CHAPTER III

FUNCTIONING OF DEVASWOM DEPARTMENT

In pursuance of the devaswom proclamation dated 12th April 1922, the control of the sircar devaswoms which was till then vested with the land revenue department was taken away from that department and entrusted with the newly formed devaswom department. The devaswom department was given the power to administer not only the sircar devaswoms but also of japadakshina and uttus or charitable institutions. It did not include the SriPadmanabhaswamy temple and agrasala in he Thiruvananthapruam and the personal deposit devaswoms (unincorporated devaswoms) and their properties situated in and outside the state\(^1\). Towards the close of 1925, the dewan was relieved of his duties and responsibilities in connection with the administration of devaswoms within the purview of the devaswom proclamation. The administration of devaswoms was directly entrusted to the commissioner who was made directly responsible to the sovereign except in certain important matters in respect of

\(^1\) *T.A.R.*, 1930-31,p.223.
which the previous approval of the dewan had to be obtained. But with effect from A.D 1930, this arrangement was cancelled under the command of the Maharaja and it was decided to place devaswom department under the dewan, like other department of the government, with devaswom commissioner under him as the head of the department. The bifurcation of devaswom administration from the department of land revenue and entrusting with devaswom department also gave way to the creation of a devaswom fund, allotted it to each temple according to the pathivu fixed for the respective temple.

The formation of a separate devaswom department did not in any way affect the revenue administration of the devaswom lands. The proclamation of 1922 had made it clear that the devaswom lands were treated as pantaravaka lands and the collection of revenue from them was made by the government from time to time. On 31st January 1923, the government permitted the commissioner to lease out the lands belonging to

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3 E.R.G.O No. Dis 335 of 22/G.B.
unincorporated devaswom on kuttakappattam for an indefinite period. The assistant commissioners of devaswom were also given power to do so, but only for a period not exceeding 12 years. All devaswomvaka service lands were made pantaravaka property from 3rd June 1923. The entire land was divided as pantaravaka, brahmaswom and devaswom lands. The devaswom lands were exempted from taxation and such lands were known as irayilli (tax-free). The government was entitled to the extra assessment or vilayartham of such lands. On 1st November 1924, the superintendents of devaswom were empowered to grant kuttakappattam leases for a period not exceeding three years. All departments including the devaswom department were given to lease out on kuttakappattam basis for all tarisu, tanatuchitta and purampok lands under their control. On 30th July 1928, the government order to treat the tanatuchitta lands belonging to the devaswom department as sircar devaswom purampoks and the tax due there on to revenue department was treated as write off by the

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6 G.O.no.1691 of 26/Revenue, dated 13 November 1926.
government. The rules for the leases of personal deposit devaswom lands were amended so as to authorise the devaswom commissioner to sanction *venpattam* leases of such lands without an auction when it was found feasible and desirable. This amendment was made by the government on the recommendation of the devaswom commissioner.

With the separation of devaswoms from land revenue department and the creation of a separate devaswom department which began functioning in August 1922, drastic changes took place in the administrative machinery of the devaswoms, particularly on the establishment wing. The devaswom commissioner became the head of the department. He was the adviser to the government in matters relating to devaswom and supervised and controlled the working of subordinate officers of dehaswom department. He was directly responsible to the government for the proper management and control of the

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9 G.O.ROC. No.7238/36, dated 17 September 1936.
devaswom and charitable institutions. Below him, the devaswom assistant commissioners and superintendents were appointed for the proper and effective administration of the temples. The network of devaswom department itself was divided into two categories of the service namely establishment service and religious service. The establishment service was meant for management of temples and religious service was for the different works inside the temple such as the ordinary daily service called nityanitham, extraordinary ceremonies known as masavisesham, attavisesham and ulsavams. Under the uranma system no clear-cut distinction between staff of the two services could be identified. It was because the uranmakkar who lived on temple revenues themselves undertook one or other the of these services on receipt of fixed income\textsuperscript{12}. However, 12 officers belonging to both categories of services were well known; such as uranmakkar, melkoyma, koyma, melsamudayam, samudayam, akattemanusym, puratemanuayam, pattali, kanakkam, masapati, tantri (santhi),

