their programme made this design a self-defeating exercise since it was distinctly different in its assumptions and purposes from the colonial education policy. It was not within the logic of colonialism to promote a scheme of education which would eventually destroy its own foundations. The failure to recognise this reality led many of them to entertain illusions about their ability to influence and change the policy of the Government by their participation.

It is generally argued that whatever the British Government did was intended only to promote their own interests and not the welfare of the people. The expansion of western education, it has been pointed out, was primarily designed to supply men for the lower grades of administration, thus saving money and maintaining the status of the whiteman by reserving only the upper echelons of

power for his exclusive use. For the purpose of trade also it was beneficial to the foreign rulers to educate and civilize the native population. However, the educational policy adopted by the British in Travancore became a great help to the country to reach the first position among the princely states in Kerala.

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