

**A Retrospection into the Cultural History of Kerala: An Analysis of Manu S
Pillai's *The Ivory Throne: Chronicles of the House of Travancore***

**Dissertation submitted to the University of Kerala in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Degree of Masters of Arts in English Language and
Literature**

University of Kerala

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2022

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Preface

The study of popular cultural traditions and cultural perceptions of historical experience is done through the integration of anthropological and historical methods known as cultural history. It explores historical documents and narrative accounts of events from various points throughout a culture's timeline, the study of the past through the social, cultural and political context of a community or through the lens of their preferred arts and modes of conduct. It also studies and interprets the record of human societies by denoting the various distinctive ways of living built up by a group of people under consideration. It involves the aggregate of past cultural activity, such as ceremony, class in practices and the interaction with locales.

This dissertation titled “A Retrospection into the Cultural History of Kerala: An Analysis of *The Ivory Throne: Chronicles of the House of Travancore* by Manu S Pillai” is divided into four chapters. Chapter one discusses the author and the history of Travancore. Chapter two deals on tracing the changing social systems and thoughts in matrilineal, devadasi, caste and family systems. And also studies the development of newspaper culture, tea culture, and blending of European culture in paintings of Raja Ravi Varma. Chapter three details Sethu Lakshmi Bayi’s ruling strategy and representation of women in politics. The concluding chapter gives a brief summary of the whole discussion along with the researcher’s own analysis and observation. This thesis attempts to draw the untold historical parts of Kerala systems, its causes and effects and analysing the presence of women in political representation.

Chapter One

Introduction

In the early centuries, Travancore, a former princely state in southwest India, was located in the Kingdom of Kerala or Chera. The area was ruled by the Chera empire in the eleventh century and was united in the middle of the eighteenth century. It was established as the autonomous state of Travancore, which was aligned with the British in Southern India. The government of Travancore was renowned for being progressive. Travancore and Cochin combined to establish the state of Travancore-Cochin after India attained independence, and Kerala was given that name in 1956.

Early in the eighteenth century, the Travancore royal family—also referred to as Kupaka Swaroopam, Thripappur Swaroopam, Venad Swaroopam, Vanchi Swaroopam, etc. ruled the Kingdom of Travancore. When Travancore united with India in 1949, Kupaka's rule came to an end. Eleven successors followed, and their residual rights were removed in 1971. Martanda Varma's reign begins in 1729. Some members of another royal dynasty with roots in the modern-day Malappuram area were adopted by the Travancore royal family. Anizham Thirunal Martanda Varma broke with convention when aristocratic lineages came to power. He employed merciless force to further his goal, murdering the landlords as well as his own relatives if they failed to submit to him. He is credited for creating modern Travancore by putting in place monarchical rule to end feudalism.

Kerala's history may be linked to three kingdoms in Southern India: the Chera, Chola, and Pandya empires. Cholas, Pandyas, and Cheras were in charge

of the areas north of Madras, which make up Sreeelanka and southwest Asia, Madras, and Kerala, respectively. The Chera family was initially sent to the far north of Kerala (Kolathiri dynasty) area, and a few branches were afterwards moved to Venad, where they amalgamated with the Kupaka family. The most well-known emperor of this Chera-Kupaka dynasty was Sangramadhira Ravivarman Kulashekhara (1266–1314). Attingal and Kunnumel Ranis, two princesses from the Kolathiri dynasty, were adopted by him. The line of kings after Ravivarman followed the Marumakkathayam law of matrilineal succession. Whenever there were no females to take forth the line, princesses were adopted and the latest adoption was in 1994.

A well-known queen was Umayamma Rani, also known as the Queen of Ashure, who ruled around the end of the seventeenth century. The kingdom was a princely state in the British Empire by the early nineteenth century. Under Chitira Thirunal, the last king of Travancore, the princely kingdom grew to be the wealthiest one in the British Empire. The women of the family were popularly referred to as Attingal Queens. Attingal was also known as ancestral home for Travancore royals. It is said that many Attingal queens misused their status and signed potentially dangerous treaties with foreign forces, without even consulting with the reigning Travancore kings their powers were removed permanently by Martanda Varma. Thus, Attingal queens lost all private rights in the family properties, their power limited to the role of just supervisor of such properties. But the fact was that in political matters Ranis exercised no sovereign rights. They required king's previous assent or confirmation. They were designated as Regents

who were appointed to administer state because the monarch is a minor or absent or incapacitated.

The Ivory Throne, which contains untold tales of Travancore, tells the stories of most of the kings and notable people, but it places greater emphasis on Sethu Lakshmi Bayi, the Regent of Chithira Thirunal, her life, and her methods of governance. The book highlights her grandeur while also outlining how she was banished from history. This book is a chronicle of those fascinating times from the era of Martanda Varma, India's liberation from colonial rule two centuries after his passing, those years when the region became a smouldering cauldron of social, political and cultural contestations, story of a monarchy that was constantly reconciling its dynastic prerogatives with the demands of its colonial masters, the story of the tremendous transformation is told through the life and times of most distinguished rulers of Travancore in the modern period, and story of the last queen of Kupaka dynasty and its Ivory Throne where five million subjects of the state were entrusted in the hands of a female monarch.

In *The Ivory Throne: Chronicles of the House of Travancore*, Manu S Pillai focuses on the remarkable life and work of Sethu Lakshmi Bayi, the last and forgotten queen of the House of Travancore. The supporting cast includes the ostentatious painter Raja Ravi Varma and his wrathful wife, scheming matriarchs of violent, profligate and sordid character, wife swapping court favourites, vigilant English agents, quarrelling consorts and lustful kings. The book conjures up a dramatic world of political intrigues and factions, black magic and

conspiracies, crafty ceremonies, the contest for power and authority in the age of empire.

Twenty pages of well researched Keralan history make up the first part of the book. The author's extensive comments and bibliography are included at the conclusion. Photographs of the main characters from the epic story are displayed in between. This book is a remarkable accomplishment that has combed through the extensive dispatches of British residents in Travancore and the archives of the India Office at the British Library in London. This book contains three separate works. The first volume tells the tale of Travancore's seventh regent, Sethu Lakshmi Bayi, who came to power in 1924. The second volume is a critical examination of the Travancore matrilineal system's theory and practise. The third volume is an in-depth examination of the history of the social revolution that occurred in the 20th century and that eventually resulted in the demise of the way of life that was followed by the aristocracy and tolerated by subjects. One may easily forget that it is the author's first publication after giving it even a quick glance.

Manu S. Pillai is an Indian author and well-known historian who dared to lucidly chronicle Kerala's history. *The Ivory Throne: Chronicles of the House of Travancore*, his debut book from 2015, is what made him famous. His adventure has since been continued by *Rebel Sultans: The Deccan from Khilji to Shivaji* (2018), *The Mahatma and the Italian Brahmin: Tales from Indian History* (2013), and *False Allies: India's Maharajahs in the Age of Ravivarma* (2021). From running Shashi Tharoor's parliamentary office to writing his debut book, *The*

Ivory Throne, and the author earning the Sahitya Akademi Yuva Puraskar for the same and other prizes he had received, his accomplishments are deserving. It is made of his intense love for learning about and recounting the lesser-known history of India.

History can be defined as the study of change over time, and it covers all aspects of human society. Political, social, economic, scientific, technological, medical, cultural, intellectual, religious and military developments are all parts of history. History is an umbrella term comprising past events as well as the memory, discovery, collection, organization, presentation, and interpretation of these events. Historians seek knowledge of the past using historical sources such as written documents, oral accounts, art and material artifacts, and ecological markers. Herodotus, a fifth century BC Greek historian, is often considered as the father of history in western tradition, has also criticized as father of 'lies'. Lies can also be called the different perspectives and interpretations according to the historian. Here historiography is an important factor to check the blends occur. History changes according to the writers' perspective in earlier times. And it changes in *The Ivory Throne*. The book encompasses the wide chances of checking out different perspectives complying with facts.