purattesanthi (kalakam). But in the later stage the devaswom administration was divided into devaswom establishment servants and temple servants. In the establishment wing, there were five categories of staff and under religious administrative side also five categories staff\textsuperscript{13} functioned below the authority of division peishkar. The officers and office bearers of the religious services were left undisturbed at the initial stage of the assumption of devaswoms. Yet later two types of employees came into existence. Additional staff was appointed for its efficient administration\textsuperscript{14}. For administrative convenience the state was divided into four devaswom districts namely Suchidrum, Trivandrum, Ampalapuzha and Vaikam. The four districts were again subdivided into eighteen groups. Each of the four district was placed in charge of an assistant commissioner and each of the eighteen groups was to be

\begin{itemize}
\item Division Peishkar
\begin{itemize}
\item Estabslishment
\begin{itemize}
\item 1. Tahsildar
\item 2. Provatikar
\item 3. Manager (Srikaryam)
\item 4. Pillay (Accounts)
\item 5. Shroff (Cash keeper)
\end{itemize}
\item Temple service
\item Santhi,(Santhikars)
\item Kalakakkaran (Store Keeper)
\item Vilakkuveppu
\item Ambalavasis
\item Achimar (Nair women sweepers)
\end{itemize}
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{13} Travancore Devaswom hand Book, 1923

\textsuperscript{14} Legislative File No.D.Dis. 276/1946, dated 18 July 1946, p.3.
administered by a superintendent. The office of the devaswom commissioner assistant devaswom commissioner and superintendents had their own separate establishment of administrative staff. In view of importance and large-scale expenditure of devaswoms at Cape Comerin, Suchindrum, Tiruvattar, Haripat, Amupalapuzha, Vaikam and Errtumanur, resident managers were appointed in each of these temples. In addition to this, the devaswom department had to carry on maramath works such as construction and repairs of temple buildings and their appurtenances. Technically qualified persons were appointed for that purpose. Aminadars were appointed and one each was attached to the offices of the assistant devaswom commissioners.

Though the separation of devaswom was effected from land revenue department, the properties mixed with government were not restored to the devaswom department. Hence the government gave an annual contribution of 16 lakhs of rupees towards the

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16 Ibid.
devaswoms fund as compensation\textsuperscript{17}. As the devaswom were further classified into major, minor and petty on the basis of their annual expenditure, the government allocated each devaswom a share from the devaswom fund. In 1936, under this classification there were 155 major, 355 minor and 945 petty devaswoms in Travancore\textsuperscript{18}. The major devaswoms were authorized to spend an expenditure of Rs. 1000/- or more, minor devaswoms between Rs.100/- and 1000/- and petty devaswoms below Rs.100/-. The table showing the expenditure to devaswoms and other charitable institutions from 1812 to 1932 (every ten years) gives a picture of gradual increase from year to year.

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{17} Devaswom, File No. D.Dis. 611/.1932, dated 10 November 1932, p.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Devaswoms Rs.</th>
<th>Charitable Institution Rs</th>
<th>Total Rs</th>
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<tr>
<td>1812-13</td>
<td>292060</td>
<td>193904</td>
<td>485964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1822-23</td>
<td>564887</td>
<td>226081</td>
<td>709068</td>
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<tr>
<td>1832-33</td>
<td>517357</td>
<td>267392</td>
<td>784749</td>
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<tr>
<td>1842-43</td>
<td>531870</td>
<td>297991</td>
<td>829861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1852-53</td>
<td>521581</td>
<td>303297</td>
<td>824878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1862-63</td>
<td>533401</td>
<td>341529</td>
<td>874930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1872-73</td>
<td>532716</td>
<td>359980</td>
<td>892696</td>
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<td>910461</td>
</tr>
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<td>1892-93</td>
<td>531345</td>
<td>396882</td>
<td>928227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902-03</td>
<td>530659</td>
<td>415333</td>
<td>945992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912-13</td>
<td>529974</td>
<td>433784</td>
<td>963759</td>
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<td>1179051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932-33</td>
<td>728603</td>
<td>470686</td>
<td>1199289</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source:


23. Ibid., p.19
Pathivu in respect of two major devaswoms viz. the Aramboli devaswom in the Suchindrum district and Kaviyur devaswom in the Ambalapuzha district were revised during the year, involving an additional annual expenditure of Rs. 11116/-. In 1931 proposals for the revision of pathivus of two other devaswoms viz. Samburvadakara and kaduthuritti were under scrutiny when the year closed\textsuperscript{24}. The renovation and reconstruction of temples were being systematically carried out every year. It was done according to an approved scheme from funds specially allotted for the purpose and the work was entrusted to the maramat department. A sum of Rs. 280000/- had been allotted for the year 1930-31. Petty construction and repair works to temples were carried out by the officers of the devaswom department. Another item of expenditure incurred by the devaswom department was for the conduct of several extraordinary ceremonies like astabandha kalasam, dravyakalasam, balabimba pratishta, navikarana kalasam\textsuperscript{25}. Every year some of the extra-ordinary ceremonies were conducted in certain temples.

