CHAPTER - V

LEGACY OF TRAVANCORE - THIRUNELVELI RELATION

Before Marthanda Varma the South Western extremity of the Indian subcontinent known as Malabar, was segregated into many principalities. The prominent principalities were kuttanadu, Edainadu, Venad and Nanjil nadu. During the middle of the 18th century Marthanda Varma united all these principalities and created a united kingdom known as Travancore.¹

Travancore had an extensive area from Kasarcode up to Kanyakumari, having a length of 275 Kilometers. South Travancore familiarly known as Nanjilnadu has been a fertile region. This South Travancore has been divided in to 4 taluks, Vilavancode, Kalkulam, Thovalai and Agastheeswaram. Of these four taluks Thovalai and Agastheeswaram are having fertile arable lands having paddy cultivation.

Aralvaimozhi was the eastern border of the then Travancore state.² The Western Ghats from Mahendragiri down to Maruthuvalmalai near Kanyakumari fully demarcates the eastern boundary of Travancore. Travancore between the Western Ghats and the Arabian ocean had been highly protected. Next to Aralvaimozhi all the eastern regions up to Tirunelveli were barren lands. So the

¹ Gopala Krishnan., Kanyakumari District gazetteer, Madras, p.84
² Shungunny Menon P., A History of Travancore from the earliest times, Madras, 1878., p.8
Pandyan kings of Madurai had always developed a tendency to take possession of the fertile regions of Thovalai and Agastheeswaram.\(^3\)

South Travancore was thus the bone of contention between Travancore and Pandyan Kingdom. The Pandyan kings erected fortification in Palayamkottai, Thenkasi, Vallioor and Kalakkad. To safeguard the fertile regions of South Travancore the Travancore kings maintained a capital at Padmanabhapuram 14 Kilometers away from South Travancore. An army was stationed at Padmanabhapuram to guard the invaders. In addition to this a garrison was also stationed in the border village, Aralvaimozhi. To have more protection the Travancore kings erected a fort between Kanyakumari and Mahendragiri up to Kadukkarai having a length of 30 Kilometers.\(^4\) The fort at the early stages was built of mud.

During the period of Marthanda Varma technical skill developed. So the mud fort was demolished and a stone wall was built ‘connecting’ the two centres, Kanyakumari and Kadukkarai. It was a double wall each having 25 feet height and 13 feet breadth in between the walls. The two walls were filled with sand, so that no damage could be caused through musket fire. It was partly the work of D’Lannoy, the commander of the Travancore army. In 1741, the Dutch under the command of D’Lannoy come to Colachel harbor and a war was fought between

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Marthanda Varma and the Dutch. The Dutch were defeated and D’Lannoy was arrested. Marthanda Varma highly appreciated the war techniques of D’Lannoy and appointed him as the commander of Travancore army.⁵

The Nair battalion which was consisting of archers were transformed into gun fighters. Excellent training was given to the Nair battalion and the soldiers were trained on par with the western soldiers. Organizing the Nair army on European model came down as the legacy of the period.⁶

Modernisation of Travancore army under Martanda varma (1729 -1758)

The traditional system of warfare underwent tremendous changes throughout the 17th century thanks to the serious internal and external threats faced by the State of Travancore during the period. The internal instability of Travancore kingdom and its consequent military weakness provided opportunities for the rulers of Madurai and other eastern neighbors to send the marauding Marava troops.⁷ During the period European powers like the Dutch and the English also offered threats to the authority of the monarch. Therefore it was necessary to subdue the feudal barons who were the chieftains of the traditional

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⁵ Shungunny menon. P., op.cit., p.148

⁶ Krishnan Nadar, G., Socio economic background of the military history of Travancore, Kerala - India, Trivandrum, 1993, p.47

⁷ Shungunny menon. P., op.cit., p.148
Militia. To safeguard the independence and integrity of the kingdom from external threats also, it was necessary to take urgent measures.

When Martanda Varma came to power in 1729, his ambition was also to recover the territories once controlled by the Venad rulers. There was no well organised standing army, equipped, trained and disciplined. He inherited the command over the feudal army which adopted traditional methods of warfare. Moreover, the King’s authority was very weak and he had neither financial resource nor man power to create a standing army because of the influence of the feudal barons who controlled much of the land. It was under these circumstances that Marthanda Varma decided to “cast aside the traditional rules of warfare” by stages.

The country called Travancore was formed by annexing a number of petty independent principalities whose rulers were in constant warfare not only with each other but also with the Raja of Travancore. The ambition of Martanda Varma led him to a suppression of such aggressions on the part of those States and for this purpose he raised the Militia as emergencies occurred and with their assistance those principalities were attacked, conquered and subdued, and thus the king of Travancore, Martanda Varma “extended the limits of his own province between

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8 Shungunny menon. P., op.cit., p.149

9 Krishnan Nadar, op.cit., p.30
Kuriapally and Cape Comerin”\textsuperscript{10} The army was composed by the subscription of one individual by each householder for the soldiery, whose arms were bows and arrows, shields, swords, axes, spears and a peculiar musket known by the name “Kottapidithoke” Since the soldiers of the new Militia used traditional weapons, it is to be presumed that the Militia was organized in the traditional manner and that the methods of warfare were traditional in character.\textsuperscript{11}

After his accession to the throne, Martanda Varma appointed Kumar Swami Pillai as his commander-in-chief, with Thanu Pillai as his assistant. They formed the army by enrolment of the sons of the soil in large numbers. The soldiers were supplied with better arms and strict discipline was enforced. A better sense of loyalty and obedience was enforced among the rank and file.

