CHAPTER II

AUTHOR AND HIS LIFE

Rāmavarman Kuñjuṇṇi Tampurān popularly known as Parīkṣit Tampurān ¹ is the last king of Cochin. He was born on 15th August 1876 (1st Chingamj 1052, Star Makayiram in ME) as the son of Manku Tampurātti and Raman Nambutiri of Ottur house. He had three brothers and five sisters.

He got the appellation Parīkṣit in his name due to a strange coincidence with his namesake in Mba, at the time of his birth. The birth of the child was proceeded by great anxiety since the delivery did not take place even after the prolonged period of pain to the mother. Everyone in the palace despaired for the lives of the child and the mother. Then a famous physician visited the palace. By the mere exhibition of herbal paste in front of uterine mouth, the mother gave birth to the child. The then Mahārāja Rāmavarma named the baby Parīkṣit, since he had given to his mother much pain as the Parīkṣit in Mba to his mother Uttara ². The baby thus came to be known as ‘Parīkṣit’. Being the first born male, he is officially designated Rāmavarma and people called him by the pet name
Thus His Highness was known as Rāmavarma Kuñjunḍi Parikṣit Tampurāṇ.

EDUCATION

He started his education in his fourth year under his mother. Later he was tutored by Ilkapīṭ laughter Kuñṇan Warrier and Muringottu Kochu Kuñṇan Nambiar. Both of them were teachers in Sanskrit Pāṭhasāla, specially run for the benefit of the members of Cochin Royal Family. In this Pāṭhasāla the young prince studied Kāvyas and Nālakas and Preliminaries of Nyāyaśāstra. His uncle the learned Rājarṣi was his teacher for higher studies in Nyāya. Satṭākopacārya one of the greatest scholars of Nyāya at that time instructed him further in Nyāyaśāstra.

One day, the prince went with his father, to the palace of his grand uncle, then Mahārāja, who casually asked him whether he wanted to study English or Sanskrit. The boy without hesitation answered that he wanted to study Sanskrit. The Mahārāja was pleased and said that he would ask his cousin, the Elaya Rāja to teach him. Then he continued his studies under Śri Satṭākopachārya, the court pandit and one of the greatest scholars at that time. In 1893 H.H. made the prince commence the study of English. Within five years he passed his matriculation Examination and
three years hence the F.A. Examination from the Maharaja’s college, Ernakulam, topping the list of successful candidates and receiving the ‘Sealy Memorial’ medal. He joined the Presidency college, Madras for his graduate course and in 1905 took his B.A. degree from Madras University. For two years during his college course he had to discontinue his studies, one year due to illness and the other year when he accompanied the Maharaja on North Indian tour. Thus within a period of nine years of actual study Tampuran took his degree.

After his studies in Madras, the prince settled down at Tripunithura and turned his attention to the study of Vedānta and Mīmāṃsā, especially the former, although Nyāya continued to be his first love. Pānditarājan Achyuta Poduval gives a detailed description of his student days in Parīkṣit Caritam.

R.V.P’s knowledge was not confined to literature. He was an authority on all fields of knowledge. He spent the major part of his life at Trissur with his uncle Rajarsi who was residing at Kānāttukara after abdicating the throne. This close association with Rājarṣi who was called modern Janaka by no less a person than Macdonell, gave him ample opportunities to pursue his scholastic studies as also to come in contact with several renowned scholars at that time. He took a journey to Kāśi
along with his uncle. He attended the Ayurveda conference at Poona and Thiruvananthapuram along with Rājarṣi.

He was the patron of classical arts Kūtiyattam, Kūttu and Kathakali. The great Māṇimādhava Cākyar was his disciple. He was the president of Ernakulam Kathakali Club. He had participated in all the activities related to language art and literature.

In 1907, at the age of 31, he married Madhavikutty affectionately called Ammukutty who was brought up under the guidance of his uncle Rājarshi. She was also well versed in all art forms. They had a happy married life. The only cause for concern was that they did not have children.

