

# Dewan Ramiengar and His Reforms in Travancore

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**Abstract-** The present research paper entitled, “Dewan Ramiengar and His Reforms” analysis the reforms of Ramiengar and their impact on the life and progress of the people of Travancore. Among the distinguished personalities who shaped the administration of Travancore, Dewan Ramiengar occupied an important place. He was appointed as Dewan by Visham Thirunal Maharaja. Dewan Ramiengar was in office for a period of seven years from 1880-1887. During this period the Dewan gave a face-life to Travancore on its wheels. He gave primary importance to the agricultural reforms. He also provoked keen interest in the educational development of the State. His period was remarkable for the betterment of forest administration. Irrigation system in South Travancore was seriously taken by the Government. The salt development was completely reorganised. A Stamp Regulation Act was passed in the lives of the British Act to suit the local people. He was mainly responsible for the reorganisation of the Police Department in 1881. New roads were constructed in order to improve the transport communication. Thus, his achievement in the various branches of administration enhanced the status of the State and endeavoured to eradicate the grievances of the people

Ramiengar assumed charge as Dewan of Travancore in 1880 and continued in power till 1887 when he came to power he found that the finance of the State was very weak. It was a stumbling block to the implementation of his schemes. To get rid of the succumbed situation, he turned every stone to increase the State’s revenue. The income of the State drawn from different sources went high. Major portion of the State’s income was spent on long standing schemes such as irrigation, education and other works of public utility. The Government increased the State revenue collection. No wonder the period from 1880 to 1887 is rightly described as a period of rapid progress in Travancore.

The administration of Ramiengar gave primary importance to the agricultural development of the state. Agricultural formed the backbone of the economy of Travancore and a vast majority of its population depend on it. Among the agricultural product, paddy had a predominant place. Nanchilnad was the chief paddy producing centre of South Travancore. Therefore, the Dewan devoted much of his time to develop agriculture. For agriculture he had a special aptitude. His name will ever remembered for the extension of tapioca cultivation in Travancore. He also tried to introduce Manila Tobacco into the country though with only indifferent results

Dewan Ramiengar made an official visit in July 1881, in Nanchilnad in the course of which he inspected the irrigation works. On finding that the stage of Kothayar project was very unsatisfactory, the Dewan directed the Chief Engineer to take immediate steps as would be calculated to bring about an improvement. The Chief Engineer thereupon reported that four major works were taken up urgently. He suggested that

the leakage in the Pandiyan dams should be stopped, that the Pandiyan Kal should be widened and improved, that the Padmanabhapuram Puthenar Channel should be completely restored, and that a new channel from the Kothayar at Thripparappu should be excavated for irrigating parts of the Vilvancode taluk. The Government thereupon insisted Col. Mead of the Madras Public Works Department to examine the several schemes. He expressed the view that the Pandiyan canal Padmanabhapuram Puthenar and Puthen dam should be improved and the head works for the two main channels constructed. In his opinion, Kothayar scheme was premature. The Government accepted his suggestions and the developmental plans suggested by him were completed in 1885. The combined head works were formally opened by His Highness Sri. Visakam Thirunal Maharaja on 5th March 1885, His Highness observed on that occasion, when events shall have proved that after the waters of the Paralayar have been economised to the utmost extent, they have fallen short of the demands of the agricultural population, if will be time to woo her twin sister the Kothayar and to consider at what point and in what manner she might be best coaxed to yield up her treasures into the common coffers which these head works constitute.

The repair and restoration of channels and bunds as were in existence were left for the most part to the ryots themselves. But this arrangement did not work well. Owing chiefly to the want of co-operation among the ryots all such works were neglected, and the damage to cultivation in consequence was very great. With a view to help the ryots, the Government was pleased to sanction an annual grant of Rs.20,000, subsequently raised to Rs. 30,000 for the Northern and Quilon divisions and parts of the Trivandram division. The grant was expanded on irrigation and drainage channels. The amount

spent were made recoverable from the ryots along with the tax. The rules also provided of the expenditure, not exceeding one-half in each case, being borne by the Government, if on special grounds it was found necessary to show such consideration.

The history of education in Travancore is a long one which divides itself into the various stages by which the disorganised Prial School were encouraged and brought to fit in which a well devised scheme of Primary, Secondary and Collegiate education leading ultimately to the establishment of the Travancore University. Although there were separate schools for boys and girls at the Primary stage until 1932. Co education was freely permitted in the lowest classes of the boys schools with a view to enable young girls to study in schools near their homes. The number of girls studying in boy's school was far greater than the number studying in girls schools. Out of a total of 7780 girls under instruction, in 1884 as many as 5278 were in mixed schools . A Chemistry chair was opened in 1884 with Mr.H.N.Reade as Professor. The Philosophy chair also had become popular under Dr.Harvey and his student, P.Sundram Pillai. The Travancore College soon found reputation throughout the Madras Presidency for efficient teaching and an academic atmosphere. Its alumni rendered excellent accounts of themselves in various professions. Of them Visakam Thirunal said in April 1882, "That the native portion of the government service and of the bar has immensely improved during the past forty years is a fact which the most cavilling critic will not deny. If this result fall of importance is not to be traced to the higher education given by government, to what else is it due. The result is a happy one equally to the governing and governed classes. The good is for from being confined to British territories. Every educated native in or out of government service is a radiant point of enlightenment possessing mainly, self-respect and grateful loyalty government".

