

BODY AND GOVERNMENTALITY: A GENEALOGICAL ANALYSIS

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in

History

by

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CERTIFICATE

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1. "The Making of the Medical Consumer: Press and Medical Advertisements 1920-47," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 2018-19, Vol 79, ISSN No. 2249-1937, 625-633
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DECLARATION

I, Abin Babu P, hereby declare that this thesis titled **Body and Governmentality: A Genealogical Analysis**, submitted by me under the guidance and supervision of **Professor. Dr. Anindita Mukhopadhyay**, Department of History, School of Social Sciences, University of Hyderabad, is a bonafide research work. I also declare that it has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this University or any other University or Institution for the award of any degree or diploma. A report on plagiarism statistics from the Librarian, Indira Gandhi Memorial Library (IGML), University of Hyderabad, is enclosed.

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Abbreviations

CI	Imperial Order of the Crown of India
CLC	Cochin Legislative Council
CSI	The Star of India
FSG	Fort St George Gazette
GCIE	Knight Grand Commander of the Order of the Indian Empire
GCSI	Knight Grand Commander of the Most Exalted Order of the Star of India
ME	Malayalam Era
SCSC	Sri Chithira State Council
SMPA	Sri Mulam Praja Assembly
TAR	Travancore Administration Reports
TLC	Travancore Legislative Council
TSMA	Travancore Sri Mulam Assembly
USTCLA	United Sitting of Travancore- Cochin Legislative Assemblies

Glossary

<i>Acharam</i>	Daily observances of the Hindus prescribed by the Dharmasastras.
<i>Asuddhi</i>	Impurity
<i>Channar</i>	A caste
<i>Devaswom</i>	Religious endowments and property belonging to temples
<i>Dewan</i>	Prime minister for the Maharaja
<i>Hiranyagarbham</i>	A royal ceremony in which the Maharaja sits inside a large cow or lotus of gold made for the function
<i>Jananamaranakanakku</i>	Register of birth and deaths
<i>Kaimukku</i>	A form of ordeal by dipping the hand in molten ghee/ oil to prove one's innocence.
<i>Karanavar</i>	Patriarch of the Household
<i>Karanavatti</i>	Matriarch of the Household
<i>Kariakkar</i>	An administrative head of a Taluq, with judicial, revenue and administrative powers. It was later renamed to Tahsildar
<i>Kazcha</i>	Gift
<i>Madampimar</i>	Nair chieftains of Travancore
<i>Mamul/ Mamool</i>	Ancient customs
<i>Maryada</i>	Established customs
<i>Murajapam</i>	A ceremony in which the state feasted the Malayala Brahmins
<i>Nadu</i>	A small territorial unit under a chieftain
<i>Naduvazhi</i>	Ruler of a nadu
<i>Proverties</i>	Revenue Divisions
<i>Rajadharma</i>	The Duty of the King
<i>Sattavariola</i>	A collection of rules and laws/ Ordinances of the government
<i>Sitala/ Chutala</i>	Goddess of smallpox
<i>Sunnud/ Sanad</i>	A Document or agreement
<i>Thrippadidanam</i>	Dedication of the kingdom to the Lord Padmanabha
<i>Uriyam/ Uzhiyam</i>	Forced Labour
<i>Vasuri / Vasoori</i>	Smallpox
<i>Vyavaharamala</i>	Law book of Travancore
<i>Vydyan</i>	Traditional medical practitioners

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Chapter I

Introduction

Body and Governmentality: A Genealogical Analysis

A Theoretical Introduction

The term government is often identified as synonymous with the institutional and administrative apparatus of the state. While the term government is etymologically derived from Greek, meaning ‘steering the ship,’¹ the possibility of such a broad meaning has been subsumed to the idea of the state. This has resulted in equating government with the administrative and bureaucratic structure of the state. The concept of governmentality helps to look at governing/ government in a broad sense without restricting government to the administrative domain of the state. The term governmentality is derived from the French word ‘gouvernemental’ meaning ‘concerning government,’² and it is in this sense that I have deployed the term in the thesis. That government is not monopolized by the state is a central premise of governmentality. According to the governmentality perspective, government is enacted and exercised across multiple axes, not just the state. In such a perspective, government is conceived not as an institution but rather as an activity or practice that aims to steer and govern human beings and their conduct. Among the multiple axes around which government is enacted, the government of the body plays a crucial role in modern societies.

Bodies³ continue to be the focus of political power, and bodies have remained and will remain the focal point of articulation of power in the present and throughout history. Historical explanations of political power have analyzed different strategies employed by different regimes to effectively control and govern individuals and populations at each stage in history. These techniques were identified as peculiar to the political rationales of the regimes to effectively control and govern populations at different points in time. These practices varied

¹ David Robertson, *The Routledge Dictionary of Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 211.

² Thomas Lemke, “An Indigestible Meal: Foucault, Governmentality and State Theory,” *Disinktion: Scandinavian Journal of Social Theory* 15 (2007): 4.

³ Throughout the thesis, the term body is used to mean embodiment of human, as it is used generally in the sociology of Body, following Chris Shilling and others. Chris Shilling, *The Body: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

from the sovereign power exercised by the native rulers and colonial regimes to the postcolonial nation-states, or in other words; bodies were controlled and regulated by each of these political systems in ways they best understood for the ends they sought to establish: stability and permanence of power, authority, and control over systems of governance.

The fundamental objective of the thesis is an inquiry into the political rationalities that shaped the body in 19th and 20th-century Travancore. Contextualizing the work, the thesis explores the political rationalities of colonial power and the effects of rule created under indirect rule conditions. Colonialism, with its specific political rationalities, was to radically transform the way precolonial societies were organized. The distinctiveness of such a power and its rationalities are analyzed in the current work.

As David Scott has shown in his landmark essay, “Colonial Governmentality,” colonialism created effects of rule that broke down older forms of life and created new forms of life in its place.⁴ The body is crucial to understanding the changing political rationalities of modes of power as these forms of power constantly act on it. By looking initially at the sovereign power that existed in Travancore and the transformations it underwent with colonial intervention, it is argued that whereas the point of application of sovereign power was the body of its subjects, the point of application of colonial power was the conditions in which the bodies existed and defined life.⁵

Colonialism, apart from a political and economic project, was also a set of ideologies, technologies, knowledge systems, and practices. To understand the specificities of colonial power, it is thus imperative to understand the distinct political rationalities that constituted and shaped it in each historical context. The current thesis sets out to do this. While political power had a prominent role in shaping the understanding of bodies, it alone does not shape or give meaning to bodies, bodily practices, and their government. It is not that individuals solely are products created by the deployment of specific forms of political power and thus have no agency of their own. Even when subjected to the governmental operation of power, the individual resists it and contests it in specific ways. Even when political power has exerted its influence over the bodies, it has never been absolute, and individuals have always resisted it

⁴ David Scott, “Colonial Governmentality,” *Social Text*, no. 43 (1995): 192-193.

⁵ *Ibid.* 199.

and reformulated it, creating their own identities and self-formations. The very construction of such categorizations as and through an individual is also a political process.

Following Mary Douglas, I contend that the “human body is an image of the society and that there can be no natural way of considering the body that does not involve at the same time a social dimension.”⁶ It is asserted here that body and embodiment are shaped by society, its dominant structures, belief systems, and values at each historical stage. The thesis explores the linkages between political power and the body or how political power manifested on the body from the 19th century in Travancore. The various historical ways in which the body was trained, regulated, and acted upon by political power to be socially and economically productive thus form the crux of the inquiry here. The Foucauldian idea of governmentality provides an analytical tool and methodological lens to explore the abovementioned themes.

Governmentality

Any attempts to theorize power and any inquiry into the conceptions and understandings of power cannot avoid Michel Foucault and his formulations of power. In his analysis of modern power, Foucault developed the concept of governmentality to look beyond the conventional ideas, definitions, and operations of power.⁷ The concept was developed to understand the nuanced concepts of power characteristics of political power from the 19th century. Central to the Foucauldian idea of governmentality is the notion that power and control in the modern state are located not in the body of the sovereign and its juridico-political apparatus but in the various norms, institutions, rationalities, and forms of knowledge dispersed across the society. These dispersed nodes of actors, institutions, and networks opened up by the governmentality framework are helpful in exploring the changes Travancore was undergoing from the late 19th century under colonial intervention.

Governmentality is closely connected to the genealogy of the modern state. In the governmentality perspective, the state is regarded not as a collection of institutions; its existence is understood in terms of its techniques, practices, and rationalities that combine in

⁶ Mary Douglas, “The Two Bodies,” in *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (London: Routledge, 2003), 78.

⁷ Michel Foucault, “Governmentality,” in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, ed. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon & Peter Mitchell (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 87-104.

different ways at different times to make “something called the state thinkable and meaningful.”⁸ Although state formation and questions of state power are essential to his inquiries, Foucault refrains from proposing a general theory of the state.⁹ The ‘state’ to Foucault is not a ‘universal or an autonomous source of power’ that has no ‘heart’ and no ‘interior.’¹⁰ To him, “The state is nothing but the mobile effect of a regime of multiple governmentalities.”¹¹ Thus, while abstaining from proposing a theory of state, he still undertakes an “investigation of the problem of the state on the basis of practices of governmentality.”¹²

Foucault identifies two distinct realms and meanings to the term. While one is a clearly ‘political form of government,’ which he employs to look at the practical functioning of institutions and ideologies in liberal political economies, the other is the ‘problematic of the government in general.’¹³ Both are crucial to understanding the issues of modern power. The second meaning that he ascribes to governmentality: ‘the conduct of conduct’ emphasizes power as an ordering principle shaping conduct/ guiding/ governing persons.

Colin Gordon further explains this second meaning ascribed to government,

“Government as an activity could concern the relation between self and self, private interpersonal relations involving some form of control or guidance, relations between individuals, relations within social institutions and communities and finally relations concerned with the exercise of political sovereignty.”¹⁴

While the systematic operations of political power through liberal institutions remained the focus of his analysis of modern power, the more general meaning he gave to ‘government’ helps in looking at power in new and insightful ways. In stressing the general aspect of

⁸ William Walters, *Governmentality: Critical Encounters* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 12.

⁹ Thomas Lemke, “An Indigestible Meal,” 43.

Lemke says that Foucault keeps away from it “in the sense that one abstained from an indigestible meal.” The same view is echoed in Bob Jessop’s analysis of Foucault, “From Micropowers to Governmentality,” 3/7

¹⁰ Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the College De France 1978-79* (New York: Picador, 2008), 77.

¹¹ Ibid. 77.

¹² Ibid. 78.

¹³ Foucault, *Governmentality*, 88.

¹⁴ Colin Gordon, “Governmental Rationality: An Introduction,” in *The Foucault Effect*, 2-3.

government, Foucault focuses on the interconnectedness of different forms and meanings of power.¹⁵ Mitchell Dean defines government as,

“Government is any more or less calculated and rational activity, undertaken by a multiplicity of authorities and agencies, employing a variety of technologies and forms of knowledge, that seeks to shape conduct by working through the desires, aspirations, interests and beliefs of various actors, for definite but shifting ends and with a diverse set of relatively unpredictable consequences and outcomes.”¹⁶

The above definitions clearly establish that government as an activity is also aimed at shaping human conduct, functions beyond the state, and is irreducible to state power. Foucault introduced the idea of government as a “necessary critique of the common conceptions of power.”¹⁷ In its everyday operation, power does not confine itself to the political realm. Governmentality thus involves the analysis of a heterogeneous government that seeks to shape conduct. It is this presence of power in its day-to-day setting and its plurality that governmentality opens a window to explore. Governmentality, thus, is “a particular approach to analyzing modern political power; one that treats the state as only one element, albeit a rather important one, in multiple networks of actors, organizations, and entities involved in exercising authority over the conduct of individuals and populations.”¹⁸ This perspective is insightful in locating the transformations in Travancore in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Another concept that needs explanation here is governmental rationality, which Foucault uses rather synonymously with the ‘art of government.’ Looking at government as an activity/practice, the art of government is concerned with how that activity was carried out and what that activity consisted of.¹⁹ Governmental rationality, thus, is the way or “systems of thinking about the nature of the practice of government.”²⁰

¹⁵ Ibid. 3.

Throughout the thesis, the term ‘government’ is used in this Foucauldian sense to mean an activity/ process, along the lines used and expanded by governmentality scholars to identify and articulate various forms of power than any particular form of government or state.

¹⁶ Mitchell Dean, *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society* (London: Sage, 2010), 18.

¹⁷ Michel Foucault, “Subjectivity and Truth,” in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 1997), 88.

¹⁸ Jonathan Inda, ed. *Anthropologies of Modernity: Foucault Governmentality and Life Politics* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 1-2

¹⁹ Gordon, *Governmental Rationality*, 3

²⁰ Ibid. 3.

Society, economy, population, security, and freedom are regarded as the fundamental elements of governmentality.²¹ The governmentality approach helps in thinking about government beyond reducing it to the idea or activity of the state. He further emphasizes “that the state can only be understood in its survival and its limits on the basis of the general tactics of governmentality.”²² A genealogy of the modern state thus needs to consider these various elements that are influenced, modified, and reconfigured by the strategic deployment of governmental reason. ‘The co-evolution of modern statehood and modern subjectivity’ is the crux of the governmentality approach in Foucault.²³ While there are heterogeneous ways of government, governmentality focuses on such practices of government that aim to shape human conduct. In the words of Martin Saar,

“The “history of governmentality” is therefore neither *history of politics* (or of political institutions) nor *history of political ideas* (or of ideologies) but history of politics-as-reality, a historical tracing of the many ways in which what people can do effectively as political agents and what people can actually think about politics is shaped by institutional and epistemic conditions.”²⁴

He further captures the essence of governmentality as

“Governmentality structurally refers to the material and epistemic basis of state action, and it historically places the specific form of governmental activity in question in a specific context, namely the gradual evolution of the administrative state in which “governing the population” on the basis of new forms of knowledge became the fundamental mode of the exercise of political power.”²⁵

Governmentality allows for a greater analysis of the state and processes of subjectivation and makes possible the analysis of power beyond its juridical conceptualization.²⁶ How notions and practices of governmentality function alongside other forms of power and often through

²¹ Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the College De France* (New York: Picador, 2007), 354.

²² Foucault, *Governmentality*, 103.

²³ Thomas Lemke, *Foucault, Governmentality and Critique* (London: Routledge, 2012), 13.

²⁴ Martin Saar, “Relocating the Modern State: Governmentality and the History of Political Ideas,” in *Governmentality: Current Issues and Future Challenges*, ed. Ulrich Brockling, Susanne Krassman & Thomas Lemke, (New York: Routledge, 2011), 38.

²⁵ Ibid. 39.

²⁶ Lemke, *Foucault, Governmentality*, 12.

such power structures is the main concern here. In a context like Travancore, which was undergoing a transformation in the wake of colonial interventions, the governmentality framework helps capture the nuanced and decentralized functionality of power instead of using an essentialist and centralized core of power emanating from the state.

Even while retaining the older structures and institutions, governmentality attempts to rewrite its rationalities and recode the structures and practices with its new rationales. The central concern of the analytics of government is “how we govern and are governed in different regimes, and the conditions under which such regimes emerge continue to operate and are transformed.”²⁷ It is this expanded understanding of government and its close connections with political regimes that this thesis primarily focuses on. Governmentality, thus, is the study of the concrete aspects of the art of governing rather than the history of political ideas.²⁸

Despite its problematic relationship with the discipline of history, Governmentality, as Joyce argues, enriches the study of history in many ways, and the most significant among them is enabling new ways of conceiving the political and doing political history.²⁹ The current study thus seeks a historicist possibility in explaining power rather than trying to place historical practices seamlessly in the context of state power by looking at the body, first by situating it in the specific practices of the precolonial world and then locating its transformations under indirect colonialism.

Biopolitics

Biopolitics was a term coined by Rudolf Kjellen that was in currency even before being popularized by Foucault. In its simplest definition, biopolitics can be defined as politics that deals with life.³⁰ Many scholarly interventions have been made around the term both from a Foucauldian perspective and independent of Foucault.³¹ Unlike the ‘naturalist’ and ‘politicist’

²⁷ Dean, *Governmentality*, 33.

²⁸ Saar, “Relocating the Modern State,” 39.

²⁹ Patrick Joyce, “History and Governmentality,” *Analise Social* 49, no. 212 (2014): 752-756.

³⁰ Roberto Esposito, *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 15.

Esposito argues that the terms life and politics can be conjugated in two ways and makes a distinction between Biopower and biopolitics, as the former as a “politics that govern life and the latter as a life that governs politics.”

³¹ Lemke sums up the idea of biopolitics that has been understood and used before Foucault, by dividing it into the *naturalist* conception and the *politicist* conception of biopolitics. Lemke argues that while the former privileges life above politics, the latter places life beneath politics. Or in his own words, “Either biology accounts for politics, or politics regulates biology.”

conceptions of biopolitics before him, biopolitics for Foucault is a specifically modern form of exercising power.³² Foucault introduced the term biopolitics in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* in 1976.³³ The introduction of the concept of *biopolitics* marks a shift in Foucault from a disciplinary conception of power to a governmentalized conception of power.

Foucault defines biopolitics as having “brought life into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge-power an agent of transformation of human life.”³⁴ Biopolitics, to Foucault, is “the attempt, starting from the eighteenth century, to rationalize the problems posed to governmental practice by phenomena characteristic of a set of living beings forming a population: health, hygiene, birthrate, life expectancy, race.”³⁵ This new form of power that emerged in the second half of the 18th century, Foucault argues does not abandon or exclude the disciplinary power he formulated in his earlier works completely, instead “dovetail into it, integrate it, modify it to some extent, and above all, use it by sort of infiltrating it, embedding itself in existing disciplinary techniques.”³⁶

In establishing a clear connection between capitalist societies and biopolitics, Foucault says, “Society’s control over individuals was accomplished not only through consciousness or ideology but also in the body and with the body.”³⁷ Unlike disciplinary power, where power is applied to man-as-body, biopower is applied to man as a living being or man-as-species, as “a global mass that is affected by overall processes characteristic of birth, death, production, illness and so on.”³⁸ Foucault’s stress on biopolitics does not lead him to abandon the *anatamopolitics*, which was the distinguishing feature of disciplinary power. The disciplining of individuals is now subordinated to a power that focuses on management, regulation, and

Thomas Lemke, “From State Biology to Government of Life: Historical Dimensions and Contemporary Perspectives of Biopolitics,” *Journal of Classical Sociology* 10, no. 4, (2011): 428-9.

As both these conceptions fails to explain “the fragility of the border between life and politics,” in response to the two above distinctions, he places the *historicist conception* of Foucauldian biopolitics, 428.

³² Foucault identifies the 18th century as the moment of the birth of biopolitics. He argues that from 18th century the fundamental biological facets of human beings as belonging to a species becomes part of political strategy in the western world. Foucault, *Security, Territory, 1*.

Also, Lemke, *From State Biology*, 429.

³³ Foucault, *Society must be Defended*, 239-265.

³⁴ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol I* (New York: Vintage, 1990), 143.

³⁵ Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 317.

³⁶ Foucault, *Society must be Defended*, 242.

³⁷ Michel Foucault, “The Birth of Social Medicine,” in *Power: Michel Foucault: Essential Works III* (New York: The New Press, 2000), 137.

³⁸ Foucault, *Society must be defended*, 243.

interventions at the level of the population. The disciplining of individual bodies through such institutions as schools, prisons, and hospitals continues to shape individual bodies and embodiment, as will be shown in the thesis. However, the thesis will show these institutional spaces beginning to be entrenched with biopolitical practices.

This thesis, focusing on Travancore as a historical process in this direction, argues that the emergence of biopolitics was not a phenomenon distinct to late capitalism in the Western societies alone but a development that can be traced to the 19th-century colonies as well (the small region of Travancore being no exception) which had already marked a shift in the understanding of human beings as a species, and as constituting a global mass.

Biopolitics affects politics significantly; it envisages the regulation and government of the subjects who are also identified and governed at the level of population. As Nikolas Rose argues, “[It] has given birth to techniques, technologies, experts, and apparatuses for the care and administration of the life of all, from town planning to health services. And it has given a kind of ‘vitalist’ character to the existence of individuals as political subjects.”³⁹ It is the “biological and the biosociological processes characteristic of human masses” that is the focus of biopolitics as envisaged by Foucault.⁴⁰ Biopolitics, thus, can be understood as a “fundamental dimension, or even trajectory, of government from the eighteenth century that is concerned with the government of and through the processes and evolution of life.”⁴¹ The rise of the new taxonomical, ethnographic, enumerative rationalities that came to have an important place in determining the practices of government in Travancore from the 19th century aligns perfectly with this framework underlined.

Foucault also uses a similar term, ‘biohistory,’ which he defines as “The effect of medical intervention at the biological level or the imprint left on human history by medical intervention from the 18th century.”⁴² While it refers to the impact and imprint of social medicine upon human history, biopower offers a more significant window to address the problems here. The term does not seem to encompass all the aspects that would mean a history of biopolitics. By biopower, Foucault does not attempt to write a general theory of power. Instead, he looks at

³⁹ Nikolas Rose, “The Politics of Life Itself,” *Theory, Culture and Society* 18, no. 6 (2001): 1-30.

⁴⁰ Foucault, *Society must be Defended*, 250.

⁴¹ Dean, *Governmentality*, 152.

⁴² Foucault, “The Birth of Social Medicine,” 134.

the general processes and mechanisms by which power manifests in modern societies. He reiterates that an analysis of mechanisms of power can, at best, be a starting point for the formulation of a theory of power.⁴³

Governmentality and Biopolitics

Biopower is an integral and inseparable part of modern governmentality. It is regarded as the predominant form of power in modern societies. Foucault defines biopower as “the set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of human beings became the object of a political strategy.”⁴⁴ He identifies the 18th century as the moment when the biological facets of the human species entered the concerns of politics in the West.⁴⁵ The concept of governmentality finds its convergence with biopolitics from the same period. However, the distinctions between governmentality and biopower are rather tenuous in Foucault. The thesis argues that from the late 19th century, administrative and legal changes initiated by the state in Travancore, under colonial influence, were based on a distinct form of administering human life, which can be called colonial biopolitics.

Sovereignty, Disciplinary Power, and Governmentality

Three distinct forms of power can be delineated in Foucault’s conceptualization of power. To understand and theorize power, characteristic of any society from a Foucauldian perspective, it is important to establish a clear conceptual connection between these three forms of power: sovereign, disciplinary, and governmental power. Sovereign power is the traditional notion of power, whereas disciplinary and governmental power, Foucault argues, are power networks particular to modern societies.

Sovereign power was characterized by the ‘Right to decide life and death.’ This power, however, was not absolute. The ‘power of life and death’ “was in reality the right to take life or let live.”⁴⁶ The sovereign exercised this power by killing or refraining from it. The death penalty, along with war, was regarded as the other form of the right of the sword, which was

⁴³ Foucault, *Security Territory*, 2. It is important to note that, he stresses that some of these procedures and mechanisms may not be successful in securing power. What is debunked here is the absoluteness assigned to power being located in and emanating from a single source.

⁴⁴ Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory*, 1.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 1.

⁴⁶ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume I*, 136.

the symbol of power over life and death.⁴⁷ Foucault, in making a distinction between sovereign power (*Right of death*) and governmental power (*Power over Life*) in his analysis of power, points to the insufficiency of the juridical model of power in understanding modern societies.⁴⁸ The ‘power over life’ can further be scaled down to disciplinary power and biopolitics. While deduction was central to the operation of sovereign power, which included fines, corporal punishments, flogging, penalties, ostracizing, exiles, and even death, optimizing remained the crucial aspect of biopolitics, enabling or productively using the body or fostering the body becomes the focus of biopower. This transformation is explicated in the context of Travancore in the chapters that follow.

According to Foucault, power in modern societies has ceased to be located in the body of the sovereign or exercised solely by the state. Power is no longer the sole privilege of institutions of juridical forms like courts of law. By this, he does not mean that the juridical forms of power have ceased to exist in modern societies; rather, juridical power coexists with disciplinary and biopolitical administration. Sovereign power functioning through juridical institutions, Foucault argues, is “essentially a right of seizure: of things, time, bodies, and ultimately life itself; it culminated in the privilege to seize hold of life in order to suppress it.”⁴⁹ The abolition of the death penalty in Travancore, discussed in Chapter III, is used to further strengthen the theoretical insights drawn here.

It is essential to clarify the idea of juridical power and its various forms here. Most scholarly positions on Foucault’s ideas of juridical power equate it with law and legal institutions. While law and legal institutions remained the primary juridical apparatus, Tadros argues that it is wrong to reduce juridical power to legal power. To him, the juridical in Foucault refers to “any form of power which attempts to prevent a certain type of action through the threat of legal or social sanctions.”⁵⁰ In the juridical conception, power is defined in terms of a series of acts, and it decides which acts are transgressive and which are permitted. Tadros argues that law is not the only way the transgressive threshold is defined nor the only instrument through which

⁴⁷ Ibid. 136. Foucault looks at law primarily as a negative system of order.

⁴⁸ Ibid. 133-159.

⁴⁹ Ibid. 136.

⁵⁰ Victor Tadros, “Between Governance and Discipline: The Law and Michel Foucault,” *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies* 18, no. 1 (1998): 78.

it is enforced.⁵¹ The significant difference between modern power and juridical power is that the former does not function in relation to a series of acts like in juridical power; it operates in relation to the lives of individuals.⁵² However, Tadros agrees that sovereign power was mainly characterized by juridical power. Rather than becoming redundant, Law and legal institutions remain the key instruments of biopolitics. Discipline and governmentality are regarded as the two poles of biopower.⁵³ As Foucault contends, these two forms of power are not antithetical but constitute “two poles of development linked together by a whole intermediary cluster of relations.”⁵⁴ While disciplinary power looked at the body as a machine and focused on its disciplining, biopolitical power focused on the body as that of a species and, thereby, on its biological processes and regulations.⁵⁵

Whereas the juridical authority rested on the sovereign's power over the lives of its subjects or the right to death, governmental power rests on flourishing life, the power over life. Unlike sovereign power, disciplinary power focuses on the constant monitoring of individual bodies while subjugating them to the disciplines through surveillance; it also functions mainly through juridical institutions. Biopower, on the other hand, concentrates on the normalization of the population. It works through micro and distributive management of individuals and populations; it employs its influence through all sorts of technologies, from medicine, schooling, peer pressure, associations, family, etc.

One of the most distinguishing features of disciplinary power in the modern world was its dislodging from its institutional space and its circulation into the social world. Disciplinary power and its rationalities began to be extended beyond the institutions to the community and the social plane.⁵⁶ Disciplinary power thus shapes the non-institutional realms of society predominantly through legal and legislative institutions. This is achieved through the works of not just the state alone but a collective of other non-state actors as well.

⁵¹ Ibid. 78. Tadros borrowing from Mill, argues that the transgressive threshold is defined by both legal and social power.

⁵² Ibid. 78.

⁵³ Ibid. 78.

⁵⁴ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Vol 1*, 139.

⁵⁵ Ibid. 139.

⁵⁶ Tadros, “Between Governance,” 94.

Foucault clearly marks this shift as,

“The disciplines of the body and the regulations of the population constituted two poles around which the organization of power over life was deployed. The setting up, in the course of the classical age, of this great bipolar technology - anatomic and biological, individualizing and specifying, directed toward the performances of the body, with attention to the processes of life-characterized a power whose highest functions was perhaps no longer to kill, but to invest life through and through”⁵⁷

If one is to follow the conceptions of power articulated by Foucault closely, there is a definite movement from the initial sovereign model (juridico-institutional) to disciplinary power and then to biopower. The sense here is not evolutionary or teleological. It is to be stressed here that the sovereignty-discipline-government model is to be understood as constituting a triangle rather than as successive stages of society wherein one replaces the other.⁵⁸ Rather than looking at these three forms of power in isolation, the thesis focuses on how these forms of power intersected in a colonial context within Travancore, and how these intersections changed and gave rise to unique forms of native and colonial control. In practice, what is seen is the coexistence of structures that are sovereign, disciplinary, and biopolitical. Disciplinary power and techniques of discipline continue to exist and shape the regulatory apparatuses (*dispositifs*) of biopolitics. The chapter titled *The Birth of Colonial Biopolitics* explores the historical context in which these various forms of power coexisted, enriching the conceptual relationships between multiple forms of power in actual historical contexts.

However, it cannot be denied that the existing structures have undergone significant changes or have been overhauled in tune with the rationalities of biopolitics. Foucault’s triangulated model of power and eventual privileging of biopower does not entirely negate the microphysics of power which Foucault employed in his earlier genealogies in criticizing the juridico-institutional model of power associated with sovereignty.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Vol I*, 139. The thesis employs the term technology as used by Foucault to refer to the set of practices that made objects open to knowledge and power.

⁵⁸ Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 107.

⁵⁹ Microphysics of power was a central feature of disciplinary power that Foucault traces in *Discipline and Punish*. It is primarily located within the institutional structures and it involves the constant monitoring, surveillance and disciplining of individuals. The prison was its most important manifestation.

Governmentality studies also help look at state power beyond its institutions by shifting their focus to the rationalities of its practices of government. As Jessop shows, “To study governmentality in its generic sense is to study the historical constitution of different state forms in and through changing practices of government without assuming that the state has a universal or general essence.”⁶⁰

Given this scenario, it is best to regard governmentality as an “ensemble of apparatuses of governmental rationality, sovereignty, and discipline.”⁶¹ Governmentality's overemphasis on populations has resulted in the overlooking of micro-forms of subjectification. What I understand here is that while it could be true that there is a concern with population and security, the population, by itself, is not homogenous. The population is identified differently in different contexts. The different context of Travancore around these issues is explored in greater detail in the following chapters.

The embodied existence of the bodies means an application of political technologies beyond the state.⁶² This is further explored in chapters IV and V, where the role of new knowledge systems and various state and non-state agents in investing the body with the new forms of power is investigated in detail.

Foucault identifies disciplinary power as a non-sovereign form of power that cannot be justified and described in terms of theories of sovereignty.⁶³ Foucault believed that disciplinary power is theoretically ‘strictly incompatible with relations of sovereignty.’⁶⁴ Foucault does not delineate intersections of biopower and sovereign power; that is something that can be explored through the study of changing practices of government in actual historical contexts. However, Foucault accepts that sovereign power, instead of ceasing to exist, has continued to exist along with disciplinary power. Modern societies have witnessed the mutual coexistence of both these

⁶⁰ Bob Jessop, “From Micropowers,” 4.

⁶¹ Lanny Thompson, “Colonial Governmentality in Puerto Rica and the Philippines: Sovereign Force, Governmental Rationality, and Disciplinary Institutions under US Rule,” in *Rethinking the Colonial State*, ed. Soren Rud and Soren Ivarsson, (Bingley: Emerald Publishing House, 2017), 21-46.

⁶² “The Political technology of the body –the crossing of power relations, knowledge and the body-cannot be found in one single institution nor one single apparatus of power, that is, the state.” His focus is not institutions but the growth of technologies of power.

Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics, ed. Hubert L Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1982), 113.

⁶³ Foucault, *Society Must be Defended*, 36.

⁶⁴ Ibid. 36.

forms of power. He argues that power, characteristic of contemporary society, is exercised between the limits of a right of sovereignty and mechanics of discipline.⁶⁵ In this process, the steady transformation of the subjects of sovereigns to governed populations is realized. This transformation from subjects of sovereigns to governed populations is one crucial change that Foucault underlines in the shift from a juridical sovereignty model to apparatuses of security characteristic of governmentality. However, it should also be kept in mind that colonial contexts are not simply marked by a synthesis of sovereign and biopower: the two often remain in an irrevocable tension.⁶⁶

Colonial Governmentality, Authoritarian Governmentality

Foucault has been widely criticized for turning blind to the imperial context in his theorizing of biopower.⁶⁷ Mitchell Dean, following Foucault, introduces the concept of ‘alternative governmentality’ to widen the horizons of governmentality as a tool to study contexts away from the liberal West.⁶⁸ Given Foucault’s near-silence on the question of governmentality in the non-European world and colonial contexts, Dean’s intervention is important. While the mutuality of power and knowledge is central to much of his thoughts, Foucault is curiously silent regarding the institution of modern power in the colony and its constitutive relationship with the formation of knowledge systems in the colonial world.⁶⁹

However, Indian scholars employing a Foucauldian perspective have paid great attention to this for long. Nivedita Menon, in her inquiry into the trajectories of governmentality studies and Foucauldian scholarship in the Indian context, argues that the attempts of Indian scholars to analyze the nature of the colonial intervention and its impact on the realization of

⁶⁵ Ibid. 37.

⁶⁶ Deana Heath, “The Tortured Body: The Irrevocable Tension between Sovereign and Biopower in Colonial Indian Technologies of Rule,” in *South Asian Governmentalities: Michel Foucault and the Question of Postcolonial Orderings*, ed. Stephen Legg and Deana Heath (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 224-246.

⁶⁷ Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault’s History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), Preface.

Gyan Prakash is also critical of the Eurocentric notions of Foucault’s conception of Biopower. Gyan Prakash, *Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 125.

⁶⁸ Mitchell Dean, *Governmentality*, 131.

⁶⁹ Kalpagam, *Rule by Numbers*, 12.

governmentality in the West, instead of revealing a shortcoming in Foucault, lights up the possibilities offered by Foucauldian scholarship in contexts away from the West.⁷⁰

Partha Chatterjee argues that the colonial states were not simply the extension or another form of the modern state but a fundamentally distinct entity with a racialized ‘rule of colonial difference’ at its core.⁷¹ Such a perspective underlines that the distinction between the ruler and the ruled was to shape the project of colonial governance and its rationalities significantly. Despite the insights it provides, Chatterjee’s distinction between the modern and colonial states has been critiqued for looking at the colonial state as a homogenous and static entity.⁷²

Nicholas Dirks uses the concept of ‘colonial governmentality’ to refer to “the specific forms of governmentality employed by the colonial state, in which the relationship between sovereignty and bureaucracy is necessarily different from metropolitan forms.”⁷³ However, Dirks departs from Partha Chatterjee to argue that colonial governmentality shares more with metropolitan governmentality than Chatterjee assumed.

As Dean has proposed, alternative governmentality can be observed in colonial and authoritarian regimes. Authoritarian governmentality seeks to operate through obedient rather than passive and autonomous subjects. Thus, the new technologies of government had at its core the idea of the creation of obedient colonial subjects but not equal citizens, leading to more efficient control over vast populations. The argument here is that the governmental or biopolitical tools and techniques were woven into the fabric of the state and non-state actors, which would facilitate the authority of the colonizer; at the same time, it also produced governable and disciplined subjects. This was clear in the penal policies, policies on public health, sanitation, and social reforms. The paradox of colonial governmentality was that it could play the dual role of creating both fissures and, at the same time, generating and

⁷⁰ Nivedita Menon, “Foucault and Indian Scholarship,” <https://criticalencounters.net/2009/02/25/foucault-and-indian-scholarship/>, accessed on 7.9.21.

⁷¹ Given Foucault’s silence on colonial governance it is even more important to underline the concept ‘rule of colonial difference’ employed by Partha Chatterjee, to look at the nature of colonial state and its distinctions with the modern state. Chatterjee argues that the colonial state was not merely the extension of modern state in a colonial context but a fundamentally distinct entity marked by the ‘rule of colonial difference.’ Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 14-35.

⁷² Mark Brown, “That Heavy Machine”: Reprising the Colonial Apparatus in the 21st- Century Social Control,” *Social Justice* 32, no. 1-99, (2005): 44-45.

⁷³ Nicholas Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 317.

successfully articulating the idea of more significant aggregating categories as populations and their optimization. Hierarchizing and homogenizing happen at the same time under colonial governmentality. Exclusion, thus, is always crucial to the idea of colonial governmentality.

Colonial governmentality refers to the distinct forms of rationalities that colonial power employed in the colonies. The term ‘colonial governmentality,’ as understood today, was developed by David Scott in his landmark essay “*Colonial Governmentality*.” Looking at Sri Lankan modernity, Scott shows how it marks a break with the past and initiates a new rationale of the ‘political.’ Employing Foucault’s ideas on governmentality and the conceptions of power, Scott, exploring the specificities of Sri Lankan modernity, makes the case that to understand the effects of colonialism, what is needed is not so much the ‘decentering of Europe,’ instead a critical interrogation of the ways, practices, and modalities through which Europe inserted itself into the lives of the colonized, constructing and shaping their lives.⁷⁴ Focusing on the targets and effects of power, Scott argues that in order to understand the uniqueness of colonial power at any given historical moment, one needs to understand the character of its political rationality. Colonial power was characterized by a political rationality, “which was concerned above all with disabling old forms of life by systematically breaking down their conditions, and with constructing in their place new conditions so as to enable—indeed, so as to oblige—new forms of life to come into being.”⁷⁵ Thus, the distinctiveness of modern power, according to Scott, is the point of its application.⁷⁶

Governmentality had different methods and ways of functioning in a metropole and a colony. Colonial governmentality witnessed power operating not as a covenant, something agreed upon, but as transmutation in a context that had the ‘rule of colonial difference’ underlying the mask of liberalism. Governmentality in a colonial context, much like modern medicine in a colonial context, was distinctly ‘colonial governmentality.’ The exigencies of the empire significantly shaped governmentality in a colonial setting to preserve its rule and the rationalities of government that it imposed.

⁷⁴ David Scott, “Colonial Governmentality,” 193.

⁷⁵ Ibid. 193.

⁷⁶ Ibid. 198.

Colonial governmentality ushered in new categories of government and a ‘rule by experts,’⁷⁷ often marking a break with precolonial practices and modes of government. Existing structures of state and sovereignty are significantly altered with the triumph of colonial governmentality. Modern power can be better conceptualized by employing the idea of governmentality. The thesis attempts to map the complexities of such an interaction in the context of Travancore by employing the concept of colonial governmentality, drawing on these insights while significantly departing from these positions.

Explaining Genealogy

It is important to explain the concept of genealogy in Foucault’s thoughts, its relationship with governmentality, and why the concept is employed in the current work. Governmentality has been primarily conceptualized as a genealogical mode of inquiry by several governmentality scholars.⁷⁸ Foucault, having found the thematization of power inadequate in his archaeologic approach with its focus on the analysis of discourse, employed genealogy.⁷⁹ Attempting to problematize the present, genealogy offers a better tool to look at the contemporary and its historical underpinnings.⁸⁰ Adopting a genealogical approach to governmentality, Martin Saar argues that “A genealogical approach to governmentality decenters institutions, networks, and discourses by appealing to historical accounts of beliefs and actions.”⁸¹ Genealogy has also been understood as a specific method to diagnose the emergence of biopower.⁸² Walters defines genealogy as the specific set of methods and guidelines to analyze governmentality.⁸³ It helps formulate governmentality as the genealogy of various political practices, particularly those that aim to shape and govern human conduct. The Foucault Dictionary defines the task of genealogy as “Genealogy explores what was not evident because of the institutionalization

⁷⁷ David Arnold, “Globalization and Contingent Colonialism: Towards a transnational history of “British” India.” *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 16, no. 2 (2015).

⁷⁸ Mitchell Dean and Martin Saar prominent among them.

⁷⁹ Dreyfus and Rabinow, *Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 104-105.

⁸⁰ However, scholars like Walters are critical of the presentist approach of genealogy as envisioned by scholars like Dean. He says that genealogy does not refer to one single method, instead it refers to a variety of diverse research practices. *Governmentality*, 7.

⁸¹ Martin Saar, “Rethinking Governmentality: Towards Genealogies of Governance.” *European Journal of Social Theory* 13 (2010): 431.

⁸² Dreyfus & Rabinow, *Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 103.

⁸³ Walters, *Governmentality*, 7.

of knowledge by those in power.”⁸⁴ Such a perspective assigns a radical potential to the genealogical method.

Scott identifies the objectives of genealogy as,

“One of its leading goals is to show the specific ways in which social institutions, forms of recognition, and ways of life have come to be as they are and how they, in some instances, oppressively marginalizes other people. A second goal is to develop interruptive knowledge that can lead to liberate options for those marginalized people and those who unwittingly oppress themselves.”⁸⁵

The crux of such a genealogical inquiry is not the search for origins but rather the revealing of various historical lineages that shape the present through its discursive practices. For Foucault, “the genealogist is a diagnostician who concentrates on the relations of power, knowledge, and the body in modern society.”⁸⁶ Genealogy aims for a more substantial and satisfactory analysis of the complexities of power. Pursuing genealogy, in a radical way, Foucault postulates is a nearly impossible task. However, the insights provided by genealogy offer greater possibilities for understanding historical processes and the conceptualization of power in unexplored ways in greater detail and weight. Genealogy makes one suspicious of claims of universal progress, finalities, and linear narratives of historical changes. Genealogy, specifically in the study of the body, offers possibilities for exploring historical ways in which political rationalities manifested on the body. It is possible to place the body in the context of the political field and as an effect and locus of power more clearly in a genealogical inquiry.⁸⁷ Here, the passage of Travancore from a premodern state to one embracing modern administration can be tracked through this analytical frame.

Understanding political power/technologies beyond the state

Although not a study of the state per se, the operation of political power through the state apparatus is crucial to the framing of questions here. Law and legal institutions remain central

⁸⁴ *The Foucault Dictionary*, “Genealogy.”

⁸⁵ Charles E Scott, ‘Genealogy’ in Leonald Lowler & John Nale, *The Cambridge Foucault Lexicon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 165-174.

⁸⁶ Ibid. 105. However, this does not mean the complete abandonment of archaeology in Foucault’s inquiries.

⁸⁷ *Discipline and Punish* would be the best example for this, Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London: Penguin, 1991), 25-26.

to the examination of operations of power. Although this research does not limit its scope to just the state apparatus, how the state, with its own rationality and political ends, negotiates with the government of the non-institutional spaces can reveal the complexities of modern power. State power, on occasion, gets legitimated by non-state/civil governmental authority and, at times, challenged and contradicted by governmental power.

The relationship, thus, is problematic. That the state is the sole embodiment of power in society is no longer an axiom. Where the state resorted to a more visible operation of power (juridical) with its more concrete mechanisms and rituals (through the law, law courts and the spectacle of punishments), governmental power is more nuanced, more structured, and more difficult to identify because it has got so much into the sensibilities and cultural practices in the forms of norms, common sense, and 'truth' that it is no longer identified and questioned as operation of power or control of any kind. The very fact of its ordinariness makes it a more problematic category. This production of 'truth' makes governmentality an essential aspect of analysis. The state takes one route of governing the population and the governmentality functioning of society or non-institution on another side. They are not isolated or exclusive categories but mutually constitutive.

Any attempts to study and understand modern power are also constrained by the notion of equating power with that of state power. In the social sciences, a heavy focus on power and rule creates an 'overvaluation of the problem of the state.' This tends to underplay interdependencies and simultaneous co-existence of multiple political rationalities and governmental technologies. The present research argues that state power is identified as only one among different forms of governmental practices at work, nevertheless a very important one. Rather than dismissing the significance of the state in modern power, the thesis explores state power in terms of the problematics of government in general and Travancore in particular, inspired by Foucauldian ideas of governmentality.

