INTRODUCTION

Kerala is the abode of good number of scholars in different branches of ancient learning. Kerala aptly called ‘Gods own Land’ is blessed by the birth of Sri Sankara, the great savant of the Advaita philosophy. Before and after him, Kerala produced many great poets and scholars. Their contribution to science and literature stands first in quantity and quality as compared to the contributions of other states. A number of principalities that extended magnificent patronage to scholars, artists and poets from inside and outside Kerala. They received warm welcome everywhere and kings even vied with one another to patronise them. It is interesting to note that not a single scholar had to leave Kerala, in search of patronage.

Of the many kings who patronised the pundits, three were prominent. They were the Sāmūtāris of Koḻikott of the north, the kings of Mahodaypura who shifted their capital to Cochin at the centre, and the Travancore kings in the south. Most of the rulers of these kingdoms were great scholars, artists and composers. The kingdom Koḻikott, ruled by the Sāmūtiris, was an important centre of Sanskrit learning. Mānavikrama
Śaktan Tampurān is remembered as the greatest patron of literature, that kerala has ever produced.

The Travencore Royal family in southern Kerala was another centre of fervent literary activity. In the lineage of Travencore kings, the names of Martāṇḍavarma, the father of modern Travancore and a generous patron of literature, and Svātī Tirunāl, the monarch musician stand in the forefront.

The Kulaśekharas of Mahodayapuram (modern Kotuṇṭallūr) and their descendants who shifted their capital to Cochin represent a very important tradition of learning in Central Kerala. The kings them-selves were composers and generous patrons of arts and literature. Kulaśekhara Alvār, a mystic poet and Vaiṣṇava Saint, and KulaśekharaVarma, the royal dramatist, stand in foremost among the Mahodayapuram – Kings.

The capital of the Alvars was shifted from Mahodayapuram to Cochin in the 14th century A.D. several poets and scholars adorned the royal court of Cochin. Viṭanidra, an anonymous Bhāna, is the earliest available work from the centre of Cochin. Balakavi, a dramatist, and vedāntācārya, a scholar came to Cochin in search of Patronage. Rāmavarmanvilāsa and Ratnaketūdaya are two famous dramas of Balakavi. Kāvyapakāsottejini, a commentary on Kāvyaprakāśa, is a scholarly work
of Vedāntacārya. The Namputiris of Mahishamaṅgalam family and Bhāskaran Namputiri of Mutukkurissi, are the poets who adorned the court of Cochin.

Narayana Bhatta of Melputtūr, the great Grammarian and poet, was honoured, both by the Sāmutiris of Koḷikkot and by the kings of Cochin. He has written several works on different subjects. His Prakriyāsarvasva is a recast of the pāṇinian sūtras with a lucid commentary. The Māna portion of Mānmaṇḍodaya, a work on Puṇāmināmsa, and Dhātukāvyya are his contributions to scientific literature. Nārāyaṇīya, Summerising the story of Bhāgavatapurāṇa in one hundred Daśakas, is a devotional lyric. This is considered as his masterpiece. He is the only author in Sanskrit who has composed twenty-three Prabandhās (short campūs) and they were meant to be performed on the stage by Ravinartaka a Cakyar.

The contribution of Kerala to Sanskrit literature includes Mahākāvyas, Yamaka Kāvyas, devotional poems, Māhātmyas, message poems, historical poems, etc. Rāmavarma Parīṣit Tamurān was a versatile scholar and he wrote different types of Sanskrit works. He was one of the princes of the Cochin Royal family and the last ruler of
erstwhile Cochin State. His works include Stotras, Prabandhas and Commentaries.

The thesis has two parts. The first part consists of the history of Cochin Royal family, his life and the details of the contemporary scholars. Second part is a detailed study of his works.
Part I