

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **ESTABLISHMENT OF TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD AND ITS WORKING**

After the formation of united Travancore Cochin state in July 1949 and subsequent enactment of Travancore Cochin Hindu Religious Institutions Act XV of 1950, two Devaswom Boards were established, one for Travancore and another for Cochin. The Travancore Devaswom Board was constituted under Chapter II of Part I of the Act in accordance with the terms of the covenant<sup>1</sup>. It was constituted under section 4(1) of the Act. It consisted of three Hindu members, one of whom was nominated by the ruler of Travancore. The Hindu ministers and the Hindu members of legislative assembly elected the other two members. The members are elected for a period of four years from the date of nomination or election as the case may be. A member is allowed to continue in office after the expiry of his term till the vacancy is filled up by a

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<sup>1</sup> Travancore Government, **Gazette Extraordinary**, dated 16 April 1950.

new person or through his re-election<sup>2</sup>. If a member wanted to resign his membership before the completion of his term, he was required to tender a written resignation letter. In 1984, a question arised whether a member for whom the term had already been expired could resign from his office. The court held that he should continue in office till the vacancy was filled up by a new member as per rules<sup>3</sup>.

The Board is a body corporate having perpetual succession and a common seal with power to hold and acquire properties for and on behalf of the institutions under its management. The Board shall by its name sue and to be sued and the secretary of the Board shall represent in such suits. In 1976, the secretary himself was impleaded in suit no.83 of 1976 on behalf of the Devaswom Board with regard to a question whether the Board includes all members or only a single member as the case may be.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Act No.XV of 1950, S.10 (3), and p.7.

<sup>3</sup> **K.L.T.**, Case No.779, 1984.

<sup>4</sup> **K.L.T.**Suit No.83 (38), 1976.

### **Devaswom Board members and President:**

The Board consisted of three members belonging to Hindu community, one of whom was nominated by the ruler of Travancore (by the Government, later through amendment). The Hindu ministers and the Hindu members of legislative assembly elect two others. These members, at the first Board meeting elect one of the members as its president<sup>5</sup>. The President is the administrative head of the Board office. He can delegate powers to other Board members. The President and other members of the Board received honoraria subject to maximum of Rs.450/- per mensem for the president and Rs.400 per mensem for each of the other two members<sup>6</sup>. The Board has an office in Trivandrum and the meetings of the Board are conducted there. The president will preside the Board meetings. If he could not present, he would authorise a member to preside the meeting<sup>7</sup>. No business is

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<sup>5</sup> Vide in the Appendix IV, pp.11-13.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., S.13(2).

transacted at any meetings unless two members are present. In case of difference of opinion among the members, the president has a casting vote to decide the matter. As per section 11 of the Amendment Act 1974, the president of the Board is to be nominated by the Hindus among the council of ministers. According to a court decision in 1977, it was held that the president of the Board is not holding an office of profit under the government. The Court pointed out the following reasons<sup>8</sup>.

- (1). The right to remove a member is vested in the high court and not on the government.
- (2). The honorarium received by the president was drawn from the devaswom fund and not directly from the government.
- (3). He did not perform any function for the government.
- (4). The government did not exercise any control over his functions.

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<sup>8</sup> **K.L.T.**No.10,1977.

### **Devaswom Board Secretary:**

The Board secretary is the covener of the meetings of the Board. He keeps the minutes of the meetings of the Board. He is vested with many powers and responsibilities<sup>9</sup>.

- (1). He will sanction any kind of leave to the staff in the Boards office as per rules. But he is to sanction only casual leave to the superintendents working in the Board's office.
- (2). He will sanction the increment to the employees of the Board.
- (3). He is empowered to fine all the members except the superintendents working in the Board's office for various lapses and no appeal shall lie from such an order of imposing a fine.
- (4). He will appoint the peons in the Board's office in vacancies of not more than one-month duration.

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<sup>9</sup> **The Travancore Devaswom manual**, Vol.I, p.3.

- (5). He will draw and disburse the pay and allowances including T.A. for authorised journeys of the Board's office staff.
- (6). He will attest the entries in the service books of the members of the Board's office staff.
- (7). He will sanction indents for stationery articles and printed forms for various offices under the Board.
- (8). He will communicate the decisions of the Board to the persons concerned.
- (9). He will dispose of all the routine papers and investigation of claims which are not time bared. (Investigation of time bared claims i.e. claims of over 6 years will be sanctioned by the Board).
- (10). He will exercise all such other powers as are conferred upon him by the Board from time to time<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> *The Travancore Devaswom Manual, op.cit.*, p.91.