The Ivory Throne forwards the cultural history of Travancore which is the criticized and scrutinized work of the historian Manu S Pillai, which can be placed on the thrones of history shelves.

Chapter Two
Changing Systems and Cultural Blending Portrayed in
The Ivory Throne

Attingal and Kunnumel Ranis, two princesses from the Kolathiri dynasty, were adopted by Sangramadhira Ravi Varman Kulasekhara (1266–1314), a renowned king of the Chera–Kupaka dynasty. Following Ravi Varman, there was a matrilineal or marumakkathayam system of kingship. It has been common in Travancore since the thirteenth century to install females who had been adopted by another Keralan royal family as Ranis. Marumakkathayam was a system of matrilineal inheritance prevalent in regions of Kerala. Descent and inheritance of property was traced through females. The elder male was considered the head known as ‘karanavar’ and the entire assets of the family were controlled by him as he was the sole owner. The properties were not handed to his sons but to the daughters of his sons or to their sisters. Under the matrilineal system, women always enjoyed great power. Ranis ruled over by their male relatives, enjoyed a position of pre-eminence among the Kupakas.

An inscription dated 1576 found in a temple, records renovations funded by Makayiram Tirunal, a Kupaka queen. It seems unfortunate that a few names had survived of the queens of Attingal. Among all the Attingal ranis, Aswathi Tirunal, sometimes referred to as Umayamma Rani or Queen Ashure, is the only lady who stands out. When Dutch novelist Hendrik van Rheed first encountered her in 1677, he was impressed by her honourable and masculine demeanour and described her as an ‘Amazon’ who was revered and feared by everybody. As in

business and war, Attingal ranis were remarkably unabashed in their personal lives also. They enjoyed sexual life with their desired men. It is quite amazing that the rest of the world was one where sexual freedom was permitted only to men and the above instance happened in Travancore, Kerala. Umayamma pointed out that she gave some presents to one Englishman who satisfied her sexual need. Regrettably, nineteenth century Victorian puritanism and the moral cleansing of Indian culture led to a purging of the aspects of Umayamma's vibrant life. The decline of the Attingal ranis from glory commenced with the death of multifaceted Umayamma in 1698. Two Attingal ranis came to rule the whole of modern Travancore in nineteenth century. Gowri Lakshmi Bayi came to power as there were no male princes in the royal house. Sethu Lakshmi Bayi had succeeded the ninth Attingal rani as Chithira Tirunal was not in the age to rule. Their ceremonial status and dignity were honoured, remained as equal to the Maharajah, celebrated matriliney and the female but no longer enjoyed direct political authority and proud legacy.

In the absence of a female, a girl was adopted from Kolathiri dynasty who was an aunt of Martanda Varma. The Rani was dependent on the nobles there, and the power of ranis declined since noble began to pull the royal strings. When the aristocratic lineages rose to power Martanda Varma, used execution, an incentive to ensure royalty with his ruthless power in 1729. He evacuated feudalism by destroying chief nobles of Attingal with his armies. It was in 1731 Attingal Rani signed a Silver Plate Treaty with Martanda Varma relinquishing all her sovereign rights to the Rajah after four centuries of queenly independence. The Treaty

guaranteed that only sons of the Attingal ranis would succeed to the throne of Travancore. He put towards two more clause which ranis without any real political power, remained an equal signatory and living as shadows of their former greatness even become more dominating.

In the nineteenth century, there had been a number of Regencies of India such as Begum Qudisa III, the Dowagar Maharani Vani Vilas Sannidhana, Gwalior and Cooch Behar had two widows in power. However, these women were only figureheads whose role entailed ratifying the better judgements of their Councils of Regency. Dewans were the executive members on these bodies acting as the real rulers, requiring the Maharanis to sanction their resolutions. These independent women had no other option but to comply. In Mysore for example, the minister was told to consult the Maharani only as is practicable and desirable liaise directly with the government of India. The case of Travancore, however was exceptional. The defining aspect here was that female member of the dynasty were inherently entitled to their positions due to the matrilineal system, and did not own their status to the accident of marriage and were entitled to rule whenever eligible male heirs were found wanting. By the nineteenth century, the concept of Regency had arrived in the state through the medium of the East India Company which acquired the right to intervene in all matters concerning Travancore including the line of succession. The company was aggressive as the ruler was a female. Their attitude towards women also influenced matters as the authorities couldn't see how a young girl of twenty could possibly manage so many difficulties in Travancore. Women were seen in Europe as private property, with

little freedom, no rights of inheritance and wife battering was considered legitimate domestic behaviour. Colonial chauvinists pulled the political strings, as the throne should be secured by a male heir. In 1813 the rani gave birth to a son, she was asked to step down from the throne, govern as regent until the boy attain the age to rule. Gowri Lakshmi Bayi didn't surrender any powers, she continued with unrestrained actual authority. When she died, a sister Gowri Parvathi Bayi became the regent and continued to exercise full powers. The boy who was supposed by the real monarch, never sit in her presence, in his minority. Both these women therefore were regents only in names. They were treated as sovereign, with all the attendant authority. Senior female of the family had unrestricted during a minority, and the strict letter of this law was modified in 1813 by Gowri Lakshmi Bayi. Removal of this matrilineal system is a part of making a patriarchal society.

The caste system was practised in Travancore in a deplorable variety. Beyond the practise of untouchability, caste was pushed to the limit. Even from the gaze of superior brethren, certain groupings were forbidden. In India, Brahmins had a position of dominance and were revered as gods on earth or household servants. Only Nairs, the following main caste, were permitted to approach Namboothiri's. The Pulaya caste of peasants was required to maintain a 90-foot separation from Brahmins and a 64-foot separation from Nairs. Low castes were not allowed anywhere in high caste dominated public places due to fear of ritual contamination which is a kind of social exclusion. They had no place in village councils, no entry to temples, no access to markets or any other

locations of socio-political importance. They were invisible non-entities in a deeply hierarchical society. Caste was such a ruthless injustice where Swami Vivekananda defined that the whole state in a lunatic asylum.

Through the late nineteenth century under pressure from missionaries and British, some aspects of caste were relaxed, especially in the new western inspired educational facilities. This opened door for low caste groups known as Ezhavas, where a small number of educated leaders emerged. The efforts of the reformer Sri Narayana Guru also united the community and made them conscious of their rights. Ezhavas begun to question their communal alienation, convinced of its injustice in 1919 a mass of Ezhavas met in village of Kanichukulangara to demand temple entry and termination of all other social disadvantages.

Vaikom and Mahadeva temple was chose as the spot to commence the movement later came to known as Vaikom Satyagraha. That town was an important religious centre in south India attracting thousands of pilgrims every year from outside Travancore. It was also a very orthodox place, dominated by Brahmins and other high castes. The roads around the four outer walls of the temple were prohibited to low castes. The goal of Satyagraha was to terminate their discrimination and have all the roads opened up to everybody irrespective of caste. The movement expertly trumpeted and publicized. Local magistrate issued orders prohibiting the events, large numbers of policemen were deployed on ground to deal with the possibility of violence. The three satyagrahis- Kunjappu (Pulaya), Bahuleyan (Ezhava) and Govinda Panikkar (Nair) walked together towards the barricades, trying to cross the roads. The police permitted Panikkar to

pass, since he was high caste, but not the others. They came with their three groups everyday but they were arrested. Mulam Tirunal was irritated of E. V Ramaswami Naickar popularly called Periyar who observed that the temple roads were not the property of his grandfather. Later Maharajah concede the satyagrahis requests but neither he nor his government budged.

