INTRODUCTION

The name Travancore is the anglicized form of Thiru-vitham-kode or Srivalumkode, the abode of prosperity\(^1\). It occupied a prominent place in the first rank among the Indian states. Travancore lay in the extreme south-west of the Indian peninsula. Cochin and Coimbatore bounded it on the north, Madura, Ramnad and Tennevelly on the east, the Indian Ocean on the south and the Arabian Sea on the west\(^2\). It formed an irregular triangle, with its apex at Cape Comorin between 8\(^0\) 4' and 10\(^0\) 21' north latitude and 76\(^0\) 13' and 77\(^0\) 38' east longitude\(^3\). The area of the state was 7625 square miles of which more than 2500 were covered with forest and backwater. Its greatest length from north to south was one hundred and seventy four miles and the greatest breadth from east to west, seventy-four miles\(^4\). The state possessed picturesqueness of scenery, diversified by hills, dales and plains.

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\(^1\) The Travancore Almanac and Directory for 1936 p.1.

\(^2\) T.A.R., 1935 - 1936 p.1

\(^3\) T.A.R., 1930 - 1931 p.1

Known for natural beauty and panoramic view, its dense forests, thick plantations of coconut groves, vast stretches of paddy fields, rich mineral resources and other varied resources attracted the attention of the people from all over the world.

Travancore had a chequered history and vicissitudes of fortune, cultural tradition and substantial achievement and steady progress in the moral and material welfare of the people. The early history of Travancore is shrouded in legends and tradition. The term Venad and Vanchidesam denote this region. The word Venad means the land of celestial and Vanchidesam denotes the kingdom ruled by the descendants of the ancient Chera king whose capital was at Thiruvanchikulam. It was also called as Dharmarajyam means the land of good laws, piety, truth, charity etc. and the main religion of this state was Hinduism and was reputed as a Hindu state\(^5\). The family that ruled the country and large majority of the people were Hindu by religion. Hence a large number of temples came into existence. Hinduism being a way of life, the people and their life become identified with their religion. The political history of Travancore was direct and unbroken and decent from the Chera

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dynasty, one of the three ancient Hindu dynasties of south India. Since Martanda Varma (1728 - 1758) the state obtained the territorial configuration and effective administration. He and later rulers gave importance to religion. They ruled the country on behalf of the prime deity of Sree Padmanabhaswamy temple at Trivandrum. They assumed the title Sree Padmanabhadasa denoting that the ruler himself was the servant of the prime deity called Sree Padmanabha.

The population of the Travancore state was composed mainly of Hindus, Christians and Muhammadans. In 1931, the Hindus formed a predominant proportion making up total of 3,137,795 out of an aggregate of 5,095,973. The Christians and Muhammadans came next in the respective order. Out of 1000 persons in towns 648 were Hindus, 239 Christians and 112 Muslims, the proportion of Hindus being highest in the southern division, that of Christians in the northern division, and Muslims in the Central division. When considering villages and the towns altogether, the Hindu population was nearly double that of the Christians who in

\[ \text{T.K. Velu Pillai, op.cit., pp.367-383.} \]
turn formed four and a half times the number of the Muslims. The Muslims like the Christians were mostly converts from among the Hindus and their descendants. The proportion of the people following other religions such as Jainism, Buddhism, Animism, Judaism etc. to the total population was very small, their total number amounting only to 3336. In calculating the percentage of the total population of the state 61.5 percent were Hindus, 31.5 percent Christians, 6.9 percent were Muslims and remaining 0.07 percent were people belonging to several minor religions. 1931, census report shows the split up number in each religious division7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>3,134,837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arya</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brahmo</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>1,604,475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>353,274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tribal religions</td>
<td>2,907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jew</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jain</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoroastrians</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sikh</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,095,973</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Travancore the Hindu temples made their appearance from the first century of Christian era. Idol worship was the practice in Travancore from time immemorial. In fact idol or image worship is a universal phenomenon. Swamy Vivekananda said, "You will find images in some form or other, with some it is in the form of man, it is in the best form". Once when image worship gained sanctity, there arose the need for auspicious abodes for the images in order to facilitate individual and public worship. Since the images were worshipped as the visible representations of God, an aura of divine holiness was also attached to them. Places traditionally considered holy and places made holy by priestly ritual, chanting and prayer came to be chosen as the abodes of idols and images. Such places grew up into temples. In Travancore also, the temples had the evolution in the same manner, but they were mostly open-air shrines common among the Hindu-dravidian races in the other parts of south India. Vestiges of such unroofed, outdoor shrines dedicated to Goddess Bhagavathy and Nagaraja (Serpant) could be seen in Travancore even today. Mullakkal Bhagavathy temple and

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Mannarsala Nagaraja temple are some of the good examples. Most of temples in Travancore were founded and endowed by the Hindus particularly by the sovereigns\textsuperscript{10}. They considered the temples so sacred that even during battles, the fighting Raja or chieftain never dared to demolish a temple or interfered with it in any way. Instead the victorious Raja contributed \textit{thiruvabharanams} and \textit{pattuparivattoms} to the deity and conducted special \textit{pujas} and festivals as a token of his victory\textsuperscript{11}. The King also constructed the temples in an extravagant manner so as to show his reverence to the deity. The devotion and enthusiasm of rulers who were either \textit{vaishnavite} or \textit{saivite} accelerated the growth of temples in this region. Here, the life of village people was centered round the temple and the worship in the temple became an integral part of their daily life. They heard stories and finally started worshipping the deity. So every temple had a tradition and a story of its consecration by a great saint. This is an unique feature of the Travancore temples.


