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HISTORICAL STUDY OF TRAVANCORE -COCHIN SOCIAL RELATIONS: A MODEL TO THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NATIVE STATES DURING THE BRITISH PERIOD

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Abstract:

Erstwhile Travancore and Cochin together form an integral part of sovereign India and associated themselves in a series of social endeavours. In the process of social formation, both the states underwent far-reaching changes. Travancore and Cochin, the neighbouring states; intermingled their culture and life for a long time. The social changes in Travancore directly or indirectly affected the Cochin states. While considering the relations of each State, there were diverse dimensions. Along with various disputes, they had maintained jovial relations with each other. Socially, economically and culturally they had irrevocable relations between them. Both the States had developed common art forms, performing arts, temple arts and religious festivals. From 1729 to 1949, social relations of Travancore and Cochin easily led to the formation of Travancore–Cochin integration. The social reform movements of Travancore had great impact not only in Travancore but also in Cochin. Both states were the native states of British, maintained their own entity in their social relations. It is the model for other states. Ancient tradition of culture in the states helped to maintain a balanced and healthy social relation in the long run of its integration and finally formed as a modern State Kerala.

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1.0 Introduction:

The erstwhile native states of Travancore and Cochin situated at the southern extent of the Indian sub-continent had a glorious history and heritage of their own. Both the states played their role in maintaining a political and cultural equilibrium. These two states, situating nearby, maintained interstate relations. The relation is not a single factor. It consists of multi-dimensional life activities involved in the States. The attacks of neighbouring States and the incursions of Europeans did not reduce the all-round relations of Travancore and Cochin. Both the states were ruled by kingship at the same time; they are the native states of British Paramount. At the same time, occasionally, they maintained cordial relation in every respect. The diplomatic relations of both the states were unique in terms of political, economic, social and cultural aspects. This uniqueness of relations ultimately enabled both the states to integrate themselves and culminate into the concept of the

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formation of the states of Kerala in 1956. The social relation of Travancore and Cochin is the culmination of political, economic and cultural factors. The social relation between Travancore and Cochin is excellent model to other local states in India during British period. The diplomatic relations both the states are a model to native states of India. The Primary source collected from the archives and secondary source included literary sources used to consult for the study.

2.0 Scope and Relevance of Study:

Kerala culture, today owes its indebtedness primarily to the life and culture of both Travancore and Cochin. Being a single stretch of land and the flow of social elements between the states bound the cultural identity of the region. The religious practices and beliefs evolved in these states still continue without any fundamental changes. Ceremonial customs and social practices of both the states are same. The model behavior of Travancore and Cochin is admirable to other existing states.

3.0 Materials and Methods:

Travancore and Cochin, the native sates of Southern India, are blessed with natural beauty, History and tradition. The sources to write the article rely upon primary and secondary. The primary sources collected from the Archives relating to the Historical facts about Travancore and Cochin Social Relations are useful for the study. The analytical and descriptive method is used for the description of the article. The descriptive method is used to trace out the historical background of Travancore and Cochin state social relations.

4.0 Geographical features of Travancore and Cochin:

The erstwhile Travancore, one of the former princely states of present Kerala state situated between $8^{\circ}4'$ and $10^{\circ}21'$ north latitude between $76^{\circ}13'$ and $77^{\circ}38'$ latitude.¹ It is situated at the southernmost part of the Indian subcontinent. It has an area of 7625 Square meter. The state is bounded on the north by the state of Cochin; the British district of Coimbatore, on the eastern boundary situated the British district of Madura, Ramanad and Tinnavelly. On the west and south side Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean, from the north to south the Western Ghats appeared as a continuous mountain chain isolating Travancore from Madras presidency.² Travancore is a land of perennial waters. The country is rich in natural beauty and resources. The "rice-bowl" of Travancore is located at the southern extremity of the state.³

Cochin State lies between $9^{\circ}48'$ and $10^{\circ}50'$ north latitude and $76^{\circ}58'$ east latitude. The state has total 1418 square meter. The Cochin state was originally known as Perumpadappu Nadu and its ruling family is still called as Perumpadappu Swaroopam. (Perumal, 1939) .But the name 'Cochin' was called after the formation of a harbour in 1341, afterwards to the country as the kingdom of Cochin.

Cochin has a river and a backwater system which affords as easy and cheap means of communication. It is basically a maritime district at a model point of international trade since the emergence of the harbour. With the arrival of the Europeans, Cochin became a busy hub of foreign trade. Chalakkudy, Karuvennu, Chittoor and Always were the main rivers in the state of Cochin (Padmanabha, 1913).