There is a well organised office for executing various works of the Board at Trivandrum. The organisation of the Board's office was a major preliminary work of Travancore devaswom Board. The president shall be the administrative head of the Board office. All general instructions issued from time to time for the guidance of staff members should be embodied in an office order book. The administrative head shall be competent to control the staff and regulate their work. He shall exercise superintending control over the whole Board office. The Board's a secretary and two superintendents known as senior superintendent and junior superintendent<sup>11</sup>. They will look after the daily routine work of the Board and the devaswom fund.

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5.

### **Powers and responsibilities of the Board:**

Section 16, of the Act confers all rights, authority and jurisdiction on the Boards in respect of devaswoms and Hindu religious endowments formerly exercised by the ruler of Travancore. The Board is given powers of direction, control and supervision over the incorporated and unincorporated devaswoms and Hindu religious endowments under their jurisdiction. The acts and proceedings of all officers and servants of the Board and of the devaswom department are to be supervised and controlled by the Board. Section 17 of the Act empowers the Board to make bye-laws which are not inconsistent with Part I of this Act. Rules are also made in accordance with the above section. In 1953, the Travancore Devaswom Board was pleased to make bye-laws regulating the conduct of business of the meetings of the Board<sup>12</sup>. It also framed bye-laws regulating the form and manner of applications to the Board. The following rules were also prepared:

- (1). Rules for the purchase of properties.
- (2). Travancore devaswom pattom rules.

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<sup>12</sup> **Travancore Geztte** No.21,dated 26 May 1953.



- (3). Rules regarding Entrance Test Examination for recruitment to appointments in the devaswom administrative service.
- (4). Rules regarding the recruitment service and conduct of devaswom servants.
- (5). Travancore devaswom scale of expenditure rules.
- (6). Travancore devaswom audit rules.
- (7). Travancore devaswom budget rules.
- (8). Rules regarding the granting of travelling and halting allowances to the members of the board and devaswom officers.
- (9). Travancore devaswom contributory provident fund cum insurance rules.
- (10). Rules for the exercise of superintendence over the management of the Hindu religious endowments.
- (11). Rules regarding constitution, functions etc of committees for the superintendence of endowments.

(12). Travancore devaswom contributory provident fund cum insurance for contingent employees.

(13). Rules regarding books, registers and accounts to be kept at the office of the Board.

(14). Rules regarding grant of copies of records.

(15). Government servants conduct rules, 1950.

The Board had examined the draft rules and revised forms of correspondence and was pleased to approve the same<sup>13</sup>. This order minimised the volume of clerical work and provided for simpler forms of correspondence. In an order dated 25th September 1952, some general principles regarding audit were framed. So also the passing of the budget led to better financial administration in the Devaswom Board.

According to section 28(3) the Board resumed lands given for various purposes and services and took control over the holders of all **karanma** services. Some of the **karanma holders** challenged the

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<sup>13</sup> Order Dis.No.75/53/S., dated 27 January 1953.

resumption order in the court of law holding that these properties had been given to them as **kanam**, which was equal to alienation of property<sup>14</sup>. The court held that order of resumption could be passed only in cases where there was alienation which amounted to transfer of interest in the property and not merely transfer of possession for enjoyment of property.

The Board has absolute power to supervise, direct and control the devaswom department. It had full power to manage and administer the funds of incorporated and unincorporated devaswoms under their control. The Board arranged for the proper conduct of daily worship, ceremonies and festivals in every temple according to its usages<sup>15</sup>. A question arised when the Devaswom Board appointed a person who was not a malayala brahmin as **santhikaran** in a temple under the Board. The question was whether the appointment was opposed to recognized usage, as

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<sup>14</sup> **K.L.T.**, 949, 1962.

<sup>15</sup> Vide in the Appendix IV, SS. 29-31.

malayala brahmins were alone appointed as **santhikars** in the temples under the control of Travancore Devaswom Board. The court held that there was no illegality in the appointment since the word 'usage' mentioned in section 24 and section 31 of the Act can not have any application to the caste of the person employed as a **santhikaran** in a temple<sup>16</sup>.

Section 32 of the Act deals with the responsibility of the Board for keeping regular accounts of all receipts and expenditure in respect of the institutions under its administration for auditing. The following are the major receipts and expenditure of the devaswom department.

### **Receipts:**

#### (1). Receipts from lands

(a). Outside Travancore (lands of Achakoil devaswom held in Tirunelveli district and lands of certain scheduled devaswoms of the Vaikam district in Cochin territory)

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<sup>16</sup> Adithyan V.Travancore Devaswom Board (unreported case) cited in **Souvenir, 'Dew Drops** -97', Trivandrum, p.30.