R.V.P. led a scholastic life, always surrounded by books and scholars, discussing the intricacies of sastraic principles and finding inroads to the imagination of Poets like Kalidasa.

He died on 12.11.64 at the age of 88. His last moments were calm and quite.

On the early hour one day the Mahāraja had breathing difficulty. The members of the Royal family assembled. Mahāraja gave his golden ring as a dedicate to a Brahmin there. Kirangattu Narayanan Nambutirippad, a student of Mahāraja requested him to stretch out his palm, which he did. He poured the Gangātirtha. His highness asked what
it is. He told him Sri gangātīrtha he took it and passed away. Namboodiripad concluded by reciting sloka.

HONOURS CONFERRED.

Darśanakalānīdhi is the title bestowed upon him by the Sankaracarya of Kaṇci Kamakoti. Sānkhya, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Pūrvamīmāmsa, Uttaramīmāmsa and yoga are together known as Darśana. R.V.P. has been acclaimed as an authority on all these six sastras by this title.

Abhinava Tarkavāgīṣa is yet another much coveted honour conferred on him by the Ācāryas of Kaṇci Kāmakoti.

The Banaras Hindu University proposed to confer the title of Vidyā Vācaspatti, but he declined owing to his poor health.

PATRON OF THE SANSKRIT COLLEGE

The Sanskrit College was established on January 14th 1914. Pariksit took charge of running the institution with his characteristic zeal. The college grew and flourished under him.

To begin with, Vyākarna, Tarka, Veda, Ayurveda and Jyotiṣa were introduced in the Paṭhasāla. Pandita Rāja Sankara Narayana Sastri was
appointed to teach Vyākaraṇa, Tarka Śāstra was handled by Pandita Raja
Mānhitta Kuṇju Nampūtiri Vedānta was Sri. Pañcapa Śeṣācarya, Sri
Ṭrīkkovil Uzhutra Warrier was in charge of Ayurveda Section and Śrīman
Piccu Aiyar started teaching Jyotiṣa.

The college emerged as a full-fledged institution in 1924 by the
appointment Prof. Rama Pisaroti as Principal. He retired in 1931. The
principals to follow continued the work in right earnest and for a number
of years Śeṣācarya college was the only one of its kind in South India.
More than 300 pupils attended at a time the College with Sanskrit upper-
most in their minds. The alumni of this college who had taken the highest
degree Sastra Bhusanas (a four year course) were great scholars of repute.
And there lies the success of Parīkṣit Tampurān.

The college was upgraded to Degree College in 1962. Degree,
Post-Graduate research courses were introduced later. Parīkṣit Tampurān
tried hard to get his college upgraded.¹⁰

Tampurān had so much care and concern for this institution that as
soon as he became the ruling prince he donated a sum of Rs. One Lakh to
the college.
The college is a full-fledged 1st grade institute and centre of research and higher studies in Sanskrit affiliated to the Mahatma Gandhi University.

SĀSTRA SADAS

Among R.V.P.'s everlasting contributions Sāstrasadas is the best example. The Sāstrasadas, which was conducted in the place under the auspicious of the founder during his birthday celebrations in Dhanu, was conducted for the first time in the college in Dec. 26 1926. This became a unique annual feature of the college. Scholars from all parts of India used to attend the week long Vākyārtha Vīcāra. Parīkṣit Tampurān presided over the Sadas and scholars were treated as his guests. In recognition of the outstanding scholarship in Sāstras and Literature as an inducement to preserve the same.

Pandita Rāja Gold Medal and Sāhitya Nipuṇa Gold Medal were being awarded every year to deserving scholars on the concluding day of the sadas. The successive Mahāraja of the Cochin is donating the medals. A medal for the scholarship in Vedānta was also awarded annually. Gold medal for the best Nyāya student was formerly awarded by Sri. Elamana Krishna Menon. This Sadas is being held very actively now also. Eminent
scholars from various parts of the country are participated in this occasion. H.H. Parīkṣit who was the chief judge of the first Sadas in 1926 continued to add on the seat till his demise in 1964.

