

**THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES OF GOVERNANCE AND GOOD GOVERNANCE: A  
STUDY OF KINGDOM OF TRAVANCORE (1729- 1949)****A.Jesu Amala Kavitha**

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**ABSTRACT**

Good governance has always been the ideal concept of political thinkers, decision-makers, policy planners, and academics. Citizens' primary concern in any society is the goodness of the government. And for this, governance systems and subsystems must be fundamentally efficient, effective, economical, ethical, and equitable. Similarly, the governance framework must be just, reasonable, fair, and concerned with citizens. In order to achieve these characteristics of good governance, the leadership machinery should also be able to take responsibility. The good governance had already long become the mainstay of assessing how the powers that be function. According to Banasree Devi, Governance can be both participatory and normative. Whereas the former emphasises citizen participation in the process of controlling the state, the normative definition of governance is value loaded, emphasizing the concept of good governance. This study is an attempt to analyze the concept of good governance and its application in the country's current administrative system.

**1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF TRAVANCORE KINGDOM**

Travancore was situated at the south-western extremity of India. The total area was 7,091 square miles, which was slightly smaller than Wales. In 1931 it had a population of 5,095,973, of which about 84 percent spoke Malayalam and 15 percent Tamil. In 1956 the Malayalam-speaking areas were finally merged into today's Kerala State, and the Tamil areas became the parts of Tamilnadu State. Travancore was one of the larger of India's many princely states.

Geography is indispensable to fix an historical event in space. An Historian should always have a map at his elbow. The indelible influence of geographical factor on history has always been recognized. Therefore Geography and Topography are auxiliary studies to the historian and to the makers of History. History is indeed conditioned by the geographical factors, but historical process is influenced more by non-geographical forces. History without Geography has no root so it would be quite pertinent and plausible to study the Topography and Geography of Travancore. Travancore occupied the extreme southwestern pass of the Indian Peninsula. It was formed on irregular triangle between 8.2 and 10.12 North Latitude and between 76.1 and 77.38 East Longitudes at the West Coast of Peninsular India. Its apex at Kanyakumari the land's end of India.

The State was bounded on the North by the Princely State of Cochin and the District of Coimbatore, on the East by the Western Ghats and the districts of Madurai, Ramnad and Tinnevely while on the West and South lie the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean. The State had an area of 7,621 square miles, its length from North to South being 174 miles and its width seventy five miles. It had a coastline of 180 miles in length and was the largest maritime State in British India, Travancore was divided into three major revenue divisions—Trivandrum in the South, Quilon in the Centre and Kottayam in the North. The Tamil regions comprise of the four southernmost taluks of the Trivandrum Division, viz., Vilavancode, Kalkulam, Thovala and Agasteeswaram, the Shen-kotta Taluk of Quilon Division and Devikulam and Peermede taluks of Kottayam Division. Twenty-nine languages were spoken in the State. Malayalam formed the mother-tongue of eighty-four percent of the population and Tamil of fifteen percent. The remaining one percent spoke all the other languages.

## 2. RULER OF TRAVANCORE KINGDOM (1729-1799)

Possibly the oldest residential house in India was located in the former princely state of Travancore, which was in southern India. Various epochs gave it distinct names. Venad, Vanchidesam, and Tiruadidesam are some of its more common names. Vanavanad, meaning "the abode of the Devas," was the original name of what is now simply known as Venad. The name Vanchi desam can signify one of two things: the land of baboons or the land of treasure. 'Tiruvithamkur' was the Malayalam interpretation of the term Travancore, while 'Srivardhanapuri' or 'Srivazhumkode' meant the seat of wealth in Sanskrit. The term Thiru-vitham-code, also known as srivalumkode, is an abbreviation of the English word "Travancore".

According to most historians, the Travancore Kingdom's reigning dynasty was comprised of a lineage of kings derived from the later Cheras who controlled practically the whole western coast of south India around 820 C.E. This ancient Hindu Royal Family governed Travancore for more than two centuries, flying a red flag with a dextral silver conch in the centre. During its height, the kingdom included what is now central and southern Kerala, the enclave of Irinjalakuda in the neighbouring Kingdom of Cochin, and the district of Kanyakumari in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. It was also connected to the Thachudaya Kaimal. The official flag of the state was red and featured a silver conch shell (*Turbinella pyrum*) with dextrally-coiled spirals in the centre. William Logan, in *The Malabar Manual*, states that, A copper-plate of their period tells that Shri Veera Kerala Chakravarthi who was a chieftain from West Coast of south India had granted lands and privileges to Jewish and Christian tradesmen who had visited to this region, Venad later became Travancore State under the reign of the Legend Marthanda Varma. The Travancore Princely State had been ruled by a lineage of twelve rulers from 1729-1949 C.E. who followed the typical matrilineal system of inheritance of for over 200 years.