- (b). Inside Travancore i.e. **Kuthakappattam** and other revenues on devaswom lands and trees.
- (2). **Nadavaravu** in cash through **vanchies**, **kanikkakudoms**, **nadakkuvaippu** and collection in connection with kavadi and other **vazhivadus**, **satyam** etc.
- (3). Sale proceeds of offerings like **sanchayachoru**, **parayeedu** and **thulabharam** articles , live stock etc.
- (4). Miscellaneous, prohibitory assessment levied for encroachments on devaswom **purombokes**, **kudivila** on royal trees on devaswom lands, hire of devaswom elephants, rent for campsheds, letting and right of vending oil, firing petards (vedi vazahivadu - auction) etc.
- (5). Arrears - revenue not collected before the end of the previous year
- (6). Interest on fixed deposit and other investments.
- (7). Sale proceeds of old stores and inserviceable materials.

- (8). Capital receipts from lands purchased out of devaswom surplus fund.
- (9). Loans refunded
- (10). Devaswom special test examinations<sup>17</sup>.

**Expenditure:**

- (1). Salaries, dearness allowance and leave allowances to all officers.
- (2). Pensionary contribution for the officers eligible for pension.
- (3). Travelling allowances for the above officers
- (4). Contingent expenditure of the drawing and controlling officers.
- (5). Grants to temples within and outside state.
- (6). Charitable institution (koppukars, pokkuvarathukars etc.)

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<sup>17</sup> G.O.DB.No.831/40/Dev., dated 3 September 1940.

- (7). **Pathivu** expenditure in scheduled devaswoms.
- (8). Extraordinary expenditure
- (9). Religious libraries
- (10). Maramath works carried out through the department including **ulsava** maramath.
- (11). Purchase and repair of **thiruvabharanams**, **bharanipatroms** etc.
- (12). Nandavanoms
- (13). Elephant charges
- (14). Rent and taxes
- (15). Electric current and maintenance of electric installation.
- (16). Religious convention and discourses
- (17). Religious publications
- (18). Hire of elephants.
- (19). Miscellaneous and law charges
- (20). Postage charges

- (21). Diary farms
- (22). Land compensation charges.
- (23). Special police guards
- (24). Telephone charges
- (25). Advertisement charges
- (26). Stationery and printing charges.
- (27). Devaswom special test examinations
- (28). Purchase of books
- (29). Thiruvabharanom special office.
- (30). Arrears payments.

The detailed statement showing the annual receipts and expenditure shall be prepared and produced before the auditors for auditing along all documents, cash books etc. The auditors shall send the report to the high court and the high court shall send a copy of every audit report to the Board. It shall be the duty of the



Board to remedy any defects or irregularities pointed out by the auditor and report the same to the high court. A copy of the audit report shall be supplied to any person who duly applies for the same<sup>18</sup>.

Section 33 of the Act gives power to the Board to prepare a budget for the nest financial year showing the probable receipts and expenditure of the incorporated and unincorporated devaswoms and Hindu religious institutions under the management of the Board. The budget may be prepared within two months of the commencement each financial year. The budget will be submitted to the ruler of Travancore, at present to the government for approval<sup>19</sup>. The Board shall also prepare an administration report in each financial year of the working of the Board. The administration report will also be submitted to the ruler of Travancore for approval<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Vide in the Appendix IV, p.20.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p.21.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

In exercise of the powers conferred under clause (d) subsection (2), section 35 of the Act, the Travancore Devaswom Board was pleased to make budget rules. The budget referred to in these rules is the estimate of annual revenue and expenditure of the expenditure of the institutions administered by the Board. The Board shall in each year prepare a budget for the next financial year showing the probable receipts and expenditure of the incorporated and unincorporated devaswoms. The departmental heads or other officers under the Board will also be present for the budget preparation and discussion when so required by the Board. The budget estimates shall be sanctioned by the Board early enough at least 15 days before the commencement of the financial year to which they relate. When the Board passed the budget, a copy of the same will be forwarded to the secretary. No new budget heads should be opened without the sanction of devaswom accounts officer and the devaswom Board. Officers incurring expenditure will be held personally responsible for excess expenditure over budget allotment unless it has the sanction of the

competent authority. All allotments made in the budget shall lapse at the end of the financial year<sup>21</sup>.

The Board may assume the management of Hindu religious endowments in five occasions<sup>22</sup>. It may be due to the request of two third majority of trustees. The important cause for assumption is the mismanagement of trustees including the violation of the recognised usages of temples<sup>23</sup>. If any person is aggrieved by the order of assumption may file a suit against the Board to set aside such order. Subject to the result of the suit, the order of assumption shall be final. According to section 59 of the Act the members of the Board, officers and servants of the devaswom department, the members of the SreePadmanabha Swamy temple committee and the executive officer and other shall be deemed to be public servants within the meaning of section 15 of the Travancore penal code<sup>24</sup>. Hence the powers and responsibilities go hand in hand as in the case of the public servants.