It was the new ruler Sethu Lakshmi Bayi, who did new moves regarding the movement. She had released the arrested satyagrahis brought the movement back to spotlight. The participation of women seemed distinct the movement. A participant P. K Kalyani and group of women were piloting the Vaikom Satyagraha. A series of promotional events were successfully organized, then it was announced that Maharani had agreed to grant the leaders of the movement. She accepted a petition signed by thousands of high caste Hindus .When later the circumstances that Maharani was not well, as she was not in full possession of power in 1924, there were disputes between ruler and minister or Dewan who was against the movement and stood with the arguments of high class.

Sethu Lakshmi Bayi again pointed out, if they got more vote on the movement in the Legislative council and received support, then no option would be there for the government other than to support the change. The Legislative Council of Travancore consisted of fifteen officials, seven nominated non officials, and twenty-eight elected members from the public, total of fifty constituents. The debate between them ensured enormous support in favour of the reform. Thus, the government orders to withdraw the police and remove the barricades from Vaikom. Several debates happened, and the opening of the roads

is not the final but the first step in the ladder of reform, Mahatma declared. Roads around Vaikom temple on the northern, western and southern sides, thrown open to all Hindus irrespective of caste while the main gate of the temple was barred. But the movement can be considered as a great achievement in history which helped in lowering casteism. Mahatma's applause and newspapers' elaborate reports pointed the greatness of Sethu Lakshmi Bayi.

When English education was induced in the half of nineteenth century, British looked for educated Indians to help them in administering in trade. Thus, competition for job offers highlights the inequalities of Travancore's society. Tamil Brahmins who immigrated at the time of Martanda Varma who vividly took up English education with ritual precedence as qualifications dominated higher government appointments. This disappointed the lower castes, Ezhavas claimed jobs for them as they are a part of Hindus. At the same time Christians too demanded that only the best should be employed even if they are not Hindus. It was a community against community advent in twentieth century. Ezhavas had several battles to fight while caste below them had miserably no voice. Syrians dominated Roman and Latin Catholics among Christians. Other minorities, like Muslims, also had a voice, but it was harsh. Everyone, including college students, should cast a ballot in Legislative Council elections, regardless of caste, however this merit was later disregarded. Although Mulam Tirunal made certain accommodations for the Christians and lower castes, Brahmins and Nairs continued to enjoy favour. Even though she succeeded him as ruler, Sethu Lakshmi Bayi kept her commitments by performing a number of good activities.

She opened up the government to marginalised classes. A Christian was appointed as chief secretary for the first time, a position second only to Dewan, another was made a member of the Medical Board. In 1928 Ezhava was appointed as a District Judge, other a Divisional Assistant and both persons of lower caste bossing over hundreds of Nair employees. Non- Brahmins were appointed into the state services that weakened upper caste monopoly. It was a democratisation, as no one had done before or after her reign.

The Indian government passed further economic and political reforms, such as establishing the joint-stock Bank of Travancore and its administration to rural self-government, and added the Village Panchayats Acts of Travancore to the law. Local government, or the panchayat system, involves the development of cottage industries, agricultural development, and education that stimulates a sense of responsibility in the common citizen. It also involves maintaining roads, communication, cleanliness, irrigation wells, etc. The money collected from each village was to be spent in the village, for the villagers, and by the villagers. The right to vote was also granted at that time, was a democratic right which was only considered as a privilege of high class. The Government of India took over and completed the process after Independence when the panchayat system took root in the state.

The distinction of so called high class and low class has its story in history. The caste system in India is the paradigmatic ethnographic example of classification of castes. The BBC reports claim, the India's caste system is among the world's oldest forms of surviving social stratification. Manusmriti, regarded as

most important and authoritative book on Hindu law. It acknowledges and justifies the caste system as the basis of order and regularity of society. The system bestowed many privileges on the upper castes while sanctioning repression of the lower castes by privileged groups. Until eighteenth century these distinctions were more flexible and people could move easily from one caste to another. Now research shows that hard boundaries were set by British colonial rulers who made caste India's defining social feature primarily to create a single society with a common law that could be easily governed.

The Independent India's constitution banned discrimination on the basis of caste and provided a level playing field to the traditionally disadvantaged, the authorities announced quotas in government jobs and educational institutions for the lowest in the caste hierarchy. Despite all these, still the caste problems are persisting today. It clearly shows the hierarchy set in the society and at the same time the placement of lower caste in government job sections and educational institutions is rising. It makes the 'general' group disappointed. For example, in a PSC examination, the marks obtained by the oppressed class may be lower than general class but due to reservation they would get seats than general who gained more in score sheets. And there are debates regarding and this claim can also be silenced by giving reservation to the general class who are facing economic crisis.

Ahead of a crucial election, government had approved ten percent reservation for economically backward upper-class individuals in government jobs and education. Both houses of parliament passed the Bill. Following cabinet approval, the government moved to amend the Constitution in order to grant the

reservation on the basis of economic backwardness. Reservation based on economic status can never be alternative to caste-based reservation, because the socially backward communities are entitled to protection against discrimination based on their group identity. Many people complain that reservations make India insufficient, but one must remember that to achieve economic efficiency, certain freedoms like the choice of occupation, work and educational opportunities are necessary preconditions. The reservation system is just like athletics track where players are given different positions to make sure that the distance, they run in total are same. Until one creates an environment where everyone is guaranteed some minimum capabilities through the guarantee of reservation, he cannot claim to have fair competition.

Kerala draws ‘the history of civilization’ in the ports which owed a tremendous deal to trade and how the prosperity increases. The ‘Book of Kings’ in the Old Testament refers to the flourishing King Solomon had with the Chera dynasty between 1015 and 996 BC, importing gold, silver, ivory, apes, peacocks, sandalwood and precious stones from their ports. From 69 BC the celebrated Cleopatra of Egypt sent her ships to Kerala, had a close alliance and seek sanctuary here with her son upon her defeat in the Battle of Actium. Kerala’s staple produce of pepper was more valuable than gold. Fearful of the open sea and violent winds, competition was there in finding sea routes to India. Kerala’s ancient relations with China were trade of good and transfer of culture, intellectual knowledge and more.

Before the rise of Calicut, it was the fabled port of Muziris now known as Kottapuram port served as the principal gateway to India and one of the greatest commercial centres of the ancient world. The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea described it as being at the height of prosperity and it placed the region on the global map so that even in the millennium before Christ, Kerala was recognized in all parts of the maritime world. Welcoming Arabs, Jews, Christians and many other ethnic groups with different cultural backgrounds with open arms.

After the floods of Periyar the historic port became a residue and later in the fourteenth century Cochin emerged as the port where Dutch and the English succeeded the Portuguese as the masters of seas and of Cochin. The northern part of Kerala was dominated by the Zamorins, became the Malabar district of the Madras presidency, while Cochin and Travancore retained their independence as tributaries. These three governments worked in peace with each other, giving rise to hope that Kerala could resume its place as one of the great trading centres of the world. But regrettably there was no way for three-mile channel, which was required for deep-sea ships to sail in, Cochin remained as a small port.