Geographically both the States were lands of perennial waters. Western Ghats formed the common eastern boundary to these states. Being hydrological landlocked areas, they shared the

¹ Cover file. No.123,1908, 'Communication from Dewan of Travancore to the Dewan of Cochin', State Archives, Trivandrum, p.14

² Census of India, 1932, 'Travancore 1931', Vol. XXVIII. Part I, Report, Trivandrum, , p.11

³ The Travancore drectory,1938, *Almanac*, part 1,P.4

waters of rivers, flora and fauna of forest regions and long coastline.⁴ There existed regular interrelations and contact between the people who inhabited in both the regions

The extensive Tea and cardamom plantations, spice cultivations etc, were bulkily carried on the higher elevations of the state. The fertile river beds were the cradle of paddy cultivation. The state receives a major portion of south west and north east monsoon. Excellent communication system supported by lagoons, backwater and canals initially existed, later improved by the roads and railways. The passes over the mountain at intervals were busy tracks of trade and at the same time served the paths of invasion in olden days. Numerous rivers had their births in the Western Ghats; most of these were navigable for some distance. Periyar River demarcates the Cochin territory boundary from Travancore.⁵ Travancore is primarily an agrarian state with the chief food grain of rice or paddy

5.0 Historical Background of Travancore and Cochin:

The Travancore rulers owned their hereditary relation in Chera lineage. The king of Travancore had adopted the title 'Vanchipala' which means protector of the land of Vanchi, the capital of the Cheras (Innes, 1908). Hence the real title of the Travancore King was Sri Padmanabhadasa Vanchipala Kulasekhara Kirtipati Manney Sulthan Maharaja Raja Ramaraja Bahadur Shamsheer Jang (Rejikumar, 2009). A small portion of the south west Cochin is washed by the Arabian Sea whereas Travancore forms the southern boundary. The credit for the emergence of Travancore and its glorious history goes to Marthandavarma, the founder of Travancore who ruled from 1729 to 1758. Being a man of blood and iron, he truly deserves the title "Maker of Modern Travancore" (Pankajakshan, 1926). From a minor stretch of land he placed the border of Travancore of the near proximity of Cochin. One by one all the minor principalities and the territories were conquered and finally successfully consolidated. The survey and assessment of land revenue settlement along with trade diplomacy enriched the Travancore Treasury. The Travancore rulers owed their hereditary relation to Chera lineage (Thampi, 1940).

The advent of the Europeans led to unprecedented changes in the internal politics of the state. The hostile attitude towards the Dutch and policy favouritism towards the English actually determined the political history of Travancore in future years. Due to the rigorous policies of Marthanda Varma, Travancore emerged as the mightiest kingdom in the Malabar Coast (Krishna 1928). His successful reign was continued by the Karthika Thirunal Ramavarma, and a logline of illustrious rulers. The sufficient training in military affairs and maintained diplomatic relationship, he obtained from Marthandavarma was a unique asset as far as reverent areas are concerned. It shaped his code of conduct and it determined the diplomatic relation of Travancore.⁶ But towards the close of his reign the British East India Company tightened their hold over the Travancore administration. Then Ramavarma was succeeded by a logline of illustrious rulers like Swathi Thirunal, Ayilyam Thirunal, Sreemoolam Thirunal, and lastly Sree Chithira Thirunal

The democratic agitation in Travancore started from the period of Sree Moolam Thirunal and gathered momentum under Sree Chithira Thirunal. As a result though the country became independent from British authorities in 1947, Travancore tried to remain as an independent entity but later the king of Travancore agreed to merge Travancore with the union of India (Raimon. 2005). Thereafter both the territories of Travancore and Cochin were merged together to form the

⁴ Dis No .T. 29,1753 , *UdambadyPakarpukal* (Treaties), Central Archives , Thiruvananthapuram ,p.47

⁵ Document No.B.37 , 1923 , 'A brief Note on the History' ,Travancore and Cochin P.1

⁶ Showcase Record No 193 Neetu 1758 , 'Record of Pepper Transaction' Regional Archives Ernakulam,P.175

Travancore-Cochin state in 1949.⁷ Since then the king of Travancore Sree Chithira Thirunal was made the 'Rajapramukh' (Sobhanan, 2010).