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<sup>21</sup> **Travancore Devaswom manual**, Vol, II, 1952, pp.255-230.

<sup>22</sup> Vide in the Appendix IV, S.e7, p.23.

<sup>23</sup> **K.L.T.** (S.N) No.83(38), 1976.

<sup>24</sup> Vide in the Appendix IV, p.30.

## **Devaswom Fund**

Section 25 of the Act deals with the constitution of devaswom fund for the administration of incorporated devaswoms. It consisted of (i) the sum of fifty-one lakhs of rupees mentioned in Article 238(10) (ii) of the constitution as payable from the government to devaswom fund. (ii) money released from time to time by the sale of movable properties belonging to the said devaswoms (iii) all voluntary contribution and offerings from devotees (iv) profits and interests received from investment of funds belonging to them and (v) all incomes belonging to and other income received by the said devaswoms. Out of fifty-one lakhs received to devaswom fund, six lakhs were to be contributed for the expenditure in SreePadmanabha Swamy temple Trivandrum. The unspent balance of each year out of the devaswom fund formed the devaswom surplus fund. This surplus fund is to be administered subject to the control and direction of the Board by the devaswom commissioner. In 1958-59, the endowment fund under the control of Devaswom Board was increased through an addition of a small amount of Rs.475/- which was contributed by SriGuda Sankara valiya Raja of Punnathoor, Kottapdi for instituting a **vazhivadu** in

the Vaikam devaswom<sup>25</sup>. The devaswom surplus fund as it stood at the end of 1958-59 was Rs.9523527/- as against Rs.9518527/- for the previous year <sup>26</sup>. With regard to the total receipts and expenditure during the financial year for 1958-59 under various budget heads were Rs.5855018/- and Rs.5594295/- respectively. The corresponding figures for 1957-58 were Rs.6090569/- and 5849364/- respectively<sup>27</sup>. The figures showed a decrease in the receipts and expenditure from the 1957-58 to 1958-59.

The devaswom surplus fund is also showing an increase from year to year. Take for example, the devaswom surplus fund which consisted of fixed deposit account in banks, securities and shares and deposits with government for the year 1962-63 was Rs.9479466/- and for the year 1963-64 being Rs.6964122 which showed clear increase in the deposit due to various devaswoms under the Board<sup>28</sup>.

### **Working of the Board:**

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<sup>25</sup> **Kerala State administration Report** <sup>9</sup>1958-59, p.312.

<sup>26</sup> **Ibid.**, p.313.

<sup>27</sup> **Ibid.**, p.314.

<sup>28</sup> **K.S.A.R.**, p.342.

After the statutory organisation of Travancore Devaswom Board in 1950, it acted as the sole administrative body to manage and control all the incorporated, unincorporated devaswoms and other religious institutions and endowments along with their funds. Thereafter the overall working of the temples became more effective. The first Devaswom Board constituted in accordance with the Hindu Religious Institutions Act, 1950, laid the foundation for a better administration. The Board gave importance in classifying the ceremonies of the temples, chalked out programme of daily pujas, revision of **pathivus** and instructions regarding conduct of **ulsavams**. The ceremonies performed in devaswoms may be broadly classified into ordinary and extraordinary ceremonies. **Nityanidnam**, **masavishesams**, **attavishesams** and **ulsavams** are ordinary ceremonies of the temple<sup>29</sup>. **Nityanidanam** is the daily round of ceremonies. Under this, daily **abhishekam**, **puja**, **nivediam**, **namaskaram**, **sreebeli** etc are conducted. The deity is taken in procession round the temple at the close of the morning, noonday and night services and **puja** is offered at the **valiabelikkal**

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<sup>29</sup> *The Travancore Devaswom Manual, op-cit.*, p.123.

and to the **devas** installed in **belivattom**. This is called the **sreebeli**<sup>30</sup>. The board has issued instruction to all major devaswoms that **sreebeli** must be held without any interruption<sup>31</sup>. **Masavisheshams** are periodical special ceremonies conducted on specified days in a month. They are conducted in certain week days such as Tuesdays and Fridays etc., **thithis**<sup>32</sup> such as **pradosham**, **shasti** etc., specified days with reference to star such as **askarthika**, **thiruvonam**, **sankranthi** etc. The devaswom department permitted such temples to conduct these ceremonies in a fitting manner with the devaswom fund of the temples. With the special instruction of the Board, the Superintendents visited these temples on such days<sup>33</sup>. **Attavisheshams** are special ceremonies conducted on certain fixed days in the year. Sivarathri, vishu, ashtami, rohini, nira, puthari etc fall under this head. In most of the major temples, the ulsavams are conducted only once a year. In some temples there are more than one **ulsavam** and the duration

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> **K.S.A.R.**, 1957-58, p.232.