In the early twentieth century more ships started passing the shores of Kerala, which acquired a strategic significance during the First World War. Sir Robert, a distinguished engineer was commissioned to develop the harbour and dedicated twenty-one years of his life to the new venture leaving a lasting mark of the glory behind. Government of Madras invited collaboration of Travancore also as the expenses were forbidden for Cochin to bear alone. Construction of a special dredger named The Lord Willingdon, named after the Governor of Madras and in

1926 it was taken out to sea for the first time. This dredger dredged a two-mile long, 450-foot-wide channel to the inner harbour, set a world record. In that year itself a steamship from Bombay called The Padma became the first deep-sea ship to harbour in Cochin. Cochin harbour did not only benefit two coastal princely states alone but would serve as a gateway to south India. With each year trade grew here brought greater revenues on businesses, banks, hotels and more. Employment was generated, incomes rose for common men and women. Cochin emerged as a great port in the world and became the business capital of Kerala symbolising enterprise and industry.

Tea became an important commodity in trade and is drawn how this trade commodity became part of Indian culture. It is stated that by the era of Tang emperors in China (618-907 AD), cakes of tea were being transported, powdered and consumed as liquid jade. By 1618 tea became an international delicacy. By 1766, it was imported to Britain and East India Company decided to cultivate the crop in their colonies as tea become a commodity of great profit. The British had produced opium in India and had exchanged it for tea from China and was first planted in Assam. It spread into Nilgiris in the south and then to the hills along the Kerala coast.

The story of transformation of the hills of Central Travancore was the story of enterprise, courage and self-reliance. Tea's first cultivation on those hills had a great explosion in commercial agriculture. The profits went to British planters and benefit to the people of Travancore was not significant. Foreigners built first roads there, schools, hospitals and other modern amenities, and a new

avenue was opened for economic advancement. When European planters were backed by the government of India, Nairs and Brahmins had no interest in plantations and Christians had lobbied for gains in the sector, the seven Indian owned estates in the state, Christians held five, and they did venture with greater success into rubber. The attractive avenues are given for profitable employment to growing number of young men of the middle classes. It also benefited lower sections of the marginalised castes. In 1921, the largest number of estate workers in Travancore, like Parayyas, Shanars, Sakkiliyans, Ezhavas, Maravas, Pulayas, Kuravas, Kammalas, Muslims and Vellalas all from backward communities and the opening up estimated 75,000 new jobs benefited them with offer of cash incomes. Tracing the history of tea, it is been seen how tea cultivation provided employment to the poor and later became a necessary drink of India and now a part of culture.

Tea or chai is loved throughout India and is amongst the most popular drink today. India is the second largest tea producer in the world after China and a net tea exporter too. Indian tea is one of the finest in the world due to strong geographic conditions, heavy investment in tea processing units, continuous innovation, augmented product mix, and strategic market expansion. Tea is considered as a national beverage with the 212th birth anniversary of an Assamese planter who was hanged during the anti-British uprising of 1857. Today tea becomes part of our Indian culture. Masala chai is common in north India but in south, milk tea and black tea are favourites. Indians have an affair with tea in the evenings as a sip of tea are like breaths of energy and freshness for menfolk

after their return from work in the evening. It is also seen as homemade medicines for many ailments ranging from common cold to severe headaches. In India, is seen as a herbal remedy for seasonal coughs and cold. In this changing and growing world, the love for tea is constant after all these years.

Like tea has influenced, Newspaper had also become a part of life and called Newspaper culture. Newspapers play an important role in society. They serve as a tool for shaping thought, a forum for public discussion and debate, and a way to protect and inform the public of wrongdoing. Printing arrived with foreign missionaries at the end of the sixteenth century and in 1722 the first printed Malayalam book was published from Rome. Newspapers and journals took some more time to make their appearance and in 1847 The Rajya Samacharam was published in Malabar, with the distinguished linguist and scholar, Hermann Gundert, as its editor. In 1876, the Satyanadam Weekly commenced circulation and in 1881 the Kerala Mitram followed. The Deepika on 1887, and most celebrated, the Malayala Manorama was born in 1888. In 1920s there occurred an outburst of journals and magazines.

It was a moment when many communities were waging a war for office space, and the press began to highlight these conflicts as a step toward communalism. A brand-new era of agitational politics began. Rumours were purportedly collected by the press, which would later refute them as they filled their columns and editor's pockets. The idea of quality press regulation existed under the Dewanship of Mr. Raghavaiah, that is, during the reign of Mulam Tirunal, but nothing was done as it was certain to result in significant disputes on

the basis of freedom of expression. However, Sethu Lakshmi Bayi decided to proceed the idea of newspaper regulation upon the press, she affixed a series of qualitative standards and a number of stringent restrictions. Several protests were there but she remained impassive and moved with the decision. By 1930 the Travancore Press Act passed under which newspapers suspected of mischief were asked to deposit rupees thousand with the government and pay up to rupees two-thousand for publishing unacceptable articles. Travancore press flourished with number of newspapers and periodicals without breaching the law, that maintained the standards.

Local teashops and coffee shops provided place for newspapers, read the news loud out for general benefits. Tea shops thus became a part of culture, a place where serious discussions takes place. The demise of the newspaper has been predicted. Yet they continue to survive globally despite competition from radio, television and internet that serve core social functions in successful cultures. Newspapers value to a successful society that are easily accessible despite changes in reading habits and technology. Newspapers played a big role in high literacy rate of Travancore.

Art is also a part of culture. It influences society by changing opinions, instilling values and translating experience across space and time. Art is a form of communication that allows people from different cultures and different times to communicate through pictures, sounds and stories. Art can cross the cultural boundaries, as it can be understood in any language and all social groups. Theatre,

literature, painting, sculpture, poetry, music, dance, architecture etc. can convey messages and ideas without restrictions.

Painting, an art of expression of ideas and emotions moreover it is the magic of blending colours, where the artists amaze the viewers, make them think even without their spoken words. Raja Ravi Varma, who pioneered colourful changes in painting, was called the painter prince of Travancore. Admired by the paintings on walls and corridors of his palace at his teenage, observed it which has the touch of European art, had seen tales from Hindu mythology depicted on walls of temples and the murals at his family home absorbed with great enthusiasm, brought them to life himself specifically in oil paint. His paintings featured religious themes, deities, stories from the Ramayana and Mahabharata and beautiful women in diverse settings. It is believed, more than 7000 paintings he had painted before his death. He referred to as the father of modern Indian art widely known for his realistic portrayal of Indian gods and goddesses. He learned water-colour painting from the royal painter Ramaswamy Naidu, and later trained in oil painting from Dutch artist Theodore Jenson. He popularized oil painting in India.

Ravi Varma combined European realism (realism, an artistic movement emerged in France in the 1840s, realists rejected romanticism) with Indian sensibilities, he travelled to find his subjects and his inspiration came from varied sources that is from Indian literature to dance drama. He was the first Indian to use western techniques of perspective and composition and to adapt them to Indian subjects, styles and themes. He mastered western art of oil painting and

realistic life study but painted themes from Indian mythology. He majorly painted for royalty, also credited for taking art to the masses with his prints and oleographs. Oleograph is a print textured to resemble an oil painting. He aspired to take his art to the masses and intent led him to open a Lithographic Press in Bombay in 1894. Lithograph (in Greek meaning stone write) is a type of print process done by stone and metal. The first picture printed at his press was The Birth of Sakuntala, followed by numerous mythological figures and saints such as Adi Shankaracharya. In 1901, Ravi Varma sold the printing press to a German lithographer Fritz Schleicher. The popularity of prints continued till modern times.

Ravi Varma's success came not only because of his innate talent and hard work, but also because he had the advantage of high birth and social cultivation that made him an exotic catch to many of his adoring patrons. He spoke several languages in varying degrees of proficiency such as English, Tamil, Hindustani, Gujarati, Marathi and some German. His close links with the royal house of Travancore distinguished him from the legions of nameless artists and painters in India. He succeeded in taking his art into the homes of millions through the lithographic press despite financial loss and several sacrifices and gave dignity to the profession of painting.