It was with the emergence of the Cochin port the rulers of Perumpadappu Swaroopam shifted their headquarters from Mahodayapuram to Cochin, there begin the threats of Zamorin towards Cochin. The rulers of Cochin always utilized the trade profit of the Cochin port to the maximum. In the meanwhile, the entry of the Europeans disturbed the balance of power between the native princesses.⁸ In due course, the rulers of Cochin became an easy prey and often had taken false step to cope with the Europeans. The affairs of the Kingdom were normally administrated by Paliathachhan and largely the Cochin ruler was bound to act upon the decisions of the feudal lords.⁹ The only exception in this case was SakthanThampuran, who suppressed the feudal elements with repressive measures. With the emergence of Dewanship, the rulers became nominated and Cochin witnessed the rule of Dewans like Shanmukham Chetty.

6.0 Diplomatic Relations; A Setting of social Changes:

While analyzing the political and diplomatic relations of Travancore and Cochin, in each of these states, the ruler was the source of all authority. But in the case of Cochin, feudal elements were more vibrant.¹⁰ The diplomatic relations is the background of healthy social relations with Travancore and Cochin.

On another side, the hostility achieved another shape in the form of border dispute. In it, the disputes related to land, water and temple management deserve special mention. The main water confrontation between the two states was with regard to Periyar water and the stretches of land adjacent to it. Devaswom disputes comprised those related to Irinjalakuda Koodalmanikyam Temple, Adoor Gramam, Annamanada Temple and those of Perumanam and Elamkunnappuzha Temple.¹¹ In order to settle the dispute, the Madras government appointed J. C Hannington as Arbitator.¹² According to his verdict almost all the disputes were settled amicably either in favour of Cochin or in favour of Travancore. The disputes in one way or another never caused any conflict or war between these two states.

On closer analysis of the conflicting relation between these two native states, it is to be understood that, both these states had signed several treaties, which helped them to maintain cordial relations. Even though the treaties had brought certain differences and disputes, they did not affect the people of those states.¹³ The treaties signed with foreign powers also had maintained their status without much difficulty though the treaties had resulted in the positive and negative field, they could maintain their status as native states.¹⁴

In addition to political relation, these states developed interstate relations in the fields of cultural, religious and economic spheres. At the same time, these states maintained diplomatic relations with the foreign intruders. In shaping their relations rightly the economic factors played a key role. As these territories were a single stretch of land, the possibilities of agricultural surplus and trade progress led to much accumulation of wealth (Valath 1983). The fast developing maritime trade

⁷ R.100 Document No.39,1949, 'Rulers and Naduvazhis Or Chief', Regional Archives, Ernakulam p.1

⁸ Cover file. No.125, 1828, 'Copy of letters, Memorandums etc., between Diwan of Cochin and others', Regional Archives Ernakulam. P.4

⁹ Administration of Travancore,1922-23, 1924, Part I- Report, Part II- Statements, Travancore Government Press, Trivandrum, p.184

¹⁰ Proceedings of Travancore Sree Moolam Popular Assembly, 1946, Vol. XXIII, No. 7, Trivandrum, P. 599

¹¹ Letter No. 515/1907, 'British Resident to Dewan of Travancore' dated 30-10-1907, Papers Relating to Perumanam Devaswom Dispute, Regional Archives Ernakulam , p.2

¹² Cover File No.1581,1881, 'Boundary Travancore Cochin Elenkoonapalay' State Archives Thiruvananthapuram, , P.8

¹³ The record of Administration, 1914, 'Cochin State'. Part IV, Government. Press, Ernakulam, p. 23

¹⁴ Showcase Record, Cadjan Record No. 89, Ola No.2 ,Vol.5, Central Archives , Thiruvananthapuram, P.387-388

with outside world opened a new arena to the contemporary society and the political outlook of the people. In shaping the identity of the independent Kerala, these relations played a significant role.¹⁵ The different aspects of relations such as political, economic and religious culminated in the social relation of both the states.

7.0 Social relations:

The relation in Travancore and Cochin is cordial in political, economic, cultural and social aspects. The social relation is the combination of all the relations. It affected any matter relating to the state. The composition of the Travancore population comprised mainly of Hindus, a strong minority of Christians and Muslims. Hinduism is the chief religion of the state, more than two third of the entire population professing it, next comes Christianity which is the religion of about a fourth and then Mohammedanism the religion of about one sixteenth.¹⁶ The existence of the strong minority religions was a peculiarity of Travancore society which had its repercussions in the political evolution of Travancore (Suresh Kumar, 1994). Taken as a whole Travancore has a density of 461 persons to the square miles and since 1875 the density has been steadily increasing. 6.2 % of the total population has been living in towns and 93.8% of the population living in villages (Nagam,1999)

