CHAPTER II

RAVIVARMAN TAMPI AND HIS LIFE

Ravivarman Tampi, popularly known as Irayamman Tampi was born in 1782, under the star Pururuttathi. (M.E. 958 Thulam) as the son of Parvathi Pillai Tankachy, (daughter of Lekshmi Parvathi and Ravivarman Ilaya Tampuran) and Kerala Varma Tampan. Kerala Varma Tampan hailed from the Naduvilkovilakom at Cherthala, which was famous for many illustrious artists and patrons. Kerala Varma Thampan was more known as Kelaru Tampan. Tampan was a reputed scientist and a scholar with extraordinary genius which got him the title ‘Sastri’. The patronage of the Travancore Royal family specially that of Dharmaraja, helped the Kovilakom and its members, to attain top culture and learning. In this connection the following verse is relevant.

കേരളത്തിൽ ചെലവ ചെയ്യുന്ന കാലാഗ്നി
കടൽ സൂര്യന്റെ വീണകാല;
കടൽ പെടുന്ന് സാമീവു അണുന്നു
കടൽ ബിരിൽ താമസം ബിരിൽഭയം
മാപ്പാളൂടെ
വനമാസത്തിൽ വനമാസം.

ചെളിയേറിയതാഴ്ച് രക്ഷിക്കുന്നു.
കേടെത്തി അയോധ്യ ഇരാ.

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Tampi was related to the Royal family. Ravivarman Ilaya Thampuran, the eldest brother of Dharmaraja married two sisters named Lekshmi Parvathi alias Thankakudom and Kalipillai Thankachy alias Chellakudom from Puthumana Ammaveedu, at Karamana Andiyirakom. The root of Puthumana Tampies lies in Idakkodu, Puliyarathara Veedu at Vilavankodu Thaluk. The elder sister Lekshmi Parvathi had one son and two daughters and one among them was Parvathi Pillai Thankachy, the mother of Irayimman Tampi.

When Tampi was born, his parents were residing in a house named, Kizhakkemadom near Virakupurakottavathil at Kottakkakam. This ancestral house and surroundings were gifted by Dharma Raja to Tampan in admiration of his scholarship. The ancestral house is still existing. Naturally Tampi was brought up in the Royal surroundings. He was connected with the Trvancore Royal family in many ways other than the above said royal connections. Tampi was one of the closest associates of Travancore royal family, sharing all the joys and sorrows of the royalty.

Records State that Parvati pillai Thankachy, the mother of Tampi had a brother named Padmanabhan Tampi and hence Tampi was also called Padmanabhan Irayimman Tampi reminding his matrical linage.

**EDUCATION**

Tampi was a daily visitor to the palace with his father, during his childhood. This helped him in developing his knowledge in various aspects such as Sanskrit, Music etc. Thus he was able to attain proficiency in music and literature before his youth. He was initiated to learning by his father Kelaru Thamban, who was his first
Guru as well. After that he had a sound systematic education and in the traditional way under eminent masters like Mutedatu Sankaran Ilayatu who were distinguished scholars in Sanskrit, Kavya and Sastra and attained remarkable proficiency in them. Karthikatirunal Dharma Raja, one of the foremost scholar, artist and patron of the day took special interest in developing Tampi into a man of histrionics, poetry, criticism, alankara sastra, music, natyam and Kathakali. Tampi faithfully followed the footsteps of his Guru, Karthikathirunal in all the branches of arts. The Attakatha, Kichakavadham and Uttarwayamvaram are the two ever memorable of his contribution to Kathakali. (The other being Dakshayagam). They were composed before the demise of Dharma Raja, and history states that those two were performed before His Highness and, as a token, Dharma Raja donated Valiyakottaram to Tampi. In the following sloka Tampi pays his homage to his Guru and maternal uncle Dharma Raja.