<sup>32</sup> Tithi - bright and dark halves of the moon.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

may generally be for 10 days. **Ulsavams** consist of special services within the temple or **akathepaditharam** as well as outside the temple or **purathepaditharam** such as feasts, processions, exhibitions of various art performances for the entertainment of the devotees who gather on the occasions. The Travancore Devaswom Board has undertaken the task of conducting all these ceremonies in the temples under their control in an effective and befitting manner with the co-operation of devotees and the participation of public. There are seasonal **ulsavams** with special **pujas** in some temples as in the case of Sabarimala temple. The Sabarimala temple has become the most popular pilgrimage centre in India<sup>34</sup>. The **mandalapuja** and **makaravilakku** festivals during the year made a record both in the number of pilgrims and in the revenue collected. The receipts during 1962-'63 for **mandalapuja** and **makaravilakku** festivals was amounted to Rs.120306 and Rs.279533/- respectively. This has been considerably increased during 1963-'64 to Rs.175471 and Rs.394123 respectively<sup>35</sup>. The worshipping public offered **vazhivadus** in all these temples. These

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<sup>34</sup> **K.S.A.R.**, 1962-63, p.257.

<sup>35</sup> **K.S.A.R.**, 1963-64, p.342.



generally consist of **nivediams**, **archana**, lighting, **vedi vazhivadu** as per approved rates<sup>36</sup>. The devaswom Board issued instruction to issue written receipts for all payments to the temples. This made all accounts proper and accountable<sup>37</sup>.

The Travancore Devaswom Board has taken steps for conducting the programme of daily **pujas** in all the temples under its control very promptly and perfectly. The number of daily **pujas** varies considerably in different devaswoms according to the importance of each devaswom. There are some devaswoms, just like Sabarimala temple, where pujas are not done daily but only occasionally. There are five **pujas** to be performed at different intervals of a day. They are, (1) **ushapuja**, (2) **ethirthapuja**, (3) **pantheeradipuja**, (4) **uchapuja** and (5) **athazhapuja**. In addition to these **pujas**, **panchagavyam**, **navakom**, **nirmalayam**, **abishekam**, **deeparadhana** are other **pujas** in the temples which attracted a large number of devotees. There is proper timing for each **puja** and it is calculated on the basis of sunrise and sun set by **nazhikas** , a

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<sup>36</sup> **Travancore Devaswom manual, op.cit.**, p.125

<sup>37</sup> **K.S.A.R., op.cit**, p.342.

timing in Indian method. For example, the **deeparadhana** is done within one and a quarter **nazhikas** after sun set. However these timings will not apply to Thiruvārppu temple which has a programme of its own<sup>38</sup>. All religious functions during **ulsavam** and other ceremonial occasions should end by midnight except the following functions, which may extend to two and a half **nazhikas** beyond midnight<sup>39</sup>.

- (1) **Vrichikam** and **Kumbhom Ashtami** procession in the Vaikam devaswom.
- (2). **Pallivetta** and **arat** in the Ettumanoor, Aranmula, Ambalapuzha and Thirunakkara devaswom.
- (3). The Fifth and seventh **ulsavams** in Suchindrum devaswom.

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<sup>38</sup> G.O.R. Dis. No.256/43, dated 5 April 1943.

<sup>39</sup> *Travancore Devaswom Manual, op.cit.*, p.127.

(4). The eighth **ulsavam**, **pallivetta** and **arat** in Haripad devaswom.

The Travancore Devaswom Board members visited the major devaswoms during the days of **ulsavam**. The officials of the devaswom department inspected the temples periodically during the programme of daily **pujas** and **ulsavams**.

The temples activities in the Travancore temples showed fast improvement during the period from 1958 to 1965. During this period the Travancore Devaswom Board was reconstituted thrice. On 9th June 1958, the Board was reconstituted when the term of office of the president and members of the Board expired<sup>40</sup>. The new Board was headed by A.S.Dhamodharan Asan as president and R. Vasudeva Pothuval and K.G. Narayanan as members. During the year steps were taken for the revision of Devaswom manual and for the gradation list of the staff. The work of the special officer appointed for this purpose was making good progress. Steps were taken for the formation of a unit in Board office for dealing with anticorruption cases<sup>41</sup>. Three-district audit

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<sup>40</sup> **K.S.A.R.**, 1958-'59, p.309.