His paintings were sent to the Fine Arts Exhibition sponsored by Lord Hobart, the Governor of Madras. He had won gold medal for the painting *Nair Lady at the Toilet* an admired work and became the talk of the town. Winning medal for the same painting in the exhibition in Vienna, brought him coverage in

all major newspapers. He got gold medal, a serious honour at the time for young native artist. His *Sakuntala's Love Letter* was sought by Sir Monier Monier-Williams as frontispiece for his famous translation of the Sanskrit *Abhijnana Sakuntalam*. He became a popular member in Madras society and an established painter with very pleased royal patrons in Trivandrum. He died in 1906, become one of colonial India's great artists.

There Comes Papa is an 1893 painting of Ravi Varma and it focuses on Varma's daughter and grandson, looking towards the left at an approaching father. Evoking both Indian and European style, the painting has been noted by critics for its symbolism regarding of the Nair matrilineal practices. The matrilineal system allowed men and women to enter and leave relationships with very little difficulty. During Sambandam event, men would visit woman's household and present her with clothes and gifts, and after obtaining the consent of both the family and the woman herself, the men could enter into a relationship with the woman.

The mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century saw the disintegration of this system due to the shifting morals and new laws such as Malabar Marriage Act. The matrilineal and matrilineal system of kinship was redefined. The painting *There Comes Papa* was reflective of this newfound redefinition of societal roles, combining European influence and native tradition. For example, a dog is there in the picture which is regarded as unclean in Indian culture but it is the European idea correlates to domesticity. Furthermore, although the woman in the image is dressed in a manner that would be expected

of an upper-class Nair, her posture is reminiscent of European fashion. It also portrayed a demand for patrilineality to end. Victorian paintings showed expecting mothers waiting for their fathers to join them to form a small, content nuclear family. The main subject of the picture was Ravi Varma's own daughter, who was raised in a traditional taravad but is shown as an embodiment of the modern family ideal.

In 1925, the final demise of the matrilineal system inherited after decades of debate and dissent. Passing of matrilineality was such a laudable event in history. Scholarly circles would lament that Victorian morality and the insecurity of men what had once stood out and positively shaped the identity of Kerala. Many things contributed to the fall of matrilineality, but an air of nostalgia would diligently persist against the forces of modernity that withdrew from Malayali women those uninhibited rights of power and independence they had enjoyed for centuries.

There is diversity of thoughts regarding the origins of matrilineal system. Some anthropologists claimed it as the continuation of a system one time existed all over the world, while others contend that it was conceived due to some mysterious, compelling circumstances that replaced patriarchy at a historical point. One thought is mythological and based on Malayalam treatise called Keralolpathi and a Sanskrit work called the Kerala Mahatmyam. These refer to the creation of Kerala by the legendary hero Parasurama, who is supposed to have hurled his battle-axe from Gokarna to Cape Comorin and claimed from the sea all the land in between. He is then said to have awarded this new region to Brahmins after which he summoned deva, gandharva and rakshasa women for the pleasure

of these men. The Nairs, the principal matrilineal caste, were according to this theory, the descendants of these nymphs and their Brahmin overlords, tracing their lineages in the maternal line. Nobody of any intelligence was deceived by this version, but was dismissed by William Logan in his Malabar Manual as a farrago of legendary nonsense.

The other theory relates to the ancient martial tradition of the Nairs. Boys were sent off to train in military gymnasiums from the age of eight and their sole occupation was to master the art of warfare. Because of their constant zeal for military excellence and glorious bloodshed, they had no time to husband women or economic resources. So, a man would never marry a woman instead he would visit a lady in her natal home solely for sexual purposes and the offspring would be her responsibility entirely. So, the onus of family and succession was taken care of by women, who formed large establishments and managed their affairs independently in the absence of men. While the military tradition of Nairs, is also more circumstantial. Thus, there is a lack of clarity on the origins of matriliney.

The above theories don't offer an identity and security to woman. Under matrilineal system, women were not dependent upon men, having control over and access to economic resources. This was something women in the more conventional patriarchal system did not enjoy; they were guests in their parents' houses till marriage; at their husbands after marriage; and under their sons' control in later life. On the contrary, Nair women always were not dependent on their husbands. Sexual freedom was also remarkable so that while polygamy was happily recognized in other parts of India, in Kerala women were allowed

polyandry. Nair women, if they wished can have more than one husband and in the event of difficulties were free to divorce without any social stigma.

Widowhood was no catastrophic disaster and when it came to sexual rights, have complete control over their bodies.

The marriage system in fascinated the visitors to Kerala. This was called sambandham (relationship) and it was not seen as a sacred contract but as a purely fugitive alliance, terminable at will. The bond between brother and sister was considered more sacred than that between husband and wife. Women were economically protected and independent in their natal homes, they needed outside men only to father their children. Sambandhams were permitted remarkable interaction among Kerala's high castes, leading to an interesting, advantageous mixing of culture and various bloodlines. Among Brahmins only the eldest son was permitted to take a Brahmin wife and all other men had to seek sambandhams from the high caste matrilineal communities. This meant was to protect Brahmin property and other younger men belonged to their mothers' families had no claims on their patrimony; and for the women alliances with a superior caste amplified prestige.

To take Travancore royal family itself as a case, husbands were always Koil Tampurans who were fathered by Brahmins. Every Maharajah had a Brahmin for a grandfather and Nair for a grandson, both of them were commoners. That is Nair's father, grandfather and great-grandfather came from different rungs of the social hierarchy. The very procedure into a sambandham was easy and simply involved the man handing the woman a piece of cloth before

an oil lamp. Once Sir Mountstuart Grant- Duff Governor of Madras met a lady from Travancore and the talk somehow came to the topic of textiles. He innocently said that he would like to send a cloth from Madras as a specimen of the handiwork executed there to which the lady blushed and quickly responded that she was obliged and quite satisfied with her present husband.

Rajah of Cochin who ruled from 1895 to 1914 said that he had proposed a girl who was sixteen already had a husband and even he had raised no objection for that. These kinds of things were not considered improper at the time. In Travancore, Queen Ashure, had an English lover in the seventeenth century while Gowri Parvathy Bayi in the early nineteenth had two husbands. The author C. V. Raman Pillai wedded his late wife's sister, for whom it was the fourth marriage in a line that included two dead husbands and one divorce.

Traditional Kerala society never frowned at all this for the simple reason that such sexual relations were not a taboo. It was customary and made perfect sense within the historical and economic context of the land. But what did happen by the nineteenth century was the impact of Christian missionaries with their prudish Victorian notions of decency and morality, aided by the colonial enterprise to 'civilise' India. Patriarchy was another norm that added fat to the fire. To the modern-day observers Kerala's marriage practices were a source of outrageous horror.

This was also the time; Nair men went out to new English colleges and schools to study which were exposed to foreign opinions. This education influenced them in many ways. When sambandham was equated to concubinage

and the women to mistresses and the children called bastards, suddenly Kerala was told that female ought to be a paragon of Victorian virtue, which means her rampant sexuality begged to be controlled and the man-wife-children format of family, what was eminently correct. Nairs good understanding of the advantages of individualism, they began to call for the reform of the marriage system and for the right to claim individual shares in ancestral taravad properties. Both were vehemently opposed by orthodox sections of society but as the political clout of these educated men grew, some legal breakthroughs were gained.