He was patronised by six successive rulers from Kartika Thirunal to Uthram Thirunal (life sketch of these rulers are in the chapter IV). His inborn gift for poetry began to manifest itself when he was barely 14 years of age and struck by the potential talent to him. Karthika Thirunal conferred on him a pension, the amount which
was successively increased by the subsequent rulers of the state. Likewise the timely help offered to him by ‘Kulasekhara nripasadari’ -Princess Rukmini Bai, and also her wide reputation as a kind personality and well-known artist and patron of art are fully brought out through some of his Kritis and Slokas. To cite a few, ‘Kulasekhara nripasodariikkku’ in the raga Sankarabharanam, tala chempata, ‘Paridangalilengum’ in the raga Kamodari, Chempata Tala.

Tampi had become popular as become a great scholar, musician and a composer when Svati Thirunal was born. The birth of the Prince Svati excited him so much that his emotion burst out as lullaby unique specimen which stands as a monument for his poetical genius, musical excellences, and literary knowledge and above all for his dedication towards the royal family. His best time was during the time of Svati Thirunal, who gave his due recognition as a poet and a composer and made him the poet laureate, an unique honour not given to anyone else and encouraged his musical activities. He awarded him the Vira Sringala, a specially ornamented golden chain, the highest honour at that time in Travncore, more than once even after the demise of Svati he continued to enjoy in the patronage of royal family. This generated his literary and musical effusions in abundance and the contact with several celebrities in the court gave him novelty, variety and refinement. This association with the numerous artists in Svati Thirunal’s courts who were representatives of different traditions of musical art, activated his genius to blossom forth into beautiful patterns in all the major forms our music. The intimacy with Vadivelu Nattu Vanar and Palghat Parameswara Bhagavathar must be particularly mentioned in this connection.
The Ganapathy Temple where he used to go and worship daily.

Kizhakke madam House
The Divan used by Thampi

The esthani of Thampi along with Gita Upakhyaana
Markandeya purana (Hagham 51% Sargam) and
Banayuddam (Palm leaves) which he used to read daily
Tampi was right hand of Svati Thirunal, in every aspect. Tampi submitted a Slokam to Svati Thirunal indicating his deteriorating financial position. Imminent action was taken by the Maharaja to runnavate his dilapidated house. The Slokam is as follows:

Even though poem of many composers were published on those days it seems that only Tampi’s name was published with the title ‘Kavi’. This title must be honoured either by Svati or Uthram Thirunal.

There is a government record which states that the royalty bought a plot at Karamana owned by Tampi to construct a Summer Palace. The government order is as follows:

\[\text{Order: 578: 500 1012 \text{ in mo 15}}\]
His Marriage and Family

He married Idakkodu Kalipilla Thankachy, the daughter of his maternal uncle Krishnan Tampi. She was also a scholarly lady. He had a very happy married life and the couples were very much attached to each other. His wife was one of the beautiful ladies as well. She died in the year 1022. They had seven children, three sons and four daughters. The elder daughter had no children and she died very old. Another daughter died pre-maturely. Rukminipillai Tankachy had children. Of them Kuttikunchu Tankachy
become a great composer like her father. Her life and contribution is briefly explained in this chapter.

It is found that towards the end of his life he suffered a lot mentally, physically and financially. The following order ascertains it:

\[\text{1036 171/1036 -1-22}\]

He had severe rheumatic complaints during the last days of his life. His children and children in law gave him a lot of mental tension on those days. Thus he had to pledge his household articles in order to satisfy them. Most of them are pledged to Arumana Ammaveedu which is closely related to his family. There is a record that gives the information that his grandson once went to Arumana Amma veedu in searching of his grandfather’s photo. It is recorded in the diary of M. Rajaraja Varma. The date is given as 24-12-1927.

His relatives are still there at Kizhakkemadam. Sri. Kizakkemadam Govindan Nair and Indira Bai Thankachy are to be mentioned. Their bio-data is as follows:-
Kizhakkemadam Govindan Nair

He is the great grandson of Irayimman Tampi’s daughter, Rukminipillai Thankachy. He is a scholar in the history of Kerala especially the history of the Travancore and Cochin Royal families. Many records about Tampi’s family, royal family and the articles used by Tampi and Thankachy are kept by him with great care. He gives great help to the Research Scholars of Kerala. He is the director of Irayimman Tampi Research Institute

Indira Bai Thankachy

She is the great grand niece of Tampi. She is a very good Vainika and a dancer. The cot and the Veena used by Tampi are kept in her house without any damage.

