



AN ANALYSIS ON THE LEGACY OF MODERN HEALTH SECTOR IN TRAVANCORE

CHINTHU I B

Research Scholar (ICHR Fellow)

Department of History, University of Kerala

ABSTRACT

Travancore was one of the princely states in India which was protected by the British imperialism and supported by the divine right system implemented through the dedication of Kingdom to Sri Padmanabha. They followed Hindu orthodox character from its origin. The state came under the British imperialism and consequently underwent changes by adopting western ideologies. Travancore was known as model state in British India because of its innovative policies in society. The Travancore rulers gradually changed their traditional attitude and gave concerns to their subjects especially for their health system. Under their rule the public health sector achieved great progress. Travancore followed old age medical practices sometimes which were controlled by the high caste Hindus. The limited financial resources and trained practitioners was a challenge in front of the Travancore health system. Many epidemics were common in the society. Rulers were aware about the useless old age medical practices and found the western medicine the more effective and they welcomed these medical services to the state. The royal patronage in western medicine and the indigenous medicines helps us to achieve growth in this field. Their modern attitude towards health paved the way for the establishment of many hospitals in Travancore and they also gave grand aid system for medical education. Gradually the emphasis of medical treatment changed from curative to preventive in Travancore society.

KEYWORDS: *Ayurveda, Christian Missionaries, Health sector, Travancore rulers, Western*

Medicine

I.INTRODUCTION

The 19th and 20th century witnessed the emergence of a new social order in Travancore under the impact or influence of many social - economic and cultural influences. The feudal character of the state and some other vestiges of old order remained to be modernized or wiped out. The Government took various initiatives to introduce measures for the improvement of the state. Among this, public health received more attention as state gave much concern to its advancement. The state witnessed epidemics like small pox, Cholera, Malaria, plague, etc., the rulers were too conscious about this situation and implemented a series of remedies to overcome it. For



that they welcomed the Western Medicine System to the Native state with an aim of providing basic health services to all.

The Western medicine acted as an agent of western culture and it had an immense influence on the Travancore society. The native medical System was popular in the state till the emergence of Western medicine. The British authorities patronized Western Medical System as they were aware that western medicine had more capacity to be used as a tool of colonial domination over society, which gradually resulted in occupancy of western medicine in the mainstream of Indian Medicine. The adequacy and preponderance of the English medicine become recognized all over India and in the princely state of Travancore. The royal family was the foremost to accept this system in Travancore, they themselves responded positively to this English medicine. This attitude was partly helpful to the improvement of health system in Travancore with a modern outlook. Under the influence of the colonial modernization, like in many other states the ruling family of Travancore pioneered the introduction of western medical system and other developments.

II.FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The modern Medical System was at first confined to the ruling authority and the government officials thereafter it gradually extended to prisoners and then to public. The Western influence over the medical sector of the state was opened during the first Regency period itself, that is, under Regent Gowri Lakshmi Bai in 1810-15.¹ Regent was assisted by Munro the resident Diwan in all matters related with administration of the state. In 1813 Dr. Proven was appointed as the first Western doctor in Travancore with a view to service for all the common subjects.² The Western medical treatment was first started in Kollam for the Europeans and Anglo-Indians. The Travancore on those times focused on vaccination and sanitation activities. Regent established a small vaccination department in 1813 and appointed Dr. Proven as the in charge of the vaccination department. This was mainly for the purpose of controlling the epidemic of small Pox which was seriously affecting the society on those days. But there aroused a problem as people were afraid of vaccination which was not familiar with them. The people showed signs of alarm of vaccination and so the royal family members of Travancore vaccinated themselves first.

The Regency period of Gowri Parvati Bai was regarded as the era of administrative and social progress in Travancore.³ During her regency James Rass was appointed as the physician of royal house for some time.⁴ But Dr. Proven was their favorite doctor, so the Resident appointed him as the Palace doctor in 1818. Regent also build a Charity dispensary at Thycadu in Trivandrum in 1818, at there the convicts from the Jails were treated. In the same year two small dispensaries were opened. First one was in Palace and second one was in the premises of the Nair brigade barracks. Dr. Eaton was appointed as the durbar physician and Dr. Patterson succeeded him.⁵