The specificities of the colonial state generate an even more significant problem for theorists of state. As Kaviraj says, "State theorists have paid little attention to colonial regimes as a specific state form," and he stresses the 'need for a cognitive dialogue of political theory and

history.⁸⁸ Colonial regimes are markedly different as they force the precolonial regimes to recede into the background on their confrontation with the colonial regimes. As Deborah Lupton argues, governmentality helps transcend the notion that views “the state as one overarching, repressive authority intent on maximizing power it sees power relations as diffuse, as emerging not necessarily from the state but from all areas of social life”⁸⁹

Governmental practices are challenged at every stage, making resistance a crucial theme in the current work. There can be symbolic and real resistance to the forms of governmental power: bodily resistance to norms of governmental regulation is symptomatic of the functioning of modern power. Foucault identifies struggles against forms of subjectivation of governmental power alongside resistance to other forms of political, economic, and social dominations.⁹⁰ The forms and techniques of power are not absolute and are opposed by the people. The ‘exercise of uncontrolled power over people’s bodies, their health, and their life and death are thus resisted and opposed by the people.’⁹¹ This can be motivated by the concepts of the body rooted in traditional notions of subjectivation, even when it was slowly retreating in the face of governmental power.

I begin with the assumption that the body is constructed, shaped, given meaning, and controlled or governed in its everyday existence. Governmentality studies offer the possibility of looking at power as not an absolute dictum; the context and relations being crucial allow us to look at resistance in more ways than traditional analysis of power. Foucault underlines the possibilities of resistance with his idea of ‘counter-conducts’ or ‘strategic reversibility’ of power relations, by which governmental rationalities could be challenged and reshaped.⁹² Stressing the role of resistance, he argues that a history of government as the ‘conduct of conduct’ is entwined with the history of dissenting counter-conducts.⁹³ The idea of resistance is underlined in the current

⁸⁸ Sudipta Kaviraj, “On the Construction of Colonial Power: Structure, Discourse, Hegemony,” in *The Imaginary Institution of India: Politics and Ideas*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 40.

⁸⁹ Deborah Lupton, *The Imperative of Health: Public Health and the Regulated Body* (London: Sage 1995), 9.

⁹⁰ James D Faubion, ed. *Power: Essential Works of Michel Foucault*, 330.

⁹¹ Ibid. 30.

⁹² Colin Gordon, *The Foucault Effect*, 5.

⁹³ Foucault first used the term “revolt of conduct” to refer to the resistances to governmental power but he soon found that term to be unsatisfactory and then resorted to use the term counter-conduct or dissidence. He uses the example of resistance to medical power by individuals as evidence of counter-conduct. This perspective helps us move beyond the simple binaries of rational Europeans-irrational natives in the context of resistance to medical power by individuals, particularly in colonial contexts.

Foucault, *Security, Territory*, 199-200.

thesis in the context of native resistance to the spread of modern medicine and its technologies of control and intervention on people's bodies and environment in chapter IV.

A linear narrative beginning from the sovereign power that existed in Travancore to the postcolonial state with its liberal political rationalities would be missing many points that are crucial to the forms of subjugation and subjectification that the body has undergone. It is important to take cues from Kaviraj's caution in using the idea of linear transitions and the limitations of the state theory in studying the actual functioning of colonial states.⁹⁴ Here, I locate a contemporary problem and situate it in its present and historical context through the methodological lens of *problematization*.⁹⁵ Identification of *problematization* or the specific situation of government (activity of governing) is key to any inquiry into the analytics of government.⁹⁶ The historical government of the body and the shaping of embodiment or the body as governed by the 'conduct of conduct is precisely what is attempted to be problematized here.

Instead of a top-down model where the practices and techniques of governance are seen as emanating from a fixed political authority that is homogenous, I would like to approach the subject from a bottom-up model whereby the techniques and practices are given their necessary due and questions asked at the rationalities of political power from these practices. Governmentality as an analytical tool is helpful in this kind of analysis. Governmentality has helped in looking beyond the state and looking at more nuanced forms of operations of power in interpersonal, personal-society, and other relations.

Although regarded as a conceptual tool to question the development of modern forms of government in Europe, Governmentality as an analytical tool has been used by many scholars to understand societies outside and within the Indian context as well. Here, governmentality has been mostly understood as a distinct mode of rule and policies as enforced by colonial rule or a characteristic of colonial modernity or neoliberal policies. That is to say that

⁹⁴ Kaviraj, *On the Construction of Colonial Power*, 40.

⁹⁵ The idea of *problematization* in this thesis is used following Robert Castel's conception of problematization as a mode of reading history.

Robert Castel, "Problematization as a mode of Reading History," in *Foucault and the Writing of History* ed. Jan E Goldstein (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell 1994), 237-252.

⁹⁶ Dean identifies problematization as slightly different from Castel and specifically to analytics of government as "calling into question how we shape or direct our own and other's conduct," Dean, *Governmentality*, 38.

governmentality has been understood as a specific practice of colonial or postcolonial governance; nevertheless, the approach has explored many new areas of research like the public sphere, poverty, the domain of health, and traditional themes like the economy has undergone a revamped reading through governmentality studies. However, governmentality is a more sophisticated analytical category to be understood and explored than perceived as a policy of any political regime. This would mean the exploration of the theme in its weight and significance as termed by Foucault as ‘conduct of conduct,’ characteristic of modern power. The state-centric or political power-centric approach will be missing the scope governmentality has opened up as an analytical tool to be used to understand society and the complexities that regulate it. Such an analysis requires considering individual experiences that are crucial to the framing of subjectivities, which are indicators of how an individual or individual body is governed. Though historical patterns will be identified in Travancore, no attempt to frame an all-pervasive meta-narrative is undertaken here.

Governmentality as a tool can be employed to look beyond the idea of political power at the level of the state.⁹⁷ Some scholars have conflated governmentality with liberalism. However, this is misleading, as the various meanings and possibilities offered by governmentality are not exhausted by an analysis of liberalism.⁹⁸ A reading of Foucault, however, is more insightful as it leads clearly to a direction leading to multidimensional facets of power and its operations extending beyond state power. Foucault traces the origin of governmental concerns to the 16th and 17th centuries when the state employed new knowledge, viz., statistical knowledge, in the eventual rise of mercantilism.⁹⁹ Rather than making an analytic distinction between state and non-state agencies, it is treated as a complex whole through the Travancore state, while governmentality provides the theoretical binding to understand and explore.

Body and Society

This thesis attempts to understand how embodied existence in its everyday setting and throughout history is subjected to the processes of rule and government or, in other words, to power. The state, society, and other non-state actors actively engage in the management of the

⁹⁷ Nikolas Rose and Peter Miller, “Political Power Beyond the State: Problematics of Government,” *The British Journal of Sociology*, 43, no. 2, (1992): 173-205.

⁹⁸ Walters, *Governmentality*, 6.

⁹⁹ Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 212.

essential elements of governance: The embodied human and non-human in all their unpredictability. The biological bodies thus become a political and social concern. As Shilling says, “It is difficult to disentangle the social from the biological processes that affect what and who we are.”¹⁰⁰ The relationship between body and power takes an entirely new dimension in modern societies. With biopolitics becoming the hallmark of modern power, bodies become the object of government in entirely new ways. The thesis explores this in greater detail by tracing the history of colonial biopolitics in the princely state of Travancore. Any attempts to explore this demands an engagement with Foucauldian notions of power.

The body has long been subdued to the social system perspective in sociology. The dominant sociological perspective is that the body is secondary to the self-in-society perspective.¹⁰¹ In other words, social structures and collectivities were the focus of sociology than individual bodies or their embodiment. Turner thinks that sociology had long neglected the body to that of the social. What Foucault offers to the sociology of the body is a materialist theory wherein the individual body and its disciplining are linked to the management of bodies at the level of populations. The body in this connection between the disciplining of the individual body (*anatamopolitics*) and the management of the populations (*biopolitics*) remains a historical variable shaped by social structures, the focus of sciences, and the locus of power.¹⁰²

The insights of the sociology of the body are employed to understand how the body was historically shaped and regulated and also made an element of political rationalities and knowledge regimes. What is crucial to the inquiry here is how the body was central to the micro and macro forms of operation of power. While the microforms of power focused on disciplining the individual, the macro forms of power worked at the level of government of the population. I will focus on the advent of modern ideas of governance and its impact and relationship with the body. The native and colonial responses to issues pertaining to the body are crucial here.

¹⁰⁰ Shilling, *The Body*, 4.

¹⁰¹ Bryan S Turner, *The Body and Society*, (New Delhi: Sage, 2008), 35.

¹⁰² Turner regards this historicity of the body established by Foucault as his greatest contribution to the sociology of the body. Turner, *The Body and Society*, 37.

Body and the Shifting Reconfiguration of the Self.

Governmentality is not only about controlling the population, but it is also about the subjectification of the self. Optimizing the body and fashioning the self through self-management is a central aspect of governmentality. The internalization of productive power shapes the individual body and the self. Central to governmentality is the governing of people's conduct through positive means, unlike sovereign power. Unlike disciplinary power, which focuses on disciplining individual bodies, governmentality aims to optimize power through the willing participation of the governed.

Archival data indicate the movement underlined in the theoretical frame. With the influence of modern technologies of governance and practices, the focus shifts to the flourishing of life, optimizing the health of the populations, and fostering life rather than the juridical excesses of taking life. This is certainly a change given that the eighteenth and 19th centuries witnessed cruel punishment and explicit displays of juridical killings as spectacles. Again, premodern Travancore illustrates this point. This could be assigned to the new meaning the body began to acquire and the new art of government, which focused on the controlling, flourishing, and fostering of life in the place of unrestricted use of violence to stamp the authority of the sovereign.

In the context of Travancore, census and vital statistics began to be produced from the late 19th century. These health data began to be used to ensure the better health of the populations. As was shown by Cohn and Appadurai, these data, once produced, did not remain numbers after that; they began to have tremendous influence in the social world. Data on smallpox and other contagious diseases were compiled from the later part of the 19th century. The advent of modern medicine and its interference and influence on social life began to change the prevailing concepts of the body. This was to deeply influence systems of punishments and social legislation around the body. Travancore, known for the capricious use of corporal violence on the body, was the first state in India to abolish capital punishment could be surprising.¹⁰³ It was only in the context of a new understanding based on the value of life and possibilities of reform it was made possible.

¹⁰³ Travancore banned death penalty on November 11, 1944, which is explained at greater length in Chapter III

The emergence of biopolitical technologies was to transform the Travancore social world significantly. Criminal and judicial reforms transformed in tune with the knowledge that was produced. The idea of locating the agency in crime began to emerge. Juvenile offenders were separated from adult offenders. Care was taken to protect juvenile offenders in state-run correctional homes. The health of the population began to be an active concern of the state. Such legislations as the banning of juvenile smoking and child marriage prevention¹⁰⁴ indicate this growing concern of the state with the health of its subjects and institutionalizing mechanisms to control and discipline them, albeit with a changing rationale. Social and moral hygiene and aftercare programs were also launched by the state.

Methods and Approaches to be used

The dissertation has broached the research theme through a genealogical/ historicist approach to governmentality whereby governmental practices, techniques, and reasons are identified in their historical context. As discussed in the previous section, the abstract conceptions of power operating in society are deployed to illuminate the power relations in an empirical setting and scrutinize these categories through an ethnographic approach to institutional and non-institutional power.

Here, I deepen the understanding of a genealogical mode of inquiry by pursuing questions on the rationalities and practices of government and contextualizing them in the wake of the historical transformations they have undergone in Travancore transitioning to a more modern state. The thesis critically engages with the various strategies, techniques, knowledge systems, and practices employed by governmental rationality to govern the Travancore society from the 19th century. This engagement and interrogation of the strategies of governmental reason form the crux of the thesis.

The governmentality approach opens three distinct windows to the field: reason, techniques, and subjectification.¹⁰⁵ Here, I deploy governmentality as a historicist and genealogical mode of inquiry. Governmentality scholars have identified how local practices or micro-practices

¹⁰⁴ Prevention of Juvenile Smoking Regulation, 1919, Archives Directorate.
Child Marriage Restraint Act 1941, Act XX1, 1116 (1941), in *The Acts and Proclamations of Travancore, Vol XII* (Trivandrum: The Government Press, 1943), 492-495.

¹⁰⁵ Inda, *Anthropologies of Modernity*, 2.

have a bearing on social life and how these “local practices whose connection, systematization and homogenization allow for a macro phenomenon.”¹⁰⁶ There is a definite process of government at work which acts on the body. The experience of individuals is essential as individual subjectification is among its central concerns.

The complexities of issues involved in the problem make it imperative to look beyond the tools and frameworks of social history, which deduce the origin of practices to its political and social contexts. The more sophisticated and complex conceptions of power in everyday life and its implications on the coded body are central to the analytic framework of governmentality and the methods of genealogy. Here, the government is identified as an activity or a series of activities. This more expansive interpretation opened up by the governmentality perspective is used here to identify power, power relations, and its practices and rationalities.

How historical backgrounds impact people, individuals, and their subjectivities form the core research domains. In addition to this wide-ranging issue, there is a practical functioning of power that restricts one's actions and defines what one should and should not do. This creates a deep consensus of order in a political economy that the governmentality approach seeks to address through a thick description of practices in the empirical location of the princely state of Travancore under indirect colonialism. This is crucial to identify formations and the meanings bodies inherit and represent in a particular location at a specific juncture.

The Archives and Beyond

In a thesis on colonial governmentality, the archive and the process of archiving constitute an important element as “archive was the supreme technology of the late nineteenth-century imperial state.”¹⁰⁷ Contrary to the once popular ‘reading against the grain’ of colonial archives, Ann Stoler emphasizes the need to be reading the archives ‘along the grain.’¹⁰⁸ She stresses the need to look at the archives not as sources but as sites of knowledge production and, thus, sites of power and colonial governmentality.¹⁰⁹ Such an approach aids in understanding the

¹⁰⁶ Brockling et. al, *Governmentality*, 12.

¹⁰⁷ Ann Laura Stoler, “Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance.” *Archival Science* 2 (2002): 87.

Stoler insists the need to move from an archive as source to archive as subject approach to understand the nuances of colonial archiving.

¹⁰⁸ Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Knowledge Production*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

¹⁰⁹ Stoler, *Colonial Archives*, 87.

epistemological grounds of archiving and the various taxonomical endeavours of the colonial state as rationalities through which the modern state itself came into existence. Looking at the colonial state, Nicholas Dirks asserts that the colonial state from the 19th century was nothing but an ‘ethnographic state.’¹¹⁰ By the 19th century, Colonial anthropology had become the ‘principal modality of colonial knowledge.’¹¹¹ Dirks explores the various taxonomies of colonial knowledge and modalities that constituted the colonial state and gave it a distinct character.

The body is an entity that is largely absent in the archive. The various statistical and taxonomical efforts of the colonial state played as much an essential part as the institutional and administrative apparatuses of the state in realizing state power. In this thesis, the taxonomies of the colonial state and the native state under colonial power are understood and studied not as mere documents that aided in the study of the period but rather as ‘governmental technologies’ that actively created their own systems of regulations and government. The population registers, gazetteers, manuals, and ethnographic documents were all used as a technology to govern the people. This is further explored in chapter V.

At the same time, when one looks beyond the conventional definitions of power, its institutions, practices, and thus its documented forms through which it best articulates its authority, it is imperative that one should be looking beyond the conventional sources along with it. A shift from the juridical idea of power necessitates exploring other areas of human interaction that might not find their place in archives or judicial documents. There is a wide world of operation of power that does not leave documented evidence; they need to be explored in their everyday functions. A mode of inquiry like governmentality, which looks beyond the state power and its mechanisms, necessitates looking at sources beyond the archives and reading the archival sources in a new light. As asserted earlier, the archives and archival sources are sites of colonial knowledge and governmentality. The current thesis, thus, critically engages with the same with these insights. Everyday practices that are best articulations of government or governing conduct because of their sheer ordinariness get no attention in a

She clearly manifests the connection between colonial politics and the politics of archiving when she says, “What constitutes the archive, what form it takes and what systems of classification signal at specific times are the very substance of colonial politics.” 92.

¹¹⁰ Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, 43.

¹¹¹ Ibid. 43.

conventional reading of the archives and history. It is these practices that concretely manifest power and not absolute political ideas. It is here that the work locates the node between society and the techniques of governance.

Contextualizing the Body

Bryan Turner, stressing the sociology of body perspective, argues that “The body rather than a naturally given datum is a socially constructed artefact like other cultural products.”¹¹² A different perspective on the body is seen in the words of Paul Connerton, who argues that under the impress of the hermeneutic and linguistic turn, “the life of the human beings as a historical life, is understood as a life reported on and narrated, not life as physical existence.”¹¹³

Between these two statements lies the important problematic of the body and the studies that situate the body. While social theories on the body have largely addressed the body from the standpoint that Turner articulates, historians have looked mainly at the body as a given physical being in a context and have largely avoided the constructed body from its ambit. The body as an effect of or shaped by discursive practices and the operation of power have been left mainly to the social theorists on the body.

These two important statements are important when it comes to a historical analysis of the body and open up two completely different perspectives. What is attempted in the proposed thesis is to analyze the positioning of the body as a historically constructed and culturally specific artefact simultaneously without avoiding the body's phenomenological and physiological aspects. At no point is it intended that the latter is unaffected by the former. Rather than treated as an entirely discursive construct, the body is attempted to be placed in its empirical context. It is affected, shaped, and guided by discursive practices as part of the political rationalities working on the body in each context. This governing of the body in contexts attuned with or differing from the larger state structure is understood through governmentality. As Mills shows, “Bodies are always subject to change and can never be

¹¹² Bryan S Turner, “The Body in Western Society: Social Theory and Its Perspectives,” in *Religion and the Body*, ed. Sarah Coakley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 19.

¹¹³ Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 101.

regarded as natural, but rather are always experienced as mediated through different social constructions of the body.”¹¹⁴

The government of conduct most often finds its visible expression through the body. The mind-body divide has become a thing of the past, and the everyday body has been acknowledged as central to an understanding of both the self and the social world. The mind and body are intrinsically linked to and are entwined in cultural and social interactions and thus instrumental in understanding every aspect of humans as social beings. Thus, the second chapter seeks to show the embodied human “communities” in Travancore in a precolonial context and then locates shifts in the cultural practices and norms that shape the embodied “individual.”

Body and Governmental Practices

The body, being a culturally and historically shaped artefact, gains meanings through both discourses and non-discursive practices; its history/histories can be revealed only by careful examination of the practices that affect it. The contemporary location of the problem of the body is the beginning point. This is then genealogically analyzed, and the historical transformations it has undergone need to be marked. A diachronic approach to governmentality, as shown by Bevir, would reveal these complexities.¹¹⁵ The mundane everyday life of the body is perceived not as an absence of power on it but as the effect of the practice of power, which has become so entrenched into its everyday day in the form of norms or ‘truth.’

The government of bodies or normalizing the ‘conduct of conduct’ is never a one-dimensional process. It is always resisted at different stages by individuals, groups, and populations. Such forms of resistance bring to light the governmental processes. As the conceptions of power and government have undergone radical changes, the acts of resistance to these processes should be looked at in modes of political articulation different from conventional modes of resistance. In this sense, the current study is attempting a history of conduct and regulations over bodies,

¹¹⁴ Mills, *Michel Foucault*, 83.

¹¹⁵ Mark Bevir makes a distinction between the archaeological and genealogical approaches to governmentality. He makes the case for the later as it is based on a diachronic approach over the former based on a synchronic approach. However, there are other scholars who have used governmentality analysis from an archaeological perspective for fruitful studies.

Mark Bevir, “Rethinking Governmentality: Towards Genealogies of Governance,” *European Journal of Social Theory*, 13 (2010): 423-441.

but the scope of social history is limiting in its conceptions of power as it tends to assign all the issues that arise in larger structures of society alone.¹¹⁶

A normative understanding of state power runs the risk of the state being understood as a guarantor of its own principles on which they are founded, but governmentality helps question this normative sanctity assigned to political power by looking at actual political practices which often transcended the state realm. Here, I take the example of violence or torture; wherever it is reported, it is seen as an aberration of the principles of law. But one must recognize that it is an inherent part of the functioning of power. Foucault has eluded the concept of violence in the conception of government in favour of the more productive aspects of power, which he assigns to governmentality and biopolitics, but this misses the point.¹¹⁷ A known secret as Anupama Rao has shown in the case of the colonial state. Violence remains a real threat posed in ensuring the conduct and thus to the government, especially in colonial conditions. Juridical power has always rested on the threat of violence. This was soon to change in the wake of colonial governmentality and biopolitics, as will be revealed through a discussion on the abolition of the death penalty in Travancore (*chapter III*).

The practices of the state and the governing of conduct happen hand in hand. Governmentality studies that oppose the duality of the state-society divide and all such dichotomies help to look at and make sense of the social world more comprehensively.

Technologies of Government and Moral Regulations

Moral regulation is a distinct form of ‘discursive and political practice.’¹¹⁸ It is a contested territory. Its most visible expression could be in imposing regulations and restrictions over the conduct and action of individuals or groups based on one’s sense of perceived ideas or beliefs of right and wrong. It rests on the premise “that there is something inherently wrong or immoral in the conduct of others, and people are mobilized and drawn into the action by this

¹¹⁶ Simon Gunn, “From Hegemony to Governmentality: Changing Conceptions of Power in Social History,” *Journal of Social History* 39, no. 3 (2006): 705-720.

¹¹⁷ Susanne Krasmann, “The Right of Government: Torture and the Rule of Law,” in *Governmentality*, ed. Brockling et.al, 115-137.

¹¹⁸ Alan Hunt, *Governing Morals: A Social History of Moral Regulations*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1999), ix.

conviction.”¹¹⁹ Moral regulations work on a normative understanding of what is bad, wrong, or immoral. This varies from society to society and from time to time.

The body is central to the ideas of moral regulations and issues of moral politics. All aspects of social life are influenced by moral regulations. This includes human interactions and institutional practices. At the same time, certain issues like prohibition, prostitution, drug use, etc., have a greater appeal and consensus in being morally governed. Most of the issues of moral regulations involve repression of some kind. The common tendency is to equate the call for moral regulations to the presence of traditionalism, which is a misplaced argument as modern life generates its own ideas of regulations in the name of morality. It cannot be denied that moral regulations are an integral part of the political rationalities of the contemporary world. However, the positive and optimizing aspects of power that characterize governmental power reconfigure the repressive character of moral regulations to subject the body and its government to new sciences, rationalities, and knowledge systems.

As governing and guiding human conduct is the central objective of governmental power, it raises considerable questions on the politics of moral regulations. While the new governmental rationalities significantly transformed existing moral frameworks within which bodies existed, the moral values of the society continued to shape and influence the new practices and techniques enacted as a result. As in the case of colonial medicine, the existing belief systems and the moral values of the society continued to be part of the new technologies of government. Legislations that played a key role in the spread of biopolitical technologies are therefore not completely insular and unaffected by the moral values of the society. This results in the body's constitution in a hybrid fashion: a body at once invested with the techniques of governmental and biopolitical power and continued to be invested with the traditional symbols of signification and its moral values. Travancore, a Hindu state moving on the path of modernity and embracing modern institutions and rationalities, provides the best context to locate such a hybridity.

Governmentality as an analytical tool could be used to understand and make sense of the moral politics of the times. While practitioners of governmentality have focused mainly on political power, it does not exhaust the theoretical possibilities opened by the term with its attention on

¹¹⁹ Ibid. preface. Ix.

the conduct of self and others. Governmentality, defined as the ‘conduct of conduct,’ is also an individual activity. It refers not only to governing the conduct of others. It is as much about governing one’s own conduct or oneself as governing the conduct of others.¹²⁰

In short, the government here is as much the government of the self as that of others. Dean argues that more abstract attempts to govern larger entities entail ideas and try to shape how individuals, their actions, their bodies, and their conduct are and should be governed.¹²¹ The government of the self is mostly addressed at the level of ethics and often gets articulated only through its relationship with that of the political government. The focus of the current thesis is also the political government of conduct; however, the idea of the government of the self cannot be completely left unaddressed in such an attempt and is attempted to be explored in subsequent chapters. As Foucault visualized, the government of the self has the seeds or potential of what he calls the ‘counter conduct,’ which has an important role in the political government.

Norms existing in societies have a crucial bearing on the attempts to normalize conduct. Normalizing the populations is central to the concerns of modern biopolitical administration. Institutions like schools, hospitals, convents, hostels, courts, prisons, asylums, etc., which were important instruments of disciplinary power, governed and regulated the conduct of individuals at every stage. The idea of right conduct produces, along with it, the idea of the deviant. Even outside the realm of institutions, individual bodies are subjected to moral regulations in their everyday positioning. While it could be one possibility to look at moral regulations that made certain governmental technologies possible and functioning, it could be another possibility to look at the everyday processes of governing conduct through moral regulations. Individuals are subjected to moral regulations, which brings the idea of self into the issues of moral politics and moral regulations.

Modern power has been understood to be totalizing and individualizing at the same time. A conception of power here cannot certainly ignore other structural frames like class and caste, among other factors in regulating conduct. It is not denied that the discursive and non-

¹²⁰ Dean argues that government as conceived here encompasses not only how abstract entities such as states and population is governed, it is also about how we govern ourselves. Dean, *Governmentality*, 19.

¹²¹ Ibid. 19.

discursive factors here are considerably affected by these structures. However, they are not entirely determined by these structures. The theoretical framework of governmentality helps not to reduce the working of multifarious power relations into structural frameworks.

Foucault's concern with how the 'government of the self is integrated with the government of others' is most important here. One of the main challenges of contemporary power is to address the link between the formation of the self and the government of others. Following Foucault, Hunt argues that there has been a significant shift from the negative or coercive form of self-government epitomized by a quest for self-control to a more positive concern with the self.¹²² Dean locates the formation of the self in the interface between governmental practices concerned with political subjectification and regulation of citizens and ethical practices of self-formation.¹²³ In this interaction between the government of the self and the government of others, the problems of moral regulations exerting over individuals could be located. It is seen that the new discourses on health, hygiene, and sanitation have come to play a very important role in shaping moral regulations and, thus, the reconfiguration of the self in the context of Travancore. The moral values of the society lingering on to the new practices of government are better illuminated with the understanding underlined.

Governmentality Studies: The Indian Context

Not an extensively explored territory, governmentality studies have been put to diverse use in the Indian context by different scholars. Partha Chatterjee (1993, 2004), Gyan Prakash (1999), U Kalpagam (2014), and Stephen Legg (2018) have done extensive work on colonial and postcolonial governmentality. Prakash has looked at the use of enlightenment reason in a colonial context and the peculiarly distinct forms of colonial science and the Indian response to it, giving rise to a hybrid modernity that is European and indigenous simultaneously. Thus, the interconnectedness between colonialism, colonial reason, and the modern nation has been explored by Prakash. In the chapter titled 'Body and Governmentality,' he looks at how the body's internal functioning, which was then culturally considered a taboo, began to be the focus of western medical exploration. Prakash argues that governmentality in the colonial context

¹²² Hunt, *Governing Morals*.

¹²³ Mitchell Dean, "A Social Structure of Many Souls: Moral Regulation, Government and Self-formation," *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 19, no. 2 (1994): 145-168.

was fundamentally ‘discontinuous’ with and ‘dislocated’ from the West.¹²⁴ He makes the case that colonial governmentality did not mean the tropicalization of western governmentality; instead, it was fundamentally dislocated from the western norm. Prakash also points to the contradiction of science, which is supposed to be an agent of liberating potential in the context of a colony becoming an active agent in the colonial project of domination.

With the first book-length exploration of governmentality in the Indian context, U Kalpagam, in *Rule by Numbers*, focuses on governmentality more specifically than Prakash. She has looked at employing specific techniques of rationality, among them the use of statistics being the most prominent one in the construction of governable colonial subjects. She focuses mainly on the production of space, the transformation from sovereignty to governmentality, and the role of statistics in modern power. She also looks at the economy and the emergence of a public sphere in the colonial context. Kalpagam argues that the scientific tools or statistical data generated by the colonial state to govern better was effectively used to launch an effective anti-colonial challenge by the nationalist politicians. In her essay ‘Colonial Governmentality and the Public Sphere,’¹²⁵ she argues that the rise of a public sphere was crucial to the idea of modern governance enabled by liberal principles; however, when the emergent public sphere founded on the same liberal principles questioned the ambivalence of the liberal principles in the colonial setting the same colonial state was all up in arms to suppress the public sphere and its use of reason in critiquing the colonial state. The colonial state’s use of reason was thus an illusion, employed only to enable its rule and not motivated by any principled faith in the liberal tenets. So, in both of her essays, she effectively uses the analytical tool of governmentality to question and reveal the contradictions of western liberalism in a colonial context and its overweening claims. From a theoretical perspective on power, Prakash and Kalpagam essentially use governmentality in exploring the possibilities to counter power, as articulated by Foucault. The natives used the very system employed to govern the colonial populations to mobilize, gather opinion, and challenge the domination of the colonial state itself, in this process giving rise to its own dominations and hegemony. The thesis shows that Travancore is no different in such a transition.

¹²⁴ Prakash, *Another Reason*, 123-127.

¹²⁵ U Kalpagam, “Governmentality and the Public Sphere,” in *Rule by Numbers: Governmentality in Colonial India*. 2015, (Hyderabad: Orient Black Swan, 2015), 261-288.

The above scholars who used governmentality analysis were not the first to explore the European use of technologies of science, statistics, and other knowledge systems for governing the population. Bernard Cohn first mapped the intricate connections between colonial knowledge systems and projects to govern the colonial world in the Indian context. Cohn clearly articulates the project of domination, which used modern rationalities and modalities like enumeration, survey, museology, observation, census, and surveillance to manage the colonial world.¹²⁶ This is well in tune with Foucault's understanding of modern power and the windows opened by his thoughts. Cohn clearly establishes the motives behind the colonial pedagogic practices in their compiling of language guides, dictionaries, and attempts to learn vernacular Indian languages. Cohn, however, does not attempt a comprehensive thesis on power; his interest lies mostly in the specificities of colonial rule and its various techniques to further it. The current study finds Cohn's works as useful as Foucault's in understanding modern rationalities of government.

Cohn advances the theory that the conquest of the Indian subcontinent was attained through the western knowledge systems and not through military conquest. The new knowledge systems enabled the retention of colonial domination. In the context of Travancore, it is observed that the native states under indirect colonial rule employed or endorsed the western knowledge systems in its transformation to the 'model native state.' These new knowledge systems, with their new rationalities, were the most crucial components of colonial governmentality in Travancore. Administrative changes initiated in the Travancore state from the late 19th century under the pressures of the colonial state were also attempts to make the state more intelligible and easily managed by the British. The threat of annexation citing misrule remained a permanent threat through which the state was forced to adopt these practices. This is further explored in Chapter III with reference to the Travancore polity.

Arjun Appadurai looks at the connection between the numerous productions of data and records under the colonial aegis and the projects behind it.¹²⁷ He makes the point that the

¹²⁶ Bernard S Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India*. (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1997).

¹²⁷ Arjun Appadurai, "Number in the Colonial Imagination," in *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia*, ed. Carol E Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 314-337.

regimes that existed before the British intervention also produced elaborate accounts and records as part of governing the territory, but the colonial project was distinct in its own way. He contrasts the colonial production and use of numbers or data with the kind of statistical data and surveys that were produced in the metropole; he shows that both significantly differed in terms of spirit and means. The colonial use of numbers was with a clear political goal, the subjectification of the colonial population to this new regime was its primary focus. The idea of ‘colonial difference’ and its construction as the other was crucial to this project. While in the metropole, statistics created margins of the deviant, the poor, the criminal, etc., in the colonial context, the entire population was regarded as deviant and pushed into a marginal status. Informed by Hacking’s idea of ‘dynamic nominalism’ on the role of statistics in determining, shaping, and regulating civic life, Appadurai reveals the shift from a ‘functional use of numbers to a disciplinary and pedagogical role.’¹²⁸ What was attempted here was to show how the production of statistics and knowledge production, an essential aspect of governmentality, was initiated and infused into the logic of government by the colonial state. Colonial archiving was the process by which this was realized.

A more recent collected volume edited by Stephen Legg and Deana Heath has explored the idea of Governmentality in the South Asian context more deeply. This volume looks at South Asian governmentality as a unique problem, different from the western conceptions of governmentality.¹²⁹ This volume was also an attempt to debunk the idea that governmentality was essentially a western concept, useful only to understand the liberal societies of the West and their historical transformations.

Prathama Banerjee raises an important critique of governmentality in the volume mentioned above.¹³⁰ She, rather than dismissing the utility and usefulness of governmentality, cautions on the blind use of adapting governmentality to the Indian context as well as regarding “modernity as always marked by a transformation from sovereignty to governmentality.”¹³¹ Banerjee also

For a critic of Appadurai’s position and on the nature of precolonial identification and enumeration practices Sumit Guha, “The Politics of Identity and Enumeration in India 1600-1900,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 45, no. 1 (2003): 148-167 (153).

¹²⁸ Appadurai, *Number in the Colonial Imagination*, 325-326.

¹²⁹ Stephen Legg and Deana Heath, ed. *South Asian Governmentalities: Michel Foucault and the Question of Postcolonial Orderings* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

¹³⁰ Pratama Banerjee, “The Abiding Binary: The Social and Political in Modern India,” in *South Asian Governmentalities*, ed. Stephen Legg & Deana Heath, 81-105.

¹³¹ Ibid. 81.

cautions on the contrast in configurations of sovereignty, state-society, and political authority relationships in the Indian context from Europe. Although her intervention is important, it does not dismiss the possibilities offered by governmentality studies. Banerjee proposes the idea of *developmentality* in place of governmentality to refer to the processes of the social/political. However, the term does not hold the potential and depth governmentality offers in understanding and exploring modern power.

There is no disagreement that sovereignty, as understood in Europe, was distinct from what was seen in India. However, this does not altogether negate the possibilities of governmentality in any way. Nor is there an unproblematic assumption of modernity being marked by a sovereignty-governmentality transformation inherent in governmentality studies. Even though this thesis also marks such a shift from sovereignty to governmentality based on historical experiences, this is not an unproblematic assumption. While mapping this transformation, it is understood as a specifically Indian experience under the aegis of colonialism. This transformation, rather than being marked by binaries, is bringing out the nuances and specificities of sovereignty and the multifarious networks and relationships of power on whose base it rested. Neither do governmentality studies desist from analyzing specifically Indian categories and experience, including caste and convention, in favour of an all-pervasive narrative of the emergence of colonial biopolitics and governmentality. The specific relationships and configuration through which sovereignty functions change in favour of a governmentalized state. Nevertheless, as said earlier, this is no watertight compartment of one system succeeding or replacing the other. Instead, values, conventions, and practices linger on to the new 'reasons of state' and the 'art of government' making it a unique and historically contingent experience.

Contextualizing Body and Governmentality: The Case of Travancore

Colonel John Munro laid the foundations of colonial administration in Travancore in the first quarter of the 19th century. The political history of Travancore is rife with conflict between native rulers and the British Resident who wielded considerable power. With colonial intervention, the history of Travancore began to be put on a track untraveled before. However, my focus is the late 19th and early 20th century, by which colonial influence over Travancore had become already strong in many ways. The thesis argues that from the late 19th century, the

political and administrative structure of the princely state was gradually changing with colonial interaction. While the existing sovereign structures were allowed to remain in existence, it was radically altered by a new rationality of colonial governmentality and colonial biopolitics.

Being a Hindu kingdom, the law and legal system of the land were loosely based on Hindu scriptures, customs, and practices, making it highly arbitrary. Caste and caste-based practices and customs were the norms. Bodies were inscribed with these caste and religious meanings. The functioning of bodily and spatial notions of purity and pollution were governed by caste privileges. Such customs as untouchability and unapproachability existed along with slavery. Individual and collective bodies were marked with symbols and markers so that they could be identified and customs preserved undiluted. How bodies were governed in the precolonial world forms the focus of Chapter II.

In this context, modern institutions began to make their presence through colonial intervention. While governmentality as a practice worked in directly ruled presidencies in one way, it worked in totally different ways in princely states, which were indirectly ruled through Residency. There was still the authority of the colonial regime looming large. The subjects gained effectively and used the political scenario, which curtailed some powers of the rulers, by making appeals directly to the governor and the colonial government. The new subjectivity enabled them to question the practices and rules that they considered repressive and not in tune with modern ideas of equality and good governance. Thus, an opportunity was created for them to make use of the new governmental practices and institutions. The new subjectivity gained, especially with coming into contact with the missionaries, schooling, and a variety of other factors appealed effectively to undermine the existing repressive regimes.

Among the most important changes that were initiated by colonial biopolitics were those existing identities and their ascribed disabilities, rather than completely fading away, began to be expressed in new ideologies and vocabularies of biopolitics like sanitation, lack of it, cleanliness, vaccination, etc. Although ideas of ontological equality of bodies began to be foregrounded in the languages of reform and resistance, this was further limited by the persistence of caste-based disabilities, often reincarnated in the language of modern biopolitics. Thus, traditional notions of purity were given a new existence by the discourses of cleanliness and sanitation.

In the early 20th century, Travancore was a state on the path of modernity through its practices or employing techniques of modern governance while retaining the religious underpinnings and customs. This might appear paradoxical, but that is not something new, especially in the colonial context. The very idea of modern governance has in it the paradoxical idea of incorporating practices that might appear contrary to its principles and spirits for its efficiency. A new regime also feeds on the existing conventions, if that helps it to govern the society without dissent, than radically altering every extant rule and power relations.

This is not to say colonial governmentality was all progressive and empowering and represented the aspirations of the people. Nevertheless, it could not be denied that the principles binding it could provide an opportunity whereby the people's protests and appeals could effectively be turned to question the legitimacy and powers of the king. It offered new avenues to challenge the established order of things and the power structures binding them.

The lower ranks of the population found the opportunity beneficial to their interests and resorted to constitutional means of appeals and petitions. It should be understood that the various sections of society, divided by religion, caste, community, and customs, each of these groups perceived and experienced the idea of colonial modernity differently and tried to make use of it to suit their interests better and articulate their causes. The point is the native response to colonial governmental practices was not uniform across society. New subjectivities were formed, and some older practices and identity markers were questioned. However, equally problematic is the colonial government's response; the liberal tenets that were supposedly central to governmentality were often undermined for narrow and short-term interests and avoiding conflicts.

Like elsewhere during the colonial regime, information was produced on criminal tribes and the deviant. Legislations motivated by a concern for security were brought on to prevent deviance and control deviants who were regarded as a threat to society. This included lunatics, beggars, the sick, and the prostitutes. The health of the population also meant the moral health of the population, and the idea of what is morally right impacted these legislations. There was a clear initiation of governmental practices concerned with political subjectification and regulation of the governed throughout the early 20th century.

As said earlier, Travancore was known for its extremely repressive caste system. The 19th and 20th centuries witnessed many lower caste struggles that raised questions of self-respect and the politics of the body. The body was brought into the realm of politics both as an active agent and symbol of resistance to power, predominantly by the lower caste movements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries in Travancore. The body had, until then, been the vector of dominant conceptions and operations of rules and norms formed around caste. That the body is at the centre of political struggles is a key element in the historical sociology of the body.¹³² Until the 19th century, the body was placed in a deeply hierarchical and ritualistic conglomeration of faith, norms, and *maryadas*. These religious understandings invested the body with symbols of subordinations and markers of their positions. The body thus served both as a symbol and signifier of these caste positions. Textual sanction of this subordination was provided in the form of Hindu texts written based on the laws of Manu and its regional incarnations.

Among these, the lower caste movements led by Ayyan Kali denouncing the traditional and debilitating caste markers, the struggles for self-respect around the body led by lower caste leaders like Poykayil Yohannan, Pandit Karuppan, Arattupuzha Velayudha Panicker and the breast cloth agitations of 1859 has a prominent place. Colonial modernity and its promise and aspiration often provided the impetus for these struggles. It is to be seen here that by the early 20th century, there was an increasing acknowledgment of the role of body and embodiment in the constitution of the self. The lower caste struggles that place the body as central to these struggles for equality and respectability need to be understood against this backdrop. Udaya Kumar traces the emergence of new secular community formations in Kerala by denouncing the caste markers to the processes of imperial governmentality and its technologies like census, enumeration, and surveys to govern populations.¹³³

Lower caste movements, which began in the 18th century, brought the body into the discourses of politics through these social movements and weaved their ideas of self-respect and equality around the concept of the body. Cleanliness and bodily purity were central concerns during the

¹³² Turner, *The Body and Society*, 40.

¹³³ Udaya Kumar, "Writing the Life of the Guru: Chattampi Swamikal, Sree Narayana Guru and Modes of Biographical Construction," in *Biography as History: Indian Perspectives*, ed. Vijaya Ramaswamy and Yogesh Sharma (Hyderabad: Orient Black Swan, 2009): 61.

Kerala Renaissance. Cleanliness and the lack of it had long been the tool used by the caste Hindus to keep the lower castes outside their realms of engagement and institutions. To surpass the debilitating claims of caste Hindus, the lower caste movements actively propounded the ideas of cleanliness and individual bodily purity. However, this was not just to achieve the appreciation of the upper caste Hindus or to achieve ritual recognition by them. Rather, cleanliness as a modern quality that everyone must pursue had been understood by them as part of a variety of discourses and coming into contact with the more modern and nuanced understanding of the body viz-a-viz its relation to modernity. Missionary discourses played an equally important role in bringing about an agreement with respect to bodily purity, and self-respect centred on the body.

Colonial modernity altered the mental world of the large majority of the population. An important contribution to the experience of colonial modernity was the reification of the notions of community. The lower class movements articulated the notions of cleanliness and hygiene, which modernity propagated as essential to a modern or civilized life. Every social reformer thus articulated the need for maintaining personal hygiene as well as the need to pursue cleanliness as a community virtue.

The history of the PRDS (*Pratyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha*) movement clearly shows the increasing thrust on the significance of cleanliness and hygiene in the lives of community members.¹³⁴ Poykayil Yohannan, the founder of the sect and an important social reformer of 20th-century Kerala, advocated a strict adherence to disciplined life and to cleanliness and hygiene among the followers. He founded the Pratyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha in 1910 to fight caste oppression. This was a movement inspired by missionary preaching. Yohannan initially joined the CMS and later the Marthoma Church. Disillusioned with the treatment of the lower caste converts and by both these sects, Yohannan founded his own church. Through this new collective, Yohannan fought caste oppression. Hygiene and the lack of it had been said to be one reason the existing Christian sects discriminated against the new converts. Yohannan overcame this by advocating strict hygiene and cleanliness practices among his followers.

¹³⁴ Sanal Mohan, 'Imagining Equality: Modernity and Social Transformations of Lower Castes in Colonial Kerala, PhD Thesis, MG University, 2005.

As Sanal Mohan has shown in the case of the PRDS, the lower castes resorted to new bodily practices, which they found important not only for claiming equality and respectability but also for reconceptualization of the self.¹³⁵ Yohannan personally took his followers to river banks and instructed them on the usage of oil and soap. He also encouraged his followers to wear white clothes instead of rags.¹³⁶ He also prohibited the use of alcohol and other intoxicants among his followers. The PRDS movement hailed a disciplined life in which bodily practices, customs, and attires were reformed. Sanal Mohan stresses the subversive power these actions had over the symbolic world. In the thoughts of Yohannan, the human body and bodily practices were closely tied to the notions of self and, thus, both transformations of the self and the society. The subversive potential of Yohannan's thoughts had tremendous potential in the quest for respectability of the lower sections and in their own reconceptualization of the self. The self in the thoughts of Yohannan is composed of both the inner self and the body. The centrality of the body, thus, in the discourse of self-respect, is best exemplified in the thoughts of Yohannan.