\textsuperscript{24} T.A.R., 1930-31, pp.233-238.

\textsuperscript{25} Proceedings of the Government of Travancore, op.cit,p.12.
In Travancore the personal deposit devaswoms were unincorporated religious institutions which came under the government management and control at different times and under varying circumstances. The accounts in respect of them were not merged in the general devaswom accounts but maintained separately and independently. They had personal deposit accounts with the government treasuries. The total number of these institutions were fifty seven of which twelve were in the Suchindrum district, fourteen in the Trivandrum district, four in the Ambalapuzha district, twenty five in the Vaikam district and the remaining two under the direct control of the devaswom commissioner. In 1930-31, the government had spent about Rs.58000/- for various temples when the management of such temples were taken over by the government. In Perumanam devaswom, uchapuja service was conducted by the Travancore government by virtue of the right of take over of the management of that temple. The renovation work of the Mannadi temple in the Pattazhi devaswom for which an estimate for Rs.7600/- was sanctioned. The renovation of temple tank and repair to the vilakkumadam attached to Turavur devaswom was completed. The

surplus funds of these devaswoms aggregated to Rs. 4.5 lakhs at the close of the year. The sripandaravaka and agrasala were outside the control of the devaswom department. They were directly under the supervision of the government. The former related to the Sri Padmanabhaswamy temple. The agrasala attached to this temple dealt with daily feeding of the brahmins. The expenditure under these two items was not included in the expenditure controlled by the devaswom department headed by devaswom commissioner.

The devaswom department not only concentrated in the general administration, devaswom land revenue etc but also paid attention in the management of income and expenditure of the devaswoms. It also worked for social and cultural causes and for the development of the society. Soon after the formation of a separate devaswom department, the government felt the need for codifying certain devaswom rules, proceedings, statues and general reports. The devaswom commissioner was assigned to take up the work. He prepared a devaswom handbook, which was published in

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192328. Yet the inversed volume of work of the devaswoms necessitated the modification of the devaswom handbook. So the government took up the task of compilation of a well-planned and comprehensive manual for the department. In 1930, a full time officer with sufficient experience was deputed to take up this work with the assistance of two clerks and a typist29. The work was completed in 1932 and it served as systematic and effective guide to the subordinates of the department and as a text book for the devaswoms. In 1938, the printing of volume II of the devaswom manual was taken up and the work made good progress during the year. Large-scale devaswom maps of the state were printed and supplied to the assistant commissioners as a guide for their inspection work30.

In 1922, a special officer was appointed for the verification of thiruvabharanams 31. The verification, custody and utilization of

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thiruvabharanams and other valuables in temples are some of the important items of work relating to deaswoms. Later the number of special officers were increased to five, one in each for the four deaswom districts and also one already sanctioned for verification work in the major deaswoms containing valuables for which the value exceeded above of 10000/- In 1937-38 an officer and two accounts were newly appointed in the office of the deaswom commissioner to deal with and expedite disposal of reports of the thiruvabharanam special officer. The following table shows that the work made good progress after various steps had been taken for the effective functioning of the concerned department32.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>No. Verified in 1937</th>
<th>No. Verified in 1938</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thiruvabharanams</td>
<td>4645</td>
<td>5053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bharanipatrams</td>
<td>9363</td>
<td>12780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pattuparivattams</td>
<td>1419</td>
<td>704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other miscellaneous</td>
<td>941</td>
<td>1469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>valuables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To keep the devaswoms in the proper perspective, the authorities inspected them frequently. The commissioner inspected the offices of assistant commissioners and verified the records and accounts. The assistant commissioners inspected the records and accounts of the superintendents office and sent their reports to the commissioners. The superintendents in turn inspected minor and major devaswoms within their jurisdiction and sent their inspection reports to the assistant commissioners. The inspection notes were prepared in Malayalam for the convenience of rectifying the mistakes without delay. Therefore, the inspection helped to minimise the irregularities existing in the devaswoms.