In state like Travancore, literacy was the eye opener of the masser who were sunk deep in superstitions. Therefore no performer interested in social upliftment could ignore education. The early rulers made many an attempt to improve the educational system of the State. Among them Visakam Thirunal had a renowned place. Some educational measures of this king marked an improvement over the earlier system. From the reign of Rani Parvathi Bai(1815-1829) the government began to exert control over the educational activities in the State. The Dewan took deep interest in Science, as a result Physics and Chemistry were established in the Maharaja's College. A normal School was established in 1885 to train teachers for vernacular Schools . Elementary education was also encouraged by continuing-in-aid system adopted by Seshiah sastri. Elementary education was extended by the offer of grants in-aid . The Text- Book Committee was revived. The necessary to train teachers for vernacular schools seems to have been felt much earlier and the Government accordingly sanctioned during the year 1883, the establishment of two normal Schools, one at the capital and the other at Kottar for training teachers for vernacular schools. With the services of the duly qualified and trained

teacher from Madras the start of the normal School at Trivandram , was effected.

The education commission recommended to the Government of India in 1883 that the elementary education of the masses, its provision, extension and improvement should be that part of the education system to which the strenuous efforts of the State should be directed in a still larger measure than before .

In 1881 an experienced officer of the British Postal Department was selected and placed at the head of the department on a salary of Rs.100 per mensem . Rules were passed and the pay of the establishment was increased. The registration fee on letters was first reduced from 7 chs to 6 chs and subsequently to 3 chs. Registration of book and pattern packets was allowed on payment of 3 chs. Provision was made for obtaining acknowledgment receipt from the addressee on payment of a fee of 2 chs. Letters of complaints against the Anchal Department were allowed to be carried free. The local delivery of official letters was discontinued. About 1882 at the instance of the Postmaster General, Madras a postal treaty appears to have been concluded between Travancore and the British Government tentatively for one year with a view to bring the Anchal System to fuller reciprocity of action with the Imperial Post. There were 150 Anchal Officers in the state and 185 letter boxes. The Anchal rates of postage were comparatively lesser than the corresponding Postal rates and greater facilities were enjoyed by the people

The depot system was continued in Travancore till 1884. When we found a return to the old seignorage system, merchants, being allowed to cut timber on permits. But in 1886 the same firm took a contract for 10 years for as much teak and black wood as we could deliver to them within that time. About the year the feeling of Kol-teak by the taluk authorities was stopped and work was transformed to the Forest Department, the Sikar demand per Candy was raised to Rs.8 from Rs.6 inclusive of the cost of cutting and delivery. On 6th Minon 1886 an important proclamation was issued defining the limits of hill-cultivation . In 1887 the conservator reassigned the duties of a Magistrate to try forest offences, as the High court did not up hold his convictions which were not passed under any special Law. In 1888 the forests on the western slopes of the Mahendragiri Hills were handed over to the Forest Department and an Aminadar and staff were appointed to protect them. An order was published for bidding the burning of grass in the forests adjoining Tirunelveli. In the same year, notices were issued by the Conservator directing that all timber sold by the Department should be stamped and that receipt given by the Department should all be on printed forms

In 1881 an Assistant Engineer being appointed for the restoration of tanks, the distribution of water for irrigation purposes in the South was under the direct supervision of that Officer, the Peishcar being relieved of all responsibility . To meet the difficulty in securing old and standard venetion sequien frequently wanted for temple offerings, Dewan Ramiengar suggested the coinage of a token gold cold coin which was to be merely a token and not a part of the State

currency. The suggestion ordered to be struck at the Bombay mint in October 1882 but were actually struck at the local mint. The coins were of two sizes. One equal to the English sovereign in weight and purity and the other to the English half sovereign which was to be used in 10000 Anantarayam Panams lieu of sequiens 1000 sovereign and 2000 half sovereign token coins were ordered to be struck.

Travancore has an almost uninterrupted line of natural communications in its extensive river and backwater system. Transport, by water appears to have been in vogue from very early times. The first mention of the adoption of a deliberate policy of opening new roads of the modern type was in 1750A.D . But good progress was made in road construction during the time of Dewan Ramiengar. In the beginning of 1880 the Northern division had absolutely no cart tracks and paved one from kottayam to Mundakayam via., Kanjrapaly with nearly 241 miles of road fit for cart traffic and with several miles of traces. The total length of roads maintained throughout the State at this time was 950 miles, which in another five years increased by 200 miles. Since then a steady policy in the matter of road construction had been followed .

The financial condition of the State during the time of Dewan Ramiengar was in the highest degree prosperous. The Madras Government observed in their Government order that "It must have gratified the present Maharajah to learn that the first year of his reign as a year of unexampled prosperity ; the weather was seasonable, the harvest was plenteous. Under almost every head of revenue there was a marked increase of income and the year closed with a surplus of nearly five lakh"

#### REFERENCE

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