<sup>41</sup> **Ibid.**

offices were established in three districts for ensuring efficient audit of the accounts. These offices were placed under the administrative and technical control of the devaswom account officer and independent of the assistant commissioner of the district concerned. Again the Board was reconstituted on 1 September 1962 and the first meeting was held at the Board office building on the same day<sup>42</sup>. The vacant posts for different categories of temple priests such as **tantri**, **melsanthi**, **keezhsanthi** were appointed during this period. Their work was placed under constant supervision. In large number of temples malayala tantram was followed. The paradesa **tantram** was followed only in the Shencotta taluk and some part of the Trivandrum district. The Board has also taken steps to give proper training to **santhikars** of the temples under its management. The duties and responsibilities of **tantri**, **melsanthi**, **keezhsanthi** and other temple servants were well defined and demarcated.

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<sup>42</sup> **K.S.A.R., 1962-63**, p.256.

## **Tantri:**

The headman of the temple is the **tantri**. A **tantri** is an accredited exponent of **tantric** rules on all spiritual matters including the methods of worship. Nambutries were appointed as **tantri** for the first time in Suchindrum temple<sup>43</sup>. Generally they were appointed on a hereditary basis or **karanma** basis. They were the final authority on all rules pertaining to the religious rites of the **pagoda**. However they were limited in number and many of them hold **tantram** of several temples. They did not officiate the daily services except in a few important temples. They officiate for the **ulsavams**, other occasional and extraordinary ceremonies. For each extraordinary ceremony, the **tantri** should forward an estimate or **paditharam** prepared for the occasion, stating the nature of services, quality of the provisions and **dakshina** or remuneration due to the **tantri**. In recognition of the service they were remunerated, which varied from temple to temple. In some temples, the **tantri** was remunerated only for the occasional or extraordinary ceremonies, while in others he was given a monthly

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<sup>43</sup> K.K.Pillai, *op.cit.*, p.174.

allowance. The remuneration was either in cash or kind<sup>44</sup>. **Tantri** is an ecclesiastical dignitary was learned in the art of exhibiting proper signs and symbols to the accompaniment of appropriate mantras while bathing the deity, offering flowers, **naivedya** and the **upacharas**<sup>45</sup>. The services of the **tantries** were utilised mostly during temple festivals<sup>46</sup>.

### **Melsanthi:**

The melsanthies are the chief **pujaries** in the temples of Travancore. He has to conduct the worship in the inner shrines of the temples<sup>47</sup>. He has to look after the prompt conduct of **pujas** at the specified periods. However the duties like the preparation of **nivedyam** and other items required for offering were prepared with the help of subordinate officials of the devaswom department<sup>48</sup>. This not only reduced the work load of the **melsanthi** but also

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<sup>44</sup> The Travancore Devaswom Hand Book, p.142.

<sup>45</sup> V.Varadachari, **Agamas and south Indian Vaishnavism** Madras, 1982, p.35.

<sup>46</sup> **T.A.S.**, vol.IV, p.29.

<sup>47</sup> **Ibid.**

<sup>48</sup> G.O. No. D.3343, dated 25 October 1918.

showed the superior authority enjoyed by him. Therefore his orders were to be obeyed by the subordinate priests.

### **Kizhsanthi:**

As subordinate officiating priests, the **kizhsanthies** were provided with various duties and responsibilities. They cooked the **nivedyam** (sacred food) meant for offering, to furnish the **melsanthi** with water for bathing the image and hand over to him the vessel containing the charcoal on which incense is burnt<sup>49</sup>. All the **kizhsanthies** were not enjoying the privilege of performing the **pujas**. For such **kizhsanthies** specified qualification was not required for. Yet they had to submit their conduct certificates<sup>50</sup>.

### **Santhikars:**

The sanctity of the temple rests on the performance of the **santhi** service. **Santhikars** are the officiating priests of the temple. Well-qualified persons were recruited for this service. They conducted ordinary ceremonies in the temples. They enjoyed many privileges. According to the tenure they were classified as

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<sup>49</sup> **T.A.S.**, vol.IV, pp.29-30.

<sup>50</sup> G.O. No.D.5067, dated 4 October 1911.

**karanmasanthikars** (hereditary **santhikars**) and **nonkaranmasanthikars** <sup>51</sup>. Formerly the **santhikars** had to pay **adayara**, a fee just like a security deposit, in consideration for granting the privilege for conducting **santhi** in a temple. However, in course of time the system of **adayara** and auctioning of **santhi** service for a fixed term were abolished <sup>52</sup>. This enabled more suitable persons with real aptitude to come forward and accept the sacred profession of **santhi** service. The Board also appointed new **santhikars** when the **karanmasanthikars** vacated the place either by death or due to other reasons.. The selection was made on the basis of good character, deep knowledge and proper training in the subject matter. In some temples like in the Suchindrum temple, the **santhikars** were selected from a limited circle. Training is considered to be an essential qualification and with this view the Board has started training schools in Travancore to impart proper training to **santhikars**. At one stage the Board considered non-brahmins also for the appointment of **santhikars** in the temples

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<sup>51</sup> G.O. No.D.5067, dated 4 October 1911.