Pandit Karuppan was a social reformer from the Araya community. A poet, dramatist, and Sanskrit scholar, his work focused mainly on the upliftment of the Araya community from the shackles of the caste system. The women of the Araya community did not cover their upper body in those times. Much like the other social reformers of the period, Pandit Karuppan also advocated the need for reform among the members of the community in dress and bodily practices in his speeches and writings. It is said that the youth of the Araya community inspired by him had resorted to forcefully providing a piece of cloth to the women that could be tied around their breasts. These clothes came to be called 'Karuppan *Kachhas*' (*Kachha*- meaning a piece of cloth). However, no evidence has been found of Karuppan advocating such a practice. It is believed that Karuppan *Kachha* was the handiwork of one of his followers, P K Deewar, and not Karuppan himself.¹³⁷

The missionaries contributed significantly to bringing about this change in both the mental world and the material world of the lower sections. Notions of purity and pollution had been central to the whole idea of untouchability and inequality. The perception that the lower castes

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid, 167.

¹³⁷ E Rajan, *Keralathile Maaridam Marakkal Kalapam* (Thrissur: Indivaram Books, 2017), 175-6.

doing menial jobs were never clean was one reason for their discrimination. It was this notion that the lower caste movements contested; in their struggle for equality and respectability, they advocated the reforms of bodily practices, dress, and personal hygiene.

Missionaries played a significant role in changing perceptions regarding the body, bodily integrity, and embodiment. Critical scholarly works have been produced on the role played by missionaries among the lower section of society in bringing about a new consciousness about their own body and honour.¹³⁸ Here, colonialism is not understood as a political intervention alone but as permeation in the form of different practices, including institutional intervention.

In the Kerala context, studies on bodies have argued that with the colonial intervention and the modernity it brought along, caste bodies have changed to sexual bodies: a displacement from traditional structures of caste to the discourses and practices of sex.¹³⁹ Rajeevan argues that it is in this transformation from caste bodies to sex bodies that the modern subject emerged in Kerala.¹⁴⁰ But caste and its fixations continued to shape sexual identities and bodily practices. J Devika, in her analysis of the birth of modern gender, has highlighted the role of pastoral power and its disciplinary logic in the fashioning of modern gender in Kerala.¹⁴¹ She identifies the emergence of a new political rationality in the early twentieth century that was at the same time individualizing and totalizing within which the government of individuals emerged, and modern gender was constituted. She argues that modern disciplinary institutions, their ideologies, and the totalizing legal-political forms played a crucial role in the emergence of modern gender and transforming them into governable subjects. Devika has further identified the issues regarding the absence of both body and sexual practices in the much-hailed Kerala model of development and its discourses.¹⁴² However, she stops short of exploring the specific character of the political rationalities beyond the realms of pastoral power and disciplinary

¹³⁸ Sanal Mohan, *Modernity of Slavery: Struggles Against Caste Inequality in Colonial Kerala* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015) explores the experience of colonial modernity among the lower castes of Kerala in depth.

¹³⁹ B Rajeevan, "From Caste to Sex: A Study on Sexuality and the Formation of Modern Subject in Kerala," *Rethinking Development: Kerala's Development Experience*, ed. M A. Oommen (New Delhi: Institute of Social Sciences, 1999), 45-60.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. 51.

¹⁴¹ J Devika, *En-gendering Individuals: The Language of Re-forming in Twentieth Century Keralam* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2007), 292-303.

¹⁴² J Devika, "Bodies gone Awry: The Abjection of Sexuality in Development Discourse in Contemporary Kerala," *Indian Journal of Gender Studies* 16, no. 21 (2009): 21-46.

institutions.

The governmental order of things over the body functions differently in different contexts. At one level, the body and its potentialities are attempted to be optimized, and at one level, it could be the complete silencing of issues over the body, sex, and sexual practices, yet at another level, it would be the direct suppression of it using force. The struggle for the ownership of one's own body and what one chooses to do with one's body and attempts to regulate it and subdue it to norms is an ongoing process. This struggle for the government of the self and the government by others in the contemporary world through its political technologies of governance will provide an insight into both the theoretical dimensions and the actual functioning of power in the present.

Here, by governmentality, what is assumed is not the statization of society but the 'governmentalization' of both state and society in the way Foucault enunciates.¹⁴³ Dean Explains governmentalization further as "the long-term trajectory by which the exercise of sovereignty comes to be articulated through the regulation of populations and individuals and the psychological, biological, sociological and economic processes that constitute them."¹⁴⁴

Governmentality and the Production of Knowledge.

Central to the project of governmentality is the production of knowledge. New knowledge is produced to further the new rationales of government. As Biebricher argues, "Any governmentality requires the production of knowledge and, in turn, enables the production of knowledge through the process of governing."¹⁴⁵ This relationship between the production of knowledge and the processes of government takes a distinctive form under colonial conditions. In its hegemonic capacity, the colonial state initiates a series of knowledge-production endeavours that aid in the control and rule of the native populations. Colonial governmentality derives its legitimacy from these distinct forms of knowledge produced under the aegis of the colonial apparatus. What makes the context further complex here is the presence of two different and problematic political authorities: the princely state and the increasingly dominant

¹⁴³ Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 109.

¹⁴⁴ Dean, *Governmentality*, 267.

¹⁴⁵ Thomas Biebricher, "Governmentality," in *Routledge Handbook of Interpretive Political Science*, ed. Mark Bevir and R A W Rhodes (New York: Routledge, 2016), 145.

and assertive colonial state with its rationalities and superior logic rooted in the new governmental practices. The new knowledge regimes significantly alter and transform existing forms of political authorities and the reasons of the state and enable the transformation to the new rationalities of government, which is explored in detail in this thesis.

Governmentality- Limitations.

Limitations of governmentality are better underlined by scholars after Foucault. The most important blind spot or limitation of the governmentality approach is its Eurocentric focus and obsession with the present/contemporary. Another important problem in the approach is equating governmentality studies with the study of neoliberalism. While governmentality studies have made important interventions in the studies of neoliberalism, they can never be exhaustive of the potential governmentality offers. In the current work, the former actually enhances than limits the governmentality approach. Governmentality studies have been misrepresented to imply a quasi-teleological sense whereby neoliberalism is regarded as the end of the art of government or the final stage in the art of government.

The modern surveillance state has the body as its central focus of the government. For the modern state, the systems of surveillance are not just new /latest or efficient management of the bodies/ subjects. Rather, it is central to the fashioning of the modern self in which management and government of the body are of the utmost importance, the seeds of which were laid in the late 19th century under indirect colonial rule.

The thesis, more than a comprehensive thesis on the body, is an exercise in the analysis of power and its rationalities of government of the body. It is argued here that the body cannot be separated from the conceptions of power. The body was the terrain or tactile form on which the power was concretely manifested. This manifestation of power upon them shapes embodiment. Thus, any attempt to understand the history of embodiment is also an attempt to understand the various forms in which power was manifested in Travancore.

Chapterization

The thesis is divided into Five chapters. The current chapter situated the context and the theoretical framework of the thesis. The second chapter, ***Precolonial Body***, explores in detail how the bodies were controlled, regulated, and shaped in their everyday setting in the pre-

colonial world. This enables the situating of the changes bodies underwent in the 19th and 20th centuries as a result of the emergence of colonial governmentality. The religious, caste-ridden, and communitarian positioning of the body in its everyday setting forms the chapter's core theme. The state is one with an official religion, the symbols of power that operated on the body were based on the customs and loosely framed around *sastric* texts. Communitarian values and ritualistic duties were inscribed directly on the bodies of both men and women. Bodies operated within this cultural web of accumulated practices. Identities were fixed on the body through caste. Unapproachability and untouchability were practices that assigned meanings that worked directly on the body and determined the political and social life of the body. Body, in this sense, was always conceived as an effect of power, a power that was already up there, fixed and inscribed with meanings. Forces that worked directly on the body included local power structures in the form of caste, customs, and juridical institutions. Corporal punishments and breaking the body when it violated its assigned roles and transgressed its boundaries were the norm. This chapter looks at the body and embodiment in its quotidian, everyday settings as structural effects but with the potential to challenge these norms, however limited it was. In short, the primary focus of the chapter is exploring and mapping what the 'prehistory of biopolitics' was in a princely state.

The third chapter, ***From Sovereignty to Governmentality***, analyses the political transformation in Travancore. It locates a gradual shift in the working of the princely state and its juridical apparatus from the late 19th century. A centralized Hindu state by the 18th century, the colonial engagement in Travancore through the residency system, the overarching colonial state, and other colonial agents rewrites traditional political sovereignty in the state. Colonial modernity rewrote the existing relations of power and conceptions of sovereign power. The power of the sovereign was slowly waning by the dawn of the 19th century. Modern institutions of governance in Travancore were a reality by the 19th century. The sovereign at the helm still controlled these institutions. The growth of democratic institutions in the state by the early 20th century enabled a counter to the unrestricted power of the sovereign. The state's engagement with colonial modernity resulted in the incorporation of colonial biopolitics that significantly influenced the working of the princely state. Colonial governmentality refashions the practices of government through the juridical powers of the sovereign. The early 20th century witnessed this working of colonial biopolitics through juridical institutions and was backed by the

sovereign. By the end of the 19th century, Travancore state had elaborate usage of numbers and statistics. With the onslaught of colonial governmentality, these statistics and their concerns undergo serious changes. Central to this chapter is the working of the sovereign and the transformation under colonial conditions and engagement with modernity. ‘The right of death,’ central to the idea of sovereign power, transforms into ‘power over life.’ This transformation, however, is not absolute, or the sovereign power or the ‘right of death’ did not cease to exist with the emergence of governmental power. The power over life can further be scaled down to disciplinary power and biopolitics. What is witnessed here is not the replacement of one form of power with another but rather an overhaul of subjectivities in tune with the introduction of this new form of power. The transformation also strengthens the state’s engagement with the body. The state and other agents actively intervene in the health of the subjects. This chapter throws light on the much-unexplored dimensions of sovereign power under colonial conditions.

The fourth chapter, *Modern Medicine in Travancore*, traces the institutional history of modern medicine in Travancore and its role in shaping the new rationalities and forms of control in shaping the government of the body from the late 19th century. The chapter traces the trajectory of the modern medical system, the proactive role of the state, the missionaries, and other non-state agencies, and their complex interactions in institutionalizing modern medicine in the state. The growth of modern institutions and their new rationalities is intimately connected to the development of modern medicine in the state. This chapter attempts to trace the intricacies of this mutual encouragement and facilitation. It is argued in this chapter that, among other factors, modern medicine played a significant role in this transformation through its rationalities and knowledge systems. The chapter attempts to show that the growth and spread of modern medicine in Travancore was not merely the transplantation of western medicine in a non-western context; it was deeply colonial in character and embodied the spirit, ambition, and ideologies of the empire.

The fifth chapter, titled *The Birth of Colonial Biopolitics*, argues that biopolitics, the phenomena by which ‘life’ becomes an object of politics, had become the distinguishing feature of governmental rationality in Travancore from the 19th century.

This chapter argues that unlike disciplinary power, where power was applied to man-as-body, biopower is applied to man as a living being or as a global mass that is affected by overall processes characteristic of birth, death, production, illness, and so on. The chapter situated the medical, sanitary, public health, and governmental initiatives that brought about a radical shift in the government of the body in the 20th century in this transformation.

The chapter argues that the emergence of biopolitical power is marked by the apparatuses of security, resulting in the micro and distributive management of individuals and populations and their surveillance. With the emergence of population as an aggregating category of governance, life is becoming the statistical and biopolitical subject of the state. The disciplining of individuals is now subordinated to a power that focuses on management, regulation, and interventions at the level of the population.

Travancore's integration into the global networks of health and its impact on institutionalizing public health and modern scientific regimes in the state is also addressed in the work. The period witnessed the intersection of disciplinary and governmental power in institutional as well as non-institutional spaces. Through a discussion of institutional spaces like schools and prisons, it is shown how these institutions and their rationalities were radically transformed with the emergence of biopolitics.

The ascendancy of biopolitical and governmental reason, with its focus on fostering and flourishing human life, created its own sets of margins and hierarchies. The effective management of the population also led to a systematic exclusion of groups not belonging to this ideal of healthy subjects. This exclusion was central to the modern idea of government and the management of populations. Next, turning to Chapter Two, the present work outlines the socio-cultural precolonial grid that marked and held the hierarchically organized embodied communities in ascribed locations.

Chapter II

Pre-Colonial Body

Travancore witnessed the emergence of modern institutions and huge infrastructural penetration in the 19th century under indirect colonial conditions. However, few studies have investigated the changing rationalities of government that motivated political and governmental changes in the state from the 19th century. As a result of British colonial intervention, the pre-colonial social set-up of Travancore underwent a radical transformation in the 19th and 20th centuries. Traditional social order was broken down, and in its place, new social relationships and new social classes emerged as a result of colonial economic and political initiatives.

This chapter explores at length the place of the body in the precolonial world and how it was governed, regulated, and embodiment shaped in the precolonial social world. The ways in which political power worked on the body shape the crux of the inquiry here. This chapter begins with the presumption that the bodies had a political role to play in tune with the rationalities of the precolonial regime. The precolonial social world of the body, as asserted by Mary Douglas, was one where “the social body constrains the way the physical body is perceived.”¹

To demonstrate this transformation that colonial governmentality brought about, this chapter looks at the body in its precolonial setting and the religious and cultural setup within which it functioned and then contrasts it against the changes it underwent in the subsequent chapters. The body and its relationship with the political processes form the central concerns of the thesis. To understand the place of the body in the precolonial social world, the punishment systems of the period and the textual legitimacy provided by the law books of the land are explored in this chapter.

Modern institutions began to emerge in Travancore in a dependent colonial context. These modern institutions brought along with them new rationalities and modes of government. This also meant the transmutation of the colonized subjects in their subject positions. As Gurukkal

¹ Mary Douglas, “The Two Bodies,” in *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (London: Routledge, 2003), 72.

argues, through the colonial representation of the native populations, “the people were trained to seek the truth about themselves and constitute their self-image exactly as construed by the colonizers.”² The people began to look at the social world and existence in new ways, often problematizing their existence and attempting to liberate themselves from the extant social conditions.

Social and material changes under conditions of colonialism in Travancore have been explored from various perspectives. Among these, K T Rammohan’s perspectives on the social and material dimensions of development and welfarist expansion under colonial conditions are particularly illuminating. Rammohan looks at the socio-economic changes of the 19th century and argues that “the development question was inextricably linked with the issue of social equity.”³ The idea of development was negotiated and effectively appropriated by the colonized to further the cause of social equality. He situates the struggles for civic rights, education, access to public roads and health care, and modern institutions in Travancore in the 19th and 20th centuries in this context.⁴ In such a context, development was not a monolith but instead shaped by the social location and consciousness of the various communities who participated in it. The colonial subjects, he argues, negotiated the paths of development while legitimizing it. Travancore, he argues, was integrated into the world market economy largely through the labour of the lower castes.

While the focus of the current thesis is not the economic changes under colonialism, it nevertheless acknowledges the significance of economic changes initiated under colonialism that fundamentally restructured the material and social structure of Travancore as a result. The thesis also adds that the integration of Travancore into the global world was not restricted to the global capital economy but also to the global networks of power that initiated new strategies and rationalities in government.

Rammohan’s approach to developmentalism, while deeply insightful in problematizing the specificities of development under colonial conditions, fails to adequately capture the

² Rajan Gurukkal, “Development Experience of Colonial Keralam,” in *Rethinking Development Kerala’s Development Experience* Vol I, ed. M A Oommen, (New Delhi: Institute of Social Sciences, 1999), 73.

³ K T Rammohan, “Mentalities of Development: The Case of Travancore: South-West India,” *Social Orbit* 1, no. 1 (2015): 48-63.

⁴ Ibid. 48.

dynamics of power involved in these development initiatives in shaping the consciousness of the colonized. The governmentality perspective is better suited to capture the rationalities of the practices of this development discourse and situate them in the larger history of colonial power.

A proclaimed Hindu state, Travancore society was organized along the strict and impassable hierarchical organization of caste. Bodies were the vector of this hierarchical order, and the established orders of caste hierarchy thus shaped embodiment. Caste-based codes of conduct, conventions, and rules that regulated everyday social practices and modes of self-representation shaped the social life of bodies. The rigid caste rules determined all aspects of social life from birth to death.⁵ As caste was the fundamental unit of social organization, bodies in this context remained primarily caste bodies, and their government was primarily based on strict caste rules or *jatimaryadas* or *mamools*. Identities remained ascriptive in this caste world. While the caste-sub-caste systems in precolonial Travancore had their own peculiarities, it was ideologically shaped by the Brahmanical Varna system.

The conditions of social life were determined by the conventions and *Maryada* of deep-rooted caste and religious practices and hierarchies of power tied through and legitimized by the *sastraic-puranic* idiom. Multiple networks of power existed in the society, all bordering on thin lines of conventions, and the sovereign's authority ran through these *maryadas*, often respecting the borders. Analyzing the precolonial social patterns, Gurukkal says, “[T]hough there existed all kinds of non-Brahmanical institutions, ideas, values and conventions in the society, the *sastraic-puranic* idiom had enmeshed them all through a syncretic process.”⁶ This further strengthens the claim that even though there existed a refracted understanding of the laws in the form of customs and traditions, punishments assigned in the name of dispensing justice were according to the doctrine of *chaturvarnya*.⁷ This fact would be further concurred by the lawbook of Travancore, the *Vyavaharamala*.

⁵ For a detailed description of caste practices of each caste, P Bhaskaranunni, *Keralam Irupatham Nootandinte Aarambathiil* (Thrissur: Kerala Sahitya Akademy, 2005) 15-158 and *Pathonpatham Nootandile Keralam* (Thrissur: Kerala Sahitya Akademy, 2012), 89-463.

⁶ Ibid. 76.

⁷ Bhaskaranunni, *Pathonpatham Nootandile Keralam*, 453.

Giorgio Agamben's ideas on the body and its centrality in political power are useful here to understand the political life of bodies in precolonial Travancore. Agamben makes the distinction between the simple biological body and the privileged or qualified life that distinguishes human life from other living beings.⁸ Using the Aristotelian distinction of *Zoe* and *Bios*, Agamben argues that while *Zoe* is the mere existence common to all animal forms, *Bios* is living 'proper to an individual or a group or in other words, it's the qualified political existence of human beings.'

This chapter postulates that central to the core of the precolonial government was the persistent denial of this qualified existence to a large majority of the population. The organizing principle that extended legitimacy was the practice of caste. In this setup, *Bios*, or the privilege of qualified political life, was the prerogative of those who formed the upper strata of this caste hierarchy. Embodiment was shaped in this context; in other words, the political and social life of bodies was shaped in this *Zoe-bios* distinction. While this might appear as a rather simplistic mode of looking at untouchability and the social organization of caste, it is insightful in understanding the place of bodies and their regulations in the conceptions of political power. Notions of bodily and ritualistic purity and attempts to preserve it were central to the distribution of power in the precolonial world.

In the precolonial world, the social lives of the body were deeply enmeshed in the religious and ritualistic world of social control. Life and politics were intimately connected in the precolonial world, tied by conventions and customs and validated by sacred laws. The society was ordered along strict caste divisions and attempts to preserve it undiluted. Central to such a society was the regulation and control of caste bodies. To maintain the bodily purity of the upper castes, distances to be maintained by each caste with respect to others were fixed by the customs, and any violation of these rules was strictly punished.⁹ Bodies, in their everyday practices, were invested with religious and caste symbols and remained the locus of the application of power. Transgressions of existing norms and hierarchies were severely dealt

⁸ Giorgio Agamben, *Homosacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998, 1-2).

⁹ For a detailed description of the distance that was to be maintained by each castes vis-à-vis other communities Bhaskaranunni, *Pathonpatham Nootandile Keralam*, 89-463 and *Vyavaharamala*. Samuel Mateer, *Native Life in Travancore* (London: W H Allen & Co, 1883), 291.

with. The way bodies were marked and displayed in precolonial Travancore was consistent with Turner's observations about pre-modern bodies that they were surfaces where such identities and markers as social status, family position, religion, and tribal affiliations were publicly displayed.¹⁰ The body in such a caste-ridden social world remained what Turner calls "the ubiquitous target for public symbolism."¹¹

The systems of punishment that existed in the period provide one of the best indices of the regulation of bodies. Travancore society, till the 19th century, was known for the rigorous and gruesome forms of punishment on the body. Corporal punishments were the most preferred modes of punishment for any transgressions of the established order. The caste of the accused determined the nature and gravity of the punishment that was accorded. Punishment systems of the time throw light on the various local structures and networks of power as well as the powers of the sovereign. The power to punish was distributed across the body politic along caste hierarchies and privileges.

As Gurukkal asserts,

"[T]he juridical conventions and administration of justice were primarily based on sastraic jurisprudence institutionalized as *desamaryada* or local conventions.....among other forms of domination were the various socio-political institutions, religious sensibilities and cultural practices."¹²

Both native and foreign accounts attest to the harsh and stringent caste system that existed in Travancore in the 18th and 19th centuries. A glimpse of the rigorous caste system is captured in the words of Sreedhara Menon, "Failure on the part of lower castes to make way for Nairs and other upper castes on the public roads even led to their being murdered with the connivance of custodians of law and order."¹³

Punishing the body remained a key feature of the functioning of sovereign power. This form of social control, unlike governmentality, did not offer the possibility of investing the bodies

¹⁰ Bryan S Turner, "Recent Developments in the Theory of the Body," in *The Body: Social Processes and Cultural Theory*, ed. Mike Featherstone, Mike Hepworth and Bryan S Turner (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1996), 5-6.

¹¹ Ibid. 6.

¹² Gurukkal, *Development Experience*, 75-76.

¹³ A Sreedhara Menon, *A Survey of Kerala History* (Kottayam: D C Books, 2008), 277.

with the potential of productive power. Power remained rather deductive in its aspirations, and bodies remained its central point of application. Such a position does not endorse the view that instances of counter-conduct were entirely absent in such a social setup. Attempts to transgress existing hierarchies and resistance to established social norms were widely prevalent in Travancore society, especially from the lower sections of society.¹⁴

While biopolitics, as envisaged by Foucault, is a modern form of expressing power, the biopolitical preoccupations of the premodern era are something that needs to be explored in greater detail. Among others, Jean Luc Nancy pressed the need to examine “what the biopolitical preoccupations were before the modern era?”¹⁵ It is not meant here that biopolitics, as experienced through colonial intervention, was present in its nascent form in the precolonial world and progressed linearly into colonial biopolitics in the 19th century. What is emphasized here is rather the need to look into its prehistory or the relation between body and political processes in the precolonial world.

Agamben offers significant insights when he argues that the preoccupation of politics with the body is not a uniquely modern phenomenon or something exclusive to biopolitics. The point of departure is in the techniques employed and the ways in which these techniques manifested themselves on the bodies. Colonial biopolitics, rather than making a complete rupture with existing forms of regulating the body, employed, appropriated, and reconfigured the precolonial modes of regulations in ways that strategically suited its rationalities and objectives. Rather than becoming completely redundant, caste and its various forms of expression found novel ways and means to persist and percolate colonial governmental practices, as will be shown in the following chapters.

However, the significant difference from biopolitics is that the body that was present in the precolonial social and political order was central to the creation of bare life. In other words, bare life was the form the body took under conditions of precolonial sovereignty. To put it

¹⁴ Ayyan Kali’s challenge to the existing caste hierarchies can be the best case in point. Fundamental to his philosophy was the disruption of the existing caste scripts and practices, the body played a crucial role in this as a site of resistance.

¹⁵ Jean Luc Nancy, “A Note on the term Biopolitics” in *The Creation of the World or Globalization* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2007), 93-95.

more clearly, sovereignty continuously engaged in the production of bare life. For Agamben, the production of bare life was the originary endeavour of sovereign power.

The everyday life of the bodies was thus engaged in preserving this *Zoe-Bios* distinction by constantly denying a section of the population their right to a qualified life. The precolonial world of bodies is explained in this fundamental organizing principle. Untouchability was the most concrete manifestation of power that centred on the body. Untouchability as a norm determined the organization of Travancore society. This practice was legitimized both textually and through established conventions. Any violation of the norms meant appropriate punishments and repercussions, further reinforcing the order along the *Zoe-bios* distinction. Untouchability has been theorized from several philosophical and sociological perspectives.¹⁶ Travancore was known for its extremely strict and inflexible practices of caste rules of purity and pollution that extended beyond untouchability to unapproachability. Caste rules did not permit the lower caste people to approach the caste Hindus.

Touch was among the most fundamental of all senses. Denying it meant denying a feature that was fundamental to human existence, in short, denying human existence itself. Despite their ontological equality, bodies were politically and socially organized hierarchically through caste.¹⁷ Bodies or natural life were incorporated into a politico-religious order enmeshed by the sacred sastraic-puranic idiom and legitimized. In other words, biology and the body intersected through customary practices.

The ontological equality of the body has added significance with the emergence of modern medicine and biopolitics. This understanding significantly shaped the regulation of bodies in the 19th and 20th centuries. With the emergence of colonial biopolitics, life and biological facets of life became the object of political strategies more than ever. In transforming caste bodies into medical bodies, the ontological equality of the bodies received greater significance. All

¹⁶ Gopal Guru & Sundar Sarukkai, *The Cracked Mirror: An Indian Debate on Experience and Theory* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012). Was among the best attempts to theorize untouchability from various perspectives. However, the nature and intent of that enquiry is significantly different from the one attempted here.

¹⁷ I borrow the term 'ontological equality,' from Gopal Guru, "Archaeology of Untouchability." This refers to the common traits of impurities all the bodies share unlike the socially constructed categories on the body. (The organic trait/ the biological body). This biological body is a crucial locus in biopolitics. Ibid. 204.

Guru argues that the lower caste struggles were to a large extent motivated by claims of this ontological equality, denying the bodies of the moral values it was invested with and by realizing the principle of one person, one value rooted on ontological equality. Ibid. 206.

bodies were now understood as potential carriers of diseases and thus risk. This potential threat the bodies posed demanded greater regulation, management, and government of the bodies than one regulated and determined by caste norms and conventions. Caste and religious notions of purity continued to assert their influence over new mechanisms of social control imposed by biopolitical strategies. These biopolitical transformations proposed new practices involving sanitation, public health, cleanliness, and the care of the individual body, different from the precolonial sanctions on the body. These biopolitical strategies thus played a crucial role in dislocating the body from its traditional religious and ritualistic location. The emergence of the reflexive subjects is thus enabled by the dislocation of the body from its caste and ritualistic location.

The attempts to maintain the existing hierarchy and the dominance of the privileged sections result in “the natural to be transformed into the cultural and the ecological into the sociological.”¹⁸ In this transformation, while the bodies of the lower castes were deemed polluting, the bodies of the Brahmins and the upper castes were considered pure. The hierarchical order now concerns itself with the maintenance and preservation of this pure-impure divide. This was the context in which bodies existed and embodiment shaped in the precolonial world.

The body was central to the political concerns of the precolonial world order, as asserted earlier. The body was controlled, regulated, and governed in a social order dominated by caste. These modes of regulatory mechanisms that functioned on the body differed significantly from the modern ideas of the government of the body and biopolitics. The significant point of departure is incorporating the body into the focus of specialized knowledge and disciplinary paradigms institutionalized under colonialism and thus investing it with the possibilities and potentialities offered by these paradigms, which is explored in chapters IV and V.

While it is true that the birth of biopolitics is not the precise moment of the entry of bodies into politics, the body was always politically governed. However, the role of bodies is significantly altered under biopolitical administration. Primordial identities played a cardinal role in the government of the body until the 19th century. The emergence of colonial governmentality and

¹⁸ Ibid. 206.

the resultant transformation of the body and its political existence as a result of colonial biopolitical administration does not completely get rid of this precolonial social organization based on caste and customs. However, precolonial modes of social organizations based on caste undergo a radical transformation. The body also undergoes a transformation and reincarnates in new forms during the period of high colonial influence in Travancore, giving rise to a distinct biopolitical existence.

The ideas, values, and conventions in the society were enmeshed in the *sastraic-puranic* idiom.¹⁹ The society had been identified as a “document-minded society which used written text as a source of legitimacy and validation.”²⁰ However, there is a significant difference between these ‘document-minded’ societies and the one envisaged through the processes of colonial governmentality in which documentation played a significant role, albeit from a totally different epistemological standpoint. The massive documentation programs of the colonial state altered the colonized subject positions. They created a truth regime that the colonized subjects used to their benefit and questioned the established order of things within a hierarchical and ritually organized social world. With the proliferation of colonial modernity, the process of documentation becomes all-pervasive. This is further explored in the section on the role of statistics in colonial governmentality as it begins to be operative/ exercised in Travancore.

The chapter attempts to understand the government of the bodies that existed in precolonial Travancore from two perspectives. First, it looks at the texts central to the judicial and quasi-judicial processes in the rule of the bodies. Through it, it is attempted to delineate the ideological processes that shaped body and embodiment. The second part of the chapter looks at how the body figured in actual historical events as seen in historical narratives, memoirs, travelogues, and literature of the period.

Body and Untouchability

Untouchability was the most prominent mode of social control in Travancore. A strict social and moral code that regulated the people based on the idea of preserving the purity of the upper caste bodies was in force. Any breach of these regulations was met with serious consequences,

¹⁹ Gurukkal, *Development Experience*, 76.

²⁰ Ibid. 77.

at times even amounting to death. Caste was the organizing principle of society, shaping embodiment. The experience of the body was mediated and shaped through the social categories that the bodies were inscribed with, as Douglas has shown.

The practice of untouchability remained the most visible manifestation of power over the body in the precolonial world and continued until the early 20th century. The body was central to the idea of untouchability. Untouchability ensured the distance between bodies based on notions of purity.

Douglas explicates this point clearly: “Distance between the bodies is the range of pressure and classification in a society.”²¹ Untouchability and unapproachability were not mere practices of exclusion but a system of order along whose lines the body was placed in the social and material world. Assigned by birth, it was impossible to escape the clutches of this order in those days. The rigid systems of untouchability defined the body, bodily practices, its visibility, and all the corporal and cultural dimensions of the body. Travancore, a Hindu polity, was notoriously known for the highly rigid systems of untouchability and notions of ritual purity.

Mateer gives a picture of the existing conditions in Travancore,

“The use of public highways was forbidden to outcastes and anyone daring to pass on within polluting distance of a Nayar would be cut down at once. To secure immediate recognition of such classes they were required to be uncovered above the waist; shoes, umbrellas, fine cloth and costly ornaments were interdicted to them. The holding of umbrellas was prohibited to all castes, except Brahmins, on public occasions, though the rain were pouring upon them. The proper salutation from a female to a person of rank was to uncover the bosom.”²²

Richard Collins, writing about the condition of the untouchable castes of Travancore, says,

“They are not suffered by the high castes to walk on the highways. As they go along they are obliged to cry out, that the high castes may be warned of their polluting presence. They are not allowed to come within sixty paces of a Brahmin, and if they

²¹ Douglas, *The Two Bodies*, 80.

²² Mateer, *Native Life*, 291.

should be caught too near to such a holy presence, they should stand a good chance of being well thrashed.”²³

He further describes how the slave castes were denied access to courts of law and civic amenities. This is further attested by Francis Day as well. Even the native Christians were sometimes prohibited from using the public roads. However, the Christians managed to have the directions withdrawn with the intervention of the Court of Directors and the support of sympathetic colonial officials like Macaulay.²⁴

The regulation and control of the body by sovereign power were happening within this caste-ridden social world of Travancore society. These conventions and customary practices were not the creation of the sovereign; however, sovereign power was intimately tied to these conventions. Sovereign power often played a part in preserving these caste conventions. Conceptions of sovereignty coexisted with an established order of caste hierarchy that attempted to preserve the ritualistic and social dominance of the privileged castes.

The concept of body figured in pre-modern thought and discourses in a significant way. The former chief minister of Kerala and an eminent Ezhava political activist, C. Kesavan narrates an incident at Mayyanadu where a *Channar* who went to pay respect to another religiously superior *Channar* with traditional *kazcha* of betel leaves and tobacco was ordered to be tied to the trees in the courtyard when it was noticed that his hands were shaved from the end of palms. Such were the customs that one did not have the right to shave one's own hair. In the same book, Kesavan also despairs the lack of freedom one has in dressing up and turning out the way one likes or even cutting one's hair the way one chooses.²⁵ The strict caste hierarchy prevented the lower castes from wearing sandals and umbrellas and covering their torso, all of which began to be challenged in the 19th century. The rigidity of the existing caste-based norms can also be seen in the following words: “Each man of the lower caste had to pay a tax for the hair he grew on his head, and each woman had to pay a breast tax.”²⁶

²³ Richard Collins, *Missionary Enterprise in the East with Especial Reference to the Syrian Christians of Malabar and the Results of Modern Missions* (London: Henry S King & Co, 1873), 177.

²⁴ Francis Day, *The Land of the Permauls; or Cochin, Its Past and Present* (Madras: Adelphi Press, 1863), 391.

²⁵ C Kesavan, *Jeevitha Samaram* (Kottayam: DC Books, 2005), 69.

²⁶ T K Ravindran, *Asan & Social revolution in Kerala: A Study of His Assembly Speeches* (Trivandrum: Kerala Historical Society, 1972), VIII, original ref-N R Krishnan, *Ezhavas Yesterday and Today*, p 175-180.

T K Madhavan, the Ezhava social reformer who was a renowned crusader against untouchability in Travancore and played an active role in the Vaikom Satyagraha, writes of instances where he was beaten up by a Nair servant who was tasked with clearing the road for his upper caste chief for mimicking him.²⁷ He also narrates instances where his classmate from the Nair caste could take the road straight along, whereas he had to leave the road occasionally to make way for caste Hindus who deemed the Ezhavas polluting.²⁸

Ezhavas and other lower castes were prohibited from covering their upper body with clothes.²⁹ Even the Nair women, who were Shudras in the caste hierarchy, who had considerable economic and social might, unlike their counterparts in the rest of the country, had to remove their upper clothes in the presence of the Royalty and people of higher ranks.³⁰ Mateer, on his arrival in Travancore, expressed his shock at the sight of numerous women walking around in a near-nude condition.³¹

The Shannars/ Nadars were a community of toddy tappers who mostly lived in the regions of Southern Travancore, belonging to the lower ranks of the rigid Travancore caste hierarchy.³² They were among the first to embrace Christianity and a social life inspired by Christianity through the works of the London Missionary Society (LMS). The Shannar woman, after encountering Missionary women, adopted their sartorial practices and began to wear upper clothes. This was resented by the conservative Travancore elites and the dominant Shudras, giving rise to a series of conflicts between these communities.³³ The Shannars' adoption of these new dress codes was regarded as acts of insubordination challenging the existing caste norms and hierarchies by the upper castes, and violence was unleashed on them. Instances of officials themselves attacking and stripping Shannar women who covered their bosom were reported from Travancore.³⁴ Many Chapels and Churches were destroyed and set on fire by the caste Hindus and the Nairs, and many Shannar women and men were grievously injured in

²⁷ P K Madhavan, *T K Madhavante Jeevacharithram* (DC Books: Kottayam, 1986), 15-18.

²⁸ A Aiyappan, "Irvayas and Social Change," *Madras Government Museum Bulletin* (Madras: Government Press, 1943): 45-46

²⁹ Day, *Land of the Permauls*, 322.

³⁰ Mateer, *The Land of Charity*, 61.

³¹ Ibid. 61.

³² Both Shannars and Nadars refer to the same community, the community identifies themselves as Nadars now, while Shannars refer to their earlier caste name.

³³ C M Agur, *Church History of Travancore* (Madras: S P G Press, 1901) 826-844.

³⁴ Samuel Mateer, *Land of Charity*, 98-299.

these attacks.³⁵ Much to the dismay of the missionaries and the Shannars, the government failed to take any action on these atrocities. The missionaries sided with the Shannars and often appealed on their behalf to the colonial authorities in Madras.

The breast cloth agitation was a series of struggles by Shannar women in Southern Travancore for the right to cover their breasts. Until then, the women of the lower castes, especially in Southern Travancore, were not allowed to cover their breasts before the upper castes as a sign of respect for their higher status.³⁶ It is even said that a separate tax for covering breasts existed in Travancore.³⁷ The sartorial resistance to this debasing practice was shaped by a new consciousness that emerged as a result of modern education and the resultant new consciousness of the body. The breast cloth agitation could be placed in the new subjectification processes initiated as part of colonial rules whereby bodies embraced the new truth regime, which gave new meanings to the body and bodily practices in resisting existing hierarchies. How the members of the old order severely rejected the demand for covering the breasts is read as the clash of two subjectivities, one clinging to custom-based social order and the other developed in tune with the governmental practices of colonialism. This did not happen in the realm of political power alone.

As a result of these struggles, the Travancore government abolished rules that prohibited Shannar women from covering their bosoms by a government proclamation in 1829. However, the order, while permitting the usage of upper clothes by the Shannar women, prohibited them from emulating the dressing style of upper caste women.³⁸ This was followed by the proclamation of 1865 by Maharajah Ayilyam Tirunal, which permitted women of all castes to cover their breasts.³⁹ The pressure put on the native government by the frequent clashes between the Shannars, the missionaries, and the colonial state was instrumental in bringing

³⁵ Ibid. 289-305.

³⁶ Robert L Hardgrave Jr, *The Nadars of Tamilnad: The Political Culture of a Community in Change* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2018), 59.

³⁷ Ajay Sekher, Breast-tax in Kerala History: Nangeli and Mulachiparambu, in 'Margins' a blog by the author, ajaysekher.net/2012/08/28/nangeli-mulachiparambu-breasttax-travancore/. The term mulakkaram that refers to a tax imposed on women can be translated as breast tax. However, the precise nature of this tax is contested as it has also been understood as a name to distinguish tax on women from that on men.

³⁸ Queens' Proclamation 1829, in *Selected Proclamations by the Sovereign From 1811-1936*, (Trivandrum: Government Press, 1937), 224-227.

³⁹ Proclamation by Maharajah Ayilyam Tirunal, 1865. Ibid. 319-320.

about this new legislation permitting the lower caste women to cover their breasts in Travancore.

Slavery and Bonded Labour

Along with the rigid caste system, Travancore society was also characterized by the presence of slavery. Slavery was an integral part of the caste-based social structure of Travancore.⁴⁰ The system of slavery that existed in Travancore was organically connected to the existing caste system. The sale and purchase of people, which was an essential aspect of slavery, was permitted in the state until its formal abolition by the Queen's proclamation in 1811.⁴¹ In Travancore, where slavery confluent with the existing caste system, it remained the primary source of labour in the predominantly agrarian landscape. Slavery was abolished in Travancore in 1855 with the consistent efforts of the missionaries and the pressures put on by the Madras government.⁴² The European missionaries also played a crucial role in bringing about these changes. Petitions and requests were frequently made by the missionaries, citing the miserable conditions and the need for extending basic civil rights to the lower castes to the British Resident and the Travancore rulers. Although reluctant and often evasive in their responses, the Travancore rulers often heeded the missionary demands. The missionary causes were often helped by the Madras administration, which had considerable powers over the Travancore state.

Apart from formal slavery, the strict divisions of caste gave rise to the customary practice of forced customary labour called Uriyam/ Uzhiyam. Uzhiyam was one customary practice through which the society controlled and denied the autonomy of the body. This forced labour was often extracted from the lower castes towards public works when the state did not have an elaborate public work department mechanism, the temples, and even the landlords. With Munro's efforts, the Syrian Christians were exempted from this practice.⁴³ The Christian converts from the lower castes demanded exemption from *Uzhiyam* services on Sundays as

⁴⁰ K Saradhamoni, *Emergence of a Slave Caste: Pulayas of Kerala* (New Delhi: People's Publication House, 1980)

⁴¹ Proclamation prohibiting the purchase and Sale of Persons, *Selected Proclamations by the Sovereign From 1811-1936*, (Trivandrum: Government Press, 1937), 1-2.

⁴² K P Padmanabha Menon, *A History of Kerala Vol II* (Cochin: Cochin Government Press, 1924), 282-283. Also, Royal Proclamation on Ameliorating the Condition of Slaves, in *Selected Proclamations by the Sovereign From 1811-1936*, (Trivandrum: Government Press, 1937), 296-7.

⁴³ R N Yesudas, *The History of the London Missionary Society in Travancore 1806-1908* (Trivandrum: Kerala Historical Society, 1980), 44-46.

that was a day meant for the service of the Lord. The government was reluctant to permit this, but with the persisting demands of the missionaries, they were exempted from performing *Uzhiyam* services on Sunday on account of their Sunday prayers.⁴⁴ However, this was violently resisted by the upper castes as they did not want to let go of the cheap and free labour available to them.⁴⁵ The Government proclamation in 1821 (997 ME)* made it clear that it was only the Christian converts who were exempted from *Uzhiyam* services on Sundays, whereas all the others were expected to render the services on any day demanded by the state as per customs, failing which the violators would be punished.⁴⁶

Freedom from *Uzhiyam* was one of the most important demands raised by lower caste converts and became a hugely contested issue in Travancore. *Uzhiyam* services ended to a large extent with the setting up of the public works department and the introduction of paid labour. However, the officials continued to employ the lower castes whenever required by the state. *Uzhiyam* can be understood as a condition of unfreedom in the precolonial society where one did not have ownership over one's body and labour. Thus, The abolition of *Uzhiyam* can be regarded as a moment wherein one gained control over one's body and autonomy. Sanal Mohan argues that the resistance to *Uzhiyam* that led the Christian converts to take on the landlords and the state was inspired by a new notion of work and leisure.⁴⁷

However, slavery, with its roots in the caste system, continued to exist in various debilitating and exploitative forms despite its formal abolition that prevented the sale and exchange of slaves. One of the reasons for the continuance of slavery was that the critique of slavery in Travancore failed to "problematize the organic links between caste and slavery that was legitimized by Hinduism."⁴⁸

Mohan argues that despite the modernization initiatives of the state, the continuance of extra-economic coercion in the caste world, the denial of a right to property, and the exclusion from

⁴⁴ Robin Jeffrey, *The Decline of Nair Dominance: Society and Politics in Travancore 1847-1908* (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 2022), 52.

⁴⁵ Sanal Mohan, *Modernity of Slavery: Struggles Against Caste Inequality in Colonial Kerala* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2021), 97.

⁴⁶ *Selected Proclamations by the Sovereign From 1811-1936*, (Trivandrum: Government Press, 1937), 136-137. ME- Malayalam Era was a calendar officially used by the Travancore state. It is a solar calendar that starts from 825 CE.

⁴⁷ Mohan, *Modernity of Slavery*, 318.