The devaswom department took steps for training the *santhikars* in order to perform *pujas* and related rites regularly in the temples as per the customs and usage. The daily pujas like *abhishekam, navakom, nivedyom, sribeli, namaskaram* etc could be done properly only with proper training. Similarly

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33 *T.A.R.*, 1924-1925, p.90

34 Ibid.

35 *T.A.S.*, vol.IV, p.29.
of the sastras. Specific qualifications were also prescribed for the santhikars. They produced certificates from tantries and pushpanjali swamigals at the time of recruitment\(^3^8\). But these certificate holders had neither the knowledge of sanskrit nor able to pronounce even the mantras correctly. Hence Sree Mulam Popular Assembly and local press repeatedly urged the importance of appointing qualified men to conduct puja services as prescribed by the sastras. The assistant devaswom commissioners also discussed this matter at a special conference held for this purpose and a detailed scheme was prepared and submitted to government for approval. Consequently, Sree Chitrodaya Devapuja Patasala was


\(^{38}\) Devaswom, File No. D.Dis.5607/1911, dated 4 October 1911, p.i.
started to impart proper training to the santhikars. A separate syllabus was also prepared for santhi School. The secretary of the tantric sabha supervised the teaching and conducted examination for the patasala. In 1932, the government increased the pay of santhikars who were employed to conduct pujas in minor and petty devaswoms. In 1935, nambudiri boys were selected to study vedic dharma and they were appointed in the religious services of the state. Higher salaries were provided to the employees of the devaswom department with a view to achieve greater efficiency in administration. The standardisation of paditharam for purifactory ceremonies in temples was discussed and passed at a conference in which thirteen tantries were present on invitation. The paditharams were intended to be applied to the temples governed by the malaya tantram as opposed to the paradesa tantram and fourteen devas (deities) common on the west coast. For the purpose of prescribing paditharams, the devaswoms were


classified into five grades. The several rites that have to be performed in the course of purifactory ceremonies in the temples were also classified. The articles to be used in each rite as well as 
\textit{dakshina} to be paid therefor was also fixed\textsuperscript{44}. These proposals were approved in general by \textit{tantries}.

In Travancore the temple was a multifaceted institution. Besides \textit{pujas} and festivals, periodical religious discourses and \textit{harikatha} were conducted in them\textsuperscript{45}. A separate fund was allotted for religious discourses during annual and occasional ceremonies in temples. The public in general and the Hindus in particular appreciated these discourses and thus it became an integral part of certain important devaswoms. Holding of religious conventions in important centres like Neyyattinkara, Trivandrum, Kollam, Alleppy and Kottayam contributed much towards the religious awakening among Hindus\textsuperscript{46}. Separate budget was sanctioned to purchase books to constitute a religious library was also a landmark step

\textsuperscript{44} T.A.R., op.cit., p.233.

\textsuperscript{45} T.A.R., 1925-1926, p.159.

\textsuperscript{46} \textit{T.A.R.}, 1932-1933, p.218.
taken towards the development of cultural side of Hinduism. The Sri Chitra Central Hindu Religious Library which was opened at Trivandrum in 1112M.E(A.D.1937) carried on very many activities. Great facilities were afforded to the reading public by the addition of 843 religious books newly purchased for the library over and above the 1525 books which it already possessed at the beginning of the year. Fifteen magazines and journals were also subscribed for. A library and lecture hall at Nagercoil was established in Suchindrum division. The opening of two new religious libraries one at Thattarambalam and the other at Kottayam was sanctioned by government during 1944. A large number of religious discourses were held in the library halls. The public evinced great enthusiasm and keen interest and they zealously co-operated in the endeavours of the department by making free gifts of books to the library and sometimes giving religious discourses without payment. An honorary curator was appointed for the library, he compiled a book entitled Geetha Samgraha, the first part of which was

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published during the year 1938\textsuperscript{49}. The institution might well be said to have become a center of religious learning at the capital. In addition to the Sri Chitrodaya Devapuja Patasala, the \textit{veda patasala}, at Trivandrum continued to work satisfactorily with seventy four pupils and two aided \textit{vedic} schools at Thirperunthura and Mankompu were stopped since the institutions were not working properly. The \textit{Thevara Patasala} at Suchindrum for teaching the recitation of devotional songs, was also established\textsuperscript{50}. To encourage the indigenous arts like \textit{kathakali}, \textit{chakkiyar kooth} etc the experts were invited to perform these arts in large devaswoms\textsuperscript{51}. Thus temples in Travancore served as transmitting stations of knowledge which by and large awakened the Hindu society of the state. In 1933, the devaswom department organised \textit{bhajana} parties from, among the worshippers in temples for singing devotional songs during \textit{puja} hours\textsuperscript{52}. Special \textit{bhajana} parties were also permitted to sing on \textit{virshika vritham} and other

\textsuperscript{49} \textit{T.A.R.}, op.cit., p.220.