During SwathiThirunal maharaja's period a Charity lying hospital was established in 1837 at Thycadu.⁶ Colin Patterson was appointed as the physician in 1844. He was in charge as the physician of Rajah



and Nair Brigade. Colin remained this post for several years, and even continued in charge during the last days of Swathi Thirunal.⁷ The attitude of Royal family was different from others. They took keen interest to practice Western medicine themselves along with promoting it. Uthram Thirunal, the successor of Swathi Thirunal actively encouraged the spread of western Medical System. His Highness studied allopathy and practiced it himself. He found pleasure in treating cases in the dispensary attached with the palace, and he also trained some of his servants to help him. Later this dispensary worked under the name of *Elayaraja* dispensary until the first dispensary was established in Fort Trivandrum. He also established many hospitals in different parts of the state.

Ayilyam Thirunal Maharaja's period witnessed reorganization of medical department. He introduced several schemes in western medicine system. In 1865 a separate vaccination department was formed⁸ and Dr. Pulney Andy a native of Madras, who studied in Europe was appointed as the Superintendent. He was assisted by a head vaccinator and 27 other vaccinators. His highness Ayilyam Thirunal laid the foundation stone of the civil Hospital which was later renamed as General Hospital on 1st September 1864.⁹ The civil hospital was under the direct supervision of darbar physician. In the course of that time the vaccination department was recognized as the separate division of medical department.

During that period poor people who were affected with deadly diseases approached hospitals as in-patients, which consequently increased the death rate. This situation paved the way for aversion towards western medicine among common people. So in 1868 an experienced Ayurveda doctor was appointed to restore the public confidence in health sector.¹⁰ A lunatic asylum was started in 1878 for insane people. In 1869 a medical school was started. The foundation of the Civil Hospital was a Revolutionary measure for the motive of the ruler to see the government medical aid was placed within the reach of all classes of his subjects. This measure testifies the Welfare motion of royal Family and their interest in providing free Medical Services to state irrespective of their caste. During the period of the predecessor of Ayilliam Thirunal there were only six hospitals in the whole state of Travancore. But in his highness's period witnessed much advancement in medical field, the number of hospitals rose to 24 within 12 years of his succession. Vishakam Thirunal introduced many statutory changes in Travancore connected with medical department. He appointed a committee in 1880 to give report on the sanitary issues and to provide with effective measures to overcome it. His period witnessed the formation of a sanitary department; there were about 31 hospitals and dispensaries in the state.

Sri Moolam Thirunal Rama Varma's period also witnessed the improvement of the medical service. He appointed qualified physicians and surgeons in government hospitals. He also patronized some hospitals run by the missionary societies with issuing grants. He also started a small maternity hospital as an annex to Zenana Misson hospital. The maternity section was removed from the general hospital and made a separate institution.¹¹ In 1895 a separate hospital for women and children was opened. The government passed the Towns Improvement and Conservancy Regulation on a regular platform in the towns of Trivandrum, Nagercoil, Quilon, Alleppey, etc., the vaccination department was formed in 1896.



The medical department was again reorganized in 1897 under his reign.¹²In the following year medical school was set up at Trivandrum for training of hospital assistance and to promote private practitioners who would carry the European medical service in to other parts of the country. This also paved the way for their services to the state. In the same year the hospital building for incurables at Oolampara was completed and charity Hospital was shifted to that building from Thycadu in between 1903-1904. The Victoria Jubilee Medical School was opened in 1887 for training midwives and nurses in Quilon. He also made arrangements for making improvements in general hospital; it was equipped with x-ray and Dental section in 1914. In 1905 a separate ophthalmic Hospital was built and Maternity Hospital was merged with the hospital for women. To investigate the diseases which were Peculiar to Travancore and to take effective measures to restrain diseases like malaria, plague, etc., research laboratory was opened. The women and children hospital at Thycadu was brought under the charge of eminent physician like Mary Punnan Lukose under his rule.