⁴⁸ Ibid. 41.

the evolving market economy that offered a modern experience resulted in the social position of the slaves remaining nearly unchanged even after the formal abolition of slavery.⁴⁹ The precolonial caste structures of the Hindu society that shaped slavery continued to prevail in the 19th century without much change. Francis Day has shown that the majority of the slaves continued to be tied to the land and were unaware of the changing circumstances that prohibited their sale and purchase.⁵⁰

It is important to note here that the Resident, in his efforts to abolish slavery, tried to impress upon the Travancore ruler the esteem and goodwill such an action would bring on him not only in India but in Europe and the whole world.⁵¹ The Ruler acknowledges this but raises his concern regarding the repercussions of the landed elite.

It is not right to assume that the precolonial social world had no sense of the body in the realm of politics or government. The manifestations of political power were often squarely felt on the body in that era. These texts open the window to the applications of power on the body. However, the body, as seen today as a linguistic or discursive category, was far from the imagination of the times. In other words, the body was ritually and religiously constituted as a caste body.

The juridical structures that regulated and controlled the body were deeply enmeshed in the caste and customary idiom. Cultural symbols marked and embedded the body within this deeply hierarchical semiotic world of symbols and signs. Bodies were inscribed with oppressive caste markers to identify their place in this caste hierarchy. Dress, ornaments, hair, and accessories helped identify the people's caste position. These markers aided in the preservation of the caste hierarchy unchallenged. These markers were strict covenants that could not be breached and whose violations were often met with repercussions. It is significant to observe here that the lower caste movements in Travancore from the 19th century were quick to realize this and focused on getting rid of these oppressive markers and caste symbols as fundamental to their emancipation.

⁴⁹ Mohan, *Modernity of Slavery*, 42-43.

⁵⁰ Day, *Land of the Permauls*, 171.

⁵¹ K P Padmanabha Menon, *A History of Kerala, Vol II*, 282-283.

The *kallumala* agitation of 1915, led by Ayyan Kali, is the best example of such a radical step where he and other leaders urged the lower caste people, predominantly from the Pulaya community, to abandon the wearing of *kallumala*, a marker of their inferior lower caste status.⁵² Such attempts to liberate the body from the carrier of such oppressive caste markers were inspirational to the flourishing anti-caste movements in Travancore. These resistances were met with severe backlashes from the upper castes. The upper-caste anxiety of losing control over the lower caste body resulted in serious atrocities against the lower castes in several parts of Travancore. These upper-caste anxieties were shared by the rulers as well, as seen in the prohibition of convert women emulating the upper-caste dress code; however, the state could not turn its back on the pressures put on by the missionaries and the colonial state. It had to make concessions by heeding many of the lower caste demands, the prominent among which was the liberation of the body from the enduring control of caste and its markers. Caste, as shown in the following chapters, continued to shape the embodied nature of the native body. The older normative understanding of the body continues to influence the government of the body, despite it being invested with the potentialities of biopower from the 19th century, which is explored in detail in chapters IV and V.

The body was figured as an important site of Ayyan Kali's protests against the caste system in Travancore. Ayyan Kali realized and put to the best use the potential of the body into political protests. His masculine image provided the requisite confidence in the movements he organized. He was the first among the lower sections that called for removing the degrading symbols that the bodies were compelled to carry. He thought that by removing these debasing symbols, the bodies could be free of the hierarchy imposed on them. He used his own body as an imposing symbol of protest to challenge the established caste conventions by choosing to dress the way the elites did and transgressing the norms of untouchability by riding a bullock cart into the public roads where members of his caste were prohibited from entering. Ayyan Kali, by refusing to comply with and denouncing the caste markers, liberated the lower caste

⁵² Several works have been written on Ayyan Kali and the *kallumala* agitation many of them euological in content, for a slightly different take on *Kallumala* agitation from the perspective of performativity and its significance in the semiotic world of caste, Vivek Narayan, "Caste as Performance: Ayyan Kali and the Caste Scripts of Colonial Kerala," *Theatre Survey* 62, Issue 3 (2021): 1-23.

body from its cultural and caste location. This public visibility and appropriation of the public space, which was hitherto denied to lower castes, were central to Ayyan Kali's protests.

Movements like the *Kallumala* agitation and the breast cloth agitation played a significant role in the history of the body, wherein the body became an active political agent in resisting oppression and the existing rules of caste and its semiotic world. Sartorial resistance and reforms were an integral part of the social reform and anti-caste movements of the period. These sartorial reforms and resistances were significantly shaped by a new sensibility of the body and proposed new understandings regarding the autonomy and sanctity of the body by liberating it from the existing cultural and religious settings.

The body was central to the repeated performance of caste rules or *jatimaryadas* that were crucial to the existence of caste. It was through these repeated performances and reenactments that caste reinforced itself unchallenged in society. The micromanagement of the body was fundamental to the sustenance of the caste hierarchies. The lower caste movements from the 19th century resisted the performance of caste in its everyday settings, and the body remained the most significant point for these resistances, transgressing the existing norms. As late as the early 19th century, nearly 60 percent of the Travancore population belonged to the untouchable castes.⁵³ Lower caste movements of the 19th and early 20th centuries brought the body to the centrality of resistance to caste domination. The body became a site of struggle in challenging caste practices.

All aspects of social behaviour were regulated by caste norms regarded as conventions or *jatimaryada*. The words of the text did not entirely dictate the tacit norms and rules governing the society. Nevertheless, the practices were rooted or enmeshed in perceived wisdom and acquired practices over the years in the forms of repeated acts of caste performances. The texts provided the ideological bindings to deal with such transgressions, and often, the actual practices were harsher than the ones prescribed by the text, as the evidence below indicates.

State- Society Divide in the Precolonial World

The specificities of colonial regimes and colonial governmentality need to be situated, as Kaviraj argues, “within the tangled complex of memories and structural legacies of the earlier

⁵³ P Chandramohan, *Developmental Modernity in Kerala: Narayana Guru, SNDP Yogam and Social Reform* (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2016), 8.

regime; and in the space allowed it by the pre-existing structures of social relations.”⁵⁴ The precolonial structures continued to influence, shape, and limit the nature of colonial power in Travancore in the 19th and 20th centuries. As a result of this unequal interaction, the precolonial structures themselves undergo a transformation. The state and society were not two neatly separate entities in the precolonial world. Multiple feudal forms of authority existed in the kingdom, often challenging the sovereign. These multiple forms of authority often functioned based on customary practices and conventions often termed *Acharams/ acharamaryadas* or *Mamool*. These *acharamaryadas*, with the backing of the sastraic-puranic idiom, often functioned as sacred codes binding the society; their violation often led to strict punishments. These *maryadas* or rules practically regulated all aspects of the body in relation to the social world. Equality was unheard of, and the hierarchical order based on religious and ritualistic superiority was the norm of the moral economy within which the bodies existed.

Towards the end of the 18th century, political power began to be consolidated by the Travancore sovereign. With Marthanda Varma occupying the throne of Travancore, the state power was solidified, and rival chieftains and other multiple forms of authority in the kingdom were suppressed. The right of death, which was distributed along the body politic, now became the privilege of the sovereign, or the taking of life or execution could only be done with the explicit permission of the king.⁵⁵ The ‘right to life’ became a crucial element of sovereignty with the consolidation of the Travancore kingdom. Sovereign power also converged with ritualistic and religious powers, and Travancore remained a Hindu state. However, the moral fabric of the society remained the same when it came to questions on untouchability and freedom of the bodies. Caste was the predominant factor that determined and regulated the social order.

As the thesis looks at sovereignty in detail, it is also important to briefly note the political authority that existed before the consolidated Travancore kingdom in 1729 by Marthanda Varma. However, this is only a survey of the existing scholarship on the subject, as it is not the primary focus of the thesis. ‘Pre-modern’ Travancore comprised numerous lesser-known *Naduvazhis* and landlords who wielded considerable political and social authority. They were

⁵⁴ Sudipta Kaviraj, ‘On the Construction of Colonial Power: Structure, Discourse, Hegemony,’ in *The Imaginary Institution of India: Politics and Ideas* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 41.

⁵⁵ Bhaskaranunny, *Pathonpatham Noottandile*, 729.

connected by established practices and accumulated customs and conventions loosely based on a sastraic-puranic idiom.

Here, I go by the conventional historiography of Travancore that the consolidation of the kingdom happened from the time of Marthanda Varma. This was the most popular view among historians. This view has not been contested from the centralization point of view rather, there have been various historical interventions regarding the nature of state and government before the consolidations of the kingdom, which is an inquiry in itself and does not form the subject of inquiry of this thesis. However, the nuances of the period before the consolidation are understood from the dominant historiographical interventions here. Again, these new perspectives, rather than discounting the centralization theses, have widened the idea by bringing into focus such areas unattended to before, including trade, focus on missionary and external contacts and other social and cultural aspects.

Studies on Early medieval South India have shown that the temple culture had become strong between the 8th and 12th centuries. As a result, political organizations were rooted in this temple culture. The temple culture and its religious symbols and idioms provided the legitimization factor for the monarchies that had become the established form of political authority from the said period.⁵⁶ The period also witnessed the existing society being transformed into one based on *Varnasramadharma* with the firm assertion of the Brahmin-Kshatriya nexus over political control. This new idea of kingship asserted the Kshatriya as the ruler, and as a result, the self-image of the monarch or the ruler began to be constructed.⁵⁷ The ‘divinity of kingship’ that began to be claimed by the rulers was an attempt to create this self-image of the ruler and legitimize his authority in the newly religious-political complex.⁵⁸ The Travancore sovereign’s attempts at legitimizing their power and authority through elaborate displays of rituals of subservience to the deity Sri Padmanabha should also be seen in the context of these innovations of legitimization of kingship by assigning it a religious and ritualistic sanctity.

⁵⁶ Kesavan Veluthat, “Religious Symbols in Political Legitimation: The Case of Early Medieval South India,” *Social Scientist*, Vol 21, no. 1/ 2 (1993)” 23-33. argues that religious symbols provided the ideological legitimization for the ruling classes in general and the ruler himself in particular, 3.

⁵⁷ Ibid. 27.

⁵⁸ Veluthat also cautions that this association of monarchy with divinity and divinizing the monarchy should not be thought of as the divine right theory of kingship, Ibid. 28.

Unlike the West, the Travancore sovereign was not ordained with the divine right of kingship. The Hindu king was instead constituted as divine kingship.⁵⁹

Understanding the Earlier Centuries

While the thesis focuses on the 18th and 19th centuries, by which time the sovereign had become centralized and solidified, it is still important to give a rough picture of the nature of political power in the state before this centralization. The history of Travancore in general and, more precisely, the nature of political power and sovereignty is attempted to be understood in the larger context of the history and historiography of South India. The monopoly of coercive power was among the chief characteristics of the sovereignty model. However, with multifarious authorities wielding power ascribed to them traditionally, the state did not enjoy a monopoly of coercive power.⁶⁰ Veluthat argues that the range of political relations followed a feudal pattern.

Medieval Kerala was composed of several militarized societies characterized by a dominant warrior population and a resultant martial culture.⁶¹ As a result, the society was composed of numerous chieftains wielding considerable spheres of influence in specific areas connected through various ritualistic transactions and conventions. Sovereignty, in this sense, can be understood to be dispersed across the body politic. Logan calls the Travancore rulers before Marthanda Varma mere puppets in the hands of the Brahmins and powerful Nair chieftains.⁶² These local chieftains were subdued by Marthanda Varma to found the modern state of Travancore. Logan also opines the English East India Company, which had already established its contact with the region and set up a fort at Anjengo in 1699, was also interested in having a despotic monarch in Travancore, who could assign them trade monopolies than multiple local chieftains fighting among themselves for authority.⁶³ The company's interest at this stage remained primarily commercial, which was to change soon, with the company employing more

⁵⁹ U Kalpagam, *Rule by Numbers: Governmentality in Colonial India* (Hyderabad: Orient BlackSwan, 2015), 31.

⁶⁰ Kesavan Veluthat, *Political Structure of Early Medieval South India* (Hyderabad: Orient BlackSwan, 2012), 21.

⁶¹ Susan Bayly, "Hindu Kingship and the Origin of Community: Religion, State and Society in Kerala, 1750-1850," *Modern Asian Studies* 18, no. 2, (1984): 181.

⁶² William Logan, *Malabar Manual, Vol II* (Madras: The Government Press, 1887), 352.

⁶³ Ibid. 352. It is important to note that the permission for the Anjengo fort was given by the ruler of Attingal and not the sovereign of Travancore. It was the company's first permanent post on the Malabar coast.

aggressive expansionist strategies at the princely states, resulting in the setting up of British residency in Travancore.

A Note on Swarupams

Travancore, until the consolidation of the state under Marthanda Varma, remained a conglomeration of various principalities governed by petty chieftains and *naduvazhis* connected by various conventions and *Acharya maryadas* and bound within the sastraic puranic moral order.⁶⁴ Swarupams formed an important form of political authority in the pre-modern landscape of Travancore. Before the consolidation of the kingdom, the land was also divided among various Swarupams, wielding considerable regional authority. Swarupams were large landlord families with extensive territorial control.⁶⁵ They commanded allegiance from the other less powerful families and landlords.⁶⁶ The swarupams were organized on matrilineal lines and tied by complex ranking systems.⁶⁷ By the mid-18th century, the authority of the Travancore sovereign was established over the rival principalities, and Travancore emerged as a strong Hindu kingdom. Before the consolidation of the kingdom of Travancore, the swarupams of Desinganad, Thrippapur, and Chiravay could lay claims to being the ruler of Venad. The ruler of Venad remained the most powerful one. There were succession battles to becoming the ruler of Venad by the elders of each of these swarupams. These succession battles were further complicated by the complex inheritance practices and adoptions made by many of these swarupams.⁶⁸ The nature of the political authority of the swarupams has been called by scholars to be of ‘proto-state’ in character.⁶⁹ Such an analysis supposes that the nature of the state has changed after the consolidation or that Travancore proper became a state post the Swarupam phase.

The country was divided for military, judicial, and administrative purposes into *Taras*, *Desoms*, and *Nadus*. *Taras* were the basic administrative units, and several *Taras* combined to form a *Desom*, and several *Desoms* in turn formed a *Nadu*, each *Tara* had its own elders for the administration of justice, and *Desoms* had *Desavazhis* and *Nadus* were ruled by

⁶⁴ T K Velu Pillai, *The Travancore State Manual, Vol IV* (Trivandrum: The Government Press, 1940), 75.

⁶⁵ Ganesh K N, “The Process of State Formation in Travancore,” *Studies in History* 6, no. 1 (1990): 18.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 18.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 18.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 19.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 22.

Naduvazhis. Administrative and judicial powers were combined in the *Naduvazhis*, and they wielded considerable autonomy over their territories and even challenged the authority of the king.⁷⁰ This kind of judicial and administrative mechanism gave the elites of the society a free hand in the judicial administration of the territory. The elite of Travancore society, the sword-wielding Nairs of the state, had judicial functions that gave them the power to dispose of cases by merit of their social status, especially grievances pertaining to those sections lower to them in social status. It is widely held that they could kill anyone at will, and the law of the land gave them immunity by assigning it as their social responsibility. The extant customs and laws were tools of the dominant sections of the society to oppress the lower sections and preserve the social and religious superiority they claimed.

It is also important to note that the right over the Padmanabha temple was sometimes shared by these swarupams. Often, there were contestations over the very fragile and complex relations and customary obligations shared by the swarupams on ritual and matters of power. The right over the Padmanabha temple became a crucial factor in the later consolidation of the Travancore kingdom. The Padmanabha temple and control over it thus occupied a strategic position in the political maneuvering of the kingdom by Marthanda Varma.

Although Swarupams and such pre-modern forms of authorities do not form the focus of inquiry here, attention is paid to them to show that the state as seen in the mid 19th century was also a historical result of such political processes that involved multiple forms of authorities and contestations among them. The state that came into being with the consolidation had these elements still lingering in it.

It can be summed up that multiple authorities or ruling families wielding control of small principalities contested for power among themselves. Many of these families were tied by conventions and certain transactions like (*Dathu*-adoption). Among the many ruling elites having sway over their swarupams or local principalities, the ruling family of Travancore emerges as the most important one. The kingdom was consolidated, and rebellious voices were shut down by Marthanda Varma. The ascendancy of the Travancore royal family and its head

⁷⁰ *A Judicial history of Travancore*, (Trivandrum: V Press, 1932), 2.

as the sovereign of Travancore marked the end of the Swarupam phase and the consolidation of the kingdom of Travancore.

Precolonial Body and the World of Texts

Codified textual practices were not the only binding principles on which the social system functioned in precolonial Travancore. Nevertheless, the ideological bindings provided by these normative texts and their refracted understandings were crucial in the operation of power. The two predominant texts that existed in Travancore based on which the legal systems functioned were the *Sankarasmriti* and *Vyavaharamala*. Both these texts were region-specific adaptations based on the Dharmasastric canon. Though actual practices might not always have been as prescribed by these texts, or there could be regional variations, these texts nevertheless provided the ideological backing and legitimacy to the existing practices. These texts were both normative in their aspirations and prescriptive in the everyday control and order of society, much like the rest of the Dharmasastric texts.

An analysis of these texts, their rules, spirit, and directions would provide a perspective on how the body figured in these *sastraic-puranic* idioms and how the body was ruled, controlled, and governed in pre-colonial Travancore. These texts provided both the ideological binding and a worldview that engaged in denying qualified political life to the majority.

Vyavaharamala was a legal text indigenous to Travancore inspired by the Dharmasastric texts and the local customs. The fact that such a text was not found elsewhere strengthens the claim that the text was generally adhered to in this part of the country.⁷¹ Thus, this law book of Travancore is critical for understanding the broad nature of the criminal justice system that was in place. The forms of punishments prescribed by the text provide a window to understand the place of the bodies in the socio-legal world of Travancore.

However, it is important to look at the text and the kind of punishments listed in the text to understand the purpose the text served, the existing social relations and practices of the period, and the values the text upheld. The text provides great insights into the various ways in which the body was controlled and regulated in those times. The kind of punishments the text assigned for various offenses gives a clear idea of the nature of the society, its inherent power relations,

⁷¹ Ulloor S Parameswara Aiyar, *Vyavaharamala*, preface, (Trivandrum: The Government Press, 1925), i.

the social status of each caste and community, the mode of governance, and the intentions and purpose of such forms of punishments. The spirit of the text could be effectively used to understand the mentality of society towards deviance and transgression.

Vyavaharamala was the law book of Travancore during the pre-colonial days. It was believed to be in existence from roughly the 14th -15th centuries till the early 19th century. It was believed that the core text was nearly 500 years old and its earliest interpretation nearly 200 years old.⁷² It is compiled from the sastric texts *Yagnavalkyasmriti*, *Naradasmriti*, *Manusmriti*, and *Parasara Madhaviyam*.⁷³ Ulloor says that its resemblance to *Parasara Madhaviyam* indicates that it was written after the 14th century.⁷⁴ Travancore, being a Hindu kingdom throughout its history, it was no surprise that the law of the land was based on Hindu scriptures and customs. Derrett translated the term *vyavahara* as litigation.⁷⁵ *Vyavaharamala* could be translated as ‘that which reduces uncertainty and doubts.’⁷⁶

Vyavaharamala served as the chief authority of the judicial system in Travancore. It set out the ways in which the civil and criminal administration of the state needed to be carried out. It dealt with not only the judicial administration of the territory but also the social and moral life of the people of the territory. It also laid down how the territory should be governed and regulated. The moral values the text sought to uphold and preserve were essentially Brahmanical.

The ideological foundations of untouchability practised in Travancore could be traced to the Dharmasastric traditions and their various forms, like the *Vyavaharamala*. *Vyavaharamala* had at its core the idea of preservation of the existing values of the society and the existing social relations of the state, which was organized along strict rules of caste under the religious umbrella of Brahminical texts. The excesses it had were similar to the other sastric texts like *Manusmriti*. Being a text based on Hindu religious law, *Vyavaharamala* sought to further the religious hierarchy into the legal and social sphere. Inequality based on caste lines was the main feature of the rules listed in the text, there was no idea of equality before the law. The

⁷² *Vyavaharamala*, i.

⁷³ Ibid ii.

⁷⁴ Ibid ii.

⁷⁵ Cited in Nandini Bhattacharya-Panda, *Appropriation and Invention of Tradition: The East India Company and Hindu Law in Early Colonial Bengal* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008), 20.

⁷⁶ *Vyavaharamala*. 15.

caste of the accused or the offender determines the treatment that should be meted out to the offender. The Brahmanic nature of the text meant that the text was heavily loaded against the lower castes; the Shudras, being the lowest in the varna-Jati hierarchy, faced enormous legal and penal discrimination. If a Shudra accused someone belonging to castes above them by uttering their names, a pointed weapon called *narayam* was to be heated and put in their mouth.⁷⁷ This kind of punishment implied a strict ‘do’ and ‘do not do’ for the lower sections of the societies. It conveyed that a Shudra was not supposed to be learning verses from the Vedas when it said molten lead was to be poured into the ears of a Shudra listening to a Brahmin reciting the Vedas.⁷⁸ Knowledge thus became a preserved privilege of the dominant castes. And it is this knowledge that allowed them to strengthen and further their own ideological power over other castes. If a Shudra caused injury to a Brahmin intentionally or unintentionally, he was to be tied to a buffalo and dragged to death.⁷⁹ It was a crime to inflict any bodily punishment on Brahmins. If a Shudra dared to sit before a Brahmin or a Kshatriya, his back was to be cut off.⁸⁰ If a Shudra dared to advise a Brahmin, hot oil would be poured into his ears and eyes.⁸¹ All these punishments had, at their core, the idea of preserving the dominant power relations unquestioned by any social category.

Vyavaharamala placed the king at the helm of administrative and judicial functions and gave him unquestionable powers and privileges. In pre-colonial Travancore, law was intrinsically related to religion, and the law's purpose was to maintain the social and moral order under a religious framework. *Vyavaharamala* listed the moral obligations and responsibilities that must be fulfilled by members belonging to each caste, violation of which or failure to comply with it would call for strict punishment, which means it was strengthening the already existing rigid social hierarchy by giving it a legal sanction. In the precolonial world, the legal could not be strictly separated from the moral, social, and religious world. The legal texts thus encompassed all aspects of social and moral life.

⁷⁷ Ibid. 236. *Narayam* was an iron stiletto used for writing on palm leaves.

⁷⁸ Ibid. 236.

⁷⁹ Ibid. 236.

⁷⁹ Ibid. 242.

⁸⁰ Ibid. 247.

⁸¹ Ibid. 247.

The law and legal system existing in a particular society is a product of the dominant knowledge system, which is, in turn, a result of the power relations existing in that society. The resulting law and legal system seek to further these existing power relations or sustain the social hierarchy of which it was a product. *Vyavaharamala* was thus the textual legal expression of the existing power relations that produced it, and that sought to further it.

Vyavaharamala provided the legal sanction to the moral and social life of the people deeply influenced and dominated by religion. They enforced strict rules and customs by performing the social and moral duties assigned to them at their birth. The text was so carefully written that it had in it the chief objective, preserving the ritual purity and social status of the elites of the society. It had measures that would enable its supremacy to remain unchallenged. It listed ways for members of every caste to conduct themselves, and there was no wonder that every measure in it kept the lower sections of the society at the receiving end. The text, being a product of the age in which it was written, carried the values of the society and the time it was written. The text gave legitimacy through the law to the society's existing social mores and customs. The text, with its very harsh way of punishing only the lower sections of society, was giving legal expression to the socio-cultural life of the people, which was characterized by deep social and political inequality. It legitimized the power relations not only along lines of caste but of male over female, father over son, teacher over pupil, elder brother over younger brother, and so on.⁸² Any violation of the existing power relations amounted to strict punishment. So, the character and focus of law in those days were to preserve the extant power relations unchallenged by ensuring that the social responsibilities and obligations are carried out unchallenged by assigning strict punishments for its violations.

Adultery was one of the gravest crimes that existed during those days and called for the strictest punishments. If a Shudra was found committing adultery with a Brahmin woman, he was to be burnt alive by tying grass around his body, and the woman to be shaved head and made to sit on a horse nude and a lantern placed on her head and announcing her crime and thrown out of the country, if a Vyshya or Kshatriya was found committing the same crime he was to be burnt alive with a wet cloth around his body.⁸³ A Brahmin woman found forming criminal intimacy

⁸² *Vyavaharamala*, “wife, son, the servant or pupil, or brother does a crime or mistake they should be beaten with a rope or a cane on their back,” 244.

⁸³ *Vyavaharamala*. 287.

with men of lower castes was made to suffer slavery. In contrast, the existing customs of the land permitted adultery between Nair women and Brahmin men. The main reason for this could be the Brahmin intention of preserving their bodily and ritual purity intact. This shows how power relations were strictly guarded by the legal system.

Several different examples of gruesome punishments, particularly of a corporal nature, can be cited from the *Vyavaharamala*. The text provides a clear understanding of the ways in which the body was constituted and regulated in the precolonial world. Bodies were ideologically inscribed by these texts. The systems of punishment that existed in Travancore reveal that the actual forms of punishment were not too different from those prescribed by the texts. Precolonial punishments often remained gruesome and corporal, as shown below.

Punishment and the Precolonial Body.

The body was the central object of systems of punishment in the precolonial world. The powers of the sovereign were inscribed directly on the corporal body. Juridical power was the hallmark of sovereignty. As explained in the introduction, Sovereign power was marked by the ‘Right to decide life and death.’⁸⁴ Bodies in the precolonial world functioned within this conception of sovereignty. The King was at the apex of the legal system, significantly shaped by conventions and customs. Sovereign power was wielded by exercising the right to kill or by abstaining from it. Punishment systems in the precolonial world were marked by this sovereign exercise of the ‘Right of Death.’ Death penalty thus had a prominent place in precolonial modes of punishment as it was nothing but the sovereign expression of the right to death. This was to soon undergo a radical change in the transformation from sovereignty to governmentality and the eventual rise of colonial biopolitics, as explored in chapters III and V.

Transgression became the ultimate test of juridical power in such a mode of functioning of power. Juridical power, as described in the introduction, was characterized by the hold of both the legal and the social in the people's lives. Juridical power defined what acts were permitted and what acts were not permitted or considered transgressive.⁸⁵ In such a society, the transgressive threshold was decided by the society based on its moral values and existing

⁸⁴ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Vol I* (New York: Vintage, 1990), 136.

⁸⁵ Victor Tadros, “Between Governance and Discipline: The Law and Michel Foucault,” *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies* 18 no. 1, (1998): 78.

customs. Violations of the strict caste norms or transgressions and the punishments extended to such transgressions thus were the best indicators of the administration and regulation of the bodies in the precolonial world in which juridical power held sway.

This chapter analyses both the historical life of bodies in such a context and the normative and textual sanctions provided to justify the way such transgressions were dealt with. The body was the locus and focus of all modes of precolonial punishment systems both by the state and the society. Punishment systems, which were the best indicator of power and authority, throw considerable light on the nature of sovereignty in Travancore. It is argued that punishment systems in Travancore until the late 19th century were shaped by a socio-political system that denied dignified social and political life to a large section of society.

Punishment was not the sole prerogative of the state. Power was distributed multifariously across society, privileging the hierarchical order of the society with quasi-judicial power and social acceptance to deal with the violation of norms, which was understood and regarded as attempts to subvert the established order or conventions. The body figures greatly in this scheme of things. With the centralization of the state, the ruling sovereigns of Travancore managed to subjugate various feudal elements and local chieftains who held considerable sway in certain regions of the state. By the late 18th century, almost all these regional and local powers were subdued by the imposing Travancore sovereign. However, punishment systems continued to be entangled with religious and ritualistic symbols. Colonial intervention and the founding of British residency in Travancore made all these local powerhouses further redundant and aided in establishing a modern state on firm footings by their suppression.

Various European accounts of Travancore and Southern India provide vivid details of the various practices of punishment that existed in these regions. Edgar Thurston describes the forms of precolonial punishments that existed across South India in vivid detail.⁸⁶ William Logan, who was the collector of Malabar, in his widely acclaimed account *Malabar Manual*, also records the forms of punishments that existed in the South Indian region, particularly the Malabar region. Letters by the Dutch priest Canter Visscher and commentaries of the same

⁸⁶ Edgar Thurston, *Ethnographic Notes in Southern India* (Madras: Government Press, 1906), 407-432.

elaborated as *History of Kerala* by Padmanabha Menon also reveal the nature and gravity of precolonial modes of punishment in considerable detail.

Portuguese traveler Duarte Barbosa recorded some of the earliest accounts of punishment practices in precolonial Kerala.

“If any of these low people commits a robbery concerning which a complaint has been made to the king or governor, they send to take the robber, and if they find the thing stolen in his hands, or if he confess that he did it, if he is a gentile, they take him to a place where they carry out executions, and there they set some high posts with sharp points and a small stand through which passes one of those points; and there they cut off his head with a sword, and spit him through the back and the pit of the stomach, and that point comes out about a cubit, and on it they also spit his head. And they tie ropes to his legs and arms and fasten them to four posts, so that the limbs are stretched out and the body on its back upon he stand.”⁸⁷

The rebel chieftains of Ettuveetil Pillamars, who rose in revolt against Marthanda Varma, were executed in public at Mukhamandapam near Kalkulam. The Brahmin supporters of the Pillamars who were found guilty were branded with the image of a dog on their foreheads and banished from the country as the existing laws of the land prevented the Brahmins from the death penalty.⁸⁸

Menon further describes the nature of punishment in Travancore: “Tampering with the Sircar records was punished with amputations of the palms or fingers of the right hand of the criminal. Bribery was punished with the infliction of corporal punishment on the back of the delinquent in the public bazaars and thoroughfares.”⁸⁹ Amputation, impalement, beheading and nailing to the trees, etc., were common forms of punishment that existed as late as the early 19th century in the Malayalam-speaking world.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Duarte Barbosa, *A Description of the Coast of East Africa and Malabar* (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1865), 107.

⁸⁸ P Shungoony Menon, *A History of Travancore from the Earliest Times* (Madras: Higginbotham & CO 1878), 124-125.

⁸⁹ Ibid. 301.

⁹⁰ Ibid. 301.

The traveler Fra Bartolomeo says,

“I once saw five natives suspended from a tree in a forest near Ambalapuzha on account of the supposed crime of killing a cow,” and then he goes on to state that “ at Quilon I saw a native of the caste of Shannars hanging on gallows for having stolen three coconuts in the house of a Nair, the corpus delicti was suspended from his neck, in order that it might serve as a warning to all passengers.”⁹¹

The protestant missionary Samuel Mateer, who wrote extensive accounts on Travancore, also describes several instances of existing punishments for the transgression of norms, “Shannars if they neglected to supply jaggery for public work, were put into cages armed with spikes, and made to eat a quantity of salt with a little rice, or chained to trees like monkeys to their cage posts.”⁹²

Mateer says,

“The grossest cruelties were practiced and oppression of the laboring classes and the predial slaves. Most severe punishments were inflicted on the disobedient and criminal. Simple imprisonment were not resorted to, but cruel torture to force confession, mutilation, cutting in pieces, impalement and other inhuman punishments, even for theft, unchastity, killing of cows and other minor offences. Ordeal was common.”⁹³

Pachu Moothadu, a respectable native historian of the 19th century, further attests to the severity of punishments in Travancore,

“Punishments were too severe, beyond the law. Krishna Pillai sepoy and others were tied to the feet of elephants and torn asunder. Blowing from the mouth of a cannon, impaling and hanging, gouging out the eyes, cutting off hands, nose and ears were inflicted for trifling offences”⁹⁴

The Dutch traveler Nieuhoff records,

“Their ordinary punishments are imprisonment or the loss of a limb, If the crime be capital, the malefactor be thrown to an elephant. They have no other prisons but what are in the royal palaces.”⁹⁵

⁹¹ Cited in Samuel Mateer, *Native Life in Travancore*, 290.

⁹² Ibid. 290.

⁹³ Ibid. 290.

⁹⁴ Pachu Moothadu, *Thiruvithamkur Charitram*, (Trivandrum: Binu Printers, 1986), 63.

⁹⁵ P K Kunjan Pillai, *Malabar in the Eyes of Travelers* (Trivandrum: Excelsior, 1940), 78.

In the context of the suppression of the Nair rebellion, Shungoonny Menon writes,

“several of them were apprehended and hanged, beheaded, shot and blown from the mouths of guns. One of them suffered a most cruel and shocking death, for, his legs were tied to those of two elephants, and the animals made to run and tear the unfortunate man in two.”⁹⁶

Describing Velu Thampi’s period Nagam Aiya,

“[h]is favorite modes of punishment were-imprisonment, confiscation of property, public flogging, cutting off the palm of the hand(sic), the ears, the nose, impalement or crucifying people by driving down nails on their chests to trees and such like, too abhorrent to record here. But it may be stated in palliation that the criminal law of the Hindus as laid down by their ancient law giver Manu was itself severe. The Indian Penal Code is also much severer than the code of punishment prevailing in England. What is considered necessary and proper in our own times may become responsible according to the ethical standard of a thousand years hence.”[sic]⁹⁷

Punishment systems in the neighbouring state of Cochin were not any different either. Habitual offenders were mutilated, and the tips of their fingers, noses, and ears were cut off. Pepper being a priced commodity and a state monopoly, its smugglers had their ears and noses cut off.⁹⁸

Many inhuman forms of punishment marked Dewan Velu Thampi’s reign,

“A Nampudiry was robbed of his chellam containing a gold ring, and a silver karandakam (a silver box for carrying chunam for betel chewing) at Edawa, 30 miles north of Travancore. He suspected the Mohammadans had committed the robbery, on learning this Dalawa, ordered the whole of Mohammadan population of Edawa to be brought before him and when they denied the charge, he ordered them one after the other to be nailed to the tree under which he held the court.”⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Shungoonny Menon, *A History of Travancore*, 309.

⁹⁷ V Nagam Aiya, *The Travancore State Manual, Vol I*, (Trivandrum: The Government Press, 1906), 420-21.

⁹⁸ P S Menon, *Cochin and Her Courts of Law*, 43.

⁹⁹ Aiya, *The Travancore State Manual, Vol I*, 421.

Velu Thampi's defiance and resistance were regarded as an attempt by the existing feudal order to resist the state's modern transition, and its suppression marked the end of the older order in Travancore.

Trial by ordeals to determine innocence had a prominent place in criminal justice in Travancore. The body played an important role in these trials, as it was on the body the sense of justice and claims of innocence were inscribed and determined. Trials by ordeals were acts through which guilt or innocence was determined by divination. These included ordeals by water, fire, poison, ghee, and balance. Such ordeals like an ordeal by snake bite wherein an accused was to pick a ring from a pot in which a cobra was kept to prove his innocence.¹⁰⁰ Trial by ordeals by molten ghee and trial by ordeal in a waterbody with crocodiles were common forms of punishment in Travancore.¹⁰¹ The Suchindram *Kaimukku* was one such prominent ordeal in Travancore where Brahmin men accused of adultery had to prove their innocence through the ghee ordeal at the famous Suchindram temple.¹⁰² In the ghee ordeal, the accused was to dip his hand in a pot of molten ghee, and his hand was immediately wrapped in cotton clothes, only to be opened three days later in public presence. It was believed that if the hand was not burnt, the accused was innocent, and if the hand was not burnt, the accused was pronounced innocent. Barbosa talks about a trial where the accused was made to lick a red hot iron rod to prove his innocence.¹⁰³

Trials by ordeals were abolished in Travancore in 1826 under the pressures of the colonial authorities.¹⁰⁴ These ordeals were evidence of the societal character of punishments as people effectively participated in the trial as witnesses, and their quest for justice was satisfied. The trials also played the role of satisfying a popular sense of justice. These ordeals were often conducted before a deity or at a temple, thus carrying a religious and ritualistic character. The decision to abolish these trials must be understood as the state's attempt to gain complete

¹⁰⁰ Thurston, *Ethnographic Notes*, 424.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* 424.

¹⁰² William Logan, *Malabar Manual, Vol I* (Madras: The Government Press, 1887), 124.

¹⁰³ Barbosa, *A Description*, 117-118

¹⁰⁴ Cover Files No 15887, Archives Directorate, Resident Cullen's Letter dated 25.5.1826.

In cochin the Resident denied the request of some people to conduct the ghee ordeal in 1824 by saying it was not a practice befitting any civilized countries and thus disgraceful to the Ruler of Cochin. Letter from the Resident D. Newall to the Dewan of cochin Nanjapiah, dated 27 february, 1824 in) *Archives treasury*, ed. J Rejikumar (Trivandrum: Kerala State Archives Department, 2010), 42.

control over the criminal justice administration and punishment system. Society is seen as increasingly divested of its penal functions, and the state claims for it a certain monopoly.

Impalement was another popular form of punishment in Travancore. Francis Day attests to the presence of such a form of punishment in Cochin and Malabar as well.

“An iron spike was thrust through the criminal’s skin, in the lower part of the back, where a crosscut had been previously made for its insertion: then the point of the spike was guided by the executioner’s fingers, so as to bring it out at the neck or shoulder, carefully avoiding injuring any large arteries, or vital organs, as such would afford the poor victim speedy recovery. The lowest extremity of the spike was then made fast to a wooden post, which was raised perpendicularly, and fixed into the ground, and thus the culprit was supported, partly by the iron spike under his skin, and partly by a small bench, placed underneath his feet, and raised about ten inches from the ground.”¹⁰⁵

The misery of the punished did not end soon, Day continues,

“Tortured by thirst, but denied water, scorched by the sun, but denied shade, devoured by insects but refused any means of keeping them away, his miserable existence terminated in a lingering death, that, in some instances, was protracted for three days. A shower of rain was hailed as the greatest blessing as it caused the wounds to mortify and death rapidly ensued.”¹⁰⁶

Visscher quotes Faria Y Souza in attesting to the same form of punishment, [The Nairs], show no mercy to a thief though the thing stolen be of no value. They impale the criminal and leave him to be eaten by birds.”¹⁰⁷

The instances mentioned above show the place of the body in the punishment systems that existed in the state. Punishment systems of the period reflected the rationalities of the state and, thereby, the rationalities of a sovereign application of power. These instances of punishments were narrated here to understand the logic of power that was at play in the precolonial world. The severity of punishment was determined by caste, and it showed that the focus here is rather on the character and caste identity of the offender than the offence.

¹⁰⁵ Day, *Land of the Permauls*, 171.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 171.

¹⁰⁷ K P Padmanabha Menon, *A History of Kerala Vol II*, 285.

Sovereign power was characterized by its application on the bodies, based on their ritualistic place in the hierarchical social world shaped by caste.

Premodern punishments, as described above, often served as spectacles. Corporal punishments served the purpose of a visible delight to the people. What was at display in these spectacles was the power to punish that acted on the body. Spectacular punishments played a key role in the reinforcement of existing hierarchies of power and notions of sovereignty. Apart from the apparent deterrent effect that these spectacles created, what was on display was the reinforcement of power and authority.

The ideological framework for it was provided by the law books of the land, which were, in turn, inspired and shaped by the *Dharmasastric* texts. Sovereign power, with all its complexities, was deeply enmeshed in a caste-religious-centered ideology and often applied on the body. Such an application of power remained deductive, as asserted earlier, and the body remained its primary point of application.

Legal institutions and systems of punishment were formalized in Travancore with the intervention of Colonel Munro and the promulgation of the *Sattavariolas* during the tenure of Rani Lakshmibai. Colonel Munro, who was also appointed as the Dewan, remodelled the administrative apparatus, framing new rules for revenue and civil and criminal administration.¹⁰⁸ The powers of the *devaswams* were challenged, and they were disposed of the judicial functions they once wielded. Along with the decline of the power of the *devaswams*, the power of the local elite associated with the temple, who, until then, possessed judicial powers, also declined. During Munro's times alone, around 348 major and 1171 minor temples were taken up by the government, and the administration of their vast properties was entrusted to the revenue officials. This also enhanced the economic power of the state by bringing in additional revenue. The decline of the temple complex and its associated judicial powers, in effect, ended the multi-layered judicial authority and enabled a strong-centered judicial administration and arena of justice to become the prerogative of the state.

It is also interesting to note here that Colonel Munro, even while attempting to modernize the administration of the state, employed corporal violence lavishly. As Shungoony Menon attests,

¹⁰⁸ Shungoony Menon, *A History of Travancore*, 365,

“The foremost measure adopted by the resident was to introduce corporal punishment in every instance of corruption and other immoral conduct on the part of sircar servants.”¹⁰⁹ This should be regarded as an attempt by the state to claim a monopoly over systems of punishments and also as the reconfiguration of traditional notions of privilege. The sections of society that were largely insular to the control of the state were now subdued to the authority of the state and its institutions. Munro’s employment of corporal punishments and violence is consistent with the colonial perception that the people of the East only understood the language of force and violence.

Whipping remained a preferred form of punishment. Public whipping was abolished in Travancore, and was confined to the prison complex.¹¹⁰ The sovereign acquired greater control over the feudal structure of the polity with the establishment of courts of hierarchies and formal procedures. The state was thus attaining a monopoly over the systems of punishment by the early 19th century. The body continued to remain the focus and locus of a system of punishment characteristic of sovereign power. Society’s hold over systems of punishment gave way to that of the state.

It is fair to assume that the systems of punishment that existed in precolonial Travancore were not significantly different from the rest of South India, as evidence from Malabar and Cochin shows. While the thesis acknowledges the transformation punishment systems underwent in these states with colonial intervention, the thesis does not endorse the view that punishment systems became particularly humane with colonial intervention. The social function of punishment changes, and it ceases to become a spectacle to reinforce traditional notions of power. The thesis attempts to explore the changes in underlying rationales of power that shaped punishment systems and proposes that certainty of punishment replaced the gruesome displays of spectacles. It is argued that the changes punishment systems underwent need to be placed and understood in a context where coercive power was initially dispersed across the body politic along caste and conventions. However, they were declining with the burgeoning of sovereign power and the sovereign power’s eventual subordination to biopower that sought to manage and optimize life rather than dispense life.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. 365.

¹¹⁰ Criminal Circular 9/1891.

While torture and some forms of corporal punishments continued to target the body under disciplinary power, it was soon subordinated to a rationality of governing the body that sought to invest it with productive power. The new knowledge systems and truth regimes began to liberate the body from its precolonial setting to an entity to be managed, optimized, and an object of government. Punishment systems and their transformations, more precisely in the 19th and 20th centuries, need to be thus situated in the transformation from sovereignty characterized by disciplinary power to governmentality characterized by biopower. The nuances of such a transformation are addressed in the following chapter titled “From Sovereignty to Governmentality.”

Summary

This chapter looked at the government and management of the body in the precolonial world. The chapter showed how the bodies remained caste bodies within a religious-caste-sub-caste social order legitimized as conventions and practices. Bodies were marked by conditions of unfreedom like untouchability, slavery, and forced labour.

Sovereign power was inscribed on the bodies in the form of corporal punishments for transgressions of established order and norms. The nature of sovereign power in such a context remained primarily deductive in its nature. The normative understanding that shaped the social life of bodies was traced through an exploration of the Dharmasastric-inspired law book of Travancore, the *Vyavaharamala* that provided textual legitimacy to the control and regulation of the body in the precolonial world.