8.0 Caste Stratifications:

The caste divisions and religious changes, in the relations are pretentious to the social relation of both states. Among the minor religions there returned 2-7 Buddhists, 171 Jews, 15 Sikhs, 1 Zoroastrian and 3 Atheists', as per the census of 1901. Among the Hindus the dominant section is the Brahmins. The Namboodiris are an exclusive caste of Brahmins, scattered in almost all the Taluks of the state. Adhyans, visisthta, Namboodirins, Samaya, Jatimatras were the subdivisions of the Brahmins. Ambalavasis include Adikal, Chakyar, Nambbesan, Pushpkan, Tiyattunni, Pisharadi, and Variyar. In Travancore Nairs formed a military caste who formed a huge militia. The most common titles given to the Nairs include Pillai, Chembakaraman, Thampi, Karutha, Kruppu, Panikkar, Kaimal, Menon etc. The Vellalas were another group, especially Nanjinad Vellalas important among them. The Shanars are a class of Hindus inhabited in the southern taluks of Travancore. They usually use the term Nadar. Ezhavas occupy the prominent place in the population of the state of Travancore. The Kuruvas, Parayas, Pulays, Kanikkars, Malapandaram, Ullada, Urali, Methvon, Mannar, Malayaryanare the other communities.¹⁷

Unlike Travancore, Cochin is the most densely populated state; the great majority of the people live in towns.¹⁸ Malayalam is the official language of the state. Hinduism is the religion of the bulk of the population. But there is a large proportion of Christians, then forward anywhere else in India. The Namboodiris form a small community numerically enjoyed high social position. Among the Namboodiris there were sub division on the basis of certain rights and privileges. Adhyans, Moosad, Elayathu and Meothathu were among the Brahmin communities. Ambalavasis, Samantas, Nairs, Tharakans, were other communities. The polluting castes comprised of Kammalar, Ezhavan, Thandan, Valan, Arryan, Kaniyan, Kanakkan, Cheruman or Pulyan, Kaddan, Malayan etc. In Cochin, Syrian Christians, Roman Catholics, Jacobites, Syrians were included among the Christians.¹⁹ Mohammedeans scattered throughout Cochin state. The Jews

¹⁵ Secret Document No .864 1949, 'Rules of Business of the Government of the united state of Travancore and Cochin', Government Press, Ernakulam, p.1

¹⁶ Travancore -Cochin Census 1941, Ernakulam, Government of Travancore, p.72

¹⁷ Travancore Government Gazette, Extraordinary dated 27th May, 1949, Ernakulam, p.419

¹⁸ Cover File No .125, 1913, 'Copy of Letters, Memorandums etc. between the Dewan of Cochin and others', Regional Archives Ernakulam, P.24

¹⁹ Showcase Record Cadjan No.18, 1766, 'Treaty between Travancore and Cochin', Central Archives, Thiruvananthapuram, p.78

also had their settlement at Mattancheri. There are some small sects or castes intervening, but broadly speaking, the Nairs rank after the Nambootiris of Malabar, and they occupy the same position in the native States of Cochin and Travancore (Fawcett. 1915).

In numerical strength in both the states the Hindus were the majority. Comparing with the Christians of Travancore, Cochin had the majority of Christians. The ruling class of Travancore belongs to Kshatriya community while the Cochin ruling fairly belongs to Brahmin – Namboodiri class.

In Travancore the feudal elements were comparatively weaker when compared with Cochin. Big landlordism was absent in Travancore. MarthandaVarma's rigorous policies crushed the feudal elements in Travancore. But in Cochin this target was attained only with the ascendancy of Saktan Thampuran around 1800.

9.0 Social Evils and Divisions:

Since the Brahmins were religious heads of the Hindu religion, their influence was too high. The lower caste people were denied social freedom, Justice and equality. Untouchability, unapproachability and unseeability existed in Travancore. Slavery in Travancore arose as a result of the crystallization of castes and the growth of various disabilities. As outcastes, they were not permitted to worship the higher order of Hindu deities. The wells belonging to the caste Hindus were forbidden to them and they were not allowed to approach the Brahmins within a specified distance. They were also denied the right to education.