R.V.P. AS A RULER

In 1905 the prince accompanied the abdicated Mahārāja to Trichur and after his demise in 1928 shifted his headquarters to Tripunithura again.

He became the Mahārāja in 1948. After few months he stepped down consequent on the unification of Travancore and Cochin state.

At the time of integration of states V.P. Menon had an audience with the Mahārāja and submitted to him to outline the special privileges the Mahatma would like to have. Mahārāja said Menon that he wants none. When V.P. Menon insisted the Mahārāja said – on the New Year day government press will give two copies of the almanac to the palace free of cost. It is the tradition here. After the integration of states the press may give but it is under no obligation to give. If you are keen on extending special privileges to me then you may account that two copies of almanac must be given on New Year day free of cost. And an almanac costs two anas\(^{11}\).
It was also reported that Sardar Patel requested Mahārāja to be the governor of U.P. Mahārāja said on account of my religious predicaments I cannot be away from Ernakulam.

As a ruler he had a short term in office. The native states were preparing to join the Indian union. Popular ministries were installed. In these circumstances there is no wonder that he could not do much as an administrator.

PARĪKṢIT MEMORIAL LECTURE

In every field of literature; drama, poetry and Sastra, R.V.P. has shown keen interest and to whatever he has touched, he has been able to throw added lusture.

He left after leading a fruitful life mainly for the revival and population of Sanskrit language and various art forms. His literacy contributions have immortalized him. To perpetuate his memory the Government Sanskrit College Committee very aptly decided to hold 'Parīkṣit Memorial Lectures every year. The lectures are being conducted from 1988. The texts of the lectures are published.
Reference:

1. परीक्षितोऽं जटराण्वजन्व्रव्रवस्यप्रापते।
स्वरिणमे मण्डरां प्रमादे।
भिषंद्वतरायुं च पालितप्रयम्।
परीक्षिसदरवयां नृवर: प्रपेदे।।
Mālā, Krishna Varia. A.V.

2. Introduction of Daśaṅgal by Rāma Varma Parikṣit Tampurān.


4. कृष्णभूत पियविधायत्वहेतुविद्याशिवायादििं।
कृष्णभूतेऽविद्यगत्वतरावस्य काण्यादिकि वत्सलो।।
प्रादात्नें जनमन्जरधेऽविद्यायणे मातेंवरा मातुलो।
तस्मी दक्ष्यमराग्रहीसस ‘अठकुपाचार्य कर्योपिषि।।
K.S.S.C., Vol VI, P. 428

5. कालाखुसारियवहवहहेतो।
स्स पाठ्यालाभिरणाकुलस्थाम।।
आसादय विधािर्षिपदं गृहीतवा।
6. तपं तपं पुनरणि पुनउचारुण्य सुवर्णः

पिष्टं पिष्टं पुनरणि पुनउचारुण्य सुवर्णः ।

स्वर्णः स्वर्णः पुनरणि पुनः स्वादुरेवेश्च स्वर्णः ।

प्राणान्वेषे प्रकृतितिविहितजायते नोत्तमानान् ।

7. The high degree of culture that Kerala enjoys is due to the Samskṛta education, which has always been open to all at levels. One of the pioneers in repopularising this linguistic legacy was the ruler of Cochin H.H. Rama Varma Parīṣit Mahārāja. Appreciating his service to education and culture, the sage of this century Pūjyaśri Chandrasekharendra Sarasvati Swamigal the 68th Sankaracharya of the
illustrious Kāñchi Kāmakoti Pīṭha conferred on him the coveted title 'Darśana Kalānidhi on 4th December 1948. It is not out of place to recaptitulate that event summarising what is described in the detailed biography of his Holiness written by Sambamurthy Sastrigal (In Tamil).