This reform had far-reaching consequences.\textsuperscript{12} It enabled the Maharaja to take the fullest advantage of the courage and military skill of his subjects who had not only the physical training in the Kalaris, but also the inspiration of a long tradition of success in the field. “Many of the wars like Colachel and combined attacks of the Dutch and Malabar princes were won before D’Lannoy had entered service in Travancore”.\textsuperscript{13}

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\textsuperscript{10} Krishnan Nadar. op.cit., p.31  \\
\textsuperscript{11} Mily. Cons. Vol. I., pp.156 -162  \\
\textsuperscript{12} Krishnan Nadar., op.cit., p.30  \\
\textsuperscript{13} Mily. Sundries, Vol XL, pp. 82,83
\end{flushright}
“As a measure of prudent statesmanship, Martanda Varma disbanded the contingent of mercenaries which had been entertained in the previous reign. The pay of these hired soldiers was in arrears and the men took the law into their own hands to enforce payment. They seized the Dalawa and placed him in custody at Thirukurunkudi beyond the Aramboly frontier. The Dalawa was so popular with the people that the wealthy merchants came to contribute their share and soon the arrears were paid off. But the mercenary force refused to release the Dalawa till the last cash was paid. The Maharaja thus ordered Kumaraswamy Pillai to proceed towards Thirukurunkudi with a suitable force”. The attitude of the mercenaries was a great lesson to the Maharaja and he resolved to avail himself of the fighting material of his own kingdom. This might have led him to the conclusion that a large standing army was inevitable.\textsuperscript{14}

Thanks to the influence of Westerners like the Portuguese, the Nair soldiers learned also the use of fire-arms to that degree and in the same order as the Europeans did. They had a great store of artillery muskets. Foreign travellers like Visscher writes that their arms were more in esteem than those of the Portuguese. They made very good and strong gun-barrels and gun-powder. “The Nayars in general are very good soldiers. Yet there is a certain kind among them called Amokas who are esteemed above all the rest, being a company of stout, bold and

\textsuperscript{14} Shungunny Menon., op.cit., p.16
desperate bravadoes...they stop neither at fire nor sword to take vengeance of the
death of their masters”.

In the Militia, there were also musketeers who were infantry soldiers. Now it has become an obsolete kind of rifle. The barrels of muskets made by them were very heavy compared with those of the Europeans. With these heavy weapons, they could nearly match with the Europeans in their march. The bullets used by them were not round in shape but “grape-shot of various shapes”.

They took a very sure aim to fire and the first shot generally hit and often inflicted great mischief. “The Travancore infantry was always good. There were draft elephants but not much of cavalry”.

In 1734 Quilon and Kayamkulam were attacked by the Maharaja’s forces under the joint command of Kumaraswamy Pillai, Thanu Pillai and Ramayyan. At this time the Travancore army was strengthened with the addition of cavalry and infantry. Moreover, new fire-arms were obtained from the English merchants trading at Anjengo and Edava. Thus at the time when the Dutch advanced in South Travancore between Colachel and Kottar, the Travancore army consisted of infantry, artillery, musketeers, elephants and cavalry; and the cavalry was commanded by Ramayyan.

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16 Krishnan Nadar., op.cit., p.31
In spite of the fact that there were few fire-arms purchased from the English, the army was not even partly European but mainly native in character.\textsuperscript{17} This native army which was powerful enough to defeat the European army met at Colachel on 10th August 1741. Martanda Varma did not forget to strengthen the infantry stationed in South Travancore by the addition of new Nair soldiers. The timely reorganization brought in the army by Martanda Varma and the martial quality of the Travancoreans helped him to win battle after battle, including the battle of Colachel. The war with the Dutch revealed to him the superiority of the trained infantry over the feudal levies.\textsuperscript{18}

When the country grew in size as a result of conquests, Martanda Varma was wise enough to realise the necessity of keeping men in a permanent military service to ensure safety and peace in the conquered provinces. He also realised that the time was most suitable for the adoption of European warfare, in order to ensure victory. Hyder Ali and the Nizam of Hyderabad had employed European generals. Six thousand men of the Travancore army were defeated at Quilon by the Dutch and were forced to retreat in 1742.\textsuperscript{19}

This incident might have shocked Martanda Varma and he might have been fully convinced of the fact that a standing army, trained and disciplined on the European model with European weapons, was inevitable for the safety of the

\textsuperscript{17} Krishnan Nadar., op.cit., p. 32  
\textsuperscript{18} Ibrahim Kunju, op.cit. p. 34  
\textsuperscript{19} Rajendran P. Dr., Aspects of South India history, Chennai, 1978, p. 94
country. Martanda Varma finally decided to form a standing army under the
guidance and instruction of D’Lannoy, one of the prisoners captured in the battle
of Colachel. Thus for the first time in the history of Travancore a standing army
trained on the European model came into existence.20

Martanda Varma appointed Caption D’Lannoy as Caption of His Highness’
service for modernizing the army. He recruited the sons of the soil including
“Nairs, Nadars, Ezhavas and Christians”. The documents preserved in the
Trivandrum temple show that Martanda Varma’s soldiers were men recruited from
within Travancore itself. Therefore the conquests of Martanda Varma were made
with the help of armies composed of his own subjects. The Mathilakam records
also prove that the army of Martanda Varma consisted on mainly of his own
subjects. The best of the soldiers were Kunchukuttakkar, who were the picked
Nairs.21

All the great men of his kingdom, called Annavi, were men of common
origin and their rank was not inherited by the descendants. They depended entirely
upon the ruler. They owed everything to him with slavish submission. From them
the King never felt any fear of conspiracy against his person or possessions. This
new class of mobility was created in place of the old nobility of the eight houses of
Nairs, in order to obtain better loyalty and service.22 They were not at all the

20 Krishnan Nadar, op.cit., p.32
21 Ibid., p.33
feudal barons of the country as the Ettuveettill Pillamar were. He thought that the chief military commanders should be the sons of the soil, and thus, D’Lannoy was not made the first in command. Thus by creating the new nobility called Annavi’s and by making them great men of his kingdom, and also by recruiting all other classes of people into the standing army, he took the first step towards the destruction of the traditional feudal army of the Nair nobility. This first step towards the formation of a national army marked the beginning of the decline of Nair domination.23

D’Lannoy instructed men in western methods of warfare. It was he who constructed modern fire-arms for Travancore, swords, guns, built for the fort and the ramparts of Puliyoorkurichy and the arsenal there. In October 1744 the King of Travancore received one hundred and fifty arms from the Anjengo Government, and in December 1744 the Travancore Maharaja received from the English two hundred small arms.