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid.


special occasions\textsuperscript{53}. The chanting of *keerthanames* and devotional hymns in temples created a spiritual atmosphere.

**Social Reforms:**

The devaswom department had taken keen interest to eradicate some of the evil practices existed in Travancore from time immemorial. Due to the growth of new temple culture, the government adopted such measures with immediate effect. The low caste Hindus were not permitted to enter the temples and temple roads. Unapproachability, untouchability, pollution were but different aspects of the social evil of casteism followed by the caste-Hindus for Travancore. There occurred a prolonged agitation for temple entry and social status. The notable event of the period was that the government had appointed a committee known as Temple entry enquiry committee to consider the question of temple entry to avarnas which ultimately paved the way for allowing all sections of the society to enter all temples and temple roads of Travancore without any distinction of caste, creed or colour.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., p.10.
Slavery in the form of *uliyam* and *virutti* services was yet another social evil perpetuated by the devaswoms, to which unprivileged and underprivileged classes were subjected to. **Uliyam** meant as compulsory labour for the government without any remuneration\(^54\) and **virutti** constituted a kind of service **inams** and virutti holders set apart for the service of devaswoms and **uttupuras** had to render obligatory services which generally consisted in 'supplying at certain fixed prices, vegetables etc' \(^55\). The people engaged in **uliyam** and **virutti** services were poor peasants belonging to the backward and depressed classes. The temple authorities treated them like slaves and the slightest flaw or disobedience on their part was met with severe punishments. The **viruttikar** attached to Sri PadmanabhaSwamy temple at Trivandrum had supply curd for ceremonies in the temple at Paravur, a place near Kollam. During extra-ordinary ceremonies like **bhadradeepam**, **lakshadeepam**, **murajapam**, **triumasam**, **tulabharam**, etc. the obligation of husking paddy and supplying the rice to the temple fell upon the **viruttikar** of Kollam. This was because nearly 3000 brahmins had to be fed freely during all days

\(^54\) A.Sreedhara Menon, *A Survey of Kerala History*, p.322.

of the murajapam. Some of the viruttikars had to carry brahmin guests from Kollam to Trivandrum in palanquins inorder to facilitate their participation in murajapam ceremony. The daily allowance paid to this servile labour was on itangali rice per head56. Ezhavas were bound to supply firewood for the famous temple at Vaikam and for uttupuras attached to it. No remuneration either in cash or kind was given, nor was any land assigned to them as in the case of others under uliyam and virutti services. The viruttikar at Haripad had to render free personal service to the subrahmania temple festivals. Apart from rendering free physical labour, sometimes the duty of the uliyam and virutti holders included the performance of velakali during festival days in temples. The performance was to be made twice a day during evening and night. It had been calculated that nearly 300 viruttikars engaged for such performance, 200 of them at SriPadmanabhaswamy temple at Trivandrum and 100 to do the same in the SriKrishnasway temple at Amapolapuzha57. To escape from this slavery and oppression from the authorities, some of

56 Ibid.

the viruttikars belonging to the depressed classes converted to christianity\textsuperscript{58}. They began to abstain from works and seek protection from court of law. On one occasion the viruttikar in the Ampalapuzha temple refused to conduct velakali. In 1814 Col. Munro, the dewan of Travancore partially relieved them from their work. Another government order issued in April 1880 relieved the viruttikars of Trivandrum, Neyyattinkara and Nedumangat taluks from the burden of supplying provisions for the Isvaraseva ceremony in temples\textsuperscript{59}. In October 1883, dewan Ramayyangar appointed a committee to study the various problems relating to the uliyam and virutti service holders and to report the government defects of the system. The majority of the committee members recommended the immediate abolition of the system.

Dewan Rama Rao issued a notification in April 1888 relieved all virutti, uliyam holders from the obligation of rendering personal service to devaswoms and uttupuras\textsuperscript{60}. On August 7, 1893 the

\textsuperscript{58} E.R. File No. 60, Devaswom Department Records, A.D. 1910, p.11.