As early as 1928, when his holiness toured Kerala, he marked the young prince as genius. In 1948, soon after he ascended the throne, Pujyaśri Paramāchārya sent his representatives with the citation and other relevant insignia of the award to be presented in a colourful ceremony. Both the citation and the Maharaja'Sanskrit reply were in Samskrta. The citation included the following.

After you having mastered Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika and other Darśanas, your efforts to faster such education by way of setting up colleges, conducting seminars and patronising pandits to protect sastras, classified by Rishis is commendable. Your interpretations are appreciated even by the learned. We pray to Sri Chandramauliswara for your welfare and bless you with the title Darśanakalānidhi.

Maharaja's graceful reply was full of humility characteristic of true merit. The gist of it was as follows:-
I bow to the feet of holiness, which is the very ocean of compassion. Just like Adi Sankara our Jagadguru has taken upon himself all the austerities for the sake of the people. In ancient history it is usual to come across Kings who surrendered at the feet of saints whose wealth was prayer, so as to remove sorrow from the world. In our times, despite scientific and economic progress, people continue to suffer greater tragedy. I hope that the people of my Samathan who are guided by wise ministers, will be blessed by PuJayasri Acharya for their welfare. I am at a loss to find suitable vocabulary to convey my profound gratitude for this honor bestowed to me.

Nātyaśāstra and National Unity,

Dr. (Miss) Padma Subramanyam


Sanskrit College, Tripunithura – Kerala

8. Reply sent by Maharaja acknowledging the letter to confer the 'Vācaspāthi' title is given below. This letter from the personal file was made available to me by Sri. Elamana Hari, private secretary to H.H. for a long time.
Dear Sir, Vice Chancellor,

I was most agreeably surprised to receive your kind invitation to me to be a present at the holy city of Varanasi for the convocation and receive the (distinguished title of) the Honour degree of ‘Vācaspati’. I feel heartily grateful to the authorities of the Sanskrit University and particularly to yourself, the Chancellor my old friend Sir. B. Ramakrishna and the Pre-chancellor the Mahārāja of Banaras, for your kind proposal to confer upon me this much valued title.

I thank you, also for the kind words you have expressed about me in your letter.

Nothing would have given me greater pleasure and happiness than to visit the holy city Varanasi and get into contact with the erudite pandits there. But I very much regret to say that my health at present or in the near future will not permit to undergo the troubles of the long journey. Under these circumstances I pray you to excuse my absence at the convocation there.

I do very well remember your calling on me more than thirty years ago in the company of my dear friend Paṇḍitarāja the late lamented Sri. K. Rama Pisharoti. I am very glad to know that you are now adorning the
distinguished post of the Vice-Chancellor of the Sanskrit University of Varanasi. Please accept my hearty congratulations, thou I am rather late.

Thanking you again and with kind regards.

14.11.60 Yours sincerely,

9. (i) The origin of the Sanskrit college, Tpra is to be traced to the Śāstra classes conducted by the Āsthāna pandits of Cochin palace who were specially invited the Mahārājās and appointed for imparting instruction in the Higher Branches of Sanskrit learning in the traditional way.

Rājarṣi Rāma Varma, Maharaja of Cochin from Sept. 1895 to Dec. 1914 was a profound scholar in Śāstras particularly in Nyāya and Vyākarna. He has a strong desire for the preservation and advancement of the indigenous system of Sanskrit study in its higher branches. So that the old type of pandits with their profound knowledge of the Śāstras may not altogether die out. On his 61st birthday which came off on the Twenty Fifth of December 1912, H.H. announced his long cherished idea of establishing a separate institution for the fulfillment of his wish, and constituted a Sanskrit encouragement committee consisting of three members – H.H. Śri. Rāma Varma (President Maharaja), Sri. Goda Varma Tampurān of
Cranganore and Sri. C.P. Achyuta Menon, Dewan’ Sanskrit Secretary – to put forward detailed proposals for the starting of the college with a view to imparting instruction in the higher branches of sanskrit learning.