Agreements were made between the Company’s authorities at Anjengo and the Maharaja for the ready procuring of gun powder, flints, arms and ammunition, and accordingly in 1744 the King of Travancore was supplied with thirty barrels of gun-powder and two thousand flints. Year after year in accordance with the needs of the time, arms and ammunition were supplied to the Maharaja in

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23 Krishnan Nadar., op.cit., p.33
exchange for pepper. This regular flow of European weapons helped to Europeanize the army under the guidance of D’Lannoy.24

D’Lannoy “made everything that was requisite for the defence of the country, brought into the service several men of his race as chieftains in the different corps which he thoroughly organized by the name ‘pullipattalam’ which consisted of 72 battalions of 200 men each, wherein the artillery was also included” There were, besides, six regiments of infantry styled as the “Carnatic Brigade” whose headquarters were first at Paravoor and afterwards at Alleppey.

A “regiment was consisted of 10 companies and 114 men including officers in each and the whole of the 72 Pullies and the Carnatic Brigade together with the attached or in other words the entire military establishment of Travancore amounted in all to 30,000 men”.25

Captain D’Lannoy divided the whole Travancore into three faces - Eastern, Western and Southern and over these he distributed the whole army in due proportion. The head-quarters of the army were at Puliyoorkurichy where Captain D’Lannoy resided. All reports were made to His Highness through the native head-commandant called Valia Yejamanan. The chief cantonments were at Padmanabhapuram, Trivandrum and Quilon.

24 Parameswaran Pillai. N., The Evolution of Travancore State forces, Vol II, Trivandrum, p.31
25 Ibid., p. 35
The trained army was divided into three categories - infantry, cavalry and artillery. Besides these three divisions of the army, there was also the traditional Militia. Therefore the army of Martanda Varma was a combination of the modern and the ancient, the regular and the irregular army.\textsuperscript{26} The regular army was the national army of the country trained in modern methods of warfare and the irregular army followed the old system of warfare, but greater importance was given to the regular army.

Marthanda Varma maintained the irregular army also with traditional weapons, in order to utilize the men trained in the Kalaries and their experiences in the battles. Most of the soldiers in the regular army were the Nairs. Therefore the Nairs could still maintain their military superiority but the supremacy of the Nair chieftains or feudal chieftains declined. Thus the decline of the dominance of the Nairs started in the reign of Martanda Varma. The ruin of the feudal system of society began since the decline of the power of the Nair chieftains.\textsuperscript{27} Robbin Jeffrey states that “D’Lannoy reorganized the military and changed it from a feudal force rallied by local chiefs, to a salaried, drilled and unified army, its composition was overwhelmingly Nair and their Militia was not abolished but the new army represented the further incursion on the independence of local Nair leaders”.\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{26} Krishnan Nadar, op.cit., p.35
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., p.36
\textsuperscript{28} Shungunny menon. P., op.cit., p.116
In order to maintain this strong and powerful army, Martanda Varna economized the expenses of the country by reorganizing the Finance Department and by apportioning the income by fixed budget allotments to different departments. This was a check against the waste of funds. Many economic reforms were introduced by Ala-ud-din Khilji, Sultan of Delhi, when he created the first standing army in the history of medieval India; more or less similar economic reforms were carried out by Martanda Varma when he created the first standing army in the history of Travancore.  

The re-organisation of the army brought about changes in the social and economic structure of the society of Travancore. The social privilege of the Nairs as a military class ended consequently their position in the society began to decline. The martial spirit of the Nair nobles declined. Before the time of Martanda Varma, the strength of a king depended mainly on his Nair force. The Nair soldiers were directly under the Naduvazhi. The Naduvazhis were the military chiefs of the provinces. The re-organisation of the army destroyed the feudal social structure and in the new army there was no place for the feudal barons who had been the lords of the land and beads of the Militia in their respective districts.

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29 Krishnan Nadar, op.cit., p.35
30 Ibrahim Kunju., op.cit., p.121
The lands of the feudal lords like Ettuveettil Pillamar had already been confiscated and all chieftains now had to pay taxes to the Government. Thus their age-old economic privileges as lords of the land, as well as the exemption from taxation which they used to enjoy, came to an end. This state of affairs reduced the Nair to the status of ordinary citizen. Logan believes that the Nairs occupied so unique and so lasting a position that “but for foreign intervention there seems to be no reason why it should not have continued for centuries on centuries to come”.\(^{31}\)

According to George Woodcock, the day of the Nair as a feudal warrior came to an end on the battlefield of Ambalapuzha. The battle of Ambalapuzha on 3rd January 1754 was the last fight in the traditional style, in which the soldiers of Ambalapuzha fought in the old style against Martanda Varma’s men who fought in the modern style.\(^{32}\) “No community in Southern Kerala was more affected by Martanda Varma’s campaigns and policies than the Nairs”. The Nairs were therefore, the only community affected by the reorganisation of the army which was affected under the western influence. Had there been no foreign influence and consequent reorganisation of the army the old feudal system might have continued without interruption.\(^{33}\)

When the standing army was created the traditional Militia became unnecessary even though it existed as an irregular army. This decline of the

\(^{31}\) Krishnan Nadar., op.cit., p. 47  
\(^{32}\) Ibid., p. 48  
\(^{33}\) Ibid., p. 49
importance of the Militia threw off the Nairs to seek some other occupation for which they had no previous training. “This was the fate of Nairs in the conquered countries too because Martanda Varma ended military careers of all the Nairs within the conquered territory by demolishing the army of the conquered chiefs”.  