The nature of premodern systems of governance and the various ways in which they manifested in the regulation and control of the body were explored in the chapter. It is argued in the chapter that punishment systems of the times, as evidenced by the various instances, were marked by the direct seizure of the body, which was soon to undergo a change with the emergence of colonial governmentality, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter III

From Sovereignty to Governmentality

This chapter analyses the political and juridical transformations in the state of Travancore from the late 18th century from the perspective of a shift in the understanding of sovereignty. A centralized Hindu state by the 18th century, colonial engagement in Travancore through the residency system and the overarching colonial control and various other colonial agents rewrote the traditional legitimacy of political sovereignty, centred on the King /Native ruler's authority and customs surrounding kingship in the state. Traditional notions of sovereignty were predicated on a notion of personhood, viz., the body of the king. Colonialism and its forms of government manifested as colonial governmentality radically altered the socio-political landscape of Travancore. The right to decide life and death, which was one of the key attributes of sovereign power in classical theories of sovereignty, underwent a radical transformation from the late 19th century.¹ New impersonal rationalities of politics and government began to replace traditional notions of power located in the King's body.

Colonial modernity/ governmentality redefined the existing relations of power that played an essential role in governance. These power relations based on traditional conceptions of authority and acquired practices through conventions based on a ritual order underwent a transformation. It is generally held by studies on colonial governmentality that "Sovereignty in the Indian context has undergone a radical transformation with the evolution of colonial governmentality."² This chapter attempts to situate such a transformation in the state of Travancore and argue that traditional notions of sovereignty were not completely displaced but modified and radically altered with the emergence of colonial governmentality and its rationalities of government.

¹ Foucault says, that this power however, was not absolute, that it was conditioned by the defense of the sovereign and his own survival, *The History of Sexuality Vol 1* (New York: Vintage, 1990), 135.

The extremely brutal ways in which the sovereign employed the 'the right to death' in the context of the revolt of the feudal nobilities while consolidating the kingdom of Travancore is an indicator of the employment of this power by sovereign in the defense of its powers.

² U. Kalpagam, *Rule by Numbers: Governmentality in Colonial India* (Hyderabad: Orient Black Swan, 2015), 27.

Nicholas Dirks also shares the same opinion while making a distinction between metropolitan and colonial governmentality.

The core argument of this chapter is that the nature of state power and sovereignty in Travancore that centred on the King or the Sovereign undergoes a transformation in its encounter with colonial governmentality towards a more impersonal 'Reasons of the State.' This was a general feature identified in the case of Indian sovereigns in their encounter with the colonial state.³ The 'reasons of the state' were rooted in the production and diffusions of colonial/ western knowledge, which was central to the project of colonialism. Kalpagam contends that the "impersonality of the modern state made it to become the central object of knowledge for 'reason of state.'"

Mitchell Dean argues that "all 'modern' forms of the government of the state need to be understood as attempting to articulate a bio-politics aimed at enhancing the lives of a population through the application of the norm, with elements of a transformed sovereignty that targets subjects within a territory and whose instrument is the law."⁴ This transformation of sovereignty in accordance with the rationalities of biopolitics is something that is evident in the case of Travancore from the 19th century. It is argued in this chapter that the traditional conception of sovereignty transformed from a juridical exercise of power that focused on territory into an exercise of power that focused on new governmental categories like population, its management, and optimization. From the 19th century, the primary focus of the state becomes 'good government,' which goes beyond the exercise of sovereign power. Such a shift has at its focus the fostering, optimizing, health, and longevity of the population. However, the existing hierarchies of caste, privilege, and social organization ensured that such categories as population were not homogenous in character and continued to be affected by their primordial identities.

Security emerges as a central concern in enabling this transformation. This transformation is enabled by the new knowledge systems and governmental practices institutionalized by the colonial rule that resulted in the reconstruction and reconstitution of the state in Travancore. In trying to understand the changing nature of sovereignty with the emergence of governmentality, Foucault identifies the shift in sovereignty from a geographical-territorial

³ Kalpagam identifies the beginning of the growth of this impersonal state in India with the decline of Mughal power in its encounter with the colonial state. Ibid. 30.

⁴ Mitchell Dean, *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society* (London: Sage, 1999), 154.

seat of control to one whose function is to change the milieu.⁵ The sovereignty-governmentality model of power articulated by Foucault has already been clarified in the introduction. This chapter locates such a transformation in the princely state of Travancore from the late 19th century.

Governmentality studies in the Indian context or the appropriation of Foucauldian scholarship in the Indian context were primarily concerned with the attempts to explain the nature of the colonial state/ regimes in India in the 18th and 19th centuries.⁶ This approach was concerned with the exploration of the nature of the state that preceded the colonial regime and its marked difference from the colonial regimes of government to ground the idea of colonial governmentality. Similarly, the nature of the state that preceded colonial intervention or indirect colonial rule and the subsequent changes the forms of authority were undergoing through this interaction are attempted to be mapped here.

A dominant perspective in the study of princely states was to look at them as collaborators of British rule in India, who were more concerned with preserving their spheres of influence and dominance.⁷ However, this perspective would be simplistic and would miss the nuances of the nature of the colonial experience of the princely states. As Manu Bhagavan alerts, “any postcolonial reassessment of the histories of modern South Asia, therefore, mandates another look at princely India, to examine anew the nature of ideological and administrative coloniality in the negotiated spaces of power created by indirect rule.”⁸ The princely states were thus simply not ‘useful props’ of the empire or ‘bulwarks of the empire.’

⁵ Foucault, *Security, Territory*, 23.

⁶ Nivedita Menon, “Foucault and Indian Scholarship.” doi: <https://criticalencounters.net/2009/02/25/foucault-and-indian-scholarship/>. accessed on 7.9.21.

⁷ However, it is acknowledged that here is a vast body of literature on the princely states that have departed from the above perspective and have looked at the specificities of their colonial experience in illuminating ways, viz.,

Waltraud Ernst and Biswamoy Pati, *India's Princely States: People, Princes and Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 2007).

Janaki Nair, *Mysore Modern: Rethinking the Region under Princely Rule* (MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

Barbara Ramusack, *The Indian Princes and Their States: The New Cambridge History of India III.6*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

⁸ Manu Bhagavan, *Sovereign Spheres: Princes, Education and Empire in Colonial India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), 1.

Nowhere is this more prominent than in the realms of sovereignty and the subsequent changes it underwent. Bhagavan is also critical of those perspectives that look at princely states as isolated domains separated from the rest of British India. My argument on a shift in sovereignty in Travancore is aligned with this frame.

This thesis employs these insights and makes the case that princely states were not isolated islets from colonial control. The thesis thus contests perspectives that claim the insularity and independence of the princely states from colonial control and shows that indirect colonial rule created conditions similar to colonial ideological control in directly administered territories. The ‘negotiated spaces of power’ were arenas marked not by the binaries of the colonizer-colonized divide but rather contested domains where modern rationalities of government emerged and flourished.

While a case could be made that in the political realm, although declining in their sovereign powers, some sort of independence was allowed to be retained by the princely states, there were other existing sociocultural spheres and also newly devised realms of interventions and concerns like medicalization, sanitation, public health, penal reforms, and modern education wherein there was a greater colonial intervention, through which the modern rationalities of government flourished. Apart from other flaws, such a perspective overestimating the insularity of the princely state also risks imagining colonialism as a political phenomenon alone.

Rahul Sagar’s recent work, *The Progressive Maharaja: Sir Madhava Rao’s Hints on the Art and Science of Government*, provides an illuminating take on sovereignty under colonial conditions. Sagar, exploring the much-heralded native administrator T Madhava Rao’s treatise on the art and science of government, explores the ideas and theories of native statecraft underlying the thinking of native administrators in the 19th and early 20th centuries.⁹ The *Hints* are lectures delivered by Rao to the young prince Sayaji Rao Gaekwad while preparing him for the throne of Baroda.

Through an in-depth analysis of Rao’s treatises on government, Sagar’s account marks a shift from the understanding that modern governance and its technologies in princely states were

⁹ Rahul Sagar, ed., *The Progressive Maharaja: Sir Madhava Rao’s Hints on the Art and Science of Government* (Gurugram: Harper Collins, 2022).

just a colonial product but also significantly shaped by native theories of statecraft and aspirations. The said work is all the more relevant to the current thesis given the fact that Madhava Rao was the Dewan of Travancore before his appointment as the Dewan of Baroda, and his stint as the Dewan of Travancore was an important period in the history of Travancore as it is believed to have played a significant role in Travancore's transformation to modern forms of government and thus to a 'model state.' The thesis, while finding "*The Hints on the Art and Science of Government*," insightful argues that there is an underestimation of colonial governmentality and its knowledge and discursive frameworks in shaping governmental rationalities in a colonial context in the 19th and 20th centuries.

While the thesis acknowledges that native statesmen and the native rulers effectively appropriated the possibilities opened up by colonial governmentality, giving it a unique tropical flavor, such a perspective should nevertheless not overestimate the independence of the realm of the political as insular from the colonial power and the real colonial threat.

While there is an important native theory of statecraft and appropriation of indigenous concepts of *Rajadharma* and *Rajaniti* shaping Rao's *Hints*, the influence of colonial governmental rationality that shaped Rao's spheres of political engagement under indirect colonialism cannot be set aside. It is important to note that Rao was a recipient of modern English education at the newly established English educational institutions in Madras.

As the chapters in the *Hints*: public health, public service, personal conduct, etc., reveal, there is certainly the internalization of the values of the new rationalities of colonial governmentality and European modernity in Rao's 'native theories' of statecraft. This further strengthens the crux of the current thesis that from the 19th century, the emergence of colonial governmentality and its new rationalities of government significantly transformed the nature of sovereignty, and it is within these changed parameters native sovereigns and their administrators propounded new theories on the 'arts and science of government.' What is seen in the case of native sovereigns is the idea of traditional notions of kingship and sovereignty like *Rajadharma* meeting the governmental responsibilities and rationalities. The native sovereigns attempted to legitimize themselves through traditional idioms and ritualistic and symbolic practices while employing new rationalities of government. The native sovereigns, I argue, could not remain irresponsive to the colonial pressure of 'good government.'

The concepts of sovereignty and governmentality explained at length in the theoretical introduction will now set out the uniqueness of such a transformation in Travancore. Mapping this transformation will open up the pathways to the modern political economy within which the body/ history of the body can be situated.

It is stressed here that colonial governmentality did not have uniform trajectories of evolution across the Indian context. Travancore posed a unique problem for colonial governmentality as a princely state, unlike the directly ruled presidencies. Hence, the career and path of colonial governmentality in this princely state differed significantly from the rest of India. The state structure models of inquiries have markedly contributed to mapping western or modern institutions in the state.¹⁰ However, the state structure models fail to explain the rationales of governments that distinguish political regimes. The period from the late 19th century was also a period of modernization that witnessed the increasing institutional penetration of the state. It was also identified as the period of ‘techno-economic and socio-cultural modernization’ for its impact on the economy and socio-cultural landscape.¹¹

Mapping this transformation is essential in the grounding of the current work as it is in this transformation, from a limiting and restricting model of power into the world of ‘art of government’ that the body/ ‘history of the body’ can be situated. The implication of life in politics can be properly analyzed only by explaining the forms of political authority in which the relations of power manifested themselves. To explain these transformations and trace the genealogies of governmentality, it is important to establish a coherent conceptual relationship between sovereignty and governmentality.¹² This chapter sets out to do this by exploring the specificities of Travancore’s colonial experience.

The governmentality model goes beyond the state structure model to map the complexities of this interaction. Conventional works that have looked at the nature and workings of the Travancore state have attributed the specificities of Travancore’s embrace of modern

¹⁰ Manali Desai, “Indirect British Rule, State Formation and Welfarism in Kerala, India,” 1860-1957, *Social Science History* 29, no. 3 (2005): 457-488.

¹¹ Rajan Gurukkal and Raghava Varier, *History of Kerala: Prehistoric to the Present* (Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan, 2018), 303.

¹² Foucault has been criticized for failing to establish this coherent conceptual connection between sovereignty and governmentality, among others, by Agamben cited in Mitchell Dean, “Governmentality Meets Theology: The King Reigns but He Does Not Govern,” *Theory, Culture, Society* 29, no. 3 (2011): 151.

institutions to the benevolence of progressive sovereigns and the ruling family of Travancore. However, this misses much of the mark as it fails to account for the changing nature of sovereignty and state power or to explain the changing rationale of government that affected much of the 20th-century social and juridical-legal transformations in the state.

This chapter thus put forward a different mapping of the trajectory of colonial governmentality by arguing that sovereignty as a concept was radically altered in its encounter with colonial governmentality in Travancore in particular and Madras presidency in general. The increasing subordinate position of the Indian princely states and their rulers under colonialism has been inadequately studied. They were pushed into a dependent and subservient position in their encounter with the colonial power, and as a result, the state as an entity was acquiring an impersonal character. This subordinate position also meant that the idea and the rituals of sovereignty, as wielded by the precolonial sovereign, underwent significant changes. The very idea of sovereignty is thus altered in its encounter with the new rationales of colonial governmentality.

It is observed that from the 18th century, “the art of government transformed into a science of government in which governing of population assumed center stage.”¹³ The population became the focus of intervention of the new technologies and knowledge systems put in place by colonial governmentality. Colonialism, thus, played a vital role in the “cultural project of legitimation and in the technological development of new forms of state power.”¹⁴

The Birth of Modern Travancore: Consolidation of the Kingdom

Travancore was a Hindu kingdom at the southernmost tip of the Indian subcontinent. Travancore, along with the princely state of Cochin and the British-administered Malabar, constituted the Malayalam-speaking linguistic and cultural community in the South and, with independence, formed the modern state of Kerala.¹⁵ Travancore bordered Cochin in the North and the Tamil districts of Tinnevely, Ramnad, and Madurai in the South. It was naturally guarded by the Indian Ocean in the South and the Arabian Sea in the West. It covered a total

¹³ Kalpagam, *Rule by Numbers*, 53.

¹⁴ Nicholas B Dirks & Bernard S Cohn, “Beyond the Fringe: Nation State, Colonialism and Technologies of Power”, *Journal of Historical Sociology* 1, no. 2 (1988): 6.

¹⁵ These three regions despite being politically fragmented, shared a common linguistic and cultural bond on the basis of shared cultural practices, myths, traditions and caste-sub caste ties.

area of 7600 sq miles. Travancore had a population of 23,11,379 in 1875, which rose to 24,01,158 in 1881 and to 29,52,157 in 1901.¹⁶ In terms of population, it was next only to Hyderabad and Mysore and was the most literate state in the country by the end of the 19th century

The Foundation of the modern princely state of Travancore with the consolidation of the kingdom by Marthanda Varma in 1729 resulted in a fundamental reorganization of the state as the existing chieftains were either crushed or forced to accept the suzerainty of the new ruler. The newly found state of the eighteenth century was regarded as the “conquest state” for its suppression of the former chiefdoms.¹⁷ Most of the nearby territories like Quilon, Kayamkulam, and other swarupams were annexed and brought under the suzerainty of Travancore. Many other dissenting principalities were added to the Travancore kingdom using force. Travancore was traditionally regarded as a Hindu state ruled by a Hindu sovereign from the early 18th century. The authority of the Travancore sovereign was reinforced through the effective usage and appropriation of the Hindu deities. After the consolidation of the kingdom by the suppression of the dissenting feudal elements, Marthanda Varma, in 1729, made the tactical move of dedicating his kingdom to the deity Padmanabha and assumed the title *Padmanabhadasa*, a practice that was adopted by all the rulers of Travancore after him.¹⁸ The ceremony by which the kingdom was dedicated to the deity Padmanabha was called *Thrippadidanam*. This was, in part, a political strategy by which the sovereigns of Travancore could evade the challenges of their rivals, as any attack on the kingdom would, in effect, be regarded as an attack on the popular deity.

The consolidation and centralization of the kingdom were followed by developmental initiatives like public roads and better irrigation measures, and as a result of better yields, markets flourished. The revenue systems were put on a better footing, and a standing army was organized.¹⁹ The monopoly the state held in the trade of specific goods, including spices and wood, enabled the state to invest both in this infrastructure development and the large standing

¹⁶ *The Imperial Gazetteer, Vol XXIV, Travancore to Zira* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908), 8.

¹⁷ Bayly, *Hindu Kingship*, 186.

¹⁸ The sovereign title adopted by the rulers of Travancore *Padmanabhadasa*, is translated as servant of the deity Padmanabha, which was yet another name for Lord Vishnu.

¹⁹ Shungoony Menon, *A History of Travancore from the Earliest Times* (Madras: Higginbotham & CO, 1878) 119-120.

army.²⁰ This infrastructural growth in the form of new cities, towns, markets, and port towns was to change the nature of state sovereignty in the 19th and 20th centuries.²¹ The growth of new cities, trading centres, towns, markets, and port towns, necessitated new modes of government by the state. Susan Bayly has shown that with the consolidation of the kingdom in the 18th century and the political reorganization of the state, various communities were brought into the political forefront in Travancore.²² This 18th-century state structure existing in Travancore was to be broken down with British intervention.

Reinforcing Sovereignty: Rituals, Signs, and Spectacle

In pre-modern political systems, power and authority were asserted and reinforced through the elaborate display of signs, ceremonies, rituals, and spectacles. Taking the form of a theatre in which power was displayed, these ostentatious displays of power often had both real and symbolic purposes. While the symbolic displays often elevated the sovereigns to mythical status, the goal was to further stamp the power relations in the society and the hold of the ruler over the ruled. Sovereignty in this kind of system stood at the apex of a variety of mutually constituting relations of power. These ceremonies and rituals were occasions to reinforce them. These rituals and ceremonies of kingship represented Brahmanical aspirations.²³ The nature of political and administrative activities in Indian princely states was often shaped by the religion and caste of the sovereign.²⁴ Travancore, being a Hindu kingdom, the Travancore ruler was also the arbiter of the Hindu social system and thus constantly encouraged various religious ceremonies to legitimize his powers. These rituals and ceremonies of kingship represented Brahmanical aspirations and

The Travancore sovereigns, who regarded themselves as the servants of Padmanabha, resorted to many rituals that would cement their religious and political authority by constantly

²⁰ Bayly, "Hindu Kingship and the Origin of Community: Religion, State and Society in Kerala, 1750-1850." *Modern Asian Studies* 18, no. 2 (1984): 188. (Look for more references)

²¹ Alleppey was one such major town that was founded in the 18th century during the time of Raja Rama Varma, which soon became an important trading centre.

²² Ibid. 188.

²³ C A Bayly, *The New Cambridge History of India, II.1: India and the Making of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 41.

²⁴ Robin Jeffrey, *People, Princes and Paramount Power: Society and Politics in the Indian Princely States* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1978), 23.

appropriating the divine. These elaborate rituals took a heavy toll on the treasury.²⁵ In the aftermath of the consolidation of the kingdom, Marthanda Varma performed the first *Murajapam* in 1751, which cost Rs 2 lakhs.²⁶ Such rituals as *Thrippadidanam* had an essential political and ritualistic function in the political landscape of Travancore.²⁷ Highly expensive rituals like *Hiranyagarbham* and *murajapam* not only strained the treasury but also helped in elevating the ritualistic status of the ruling dynasty and gave them a “semi-divine social personality.”²⁸ This attribution of the divine to the sovereign is also gradually broken down with the transformation to the impersonal rationalities of colonial governmentality.

Even while making the transitions to a modern state, Travancore continued to spend lavishly on various rituals. Such functions as the Maharajah’s birthday, weighing in-gold-ceremony (*Thulapurushadhanam*), and *murajapam* were celebrated pompously as state functions severely denting the state treasury. After the weighing-in gold ceremony, the weighed gold was then made into smaller coins and distributed among the Brahmins in the state capital.²⁹ These rituals were occasions where the state reinforced and legitimized traditional notions of privilege.

Between 1848 and 1852, during the tenure of Dewan Krishna Rao, Rs 2.13 lakhs were spent on the Maharajah’s weighing-in-gold ceremony, and Rs 2 lakhs were spent on the *murajapam* festival.³⁰ These extravagances and opulence came at the cost of public welfare, which the colonial administration at Madras deeply resented.³¹ Public funds were diverted, and the salaries of government officials ran into arrears as a result of state funding of these rituals and displays. These displays at the time of severe economic crisis and debt were regarded by the colonial state as evidence of misgovernment and called for stricter and frugal economic

²⁵ The estimated cost spent on state ceremonies in the year 1911 amounted to four percent of the state expenditure for the year. Koji Kawashima, *Missionaries and a Hindu State Travancore 1858-1936* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 22.

²⁶ Aiya, *Travancore State Manual Vol I*, 361.

²⁷ For a detailed exposition of the rituals employed by the state, S Umamaheswari, *Thrippadidanam* (Kozhikode: Mathrubhumi Books, 2015), 15-36.

²⁸ Manu S Pillai, *The Ivory Throne: Chronicles of the House of Travancore* (New Delhi: Harper Collins, 2015), 249.

²⁹ Joseph Mullens, *Missions in South India* (London: W H Dalton, 1854), 125.

³⁰ Cited in Jeffrey, *The Decline of Nair Dominance: Society and Politics in Travancore 1847-1908* (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 2022), 56-57.

³¹ *Ibid*, 56-58

interventions.³² The Travancore state was cautioned and warned on several occasions by the Madras governor to follow an ‘enlightened policy.’³³ Madhava Rao, who succeeded Krishna Rao as the Dewan of Travancore in 1857, took the colonial threats seriously and attempted to improve the economic and administrative conditions of the state considerably. Administrative, police, judicial, and economic reforms that would eventually give Travancore the title of the model state were initiated by Rao and were ably continued by his successor, Dewan Sashiah Shastry. It is evident here that Travancore’s transformation to a ‘model’ modern state was made possible to a large extent through pressures by the colonial state.

There is no denying that the sovereign power of the Travancore ruler was waning before that of the colonial power, and these displays remained ritualistic displays of benevolence rather than any assertions of political strength against the colonial power. The development of modern institutions and infrastructures went in hand in hand with these symbolic displays of splendour and opulence in legitimizing the sovereigns of Travancore. The state thus remained simultaneously traditional in the cultural aspects and modern in its practices of government. The state’s modernization attempts were significantly motivated by the elite’s response to the changing social circumstances.³⁴

Cohn and Dirks, in their short but insightful study, have looked at the transformations pre-modern forms of political authority underwent that marked a shift from these theatrical displays of state power to the more ‘officializing’ and routinization procedures of the modern state.³⁵ The modern state legitimizes itself through the creation of knowledge systems and their rationalizations.

The changing role of the sovereign is evident in the words of the famous chronicler of Travancore, T K Velu Pillai,

³² There were instances where Dewan of Cochin complained about the Cochin Raja to the British Resident at Travancore about the Raja’s squandering of public funds for personal expenses and instructing the Dewan to insert them into the public expenditure heads, Letter by Dewan Seshagiri Rao, to Colonel W Morrison, Resident of Travancore dated 8th June 1829.

³³ T K Velu Pillai, *The Travancore State Manual, Vol IV* (Trivandrum: The Government Press, 1940), 13. Letter sent by the Governor of Madras dated 21st November 1855.

³⁴ Burton Cleetus, “Western Science, Indigenous medicine and the princely states: The case of Ayurvedic reorganization in Travancore,” in *Society, Medicine and Politics in Colonial India 1870-1940*, ed. Biswamoy Pati and Mark Harrison (New York: Routledge, 2018), 99.

³⁵ Cohn and Dirks, “Beyond the Fringe,” 224-229.

“If the great Marthanda Varma extended the bounds of Travancore and Rama Varma consolidated the kingdom, it was Sri Mulam Tirunal Maharaja who erected an efficient and well-organized administrative system on the foundation laid by his illustrious predecessors. There was no department of governmental activity which the Maharaja did not touch and which he did not adorn.”³⁶

The sovereign had undertaken a series of governmental measures and reforms like land revenue, public works, agriculture, forest conservation, etc. He was also credited with the extension of railway lines, the constitution of the economic development board, agricultural loan regulations, etc., and the reorganization of the excise department and educational institutions.³⁷

The language and idioms that articulated sovereign power have now changed, and the Travancore sovereigns now employed the language and rationalities of a modern state hailing its achievements of efficient administration, welfare, and greater infrastructural penetration. The reforms undertaken by the state were often tied up with a vocabulary of ‘enlightened politics’ and features of an ideal ‘model state.’ While the achievements of the individual sovereigns continued to be highlighted and celebrated, it is important to note that it was mostly expressed in the language of modern government. The rulers of Travancore attempted to legitimize their powers through traditional idioms in the ritualistic and religious domain; however, in the political and governmental arena, traditional notions of statecraft like *Rajadharma* met governmental responsibilities and often functioned according to its rationalities.

The civilized and enlightened government was equated with a modern government that identified itself with a new vocabulary that centred around governance, sanitation, public health, economic and social welfare, and greater infrastructures. The avowed aim of the Travancore state by the 20th century, as expressed in the words of Dewan Nagam Aiya, was “to provide for every subject within a couple of hours of journey, the advantages of a Doctor, a Schoolmaster, a Judge, a Magistrate, a Registering officer and a Postmaster.”³⁸

³⁶ Velu Pillai, *Travancore State Manual Volume II*, 651.

³⁷ Ibid. 660.

³⁸ Aiya, *Travancore State Manual, Vol I*, 564.

Travancore Encountering Colonialism

Travancore's encounter with colonialism began when it entered into a subsidiary alliance with the British in 1795 in the face of the threat of Mysorean annexation.³⁹ The Raja of Travancore requested the company in 1788 to make provisions to allot a company of British officers to command the Travancore forces against the potential threat caused by Tippoo Sultan.⁴⁰ However, the company, citing the lack of such a provision to appoint company officers and soldiers to lead a native force, instead offered to station two battalions of British soldiers in the state to protect it from external aggression and hostilities, to which the Raja readily agreed.⁴¹ The treaty said,

“If any power or states, near or remote, by sea or land, shall, without aggression on the part of the Rajah of Travancore, attempt or begin hostility and war upon the country of the said Rajah or of his successors; under such circumstances, the expulsion of, and the protection of the country against, such enemies rest with the Company's government.”⁴²

The expenses for the company troops were to be met by the Travancore government.⁴³ The conditions of the treaty demanded an annual subsidy paid either in cash or in an equivalent amount of pepper to the British government, failing upon which the colonial state would be free to interfere in the internal affairs of Travancore.⁴⁴ The treaty of 1803 also forced Travancore to deliver to the company any surplus produce of pepper at the rate fixed as per the treaty.⁴⁵

³⁹ Aitchison C U, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads: Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries*, Vol X (Calcutta: Government of India, 1930), 228-232.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 226.

⁴¹ Ibid. 226.

⁴² Ibid. 229.

⁴³ Ibid. 229.

⁴⁴ *Reports From the Select Committee of House of Commons appointed to enquire into the State of Affairs of the East India Company, together with the minutes of evidence: An appendix of Documents and General Index* (Printed by the Order of Court of Directors: London, 1830), 156,

Shows that the subsidiary paid by the Raja of Travancore for three intervals 1809-1810 as 1,83,932 pounds, and for the period of 1817-18 and 1827-28 as 89,848.

⁴⁵ William Logan, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements, and Other Papers of Importance Relating to British Affairs in Malabar* (Calicut: Minerva Press, 1879), 246-247.

The cost to maintain the company troops was fixed at two lakhs of rupees per annum, and this was further increased with the treaty of 1805 to 8 lakh rupees per annum.⁴⁶ This soon proved to be a huge burden on the treasury of Travancore. The treaty prevented Travancore from entering into any engagements or treaties with any other Indian or European states without the consent of the British government.⁴⁷ The treaty also mandated that the Travancore state also provided the company with the services of the native army when the company was in need, whose expenses were then to be met by the company.⁴⁸ While protecting the privileges it enjoyed, the company promised a policy of non-intervention in the day-to-day administration of the kingdom.⁴⁹ However, this was soon to be violated by the company, and the threat of plausible annexation by the colonial state remained a persistent threat to the independence and sovereignty of Travancore from the 19th century. The British perception was that Travancore was ‘rescued’ by the British from Tippoo.⁵⁰ This notion enabled the British government to demand unconditional loyalty from the state of Travancore from a subordinate position. The company actively engaged and took sides in the factional rivalries in the Travancore court.

The treaty of 1795 was further ratified in 1797 and again in 1805, in which further provisions were added to the treaty. The treaty of 1805 went a step further and declared that the “friends and enemies of either of the contracting parties shall be considered as the friends and enemies of both.”⁵¹ However, the treaty also freed the sovereign of Travancore from the obligation of sending native troops when the company required it. Instead, the Raja of Travancore was to pay the company the equivalent of a sum required to maintain a regiment of native infantry.⁵² The treaty also had abrasive provisions that warned of company interventions in the administration of Travancore if the kingdom failed to fulfill the provisions of the treaty.⁵³ The treaty of 1805, which Resident Colonel Macaulay signed on behalf of the Governor-General Marquis Wellesley and the Raja of Travancore, further pushed the Raja of Travancore into a

⁴⁶ William Lee-Warner, *The Native States of India* (London: Macmillan and Co, 1910), 224.

⁴⁷ Aitchison C U, *A Collection of Treaties*, 230.

⁴⁸ Ibid. 234.

⁴⁹ Ibid. 231.

⁵⁰ John Strachey, *India: Its Administration and Progress* (New York: Macmillan & Co Ltd, 1903), 459.

⁵¹ Aitchison C U, *A Collection of Treaties*, 235.

⁵² Ibid. 235.

⁵³ Ibid. 235.

subservient position. As K M Panikkar observes, the treaties Britain forced on the native state were “treaties of subordinate cooperation and one-sided obligations.”⁵⁴

It was no longer a treaty concluded between political equals, as the following words/excerpts from the treaty show: “His Highness promises to pay at all times the utmost attention to such advice as the English government shall occasionally judge it necessary to offer to him.”⁵⁵ This indicated the paternalistic attitude of the company towards the Raja of Travancore and his declining status. The independence of Travancore was virtually surrendered before the British with the treaty, and it was to continue till the dissolution of British paramount power in 1947.

The treaty of 1795 and its subsequent ratifications made it obligatory on the part of Travancore to stay loyal and subservient to the British. The independence and sovereignty of Travancore were compromised and depended on the pleasures of British imperial authority. This led to a unique colonial experience in Travancore in which Travancore was not an ally of the British but its subordinate partner, although Travancore rulers often attempted to take pride in regarding themselves as allies of colonial power. The treaty also had many provisions which protected and furthered the commercial interests of the company, often proving disadvantageous to Travancore.

The welfarist expansion and the infrastructural penetration were not merely benign exercises aimed at the welfare of the people; it was to significantly impact and transform sovereign power itself. Infrastructural penetration of the colonial state transcended territorial boundaries and extended British jurisdiction over parts of Travancore. Railways were the most important among them. Railways played a crucial role in extending and protecting British interests across the subcontinent. Railways also broke territorial boundaries and, thereby, the territorial jurisdiction of the princely sovereigns. Travancore had to cede its sovereign authority over portions of territories through which colonial railroads passed.⁵⁶ This meant land, infrastructure, and jurisdiction over people and things were also ceded to British rule. Without the formal conquest of the territory, British colonial authority was established over Travancore

⁵⁴ K M Panikkar, *Indian States and the Government of India* (London: Martin Hopkinson Ltd, 1932), 4.

⁵⁵ Aitchison C U, *A Collection of Treaties*, 237.

⁵⁶ Ibid. 245, Agreement entered into by the Maharajah of Travancore regarding the cession of jurisdiction on the Travancore portion on the Tinnevely-Quilon railway, 1899, also of the Shoranur-Cochin railways. These deeds surrendering territorial rights is seen to be periodically renewed and extended by the subsequent rulers of Travancore, 58.

through various governance practices and modern institutions. Similar was the case with oceanic boundaries, which was shown earlier.

The bureaucratization of the once-traditional princely rulership was a phenomenon that happened across India's princely states in the 19th century with the consolidation of colonial power.⁵⁷ The Travancore experience was no exception to this. The British influence in the political and administrative affairs of the state resulted in the thorough reorganization of the administrative and bureaucratic structure of the state from the early 19th century. These reforms were often forced by the colonial power to make the state more intelligible and governable to the colonial state. This bureaucratization of the state served the additional purpose of curtailing the influence of the older order in the affairs of the state.

Another major event that happened in Travancore's relationship with the British authority was the granting of the title of Maharajah to the sovereign ruler of Travancore in 1866. The British government said that this was a reward or recognition for the excellent administration of the Travancore state.⁵⁸ The ruler of Travancore was addressed by the title Raja of Travancore until this point. This is significant to the extent that the honorific world of titles, symbols, and rituals was constantly and tactically used by the colonial state to integrate the native rulers into the colonial world.

The Politics of Indirect Rule: The Residency System

India's princely states formed nearly two-fifths of the country's territory and nearly one-fourth of the Indian population.⁵⁹ By the early 20th century, there were 693 indirectly ruled native states in India.⁶⁰ The Indian State Committee Report 1928 puts the population of the princely states at 68,652,974 and the total area at 5,98,138 sq miles.⁶¹ Princely India was composed of such large and rich states as Hyderabad, Mysore, Baroda, and Travancore to small and petty holdings of a few sq miles like the Kathiawar state. The Princely states, or native states as they

⁵⁷ Edward S Haynes, "Alwar: Bureaucracy versus Traditional Rulership: Raja, Jagirdars and new Administrators 1892-1910." in Robin Jeffrey (ed.) *People, Princes and Paramount Power: Society and Politics in the Indian Princely States* (New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1978) 32-65.

⁵⁸ *Sunmed to the Maharajah of Travancore* 1866, Ibid. 240.

⁵⁹ Dick Kooiman, Introduction, in Louis Ouwerkerk, *No Elephants for the Maharaja: Social and Political Change in the Princely State of Travancore 1921-1947* (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 1994), 2.

⁶⁰ Lee-Warner, *The Native States*, vii.

⁶¹ *Report of the Indian State Committee: Presented by the Secretary of State for India to Parliament 1929* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1929), 10.

were called, were made part of the imperial apparatus through various treaties. They were denied external sovereignty while being allowed to retain their internal sovereignty. However, internal sovereignty was often constrained by the frequent encroachment by colonial interventions of various kinds in many of these states. These princely states protected their powers by pledging their loyalty to the crown and were seen as allies of the British Empire. Many of these princely states attempted to retain their control over the states during the national movement and even when India was heading toward independence. As observed by Louise Ouwerkerk, “When independence drew near, the Princes changed from bulwarks into stumbling blocks.”⁶² The princely states were finally integrated into the Indian state in 1947.

Indirect rule was a strategy by which the British controlled the greater part of the subcontinent from the 19th century. Indirect rule was also called the treaty system despite the fact that it was not always marked by a treaty. While the treaties often promised non-intervention in the internal affairs of the state, the ascendance of paramount power was always marked by colonial intervention in the internal affairs of the princely states, crippling their powers. The new political rationalities employed by the diverse practices of colonialism enabled it to interfere and transform the native societies in very subtle ways, beyond the traditionally conceived domains of the political, as is shown in the current thesis.

Travancore was integrated into the colonial world through the residency system or indirect rule by 1800. The company’s reduced economic and social costs are identified as one of the main reasons behind the adoption of indirect rule over directly ruling the territories.⁶³ The indirect rule also offered the company the possibility to convince the natives that the ‘Indian ruler continued to rule on the advice of the British Resident.’⁶⁴ The system of indirect rule did not follow a uniform pattern across India. The local conditions and the nature of the interaction between the ruler and the Resident shaped the course of indirect rule in each territory. But what was common was the waning power of the native Indian rulers before the British. It has been argued that the legal nature of indirect rule distinguished it from its other variations.⁶⁵ Central

⁶² Ouwerkerk, *No Elephants for the Maharaja*, 4.

⁶³ Michael H Fisher, “The Resident in Court Rituals,” *Modern Asian Studies* 24, no. 3 (1984): 421.

⁶⁴ Ibid. 421.

⁶⁵ Sarath Pillai, “Fragmenting the Nation: Divisible Sovereignty and Travancore’s Quest for Federal Independence,” *Law and History Review* 34, no. 3 (2016): 747.

to the idea of direct rule is “the presumption of a single legal order.”⁶⁶ However, the indirect rule that rested on the legal notion of divisible sovereignty had come to be the preferred choice of colonial domination by the 19th century. As rightly argued by Nicholas Dirks, “indirect rule proved to be one of the cornerstones of colonial control.”⁶⁷

The indirect rule raises fundamental problems in the notions of the sovereignty of the native ruler.⁶⁸ Fisher argues that indirect rule, in an ideal sense, involves the recognition of the sovereignty of the local ruler to some degree, both at the level of local practices and at the level of imperial policy.⁶⁹ The idea of paramountcy and suzerainty that were written into the idea of indirect rule meant that the concept of sovereignty as existing in the native kingdoms was rewritten and modified as a result. Thus, sovereignty was often tactically reformulated depending on the political situation.

The desired colonial goal of native support was enlisted through subsidiary alliance and indirect rule as it led to the creation of a group of Indian princes that supported the continuance of British rule in India, whom the treaties had neutralized.⁷⁰ Kooiman argues that indirect rule posed a unique political problem for the princely states, as the stationing of British troops in these princely states provided security to the Indian prince’s authority, which led to the ossification of existing political control, which could otherwise be under threat by differing political assertions in the native states.⁷¹

The British Resident was appointed in Travancore in the year 1800. The appointment of the Resident was a direct threat to the authority of the sovereign of Travancore. Without annexing the territory, the authority of the colonial state was stamped, and its political aspirations furthered through the office of the Resident. This often resulted in the frequent conflicts between the King and the Resident, as best exemplified during the period of such Residents as General William Cullen and the Raja Swati Tirunal, while most of the other Residents had

⁶⁶ Mahmood Mamdani, “Indirect Rule, Civil Society and Ethnicity: The African Dilemma,” *Social Justice*, no 1/2, (1996): 145.

⁶⁷ Nicholas B Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 384.

⁶⁸ Michael H Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India: Residents and the Residency System 1764-1858* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 13.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 14.

⁷⁰ Kooiman, Introduction in *No Elephants for the Maharaja*, 3.

⁷¹ Ibid. 3.

cordial relationships not often running into conflicts with the sovereigns of Travancore. The Resident soon became a power centre challenging the sovereignty of the Travancore ruler. Such were the interventions by certain dominant Residents that it was even called “veiled dictatorship.”⁷²

The Resident constantly attempted to increase his spheres of influence over the sovereign. Maharajah Balarama Varma wrote to Governor General Lord Wellesley complaining about the highhandedness of Resident Colonel Macaulay in 1801.⁷³ The influence had increased so much that all appointments for the post of salary above 500 Rupees in the state had to be notified to the Resident before the appointment.⁷⁴ Cullen appointed Krishna Rao as the Dewan of Travancore against the wishes of the Raja himself. He also frequently interfered with the appointments of government officials.⁷⁵ Authorities back in Britain also showed considerable interest in the affairs of the princely states and looked at the office of the Resident as one through which interventions could be made in the princely states to protect the interests of the Empire. There have been instances where the House of Commons even discussed the discrimination in the appointments to government services in Travancore and expressed their disappointment at the discrimination extended to the Ezhavas and also called for the intervention of the Madras governor to address the situation.⁷⁶

There were also times in Travancore when the Resident simultaneously occupied the post of the Dewan, as was the case with John Munro and Colonel Macaulay.⁷⁷ However, this happened at the behest of the Travancore ruler to restructure and modernize the administration of Travancore. This resulted in the British Resident becoming at once the officer of the government and at the same time an alternate power in the form of the Resident, in whom two distinct notions of power were combined: the native and the colonial. This further enabled the

⁷² K M Panikkar, *Indian States*, 105.

⁷³ Letter sent by the Raja of Travancore to Governor General Lord Wellesley, dated 6th February 1801, *Archives Treasury*, 19-22.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 103.

⁷⁵ Jeffrey, *The Decline of Nair Dominance*, 39.

Instructions to the Travancore Staff Selection Board by Colonel John Munro, Reproduced in T K Joseph (ed), *Kerala Society Papers* (Trivandrum: Gazetteers Department, 1928), 64.

⁷⁶ Discussion in the House of Commons on Travancore State Appointments, motion brought by Mr Herbert Roberts 19 July 1897.

⁷⁷ K M Panikkar, *The Evolution of British Policy towards Princely States 1774-1858* (Calcutta: S K Lahiri & Co, 1930) 88.

spread and protection of the British interest by directly intervening in the native administration. The declining status of Travancore Rajas was clear, as they could not remove the Dewan without the consent of the Madras government.⁷⁸ There have been instances where the Resident even interfered in the decisions of the High Court, much to the court's dislike. The Court often attempted to resist these unjust interventions and preserved its independence from the Residents' interference. In a case of Murder in 1917, the Resident found the life imprisonment imposed by the High Court on the accused insufficient for the crime committed. Resident H L Braidwood, in his letter to the Dewan dated 13th November 1917, expressed his displeasure at the sentence being too mild and criticized the court for its failure to impose the death penalty.⁷⁹ He also accused the court of being influenced by personal predilections in passing the judgment to which the court took severe objections, as evidenced in the strongly worded letter written by the High Court Judge K Raman Menon objecting to the Resident's interference in the judicial matters.⁸⁰ Resident Cullen's frequent interference in judicial activities was seriously resisted by Chief Justice Srinivasa Rao, writes Nagam Aiya, and he officially complained to the government that the administration of justice suffered a setback with the Resident's unnecessary interference in judicial affairs.⁸¹

Similar instances revealing the weakened position of the sovereign are also seen in the neighbouring state of Cochin, wherein the Ruler Rama Varma himself had petitioned the Resident on occasions about the Dewan's discourtesy and disrespect.⁸² There have been several instances where the Travancore ruler complained to the company about the Resident encroaching on his powers and being disrespectful in his court. However, the company found no substance in these submissions and refused to find fault with the Resident. The company still recalled the Resident from the Travancore court to prevent further animosity and for the

⁷⁸ Ibid. 111.

⁷⁹ Letter by H L Braidwood, Resident of Travancore to the Dewan of Travancore, dated 13th November 1917, *Archives Treasury*, 290-293.

⁸⁰ Letter by Justice Raman Menon to the Dewan of Travancore, dated 19th December 1917, *Archives Treasury*, 290-293.

⁸¹ Aiya, *Travancore State Manual*, Vol I, 492.

⁸² Letter from Maharajah of Cochin to Major General Cullen, Resident of Travancore and Cochin dated 18th August 1858, *Archives Treasury*, p 85-86.