\textsuperscript{11} \textit{Travancore Archaeological Series} (T.A.S), Vol.III, p.55.
In Travancore, the temples were not merely places of worship but also the centers of social, cultural, economic and artistic activities of the places where they were built and consecrated. Later the temples became charitable institutions besides being health resorts rendering medical aid and assistance and also afforded employment and means of living to a large number of people. The tantries, santhikars, moothathus, warriers, unnis, kazhakakkars and marars and several others served as permanent employees whose services became indispensable for the conduct of pujas and other ceremonies in the temples\textsuperscript{12}. During ulsavams and extraordinary ceremonies in the temples additional men were employed for different works. It was estimated that such employees in Travancore temples came to be two lakhs of people\textsuperscript{13}. Some of the temples served as schools and colleges for vedantic studies. The epistemic sciences like tantram, mantram, puja, yaga, yoga were learned and practised in the temple premises. The Vishnu temple at Tiruvottiyur where vyakarana and somasidhanta were taught\textsuperscript{14}.


\textsuperscript{13} Report of High Level Committee on temple affairs, Trivandrum, p.9.

The Travancore census of A.D. 1891 found in the state a total number of 9364 pagodas. These pagodas were divided into two classes, viz., the first class included those temples dedicated to higher divinities like Vishnu, Siva, Bhagavathy, and other manifestations of these deities such as Padmanabha, Krishna, Sastha, Saraswathy, Mookambika etc. and other dedicated to lower divinities like Yakshi, Bhutattan, Sudalamadan, Muppitari, Mariamman etc. The pagodas dedicated to higher divinities belonged to the higher castes of the Hindu population who as a rule did not worship in the temples dedicated to lower divinities which were meant for worship of the lower classes of the population. Out of the total of 9364 pagodas, most of them managed and administered by private individuals. However these temples in Travancore occupied no mean place among Indian temples. In number and sanctity, they enjoyed a value and importance of their own. Some of the temples had merited mention even in the ancient puranas. During 8th century A.D. Brahmins, well versed in Vedas and Upanishads migrated from north to south India and this gave an impetus for renovated form of temple worship based on agamic

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15 V. Nagam Aiya, op-cit., p.10.

16 The Temple Entry Proclamation Memorial Souvenir, 1942, p.1.
principles. This also lead to provide a peculiar dimension for the temple worship and temple management in Travancore. Naturally the temple rituals became elaborate and complicated involving more expenditure. But the king or the ruler donated freely to the temples in different ways and thereby immense wealth accumulated in the temples. The *naduvazhis* and *desavazhis* who were the local chieftains also contributed their share to the temples. The *Uranma* temples which were managed by some important families of the village or priestly class were endowed with enormous landed properties and other wealth. In short the Travancore temples become very rich with movable and immovable properties.

In the course of time the administration of temples solely came under the control of the trustees known as *uralars*. They were considered as the custodians of the temple lands who enjoyed the rights to own, cultivate and dispose of the vast landed properties. In addition to revenue powers they exercised executive and financial powers. However these powerful bodies began to misuse their powers. This paved the way for misappropriation and mismanagement of the temple funds. Consequently the pujas and festivals in some temples were affected to a great extent. During the
accession of Martanda Varma of the throne of Travancore in A.D. 1729, he checked the influence of the priestly class. Even then the temple authorities continued their mismanagement till end of the 18th century. In 1811 Col. Munro took drastic step of taking over the management of 348 major and 1123 minor temples through an executive order with a view to achieve better management. The assumption of the management of these devaswoms by the government was not confiscation or usurpation and did not vest the properties attached these temples to the sircar properties\textsuperscript{17}. From that time onwards, the revenue from devaswom lands was collected by the government and credited to the public exchequer thereby mixing up of the devaswom fund along with the state fund. Hence the government found it difficult to distinguish between the various kinds of revenues. Therefore the government attempted to separate the devaswom land from sircar land and devaswom revenue from general revenue. As it failed, the government appointed a mixed committee in 1920, which recommended the bifurcation of devaswom revenue from sircar revenue. Based on this recommendation, a royal proclamation was issued in 1922 and a separate devaswom department was created.

\textsuperscript{17} Travancore Law Report (T.L.R.), Vol.XV, p.185.
with commissioner as the head of the department. The devaswom department introduced various measures for better administration. It classified the devaswoms in Travancore into four district and each district was placed under the control of an assistant commissioner.