Martanda Varma also destroyed feudalism in the conquered countries by annexing the lands of the chiefs of the conquered territories. “He annexed the lands of the former chiefs to his new state. Many of these chiefs were probably Nairs themselves perhaps claiming high ranks as in Malabar. The land was the principal source of their economic power and Martanda Varma’s action more or less destroyed it. By annexation meant transfer of Jan mom rights from individual chiefs to the Travancore State”. Thus the Europeanisation of the army resulted in the liberation of the country from feudalism, and the liberation of the Nairs from their traditional occupation of compulsory military service under their immediate feudal lords.

The reorganisation of the army made the state supreme by destroying the “old system of Nair States. This was made possible by making the landlords landless and also by making the landholders pay taxes to the Government. Their territorial authority was extinguished by the conquests of Martanda Varma. But


35 Ibid., p. 27
they continued to be the most influential community as a result of their extensive landed possessions and local prestige.\textsuperscript{36}

The Nair aristocracy, thus deprived of military and political power, lived entirely on its old traditions and maintained its dignity and style for a considerably long time merely by the forces of tradition. But the days of their unrestrained power were gone never to return. Thus the second half of the 18th century witnessed the destruction of the political predominance of the Nairs. The re-organisation of the state ruined the social, economic, political and military privilege of the Nairs and transformed the country into a military state.\textsuperscript{37}

**Travancore army under Dharma Raja**

The Modernisation of the Travancore army on the European model had been done by D ’Lannoy and he raised the army to a high pitch of efficiency. The Europeanisation and strengthening of the army also received the attention of Dharma Raja. Karthigai Thirunal Rama Varma, the successor of Martanda Varma. He had to defend the kingdom from external invasions from the east and from the north. From the east he was threatened by Yusuf Khan.

From the north Martanda Varma was threatened by Tippu Sultan. He had to help Cochin Raja against the Zamorin. Because of these developments Dharma

\textsuperscript{36} Chopra P.N., History of South India, Delhi, 2003, p. 30
\textsuperscript{37} Varatharajan A., *History of Colachel (Tamil)*, Nagercoil, 2005, p. 27
Raja paid greater attention to the re-organisation of the army, a task in which he might have been assisted by two able ministers, Ayyappan Martanda Pillai alias Raja Kesavadas, and also by D’Lannoy.\(^{38}\) In September 1759, the Raja of Travancore despatcher two thousand soldiers by way of Aralvaimozhi, and ten thousand soldiers through Shenkotta to fight against Yusuf Khan who had revolted against the Nawab.

Dharma Raja refused to support Yusuf Khan and organised a counter-move against Yusuf Khan. The coalition included the rulers of Travancore and the Poligars of Vadakarai, Sivagiri and Panjalamkurichi. It was led by Travancore forces which consisted of ten thousand troops and numerous irregular soldiers trained by D’Lannoy, the Commander of the Travancore forces.\(^ {39}\) The forces of Travancore assembled at Thovala, on the south eastern boarder of the kingdom. The troops from Panchalamkurichi and Pattapuram joined the forces of Travancore.

The combined troops occupied the towns of Panakudy, Eruvadi and Thirukurunkudi. Another expedition of Travancore encamped at Ariyancavu on the Western Ghats and joined the forces of the former Poligare chiefs of Vadakarai and Sivagiri. The combined forces of about thirty thousand soldiers captured Shenkotta and invaded Vadakarai. This event was an important landmark in the military history of Travancore because it proved the fact that the Travancore army

\(^{38}\) Krishnan Nadar., op.cit., p. 38
\(^{39}\) Caldwell R. History of Tinnevelly, New Delhi, 1982, p. 117
was not inferior to any other army in military training and fighting techniques.\textsuperscript{40} In the Mathilakam records, it is mentioned that so many Nair soldiers died in the battle at Shenkotta. In spite of the fact that many soldiers perished, the battle was won.

The Mathilakam records also shed light on the encampment of Nair soldiers in 1765 at Thovala to meet the threat of the Muthaliar army from Kalakkad. The Hussar Cut cherry Document dated 23rd September 1759 mentions the expenses incurred in gathering various military stores for the attack of Vadakarai. The Zamorin’s army was also defeated by the Travancore forces with bows and arrows at Perumbavur, and was forced to retreat to Trichur. It was finally defeated at Chelakara. This is also a notable achievement of the Travancore army during the early years of the reign of Dharma Raja.\textsuperscript{41}

In order to prevent any possible invasion from the north, a line of forts was constructed. The Minister Martanda Pillai, took up this work in earnest and D’Lannoy personally supervised the constructions. The Travancore line of fortifications or Nedumkotta as it was called, ran from Vaipin Island to the Ghats and often through Cochin territory. It was mainly a ditch sixteen feet broad and twenty feet deep with bamboo and bastions at strategic points. There were also forts at Trivandrum (Mathilakam Palace Fort) Quilon and Padmanabhapuram.