\textsuperscript{59} T.G.G., dated 7 May 1880, p.127.

\textsuperscript{60} Revenue Settlement Final Report, Vol.VI, p.169.
uliyam and virutti services were abolished\textsuperscript{61}. However, it continued in some parts of Travancore in one way or other form. After the formation of the devaswom department the seedlings of this evil system lost their roots completely from the soil of Travancore.

In some shrines dedicated to Bhagavathy, the custom of sacrificing goats and fowls was prevalent. In some part of the state, even the cow was slaughtered and sacrificed to minor deities. Protest meetings were arranged against this practice by the public. So the government decided to put an end to this practice and issued an order dated 9th March 1925\textsuperscript{62}. Cucumber took the place of the animal victims in the ritual\textsuperscript{63}.

Another age old custom prevailed in Travancore was a practice that savarnas who crossed the sea did not enter the temples or their being prohibited from entering the temples. This custom became out of practice as the caste Hindus freely enter

\textsuperscript{61} The Acts and Proclamations of Travancore, vol.1, p.211.


\textsuperscript{63} Report of the Temple Entry Enquiry Committee, 1932, p.90.
temples for worshipping\textsuperscript{64}. Abolition of purappattu was another remarkable work of the devaswom department. In Shertala temple during ulsavams, particularly on the puram day, obscene songs used to be sung by karakkars of the place in the belief that the deity's blessings could be won thereby. This was a long-standing practice. The government stopped this custom by their order dated 9th March 1927\textsuperscript{65}.

Another important step taken by the government and implemented by the devaswom department was against the devadasi system in temples of Travancore. Though initial steps were taken in 1925, it was finally abolished in 1931\textsuperscript{66}. In time immemorial, the Travancore temples had the practice of observing devadasi system. The agama works which prescribes temple rituals and ceremonies refer to nruttam or dancing as a part of temple ceremony\textsuperscript{67}. The first epigraphical record about the

\textsuperscript{64} Report of the Temple Entry Enquiry Committee, op.cit., p.252.


\textsuperscript{66} Devaswom, File No.D.Dis. 611/1931, dated 5 September, 1931.

\textsuperscript{67} Report of the Temple Entry Enquiry Committee, op.cit., p.90.
devadasi system in Kerala was found in the Chokkur temple at Neleswaram in Kozhicode taluk\(^68\).

The term devadsi simply meant 'the maid of God', which was also interpreted as to mean a maid servant to provide pleasure to the deity by dancing before them. Those 'wives of Gods' enjoyed a daily allowance of rice, monthly wages, kachapuram (cloths), kutimana (house site) and other perquisites\(^69\). Later some of the devadasis became rich and gave a portion of their earnings to the temples. This practice was prevalent in almost all major temples of south Travancore, in Sencotta and a few temples of Ampalapuzha, Karthikappalli and Cherttala taluks\(^70\). Like the devadasis attached the temples of east coast, women dedicated to temple service known as kudikaris had been doing several items of service in some of the important temples in Suchindrum district and Trivandrum district. The first attempt by the government to restrict

\(^68\) Elamkulam P.N.Kunjan Pillai, *Keralachritrattile Iruladanja Etukal* (Mal), p.75.


devadasi system came in 1909 when the division assistant of padmanabhapuram division rejected the application of a nair girl below 16 years to became a devadasi in Suchindrum temple on the ground that the Travancore penal code made it punishable to dedicated girls below 16 years of age to a temple71. Another application was also rejected in 1910 on the same ground. However, the government allowed the children of devadasis above the age of 16 years, if they had already undergone the sacrament of talikett as per marumakkatayam custom72. In 1921, the government decided to prohibit any further recruitment of devadasis either by way of adoption or by free choice. The final discontinuance of the system came into effect from 1st Chingam 1106M.E (A.D 1931) when all the remaining devadasis were relieved of their duties in the temples of Travancore73. Some of their duties were transferred to temple employees like the ambalavasis

and the devadasi system was finally abolished in 1931\textsuperscript{74}. The social reform movement undertaken by the government through devaswom department by way of purification of the Hindu community had its repercussion for a social change in Travancore, which led to the popularisation of temple worship in Travancore.

\textsuperscript{74} Devasowm, File No.D.Dis.611/1931, dated 5 September 1931.