In 1896 the Leper Asylum was opened and the lepers who were admitted in the charity hospital Thycadu was shifted to here with high attention in all matters related with them. The government made free medical service and a free supply of medicine at the public disposal in all medical Institutions maintained by the government along with this a regular system of medical grant in aid was also in force. Regent's period created many changes in the medical service of the state. She made provisions for suitable dispensary treatment for tuberculosis from Nagercoil, Trivandrum, Quilon, Alleppey and Kottayam. The medical team under the Indian Council of the British Empire leprosy relief Association, conducted detailed survey in Travancore and found the disease of Leprosy was prevalent in coastal areas. The medical missions of missionaries like London Missionary Society, Church Missionary Society and Salvation Army etc were patronized by the king.¹³

Under the Regency of Setu Lakshmi Bai, the Rockefeller foundation visited Travancore in 1928 and it was a new phase in the public health sector in Travancore. It remained for nine years in Travancore and it provided Public Health work which was scientific and more effective. This new method helped the public health department to predict to a certain degree where and when epidemics were likely to break out and so preventive measures could then be quickly applied. Dr. L.P.Jococks was the first Rockefeller advisor in Travancore. He introduced Public Health activities and established a health unit at Neyyattinkara.¹⁴ In 1933 the temporary department of public health was combined with the sanitation department.

Sri Chitra thirunal Balarama Varma of Travancore was the last sovereign monarch in the native state, his period noticed tremendous changes in the society through more administrative and social reforms. Maharaja was ably assisted by his Diwan C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer.¹⁵ His Highness implemented many reforms in the field of Public Health the hospital for Lepers at Trivandrum shifted to Nooranad in 1934 and the construction of permanent building in 140 acres was started.¹⁶Sri Chitra Thirunal started the revival of constructing Public Health Laboratory in 1934 and made departments of bacteriology, vaccination etc., together with it, this ended in 1937.¹⁷ He also opened Sri Chitra Poor Home for the poor and distressed people in November 1934.¹⁸ He organized Vanchi Poor Fund as part of charitable work with cooperation of people in 1941.The Sree Moolam Shashtiabdapurti Memorial Dharmalayam already functioning since 1918 for the poor starving and distress was



brought under Sri Chithra Poor Fund and Vanchi Poor Fund. In 1934 a Public Health Department was formed for organizing public health activities of the state. Modern treatment was given to cure Malaria, Elephantiasis, etc. The government also provided with temporary shelter and other facilities including free food and clothing to the patients.¹⁹Surgeries were done from 1934 by trained surgeons in Travancore. In the same year the post of the Director of Public Health was introduced. Health awareness programme were introduced in schools as per the recommendations of Travancore Education Reforms Committee. Maternity and Pediatric care centres in villages founded by the state in 1937 to enhance its facilities. In 1939 Radium Therapy was introduced in Travancore.²⁰Patients in the state hospitals were provided with free food and care. In 1939, the state of Travancore had about 32 government and 21 private hospitals. People were even provided with free treatment at government hospitals. The medical practice in the state was tried to be regulated by the colonial government. Travancore Medical Council was formed according to Travancore Medical Practitioner's act of 1944, which prevented the unregistered practitioners of medicine from doing surgeries and other medical services. This paved the way for better medical treatment in Travancore.

Royal Patronage was also extended towards Indigenous medicine in Travancore. The late 19th century Travancore witnessed the advancement and patronage to indigenous medicine. Every village in Travancore had their own native physician known as *Vaidyan*. This occupation was pursued by all the major sections of the society irrespective of their caste, like *Namboothiri Brahmins*, *Ambalavasis*, *Nayars*, *Ezhavas*, *Kaniyans*, etc. According to the claim of *Ezhavas* they pursued medical service from the time immemorial.²¹ People irrespective of castes received treatment from *Vaidyans*. As per the survey of Ward and Conner, from 1816 to 1820, the lower castes including pulayas received concern during illness.²² The state of Travancore encouraged the spread of indigenous medicine, as it could show a charitable aspect to common masses²³ and at the same time it was a measure for encouraging Hindu culture in the Hindu state of Travancore.²⁴ Buddhist Monks imparted the knowledge of Ayurveda medicine to Namboothiris in Kerala.²⁵ Some *Ezhava* families also practiced Ayurvedic Medicine.²⁶

The All India Ayurveda Congress was established in 1907 as a result of the awakening of Nationalist and Cultural feeling for indigenous medicine towards the end of the 19th century. An Ayurveda *Patasala* was opened in Trivandrum in 1889 during the period of Sree Moolam Thirunal Rama Varma.²⁷ During his period the state also provided *Vaidyans* with medical grant in 1895-96.²⁸ In 1902, P.S.Varier organized the *Arya Vaidya Samajam* at Kottakkal near Calicut for the spread of indigenous medicine. Homoeopathy is also an important indigenous system practiced in Travancore society. It was first introduced in the state of Travancore by Dr. M.N.Pillai during the reign of Sree Moolam Thirunal Rama Varma in 1906.