Travancore had its own Maharaja but was governed by the British indirectly. Travancore signed a contract of subsidiary alliance with the East India Company in 1795. The British gave military assistance to Travancore in exchange for a tribute under this contract. Referred to as a subsidy following this, the first British colony was established in 1800. The resident was transferred to Travancore, and the advice of residents had a significant part in the formation of governance.

King Marthanda Varma inherited the small feudal state of Venad in 1723 and built it into Travancore, one of the most powerful kingdoms in southern India. Marthanda Varma led the Travancore

forces during the Travancore-Dutch War in 1739–46, which culminated in the Battle of Colachel. The defeat of the Dutch by Travancore is considered the earliest example of an organised power from Asia overcoming European military technology and tactics. Marthanda Varma went on to conquer most of the petty principalities of the native rulers. Travancore became the most dominant state in Kerala by defeating the powerful Zamorin of Kozhikode in the battle of Purakkad in 1755.

### **3. GOVERNANCE AND GOOD GOVERNANCE IN TRAVANCORE KINGDOM (1800-1869)**

Travancore, the princely kingdom, has a long history dating back to ancient times. Travancore's early past is buried in mythology and tradition to a large extent. King Marthanda Varma inherited the small feudal state of Venad in 1723 and built it into Travancore, one of the most powerful kingdoms in southern India. Travancore's territorial structure was established during the reign of Marthanda Varma, who reigned from 1729 to 1758 C.E. Through conquests, he expanded the Venad Kingdom, cemented royal power, restructured administration, and established new governance at what is now known as modern Travancore.

Travancore's modern history began with the reign of Bala Marthandavarma. Travancore's reigning line is descended directly and unbrokenly from the ancient Chera dynasty, one of the three major Tamil dynasties of the ancient days. Travancore was eventually split into minor kingdoms and principalities, the most notable of which were Venad, Attingal, Kayankulam, Designanad, Purakkad, Tekkumkur, and Vadakkumkur.

The Travancore government that is the rulers took many progressive steps on the socio-economic front and various developmental activities. Travancore became a prosperous modern princely state in British India, with reputed achievements in education, political administration, public work, and social reforms.

Marthanda Varma during his 29-year reign, extended the Venad Kingdom through a series of military expeditions from Kanyakumari in the south to the boundaries of Kochi in the north after defeating a union of feudal lords and restoring internal stability. The Dutch East India Company and Travancore fought in the 1739–1753 Travancore–Dutch War, which was a feature of this reign. Travancore had ties to other countries.

### **4. GOVERNANCE AND GOOD GOVERNANCE IN TRAVANCORE KINGDOM (1870-1949)**

The rulers of the Travancore Kingdom from 1870 to 1949 CE were rulers from Tiruvananthapuram: Ayillyam Thirunal Rama Varma III (1860–1880), Visakhham Thirunal Rama Varma IV (1880–1885), Sree Moolam Thirunal Rama Varma VI (1885–1924), Maharani Sethu Lakshmi Bai (1924–1931), and Sri Chithira Thirunal Balarama Varma II (1931–1948).

#### **4.1 Ayillyam Thirunal Rama Varma III 1860–1880**

On 14 March 1832, Ayilyam Thirunal was born to Rani Rukmini Bai, Maharajahs' only sister Swathi Thirunal, and Uthiram Thirunal. The Travancore Royal Family's inheritance and primogeniture were determined by the Marumakkathayam system, i.e. through the female line. With the accession of Uthram Thirunal in 1846 and the removal of his elder brother from the line of succession due to imbecility, Ayilyam Thirunal became the Elaya Rajah, or apparent Travancore State heir. Only four of Rukmini Bai's seven children survived, including a daughter, Rani Lakshmi Bai, and the eldest and

third son was declared unfit to govern due to mental incapacity. Travancore, is considered a pioneer in the field of Public Health System. Interestingly, public health work commenced as early as 1813. Vaccination against smallpox was introduced in that year. The Maharaja of Travancore set an example by ensuring that members of the Royal family took vaccinations. Six decades later, a Royal Proclamation in 1879 made it compulsory for students, inmates of jails, and public servants and others amenable to influence of the government to have small pox vaccination. An ambitious vaccination program was launched by the middle of the 19th century. Registration of vital statics in rural areas was also started along with vaccination.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