\textsuperscript{40} Caldwell R., History of Tinnevelly, New Delhi, 1982, p.118
\textsuperscript{41} Chopra P.N., op.cit., p.31
Dharma Raja purchased the Cranganore and Pallippuram forts from the Dutch in 1789 and these forts were garrisoned with Nair soldiers.\textsuperscript{42} As these forts were guarded by Nairs and the army consisted mainly of Nairs, the military supremacy of the Nairs might have continued unabated during the reign of Dharma Raja also. There were also arsenals at Mavelikkara and Udayagiri which were also guarded by Nairs. The Nair soldiers might have camped at different places in the country. There is a record to prove the fact that one thousand two hundred soldiers were sent from Chirayinkil to Vasavanalloor camp. From these camps soldiers might have been sent to the battlefield to fight against the enemies.\textsuperscript{43}

The record also tells the total number of Nairs in service and of those who were young, aged, disabled or killed. Thus the army of Dharma Raja was also a combination of the ancient and the modem, the irregular army representing the earlier Nair Militia with traditional weapons like bows and arrows, swords and spears etc. and the Europeanised army with modem weapons. Guns short and big, salt petro etc. were speedily manufactured with the assistance of the English, the French and the Dutch at the arsenals at Udayagiri, Mavelikkara and Padmanabhapuram.\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{42} Varatharajan, op.cit., p. 28
\textsuperscript{43} Krishnan Nadar, op.cit., p. 49
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., p. 50
The government introduced State monopoly on certain commodities like spices in order to procure arms. The need for arms from the British and other Europeans compelled the Raja to enter into commercial agreements with the Europeans who were in great need of pepper and other species and who were also ready to dispose of their weapons in exchange for spices.

The Anjengo consultations give detailed descriptions about the craze for weapons on the part of the Raja. This state monopoly of certain products became highly inevitable for the reorganisation and maintenance of a strong and powerful army.45 As in the time of Martanda Varma, commodities like pepper were sold to the Europeans at the Government level in return for iron, steel, copper, armaments, gun powder etc. In 1780, the Travancore forces consisted of about fifty thousand men disciplined in the European manner, in addition to which the State maintained one lakh of Nairs and Chogars armed with bows and arrows spears and battle axes.

In order to maintain these large regular and irregular armies, Dharma Raja introduced some economic restrictions regarding the buying and selling of certain commodities like spices.46 With the appointment of Raja Kesavadas (Kesava Pillai) as Dewan of Travancore (1788-98) the Travancore army was further strengthened. He continued the policy of strengthening the frontiers, improving the Militia and securing the support of the British. He possessed and showed

45 Shungunny menon P., op.cit., p.148
46 Sobhanan B, Dr., Rama Varma of Travancore, Calicut.
admirable skill in the use of arms, and had the training to take up the commandership of a very big army during extra ordinary situations.

Raja Kesavadas tried to produce the sufficient number of guns at Udayagiri and other arsenals. As he followed a very friendly policy towards the Dutch and the English, he could also procure different kinds of weapons necessary for the army. He procured from the Carnatic Nawab swords, bows and arrows and other Indian weapons. He increased the number of European officers in the army. He strengthened the military centres at different places. The coastal regions up to Arukutty were strengthened with artillery guns. Thus thanks to the efforts of Raja Kesavadas, the Travancore army was transformed into a first-rate army.

The duties of the soldiers were not only military, they had also police and other duties. “It was these men that collected the revenue, performed inferior police duties; provisions for the public festivals were collected them, they also watched over prisoners, and everybody operated for the defence of the country from internal and external attacks.” Therefore every change in the army correspondingly affected the social and economic life of the country. Thus when the feudal structure of the army changed it simultaneously affected the society. In spite of the fact that Dharma Raja’s army consisted of one lakh of traditional soldiers with traditional weapons, and performed civil, police, revenue, and

47 Krishnan Nadar, op.cit., p. 49
48 Ibid., p. 48
49 Ibid: p. 50
military duties, there was no going back to the old social order of feudal society and feudal army, since the regular and irregular armies were controlled by the State.\textsuperscript{50}

The whole of the Travancore army was paid partly in paddy and other provisions. The amount was paid from the Commercial Department called Mulakumadisila at Mavelikkara. There is a record to prove that an amount of rupees eighteen thousand (Seven lakh fifty six thousand panams) was paid out to the soldiers who camped at Paravur fora year from 1-1-961 M.E. (1786 A.D) from the Commercial Department at Mavelikkara.\textsuperscript{51} There is also another record to prove that the Nair soldiers were also supplied with rice. When the Nair soldiers camped at Thovala Fort in 921 M.E. the expenditure was calculated as five hundred and seventy six panams and fifteen paras of paddy. Those who were wounded in the battle were assisted by the State. Those commanders who fought and died in the battle which resulted in the capture of Shenkotta were given a subsidy by the Travancore Government.\textsuperscript{52}

It was also the practice of the ruler to meet the funeral expenses of soldiers killed in battle and to protect their families. Thus Nair soldiers were financially protected not only during active service but also in their old age; in case they were wounded or disabled. The expenses of the puberty celebrations of their daughters

\textsuperscript{50} Letters to Batavia, 1780, serial No: 1131.6\textsuperscript{th} January, Cochin.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.,
\textsuperscript{52} Ibrahim Kunju A.P; The Battle of Colachel, 1741 AD and the Debark of the Dutch on the Malabar Coast, Journal of Kerala Studies, Vol. II - Part. III, 1975-85
and their marriages were also met by the State. This economic advantage might have brought them into active military service. It might have also compelled them to choose it as their occupation, and with the passage of time it became their traditional occupation. The system continued without much interruption till invasion of Travancore by Tippu Sultan and the consequent stationing of the European army for the protection of the country.\textsuperscript{53}

In the war against Hyder Ali, Travancore troops fought on the Company’s side and rendered meritorious services. The Madras Select Committee wrote to the Court of Directors on 13-3-1779, “The Raja of Travancore afforded the troops sent to attack Mahe, a free passage through his country and supplied them with provisions”.\textsuperscript{54} The Travancore battalions also supported the English at the battle of Ponnani. Col. Mc Lead, writing to the Madras Select Committee, bore witness to the help rendered by the Travancore in the following terms; “The King of Travancore has always been the most faithful friend and ally to the Hon’ble East India Company. Last year two of his well-known disciplined battalions fought with me to save the army which afterwards penetrated to Bedsore and thereby relieved the Carnatic. This prince would have given the dominions full security and have proved a notable check upon Tippu”.\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., p. 82
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., p. 83
The Travancore troops had also experiences of fighting along with the troops of the Company. On 16th December 1781, the Raja of Travancore had ordered his troops in Tinnevelly and Anjengo for the reduction of the factory of Tuticorin from the Dutch. Similar orders were also issued by the Raja of Travancore to his troops to march against Cochin in conjunction with the Company’s troops on 18th March 1782.\textsuperscript{56}