In 1896 the Government of Madras allowed for sambandhams to be registered as proper marriage. After the enactment, the entire Malabar district only fifty-one sambandhams were registered and in the decade that followed only forty-nine were added. In other words, while young men ashamed of their traditions, sought to emulate the civilized world and cultivate women in the image of the Virgin Mary, society had far too much at stake to abandon the existing system. But pressure continued to be applied and cracks began to appear. In 1912, Travancore gave its first boost to nuclear families, modelled on the patriarchal style when it allowed men to bequeath part of their self-acquired property or money to wives and children instead of taravad. It gave women the right of maintenance from husbands, so long as they did not 'live in adultery' that is have other partners. Thus, the man became the breadwinner of the woman and her children, his dependants. She didn't lost rights in her own taravad but by 1923 the call was final, matriliney should be abolished and individual partition was to be the weapon of choice. In all those reforms the 'individual' refers is male and not

female. 'Masculinity', so stressed upon by the west became a touchy point for the Nairs. So, it was essential for the Malayali man to rehabilitate his identity by the 'sweat of his brow' and by controlling his woman in order to gain respect in the modern or Victorian world.

Women were asked to cultivate an image as humble, passive and in need of protection. 'Womanly qualities' were championed with special emphasis on sexual virtue and loyalty to a single husband. Colonial authorities actively promoted this and it is noteworthy that Queen Victoria conferred upon the late Rani Lakshmi Bayi the imperial distinction called the Crown of India to commend her moral integrity when she refused to divorce Kerala Varma Valiya Koil Tampuran at the height of court intrigues in the 1870s. In the novel *Indulekha* by O. Chandu Menon, a landmark in Malayalam literature which became very popular with women, the protagonist Madhavi is a prototype of the new Malayali lady. She has all the qualities of a self-assured woman but is tremendously dedicated to her one man, has the graces of an English lady, and is horrified when her virtue is questioned.

Women's magazines also began to make their appearance in Kerala, promoting the domesticated, dedicated motherly lady. *Keraliya Sugunabodhini* in 1892, added writing energise the moral conscience, cookery, biographies of 'ideal women' and other such enlightening topics were covered. *Mahila Mandiram* strongly argued that women's role was as mistress of the (husband's) household, and as a caretaker and that she should leave everything else to the superior competence of men. By terminating matriliney, permitting partition of property,

legalizing all sambandhams, and inaugurating the age of the patriarchal family in Travancore by the Nair Regulation of 1925, similar acts were passed for the Ezhava and Vellala communities also, other sections of which were matrilineal. The Government of Madras followed the lead and did the same in Malabar.

The same Victorian influences are still persisting in the society and it had a strong base too. And it is a way of oppressing woman on several scenarios. Marriage now is considered as a sacred ceremony where a woman is tied knot with special thread called 'thali' and wear 'sindooram' on her forehead by man. Once it was just a cloth handing occasion in their privacy but now it is a big ceremony in public. Other way it is said that if that married woman accidentally seen with a man who is not her husband, it is the society's choice to consider the woman whether she is chaste or she had the principle of morality. Once the society had allowed sexual freedom to both men and woman and the same society itself abuse only women for her individual right.

Individualism is the western morality but it just only favoured the term for males and it was not for females. But when it came to India, it turns into the form of oppression. Womanly qualities that imposed was that they should be humble, should be a figure of endurance, should consider man as superior; father as magistrate, husband as god who gives bread and shelter.

The way of dressing also is a part of culture, and can see an enormous change in wearing clothes. It was quite normal for Malayali women even in the nineteenth century to move around bare-breasted, just as the Malayali men also wore nothing above the waist. However, by the end of the nineteenth century,

with the woman's body becoming subject to so much of scrutiny, her bare-breast began to be condemned. Women's breasts became a matter of embarrassing social concern. Mannathu Padmanabhan in his speech to Nairs, "we need to keep our women in place by making them virtuous". Matriliney became an atrocious repository of sin and debauchery, and a national humiliation for Kerala.

In India and also in Travancore, there were women dedicated to deities and temples, their life committed in service of God, dancing and singing and preserved high culture in great Hindu temples of the land. Indian histories and tradition resound with stories and legends about these devadasis, maidens of god. A two-thousand-year-old inscription of Emperor Asoka tells the tale of a painter, Devadonna, and Sutantaka, the beautiful devadasi he loved. The Meghadutam of the legendary poet Kalidasa portrays a vivid picture of the great shrine of Mahakalain Ujjain, which resounded with the sound of the ankle-bells of the dancing girls. An eighth century king of Kerala went on to dedicate his own daughter to the deity at Srirangam, while in the thirteenth century a Kupaka prince enjoyed a romance with another devadasi serving in the temple of Siva at Kandyur. Even in the colonial nineteenth century, they remained dedicated to their vocations, some won fame as musicians and actresses.

Nineteenth century Victorian moral values that were imposed by the British in India embraced by local elites began to change the position of the devadasi. Ancient Indian texts like the Natyasastra classed women into categories such as 'kulina' and 'veshya'. The former was a chaste householder, one to provide heirs and a womb to preserve the purity of her line and the other, the

provider of pleasure – aesthetic, intellectual and bodily pleasure – to men of a certain social standing. But the stigma attached to their dance and art and music intertwined as it was with sexuality and expression, was new-found and a consequence of Western cultural attitudes that frowned on women's bodies and the use of these without a badge of marriage. While on the other hand women were being liberated and sent to college and asked to take up vocations, on the other, their sexual personality had to fit the patriarchal model of a daughter, sister, wife or mother and cease to exist outside this parameter. It was inappropriate to equate an Indian devadasi with a Western prostitute who sold her body for personal economic reasons. Now, it is considered as an act of shame that how people viewed or judged from an angle of western culture.

Although it used to be regarded as nothing more than an owner-slave relationship, marriage is still a concept of cooperation. Although having a nuclear family lessens conflicts within the family, isolation within the family still matters in today's busy world and prevents people from understanding the importance of relationships. Whatever the new change, "mimicking the west" is the only comment made. The irony is that while the West today imitates Kerala's 'immoral' past, Kerala is now reliving their 'moral' past.

Chapter Three

Women's Leadership and Political Participation

Sethu Lakshmi Bayi was born on 1895 in Mavelikara to Ayilyam Nal Mahaprabha, who belonged to a branch of the Kolathunad royal family which had settled in Travancore in the late eighteenth century and was the daughter of Raja Ravi Varma. In the next year 1896, Kochukunji gave birth to Sethu Parvathi Bayi. At the age of five, Sethu Lakshmi Bayi was propelled into the seat of Senior Rani of Travancore, becoming the youngest person to occupy that exalted station in all its history. Women enjoyed greater power in the early sixteenth century. Before Senior Rani, there were female queens inherited the line, it's unfortunate that few personal names have survived of the queens of Attingal. Some survived names are Kupaka queen Makayiram Tirunal, Asvathi Tirunal, Gowri Lakshmi Bayi and then followed by Sethu Lakshmi Bayi.

Those who observed Sethu Lakshmi Bayi's lifestyle are thrilled by the fanfare and splendour. She lived in the stately Sundara Vilasam Palace in Trivandrum Fort, which was one of the handsomest buildings in the country. They were ladies at her beck and call, day and night, and a single sneeze from the girl was enough to raise competitive uproar among her staff, as everyone rushed to comfort the child. When she went out, a posse of levered guards marched alongside her. If she chose to go for a drive, entire streets were closed to traffic for her convenience of travel, while pedestrians lined up by the roadside, bowing with customary reverence of the royal carriage. When the Rani walked into room, the whole assembly would rise and bow and, in her presence, all stood with the

left hand on the breast and right hand covering the mouth, lest their breath to pollute their honoured queen. She was called ‘Her Highness’ even by her father and later by her husband, and had to greet her with most formal salutations, taking a seat only when permitted by the queen.