Thus the great composer who was honoured his various aspects by four Kings and two Queens marked end to his life in the year 1031 at the age of 73.

A few incidents in his life

1. At his fourteenth year he wrote a Sloka and submitted it before Dharma Raja. He liked the Sloka very much but thinking that if he appreciate his talent, it may cause an opposite effect, he reserved his appreciation and commended that he had to improve a lot.

2. Once two scholars from outside submitted two Slokams before the King. Tampi explained the Slokas with their meanings. Then he composed two Slokas and asked them to explain. But they had to accept their incapability in explaining the meaning.
The Maharaja was so pleased that he presented him two chains for both the hands. Uthram Thirunal presented him a palanquin on an another occasion.

3. Once when Svati Thirunal and Tampi were returning from Padmanabha swami Temple, the Maharaja asked Tampi, “Tampi Mama, (He used to addressed him Tampi Mammon) today I felt that the God Padmanabha was thinking deeply about something. Did you feel like that?” Tampi’s reply was the following Sloka

\[
\begin{align*}
& \text{The king was so pleased that he presented him a Vira Sringala.} \\
& \text{The story goes that once fascinated by the beautiful long hair of his wife he equated himself with one of the heroes of Kathakali, who always admires the hair of his beloved, started admiring the beautiful hair and started a verse which begins with the words ‘Kali kali’, which had different meanings. The wife felt proud and she remarked that he should glorify ‘Kali’, the goddess instead of ‘Kali’ the consort. Thus he composed the composition ‘Namrakeli Vidharana kurali’.} \\
& \text{Some records which give the statements regarding Tampi’s family are given here.}
\end{align*}
\]
A brief life sketch and contribution of his daughter Kuttikunchu Thankachy:

She was born in 1820 in the Anizham Nakshathram (Kollavarsham 915--Kumbha masam). Both by way of her father and mother, she was closely related to the royal family of Travancore. Thankachy had her childhood days in Kizhakkemadom inside Trivandrum Fort, along with her parents. In those days she was generally known as Kizhakkemadhathil Kuttikunju Thankachy. Her real name was Lekshmi Pillai, and Kuttikunju being her pet name. But later this name became fixed for her, all people came to know her only by this name.

At the age of seven as traditional demands, she started learning and within two years she was able to read and write Malayalam and Tamil. She had some basic training in Mathematics also. Her handwriting was very good, proof for which one even now kept in Kizhakkemadom. She was taught by the famous Pandit Harippad Kochu Pillai Warrior, who was incidentally the Guru of Swati Thirunal also. But mainly Thankachy had her training from her father only. In some of her Kritis she showed respect to her father pointing out him as her prominent Guru, like in Parvathi Swayamvaram Attakatha.
In this Sloka she uses the other name of Tampi i.e., Ravi Varman Tampi.

Also with this Sloka from the Srimathi Swayamvaram Attakatha, Thankachy pays her respect to her father.

According to the prevailing custom in those days Thankachy had her ‘Talikettu Kalyanam’ in Malayalam year 1004. Only after that the serious studies started for her. She began learning the famous Kavya Natakam and music. She became an expert in Tarka and Vyakarana, and also she mastered music by regular practice.

Before her education reached its ultimate completion, she had some sort of eye trouble and had to stop reading. We can say her period of studies started from the age of seven to the age of thirty-two.

Her first marriage occurred in the year 1009. ME when she was only fourteen years. Her husband was Chertala Varanattu naduvil Kovilakathu Kunjan Thampan, who was a Sevaka of Svati Thirunal. It was in the presence of the king, that she was given ‘Pattum’, ‘Valayum’. This marriage lasted for seventeen years. In 1026 Thampan passed away. Afterwards Kunjunni Thampan married her. He too died 1046. So her married life ended at the age of 51. Afterwards for thirty-three years (she passed away at the ripe age of 84.) she lived as a widow.
Thankachy had eight children. Among this two died very young. Of the remaining children three were boys and three girls. Thankachy’s first daughter ‘Kesava Perumal Thankachy’ had three children and third daughter ‘Karthiani Pillai Thankachy’ had five children. With their children and children’s children that family has become very large at present. Among her three sons Ummini Tampi had some taste in literature and used to write some poetry. Her second son Tanurun Tampi was a clerk in the High Court, and her third son Padmanabhan Tampi was a very good artist and was renowned in his field.