Thus the Travancore troops not only adopted the European system of training but also gained experience in European methods of fighting, by fighting against Hyder Ali and the Dutch along with the British army. But it seems that the Raja of Travancore was not confident of the might of his army, in case his country was attacked by Tippu Sultan. Therefore he wanted to seek the assistance of the Company against Tippu’s invasion.\textsuperscript{57}

On 21st September 1787 the Raja of Travancore wrote to the Company regarding the intention of Tippu’s invasion of Travancore and requested the Company to send back his troops stationed in Tinnevelly. But Cornwallis believed that Tippu would not invade the Carnatic or Travancore. The Travancore Raja took steps for procuring more arms from the Company in order to resist the invasion of Tippu.

\textsuperscript{56} Krishnan Nadar; op.cit., p. 43  
\textsuperscript{57} Mily. coun. Corr., Vol.XXX1, L.86
On 28th February 1788 the Raja wrote to the Company to send one thousand stand of arms and five thousand yards per pets. Moreover, the Raja requested the Company to protect him from Tippu and applied for two battalions of sepoys.\textsuperscript{58} It was for the first time that Travancore made such a request for military assistance for the protection of the country.

The Raja relied upon the assistance of the English against an attack from Tippu. The Raja obtained two battalions of the Company’s native infantry to be stationed in the frontiers of his territory and George Powney was sent to reside at his Court. The Raja also promised to abide by all conditions in regard to the payment of the troops. In March 1789 the Raja of Travancore had signed a treaty with the English company.\textsuperscript{59} This was the beginning of the process which made Travancore subservient to the Company as far as military protection was concerned. The Madras troops were maintained at the expenses of the Raja of Travancore.

Tippu’s molestation of the Travancore Raja was considered by Madras Government as an imminent cause of war. When Tippu Sultan of Mysore invaded Travancore making his entry through the northern districts in the years 1788-90 Travancore fortified the northern borders, strengthened her army and Kesava

\textsuperscript{58} Shungunny menon, P., \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 234-5

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., p. 236
Pillai, the Dewan of His Highness, proceeded to Calicut to bring the Company’s army for aid.\footnote{Krishnan Nadar, op.cit., p.44}

On 29th December 1789 Tippu attacked the Travancore lines with an infantry force of seven thousand. Though he breached a weakly fortified part of the lines, he was eventually repulsed; he withdrew in order to avail himself of reinforcements and siege equipment’s from Mysore. Meanwhile Dharma Raja gathered an army of one hundred thousand men, probably the largest that over operated in Kerala to defend his fortifications.

Tippu opened his heavy artillery bombardment followed by an assault through the wide breaches that had been blown in the rampartments.\footnote{Pol. Cons. Proc., 10 February, 1790, pp.299-300} The Travancore soldiers consisting partly of local Nairs and partly of mercenaries from the Madras region, were demoralized by the fierceness of the attack, and they fled deserting the lines’. On 15th April 1790 the Travancore lines were captured “The Nairs, Poligars, Sepoys fled indiscriminately”. The Sultan took possession of the lines for a considerable extent with all cannon and ammunition without meeting any further resistance.

The Travancore Minister, Kesavadas, to whom the defence of the lines had been entrusted, suddenly abandoned it. The total demolition of the lines and a general devastation, as well by fire as the sword, desolated the whole face of the
country. The Nairs be took themselves to their strongholds in the mountains, the Travancore troop to the extremity of their Kingdom.\textsuperscript{62}

The storing of weapons and the increasing of the number of soldiers owing to Tippu’s invasion adversely affected the growth of economic progress of the country. The flow of the company's weapons into Travancore continued unabated. The Travancore Raja received two thousand stand of arms in 1793. This steady supply of weapons by the Company was for procuring spices like pepper. The Government of Travancore had established monopoly over the sale of pepper, many years before. The maintenance of more than a “hundred thousand men about eight thousands of them clothed and armored like our Sepoys” also drained the economy of the country.\textsuperscript{63}

It was the Nairs who suffered most. They had received encouragements even from the British to resist the invasion of Tippu Sultan. The military supremacy of the Nairs declined because the defence of the country was taken over by the Company, by the treaty of 1795. It was the practice that, necessary number of soldiers used to be trained in the Kalaries and maintained by local chieftains, to be supplied during times of emergency. This system had to disappear since its importance and necessity were lost.\textsuperscript{64}

\textsuperscript{62} Mily. Count. Corr; Vol. XXXIV, L. 88
\textsuperscript{63} Sobhanan B., Op.cit., p. 43
\textsuperscript{64} Krishnan Nadar., op.cit., p. 45
The ruler did not bother about the maintenance of a strong army since his protection was guaranteed by the Company; “the military power of the Nairs was broken finally in Travancore’. The Kalaries fell into disuse. The Travancore army, composed partly of local Nairs and partly of mercenaries from Madras region, got completely demoralized by the fierceness of the attack. The political and territorial predominance of the Nairs disappeared and their karas existed for social purposes.65

The invasion of Mysore rulers had a psychological impact on them, and it shattered the myth of their social superiority and inaugurated a new era of social change in the history of Kerala. “Nairs had contempt of all other professions” which they were not compelled to choose. When their masters lost their political authority, the Nairs who were attached to Naduvazhis and Desavazhis as professional soldiers became unemployed. Their income from the land as intermediaries between the Janmis and cultivators was also lost with the revenue settlement which was made directly with the cultivators. They were also to give up their age-old system of polyandry.66