The foregoing research reveals the Governance and Good Governance of Kingdom of Travancore from 1729 to 1949. Travancore is mostly an agricultural nation. Consequently, the peasant's position as the first and last something in the administrator's eyes takes on added significance. The laws governing land tenure in Travancore carry the imprints of certain theories espoused by writers, judges, and administrators who unwittingly imprinted the norms that govern the interaction between rulers and ruled into their service. Jenmom came to signify exclusive title to land in Malabar, and Jenmis in Travancore were excused from land taxation. Many reforms, especially those connected with the uplifting of the depressed classes have come to nothing. How far this reactionary policy is because of the Consort's influence it is hard to say, however, there is undoubtedly a considerable feeling inside the state that her presence so near the head of affairs is detrimental to its best interests.

Various agriculture reforms were implemented under Maharaja Moolam Tirunal's thirty two year reign. In 1772-73, the first village Kettezhuthu was established, and Travancore reclaimed every single one of the areas contained within its current boundaries. The colony was believed to be made up of all cultivable fields and made no claim to accuracy in recording what was heard. With the formal appointment of a group of well-known administrators as Dewans of Travancore, the state of Travancore embarked on a massive and energetic drive to modernise itself. In a country eager to adopt "enlightened and progressive ideas from the West," the missionaries' contributions to healthcare and education were invaluable. As early adopters of Western educational practices, the government oversaw a large number of schools; similarly, the missionaries' medical clinics staffed by highly qualified European physicians were invaluable to the state.

The state government of Travancore needed to change its attitude towards the developmental projects. Healthcare and education policy were also prioritised. The government of Travancore was significantly involved in the adoption of these policies, both as an ally and an adversary. To rephrase, one of the reasons that pushed for social and political reforms, accelerated the process of state-building, and sparked social reform was the robust presence of excellent governance and government in Travancore. Another significant action during that period was the abolition of slavery. The events unfolded simultaneously in Travancore and Cochin. Slavery existed in these states from the beginning, and since Colonel Munro's time, various measures to improve slaves' conditions have been proposed. The lengthy debate over the measures resulted in their complete emancipation in 1854.

The Travancore royal dynasty used a unique strategy to administering its domains and managing the State's assets. The monarch was known as Padmanabha Dasa, and he reigned on God's behalf and

vowed loyalty exclusively to God. Maharaja Chithira Thirunal Rama Varma was on the verge of declining the title of Rajpramukh in 1949 because he couldn't give oath to the Indian government. The levies were called as Padaivari the army tax and Kappalvari in Travancore navy tax. The precise rate of these military cessations was unknown. However, it appears that the collection was left in the hands of persons of prominence and social standing. Another source of consistent revenue was the treasure trove. The law states that if the monarch discovers any ancient treasure, half of it must go to the treasury and the other half must be dispersed among the Brahmans.

Because he was the ruler of the land, the monarch also had half of the metals found in the earth. Values found below earth were subsequently declared to be entirely owned by the state. Donations given at formal occasions also contributed to the royal coffers. Fines imposed by the courts were a major source of income in the past. The state receives revenue from royal properties such as woods, mining, and related industrial units, along with salt and other minerals. The king or queen might claim a quarter or a tenth of the property that had been lost and then recovered. Beni Prasad and Majumdar, *Political Theory and Administrative System in the Age of imperial Unity*, write that, "There was almost nothing that evaded the fiscal tyranny system. Customs duty, Sales tax, and taxes on livestock, clothing, gold, roots, condiments, fruits, timber, skins, leaves and clay pots all contributed to the state's revenue. Transportation taxes and toll-house dues also contributed significantly to royal income. Furthermore, the laws were freely applied during ceremonial events with a wide range of products and services".