In so many different ways Thankachi was an ideal for everyone. She was humble and was deeply religious, and after having the eye trouble she became more so.

Poetry was inherent in Thankachy. May be because of hereditary. Equally she had the chance to get more and more experience also in this field. In those earlier days Thankachi’s Sanskrit and Manipravala poems were showed to the King by Tampi, the King used to give appropriate gifts, and encouragement. In the Malayalam Era 1030 according to the wish of her father, started writing the Attakatha Srimati Swayamvaram, but stopped writing for some time because of Tampi’s death in 1031. ME After so many others compulsion Thankachy completed this and showed it to Ayilyam Thirunal Maharaja. He gave many gifts out of the happiness and this Katha was played in the palace itself. The Attakatha ‘Parvathi Swayavaram’ which was completed in 1046 M.E. was also praised by the King and it was played for the first time in Srikanteswaram Temple.
Though she had eye trouble till two years before her death she wrote some poems. After that she used to dictate her poems to her daughter. She passed away in the month of Kumbha in ME 1079-1904 in Duadasi day.

Some articles, which were used by Thankachy, are still intact like her mirror, fan etc. They all are kept even now without any damage in Kizhakkemadom in Trivandrum.

It is said that Thankachy was an expert in Mohiniyattom and Thiruvathirakali etc. And she used to conduct the classes in music, Mohiniattam, Thiruvathirakkali etc, at Kizhakkemadom which were attended by a large number of students and unbroken Sishya Parampara is kept alive by Dr. Leela Omcheri.

**Her Contributions**

There are many poetical compositions by Kuttikunju Thankachy. In all she has written three Attakathas, 'Srimathi Swayamvaram', 'Mitrasahamoksham', and 'Parvathi Swayamvaram'. Trivandrum Stalapuranam, Vaikkom Stalapuranam, Swargavatil Eekadasi Mahatmya, three Kilipattus, three Thiruvathira songs, Sivarathri Mahatmya, Seetha Swayamvaram, Narada Mohanam, Ganga Snanam Ottam Thullal, Sethusnampana, two Kurathi songs, Nalacharitam, a drama namely Ajnathavasam, one Unjal song called Snehasudhakaram, then two sangeertanas called Gajendra Moksham, Prahladacharitam and one Manipravala Kriti. There are other songs by Thankachy like Vathilthurapattu, kummi songs, lullaby songs etc. Then there are Kritis on Gods and Goddesses like Thiruvattar Adikesavan, Neyyanttinkara Srikrishnan, Guruvayurappan, Mookambika etc.
At present we have six Kritis by her all these Kritis are in different ragas. Her devotion to God is clearly portrayed in all of them. She has written one Kriti on Palkulangara Devi. This temple is very near to her place. In the last Charana of this Kriti we come across the phrase ‘Ksheeratadaka tadam’. This we can call as stalamudra. It is the Sanskrit word for ‘Palkulangara’. In the first Charana of this Kriti we come across some beautiful anthya prasas like ‘Sasidhara vadane’, ‘Manohara radane’, ‘Supoojitha charane’, and ‘Subhakarane’. Her next Kriti is about the ‘Adikesava Pratishta’ at Thiruvattar, in southern Trivandrum. This kriti ‘Samaja Hara Hare’ in Klayani Raga and adithala can be taken as a major piece in a concert. Thankachy has written two Kirtanans in pure Sanskrit. One is in praise of Devi Mookambika. (Suryakodisamprabhamarute! In Nataraga and Chaputhala), and the other one is about Neyyanttinkara Krishnan (‘Pathimohanakrite’ in Kamas adithala). These two Kritis give us an idea about her knowledge in Sanskrit. We came across the decorative angas like andhya prasam in the first Kriti. She has also written Kritis about Malayankezhe SriKrishnan. (Ananda rupa Hare Pantuvarali chaputala) and Guruvayoorappan (suruti adi). Like her father, she was also a Krishna bhaktha.