The extremely hapless position of the Ruler is further revealed in the "Minutes of conversation between the Raja of Cochin and Sir Rama Varma his successor, wherein the former expresses his inability and powerlessness to administer the state in the face of constant inservitude by the Dewan, the Resident, and the other officials. *Archives Treasury*, 286-289, dated 6th April 1915.

smoother functioning of the office.⁸³ However, there were instances where the overbearing attitude of the Resident was despised by the Ruler, but he had no option but to put up with it, as the only channel of expressing his grievances to the Governor General was through the Resident himself. As this would antagonize the Resident, and the Raja did not want to further risk his position by doing so.⁸⁴ Fearing manipulation by the Resident, the Raja attempted to communicate directly to Governor General Wellesley, but he was rebuked for not following the proper channel of communication, forcing the Raja to concede defeat to the Resident in the power struggle.⁸⁵

Often, the Resident's intervention in state affairs came in the form of 'advice' which could not be refused by the Raja. The treaty of 1805 said that the Maharajah was obliged to accept any advice offered by the paramount power in important matters; this invested the Resident with powers to wield his authority over the sovereign in all executive matters.⁸⁶ The position of the Resident moved from an authority to be consulted in matters of importance to the one whose 'advice' was binding on the Travancore ruler. Thus, Raja's powers were frequently violated by the 'advice' of the Resident, which was, in effect, commands rather than advice. An example of such interventions disguised as advice was when the Travancore government refused to sign the inter-portal conventions that curtailed the state's right to sea customs, the Resident advised the state to sign it forcefully.⁸⁷ The guarding of the coastal boundaries was another domain in which the British control over Travancore was asserted, further violating Travancore's sovereign rights. As native states were stripped of international rights, maritime boundaries were deemed to be a part of admiralty rights and thus under British paramount power.⁸⁸

The threat of colonial annexation often looming large over the princely states prevented the sovereigns from more apparent displays of power, irking the Resident and, thereby, the colonial state that he represented. Wellesley's imperial aspirations, furthered by Dalhousie,

⁸³ Michael H Fisher, "The Resident in Court Ritual," *Modern Asian Studies* 24, no. 3 (1990): 452.

⁸⁴ Cited in, Callie Hannah Wilkinson, "The Residents of the British East India Company at Indian royal courts, c. 1798-1818. Unpublished Ph. D. thesis submitted to the University of Cambridge, 2017, 60.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 60.

⁸⁶ K M Panikkar, *The Evolution of British Policy*, 61-62.

⁸⁷ K M Panikkar, *Indian States*, 40. The state was offered to be compensated a fixed sum by the company for the loss of its sea revenue.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* 89.

saw Travancore, like many other princely states, being accused of maladministration and often reminded that unless timely reforms were brought about, annexation would always remain a political option for the East India Company. The annexation of states like Awadh, Satara, and Nagpur was dreaded by the princely states, that a similar fate awaited them.

Colonial power met its first strong resistance in Travancore with the resistance of the Dewan Velu Thampi, who posed a strong challenge to the British. However, this was put down by the British soon, and the Dalawa were forced to commit suicide to avoid being captured. In the aftermath of Dewan Velu Thampi's insurrection and its suppression, the colonial state threatened to annex the Travancore state, citing maladministration.⁸⁹ The suppression of Velu Thampi's revolt marked the end of the traditional elite's hold over the affairs of the state. Travancore again narrowly escaped such an annexation threat in the 1850s, when the state was accused of maladministration and suffered from declining revenues.⁹⁰

This threat was reflected in the words of Lord Dalhousie when he wrote to the ruler of Travancore.

"It has therefore become my duty in the most earnest manner to call your attention to the abuses which prevail in your dominions, whether in the administration of the Revenue, the dispensation of Civil or Criminal justice, the Police or in the other department of your government, and strongly to urge upon you in concern with the Resident prompt and effective measures of improvement. I would point out to Your Highness that the present state of your country is critical, and as such should lead you to serious reflection".⁹¹

Lord Dalhousie again wrote to the Raja in 1855 in a sterner tone,

"It had become the duty of the Government to call the Rajah's attention in the most serious manner to the manifold abuses prevailing in his dominions: to urge and enlightened policy, and to warn him that it was to be feared that the contingency against which article 5 of the treaty was directed was not far distant unless averted by timely and judicious reforms"⁹²

⁸⁹ *The Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol XXIV: Travancore to Zira*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908), 7-8.

⁹⁰ Kooiman, Introduction, *No Elephants for the Maharaja*, 2.

⁹¹ Aiya, *Travancore State Manual, Vol I*, 515.

⁹² Aiya, *Travancore State Manual, Vol III*, 386.

The threat inherent in the words of Lord Dalhousie reflects the superior and authoritarian position the British government had over the Rajas of princely states.

The submissive nature of Travancore sovereign before the British authorities was famously expressed in the words of Her Highness the Maharani Gowri Lakshmi Bhai in her address to the Resident Colonel Munro,

“I cannot do better than to place myself under the guidance and support of the Honorable East India Company, whose bosom had been an asylum for the protection of an infant-like Travancore since the time Sree Padmanabha Swamy had effected an alliance with such a respectable company of the European Nation.”⁹³

The Maharani was never shy of expressing her admiration and loyalty to the Resident; however, this was always in a position of subordination, as seen in another letter in which she considers herself confiding her grievances to the Resident as she would with her parents.⁹⁴ On another occasion, the Maharani wrote to Colonel Munro,

“As I consider the gentlemen of the company in the light of parents, and myself as their daughter, I have committed my cares and my services to them, and expect the comfort and happiness of myself and my country from their justice and protection only. If their company do not protect and assist me, Who will protect and assist me?”⁹⁵

While Travancore considered herself an ally of the British, that was never a partnership of equals, as revealed in the treaty earlier. The company's paternalistic position towards Travancore is further evidenced in the following lines “this [last] state, however, was never entitled to much considerations in the scale of native powers, and for sometime was altogether governed by Colonel Munro the Resident, on whom the office of prime minister was conferred, with the title of Diwan.”⁹⁶

This reveals that the authority of Travancore sovereigns was constantly shrinking before the colonial power and was at the mercy of the company for protection. The Rani effectively used her relationship with the Resident to control the dissatisfied and corrupt sections of the court

⁹³ Shungoonny Menon, *A History of Travancore*, 378.

⁹⁴ Reproduced in the *Kerala Society Papers*, 68.

⁹⁵ Cited by Ulloor, in the *Kerala Society Papers II*, Series 7, 45.

⁹⁶ Henry T Prinsep, *A Narrative of the British India under the Administration of the Marquess of Hastings, 1813-1838* (London: John Murray, 1820), 8.

elites who were under the hope that they would have a free reign under the inexperienced woman ruler. One of the first steps the Rani took with the support of Colonel Munro was to dismiss the corrupt Dewan Ummini Thampi, thereby asserting her control over the native elites. This was followed by the revenue and administrative reforms under Munro, which witnessed the restructuring of the existing revenue and administrative structures that were notorious for corruption and inefficiency. These steps were regarded as instrumental in Travancore's transformation to a modern administration system, to which several historians credit Munro.⁹⁷ Poet historian Ulloor, in a eulogical tone, traces everything good in the Travancore country to the golden age of Colonel Munro.⁹⁸

In an initiative to modernize and streamline the administration of the state, the traditional offices of *Valia Sarvadhikariakkar* and *Kariakkars*, which were revenue offices with judicial powers, were stripped of their judicial functions and were replaced by the Tahsildars, who had purely revenue functions. The divesting of these traditional offices of their judicial function and the separation of revenue and judicial functions were crucial steps in the state asserting its monopoly over the judicial machinery and the power to punish. This separation of revenue and judicial administration was secured by Colonel Munro. The power to punish that was distributed along the body politic in the traditional stratified polity was slowly becoming a monopoly of the state, a state that was moving along the lines determined and guided through active colonial intervention.

Even when Munro's reforms at the earnest of Travancore rulers took place in the face of the threat of a colonial annexation on account of mismanagement and misrule, he was not a supporter of the aggressive annexation policies pursued under Lord Dalhousie. Munro was in favour of native rulers retaining their governments as long as they followed a policy of enlightened governance as found appropriate by the British administrators.

This diminishing sovereign power also strengthens the earlier observation that the relationship between indirectly ruled princely India and British India was porous. The nature of the sovereignty characteristic of Travancore was complicated further by the residency system. Robin Jeffrey, studying the politics of indirect rule in Travancore, identified four types of

⁹⁷ Ulloor, is the best case in point, *Kerala Society Papers II, Series 7*, 41.

⁹⁸ Ibid. 41.

relationship among the Ruler (sovereign), the Resident (representative of the colonial state), and the Dewan (Minister) viz. the dominant Resident, the balanced system, laissez-faire, and that of the imposed minister.⁹⁹ The period of more imposing Residents like Munro, Macaulay, and Cullen was that of the dominant Resident who often reduced the ruler to a mere cipher. They interfered actively in the affairs of the state. The period of such efficient ministers like Madhava Rao saw the minister imposing himself as the pivotal authority in the princely state, often sidelining both the Ruler and the Resident. Sovereignty in such a context was different from its European counterparts and its Indian parallels.

A study on sovereignty in Travancore cannot proceed without taking into account these complexities. Sovereignty was a precarious affair, titular yet lacking in real power. Here, I take Jeffrey's observations on the indirect rule at face value; while I agree with the four categories he identifies, the concerns of the inquiry are different here. The concerns here revolve more around the issue of the transformation from sovereignty to governmentality than the nature of indirect rule itself. The nature of indirect rule comes in only as a passive reference to the way sovereignty was constructed and altered vis-à-vis indirect rule in the transformation into a governmentalized state.

The British, after the Queen's proclamation of 1858, had ceased to annex Indian territories further. Instead, it resorted to granting semi-independent status or ruling the territories indirectly. However, this was not fully adhered to as the period of ambitious viceroys like Curzon saw the further expansion of the British empire through annexation.

The residency system allowed the symbolic power enjoyed by the Princely rulers to continue unaffected while taking away real power from the rulers. Often, the Resident was also integrated into this play of rituals and enjoyed an important role in it.¹⁰⁰ Edward Haynes, looking at the princely states, opines that the very translation of the term Raja, which meant King to the colonial administrative vocabulary as Prince, was intended to make the Indian rulers a subordinated category.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Robin Jeffrey, "The Politics of Indirect Rule: Types of Relationship among Rulers, Ministers and Residents in a 'Native State,'" *The Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 13, no. 3 (1975): 261-281.

¹⁰⁰ Michael H Fisher, *The Resident in Court Rituals*, 421.

¹⁰¹ Edward S Haynes, "Rajput Ceremonial Interactions as a Mirror of a Dying Indian State System, 1820-1947," *Modern Asian Studies* 24, no. 3, (1990): 459-492.

However, the missionaries who had a long history of engagement in Travancore themselves were often disappointed with the Residents for not sufficiently protecting their interests and that of the lower castes as well. On more occasions than one, the missionaries made their displeasure known to the Residents for not protecting the interests of Christianity.¹⁰² The Queen's proclamation was regarded by a section of Travancore Hindus (Shudras) as more favourable to the Hindus than the company rule.¹⁰³

It is important to note that the Travancore sovereign, by the end of the 19th century, had become one deeply dependent on the colonial state to preserve its power. Various new ceremonies and hollow rituals were invented to accommodate and satisfy the Indian princes while significantly curtailing their actual political power.¹⁰⁴ While the Indian princes attached great importance to these ceremonies, they carried little political weight against the colonial state.

While the power of the Travancore sovereign waned vis-à-vis the colonial state, the sovereign still wielded considerable power over the people of Travancore. While many scholars have explored in detail the transformations sovereignty in Travancore was undergoing, most of them have stopped at the level of the Travancore sovereigns becoming subordinated to the colonial state and, in short, the idea of the sovereignty of native kings becoming redundant in the face of colonial rule. While the structure of the princely state remained intact, colonial biopolitics had begun to percolate through the waning juridical structures of the princely state. The Indian princes who were exposed to English education under the careful watch of the Residents and the English-educated native Dewans protected the British interest better than the early British Residents themselves.¹⁰⁵ This could be deemed true in the case of Travancore, especially looking at the tenures of imposing Dewans like Madhava Rao and C P Ramaswamy Iyer, who embraced colonial governance and the possibilities of colonial modernization initiatives.

The period of indirect rule from the 1860s has also been identified as a period of welfarist expansion in Travancore.¹⁰⁶ Manali Desai argues that this period of welfarist expansion and its

¹⁰² Memorial to Lord Stanley, *Missionary Intelligencer*, 1859, 196-197.

¹⁰³ Ibid. 196-197.

¹⁰⁴ Dick Kooiman, "Invention of tradition in Travancore: A Maharaja's quest for Political Security," *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*, 15 no. 2 (2015): 151-164.

¹⁰⁵ C A Bayly, *The New Cambridge History*, 97.

¹⁰⁶ Manali Desai, Indirect British Rule, State Formation, and Welfarism in Kerala, India, 1860-1957, *Social Science History* 29, no. 3 (2005): 457-488.

unintended consequences later paved the way for ‘Kerala’s exceptionalism’ and the much-hailed Kerala model of development of the post-colonial period. Amartya Sen, writing about Kerala’s exceptionalism, highlights the historical factors of the public policy of “enlightenment” and “diffusion of education” and, in short, the pre-independent public health and educational policies of the Travancore and Cochin states.¹⁰⁷ Sen credits the enlightened benevolence of the Travancore sovereigns for laying the foundations for the successful Kerala model, further expanded and enriched by the elected communist governments.¹⁰⁸ This welfarist expansion, Desai argues, was contradictory in the sense that it was modernizing and yet within a dependent colonial context, and as a result, its consequences were largely unintended.¹⁰⁹

Lakshmi Iyer has shown how the indirectly ruled states showed greater progress and development across various indexes than the directly administered presidencies. One reason for this could be located in a contradiction in the nature of colonial rule itself. While colonial rule forced the native states to toe their line and ensure certain development or enlightened governance, they failed to ensure the same in directly administered territories, citing various reasons, among which financial costs needed for development initiatives were the most prominent one. The added advantage indirect colonial rule provided was that failing to initiate social and administrative reforms and development initiatives would be regarded as evidence of misgovernment in princely states, while the colonial state often disowned such responsibilities for themselves in the directly ruled presidencies. The indirect rule thus enabled the colonial state to wield power and demand reforms without being responsible and accountable.

However, welfarist expansion or administrative or institutional penetration of the modern state understood through the framework of state autonomy theorists cannot explore the power and its changing forms the way governmentality theorists do. While the focus of state autonomy theorists is more along with the infrastructural penetration of the modern state, the changes in the underlying rationales of power and, thus, in government cannot be explained by it. Moreover, the state-society divide that is central to state autonomy theorists will be a limited

¹⁰⁷ Amartya Sen, “The Kerala Difference,” *The New York Review of Books*, October 24, 1991.

¹⁰⁸ Desai, *Indirect British Rule*, 459. For a criticism of Sen for not giving sufficient credit to the communist movement and its radicalism, See Barbara Chasin and Richard Frankie, *The New York Review of Books*, October 24, 1991.

¹⁰⁹ Desai, *Indirect British Rule*, 464.

tool in understanding the complexities of interaction that shaped the rationalities of government, which increasingly functioned through greater cooperation and participation of non-governmental actors from the late 19th century.

The indirect rule also helped the colonial state to resist the already growing nationalist activities in the directly administered presidencies by enlisting the support of the princely states through a proclaimed policy of non-intervention from the late 19th century.¹¹⁰ This is evidenced in the support offered by the princely states in offering their support to the crown and also through the attempts to thwart the growing nationalist movements in their states by Indian princes.¹¹¹ The Indian National Congress, the flagbearer of the national movement, also remained curiously unenthusiastic in its early days about activities in the princely states.¹¹² However, the princely states could not remain insular from the growing tides of the national movement for long. Travancore soon became home to a vibrant national movement contrary to the official policy of the state. The Travancore state congress was formed in the year 1938, heralding a new path in anti-British struggles in the state.¹¹³

This thesis sets out to map this transformation by tracing the trajectories from a sovereign authority to a governmentalized state under colonial conditions. The power of the sovereigns is slowly reduced, and in its place, the colonial taxonomies of knowledge production, bureaucratic apparatuses, and other biopolitical techniques take precedence.

The princes, on the one end, tried to preserve the ritualistic and traditional authority they wielded and, at the same time, adapted to the changes brought about by the colonial state across India. This they did by avoiding any sort of confrontation that escalated their relationship with colonial authorities. In the case of Travancore, the subsequent rules from the 20th century had to put up with a strong national movement and movements for social reform. The transformation from sovereignty to governmentality is not a mere change in forms of authority, nor was it a smooth process. It was also a change in the political technologies of government. In other words, the ‘rationales of government’ were different in both these forms. The idea of

¹¹⁰ Kooiman, *No Elephants for the Maharaja*, 3.

¹¹¹ Ibid. 3.

¹¹² Ibid. 4. Although there was an Indian National Congress branch in Travancore, unlike Malabar it remained inactive and nonexistent.

¹¹³ P T Haridas, “Genesis of the Travancore State Congress,” *Proceedings of Indian History Congress*, 38, (1977): 398-404.

sovereignty undergoes a radical transformation with the unfolding of colonial governmentality.¹¹⁴ As Deana Heath shows, there was an ‘irrevocable tension’ in the technologies and political goals between the two forms in a colonial context.¹¹⁵

With the transformation from sovereignty to governmentality, the state was increasingly acquiring an impersonal character, taking the place of the body of the sovereign. However, in indirectly ruled states like Travancore, the ruling sovereign continued to exist, wielding considerable political control, unlike the annexed states.

Travancore sovereign was reduced to a subservient position to the colonial state by the mid-19th century. While the ritualistic and convention-based status of the King was allowed to function without intervention, actual administrative matters of the state were actively interfered in by the colonial state from the 19th century. The political authority of the sovereign was limited from all sides, with the Resident almost often functioning as a parallel authority, often challenging the authority of the sovereignty. The Madras authorities often interfered in the matters of state as and when it felt the spirit of the empire was not adhered to by the native state. It is also clear from the above statement that administrative changes and modernization processes were initiated in Travancore under a persisting threat of colonial annexation. The missionaries, much to the dislike of the Travancore government, also put continuous pressure on the government by appealing to the Madras government, which would, in turn, put pressure on the Travancore government to undertake social reforms and welfare measures.¹¹⁶

The authoritarian position that the British had over the state of Travancore is further evident in a letter written by the governor of Madras C E Trevelyan to the Resident of Travancore, General William Cullen,

“The degree of interference which for many years past has been exercised by the representative of the British Government in the affairs of Travancore is so large, and his interventions so general, that the credit or discredit of the administrations greatly rests with the British Government, and it has thereby become their duty to insist upon

¹¹⁴ Kalpagam, *Rule by Numbers*, 27.

¹¹⁵ Deana Heath, “The Tortured Body: The Irrevocable Tension between Sovereign and Biopower in Colonial Indian Technologies of Rule,” in *South Asian Governmentalities: Michel Foucault and the Question of Postcolonial Orderings*, ed. Stephen Legg and Deana Heath (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 224-246.

¹¹⁶ Jeffrey, *The Decline of Nair Dominance*, 241.

the observance of a system of toleration in a more decided manner than they would be at liberty to adopt if they had merely to bring their influence to bear on an independent state.”¹¹⁷

The fragility of Travancore’s power is expressed in the words of the famous missionary Charles Mead, “Travancore is what is called an independent state; but according to the treaty, authority over it can be resumed at any time by the British government, who are responsible for the due administration of justice. The British Resident interferes when he deems it proper.”¹¹⁸

The social and cultural milieu, along with forms of political authority until the establishment of the residency, is only looked to bring in an informed understanding of the larger structural and political changes undergoing with the coming or engagement with colonial modernity. Though the establishment of colonial residency is not imposed as a watershed moment in the history of Travancore, it is nevertheless understood and taken as the visible planks around which the more obvious interference of the colonial power was tied.

Having cleared the grounds around which the thesis is grounded, the actual focus of the thesis is now to locate the transformations from a sovereign Hindu state to that of a princely state under colonial intervention and in which the new rationales of government unfolded was that of colonial governmentality.

Representative Government under Sovereignty

Travancore was the first Indian princely state to establish a legislative council as per Regulation II of 1063, passed on 30 March 1888.¹¹⁹ The legislative council was a legislative body with no administrative function. This was followed by the establishment of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly in 1904 under the initiative of Dewan V P Madhava Rao.¹²⁰ This assembly was composed of 100 members from various walks of society. The objective of the assembly was to bring the various demands of the people before the government. The establishment of

¹¹⁷ Letter by Governor Charles E Trevelyan to General William Cullen, Resident of Travancore, reproduced in *The Evangelical Magazine and Missionary Chronicle*, (London: Ward & Co, 1859), 729.

¹¹⁸ Rev Charles Mead, *The Evangelical Magazine and Missionary Chronicle* (London: Ward & Co, 1842), 201.

¹¹⁹ *The Regulations and Proclamations of Travancore, Vol V 1097-1100 ME* (Trivandrum: Sridhara Power Press, 1929), 60.

¹²⁰ Jeffrey, *The Decline*, 243.

these legislative bodies was regarded as progressive measures by the sovereigns of Travancore to heed the democratic demands of the people of the state. This was an important step towards the democratization of political administration in Travancore. People who were until then denied an opportunity to participate in political decision-making could make themselves heard through these assemblies. This also marked a decline in the powers of the palace faction in the political affairs of the state.¹²¹ Traditional notions of privilege were restructured through these legislative institutions as members of various classes, communities, castes, and religions were given representation, and these members often tried to protect the interests of the respective social groups they represented. However, the colonial state's approach, as reflected in the words of the Resident, shows the disregard he had for these institutions: "It will do no harm until it begins to think it must be doing something on its own account, and then it will be told that it must not."¹²²

In 1932, these two legislative bodies were remodelled to constitute a single legislature. The new legislature thus consisted of two constituents: the Sri Mulam Assembly and the Sri Chithira State Council, named after two Kings of Travancore. The assembly consisted of 72 members, of whom 10 were officials, and the Council had 37 members, of whom 10 were official members. The Dewan was the ex-officio president of the legislature. A joint committee composed of selected members of both houses was constituted to address differences arising between the houses. The bills passed by the legislative assemblies had to get the assent of the king before they became law. While these legislatures borrowed their powers from the Travancore sovereign, it did bring about a democratic change in the state, where the democratic aspirations of the people were directly presented before the government. The state began to be made more answerable to the people of the state with the setting up of the legislative assemblies. Many progressive and radical reforms were initiated through these legislatures. These assemblies became the hotbed of discussions by the members wherein the state, as primarily a welfare institution answerable to the people, was asserted.

Among the concerns that were frequently raised by the members of the legislative councils were the demands for greater access to modern medical facilities and public health

¹²¹ Ibid. 243.

¹²² Letter from Resident James Thompson to Lord Ampthill, 1904, as cited in Jeffrey, *Peoples, Princes*. 21.

mechanisms. Members constantly requested the government to provide for hospitals, clinics, doctors, and staff in their respective regions. The legislative assemblies became avenues where demands were constantly raised for the greater welfare of the people. The Durbar Physician/ Surgeon General was an official member of the legislative assembly and, therefore, frequently had to address such concerns of the members.

The proceedings of these legislative bodies have been explored as one of the most important sources in the current thesis. The debates and discussions in these legislative bodies give a window into how the people negotiated with the state in asserting their rights and slowly enabling its transition to a responsive entity. Although still under the control of the sovereign, these legislative assemblies gave voice to the democratic aspirations of the people and played a crucial role in enabling the conditions for the democratization of sovereignty in Travancore. The proceedings throw light on the gradual spread of governmental technologies under the aegis of a princely state in its paths to modern government.

The Emergence of Governmentality

Governmentality, as a distinct form of governance/ government, emerged in Travancore towards the late 19th century under conditions of colonialism. The emergence of governmentality did not replace earlier structures of sovereignty, although it created its unique structures of government, rule, and authority. Distinct to governmentality is the increased non-state intervention in practices of government. The new structures of institutional spaces put in place by governmentality confronted sovereign authority often but coexisted with it. Governmentality involved the creation of new knowledge systems, and these new knowledge systems created their power structures that were integrated into the rationalities of government. The political context here becomes very important. The systems of indirect rule under which governmentality unfolded in Travancore have been explained above. Indirect rule or indirect colonialism gave a distinctive context to colonial governmentality. There was a certain restraint by the colonial state when it came to princely states after the Queen's proclamation of 1858. Despite that, the threat of annexation remained real over the princely states, forcing them to fall in line with the demands of the colonial state. The colonial state increasingly constricted the Travancore sovereign, making him virtually powerless to confront the colonial state from the 19th century. However, the Travancore sovereigns did wield considerable sway within their

kingdoms, where their powers were constantly reinforced through cultural and ritualistic appropriations.

Institutional changes under the influence of colonial intervention

The administrative and institutional structures of the native state underwent radical changes in the direction of British India. British Indian penal codes and criminal procedure codes were enforced in Travancore in 1056 (1880-81).¹²³ The government was in favour of such changes as reflecting modern forms of government. As a result, it necessitated the revamping of the existing structure of criminal courts and the police force. Until this point in time, the police-revenue-magisterial functions were not separated and were unified in the same official. This was done away with, and the police were divested of their magisterial and revenue functions and organized along British lines as a professional force. This was not received well among the officials of the older order, who were not ready to let the power they enjoyed till then go easily.¹²⁴ However, this did not stop the government from initiating these changes. The revamping of the police and the bureaucracy also meant bringing in new rationales and reasons for the state. This meant reordering in ways that a modern system of administration wanted. The police force that was in existence was found to be ‘with an untrained and undisciplined body,’ necessitating departmental actions like fines, suspension, degrading, and reduction in ranks.¹²⁵

From a sovereign princely state to a ‘colonized model state’

The indirect rule also resulted in the princely state being coopted and accommodated into the hierarchies of colonial control. However, the language and vocabulary the colonial state employed in realizing this was that of modern government. The proper duty of the native sovereign has now become the extension of the principles and benefits of modern government to his subjects. This was often achieved through coercion and under the perpetual threat of annexation by the colonial state.

These princely states were integrated into the imperial structure through the assigning of honorific titles such as ‘model’ states and ‘progressive’ states. The princely states often

¹²³ TAR, 1881-82, 15.

¹²⁴ Ibid. 15.

¹²⁵ Ibid. 9.

competed with each other for these empty titles, submitting their sovereign powers to the colonial state. Among the various indexes that qualified the princely states to be identified as model states were the progress these states achieved in education, medicine, modernization of administration, endorsement of modern representative institutions, and social reforms. Baroda and Mysore were regarded as the ideal or model princely states for the rest of the country to follow and emulate. Travancore was next in line and followed Mysore and Baroda as a 'progressive state' for its endorsement of modern institutions.

The 'exceptional' condition of Travancore was directly the result of the gigantic influence of the colonial state over Travancore. The ultimate threat of a political takeover in case the colonial definition of 'good governance' was not met by the princely state created a situation in which the princely state was forced to reform itself and employ new and modern techniques of managing the populations, territory, and economy as defined by the colonial state.

One important question the thesis, therefore, sets out to address is what were the primary constituents of good governance as defined by the dominant colonial state and what were the underlying rationalities behind these new forms of 'good government.'?

Britain constantly took credit for this transformation of Indian princely states to the 'model states.' As seen in the words of Lord Stafford Northcote in the House of Commons, "Travancore forty years ago was in as bad a state as Mysore, yet its administration under British influence had so greatly improved that Travancore was something like a model Native state."¹²⁶ Lord William Hay lamented the situation in Travancore in the early 19th century and credited Colonel Thomas Munro for laying the 'foundations of the prosperity of the country.'¹²⁷

The endorsement of modern institutions also meant supplanting certain rationalities of modern government over existing sovereign institutions and eventually undermining them. The princely states were often forced to adopt policies and institutional mechanisms different from the ones traditionally in practice. The idea of welfarism dominated the policies and aims of the princely state from the late 19th century. This welfarism had an underlying rationality that was

¹²⁶ Lord Stafford Northcote, 24 May 1867, House of Commons, accessed from Parliament papers. Accessed on 5.6.23. hansard.parliament.uk.

¹²⁷ Ibid, Lord William Hay, 24 May 1867. accessed on 5.6.23.

a product of complex alliances between the colonial state, the missionaries, modern medicine, various knowledge systems, non-state agents, and global and local philanthropists. The discourses, programs, and strategies these alliances generated were soon linked with the state apparatuses, shaping its rationalities of government.

The Indian princes were integrated into the empire's transactions as subordinate partners through elaborate schemes. These included granting such hollow yet magnificent titles, state ceremonies, durbars, gun salutes, military parades, etc. The Indian princes fought among themselves for status and honour in this hierarchical order of rituals established and sanctioned by the empire.¹²⁸ Barbara Ramusack has made an insightful observation on the Indian princes' quest for more ceremonial and symbolic power; as they could no longer fight one another for territorial domination, they "now tried to best each other in the world of symbols."¹²⁹

Among all other rituals, the gun salute became the most prestigious to contest for status among Indian princes.¹³⁰ Travancore was entitled to 19 gun salutes in this hierarchy, whereas the highest number of gun salutes permitted was 21.¹³¹ It was accorded to 5 prominent Indian states, and nearly 70 % of the Indian princely states had to contend with 17-gun salutes.¹³² In 1898, the British authorities temporarily increased the gun salutes to 21, as the Raja had proved himself to be "wise and sympathetic and also for subordinating his personal interests to the public interest."¹³³

The position of hierarchy was clearly asserted when it was made clear by the Resident to the Dewan that the Maharajah of Travancore could not have more guns than the governor in his presence.¹³⁴ The shifting attention to the symbolic and overt displays of power revealed nothing but the declining power of the native sovereigns. The British found these ceremonial and symbolic privileges as cheaper alternatives that could satisfy the Indian princes than actual political autonomy. These displays of power reinforced the subordinate position of native

¹²⁸ Dick Kooiman, "The Guns of Travancore or How much Powder may a Maharaja Blaze Away," *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 43, no. 3 (2006): 303.

¹²⁹ Barbara Ramusack, *The Princes of India in the twilight of Empire: dissolution of a patron client system 1914-1939*, (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1978), 15.

¹³⁰ Kooiman, *The Guns of Travancore*, 303.

¹³¹ Kooiman, Introduction, *No Elephants for the Maharaja*, 3.

¹³² Ibid. 3.

¹³³ Cited in Caroline Keen, *The Power Behind the Throne: Relation Between the British and Indian States*, Unpublished Ph. D. thesis submitted to The School of Oriental and African Studies, 2003: 250.

¹³⁴ Cited in Kooiman, *The Guns of Travancore*, 309.

sovereigns and also tied them to the suzerainty of imperial authority. The native administrators and sovereigns deeply valued such tags and viewed these titles as evidence of colonial approval and appreciation of their capacity for good governance.

The Maharajah of Travancore also frequently expressed his loyalty and subordination to the British in no uncertain terms on most occasions. This is seen in the words of the Maharajah at a public function organized on his return from a European visit, “It is my hope and desire to utilize for the benefit of the state the knowledge and experience that I have gained during my brief sojourn in the West.”¹³⁵

The 19th and 20th centuries brought about huge changes in the social and cultural world of Travancore. Indirect colonialism and the resultant colonial modernity played a crucial role in this. Maharajah Ayilyam Tirunal was conferred the title ‘Knight Grand Commander of the Most Exalted Order of the Star of India (GCSI) in 1875.¹³⁶ The Maharani was given the title The Imperial Order of the Crown of India on the occasion of King George V’s birthday.¹³⁷ Travancore rulers who followed Ayilyam Tirunal continued to use the various titles assigned by the colonial authorities.¹³⁸ Kooiman argues that Travancore’s quest to up its position in the colonial world of symbols and titles was an attempt by the princely states to secure its position in the face of an uncertain political future.¹³⁹ This involved the invention of ‘traditions’ and cultural practices and the adoption of new titles to be integrated into the imperial structure as a subordinate ally rather than an equal partner. Traditional notions of sovereignty were constantly being reconfigured, as evidenced by these examples.

Trial of European Subjects: Diminishing Sovereignty

The jurisdiction over the trial of European subjects always remained a contested domain in the history of colonial law. The native state’s attempt to bring the Europeans residing in the country under Indian laws or native law officers has been vehemently resisted by the European subjects. The controversy regarding the Ilbert Bill, an attempt to empower the Indian judicial

¹³⁵ Cited in *Indian Social Reformer*, Vol XLIV, No 14, December 2, (1933), 217.

¹³⁶ Aiya, *The Travancore State Manual Vol I*, 553-554.

A Durbar was organized to celebrate the occasion of conferring the title Maharajah to the ruler in Travancore on 9th November 1866. The Maharajah travelled to Madras to receive the insignia from the Governor of Madras.

¹³⁷ Hugo Vickers, *Royal Orders: The Honours and the Honoured* (London: Boxtree, 1994), 142.

¹³⁸ Sri Chithira Tirunal Balarama Varma was the last surviving of Indian Princes to have had the title GCIE and GCSI, he died in the year 1991. Ibid. 140.

¹³⁹ Kooiman, *Invention of tradition in Travancore*, 151-164.

officers to try European subjects, and the strong opposition by the influential European population in India is the best example.¹⁴⁰ The jurisdiction over Europeans in India was a subject that raised important questions and revealed important insights into the changing notions of sovereignty in the country. Underlying the European resistance to be tried by the law of the land were strong notions of racial superiority. The special protection that was offered to the European/ British subjects and the immunity and protection they enjoyed from native laws often violated the basic principles of sovereignty enjoyed by the native Indian princes. The Indian princes looked at the immunity enjoyed by the British subjects from native laws as an assault on their sovereignty and attempted to preserve their legal rights to jurisdiction over the Europeans.

Travancore also experienced a similar scenario when the question of jurisdiction over Europeans was contested in the Liddel trial. The Liddel case revealed the diminishing sovereign powers of the Travancore kings before the colonial authorities. Liddel was an employee of the Travancore government. He was accused of fraudulent misappropriation of government funds, and the government of Travancore put him on trial for the same. The Liddel case brought to the fore several issues related to the legality of the trial of Europeans, the sovereignty of native states, and the hollowness of colonial commitment to the rule of law.

The Travancore government tried Liddel by a special commission and sentenced him to two years imprisonment.¹⁴¹ The Madras government declared the trial illegal and ordered the release of Mr Liddel. Finding the intervention from Madras inappropriate and encroachment over the sovereign rights of Travancore state, Dewan Madhava Rao wrote to the government raising issues regarding the state's sovereignty. Rao was cautious enough not to offend the government but at the same time firm in pointing out the fallacies of the intervention as highhandedness. Rao emphasized that "the jurisdiction in question is an inherent right of sovereignty" and that the "Travancore state being ruled by its own ruler possessed that

¹⁴⁰ Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The 'Manly Englishman' and the 'Effeminate Bengali' in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 33-68.

¹⁴¹ Aiya, *Travancore State Manual*, Vol 1, 574.

right.”¹⁴² He also effectively showed that the Travancore state had never ceded that right to the British state.¹⁴³ Rao, in his assertions, was aided by the able English lawyer John D. Mayne.

Having found the claim made by Dewan Rao valid, the Madras government retracted from its position and upheld Liddel’s sentence. Thus, the rights of the native states to try a British Resident were accepted by the advocate general. However, this was short-lived as the Madras government’s retraction was disapproved by the viceroy, and Liddel was asked to be released. The Government of India declared that the jurisdiction over European subjects was not an inherent right of Travancore, as argued by Madhava Rao. The British Resident of Travancore who officially communicated the Viceroy’s message to Travancore said that, unlike the conditions in 1837 where Travancore’s jurisdiction was recognized, the difficulties in trying European British subjects in British courts had been removed through various legislative measures. As a result, the conditions that recognized Travancore’s jurisdiction were to be revised, and Travancore no longer possessed jurisdiction over European British subjects living in its territories.

Madhava Rao’s successor, Dewan Sashiah Sastry, followed Rao in leading a spirited defence of Travancore’s jurisdiction over British subjects. The colonial government did not concede to the Dewan’s defence. However, the government extended its benevolence and offered some concessions to Travancore because of the friendly relations both were engaged in and the enlightened and progressive judicial administration of the state. The colonial government permitted the Government of Travancore to appoint First-class magistrates who were to be Christians and European British subjects for the trial of European British subjects in the state.¹⁴⁴

The conflicting issues on the trial of European subjects were finally settled with the Royal Proclamation of 28th May 1875, by which a special magistrate, who was a European British subject, invested with the powers of a First-class magistrate was appointed in Travancore.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Ibid. 574.

¹⁴³ Ibid. 574.

¹⁴⁴ Letter from the Secretary to the government of India, Foreign Department to the Secretary to the Government of Fort St George, in File: Trial of European British Subjects in Travancore and Cochin, Nos 5-6, Judicial A, 1874. National Archives, accessed on 11.1.22.

¹⁴⁵ Royal Proclamation by Maharajah Ayilyam Tirunal on The Appointment of Special Magistrates for the Trial of European Subjects 1875, in *The Regulations and Proclamations of Travancore, Vol VII*, (Trivandrum: The Anantha Rama Varma Press, 1937), 337-338.

This was followed by the Royal Proclamation of 6th November 1875, by which a court of appeal of Special Appellate judge constituted by a Christian judge being a European British subject was to be set up in Travancore. The British Resident was also given powers of a session court subordinate only to the High Court of Madras.

The Liddel case and the issues involved in the trial of Europeans undermined fundamental principles of the rule of law and procedural justice. It is interesting to note here that Henry Maine, arguably the greatest of colonial legal experts, defended Travancore's right to put to trial the Europeans and believed that such a right could not be taken away even by parliamentary legislation.¹⁴⁶ However, while supporting Travancore's jurisdiction over Europeans in an abstract sense, Maine still believed that on practical considerations, it was prudent that the accused British subjects were handed over to the Madras government to be tried by the laws of that government.¹⁴⁷ The frivolous reasons he cites upheld the notions of European privilege that "Englishmen are to be tried by a procedure to which their countrymen are accustomed with and satisfied with."¹⁴⁸ Maine also thought that Travancore prisons were ill-equipped to ensure the comfort befitting European subjects. What is evidenced here is nothing but an attempt to shield and protect Europeans from what they thought were backward oriental laws and rulers.

In any case, on the question of jurisdiction over European subjects, the legal questions were subordinated to the political question, as Maine rightly pointed out. What is seen here is the overarching nature of the colonial state to carve for itself and its subjects realms of legal and political protection and immunity by violating the sovereignty of native rulers. These interventions posed a challenge to claims of the absolute sovereignty of the native rulers, as it constantly diminished before an overarching colonial power. What is evident in Maine's observation is a certain contradiction of colonial power itself, a theoretical acknowledgment of the sovereign rights of native princes while constantly violating them on 'practical considerations.'

¹⁴⁶ Henry Maine, *A Brief Memoir of His Life: With some of His Speeches and Minutes* ed. Whitley Stokes (New York: Henry Colt and Co, 1892), 400-401.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. 400.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. 400.

Notions of sovereignty were constantly appropriated by colonizers in ways that suited them the best. Colonies witnessed the contestations between rivalling claims of sovereignty. The native states, as was shown above, advocated a notion of sovereignty that was absolute and territorial, whereas the colonial state advocated a notion of sovereignty that was fragmented and divisible.¹⁴⁹ In this imagination, full sovereignty was reserved for the imperial power, as Lauren Benton argues in her magnificent study.¹⁵⁰ The notion of divisible sovereignty was often employed by the colonial state to breach and violate the traditional notions of sovereignty and justified their interventions in the native states by claiming that sovereignty was not absolute. Thus, the sovereign power that the native state wielded diminished considerably and was constantly violated by the colonial state.

Debating the Death Penalty: Sovereignty and the Right to Death

Sovereign power, as asserted earlier, was characterized by the right to decide life and death. The death penalty and the right over the death penalty thus have a significant place in the functioning of sovereign power. The death penalty or capital punishment has always been a contested issue in every society, deeply entwined with a society's core values. The death penalty, along with war, was regarded as the other form of the right of the sword, which was the symbol of 'power over life and death.'¹⁵¹ In this context, it is important to look at the Travancore state's attempts to abolish the death penalty in the early 20th century. Travancore was the first Indian princely state to abolish the death penalty in India in 1944, followed by her neighbour Cochin.

The chapter 'Precolonial Body' has shown in detail the prevalence of corporal punishments and the indiscriminate usage of the 'right to death' initially by the various dominant sections of the society and later by the sovereign since the consolidation of the kingdom. The monopoly

¹⁴⁹ Priyasha Saxena, "Jousting over Jurisdiction: Sovereignty and International Law in Late Nineteenth-Century," *South Asia, Law and History Review* 38, no. 2 (2019): 409-457.

¹⁵⁰ Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires 1400-1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 246.

Henry Maine was the chief proponent of the idea of divisible sovereignty. Maine's 1864 minutes underlying this was to considerably shape colonial interaction with native states. questions of sovereignty in this sense became one without general rules and one that could be decided on practical consideration on case-by-case merit, always favouring the interest of the empire. Ibid. 250.

¹⁵¹ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Vol I*, 136-137.

Death penalty, Foucault argues, "constituted the reply of the sovereign to those who attacked his will, his law, or his person." 137-138.

over the death penalty was taken up by the state since its centralization. However, this was to undergo a change from the early 20th century, wherein the sovereign princely state decided to part with one of the key constituents of sovereign power, viz., ‘the right to death’ in favor of ‘power over life.’

The parting of the death penalty by sovereign power needs to be understood as monarchical and ritualistic sovereignty that characterized sovereignty until then, giving way to the sovereignty of law. Here, I agree with Deana Heath that in the Indian context, sovereign power was sometimes more restrained than biopolitical power.¹⁵² However, the thesis makes a significant departure from her to make the case that sovereign power restrained itself (was modified into) in the wake of a transformation it underwent with colonial governmentality and its underlying rationalities rather than unaffected by it. The place that law plays in shaping and sustaining disciplinary and governmental power has already been underlined in the introduction. Legislation here works as the key ally of governmental rationality, as seen in the legislative route to the abolition of the death penalty in the state.

The abolition of the death penalty needs to be understood as a moment of the ancient right of ‘right to death’ being replaced by a ‘power over life’ characterized by both disciplining and fostering life/ optimizing life. It is interesting to note that the legislative assemblies of two princely states in southern India, functioning within the authority and control of a native sovereign, debated the abolition of the death penalty as early as the 1920s and finally succeeded in its repeal in the 1940s. It should also be of significance that this abolition was brought about at a time when there was no global consensus regarding abolitionism. In abolishing the death penalty, the Travancore state even outpaced penal reforms in British India. However, this should not be surprising given the formidable influence European thinkers and jurists like John Stuart Mill and James Fitzjames Stephen, who were both pro-death penalty and anti-abolitionists, had in shaping colonial law and legal systems in the country.¹⁵³ In contrast,

¹⁵² Deana Heath, *The Tortured Body*, 226.

¹⁵³ Stephen opposed the civilizing trend proposed by the abolitionists and defended the vindictive popular sentiments that justified death penalty and regarded it as an effective safeguard against crime. For Stephen, death penalty was a socially useful practice that served life. Randall McGowen, “History, Culture and the Death Penalty: The British Debates, 1840-1870,” *Historical Reflections* 29, no. 2 (2003): 245.

Britain did seriously debate the abolition of the death penalty from the 1840s -1870s; however, it failed to abolish it until the 1960s.

The abolition of the death penalty in these two princely states had long been hailed as an act of benevolence by the Maharajas of these two states and the progressive ideals pursued by them.¹⁵⁴ However, I depart from this simplistic interpretation and argue that the death penalty debates in Travancore are to be situated in the larger context of the transformation of political power from sovereignty to governmentality, which brought about considerable changes in penal policies and the corresponding rationalities the regimes possessed and propagated. A structural shift in the ‘practices of government’ enabled these discussions on the death penalty and its ultimate abolition.