The royal authority had been strengthened and this brought down the power and position of the Nair chieftains. Thus the Mysorian invasion brought about tremendous changes in the social, economic, political and military life of the

65 Ibid., p. 46  
Nairs. Now they were to fight unsuccessfully for their lost social, economic, political and military rights and privileges.\textsuperscript{67}

**Social legacy**

Society remained at the medieval stagnant level. Caste system existed with all its rigidity and severity. The Brahmins and Nayars termed *Savannas* were placed in the highest ladder of society and enjoyed all the privileges of the state. Rest of the people were considered as *Avarnas* and were treated as untouchables and unapproachable by the *Savarnas*.\textsuperscript{68}

Col. Macaulay the Political Resident of Travancore and Cochin (1800-1810) observed: "If the poor wretch who tills the soil and reaps the grain should happen accidently and ignorantly to cross any Nair in his path, the monster draws his sword and kills him on the spot with impunity; the insecurity of property and miserable servitude of the peasantry in parts of Maharashtra, Arcot countries, and in some poligar pollams are well known but the state of the most oppressed of the inhabitants of those parts is a state of independent and exalted happiness when contrasted with wretchedness and degradation of the beings in human shape who have the misfortune to be born in Malabar or Travancore.

\textsuperscript{67} Krishnan Nadar, op.cit., p.46
\textsuperscript{68} Fra Bartholomeo, A Voyage to the East Indies, London, 1800, p.192,193
When the Nairs go about the town, says Francois Pyrard, “and come across the villains, they cry, Po. Po, that is, that they should get out of the way, otherwise, if they should chance to touch they would resent it, and would strike them. Barbosa described that if the peasants did not change the way the Nair might kill them without penalty. The same system continued during the reign of Rama Varma, without any change.69

As desired by his ancestor, Rama Varma sumptuously fed the Brahmins overlooking all the financial strains. During the Mysorean invasion of Malabar no less than 3,00,000 Brahmins with their families fled from Malabar and took refuge in Travancore. The Maharaja established Ootupurahs, free feeding centres for Brahmins, throughout Travancore reducing his subjects to misery.70

In Travancore low caste people were sold as slaves. Sale deeds were executed and through the sale deed men and women were sold as slaves to the high caste people. Samuel Matter in his work, native life in South Travancore mentions that the caste of a slave woman was rupees 6. Ola documents were also executed on slave trades. In kalinkathuparani, Jeyamkondar mentioned as follows:

69 Sobhanan, op.cit, p.73
70 William Logon, Malabar, 1894 Vol. 1, p. 44a
Punal nadu stands for Chola Kingdom. Apayar denotes Chola Kings. Iduthirai explains tribute and Malainadu stands for Travancore. Travancore woman have fair complexion. Such Travancore woman were purchased as the Chola Kings and Chola nobles.

**Commercial Legacy**

The income from trade and commerce also began to dwindle during his reign. Through commercial transactions of the valuable products of the state like pepper, tobacco, piece-goods, teak-wood, cardamom, ginger, cinnamon, arecanut, turmeric, copra, etc., the state used to receive immense wealth from foreign countries. In order to tide over the financial crisis Rama Varma granted monopolies over these important products.\(^{\text{71}}\)

The monopoly system had been introduced by Martanda Varma. The terms placed on internal trade by means of monopolies and transit duties adversely affected the country’s commercial prosperity. The wealthy foreign merchants exploited the resources of the kingdom through these monopolies, and it led to the bankruptcy of the kingdom. William Gamal Farmer, one of the Malabar commissioners accused the Dewan Raja Kesava Das that he secured immense wealth through transactions of the monopoly.\(^{\text{72}}\)

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71 Sobhanan, op.cit., p.73

72 Pol. cons. Proc., 21st October, 1793, p. 9922
Pepper was the principal commodity through which the Raja used to settle his subsidy accounts with the Company. According to the pepper contract of 1793 the Raja was bound to give 3,000 candies of pepper at the rate of Rs. 115/-per candy. On 25th July 1797 the Raja in his letter to Bombay Government stated that in order to fulfil the terms of the contract he purchased pepper at the rate of Rs. 200/-per candy. Private merchants also paid Rs. 165, 175 or 180 without demur.73 The Government gave only. Rs. 30/- per candy to the pepper cultivators. Pepper production depended highly on climatic conditions like rain. But the Company insisted on the delivery of pepper without the least regard to the fluctuations in its availability, or market price.

Consequently the Raja was put to great hardship. On 25th July 1797 he earnestly requested the Honorable Court of Directors for an upward revision of the price fixed in the contract.74 On 14th March 1797 the Governor in Council of Bombay reported to the Deputy Governor of Calcutta that the Prince of Travancore was not to be obliged to submit to heavy annual loss by reason of the pepper contract. At the same time he had to pay a large annual subsidy for military aid and protection.