There are three Padams by Thankachy which is full of sringara bhava. Like those representing the tradition of those times, Thankachy’s padas are full of vipralambha sringara. The nayaka is the king himself. We can guess that these padas were meant for the palace-dancing girls.

Among the Kuratti Pattu that of Thankachy’s to considered as the best. By introducing Iratti vrittam for the first time in kuratti pattus, she made them more
attractive. The poetical aspects of these songs are also good. She has written some Mukthakas also which are the examples of her Kavitwam.

These are all very good examples of Thankachy’s poetical genius. Among the Kerala Women composers the first and foremost is surely Thankachy’s Sahithya. In every way she is a good example for ‘Sadacharanishta’ also for Kerala women.

Some Government orders regarding Tampi’s family

1. 994 മുൻനൂറിൽ ഒരിന്ദി എന്ന ഭാവത്തിൽ ത്രിമുഖം താളൻ (തുലോ) 1 മുതൽ 100 ബാം ഒരുവളാൽ.

2. 994 ലിസ്റ്റ് മുൻനൂറിൽ ഒരിന്ദി 99 മുതൽ 100 വരെ താഴ്ന്നായ താളൻ 994 - 2-92 ഒരിക്കൽ

3. 1003 പാനോയിലെല്ലാം ത്രിമുഖം താളൻ ഓരോന്ദി മുൻനൂറിൽ ഉള്ളന്റെ അതോപ്പും താഴ്ന്നായ താളൻ 99 മുതൽ 100 വരെ മുതൽ 8 മുതൽ 28 വരെ ഏതാണ്ട് 9 1/2 അമ്മ ബാം 37 1/2.

4. 1003 പാനോയിലേല്ലാം മുൻനൂറിൽ ഒരിന്ദി എന്ന ഭാവത്തിൽ ത്രിമുഖം താളൻ (തുലോ) മുൻനൂറിൽ ഉള്ളന്റെ അതോപ്പും താഴ്ന്നായ താളൻ കുറഞ്ഞത് 6 മുതൽ 100 വരെ മുതൽ 1500 വരെ.

5. 1009 പാനോയിലേല്ലാം ത്രിമുഖം താളൻ ഓരോന്ദി മുൻനൂറിൽ ഉള്ളന്റെ അതോപ്പും താഴ്ന്നായ താളൻ 21-30 വരെ ബാം 100.

6. 1014 പാനോയിലേല്ലാം ത്രിമുഖം താളൻ ഓരോന്ദി മുൻനൂറിൽ ഉള്ളന്റെ അതോപ്പും താഴ്ന്നായ താളൻ 500 വരെ.

7. 1017 പാനോയിലേല്ലാം ഒരിന്ദി എന്ന ഭാവത്തിൽ ത്രിമുഖം താളൻ 500 വരെ മുതൽ 100 വരെ 300 വരെ.
8. 1019 കാൽപ്പുറത്തിന് കാളി അവസീന പ്ലാറിനു കൃപാക്കാരന്റെ നിരവധിക്കും 1500 ഭാരം.

9. 1022 കവി എഴുകാനു കുടി വിപുൽ കാഴ്ച പകുതി 760 ഭാരം.

10. 1031 കുട്ടിക്കുളാവെത്താന് പ്രത്യുത്പദം ചെയ്യുന്നതിനായി കാഴ്ച ക്രമത്തിന് 1000 ഭാരം.