A Preparatory Classes, Additional staff and award of Bhooshana title:

A preparatory class intended to be healthy feeder to the śāstra course in June 1924 which by 1930 developed into a full course of 6 years of Sanskrit study known as the Kāvyā course. The post of the Asst. lecturer was abolished and instead two posts of tutors – one in Nyāya and the other in Vyākaraṇa – were sanctioned in 10.10.1924. H.H. Rama Varma, M.A. (Hons.) 28th prince of Cochin, who was the member of the college committee, was appointed as honorary professor of Comparative Philosophy in 1925. Sanction was also obtained for the award of Bhoosshan Title and proficiency certificate to those who came out successful in the examination conducted by the committee at the end of the śāstra course.

ii. The Sanskrit education committee, the Kerala University and the State Govt. are to be congratulated for evolving a scheme by which the college will be imparting higher education in Sastras in the traditional
way and at the same time which will open the gates of deant employment.

The Govt. have also passed orders sanctioning the sale of books printed and published under Ravi Varma Samākṛta Granthāvali through well – established Skt. Book sellers by allowing a trade discount. This arrangement will certainly help in the disposal of the valuable books now lying in stock for want of publicity and trade facilities.

The college completes fifty years of its existence in the month of Jan. 1964. By that time, the first year, B.A. Degree class would have been started functioning. The buildings too would have assumed better shapes. It is the desire of the Skt. Committee and the past of present students of the college to celebrate the golden jubilee in a fitting manner.

The year 1962 has opened a new chapter in the history of the college and it is hoped that with the grace of God and thee blessing of H.H. Parīkṣit and the sympathetic attitude of the Govt.and the people of the Kerala, this institution will, long develop into a great Center of Sanskrit learning in Kerala and thus fulfil the ambition of its distinguished founder.

Tripunithura, 20.6.62.

T.K. Ramachandra Iyer.
Principal of Ex-official Secretary
Skt. College Committee
A situation arose at the end of the fifties when the college was threatened to closure for want of students to study title courses. Sri. Pattom A. Thanu Pillai was the Chief Minister of the state at that time. The C.M. visited the Mahārāja in his resident at Hill Palace. The college upgraded in 1962. RVP wrote a letter in a highly emotional spirit to save the institution from ruins. The letter is reproduced here.

My Dear C.M.

The president of the Tripunithura Sanskrit college committee has kindly sent me a copy of his letter addressed to you regarding this serious situation in the working of this Sanskrit College created by the recent order of the Kerala Government. This letter makes it very plain that unless the old proposal to introduce degree in Sanskrit in the college is given effect to, the consequences are too dreary to contemplate. From the date of its inauguration this college, which was then known by the namee of Sri. Rāma Varma Sanskrit Pāṭhśāla was intended to teach Śāstras such as Nyāya, Vyākaraṇa etc. very soon the institution grew in popularity and ocassion arose for bifurcating it into two sections known as Sanskrit high school and the college. During the pretty long period of its existence it has send, and is sending, out portals many distinguished scholars who served the state as good Sanskrit teacher in the High – Schools. A few served in
this college itself as professor and lecturer. Even the present incumbants are the products of this college.

I may be permitted to note that many Mahārājas of Cochin of pre-integration days took pride in this institution and readily release help that was called for. You are probably aware that myself takes a deep intense on its welfare and progress. It will greatly pain me and many other if the college is to wind-up its affair and cease to exist. I cannot believe that you will have a part to bring out such a -- may I call it -- Calamity. If you have in the near future occasion to come to Ernakulam. I request you will be good enough to meet me and talk in this matter personally. If you are agreeable to this proposal. Kindly let me know the date and the hour, which will be the most convenient to you.

Hoping there is no improperly in the procedure. I am sending a copy of this letter to Ho. Minister of education.

With Kind Regards

12/04/60.

I am indebted to Dr. K.G. Paulose giving me this letter from his personal file.

11. (ii) The Integration of Indian States, V.P. Menon.


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