The devaswom department put forth some major reforms including the steps to improve the financial condition of the temples. In Travancore the temples are the life centres of the every Hindu. But the right to worship in temple was denied to the avarnas. The socio-religious protest spearheaded by the oppressed section of the Hindu society against the religious segregation and social discrimination practiced by the upper class of Hindu society gave birth to a number of agitations. The temple entry movements opened the door for popularisation of temple worship irrespective of caste, colour or creed. The Guruvayur satyagraha, Vaikam satyagraha and Suchindrum satyagraha formed major part of the temple entry movement which paved the way for the historic event of temple entry proclamation to be issued by the Maharaja of Travancore on 12 November 1936 throwing open all temples in Travancore to all sections of the population. The proclamation
which effected a bloodless revolution was the realisation of a long standing demand of the non-caste Hindus of the state\textsuperscript{18}.

In course of time the government felt the need of bringing the temples under legislation and consequently Travancore-Cochin Hindu Religious Institutions Act (Act XV of 1950) was enacted by the Travancore legislature\textsuperscript{19}. The Act provided wide range of administrative control over the temples of Travancore and provided scope for better administration of temples in a more effective and democratic manner. The Travancore - Cochin Hindu Religious Institutions Act provided for the establishment of Travancore Devaswom Board and the Board started functioning in an effective way\textsuperscript{20}. The Travancore Devaswom Board not only gave a new impetus to administration of temples but also brought about some social works such as establishment of schools and colleges and libraries for the upliftment of Hindu population in particular and the people of Travancore in general. The Travancore temples were

\textsuperscript{18} Vide in the Appendix II, p.4.

\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Travancore Gazette Extraordinary}, dated 16 April 1950.

\textsuperscript{20} Vide in the Appendix IV, p.11.
bifurcated on 1st November 1956, the date of state re-organization when four Tamil speaking southern taluks of Travancore namely Thovala, Agastheeswaram, Kalkulam and Vilavancode joined with the then Madras State forming Kanyakumari district. Consequently, from Travancore 490 temples were separated and entrusted to the newly formed Kanyakumari Devaswom Board, constituted under Madras Government Act 30 of 1959 and is started functioning from 1st April 1960. This special reference to Kanyakumari temples torches the glimpses on the state and condition of Incorporated and Unincorporated temples of Kanyakumari district and the financial position of the Kanyakumari Devaswom Board. The bifurcation of Travancore temples also resulted in the division of devaswom fund. A sum of Rs.13.5 lakhs was allotted annually to the Kanyakumari Devaswom Board. However, the Kanyakumari Devaswom Board was abolished on 31st December 1974 and from 1st January 1975 the Kanyakumari temples were brought under the direct control of H.R. & C.E department, Madras. The temple administration which was instrumental in transforming the Hindu society of Travancore is therefore unique and the various factors that contributed to this uniqueness are worth studying.
Sources of Information

The thesis draws its inspiration from source materials that are available both in English and vernacular language, i.e. Malayalam. The available materials are classified as primary as well as secondary sources. The primary sources constitute the English records and Mathilakam records. They are preserved in the Kerala state Archives, Trivandrum and Central Archives, Trivandrum. The manuscript library and legislature library also preserve wide range of informations, ancient as well as modern, respectively. Acts, Proceedings, Reports and Proclamations are mostly preserved in the section for Kerala studies of the University Library, Trivandrum. The deaswom records preserved at Devaswom Board office, Nanathancode, Trivandrum also give a vivid description about the multifarious activities of the Devaswom Board. The official records and reports of the different units throw more light on the Devaswom administration.

The Government order issued from time to time provide variable and valuable information on the take over of temple administration, creation of a separate deaswom department, its
establishment, functioning and other related informations. The Mathilakam Records throw a flood of light on the origin of temple administration in Travancore and administration of temples by the land revenue department. The statutes enacted by the legislature and rules framed thereunder brought the temple administration under legislation. The enactment of the Hindu Religious Institutions Act, 1950 and the establishment of Travancore Devaswom Board and its functioning are studied from the records available with the law section of the Devaswom Board office and also from the legislature library. The various government orders issued by the Travancore Government and Kerala Government helped the reconstruction of administrative history of devaswoms in an analytical way making history as truthful as possible.

As for as the Kanyakumari District temples are concerned, the source of informations have been obtained from the Deputy Commissioner of Devaswoms, Suchindrum. Devaswom minutes, Administration reports, Devaswom Hand book etc help us in this regard. The H.R. & C.E. Act 1959, The Act 30 of 1959 etc give proper information about the H.R. & C.E. Department and Kanyakumari Devaswom Board which are helpful for the
reconstruction of the history of temple administration in Kanyakumari District.

The Secondary sources helpful for the study include State manuals, Gazetteers, Devaswom Hand Books, Devaswom Manuals, Journals, Souvenirs and other published works of renowned authors. They give immense information on the subject matter.

Above all the Foreign Political Consultation proceedings kept at National Archives of India, New Delhi and Political Consultation Volumes preserved at State Archives, Tamilnadu, Chennai furnish a wide range of information regarding the administration of devaswoms in Travancore and Kanyakumari District. A critical analysis and a comparative study of these different sources and the corroboration of evidences, give a full fledged account to finalise this thesis.