Despite all these formalities and glamorous life, both Senior Rani and Junior Rani have to follow some protocol within the royal household, with proper etiquette and rigorous discipline. Starting with brushing in the morning under the supervision of court dentists and concluding with slumbering in the right posture at night, there were no escape from the tyranny of exaggerated custom for the members of the royal family. Being rulers, they didn’t have the choice and freedom to change these habits. There were rigorous rules about everything. Being a member of the royal family was like being a favourite bird in a golden cage. The Ranis were denied a normal childhood and being conducted through each day by infuriating manual of royal conventions. In the case of Sethu Lakshmi Bayi, she adapted herself quietly to the enormous changes that had arrested her life. When her old playmates and friends stood before her quietly, saluting her as they were taught to, she met them with a regal silence of her own and learned to behave like a queen they saw her to be. Her mother wanted her to control her feelings and patiently carry on with her head held high.

In addition to the education these princesses were ought to be trained in aesthetics and other aspects of that variety by cultivated European ladies. When come to their wedding, they had the right to choose their husbands. Senior Rani’s marriage with Rama Varma was a celebration at the time. She had the

extraordinary ability to draw out people's opinions and to express very succinctly in her very young age.

The Maharajah died as heir to the throne leaving the twelve-year-old Sree Chitira Tirunal behind. As the Maharajah was still a minor, facing opposition from his mother Parvathi Bayi, it was agreed that Sethu Lakshmi Bayi would be Regent before the minor king came of age.

The monsoons of 1924-soaked Travancore and portions of high ranges were submerged. It was one of the greatest natural disasters to occur in south India. Relief works commenced soon. It was at this stage Sethu Lakshmi Bayi came to power. She could grasp the magnitude of the disaster, but filled with consternation. She was not equipped but her responsibilities made her determined. The management of relief was left entirely to Mr Raghavaiah owing to her inexperience but she issued some maiden policy directions of her own. According to her orders, the agricultural loans was increased, physical reconstruction activities were launched successfully with PWD allotted money to repair roads and other infrastructure.

While Government of India imposed the inferior title of Regent for her, she held the title of Pooradam Tirunal Maharajah in all official documents and proclamations. Under the matrilineal system, where the sexes were equal, the monarch's gender was of little consequence. It was the position and dignity that mattered and whoever exercised supreme authority in the state and in the royal house was held to be the Maharajah. The Government of India with its Western outlook and cultural constrains, might have called it Regency, but to the local

people of Travancore, the reign of Mulam Tirunal Maharajah was rightfully succeeded by that of Pooradam Tirunal Maharajah.

In Vaikom Satyagraha, she played a role that made her celebrated in newspapers and got applause from Mahatma Gandhi calling it as a 'bedrock of democracy'. Mahatma's meeting with her at last led to the opening of roads to all castes except to the road of temple. Lakshmi Bayi's gesture to support and understanding for the cause, who had manifestly strong views on her own, decided to release the prisoners and make it known that she was not against the spirit of movement. She listened to the problem accepted the petition signed by thousands of high-caste Hindus, imploring her to do the good that her uncle wouldn't. She didn't promise as she was not in full possession in 1924, but introduced the topic of road entry in The Legislative Council of Travancore. There was a competition between Dewan Mr Raghavaiah and her, that who would finally prevail. The Satyagraha was a bone of contention between them and their contrasting ideals. For Lakshmi Bayi, the movement was vital to ensure her supremacy in government while the Dewan was against the ideals that paved a way for her.

After Mr Raghavaiah, Mr Watts was appointed as Dewan whose name was proposed by Lakshmi Bayi. Politicians and newspapers outraged against her, stating as an unwise step. There was shock and surprise in appointing a Christian in a Hindu state. And it was just a start later made her do something for the marginalized classes.

Due to her high moral standards, her fame was elevated and she became known for her extraordinary abilities and prodigious administrative skills. Although she always embraced improvements, she took great pains to uphold her exceptional reputation as a person of nearly Catholic good character. She affixed the sign manual to the Newspaper Regulation, imposing upon the press a series of qualitative standards and a number of stringent political restrictions as well. The far-sightedness manifested itself in her endorsement of the Cochin Harbour Scheme which proved to be a great success.

Sethu Lakshmi Bayi gave her full support to the cause of female education. Girls went to college in the state were rewarded with an invitation to join their queen at her palace for tea. She backed such symbolic gestures of her commitment to female empowerment. Only months after her succession, Dr Mary Poonen Lukose, Travancore's first woman graduate and product of one of the best medical colleges in the West being surgeon in charge of the Women and Children's Hospital and Sethu's personal doctor to the head of the Medical department of Travancore. The news was printed in the Madras Mail under the heading of 'feminism in Travancore', Dr Mary was also nominated as a member of Legislative Council, becoming the first woman to take a seat in the house. It was the first time in India that a woman being appointed as the head of a major department, also the first instance of a 'lady legislator.'

Five women from different caste despite the class were nominated to the assembly. In 1927, Sethu opened up the study of law to female students despite adverse comments, hence Anna Chandy became the first judicial officer not only

in Travancore but also in the entire Anglo-Saxon world and became a criminal lawyer in the High Court in Trivandrum by 1930. Some astonished that, she is a man with woman's clothing as no woman could possibly argue cases with such ruthless vigour. Some disgruntled by claiming 'if I also wore a blouse and a sari, I would have won'. The Unemployment Enquiry Committee that Lakshmi Bayi constituted carry specific studies on the problem of female unemployment in Travancore. 'A Degree', it would note in its report, 'makes a daughter as valuable in the parents' eyes as a son' was inspired.

Much of her work was of a foundational nature, whether it pertained to banking, ports, infrastructure, social reform and more. She could see the flow of time and did not try to obstruct it normally, laying bedrock for many progressive schemes lies her particular significance in History. And the above are only some few famous movements that had done in her life.

The portrayal of female rulers in *The Ivory Throne* makes it admirable that women were able to accomplish it. Queen Victoria, the current female monarch of Sethu Lakshmi Bayi, ascended to the throne of Britain at the age of eighteen when her three older brothers all passed away without having legitimate children. Because of her impact on governmental decisions and ministerial selections, she rose to become a national symbol associated with high moral standards. When her husband died, she avoided public appearances resulted to British republicanism in in strength. But latter half of her reign, her popularity recovered.

While looking at these woman personalities, the usual thought arising is, why they are few. Questions of the only few woman ministers, of only few

woman entrepreneurs, of the majority women homemakers, of the restrictions to jobs, of the certain parameters set in society only for women .And the questions never end. Answers are there enough, but they just remain as questions and answers.

The Forest of Enchantments, by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is a book retells the Indian epic Ramayana from the protagonist Sita's point of view, a kind of retelling from a female perspective. The author stays honest to the original Ramayana, in which Ravana mesmerized by Sita's beauty, abducts her. She remains faithful to Ram, who rescues her at last but asks her go through agnipariksha to prove her fidelity and then abandons his pregnant wife under public pressure. The glorified image of Lord Ram got overshadowed here. The image of Sita here is a woman who was restricted to royalty. She was questioned of her 'chastity' which is considered a must for ideal woman. Her words deserved no importance in both home and society. Being a woman she was oppressed of her expressions.