Tributes given by conquered vassal chiefs, money looted during battle, and occasional attacks on enemy areas provided an extra source of revenue for the tracts of land, which they farmed with labor sufficient to fulfill the king's own needs. "The commercial sector arose as a significant source of royal wealth throughout the Kulasekara Empire, due to the arrival of Arabs and Chinese merchants. In other regions of the world, there is a growing demand for Indian spices". The Maharajah established communications to facilitate trade and business in the state under the capable Dewanship of Rajah Kesavadas. During this reign, Travancore improved its ports and exported a variety of new products. Shipbuilding was also prioritised, and several developments occurred in this area. During the war, taxes were raised, but after paying the British and covering wartime expenses, these taxes were repealed. Travancore's capital was developed, and infrastructure such as bridges and other public works such as irrigation canals were built. People benefited from the establishment of bazaars and shopping centres. Fortifications were improved, and ammunition and weapon production, particularly gun production, was stepped up. Palaces across different regions of the country were developed, and new ones were constructed.

In the political history of Modern Travancore (1729-1949 C.E.), the throne was passed down to twelve rulers via the matrilineal system of inheritance that was common in the Royal Family. The first King Anizham Thirunal Marthanda Varma who had invested his entire life in battle to expand his territories and bring some administrative reforms by imposing many taxes, without mercy on poor people, while the next King Karthika Thirunal Rama Varma and Balarama Varma followed the same trend in taxation and strengthening Travancore's boundaries during their reign. Despite the Queens' active engagement in Travancore's social reforms, no political reforms were implemented during their reign. Within the Thirunal Rama Varma family, you can find Swathi, Uthradom, Ayilyam, Visakham, and Sree Moolam. Among the many administrative reforms enacted by Thirunal Rama Varma are the

following: the development of communication facilities, the introduction of vernacular and western education, enhancements to irrigation and land tenure systems to boost food production, changes to the judicial system to resolve civil and criminal disputes, and the incorporation of local people into legislation. Subbarayan Arippattu writes,

Education became more important as a text book committee became active and books began to circulate widely. It wasn't until the printing press became widely used in the second part of the nineteenth century that prose writing really took off. that poetic language or verse is not sufficient for propagating knowledge.

The problems of Marumakkathayam inheritance of properties among Nairs and Vellalas were removed from society, the age-old Devadhasi system in temples was abolished, and Queen Sethu Lakshmi Bai promoted English education. Shri Chithira Thirunal Balarama Varma's most significant political reform was his bicameral administration, which included local people in the lower house for legislation enactment. The ban on temple entry was lifted shortly after the Vaikom Satyagraha. As a result, low castes were permitted to enter temples. According to Desai, Compared to the first half of the nineteenth century, the changes in society, economy, and politics that happened in the second half were far more extensive and significant. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that the communal and caste movements in Travancore involved nearly every community and caste imaginable. The Pulayas and Parayas, who were among the lowest castes, still organised into caste groups and lobbied for improved treatment from the government and the upper classes.

During the reign of Chithira Thirunal Balarama Varma, caste-based reservations were made for the appointment of Travancore Government Services. All administrative and social reforms implemented in Travancore Princely State had far-reaching consequences. Today's administration has its roots in Travancore Samasthan's changes. During their reigns, the Kings in Travancore placed a strong emphasis on administrative reforms, while the Queens placed a strong emphasis on social reforms.

One must thus be cognizant of the possibility that the capable rulers who governed Travancore from 1729 to 1947 portrayed their actions as more fruitful than they actually were. Thus, one must exercise extreme caution while dealing with sources pertaining to the government of Travancore if they wish to conduct a more accurate and thorough examination of Travancore society. From the vantage point of this excellent governance, however, rulers' sources remain. Because caste constituted the primary basis of Travancore's social structure, administrative divisions were virtually identical; yet, political circumstances varied throughout these areas. According to Paravoor Lathika Nair, dynasty dominance was prevalent in Travancore's political history for a long time.. However, with colonial penetration, power shifted into the hands of British supremacy. The feudal institutions such as caste hierarchy and conventions dominated the state bureaucracy. Women's participation in Travancore politics was unusual in the early days. Nonetheless, women maintained the spark of political interest that occasionally ignited the state.

Thus, the judicial system underwent a gradual transition from 1729 to 1949, when Indian Laws were applied throughout the state. The modern system of judiciary grew gradually in the Travancore Princely State, and the rulers of the state effectively handled it as one of the main administrative organs of their domain.. They made decisions and passed various Regulations for the welfare of their subjects

through their judicial administration. All of the administrative and social reforms implemented in Travancore Princely State had far-reaching consequences. Travancore Samasthan's changes influenced today's administration. During their reigns, the Kings in Travancore placed a strong emphasis on administrative reforms, while the Queens placed a strong emphasis on social reforms.

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