Following Heath, I make the case that the introduction of biopolitical technologies facilitated the end of death penalties in both colonial India and other colonial contexts.¹⁵⁵ The period around which the demand for abolition was made needs to be understood in the context of punishment systems transforming themselves under the influence of colonial governmentality and its rationalities. This facilitated the movement away from more abrasive and spectacular displays of sovereign power in the form of executions and corporal punishments to a power that sought to optimize life. As asserted in Chapter I, it is within the intersection of sovereign, disciplinary, and biopower and the eventual ascendancy of the latter two forms that the abolition of the death penalty in Travancore needs to be situated.

The debates on the death penalty in Travancore kept pace with the latest arguments in support of abolition and even outpaced the colonial state and its penal reforms in the rest of the country. Even when Travancore outpaced the penal reforms of British India and even Europe, when it came to the abolition of the death penalty, this initiative needs to be understood in the context of the emergence of disciplinary and regulatory mechanisms that emerged in the interconnections and linkages between Europe and its colonies. Here, my attempt is not to

¹⁵⁴ *Travancore Information and Listener*, January 1945. The newspaper article hails the Travancore state in following the civilized western states in banning the death penalty. This was regarded as a progressive move next only to the temple entry proclamation of 1936.

¹⁵⁵ Deana Heath, *The Tortured Body*, 224.

She goes on to argue that death penalty and other forms of punishment as mutilation and torture was replaced by labor, which indicates a shift in punishment in tune with a capitalist logic of utility of the body in adding to the work force.

bring Europe to the centrality of penal reforms across the colonies, but it is incorrect to assume that these changes came about in the colonies unaffected by the transactions and interconnectedness between Europe and the colonies. Europe, I argue, is not only permanently present in these discussions as a point of reference, but these changes are also, to a large extent, shaped by the governmental rationalities of colonial governmentality and biopolitics.

The discussions on the death penalty in the legislative assemblies shed light on the dominant perceptions surrounding the usefulness of and against the death penalty. It is argued that these debates in advocating abolition consistently articulated a concern around the phenomena of 'life.' It is seen in these discussions that the legislatures of the princely state were proposing an advanced vocabulary regarding 'human life' when compared to the colonial state. The 'sacredness of life' was an important ground on which abolitionist arguments were foregrounded across the world from the 19th century.¹⁵⁶ A greater regard for 'human life,' beyond the narrow considerations of caste and caste rules that shaped the punishment system until then, is seen in these legislative debates on the death penalty.

Any debate on the death penalty is fueled by a specific understanding of human life that needs to be placed in an economy of values of varying indices. The factors that influenced the demands for abolition ranged from the increasing demand for labour to a quest for more efficient forms of punishment and a nuanced understanding of the body and bodily integrity and its autonomy. Arguments in favour and against the death penalty borrowed from both European and native ideas.

The abolition of the death penalty in Travancore also had an interesting clause in it. While it banned all forms of the death penalty, the only exception was for crimes committed against the state.¹⁵⁷ It can be understood here that while the state decided to abolish the death penalty, it nevertheless preserved the monopoly over life or the 'right to death.' Critical to the state was ensuring its unquestioned power over its subjects rather than any principled position over the death penalty or claims of humanism fueling it. The humanizing claims of colonialism can be

¹⁵⁶ McGowen, *History, Culture and the Death Penalty*, 229-249.

¹⁵⁷ *Travancore Information and Listener*, January 1945. The Travancore state assembly passed a unanimous resolution on 23.2.1945 to congratulate the Maharajah for the abolition of death penalty.

dismissed from the numerous evidence of colonial violence and the persistence and systematization of torture by the colonial state.

The case is interesting as the sovereign princely state banned capital punishment in 1944, and the postcolonial state reinstated it soon after independence. Interestingly, even in 1950, at the United States legislative assembly of Travancore and Cochin, then Chief Minister T K Narayana Pillai answered in the negative when asked if the government had any plans to reinstate the death penalty in Travancore and Cochin.¹⁵⁸ To another question by Devaki Gopidas, whether the government sought any public opinion favouring or against the death penalty, the Chief Minister responds that the state undertook no such measures. This also indicates the diminishing role public opinion had in determining the penal policies of the state.¹⁵⁹

However, in 1964, Chief Minister R Shankar, responding to a question by K M George, informed the assembly that the Government of Kerala was in agreement with the government of India regarding the proposals for the abolition of the death penalty. Unsettled here is the idea that princely states under the rule of a traditional sovereign unleashed unbridled violence on their subjects, whereas the postcolonial state ensured better welfare of their citizens through disciplinary and biopolitical administration. That violence is embedded into the logic of the biopolitical administration of the postcolonial state is, by now, no secret. Scholars have shown how the death penalty has assumed the role of a spectacle in its own right in the postcolonial state.¹⁶⁰

The debates on the abolition of capital punishment began in these princely states as early as 1928. The debates on the abolition of capital punishment were significantly motivated by changes in the West. Frequent comparisons were made with advanced Western countries, and the annulment is considered proof of such human and civilizational advancement. In the congratulation motion moved by J Pereira, he draws a comparison with the United States of America and says that Americans have succeeded in humanizing punishment only to the extent of using electric chairs for execution and have not been able to abolish the death penalty, unlike

¹⁵⁸ United Sitting of Travancore and Cochin Legislative Assembly 1949-50, (USTCLA), dated 12.1.1950, 1280.

¹⁵⁹ TCLA, dated 1.4.1950, 426.

¹⁶⁰ Baidik Bhattacharya, "Public Penology: Postcolonial Biopolitics and a Death in Alipur Central Jail, Calcutta," *Postcolonial Studies* 12, no. 1 (2009): 7-28.

Travancore.¹⁶¹ The goodwill and name the abolition will bring to Travancore were highlighted throughout the discussions, much like in the case of the abolition of slavery highlighted in the earlier chapter.

Incarceration was cited as a more plausible alternative to the death penalty. It has already been shown in the chapter *Precolonial Body* that until the 18th century, prisons were neither very common nor imprisonment the preferred choice of punishment. Prisons became the chosen form of punishment only towards the 19th century with the centralization of state power. From the late 19th century, prisons, with their logic of disciplinary power, became the key form of punishment system in Travancore. It is also observed here that the biopolitical rationalities that emerged in Travancore through various institutions and knowledge systems from the late 19th century were quick to make their inroads into the disciplinary prison system. Reformative incarceration and its institutional form, prisons thus provided a readily accessible system and inhabitants who could be made the subjects of modern medicine and biopolitics.

The legislators frequently made use of all the available sources to argue against the death penalty. The range of sources varied from foreign judgments, religious texts, cultural references, and foreign newspaper reports and an advanced vocabulary on the values of human life.

Travancore was a state known for its particularly harsh and gruesome methods of corporal punishment. Travelogues and reports from the 18th century and earlier are aplenty with records of graphic displays of punishments and tortures, which were described at length in Chapter I. However, penal policies underwent substantial changes from the 19th century, and incarceration became the chosen form of punishment by the mid-19th century.

I argue that the case for abolition was brought about by a definitive change in the understanding of human life. Therefore, investing life with more productive aspects of power became the accepted form of punishment over brute execution and taking away life. This is to be analyzed in the changing context of conceptions of power propagated by regimes or ‘the rationales of government.’ Foucault identifies the death penalty as “the other form of the right of the sword.”¹⁶² The death penalty is thus the legitimate expression of traditional sovereignty and

¹⁶¹ TSMA, dated 19.2.1945, 54.

¹⁶² Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Vol I*, 137.

the will of the sovereign. The conceptual shift in the approach to the death penalty resulting in abolition thus needs to be located in the changing rationales of government: A shift from traditional notions of power located in the body of the sovereign to the governmentalized state of the 20th century.

It is to be noted here that the number of executions had significantly decreased in these princely states from the early 20th century. An answer from the government to a query posed in the assembly in 1928 reveals that there had been just one infliction of the death penalty in the past twenty years in Cochin.¹⁶³ In Travancore, the statistics showed that from 1925 to 1932, there had been only 19 confirmed cases of the death penalty as assigned by the High Court.¹⁶⁴

To put things in perspective, contrary to the popular belief that princely states employed widespread executions, the number of actual executions positively declined from the late 19th century in these two princely states. This change was also brought about by a radical shift in the penal administration that coupled disciplinary modes of punishment with biopower in place of sovereign displays of power. The sovereign displays of power in the form of spectacle were replaced by a form of power that focused its attention on optimizing and promoting life. The main reason for such a sharp decline in the number of executions was the increasing governmental power of the state through its infrastructural penetration. The state was no longer required to resort to ostentatious displays of power to make its authority feel like in the past.

The members of the legislative assembly hailed the abolition of the death penalty as the greatest after the temple entry proclamation.¹⁶⁵ It was called a sign of progress and civilization. Comparisons with European jurisdictions frequently contrasted with such a move. During the discussions, members constantly praised the benevolence and magnanimity of the Maharajah for bringing about the abolition of the death penalty. The SCSC moved a unanimous resolution on 23 February 1945, congratulating the Maharajah for the abolition.¹⁶⁶ M. Govindan, who moved the resolution, said, “Like the historic Temple Entry Proclamation, this Proclamation has been useful not only for Travancore but has set an example to the rest of the world.” Raman

¹⁶³ CLC 1928-31, dated 17.12.1939, 90.

¹⁶⁴ TSMA 1937-44, dated 29.7.1941, 453.

¹⁶⁵ TSCSC dated 23.2.1945, 20-21.

¹⁶⁶ TSMA dated 19.2.1945, 54-57.

Pillai, seconding the motion, said, “The Doctrine of Ahimsa is the cornerstone of all Religions, and the proclamation abolishing capital punishment is founded upon that doctrine.”¹⁶⁷

Human life as a precious commodity that needs to be preserved is constantly reiterated in these discussions. As seen in the words of C A Kunjunni Raja, “The sanctity of human life is so great that to take the life of a human being on any ground whatsoever is indefensible. Imprisonment for life is a more terrible sentence than death and hence the abolition of capital punishment would have no effect in increasing the crime of murder.”¹⁶⁸

While the abolition of capital punishment has been attributed to the increasing value human life was taking as labour in the capitalist world order, such an economic motivation is not clearly visible in these debates in colonial Kerala. However, it needs to be stressed here that the state had effectively used convict labour available through the jails in public works since the late 19th century.

The themes that shaped the discussions in the legislative assemblies included that death misses the possibility of reform, which comes from a reformist understanding of punishment; capital punishment was a relic of barbarism and thus unsuitable to the times. The argument that the civilized countries have long gotten away with it, and so it was time for these princely states to follow these countries and set an example, topped the concerns of the legislative debates.

Apart from the two obvious concerns listed above, the error of judgment and the possibility of an innocent being punished and the impossibility of correcting such an error once an innocent person is executed also formed an important point of discussion. Again, this is a point that gives much value to precious human life. A strong case is made favoring the reform of the convict and its apparent denial of capital punishment. The possibilities of reform become the cornerstone of the abolition arguments in these discussions.

Travancore also started reformatories to deal with young convicts aimed at the reform of the convicted. The first reformatories were established in Travancore based on the Reformatory Regulation XVI of 1067.¹⁶⁹ These were aimed at the correction and reform of juvenile

¹⁶⁷ TSCSC dated 23.2.1945, 20-21.

¹⁶⁸ CLC, (1928-31), dated 18.12. 1929, 209.

¹⁶⁹ Aiya, *The Travancore State Manual Vol II*, 466.

offenders. The first such reformatory was established at Poojappura near the Central Jail.¹⁷⁰ Juvenile offenders below the age of 16 were lodged here. The wards of the reformatory schools were provided education and were trained in vocations of their choice. Again, it is observed here that there is a radical shift in the focus of punishment to how to make the best use of the convict. As a result, imprisonment, with its potential for reform, is advocated for replacing the death penalty.

Another critical point raised in these debates was that as the execution was conducted confined to the prison, it had little deterrence effect compared to public execution that served as a spectacle reinforcing sovereign power. This further substantiates the radical shift systems of punishment underwent from the late 19th century. The certainty and efficiency of punishment rather than its spectacular displays became the focus of the state.

The nature of social hierarchy and order in both the princely states of Travancore and Cochin was rooted in caste. Its preservation ensured that gross forms of punishment were a norm, and life could be taken at will when found violating these codes. The power to punish was distributed across the body politic based on traditional hierarchies. While other forms of violence continued to exist as a privilege enjoyed by conventional power holders, by the 19th century, the right to take life had become a monopoly of the state ever since the consolidation of the kingdoms in the 18th century.

Europe figured as a constant presence in these discussions- frequent references are made about penal reforms undertaken in Europe and about landmark judgments and observations made by European judges and juries in making both a case against and in favour of capital punishment in these princely states. There is considerable attention paid in these legislative debates on the deterrent effect and efficiency of penal reforms the world over, especially in Europe. The advocates of the abolition of capital punishment considered it a marker of cruelty and barbarity and thus uncharacteristic of civilizational progress. European examples are often cited to justify the view.¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. 466.

¹⁷¹ In the very first discussion that happened in Cochin Legislative Council, member TA Ramachandra Aiyar, who introduced the motion to abolish capital punishment quotes extensively from Judge Marshall, a colonial judge in Egypt who advocated abolition. The cases of several European countries are invoked here to emphasize that the abolition of death penalty did not increase the rate of crimes thereby demolishing the claims of pro

Execution by hanging was regarded by many members as cruel and barbaric, and possible alternatives like electrocution were proposed by the members.¹⁷² M N Parameswaran Pillai, calling for abolition, says that it was quite ironic that the Travancore sovereigns continued to sanction the death penalty while they remained the patron-in-chief of the All-Travancore Humanitarian Conference.¹⁷³ He also dismisses the deterrence claims in support of the death penalty by arguing that its prevalence has not brought down the number of murders in the state and that it has only increased in recent years.

This should not be surprising given there were no prior models anywhere in India, as the princely states of Travancore and Cochin were the forerunners in initiating a discussion on the abolition of the death penalty. Newspaper reports published in the United States and the UK were frequently cited in the discussions to represent the civilizational progress those countries achieved and the need to follow them.

The popular perception that the colonial state was the fountainhead of all penal reforms across the colonies and the native states followed suit is challenged here. Although Europe figured as a permanent presence in these discourses, indigenous ideas like ahimsa were invoked to justify the claims for abolition. Keeping track of penal reforms across the globe also resulted in rising demands that exceeded the reforms that the colonial state conceded or brought about.

Interestingly, the death penalty, which was repealed for a brief period in these princely states, was reinstated by the postcolonial state. This was an attempt to separate life from the logic of government of ‘right to death’ while the threat of death to life was intrinsically connected to the logic of a postcolonial nation-state which believed itself to be rooted in a ‘power over life.’

Summarizing the Debates

That many progressive countries have abolished capital punishment and thus Travancore and Cochin should follow suit remained a recurring theme in these legislative debates.¹⁷⁴ In these discussions, the members who opposed the death penalty, on occasion, dismissed both the

death penalty advocates. Frequent references are made about Lord Buckmaster and the abolition movement he headed in England.

CLC 1928-31, dated 18.12.1929, 206-212.

¹⁷² TSCSC, dated 26.08.1933, 415

¹⁷³ Ibid. 415.

¹⁷⁴ CLC, 1928-31, dated 18.12.1929, 208.

utilitarian and deontological justifications favouring capital punishment. However, solid cases for abolishing the death penalty based on the utilitarian or consequentialist approach that upholds capital punishment's continuance for its apparent deterrence effect and subsequent utility were made in the assembly.

A strong ethical argument drawing from both indigenous traditions as well as normative moral theory can also be seen in these discussions calling for the abolition of the death penalty. All this debunks the myth that penal reforms in the country were the handiwork of colonial administrators advocating liberal principles, and princely states blindly followed the penal reforms initiated by the colonial state. Curiously, the discussions have no mention of caste and religion, apart from the stray remarks that Travancore had a policy of non-execution of Brahmins and women. Travancore state traditionally had given immunity to women and Brahmins from capital punishment. Supporters of abolition have reasoned this fact to dismantle the deterrence theory that the absence of the death penalty among these two groups has not resulted in any significant increase in crimes by women and Brahmins in the state that warranted punishment by execution.

I have argued that the princely states articulated a progressive idea regarding the death penalty and succeeded in its abolition in the first half of the 20th century. In achieving this, the princely states articulated an advanced vocabulary on the nature of punishment by privileging the idea of life. Such a narrative far outpaced the penal reforms initiated by the colonial state. I argue that the abolition of the death penalty was far from an act of benevolence of the Maharajas of these princely states. It was brought about by a series of discussions that spanned nearly two decades and explored various aspects of the death penalty in acute detail. The humanist perspective, indigenous traditions, possibilities of reform, and the futility of the deterrence claims were all discussed and contributed in equal measures to its abolition.

By tracing the pathways of the abolition of the death penalty, the prevailing notion that it was the colonial state that was the source of all penal reforms in the country and the princely states only followed them is challenged. The abolition of the death penalty instead needs to be situated in the larger context of the transformation of political power from sovereignty to governmentality and the emergence of biopower, by which traditional notions of sovereignty were greatly modified by the political rationalities of governmentality. The death penalty

discussions and its eventual abolition strengthen the claim of the thesis that the sovereign 'right to death' was subdued to a 'power over life' in the wake of governmentality in Travancore in the 20th century.

Summary

This chapter attempted to locate a transformation in the princely state of Travancore from a traditional sovereign power into a governmentalized state by the 19th and 20th centuries. The peculiar nature of colonial control in Travancore, which cast its influence on the working of the princely state, was explored in depth in the chapter. The chapter attempted to show that, with the new technologies of government and its allied knowledge systems, new systems of government replaced traditional notions of sovereignty in Travancore. The powers of the Travancore sovereign diminished considerably in the 19th century with the colonial encounter, and in its place, a new form of government that had at its core 'reasons of the state' took over. In terms of power, sovereign power that was centred on the body of the king and the various religious and symbolic worlds associated with it gave way to more 'impersonal reasons of the state,' power, in this case, was dispersed across the body politic. These new notions of power that shaped the government were at once 'individualizing and totalizing.'

Through an analysis of historical transformations sovereignty underwent in Travancore from the 19th century to the 20th century, It has been shown how the problems of sovereignty were made more acute in the face of governmental power. It is seen that, with the emergence of governmentality, sovereign power retreated into the background while the juridical and semiotic world in which it functioned remained largely unchanged. The chapter showed how sovereignty was recast and modified with the development of governmental mechanisms in Travancore from the 19th century. Disciplinary and biopolitical power combined to shape governmental practices within a redefined framework of sovereignty. What is seen here is the intersection of different forms of power within which sovereign power was subordinated to a power that sought to augment, flourish, and optimize life.

The sovereign power, in other words, constantly oscillated between notions of tradition and modern statecraft in the act of legitimizing itself from the 19th century. The state thus acquired a hybrid character wherein it reinvented itself with modern markers and redefined its own legitimizing project. This shift is not merely political in nature; this is an epistemological shift

in which the state sees itself and legitimizes itself in the language of the modern. The new language of the modern is constituted and shaped by the new knowledge systems, techniques, and governmental rationalities that emerged in the late 19th century in Travancore. Despite the declining political prowess of the state, it is seen here that the embodied nature of sovereignty continued to exist and wield considerable influence. The following chapter, titled *Modern Medicine in Travancore*, traces the institutional history of modern medicine, the predominant knowledge system shaping governmental rationalities, and its associated practices and interventions that shaped the government of the body and locate it in the broader history of biopolitics and governmentality.

Chapter IV

Modern Medicine in Travancore

The body, from the 19th century, had become the subject of new disciplines, knowledge systems, and forms of control, in which modern medicine played a pivotal role. The colonial state brought its various dimensions into play in the British-dominated regions, while partially autonomous princely states were less directly inducted into these zones of colonial transformations. In this context, this chapter traces the trajectory of the modern medical system, the proactive role of the state, the missionaries, and other non-state agencies, and their complex interactions in institutionalizing modern medicine in the state of Travancore. The growth of modern institutions and their new rationalities is intimately connected to the development of modern medicine in the state. Tracing the historical pathways of modern medicine helps explore the intricacies of this mutual encouragement and facilitation. The chapter thus attempts to situate the history of modern medicine in the broader context of the emergence of colonial biopolitics and colonial governmentality in the state of Travancore from the late 19th century. The institutional growth, legislative measures, and histories of resistance and reforms concerning the institutionalization of modern medicine are addressed in the current chapter.

The second chapter, titled '*From Sovereignty to Governmentality*,' located the transformation in traditional conceptions of sovereignty to an 'impersonal reason of the state' shaped by governmentality. It is argued in this chapter that, among other factors, modern medicine played a significant role in enabling this transformation through its rationalities and knowledge systems. Modern/ western medicine occupied a central place in the history of colonialism. It remained one of its most potent arms of domination and control. Modern medicine and its associated disciplines significantly shaped colonial institutions and policies. Western medicine necessitated interventions and direct engagement with the social and cultural life of the colonized, unparalleled in any other scientific field.¹ The growth and spread of modern medicine in Travancore was not merely the transplantation of western medicine to a non-

¹ David Arnold, *The New Cambridge History of India: Science, Technology and Medicine in Colonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 57.

Arnold, identifies a dual engagement of colonial medicine with the 'culture' and 'environment' of the colonized invoking strong responses from the colonized.

western context; it was deeply colonial in character and embodied the empire's spirit, aspirations, and ideologies.

This chapter argues that modern medicine unfolded in Travancore within the complex triad of sovereignty-discipline-biopolitics. Medicine and medical knowledge were crucial to the disciplinary normalizations of societies from the 18th century. The key argument following Foucault here is that the development of modern medicine, its rationalities, modes of conduct, and the medicalization of behaviour are “taking place on the front where the heterogeneous layers of discipline and sovereignty meet.”² While the chapter titled *The Birth of Colonial Biopolitics* takes a deeper look at the specificities of colonial medicine and practices of government, it helped shape from the perspective of biopolitical administration; the current chapter focuses on the introduction of modern medicine and its permeation into Travancore society from an institutional perspective.

Modern medicine remained the most significant validation for the increasing infrastructural and institutional penetration of the modern state in Travancore. However, it is important to assert that modern medicine was not introduced into a social and cultural void nor a level playing field. The introduction of modern medicine led to sites of struggle where non-European knowledge systems clashed with western knowledge systems that often had the backing of the state. This engagement represented “a relationship of power and authority between ruler and ruled and between colonialism’s various parts.”³ Although significantly influenced by imperial ideologies, prejudices, and scientific innovations in the West, the trajectories of modern medicine in the colonies were also shaped by the specificities of engagement with the colonized and the unique challenges it posed. These confrontations and convergences fashioned a distinct character to colonial medicine, which is attempted to be traced in the current chapter.

In the case of Travancore, it is generally held that modern medicine had a more benign function as it was institutionalized under the guidance and vision of native rulers, unlike the directly ruled presidencies. However, the chapter proposes that the progress and unfolding of western medicine in the state is to be placed in the rationales of colonial governmentality and biopolitics

² Michel Foucault, *Society Must be Defended: Lectures at the College De France* (New York: Picador, 2003), 39.

³ David Arnold (ed.) *Imperial Medicine and Indigenous Societies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), 2.

that were being put in place through colonial interaction. Western medicine and the unique form of colonial control over Travancore in the form of indirect rule were mutually constitutive, protecting the larger interests of the colonial state. Despite the effective native appropriation, colonial medicine was an enterprise that was closely connected to colonial interests and, to a great extent, retained its deeply colonial character. However, this does not mean that the natives were mere passive onlookers. The natives internalized the logic of colonial medicine and colonial power and fully made use of the new possibilities opened by colonial knowledge regimes and the avenues opened under colonial conditions to their best advantage.

The history of colonial governmentality is inseparable from the history of colonial medicine. As Shula Marks asserts, “Often what is read as a characteristic of ‘colonial medicine’ then may be a characteristic of biomedicine more generally.”⁴ Innovations in modern medicine significantly shaped the ‘practices of government’ of the colonial state. Scholars of colonial medicine have shared the idea that “biomedicine and colonialism co-evolved from the 16th to the 20th centuries.”⁵ Foucauldian ideas of governmentality and biopolitics provide the interpretative framework to trace the history of modern medicine in Travancore. This enables us to understand how modern medical practices played a critical role in making the ‘modern governable subject’ by the management of conduct and through a surveillance regime, in other words, through the rationalities of biopolitical administration.

The Analytical Frames of Western Science and Medicine in the Colonial Context

The history of western medicine in the colonies cannot be disentangled from the history of western science in the colonies, which has been conventionally equated with progress. Medicine, therefore, has to be located within the larger historiography of western science and its intimate connection with imperialism. Armed with an orientalist logic, the dominant colonial view was that western science and medicine were the colonizer’s gift to the backward, unscientific East. Western science and medicine, in this imagination, served as an emancipator,

⁴ Shula Marks, “What is Colonial About Colonial Medicine? And What has Happened to Imperialism and Health?,” *Social History of Medicine* 10, no. 2 (1997): 206-7.

⁵ Poonam Bala, ed. *Biomedicine as a Contested Site: Some Revelations in Imperial Contexts* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2009), 1. Bala also argues that “the linkages between biomedicine and colonial power produces an equally important linkage between biomedicine and resistance.” 6.

liberating the East from its own backwardness.⁶ This proclaimed emancipatory role enabled colonial medicine to claim for itself a greater legitimacy than most other instruments of colonial rule. This celebratory perspective of colonial medicine can be summed up in the words of Shula Marks as “the triumph of science and sewers over savagery and superstition.”⁷ As Arnold has shown, thus, health and medicine were deemed central to an “Indian drive for “improvement” and a redefinition of the “self.”⁸

Kapil Raj, on the other hand, focuses on the exchange of knowledge and the active role of the colonizers themselves in the project, although they were far from equal partners within it.⁹ Raj critically evaluates David Arnold’s and Gyan Prakash’s works, with their Foucauldian approach to science, and the idea that modern science emerged in the West and, thus, the resultant hybridity that emerged through West-East interactions could only be a copy of the West.¹⁰

Kapil Raj instead advances the analytical frame of various local and dominant knowledge systems that exist across the rest of the world in multiple forms. There was thus a reconstitution and reconfiguration of what was perceived as western science at the points of intersections of cultures and knowledge systems.¹¹ This perspective “shows that important parts of what has been passed off as European, or Western, science were actually made elsewhere.”¹²

However, this perspective, although it offers a nuanced framework to understand and question the epistemological roots of modern science, its complex histories, and its geographical roots in constituting them, cannot completely dismiss the ‘hybridity’ perspective offered by scholars like Gyan Prakash and David Arnold. These scholars have not only demonstrated the discursive domination of western science and its all-pervading rationalities in the colonies but

⁶ George Basalla, “The Spread of Western Science,” *Science* 156, no. 3775 (1967): 611-22.

Basalla using a core-periphery distinction, proposes that modern science emerged in Western Europe and diffused into the rest of the world through the encounter with European countries. Basalla’s model has been criticized for failing to capture the reality of colonial medicine, especially in such contexts where western medicine and science penetrated not only through direct control and domination but also through its endorsement and appropriation by the colonized.

⁷ Shula Marks, *What is Colonial about Colonial Medicine?*, 205.

⁸ David Arnold, *Colonizing the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth Century India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 241.

⁹ *Ibid.* 6.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 6.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 10.

¹² *Ibid.* 11.

have also deconstructed the ‘emancipatory’ perspective by looking at the complexities of interaction between native agency and colonial medicine. This chapter deals with both these complex overlaps within the Travancore state. Further, the chapter also maps the institutional trajectories of colonial medicine in Travancore, mindful of David Armstrong’s insightful statement, “purely cognitive factors alone cannot explain the rise of new biomedical disciplines which could only be explained in the context of institutional advent.”¹³ Western medicine is believed to have made its first contact with South Asia in the 17th century and coexisted with various indigenous traditions of medicine until the first half of the 19th century.¹⁴ The dominant policy-oriented discourse of a modern primary health care apparatus was amongst the first interventions by the colonial government in the country.¹⁵ In its early days, the campaigns against epidemics occupied the main focus of nascent western medicine. Ramasubban’s analytical approach of a demographical transition agenda, which supplanted the epidemiological transition agenda in institutionalizing public health in the country, is definitely relevant for the transition in Travancore.¹⁶ Further, western medicine began to claim a monopoly in determining the official health policies, undermining the existing traditional medical systems and associated cultural practices in the mid-19th century.¹⁷ There were inevitable repercussions of such policies on satellite princely states like Travancore. Hume’s proposition that the contestation between these two systems led to the emergence of two health paradigms; the ‘professional’ and the ‘populist’, can also fit the case of Travancore’s transition.¹⁸

¹³ David Armstrong, “Bodies of Knowledge/ Knowledge of Bodies,” in *Reassessing Foucault: Power, Medicine and the Body*, ed. Colin Jones & Roy Porter (New York: Routledge, 1998), 181.

¹⁴ J C Hume, “Colonialism and Sanitary Medicine: The Development of Preventive Health Policy in the Punjab, 1860-1900,” *Modern Asian Studies* 20, no. 4 (1986): 703-724.

¹⁵ Radhika Ramasubban, “History of Public Health in Modern India,” in *Public Health in the Asia and the Pacific: Historical and Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Milton K Lewis and Kerrie L MacPherson (New York: Routledge, 2007), 88.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 88.

¹⁷ Hume, *Colonialism and Sanitary Medicine*, 703.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 704. The former was composed of the practitioners of western medicine, and the latter was composed of both traditional and western practitioners who believed in the utilization of all health professionals belonging to other traditions and also in the prevention of diseases. Often a combination of these two health paradigms, rather than a neat and incompatible separation, is found to be a feature of colonial medicine in its history. However, the struggle for monopoly between various traditions and its own constituents remained a permanent feature of colonial medicine.

The dominant perspective in the study of colonial medicine has been that the primary concern of colonial medicine was the health of the colonizer and not the colonized.¹⁹ However, important voices within the government, including James Ranald Martin, one of the most famous proponents of western medicine, believed that until the health of the Indian civilian population was cared for and the general sanitary conditions of the country improved, securing the health of the colonizer would not be possible.²⁰ The general health of the Indian population was also regarded as a fundamental prerequisite in ensuring the stability of British commercial interests in the country. Thus, official attempts on a large scale were made to improve the general sanitary conditions of the country. However, these attempts remained caught up in a cost-benefit analysis and a lot of political and economic concerns that would ultimately prove beneficial to the colonial state.

The focus of western medicine was not merely the treatment of diseases and the sick and the management of the crisis. It also functioned with the rationalities of a modern state and its aggregating technologies. In that sense, the unfolding of western medicine was an exercise in power that gave rise to unique forms of interactions between the colonizer and the colonized, subjecting the colonized to new rationalities of government, that was, the biopolitical paradigm.

Theorizing Colonial Medicine

It is crucial to theorize western medicine before it is mapped against Travancore society, as the general course or the emergence of western medicine is already studied by many. I attempt a Foucauldian approach to the history of western medicine here, which looks at the medical complex composed of the epistemological order as well as the political or (social control) order. The Foucauldian perspective of the centrality of medical discourses in the evolution of the modern state and its governmental practices forms the central tenet of the thesis. However, the work takes a cue from Arnold's caution that the regulatory systems of colonial medicine were far less absolute and one-dimensional than what the Foucauldian framework presupposes.²¹ This could be all the more relevant in the context of Travancore, given the

¹⁹ David Arnold, "Touching the Body: Perspectives on the Indian Plague," in *Subaltern Studies Vol V*, ed. Ranajit Guha (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987), 58.

²⁰ Hume, *Colonialism and Sanitary Medicine*, 707.

²¹ Arnold, *Touching the Body*, 56.

unique nature of colonial power in an indirectly ruled Hindu Princely State. The specificities of Travancore's colonial experience have been discussed in the previous chapter.

Koji Kawashima has looked at the history of western medicine in Travancore and has shown how the state and the missionaries came together in the 19th century to institutionalize western medicine. He has also demonstrated the complexities of this interaction. The progress and higher standards Travancore achieved in the field of medicine and public health are attributed to the state and non-state actors, the missionaries working together.²² However, the nature of the relationship is more complex than one of mutual cooperation alone. These perspectives do not attempt to place the history of modern medicine in Travancore in the changing rationalities of government and thus fail to explain the specific functions medicine had in the 'government of the individual and the populations.' Modern medicine, in these perspectives, forms just one part of the institutional mechanisms of the state, albeit a very important one. Existing literature on modern medicine in Travancore, while having explored in detail the history of western medicine and the role of the state and the missionaries, has paid scant attention to the biopolitical aspects of western medicine. Employing the idea of governmentality and biopolitics, the current thesis looks at the field as a complex within which both the state and non-state agents, the colonizer and the colonized, the practitioners and the receptors all play an essential role in shaping the social world of modern medicine in a colony.

The complexities of the interaction between Travancore rulers and the colonial state have considerably influenced the history of modern medicine and colonial biopolitics. While changing notions of sovereignty are explored in detail in the first chapter, the current chapter assumes a greater influence of colonial control over Travancore rulers and argues that the pathways of modern medicine in Travancore were significantly colonial. The remarkable role of the medical missionaries, the European Durbar physicians and doctors, the British Residents, and the frequent interventions of the Madras government all influenced the trajectories of modern medicine in Travancore. Importantly, the thesis demonstrates that Travancore was integrated into a 'transnational network of global health' to significantly shape the trajectory of modern medicine in the state.

²² Raj Sekhar Basu, "Ruling Classes, Missionaries, Non-state Agencies and Health Issues in Travancore in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," *History and Sociology of South Asia* 9, no. 1 (2015): 80-101.

The Emergence of Modern Medicine in Travancore

Dominant historiography of modern medicine in Travancore in the first half of the 20th century had looked at it as the handiwork and generosity of the benevolent rulers of Travancore.²³ While it is true that the sovereigns of Travancore extended great support and encouragement to western medicine, such a perspective would completely undermine the significant role of western medicine in the project of colonialism. That colonial medicine was an integral agent of the empire in the project of colonialism is now uncontested.

The thesis argues that western medicine spreading under the conditions of indirect colonial rule was far greater and more complex an entity entwined in the biopolitical regime to be reduced to the handiwork of the ruling family's benevolence. However, it is acknowledged that the support and advocacy of the ruling family and its symbolic power over the people of Travancore worked in favour of western medicine in its spread. This was not a strategy unique to Travancore. In its history, colonial medicine often involved attempts by the colonial states to reach out to the ruling families and leading figures of the colonies and seek their support with a view that their social acceptance among the natives would enhance the appeal of colonial medicine.²⁴ This was especially evident in popularizing practices like vaccination, which caused fear and anxiety among the natives at the time of its introduction, where the royal family's support was enlisted to mitigate fear in the people's minds.²⁵

Unlike the directly ruled presidencies like Calcutta and Madras, where modern medicine was introduced first among those people who would come into easier contact with the Europeans and thereby pose a threat to the 'health of the empire,' in Travancore, the ruling family became the first to make use of and become patrons of modern medicine. It is noted here that modern medicine by the early 20th century had entered the vocabulary of the native princely state's practices of government, significantly shaping them.

Western medicine, in its early days, had an instrumental goal of addressing those immediate health threats that were prevalent in the state. Epidemics like smallpox, cholera, tuberculosis,

²³ This is a perspective that is consistently reproduced in all the State Manuals and Gazetteers. Ulloor S Parameswara Aiyer, *Progress of Travancore under H.H. Sreemoolam Tirunal 1857-1924*. (Thiruvananthapuram: Dept of Cultural Publications, 1998), 508.

²⁴ Ing-Britt Trankell and Jan Ovesen, "French Colonial Medicine in Cambodia: reflections of governmentality," *Anthropology and Medicine* 11, no. 1 (2004): 96. Published online 19 Oct 2010,

²⁵ Ibid. 96.

leprosy, and malaria posed the most significant health threats in Travancore. Death due to epidemics and various other diseases was common in Travancore. Intermittent bouts of epidemics, particularly virulent cholera, caused great havoc in the state. Western medicine was immediately employed to counter these deadly diseases.

Poor socio-economic conditions, poverty, and the lack of both awareness and resources to maintain the right sanitary conditions all contributed to the casualties. As western medicine could not immediately achieve the desired goal of bringing down the death rates, it was initially resented, and people suspected its efficiency. The lack of consensus regarding the aetiology of diseases plagued public health initiatives across the country, as experts often disagreed on the best approaches to tackle some of these diseases, and Travancore was no exception to this.²⁶ Apart from the various epidemic diseases, various endemic diseases prevalent in the state also began to receive considerable attention from modern medicine.

First Shifts towards Institutionalization

The institutional history of modern medicine in Travancore began with its introduction during the reign of Rani Gauri Lakshmi Bhai.²⁷ The first smallpox unit was established in Travancore in 988 ME (1813).²⁸ The Travancore Medical Department was established in 1846. As vaccination was dreaded and looked upon with suspicion by the local people, the members of the ruling family subjected themselves to the vaccination process to disperse fear from the people's minds by setting an example. The death of a young Princess in 1811 is believed to have alerted the royal family to the benefits of vaccination.²⁹ Rani Gauri Lakshmi Bhai's successors, Swati Tirunal and Uthram Tirunal, also followed her in promoting western medicine in the state. By 1860, the number of modern hospitals in Travancore had risen to 7. The same period also witnessed a steady increase in the number of hospitals across the territory. The Civil Hospital, which later became the famous General Hospital, was established

²⁶ The conflict between various colonial officials and sanitary officers regarding the cause of diseases and the best ways to counter them was permanently present in the history of colonial medicine, one such conflict can be seen in the conflict between James Cunningham and De Renzy in Punjab, where in a miasmatic theory advocated by Cunningham was challenged by the Contagion theory advocated by DeRenzy in the context of the cholera threat.

²⁷ T K Velu Pillai, *The Travancore State Manual, Vol IV* (Trivandrum: The Government of Travancore, 1940), 208.

²⁸ Velu Pillai, *Travancore State Manual, Vol IV*, 208.

²⁹ William Hamilton, *Geographical, Statistical, and Historical Description of Hindostan and the Adjacent Countries, Vol II* (London: John Murray, 1820), 318-319.

in the year 1040 ME (1864-65).³⁰ Hospitals were also constructed in mofussil towns like Alleppey, Kottayam, and Quilon, thus further extending the reach of modern medicine to the interiors of the state. The bacteriology department established in Travancore focused its attention on such widely prevalent diseases as cholera and recommended injections and solutions. The government also started scholarships to medical students who attended medical schools in other parts of the country and even outside the country.³¹ Travancore state, by 1903-04, was spending a little more than 4% of its annual income on the medical and sanitary department.³² In its early days, the modern medical institutions in the state were under the direct control and supervision of the Deputy Surgeon General of Madras. This was to change by 1877, and the department was brought under the Durbar Physician.³³

Specialized hospitals for maternity care and women and children were constructed by the last decade of the 19th century. Such specializations as ophthalmology were introduced around the same time. From the late 19th century, significant investments were being made by the state to improve medical infrastructure in the state. Midwifery schools and schools for training compounders also began in Travancore.³⁴ Prenatal care was given attention to prevent infant mortality, and women were trained in midwifery and nursing schools. Trained European nurses were employed in the state medical services to extend nursing aid to the people. Dental, X-ray, First Aid, and Ambulance services were added to the medical department, further ensuring its greater permeation.³⁵ Separate hospitals for women were established along with improvements to existing hospitals like the General Hospital.³⁶ Staff and facilities at the existing hospitals were further strengthened with the rising demand from the people.

The first lunatic asylum was set up in Travancore in 1878. The same was renamed the Hospital for Mental Diseases in 1921. This nomenclatural change was aimed at bringing in a more inclusive approach in the minds of the general public about mental diseases. The state also

³⁰ Velu Pillai, *Travancore State Manual*, Vol IV, 209.

³¹ Ibid. 210.

³² Aiya, *The Travancore State Manual Vol II*, 546.

³³ Velu Pillai, *Travancore State Manual*, Vol IV, 209.

³⁴ Ibid. 208-211.

³⁵ Ibid. 210-211.

³⁶ Ibid. 210.

thought that renaming it a hospital ascribed to the institution greater possibilities of cure and reform rather than an asylum without such a meaning.³⁷

The earliest medical intervention in people's lives can be seen in the form of vaccination. Vaccination was made compulsory for all government servants, students in government schools, prison inmates, and whosoever came to potential contact with the government with the royal proclamation of 1878.³⁸ Smallpox vaccination was made compulsory for anyone entering government services as early as 1878.³⁹

The Durbar physician recommended the need for compulsory vaccination, but the government did not find it feasible on practical considerations.⁴⁰ While trying to extend the vaccination to the maximum number of people, the government was against any punitive directions and the employment of coercive measures in promoting vaccination.⁴¹ However, with time, the state gained greater support from the public and the officials in extending its vaccination pursuits. "Greater public good" was constantly articulated by the members of the legislative assemblies in favour of vaccination. Vaccination was soon to be made compulsory in Travancore. Vaccination rates in Travancore soared as a result. It is also seen here that smallpox continued to remain a huge threat despite the spread of vaccination, as evidenced by intermittent bouts of the epidemic, especially the more severe ones of 1911 and 1934. The 'success' of vaccination, however limited it was, its increasing popularity among the educated classes helped the state institutionalize a comprehensive public health system in the times to come, which was foregrounded in modern biopolitical rationalities in the state. With vaccination, the state had managed to enter the domain of the 'government of the body' more than ever before. By the early 20th century, it can be observed that western medicine had been thoroughly institutionalized and began to wield considerable influence in Travancore. Along with government initiatives, other private initiatives by missionaries also contributed to the spread

³⁷ Ibid. 218.

³⁸ Smallpox Vaccination Proclamation 1878, *The Regulations and Proclamations of Travancore, Vol VII*, (Trivandrum: The Anantha Rama Varma Press, 1937), 346-348.

³⁹ Ibid. 346-348.

⁴⁰ Elsewhere, even the colonial state found such a move impractical and proposals to make vaccination legally mandatory was dismissed by the colonial state fearing repercussions. Arnold, *Colonizing the Body*, 155.

⁴¹ Nagam Aiya, *The Travancore State Manual Vol II* (Trivandrum: Travancore Government Press, 1906), 532. TAR, 1896-98, 142.

of western medicine in Travancore. The government encouraged and even provided grants-in-aid to not only private medical institutions practising modern medicine but also to indigenous *Vydyans*.⁴² This was different from the direct state aid offered to earlier mission hospitals. As a result, the indigenous medical institutions and practices also underwent a radical restructuring and reform around this period.

Travancore was also home to a well-established traditional medical system. The increasing state patronage and the rising influence of modern medicine gave rise to contestations between these two systems. The colonial state's patronage gave modern medicine considerable authority over traditional medical systems. These grants-in-aid were to promote the practice of medicine through private initiatives and also to bring them under some sort of control and responsibility in the form of inspections by state officials. These grant-in-aid institutions were to function under the control of the Durbar Physician, and the *Vydyasalas* were to function under a special committee.⁴³ The practitioners of western medicine often viewed the native practitioners with suspicion and expressed their antipathy to the traditional medical systems. The doctors often accused native practitioners of quackery and taking advantage of the people's superstitious beliefs and miseries. The native dependence on indigenous and traditional medicine was regarded as the biggest impediment to the growth of western medicine in most colonial contexts. However, Travancore state continued to extend its patronage to existing establishments of traditional medical practices.