Even the epic Ramayana is a myth followed as a divine book by a religion, the invisible inscriptions of parameters is set in the society that a woman should be abided with certain rules. The impositions of ideal women are to obey, dependent, to be protected, to be humble, caring, to be endured and ideal men should be independent, courageous, should have strength, leadership qualities etc. Ruling is considered illicit for an ideal woman. Woman is considered 'superwomen' celebrating the image of a woman with hundred hands that considers her as an all-rounder. But, on the contrary, the image utters the inability

and inconvenience of men. The male ego doesn't allow women to overcome the oppression that they face. The last ministry of Kerala, Health minister K.K. Shylaja had got fame in world organisations for her efficiency, but in the next ministry she lost the chance as a minister. Even if a woman came to a position, had proved her efficiency, she won't get a chance to place herself the next time or someone is not allowing it.

Considering the list of female representatives in politics, it has long been a male bastion in which women have yet to gain an equal footing. An institutional process for ensuring the representation of women in legislation is critical. The lack of women's active participation in politics not only undermines the spirit and idea of a representative democracy, but also denies women equal status and opportunity, as guaranteed by our constitution.

The Women's Reservation Bill, 2010 is a pending bill in the Parliament of India which proposes to amend the Constitution of India to reserve one-third of all seats in Lok Sabha and in all legislative assemblies for women. The Rajya Sabha passed the bill on 9 March 2010. However, the Lok Sabha never voted on the bill and the Lok Sabha expired during this two times in 2014 and 2019. Panchayats have a good representation of women. In north India, this representation of women is there, who are just representatives but things are controlled by their husbands or men. Comparing to other states, Kerala can be considered as a progressing state in many ways.

The Malayalam saying "where lemon tree is planted, where women govern, where Koovalam tree dies, not good for the house" was created by men

and was used to oppress women in the past when they had equal standing. Even in other nations, there are proverbs that still apply to women and disown them. All of these indicate that women are still excluded from society and are either unaware of their rights or are aware of them but are unable to exercise them.

Chapter Four

Conclusion

The Ivory Throne is a remarkable work that combines history and anecdote to present a picture of how Kerala's society changed over three centuries. Apart from being a chronicle of Kerala's history, the book brings forward several appealing episodes, social norms and even anecdotes from the times.

Martanda Varma a cunning villain of Kerala history unlike historical precedents, set an unnerving example, for instance, by executing his own cousins in cold blood when they disobeyed him, according to the introduction. Discontent, dissent, political intrigue, deceit and dishonesty - and even plotting with the aid of black magic - do remain a constant across the five generations chronicled in the book, even though not every Keralan ruler followed in his footsteps. The book tells that during the pre-colonial times Kerala had a matrilineal society, where a family did not take after the patriarchal model of man, wife and children, instead consisted of man, sister and her children. The Rani was not the Maharajah's wife, but his sister or great niece. IN 1747, during Martanda Varma's reign when Attingal was merged with Travancore, the Ranis had reduced to gloried impotency and the male members of the dynasty gained dominance.

Senior Rani of Travancore became the youngest person to occupy that exalted station in all its history. At ten years of age, she chose Rama Varma younger brother of the more popular Rajaraja Varma, as her consort – a choice that the majority in the palace viewed as a grave nuptial error. In later years she

confessed that she had been overwhelmed by Rajaraja Varma when she first saw him, that she was positively intimidated by his exceptional appearance. Thus it seemed that once women was independent in making decisions.

The book indulges into the personal life of Senior Rani that exceeds the page numbers. Here, her personality and philosophy are quite evident in the portrayal. The clarity of partiality towards her rival and cousin, Sethu Parvathi Bayi is there, has shown as a dark character from the beginning. The rivalry and ill will between the sisters Mahaprabha and Kochukunji carried forward to the two daughters Lakshmi Bayi and Parvathi Bayi. Eventually, it culminated in such hatred that Kochukunji was discovered performing black magic against her niece. As a result, in the late 1920s, she was removed from the palace. Even though the author's sympathies are clearly with Senior Rani but, his voice and tone remain neutral. It is her patience, moderation and balance were believed to be the hallmark of her policy. Several changes occurred like English education was introduced, Christians, earlier barred from the Land Revenue Department moved into the plantation business with moderate success; state jobs were thrown open to non-Brahmins, and education and employment were provided to women

The author makes an interesting observation about traditional Kerala society, which did not frown upon women having open sexual relations. The author informs us that Christian missionaries with their prudish Victorian ideas and the need to civilize India impose their morality upon Kerala and clamped down on the freedom of women here. The good part was that by 1928, women

were being appointed as clerks, typists, secretaries etc. and by 1931 the government had 412 women on its payroll in its administrative machinery.

More lifestyle adjustments in Sethu Lakshmi Bayi's family, particularly in later generations, also correspond to these social developments. In fact, some members of the royal dynasty gave up their titles and lived as regular citizens, adopting British mannerisms and customs that were already commonplace at the time. The evolution in society, politics and history in Kerala over three centuries, until almost the time of partition, has been painstakingly captured. The chapters spliced together thematically rather than chronologically can sometimes be confusing for the reader, especially since the royal family stuck to the same name generation after generation, and which the author had made an effort to distinguish for the reader in his own way. The author has also given a simultaneous account of India's struggle for independence and the effect it had on its rulers and their decisions.

Manu S Pillai has written four popular history books. History is constantly debated in public today and more and more people are keen to learn about it. It's not possible for everyone to digest academic text, so well researched popular history fills an important gap. For history to appeal to the common reader, the historian has to be a skilled storyteller. The language and narrative style of the book is uncluttered and unencumbered. He tells a compelling and unique narrative of an Indian princely state that has rarely been explored or seen on screen before.

The Ivory Throne is a historical fiction, the book has all the elements of a riveting drama. The author has seamlessly interwoven historical facts with

legends from the past. He has brilliantly juxtaposed the rivalry for the throne, palace politics and conspiracies with the changes in India's political environment. In every chapter he has linked the present events to those that happened in past. He shows how the decisions taken hundreds of years ago went on to affect the life of Lakshmi Bayi, her ancestors and even her descendants.

Sethu Lakshmi Bayi welcomed the new reforms, thus she moved first to Madras and then to Bangalore with her daughter. She didn't use her title Maharani Regent after she left Travancore and died in 1985. As the example of a good queen and a woman, she lived her life and had a meaning.

Moreover, the book is an outright page turner says the untold story of Sethu Lakshmi Bayi and other Attingal Ranis. It is a reflection of how women's empowerment got succeeded and was thrown out the window after the British acquired control. Lakshmi Bayi was a well-known historical character who gained notoriety via her actions and the headlines of local and national media. She was a remarkable lady who was perfectly capable of carrying on the administration, a rare ruler who was industrious, intelligent and devoted to the interests of state. The Government of India held her in high esteem and their dependable support became her pillar of strength. She was honoured even by the British, and the book *The Ivory Throne* gave her a distinct identity. While Sethu Lakshmi Bayi was a character who was solely recognised by her name, and Kerala is aware of both the male and female kings of Travancore.

The book helps to review the existed systems, its changes and the altering perspectives of the society that gives light to the present and future generations.

Those changes in society that occurred under several pressures can either be assisted or persecuted. It also studies and analysis the psychology of the society too. Women representation in politics is the thought that arise in while reading the book. Why a woman like Sethu Lakshmi Bayi is not seen today is an inevitable discussion to be considered in this contemporary period.

Manu S Pillai has written four popular history books. History is constantly debated in public today and more and more people are keen to learn about it. It's is not possible for everyone to digest academic text, so well researched popular history fills an important gap. For history to appeal to the common reader, the historian has to be a skilled storyteller. The language and narrative style of the book is uncluttered and unencumbered. He tells a compelling and unique narrative of an Indian princely state that has rarely been explored or seen on screen before. He had changed the perspective that history is not only the retelling sagas of victories and defeats of man but also woman.

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Appendix



There Comes Papa