III.CONCLUSION

The state of Travancore and its rulers had made great efforts to introduce and popularize western medicine in Travancore. This efforts and encouragement could be seen as a part of modernization of medical services in the state. The rulers found that western medicine could cure many epidemics common in the state of Travancore.



On the other hand, the rulers also contributed for the development of indigenous medicine in Travancore, as this was considered as a measure to withhold the traditional Hindu nature of the state. The rulers strongly believed that the policy of health service for all was an aspect of charity that they practiced. The orthodox character of the Hindu rulers of Travancore changed due to the modern ideologies and the state forced to implement many reforms. British authorities patronized the western medicine and the medical missionary mission in Travancore as a tool of British imperialism. The main feature of health system in Travancore was it gives primary concerns to the general public, while the priority was generally given to the Army and a white minority in British India. This shows the importance given by the sovereigns of Travancore to the health sector and generalization of medical system

REFERENCES

-
- [1] T.K.Velupillai,*Travancore State Manual*,Vol IV,Thiruvananthapuram,1996,p.209
 - [2] Kozhaseril.V.Lekshmanan,*Kollathinte Aadhunika Charithram*(Mal),Kollam,1996,p.351.
 - [3] Ummarkutty,*Thiruvithamkoorinte Pracheena Charithram*,(Mal), Thiruvananthapuram,1984,p.326.
 - [4] P.Bhaskaranunni,*Pathonpatham Nootandile Keralam*, Trivandrum, 1998 (Mal)p.798
 - [5] P.Vinayachandran,*Kerala Chikithsa Charithram*.(Mal),Kottayam,2001,p.25.
 - [6] Pattom.G.Ramachandran Nair,*Thiruvananthapurathinte Ithihasam* (Mal), Trivandrum, 1996 ,p.191.
 - [7] Achuth Sankar S Nair, Catherine Logan, *Journal of Kerala Studies*, Vol. XXXIII, 2006, p.84
 - [8] Nagam Aiya, *Travancore State Manual*, Vol.II,p.524.
 - [9] Pattom.G.Ramachandran Nair,*op.cit.*,p.370.
 - [10] T.K.Velupillai,*op.cit.*,p.209.
 - [11] Pattom.G.Ramachandran Nair,*op.cit.*,p.371.
 - [12] Ulloor S Parameshwara Iyer, *Progress of Travancore Under H.H. Sri Moolam Tirunal*, Trivandrum, 1998, P.511.
 - [13] Koji Kawashima, *Missionaries and a Hindu state of Travancore 1858-1936*, Delhi, 1998,pp.122-138.
 - [14] Rockefeller Foundation Travancore Public Health Administrative Report, 1930-31, p.1.
 - [15] A.Sreedhara Menon, *A Survey of Kerala History*, Madras, 1994, p.284.
 - [16] T.K.Velupillai,*op.cit.*,p.214.
 - [17] P.Vinayachandran,*op.cit.*,pp.125-127
 - [18] Travancore Administrative Report, Annual Report,1934-35, p.264
 - [19] Koji Kawashima, *op.cit.*,pp.122-123.
 - [20] Travancore Administrative Report , Annual Report ,1943, p.133.
 - [21] N.K.Krishnankutty Vaidyar, *History of Ayurveda*, Kottakkal, 2005, p.309.
 - [22] Ward and Conner, *Memoir of the Survey of the Travancore and Cochin states*, Trivandrum, 1863, p.140.
 - [23] Travancore Administrative Report, Annual Report 1930-31, P.176.



[24] Koji Kawashima, *op.cit.*, p.142.

[25] G.Krishnan Nadar, *Historiography and History of Kerala*, Kottayam, p.329

[26] P.K.Gopalakrishnan, *Keralathinte Samskarika Charithram*, Trivandrum, 1974, p.500.

[27] Government of Travancore, Administrative Report of the Medical Department, No. G. 8038, dated 29 November 1918, Kerala State Archives, Trivandrum.

[28] Government of Travancore, Administrative Report of the Medical Department, No. G.2332, dated 15 September 1914, Kerala State Archives, Trivandrum.