<sup>52</sup> *Travancore Devaswom Manual*, op.cit., p.60.



under their control. In some temples private individuals or bodies were empowered to nominate persons for **santhi** service on certain conditions such as they possess good character, lead pious life and perform the duty sincerely. The Board adopted the renovated method of appointment of **santhikars** through gazette notification calling for applicants, stating the qualifications, emoluments and other conditions of appointment<sup>53</sup>. Such notifications were issued six months before the vacancy arised. The **santhikars** thus appointed were paid remuneration. In 1958-59, the Travancore Devaswom Board has revised the scales of pay of both gazetted and nongazetted staff of the devaswom Board<sup>54</sup>. The temple servants were also brought under the pay revision. Devaswom provident fund and contributory provident fund were opened to different categories of servants of the devaswom department as per their service rules. The total number of subscribers to the contributory provident fund increased from 150 to 276 which was a notable increase when considering to previous year<sup>55</sup>.

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<sup>53</sup> Order C.No.550 of 22/Acc, dated 24 August 1922.

<sup>54</sup> Vide in the Appendix V, pp.31-35.

<sup>55</sup> **K.S.A.R.**, 1958-59, p.311.

Subsequently seven accounts of provident fund were closed in final settlement of claims. Only one account of the contributory provident fund was closed in final settlement of the claims. Moreover 77 new applicants were admitted to the contributory provident fund<sup>56</sup>. Two temporary land officer were working in the department for land administration from 1st April 1958. These officers discontinued from service with effect from 1st November 1958 and the work connected with land administration was entrusted to the assistant commissioners of the districts concerned<sup>57</sup>. The maramath department functioning under the Board continued to function under a qualified engineer. During the year 1958-59 works costing Rs.626105 were carried out in different temples. Several maramath works such as renovation of temples, repairs to temple tanks, erection of **dhawajams**, maintenance and repairs of devaswoms buildings, camp sheds and works in personal deposit devaswoms were undertaken by the department. The total amount spent for incorporated temples alone was Rs.685559<sup>58</sup>. This was an increase in expenditure when considering the amount

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<sup>56</sup> **K.S.A.R.**, 1962-63, p.256.

<sup>57</sup> **K.S.A.R.**, *op.cit*, p.312.

<sup>58</sup> **K.S.A.R.**, 1963-64, p.343.

spent for the previous year i.e. only Rs.391923<sup>59</sup>. The expenditure incurred on personal deposit (unincorporated) devaswoms was in addition to the said expenditure<sup>60</sup>

The Travancore Devaswom Board has done remarkable service to improve the general administration of devaswoms. The **pathivus** of 20 devaswoms of different classes were completely revised and upgraded. New **pathivus** were instituted for the conduct of **ulsavams** in a few other devaswoms. On account of the revision of **pathivus** and upgrading of certain devaswoms there was variation in the number of major, minor and petty and personal deposit devaswoms. Accordingly, at the close of the year, the revised number of temples were 154, 243, 604, and 116 respectively as against 153, 246, 559 and 118 for the previous year. The Malayinkil devaswom was brought under the Board in 1962. Again in 1964, Arppokara devaswom was included with the scheduled devaswoms<sup>61</sup>. At the end of 1964 there were 155 major

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<sup>59</sup> **K.S.A.R.**, 1962-63, p.257

<sup>60</sup> **Ibid.**

<sup>61</sup> **K.S.A.R.**, *op.cit*, p.311.

devaswoms, 246 minor devaswoms, 600 petty devaswoms and 166 personal deposit devaswoms <sup>62</sup>. As a result the newly included devaswoms gained the status of **sircar** devaswoms. With the increase in number of devaswoms a new group was formed on 1st March 1963 with Karunagapally as headquarters<sup>63</sup>. For administrative convenience the necessary rearrangement of groups and sub groups was also made.