11. 1032 കുട്ടിക്കുളാവെത്താൻ തന്നതിന് കാഴ്ച ക്രമത്തിന് കുറഞ്ഞ യാത്രാ പലന്റെ പ്ലാറിനു കൃപാക്കാരന്റെ നിരവധിക്കും യാത്രക്കാരന്റെ മുൻപിൽ ചെലവഴി കൂട്ടാതെ നൽകാനും 20 ഭാരം നിറഞ്ഞ 60 ഭാരം കൂട്ടാതെ നൽകാനുമെന്നും 20 ഭാരം പലന്റെ അശോറാഴി പരാമർശം 1 യാത്രക്കാരന് അനുസരിച്ച് കുട്ടിക്കുളാവെത്താന് തന്നതിന് കാഴ്ച ക്രമത്തിന് കുഴക്കൂട്ടാന് തന്നതിന് കുഴക്കൂട്ടാന് ( യാത്ര 20 ഭാരം) കുഴക്കൂട്ടാന് 30 ഭാരം കൂട്ടാതെ കുഴക്കൂട്ടാന് 25 ഭാരം കൂട്ടാതെ കുഴക്കൂട്ടാന് 1 യാത്രക്കാരന് കുഴക്കൂട്ടാന്.

12. 1023 കുട്ടിക്കുളാവെത്താൻ കാഴ്ച ക്രമത്തിന് പോക്കുന്നതിനാവശ്യതയില്ലും പലന്റെ അശോരാഴി പരാമർശം യം 27 1/4 ഭാരം പലന്റെ അശോരാഴി പുറത്തു കൂട്ടാന് കുഴക്കൂട്ടാന് തന്നതിന് കാഴ്ച ക്രമത്തിന് കുഴക്കൂട്ടാന് പോക്കുന്നതിനാവശ്യതയില്ലും കുഴക്കൂട്ടാന് യാത്ര 22 ഭാരം പലന്റെ അശോരാഴി പുറത്തു കൂട്ടാതെ തന്നതിന് കാഴ്ച ക്രമത്തിന്

13. 2568/1023-10-30

14. രേഖോത്തേടിത്തിന്റെ സോഡിക്സിയന്റെ തെറിയായി മോട്ടുമുള്ള കുഴക്കൂട്ടാൻ കുഴക്കൂട്ടാന്

അതിന്റെപ്രായെക്കും പോക്കുന്നതിനായ് തന്നതിന് കുഴക്കൂട്ടാന്

മോട്ടുമുള്ള 300 ഭാരം പുറത്തു 3600/- പലന്റെ അശോരാഴി പുറത്തു കൂട്ടാതെ തന്നതിന്

100 ഭാരം അനുസരിച്ചു മുാ് മാനദ്യം കുഴക്കൂട്ടാന് അനുസരിച്ച് മാനദ്യം

അതിന്റെപ്രായം പോക്കുന്നതിനായ് ശേഷം 600 ഭാരം പുറത്തു കുഴക്കൂട്ടാന്

കുഴക്കൂട്ടാൻ മാനദ്യം അനുസരിച്ചു പോക്കുന്നതിനായ്

കുഴക്കൂട്ടാൻ തന്നതിന് കാഴ്ച ക്രമത്തിന്

നിർദ്ദേശം കുഴക്കൂട്ടാൻ പോക്കുന്നതിനായ്

അതിന്റെപ്രായം തന്നതിന് കാഴ്ച ക്രമത്തിന്
Government order after Thampi's demise sanctioning the expense for his funeral ceremonies.

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Thampi as well as his daughter Kanakumari Thampy dedicated their life fully to music.
Family Lineage

Makayiram Tirunal

- Lakshmi Parvaty (Tahankakkudam)
  - Padamanabhan Tampi
  - Daughter
  - Parvathy Pilla Tankachy
  - Kali Pilla Tankachy
    - Irayammin Tampi
      - Kesava Perumal Tankachy
        - No Child
      - Kuttikunju Tankachy
      - Rugmini Pilla Tankachy
      - Parvathy Pilla Thankachy
        - Parvathy Pilla
        - Kesava Perumal
        - Karthyani Pilla
        - Ummini Tampi
        - K.P. Padmanabhan Tampi (Artist)
- Kalipillai (Chellakkudam)
  - Krishnan Tampi
  - Daughter
  - Ummini Tampi