The hardship he had to suffer from both had exhausted his resources. As a point of duty they requested the Supreme Government to consider the expediency

73 For. Pol. cons. Proc. 28, May 1807, p. 332
74 For. Sec. Cons. Proc. 17, May 1804, pp. 15113-14
of paying the Raja a fair price.\textsuperscript{75} While the Raja was eagerly waiting for the sympathetic consideration of his case by the Company, the Governor of Bombay recorded his extreme mortification in the delay in pepper delivery. He rejected the Raja’s representation as ill-founded in point of fact and observed that its contents might prove prejudicial to the Raja and to his own credit and to Honorable Company’s just expectations. He was ordered to supply all the arrears at the earliest. It was too much for the dying Raja.\textsuperscript{76}

The tobacco monopoly yielded a good profit for the state in the beginning. But the contraband trade in tobacco practiced by the Europeans living under the protection of the British flag brought heavy loss to the Raja. On a later occasion Col. Macaulay wrote to the Supreme Government that “the contraband dealings in tobacco practiced by persons protected by the British flag at Quilon was calculated to affect the reputation and honour of the British Government.” It appeared from enquiry that nearly every person inhabiting this small spot was by profession a smuggler. Nearly every house in this place was filled with smuggled tobacco.\textsuperscript{77}

Formerly the Dutch Government supported the Raja in restraining such contraband dealings. The Raja purchased sufficient quantity of tobacco through the Dutch agents in Ceylon and it was brought directly into his ports. The Raja had the internal monopoly of it. But after the submission of Cochin and Ceylon to the

\textsuperscript{75} For. Pol. cons. Proc., 28 April 1797, pp. 6253-4
\textsuperscript{76} For. Sec. Cons. Proc. 17 May 1804, pp.15161-2
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 25 April 1805, pp. 5556-7
British, smuggling by British subjects changed the direction of this traffic and they began to distribute large quantities of tobacco clandestinely throughout Travancore. They evaded the payment of the Raja’s duties. According to Col. Macaulay unless some check was made the Raja of Travancore’s revenue from tobacco, amounting to five lakhs of rupees would be threatened with total extinction.78

The manufacture of cloth was formerly a great source of wealth for this country. In 1797 the Raja entered into a contract with the Company for the supply of 50,000 pieces of white cloth for the year 1798. He secured Rs. 1,45,000/- as an advance for the weavers. This amount was diverted for some other important purposes. There were more than 2,000 looms working in Travancore. But on the basis of information received Col. Macaulay stated that it was reduced to five hundred. The Raja purchased cloth from Tinnevelly. That was too little to fulfil the stipulations of the contract. As a result of this the cloth delivery also fell into arrears.79

Timber constituted another important source of revenue. The Raja divided and distributed the timber-yielding forest lands to the contractors, by which major portion of the revenue of this important monopoly was also lost. At this stage of acute financial crisis, the established and conventional sources of income were also dwindling. This brought further financial

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78 For. Sec. Cons. Proc. 22, May 1805, p. 6346
79 Sobhanan B., op.cit., p.75
strain on the empty treasury. The long and prosperous reign was drawing to a close in utter financial disarray.\textsuperscript{80}

He gave much encouragement for the regulation of trade and commerce. A good number of ports were opened at key points of his kingdom. Alleppey, Vizhinjam, Poovar, Kulachal and Poonthura were important among them. Even ships from America arrived at Alleppey for pepper. Alleppey became one of the most important emporia of trade during his period. For the promotion of trade and military movements he constructed a network of roads throughout his kingdom like, the road from Quilon to Purakkad via Kayamkulam and the road that joins Cranganore in the north with Cape Comorin in the south. The famous Chalai Bazar was also founded by him. Kottar was changed into a commercial and weaving centre. He greatly developed the postal system.\textsuperscript{81}

Several palaces including Krishnapuram and Mavelikkara palaces were constructed during his period. He built the Nedumkotta or Travancore Lines in the north. He built bridges in Killiyaar and Karamana. An irrigation project was built across the Kothaiyaaru for the cultivation of the barren land in south Travancore.\textsuperscript{35} He completed the work of the grand

\textsuperscript{80} Sobhanan B., op.cit., p.75
\textsuperscript{81} For. Sec. Cons. Proc. 17 May 1804, p. 15383
tower of Sri Padmanabha Swami temple at Trivandrum. He set up a mint at Padmanabhapuram for minting coins.\textsuperscript{82}

He carried out all these benevolent reforms mainly with the help of his seven able Chief Ministers or Dalawa. They were Ayyappan Martanda Pillai, Varkala Subha Ayyan, Gopalayyan. Malian Chenbagaraman, Allvadaviserum Subramanian, Ramayyan and Raja Kesava Das. Among them the first and the last were very famous and they served the state with distinction in the most critical periods in its history.\textsuperscript{83}

Rama varma was an erudite scholar and a lover of fine arts. He wrote a good Sanskrit work on Bharatanatyam called \textit{Balarama Bharatam}. He composed several Attakathas for Kathakali. Above all he was a great patron of letters. Kunchan Nambiar and Unnayi Variyar lived in his court. Aswathi Thirunal and Manoyma Thampuratty of Calicut were also patronized by him.\textsuperscript{84}

**Blind beliefs**

In Travancore there were many magicians and sorcerers. They had the practice of soothsaying and there were many experts in the art of palm history. When there were wars between Travancore and Tirunelveli these magicians

\textsuperscript{82} For. Sec. Cons. Proc. 17 May 1804, p.153
\textsuperscript{83} Sobhanan B., op.cit., p.77
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., p. 77
played a prominent role and these arts were exchanged with Tirunelveli. This blind belief which had its origin in Travancore had gradually spread to Tirunelveli also.

Tirunelveli people are having strong belief in the traditional art of sorcery. Likewise in Pandyan kingdom there are demons worshipped by the depressed communities. Such Gods in Tirunelveli area are known as Aiyanaar, Bhuthathan, Madan, and Esakki. Such demons are brought to Kanyakumari district during the war periods. Even today we notice many Ayyanaar temples, Madan temples and Esaki temples in Kanyakumari district. Because of the relations which prevailed between Travancore and Tirunelveli there were exchange of deals between the two places. Thus the exchange deals contributed for the legacy of the relation between the two places.

The reign of Rama Varma commenced with an open confrontation in the eastern frontier of his kingdom. In 1759 Mahfuz Khan and in 1762 Yusuf Khan, the Governors of the Nawab of the Carnatic rebelled against their master and requested the help of Rama Varma for a hostile confederacy against the Nawab. They promised to return all the territories of Travancore including Kalakkad, usurped by the Nawab of the Carnatic.