In Cochin also the matters remained the same. The feudal elements were much stronger. When speaking or to a Namboodiri or a Raja, Ambalavasis, and Nairs and other inferior castes have to use the terms of respect, which are as numerous as they were unique (Achutha, 1950)

As far as Travancore Namboodiris were concerned, they were landholders owning a great extent of *Jenmam*.²⁰ The ceremonies and customs followed by this section are entirely different from others. Since the Brahmins were religious heads of the Hindu religion, their influence was too high. The lower caste people were suppressed by the higher caste. The unjustifiable taboos and beliefs existed in Travancore (Samuel, 2013). Slavery in Travancore arose as a result of the crystallization of castes and the growth of various social disabilities. As outcastes, they were not permitted to worship the higher order of Hindu deities (Ayer, 1963). The wells belonging to the caste Hindus were forbidden to them and they were not allowed to approach the Brahmins within a specified distance. They were also denied the right to education (Retnamma,, 2005).

With the advent of Europeans ushered a new epoch in the history of both Travancore and Cochin. The Christian missionaries and their conversion movement provided an impetus to build up a strong movement within the community for gaining their long denied rights and freedom. Efforts were made by the British to improve the oppressed sections socially. As a result, the Shanar revolt and other similar agitations are success in Travancore.²¹

The national movements for renaissance in India were mainly led by the intellectuals belonging to savarna caste (Gopalakrishanan. 1984). From the very beginning the renaissance in Travancore was a movement to reform the lowest strata of society and this imparted a qualitatively new character. Caste organizations were formed like Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalanam (SNDP), Nair Service Society (NSS) and Sadhu Jana ParipalanaYogam (Warriar, 2008). These caste organizations played an important role in bringing about social change in Travancore. Among these organizations there were organizations of the oppressed and untouchables. The great saint

²⁰ The Property has on which have only priority of interest, without paying any tax on it.

²¹ Letter No. R.O.C 752, 1935, 'Dewan of Cochin to British Residents dated 28-3-1915' Regional Archives Ernakulam, p.1

luminary Sree Narayana Guru had given a great orientation to fight against the caste evils existed here. The social reform movement didn't remain inactive within the boundary of states. It expanded the social relation of each State.

10.0 Social Reformation:

The social revolution was started and racially carried forward by the Ezhavas by getting inspiration from Sree Narayana Guru. (Sreedhar, 1939) . The efforts of Sahordaran Ayyappan, V.T Bhattaripad, Thycad Ayya Guru, Mannathu Padmanabhan, Ayyankali, Vaikundaswamikal, Chattambiswamikal etc culminated in their formation of Travancore society. The social stirring influenced the people outside the Hindu religion (Menon, 1987). Vaikom Abdul Khadar Maulavi contributed a lot to religious and social upliftment of Muslim community. Swadeshbhimani K Ramakrishana Pillai, the editor of Swadeshbhimani wiped up the passions of the Travancore for responsible government.

The social stirrings that evolved in Travancore had their repercussions in Cochin also. For example, Ayyankali, Pandit K.P. Kaurppan contributed to social re- generation by reforming the mukkuva community in and around Ernakulam. In his dramatic work Balakalesam, he vehemently advocated the eradication of untouchability and pollution (Vasanthan,2005)

In addition to Pandit K.P. Karuppan, Brahmanda Sivayogi and Chavara Kurirakose struggled for eradicating the social inequalities. They were aware of the civic rights to which the citizens were eligible (Somarajan, 1999). It led them to be aware of the necessity of political power for the eradication of changes effected in the society.

Awakening from the age-old sleeping with newly gained self- confidence, the depressed communities were ready for asserting their civic rights (Velayudhan , 2012). The struggles of the newly - released social forces get assimilated with the national movement and a sense of fraternity was generated. The temple entry movements of Suchindram Satyagraha, Kalpatti Struggle, Vaikom Satyagraha, Guruvayur Satyagraha, Kuttankulam Struggle and Paliam Struggle made the younger elements in every caste organizations to realize that modernization of their caste and their society in general was integrally related to the political freedom of the country. The social formation and social reformation happened in the prior period and its reflections of the social relations greatly influenced the Integration.

11.0 Conclusion:

The native States of Travancore and Cochin maintained diplomatic relations with each other. They underwent a long process of historical development. Commercial contact was one of the main factors responsible for the development of diplomacy. As these territories together forms a single entity and the location of ports in the coastal area, facilitated transportations of goods freely in between the States. In the religious point of view, as both the states were traditional Hindu ruling communities, the idea of religious tolerance they practiced led to the assimilation of various cultures and shaping the Kerala Society we see today. The transformation of the world system order definitely had its influence on these native states also. The relation of Travancore, especially Social relations, and modern attitude of these states were copied by other states of India. It led to the ups and downs of the relations of these states occasionally.

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