In the early sixties, Travancore Devaswom Board started to work with the broad social outlook. In order to make sure of people's participation in the administrative process of the temples, and also to earn their co-operation, advisory committees consisting of Hindu worshippers of the locality were constituted in several important devaswoms. This gave an opportunity for the Hindu public to have a close touch with the administration of temples of their respective locality. This was a very progressive step towards making temple administration more public oriented in nature. Subsequently the Devaswom Board organised the silver jubilee celebration of the Temple Entry Proclamation. It was held for three

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<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> D.Dis. No. 586 (A)/ Dev, dated 1 March 1963.

days at the Srichitra Central Hindu Library, Trivandrum. C.P.Ramaswamy Iyer inaugurated the function and K.P.S.Menon delivered the valedictory address. A large number of people participated in the function. The Board also took keen interest in the preservation of ancient monuments and temple structures including **vigrahams**. The Hindu residents of Thiruvannamoor near Chengannoor unearthed an idol of Gopalakrishna and the same was accepted by the Devaswom Board. The Board took steps for constructing a separate shrine at Thiruvannamoor temple compound and Balalaya Prathishta was conducted there<sup>64</sup>. The governor of Kerala laid the foundation stone for constructing a new temple on 2nd December 1963. The renovation of temples and the installation of new **dhwajams** were carried out under the supervision of the Board. In 1963, copper **dhwajams** were installed in Major Parippil devaswom and Major Changamkari devaswom and **laksharchana** and **lekshadeepam** were conducted in the Ettumanoor devaswom. These events attracted the Hindu community to a great extent. Similarly there was sharp increase in the number of marriages conducted in temples during this period

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<sup>64</sup> **K.S.A.R., op.cit.**, p.341.

which showed that the attachment of people with temple had improved a lot. The Board also took initiative in constructing new temples on the demand of the public. Accordingly, a new temple was constructed at Oripuram in Kottarakkara group. The Board assumed the management of Arpookkara private devaswom due to public demand<sup>65</sup>.

The work of Travancore Devaswom Board did not stop with the administration of temple affairs alone. It has its activities in social and cultural spheres also. In 1957, a cultural development committee was constituted under the auspices of the Devaswom Board. A books sale depot was opened under the control of the cultural development officer and it functioned throughout the year. The SriChitra Central Hindu Religious Library at Trivandrum was maintained as a popular and useful institution. Besides this, fourteen libraries were maintained in important mofussil stations all of which attracted large sections of religious minded people. The cultural development committee held 32 sittings to decide various matters. The committee reviewed 46 books and 2 magazines submitted to the Board by various authors and publishers with

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

request for financial aid<sup>66</sup>. The Board had prepared and approved a scheme for promoting religious education among harijan students by awarding scholarships for which Maharaja of Travancore donated a sum of Rs.25000/-. The Board supervised the working of the Srichitra Central Hindu Religious Library at Trivandrum and took measures for its better performance for the benefit of the Hindu public. In 1963-'64, the library had 132'A' class and 178'B' class memberships and above fifty one thousand persons visited the library during the year. This showed that the library was of immense use of the public. The authorities took steps to increase the number of books in the library to cope with the increase in the number of visitors. In the beginning of the year 1964, there were 8037 books in the library<sup>67</sup>.

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<sup>66</sup> **K.S.A.R.**, 1962-'63, p.258.

<sup>67</sup> **K.S.A.R.**, *op.Cit.*, p.343.

The Boards' social welfare activities also need special mention. In order to help the poor and downtrodden people, the Board undertook many social reform activities. Board has started three orphanages, one each at Neyyattinkara, Kollam and Tiruvarppu. There were four harijan welfare centers one each at kanjiramkulam, Goureespattam, Murukkumpuza and Ozhkupara. A good number of harijans of all ages were attending the night classes regularly between 7 and 10 p.m.. There were two cottage industry schools, one in the premises of the Board office at Nanthancode and the other attached to the orphanage at Neyyattinkara. The trainees were given training in spinning and weaving. The articles produced at the school were sold to the departmental employees at cost price<sup>68</sup>. The Board had started a Hindu hostel at Poojapura, Trivandrum which began to function effectively. In 1964 alone, the Board awarded scholarships and fee concession to 619 college students and 276 school students incurring an expenditure of Rs.52369. One hundred and twenty six pupils who were children of non-gazetted officers and contingent employees under the Board were allowed fee concessions. There

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.



were 70 departmental **mathapatasalas** and seven **geetha** classes under the Board during 1964. The total strength of the students was about 6500 and 95 teachers were engaged for the purpose. The Board also encouraged private **mathapatasalas** and gave a sum Rs.5790 as grant to 90 of such institutions all over the state. With a view to serve the general public of the state, the Board had started five high schools, four upper primary schools with a total strength of 5313 students. About 208 teachers were appointed in such schools for imparting education to all sections of the people. The Board's work for the noble cause of imparting education to the ignorant mass earned reputation in the field of education. Hence the work of Travancore Devaswom Board can not be underestimated only as an institution working for the benefit of the Hindus alone. However, the Travancore temples were bifurcated in the eve of state reorganisation and thereby 490 temples were transferred to the newly formed kanyakumari District and eventually the work of Travancore Devaswom Board was limited to the state of Kerala.