The Cultural Othering

Implicit in the institutionalization and spread of western medicine was the othering of Indians and other non-western medical traditions. It is seen that modern medicine engages in the process of othering at two distinct levels: a general othering of the non-western world against the western world and the animosity it had against non-western medical systems.

Public concerns about the prevalence of diseases specific to particular areas were frequently raised both in and outside legislative councils by the government. However, these findings and analyses were often constrained and shaped by racist prejudices and preconceptions. The same is revealed in the words of the famous European surgeon Joseph Fayrer, who was also a critic

⁴² TAR, 1895-96, 134.

⁴³ Ibid. 134.

of Robert Koch's bacteriology theory of diseases, "that while no races are completely immune to elephantiasis, the dark-skinned are more liable to be affected by the disease."⁴⁴ He also believed that the disease was rarely found among Europeans, and its occurrence was more common among people of mixed and dark races.⁴⁵ Fayrer's perspective represented a dominant view that existed among European medical professionals that factors responsible for the same disease in Europe were different from those of India: the general sanitary and unhygienic conditions in India were blamed for the prevalence of many diseases.⁴⁶

The practitioners of modern medicine looked down upon the indigenous medical practitioners. The native practitioners were often portrayed in the colonial imagination as savage and beastly, invoking fear and taking advantage of the people's ignorance. Somerwell condemns the indigenous medical practitioners for being inept due to their lack of proper training and disparages some of them for being quacks. In the words of Canter Visscher, "They are astrologers, wizards, sorcerers, quacks, devil-dancers, and what not, combined."⁴⁷ However, this work contests the irrational native- rational European binaries by looking at the complex relationship. Importantly, Travancore was the first state in the country to pass a government order in the form of a royal decree prohibiting quackery.⁴⁸ This was mainly intended to stop the menace of quack dressers and compounders pretending to be allopathic practitioners. The quest for hegemony and the disproportionate patronage that western medicine had from the state led to a crisis in traditional medical practices that still had considerable popular appeal in the society.

Pragmatic overlaps

Despite the struggle for hegemony and the cultural othering that remained a feature of colonial medicine, the interaction between colonial medicine and other indigenous traditions was also shaped by a sense of pragmatism, necessitated by the challenges posed by the specific contexts.

⁴⁴ Joseph Fayrer, *Tropical Dysentery and Chronic Diarrhoea: Liver Abscess, Malarial Cachexia, Insolation with Other forms of Tropical Disease and on Health of European Children and Others in India* (New Burlington Street: J & A Churchill, 1881), 263.

Dr Fayrer, as the president of the medical board at India Office and the president of the Epidemiological Society, also represented the government of India at the International Sanitary Conference held at Rome in 1884.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 266.

⁴⁶ Joseph Fayrer, *Inaugural Address, Session 1879-80*, Trans Epidemiological Society of London, 263-284.

⁴⁷ K P Padmanabha Menon, *History of Kerala, Vol I*, (Cochin: Cochin Government Press, 1924), 138.

⁴⁸ K Rajasekharan Nair, *Evolution of Modern Medicine in Kerala* (Chennai: Expressions, 2017), 11.

Local and endemic diseases which were an immediate threat to the lives of the people were closely examined, and their causes and reasons for their prevalence were attempted to be studied seriously. Thus, diseases that were ‘peculiar to Travancore’ became an object of study. Microstatistics on these endemic diseases were systematically collected and analyzed.⁴⁹ The statistics thus generated often called for direct intervention by the state.

The government often made attempts to incorporate practitioners of traditional medical systems into the official health policies in various capacities. Vaccinators were sometimes encouraged to carry palliatives to help alleviate pain and also treat some basic ailments and gain trust among people through such activities.⁵⁰

There were attempts by European practitioners of modern medicine to engage with and understand the utility and usefulness of traditional medicine and drugs employed by native practitioners. One such effort was made by Edward John Waring, the physician of the Maharajah of Travancore, who attempted to study the clinical properties of native medicines and indigenous plants used by native physicians. Waring mentions in the introduction that the list of local remedies and traditional medicines was compiled to educate the vaccinators with some knowledge about means to alleviate pain and help cure some diseases where access to regular medical aid was not available.⁵¹ Waring also cautions the user that the treatment plans prescribed are not the best to be adopted, but in the absence of a better treatment available, these bazaar medicines and procedures prescribed could be employed as an immediate remedy as they may not cause any damage if judiciously used. What is seen in Waring’s approach is not only a tolerant and accommodative approach to traditional medicine and an admission that western medicine has still not been accessible to a large number of people in the state but also that the immediate goal of any form of medical practice is to bring relief to the patient. This

⁴⁹ Examples for such initiatives are widely seen, Edward John Waring, “Elephantiasis as it exists in Travancore,” [On elephantiasis as it exists in Travancore / by Edward John Waring. | Wellcome Collection](#), Accessed online on 2.3.22, Place of Publication and year unavailable, year between 1850-59.

⁵⁰ Edward John Waring, *Remarks on the Uses of some Bazaar Medicines and a few on the indigenous plants of India According to the European Practice* (Travancore: Travancore Sircar Press, 1860). page number absent

⁵¹ Ibid. Introduction, page number not available.

approach by practitioners of modern medicine indicates that the interaction between various medical practices was also shaped by a sense of pragmatism rather than antagonism alone.⁵²

It was not only in the domain of vaccination that native cooperation was enlisted. Existing native structures were reformed and integrated into the frameworks of colonial medicine. The local midwives who were rooted in traditional practices were trained and accommodated into the practices of modern medicine.⁵³ Even children of some of these native midwives were trained in child and delivery care and employed by the state. This initiative undertaken by Dr. Lukose certainly helped in making modern medicine more familiar and overcoming its alien nature among the people.

Like in all colonial contexts, there existed a struggle for legitimacy between the existing medical practices and colonial medicine. State backing often provided western medicine with an undue advantage over native medicine. The threat of epidemics and the native medicine's inability to offer any protection against it gave considerable advantage to western medicine and its popularity. Medical interventions, particularly the increasing success of vaccination, instilled a new confidence among the people. However, the struggle for legitimacy and the newfound state support enabled native medicine to revamp its existence and reorganize itself under this encounter with modern medicine under colonial conditions.⁵⁴ This quest ultimately resulted in the revitalization of indigenous medicine, especially Ayurveda, as shown by K N Panikkar.⁵⁵

The wide reception and support modern medicine received in Travancore, and its effective appropriation by the natives resulted in overcoming its foreignness and its rising popularity among the people of Travancore. Soon, the need to establish more hospitals and dispensaries was made by Sri Mulam Praja Assembly members.⁵⁶ The government spending on medical

⁵² Hume has shown in the context of Punjab, how the native practitioners, Hakims were encouraged to be the part of the vaccination drive by the colonial medical authorities. Similar initiatives of cooperation and accommodation can be seen in Travancore as well.

Hume, *Colonialism and Sanitary Medicine*, 711

⁵³ Rajasekharan Nair, *Evolution of Modern Medicine*, 66.

⁵⁴ Burton Cleetus, "Western Science, Indigenous Medicine and the Princely States: The Case of Ayurvedic Reorganization in Travancore 1870-1940," in *Society, Medicine and Politics in Colonial India*, eds., Biswamoy Pati and Mark Harrison (New York: Routledge, 2018), 98-121.

⁵⁵ K N Panikkar, "Indigenous Medicine and Cultural Hegemony," in *Colonialism Culture and Resistance* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009)168-191.

⁵⁶ SMPAP, 1904, 28.

expenditure increased steadily. The diversification and the spread of medical institutions happened simultaneously. Unlike most parts of the country, modern medicine was received with lesser hostility in Travancore. Modern medical practices finding an ally in the ruling family also could have contributed significantly to this. The practice of modern medicine lay within the caste-ridden society, with hands from each community being taught basic lessons in aiding the practices of vaccination and treatments.

Missionaries and the Discourses of Modern Medicine in Travancore

“The work of the mission may be compared to a man growing from the feeble efforts of childhood to the vigorous activity of healthy manhood. The head and body may be regarded as the church-in the widest sense of that word- the right arm to the educational department, the left arm to the medical department, and the legs by which he stands and walks to the industrial works of the mission”: Dr W C Bentall⁵⁷

Colonial medicine in India emanated largely through state institutions and not through the white civil population or settlers in the colony.⁵⁸ However, in Travancore, the case was slightly different, with the significant contribution of the medical missionaries in the field. It was the Anglican protestant missionaries who first spread the idea of progress in the state of Travancore. Education and health care were the two crucial planks that shaped the missionary notions of progress. The state was still not the most dominant player in modern medicine in Travancore until the mid-19th century. The work of the missionaries provided a considerable impetus in the spread of modern medicine in Travancore. Both the missionaries and the princely state found themselves active partners in dispensing modern medicine, which they thought amounted to ‘charity’ in the making of the charitable state.⁵⁹ The London Missionary Society and other medical missionaries, including the Salvation Army, Church Missionary Society, Lutheran Mission, and the Zenana Mission, made significant contributions towards the growth of medicine in Travancore. Missionary contribution in the field of modern medicine was next only to their significant contribution in the field of education in Travancore. The medical mission was an important part of the evangelical activities of the missionaries. The

⁵⁷ Cited in I H Hacker, *Hundred Years in Travancore* (London: H R Allenson Limited, 1908), 77.

⁵⁸ Arnold, *Colonizing the Body*, 244.

⁵⁹ Koji Kawashima, *Missionaries and a Hindu State: Travancore 1858-1936* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 114.

missionaries, as Robert L Hardgrave Jr. writes in the context of Nadars, “offered them not only the gospel of a new religion, but also the possibility of a secular salvation in release from the fetters of the tradition which had for centuries burdened them with social disabilities and economic dependence.”⁶⁰

The missionaries established dispensaries and nursing homes that catered to the health demands of the native populations. The hard reality of unapproachability, untouchability, and other severe restrictions placed on the body in Travancore made the missionary enterprise of care all the more appealing to the populations. The Neyyoor medical mission, an initiative of the LMS, the most important medical missionary station in the country, started functioning in 1838. The mission activities gained great progress under Dr. Leitch. The first annual report of the mission, published in 1854, attests to the treatment of 5318 patients.⁶¹

It became the earliest medical institution in the princely state and the first to receive grant-in-aid from the Travancore government. In the field of medicine, the Travancore state and the missionaries maintained a cordial relationship.⁶² The first medical school started at Neyyoor in 1868 with six students.⁶³ It soon grew to have six more branches. Soon, a lady missionary, Ms. Macdonnell, became the mission’s superintendent, and many nurses and midwives were trained under her who contributed significantly to the mission’s work.⁶⁴ LMS’s effort in the field of medicine received considerable support from the Travancore government. The Maharaja of Travancore even offered a scholarship for medical education at the Neyyoor medical school.⁶⁵ In 1878, the government gave an old building to the mission, which was converted into a hospital. The people initially had a lack of trust in the practices of western medicine, but with time, the influx to the hospital often increased beyond the hospital's capacity. The growing popularity of the Neyyoor Hospital was supported by European planters and wealthy natives.

⁶⁰ Robert L Hardgrave Jr, *The Nadars of Tamilnad: The Political Culture of a Community in Change* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2018), 55.

⁶¹ Hacker, *Hundred Years*, 78.

⁶² Kawashima, *Missionaries*, 114.

⁶³ T H Somerwell, *Knife and Life in India: Being the story of a Surgical Missionary at Neeyyoor, Travancore* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1940), 24-25.

⁶⁴ Hacker, *Hundred Years*, 78.

⁶⁵ Richard Lovett, *The History of the London Missionary Society 1795-1895* (London: Oxford University Press), 1899, 225.

From its early days, medical missionary activities cannot be completely separated from the proselytizing aspirations of the missionaries.⁶⁶ The missionaries, while serving as active promoters in the spread of modern medicine, were still motivated by the hope of coming into contact with the upper castes of the society and thereby converting them into their folds, a task in which they were not entirely successful.⁶⁷ The state realized the need and possibility offered by modern medicine and supported the missions in their activities. Whereas in the case of education, missionary activities were resisted by mostly the upper echelons of society, in the medical field, they were received better both by the public and the state. Here, it is interesting to note that while missionary education primarily focused on the lower castes, their efforts in spreading education were resisted by much of the society, but when it came to healthcare, which was beneficial to all, it did not receive the same animosity from the native elites. The societal realization of the potential risk of the infected and medically unattended body could be one reason for the apparent lack of animosity in the field of medicine, unlike education.

The motivation behind the medical missionaries can be seen in the words of one of the most prominent medical missionaries and surgeons of the period, Dr. T H Somerwell: “Here then I was committed to two great changes- to bring to the east my Friend and Master, Christ and to bring, too, those gifts of healing which Western science had put in my hand.”⁶⁸ It is clear that Dr. Somerwell was guided by a strong faith in Christ and the need to spread his messages through his work, that of a surgeon or medical missionary. It is amply clear in the life of Somerwell how western science, for him, instead of being antagonistic to faith, was a tool to fill in the gaps that faith has left out. He uses “science as the chief way in which the way of Christ can be interpreted to man.”⁶⁹ He sums up his dual role as a missionary and a modern medical surgeon as “the role is double yet really only one that is the task of using surgery for Christ.”⁷⁰ This further strengthens the idea that medical missions were not entirely free of proselytizing activities and ambitions.

What is revealed here is the close tie between the institutions of colonial medicine with that of religion and its specific role in the civilizing mission. Religion was crucial to the project of

⁶⁶ John Abbs, *Twenty-Two Years' Missionary Experience in Travancore* (London: John Snow & Co, 1870), 135.

⁶⁷ Kawashima, *Missionaries*, 114.

⁶⁸ Somerwell, *Knife and Life*, 21.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 22.

⁷⁰ Ibid. 23.

colonialism, and medical missionaries played a vital role in it. Governmentality in the context of colonialism thus could not be separated from the project of civilizing mission and the ‘duty to Christ.’⁷¹ Civilizing mission in the colonies was perceived as a rational project, much like the social reforms in the metropolis that aimed at improving the conditions of the general population. Travancore, with its extremely rigid caste system, provided a ripe ground for medical missionary activities. Rev Dr. Mullens, on one of his visits to the Neyyoor mission, expresses this, “We, as students connected with the South Travancore Mission Hospital, take this opportunity of stating that the medical mission the Society has established here is one of the most important and most valuable agencies for the diffusion of the Gospel among the various communities of India, widely separated from each other as they are by the curse of caste.”⁷² For the missionaries, to care for the bodily diseases of the natives was an act that would eventually lead them to the “great physician of souls.”⁷³

Somerwell, despite his detestations for practitioners of indigenous medicine, had great regard for the Indian surgeons trained in modern medicine and particularly their surgical skills, and he thought they were superior to the average London hospital doctors.⁷⁴ Somerwell often compares the mission hospital with the government hospital. He regards government hospitals as often corrupt, less efficient, bureaucratic, and often less humane. He attributes this quality of humaneness to a Christian value. The medical professionals involved in Indian medical service were appreciated for their service by the colonial state, as is seen in the New Year honors of 1939, where Dr. Somervell was awarded the *Kaiser-i-hind* gold medal for his services with a host of other medical practitioners from India.⁷⁵ Such was Somerwell’s influence among the local people that he was regarded as “the doctor who could cure the incurable.”⁷⁶

The medical missionaries of Neyyoor and their medical school, which trained native Christian youth as medical missionaries, often suffered from a lack of financial resources to fund their medical education and training. Medical missionaries frequently appealed to missionaries and

⁷¹ Trankell and Ovesen, *French Colonial Medicine in Cambodia*, 94.

⁷² Lovett, *The History of the London Missionary Society*, 225.

⁷³ Abbs, *Twenty-Two Years*, 235-236.

⁷⁴ Somerwell, 23.

⁷⁵ “New Year Honours,” *The British Medical Journal* 1, no 4070 (Jan 7, 1939): 30-31.

⁷⁶ S Guptan Nair, Preface in K Rajasekharan Nair, *Evolution of Modern Medicine in Kerala*, viii.

organizations in the home country for financial support. The missionaries in the metropolis were enthused at the utility of the native medical missionaries in spreading the message of Christ through medical mission activities. Burns Thomson, a renowned medical missionary who, on several occasions, financially aided the native medical students on the request of Rev John Lowe of the Neyyoor mission, thus writes, “peculiarly delightful it was to me to be granted the privilege of aiding an effort like this; it made me feel as if I were multiplying myself and increasing my power of helping forward the Kingdom of God.”⁷⁷

The missionary discourses produced voluminous data and records of the state of the health of the populations, their social status, their economic activities, and the conditions in which they lived. The missionary discourses paint a picture of the oppressed far from the one often painted about Travancore as a model or ideal state. These discourses aided in the call for reforms and better penetration of the health care initiatives among the populations in the margins.

The missionaries, despite wielding considerable influence with the Madras authorities and the British Residents of Travancore, did not directly interfere in political matters of the state that undermined the Travancore royalty. This can be seen from the words of Somerwell himself: “As a missionary, it is no part of my job to, nor is it my wish to take any active part in politics. We missionaries are visitors to Travancore, and as such are loyal subjects of H.H. the Maharaja.”⁷⁸

However, many an issue of social relevance, particularly that of the lower sections of the society, which led to a confrontation with the local elites and authorities, was actively taken up by the missionaries, as seen in the case of Breast cloth agitation and the careers of missionaries like Ringeltaube. The missionary intervention has inspired and initiated various lower caste movements in Travancore.⁷⁹ The missionaries received great support from influential Residents like Macaulay and Munro, who extended their personal support and ensured the Travancore rulers' support to the missionary activities, particularly in medical missions.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ W Burns Thomson, *Reminiscences of Medical Missionary Work* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1895), 149-150.

⁷⁸ Somerwell, *Knife and Life*, 48.

⁷⁹ R N Yesudas, *A People's Revolt in Travancore: A Backward class Movement for Social Reform* (Trivandrum: Kerala Historical Society, 1976).

⁸⁰ Joseph Mullens, *Missions in South India* (London: W H Dalton, 1854) 102, 127.

Modern Medicine: The New Charity

Travancore state had long been regarded as a charitable state from the times of Marthanda Varma. It even boasted, ‘charity is our household divinity.’ Chroniclers like the poet historian Ulloor regarded the growth and flourishing of modern medicine in Travancore as the great gifts of charity of the Travancore royalty to its people.⁸¹ Thus, the advocacy and support of modern medicine were becoming the new benchmark of charity in the princely state. This charity factor is seen recurring in many a discourse on modern medicine and the support given to it by the Travancore royalty.⁸² It can be observed that the princely states across India, in their encounter with the colonial state, constantly strived for tags like ‘model state’ and ‘progressive state’ to their advantage. States like Travancore, Baroda, and Mysore all proudly employed such tags. While the threat of annexation citing misgovernance was a permanent feature of indirect colonialism, these new vocabularies also revealed the appropriation of the new possibilities offered by the colonial encounter by the princely states. In these interactions, the princely states undergo a radical transformation in modern governance and institutional penetration. The endorsement and active promotion of modern medicine by the Travancore sovereigns was regarded as evidence of their benevolence. The benevolent paternalism of these princely states assimilated the vocabularies of modern governance and integrated it into the structures of indirect colonialism.

This is reflected in the words of Maharajah Ayilyam Tirunal on the occasion of the opening of the civil hospital in 1865

“From time out of mind, charity has been regarded as one of the cardinal duties of the state. Its reputation as Dharma Raj is familiar to all Indians. What can be more real, more substantial charity than the provision of means for the relief of mitigation of sickness and disease.”⁸³

The Maharajah further emphasized the importance of modern medicine and the role of the state in promoting it.

⁸¹ Ulloor, *Progress of Travancore*, 508.

⁸² Augusta M Blanford, *The Land of the Conch Shell: A Short History of Travancore and CEZ Mission work There* (London: Church of England Zenana Missionary, 1900), 53.

⁸³ TAR, 1041, 61.

“One of the main objects of my ambition is to see that good medical aid is placed within the reach of all classes of my subjects. It is a blessing which is not at present in the power of individuals generally to secure, how much so ever they may desire it. It is hence the obvious duty if the state to render its assistance in this direction.”⁸⁴

The state that once boasted of the Hindu tradition of ‘charity’ now embraces modern medicine and technologies, and the state’s support and endorsement are regarded as the new charity. The Maharajah himself regards it as the duty of the state to provide the blessings of modern medicine to people who cannot afford it. Modern medicine and public health had become benchmarks of ‘enlightened government’ not only in Travancore. It was a recurring theme employed by many states.⁸⁵ The avowed commitment to modern medicine and public health was often portrayed as the best evidence of the state’s fidelity to the development and welfare of its subjects.

That modern medicine was a new charity was reflected not only in the words of the Raja but also the missionary Herbert Baker in his letter to the government on the setting of the first government hospital in Kottayam, writes, “No one greater *Dhurmum* (charity) has the Travancore Sircar yet performed than the establishment of these institutions [hospitals], and the consequent blessings are very great.”⁸⁶

Mateer has identified the systems of government in Travancore as consisting of two benevolent despotisms: the Native and the British.⁸⁷ It was in the midst of this political scenario that modern medicine began to function in Travancore. The ‘charitable’ nature of the Travancore state found an ally in the medical mission of the protestant missionaries. The government encouraged private contributions to the promotion of modern medicine. At the launch of a new ward in Kottayam Medical College with the help of a local businessman, Said Mohammad Rawther, the Dewan C P Ramaswamy Aiyer stresses that donation to medical institutions is a new form of charity that needs to be encouraged.⁸⁸ He goes on to say that the times have new challenges, and thus, new forms of charity need to be encouraged. The Dewan making a call

⁸⁴ TAR, 1041, 62.

⁸⁵ Arnold, *Colonizing the Body*, 246.

⁸⁶ TAR, 1042, 86.

⁸⁷ Samuel Mateer, *Native Life in Travancore* (London: W H Allen & Co, 1883), 353.

⁸⁸ *Dewan’s Medical policy*, 45.

for public cooperation stresses the need for private aid or charity as the government resources are limited and insufficient.⁸⁹ He even goes on to appeal to the rich and the poor alike to contribute, as each penny could collectively make huge donations. This reliance on individual philanthropy and generosity was also a feature of colonial medicine in directly ruled territories, as these contributions were often utilized to mask the inaction and lack of commitment by the colonial authorities.⁹⁰ In the event of epidemics, the people themselves willingly donated to the victims and their dependents. Sri Chithira Tirunal, at a meeting convened in the aftermath of a malaria epidemic in Neyyatinkara, thanked the people for their charitable initiatives and stressed the need for private charity in the spread of modern medicine for the betterment of the people.⁹¹ While the state called for generous contributions from the public, the state did not rely entirely on them to further medical institutions. The state actively set up hospitals and dispensaries in Travancore.

The call for public participation by taking up the new charity indicates steps in the widening reach of modern medicine as well as the increasing reception it was getting among the population. Though the state remains the chief authority and regulator of modern medicine, the population is encouraged to be allies in it. This is an important step in the growth of modern medicine as non-state actors and individuals actively contributed to the spread and institutionalization of modern medicine, which widened its scope and reach.

Colonial influence and authority loomed large over the modern medical system in Travancore. The Inspector-General of Madras presidency inspected the Travancore hospitals annually, which ended with the duty being entrusted to the Durbar Physician in 1878.⁹² The Raja of Travancore even requested to appoint Dr Doyle, who was the medical officer of the subsidiary forces stationed in Travancore, to head the government medical establishment, which was accepted by the Madras government.⁹³ Thus, the evolution of the modern medical system in Travancore was not unaffected by colonial rule in the presidency but was rather in a subordinate position to its hegemonic control. This gained additional significance as colonial

⁸⁹ Ibid. 47.

⁹⁰ Arnold, *Colonizing the Body*, 247-248.

⁹¹ *Speeches and Messages of His Highness Sir Balarama Varma, The Maharaja of Travancore*, (Trivandrum: ARV Press, 1938), 105-106.

⁹² Ibid. 509.

⁹³ TAR, 1041, 71.

medicine remained the foremost arena through which colonial governmentality unraveled itself in the princely state.

Rational Western Medicine and “Irrational Natives”

One persisting feature of colonial medicine in its dissemination in the colonies was the construction of the natives as the ‘irrational other’ who were antagonistic to the advances in medicine and the new technologies and developments because of their ignorance, prejudice, and conflicting cultural values. This orientalist prejudice was a recurring theme in the writings of colonial officials, travellers, missionaries, and medical practitioners alike.⁹⁴ Native ignorance, superstitions, and uncivilized cultural practices were identified as detrimental factors in the spread of western medicine despite the best efforts of the state. This discursive production of the natives as the inferior, irrational other fits in perfectly with the project of Orientalism identified and exposed by Edward Said.⁹⁵ Rather than dismissing the native resistance, although mostly in the realm of personal resistance, it could still be understood as instances of counter-conduct by the native population. The exercise of biopower was often met with these instances of counter-conduct, whereby its arbitrary exercise was often rejected by the people to whom it was applied. Instances of counter-conduct cannot be dismissed as ignorance, hostility, or reluctance to change. While religious and cultural practices certainly came in the way of the advancement of biopower and its subjectification techniques, it is important to keep in mind that the exercise of biopower demanded a radical shift in the social and cultural positioning of the body. Instances of resistance thus need to be understood as the legitimate expression of the political consciousness of the people against the disciplinarian and biopolitical intrusion of colonialism. It is thus important here to underline Bala’s caution that given the linkages between colonialism and biomedicine, the native resistance needs to be situated in these linkages.⁹⁶

While it could be true that there was often cultural resistance to the advancement of western medicine and its authoritarian interventions in the lives of people, it would be wrong to assume

⁹⁴ Augusta M Blanford, *The Land of the Conch Shell: A Short History of Travancore and C.E.Z Mission Work There* (London: Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1903), 52. Somerwell also shared the perspective. Numerous examples of this can be cited in the early missionary and colonial accounts.

⁹⁵ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

⁹⁶ Bala, *Biomedicine as a Contested Site*, 6.

that colonial medicine did not find its native partners and was not received by the people. The history of western medicine in Travancore reveals that there was a greater reception by the people and practitioners and endorsement by the state, which helped in its successful penetration. Such medical practices as amputation were dreaded by the Hindu populations for religious reasons as they believed that the loss of a limb in this birth would lead to them being reborn without limbs for a thousand years.⁹⁷

It has already been shown that western medicine and its social history were far more complex an entity to be placed in this binary of irrational natives and the rational colonial apparatus. The interaction that shaped the course of western medicine and its trajectories in the colonies is much more complex and convoluted. While there was resistance to western medicine in the name of breaching conventions and traditions, it did not lead to a significant movement of resistance in Travancore, as witnessed in many parts of India. Often, the resistance remained in the realm of personal or individual opposition and attempted to evade these interventions. The enthusiastic support of the native government could be identified as one reason for the lack of protest or opposition to western medicine, like in many other parts of the country.

The native reception and cooperation in the field of medicine prove that the unfolding of modern medicine was not only marked by animosity. The presence of native healthcare workers, doctors, and vaccinators and its reception by the natives proved that the trajectories of modern medicine in the colony were not marked by ‘native resistance’ to modern medicine alone. The “native vaccinator,” as Brimnes argues, posed a problem for the dominant colonial perspective on colonial medicine as a struggle between benevolent colonial medicine and irrational natives.⁹⁸

Another important factor that reduced the possibility of resistance, especially among the lower castes, was the role played by the missionaries. Like in the case of medical missionaries like Somerwell, who had come to become active and respected members of the society, their personal connections with the people played an important role in the popularizing of western medicine. Travancore society had witnessed missionary activities in the field of education from the 19th century. This familiarity and the good work carried out by them helped in the

⁹⁷ Somerwell, *Knife and Life*, 172.

⁹⁸ Niels Brimnes, “Variolation, Vaccination and Popular Resistance in Early Colonial South India,” *Medical History*, 48 (2004): 222.

promotion and its subsequent reception by the people of Travancore. Somerwell lauds Indians for their coolness and general ability to remain calm during surgeries, which he says was not the case with British patients back home. He believed that Indian patients were more cooperative and easier to deal with during surgeries.⁹⁹

However, rumours played an important role in keeping people away from accessing hospitals and medical facilities, at least in its early days. Such rumours as people would be cut open for operations and would be taken away to England in steamers created much panic among the people.¹⁰⁰ Among other rumours was that using cow lymph would result in people acquiring the features of cows.¹⁰¹ Persistent as these rumours were, they did not have so much of an impact to impede the growth of modern medicine considerably in the state. Native Press also played an important role in dispelling the rumours by publishing articles in support of the new medical practices.

The absence of female doctors, vaccinators, and lady surgeons in hospitals prevented women from making full use of the possibilities of modern medicine. This was particularly seen among some communities like the Muslims and upper-caste Hindu women, whose strong cultural values prevented them from being examined by men.¹⁰² Dr. Pulney Andy also opines that the substantially lesser number of vaccinations among women was not only because of their aversion to touch by male vaccinators but a result of women's relative absence in public spaces, unlike men.¹⁰³ There were even instances of death on account of women patients resisting being operated on and administered injections by men.¹⁰⁴ Even during the spread of such epidemics as cholera, women refused to be vaccinated by men.¹⁰⁵ There was also a huge demand for women's medical services, which was believed to solve these problems. The demand for qualified female doctors, nurses, and midwives was constant. The elevation of Dr. Mary Lukose as the Durbar Physician was widely appreciated by the people. It is noticed in the legislative assemblies that the members frequently expressed their hope that now that a woman was occupying the highest position in the medical department, the concerns and

⁹⁹ Somerwell, *Knife and Life*, 51.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. 186.

¹⁰¹ *Mangalodayam*, "Vasoori Keerivekkal," No 6, 1085, 219-229.

¹⁰² TAR, 1869-72, 112.

¹⁰³ Ibid. 112.

¹⁰⁴ TLC, Second Session 1104, 14 August 1929, 993.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. 993.

grievances of women across the state would be better addressed. The Travancore state often took measures to address these grievances of women, although it was often constrained by financial concerns and limited resources. Having found that pressures of social customs prevented women from accessing the General hospital, funds were provided to the Zenana Mission to add beds for women patients.¹⁰⁶ Both the state and non-state agents involved in modern medical care extended special measures to further medical care to women, which is seen in its greater utilization by women.

The attempts to dislocate diseases from their cultural and religious location to a medical and scientific concern being met with strong resistance was a consistent/recurring phenomenon in the history of modern medicine. However, in the colonial context, this resistance was often magnified and portrayed as native unwillingness to change and evidence of their irrational practices. These instances of resistance would also be appropriated by the colonial authorities, often to justify coercive practices by the state. This shift was also marked by a corporeal shift in the understanding of the body from a cultural entity to a biopolitical entity.

New Ideas of Governance Old Structures of Government

Colonial biopolitics often operated through existing juridical and disciplinary institutions like jails, hospitals, courtrooms, schools, and the workplace. It was the prison population of the Travancore Central Jail who were among the first group of people to be administered smallpox vaccination. These institutions underwent many changes in tune with the new techniques of government. However, they often utilized their existing frames of power and continued to remain in the values they were familiar with. Several examples can be seen in support of these claims. While it could be argued that disciplinary power underwent tremendous changes in the treatment of criminals and convicts, torture remained a reality few could contest.

Even when modern medicine entered the lives of the people and subjected them to new modes of treatment and therapeutics, it continued to be affected by existing concerns of caste, pollution, and prejudices. Despite making the best use of the new possibilities offered by modern medicine, people would still demand a caste Hindu doctor in hospitals, and the

¹⁰⁶ Velu Pillai, *Travancore State Manual*, Vol II, 680.

government would often succumb to such demands.¹⁰⁷ One cannot ignore such instances in the study of power and make any jumping conclusion that biopolitical administration was a process complete in itself and absolute in its practice. This is an indicator of the local specificities under which the whole project of colonial biopolitics or governmentality functioned. The values of the people were not something the state and its machinery could ignore. What is exerted here is not so much the idea that people were resisting changes and clinging to tradition in their opposition to modern technologies but rather the ways in which they appropriated it as active agents in getting their values expressed in these new forms of power.

The 'population' that they have come to be part of has become the primary focus of biopower and was also something that carried other identities: caste, region, gender, norms, and tradition. These existing identities and the value systems that legitimized them continued to operate in the new practices of government. New subjectivities were formed in the interstices of operation of the new modalities of colonial power and the cultural web in which the body was embedded. Whereas the former was imposed through the discursive and non-discursive practices and rationalities of biopolitical administration, the latter invested the body with historical and cultural identities. These peculiarities made colonial governmentality an enterprise deeply shaped by its regional context wherever it operated.

While the state was quick to endorse the new rationalities of government and expressed itself in the new vocabularies of the modern, the new notions of the modern resulted in the creation of new and hybrid ways of operation for the state as well as its subjects. The state undoubtedly underwent a radical reconfiguration in the ways it legitimized itself. However, this transition was not absolute, nor did traditional identities and ways of existence become completely obsolete. Non-institutional forms of power like caste continued to exist and influence the new notions of the modern. This was further legitimized by the state's oscillation between

¹⁰⁷ In the TLC Proceedings 1930, an interesting discussion can be observed, to the question of member Mr. Kuriakose, whether any non-caste Hindu doctors have ever been appointed as the medical officers at the government hospitals of Vaikom and Mavelikkara, the acting Chief secretary to government T P Rama Subba Aiyar responds that at Mavelikkara non-caste Hindu medical officers had been posted from time to time whereas in Vaikom, as the hospital is situated in the midst of caste Hindu hospitals and close to the Hindu temple, It has been the practice to post only caste Hindus to the post of medical officers. TLC, 2nd session, 18 August 1930.

In the same discussion, to the question whether the lower castes have access to these hospitals, the Chief Secretary says, information is not available and he is not aware if the lowered castes had access to these hospitals, This was a deliberate strategy frequently employed by the state to evade questions and such evidences are found frequently in the proceedings. TLC, 2nd session, 18 August 1930.

traditional and modern forms of legitimation that was seen throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. These contradictions are best illustrated in this narrative in the context of the introduction of modern medicine in Travancore.

“In fact, a most farcical situation since the chief physician, a Dr. Lakshman, despite his eminent medical qualifications could never touch members of the royal family because he was of low caste: a Brahmin assistant would conduct examinations and convey symptoms to him, following which the doctor, who had collected his degrees from England’s most prestigious institutions would prescribe remedies.”¹⁰⁸

Dr. Somerwell narrates several incidents that reveal the extent of the native prejudice and distrust of colonial medicine among the Indians. One such instance was a man prohibiting his wife’s medical examination by a male doctor and asking the doctor to check her pulse by tying a thread to her wrist.¹⁰⁹ This is among the most revealing examples of the cultural difference between the two different systems. Here, the body figures in crucially to the prejudice. The woman’s body was regarded as too sacred to be touched by another man than her husband. Such confrontations were far too common. Native notions of purity and modesty prevented close physical proximity and the physical examination of the patients, a breach of which would lead to confrontations.¹¹⁰ Devaki Nilayamgode, in her memoirs, recalls an instance where children and other male members of the family were vaccinated, whereas the women of the household were not vaccinated as they could not be seen and touched by male vaccinators.¹¹¹ Through such confrontations and the influences of modern medicine, the body was taking a life of its own.

Even when bodies were subjected to the techniques and practices of modern medicine, they refused to let go of the religious and ritualistic notions of purity they held over other sections of the population, even that of the modern medical practitioner. Modern medicine thus operated within this understanding of the body. In this case, the doctor, being a Thiyya, which was a

¹⁰⁸ Manu S Pillai, *The Ivory Throne: Chronicles of the House of Travancore* (New Delhi: Harper Collins, 2015) 66.

¹⁰⁹ Somerwell, *Knife and Life*. 52.

¹¹⁰ Kawashima, *Missionaries*, 142.

¹¹¹ Nilayamgode, *Antharjanam*, 99.

lower caste, could not touch the body of the royal family members as that would amount to pollution.

Colonial medicine was not the mere imposition of modern medicine in a colonial context; rather, it was medicine practised under distinct colonial conditions in which the natives also participated, though as unequal partners. As Arnold emphatically asserts, “Medicine was too powerful, too authoritative a species of discourse and praxis to be left to the colonizer alone.”¹¹² The avenues of healthcare opened up for the people were not equal; however, people actively participated in it, often as unequal partners. However, as seen in the above instances, the local context and specificities continued to shape the pathways of colonial medicine.

The natives were not only the objects of colonial medicine, but by the first quarter of the 20th century, a considerable number of native medical practitioners of western medicine emerged, some of them trained in England. The first Surgeon General of Travancore was a native woman trained in England, Dr. Mary Poonnen Lukose. Her elevation to the post was regarded as an epoch-making event in the history of Travancore, and she was regarded as the ‘*Karanavatti*’ of the medical family in the state by a member.¹¹³ The appointment of Dr. Mary Lukose to such an important position was a significant step as it helped liberate modern medicine from its male-dominated existence until then. Arnold’s observation that the participation of Indian practitioners diminished the perceived foreignness of western medicine is further validated here.¹¹⁴

However, native medical practitioners continued to work in this unique situation where they were proponents of the new science engaged in the creation of new subjectivities. Still, at the same time, they were subjects carrying such primordial identities as caste, much like in the case of Dr. Lakshman, where he would still be discriminated against based on his caste. These are not isolated events. There are instances where one Dr. Chacko, who was only recently posted in Chovvara in the kingdom of Kochi, was transferred on account of the visit of the Raja of Cochin. The reason for the transfer was that Dr. Chacko, being a Christian, could

¹¹² Arnold, *Colonizing the Body*, 10

¹¹³ TLC, Vol 5, 1924, 5 September 1924, 744, *Karanavatti* means the Matriarch of the household, who is the head of the household in the absence of a *Karanavar*, who is the patriarch of the family. Incidentally Dr. Mary Lukose was also the first lady student of the Maharaja’s College for Boys.

¹¹⁴ Arnold, *Colonizing the Body*, 294.

pollute the Raja and thus transferred and, in his place, a Brahmin Dr G. Ramachandran was appointed the medical officer.¹¹⁵ It was a practice of the government not to appoint any non-caste Hindu doctors in those places where the hospitals were in close proximity to either temples or caste Hindu households.¹¹⁶ Nilayamgode also recalls the early encounters of her family with an upper-caste modern medical practitioner who, on arrival at the house, took a bath to purify himself before he proceeded to attend to the male patients. Despite being an upper-caste Hindu, the doctor was not allowed to attend to the women of the household and examine them.¹¹⁷ The same factors also made the hospitals inaccessible to the lower castes. The members of the upper caste would refuse to have lower caste midwives trained in modern medical practices to cater to the upper caste women of their households, fearing pollution and even risking the death of the pregnant women by denying them timely and expert care.¹¹⁸ The missionary John Abbs, who spent two decades of his service in Travancore, narrates instances where the medical ministers would be summoned at late hours to a distance of many miles only to be denied entry into the household on fearing pollution.¹¹⁹

It was not only native practitioners of a lower caste or different religion that had to be the victims of such considerations. Even Western doctors were subject to such prejudices, as seen in the Raja Balarama Varma's interaction with Dr Hume, where the physically weak Raja insisted on a ritual bath to purify himself after every meeting with the doctor because of the fear of pollution, further damaging his health.¹²⁰ Mateer, too, attests to the same wherein the members of the ruling family immediately took up a ritual bath after consultation by European doctors fearing pollution.¹²¹

However, the fact that traditional identities played an influential role in the practices of modern medicine was not something unique to Travancore or India. Even in the West, conventional identities frequently came in the way of the working of modern medicine. Eventually, modern medicine and the new identities that it produced triumphed over the previous modes of

¹¹⁵ Mathrubhumi, 28 January 1935.

¹¹⁶ TLC, 3rd Council, 18 August 1930, 1067.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. 106-109.

¹¹⁸ Abbs, *Twenty-Two Years*, 163-164

¹¹⁹ Ibid. 135.

¹²⁰ Aparna Nair, "Vaccinating Against Vasoore: Eradicating Smallpox in the 'model' Princely State of Travancore, 1804-1946," *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 56, no. 4 (2019): 6.

¹²¹ Samuel Mateer, *The Land of Charity: A Descriptive Account of Travancore and Its People* (London: John Snow & Co, 1871) 63-64.

organization. This is identified by scholars as a “movement of medicine from client control to medical dominance.”¹²² A new corporeal sensibility is ushered in by modern medicine and its biopolitical interventions.

Importantly, in the context of Travancore, the presence of caste and its strict and unique hierarchies further complicated the paradigms and organization of professionalization of modern medicines than in the West. However, the focus here is not the professionalization of medicine in the colonies, but it is only stressed that the existing identities and forms of the social organization played an important role in the shaping of western medicine in the colonies. It is not free from the influences of these existing identities. Rather than being entirely replaced by modern medicine and the new modes of organization it puts in place, these identities get a revamped existence and wield considerable impact over it. This also shaped the nature of western medicine in a colony and the new biopolitical administrative mechanisms it put in place in the colonies.

Western medicine, when unraveled in its colonial context rather than becoming a catalyst of radical change altering held beliefs and prevailing social customs and norms, often effectively uses them to its benefit. As Arnold has clearly shown in its functioning, “this then might be taken as an example of the way in which Western medicine, for all its novelty, might find a certain compatibility with existing social forms and cultural norms in India.”¹²³ The policy was to make the best use of the existing order as and when it suited it and confront it only when it directly impeded the growth of colonial medicine and the governmental rationalities that initiated them.

How modern medical practices often gave into local perceptions and, in the process, legitimized such practices rather than confronting and eradicating them are best exemplified in the words of the former chief minister of Travancore –Cochin, C Kesavan, “the Mavelikkara hospital also preached ‘*asudhham*’ like Mavelikkara temple and palace. Even after independence, no non-*savarna* Hindu would be appointed in the Mavelikkara hospital as a doctor.”¹²⁴ It has already been mentioned how modern institutions, rather than getting rid of

¹²² David Armstrong, “Bodies of Knowledge/ Knowledge of Bodies,” in *Reassessing Foucault: Power, Medicine and the Body*, ed. Colin Jones & Roy Porter (New York: Routledge, 1998), 18.

¹²³ Arnold, *Colonizing the Body*, 5.

¹²⁴ C Kesavan, *Jeevitha Samaram*. (Kottayam: DC Books, 2005 (1968), 193. *Asuddham* is translated as impurity.

caste practices by confronting them, reconfigure themselves to accommodate such identities as caste and its practices in its reincarnated forms, often providing them with institutional support for their ideological base. Severe difficulties were faced by the lower castes in access to health care. They had to wait until everyone finished meeting the doctor. Often, medicines would be thrown at them from a distance by the upper-caste doctors. In the General Hospital, a separate shed was erected for the Pulaya patients, next to the shed meant to keep animals and carriages of the medical officers.¹²⁵ The fear of pollution even denied two Pulaya lunatics admission to the lunatic asylum.¹²⁶ Demands were raised in the legislative assemblies to employ the lower caste Pulayas in the government medical services as nurses and attendants.¹²⁷

Such evidence is aplenty during the establishment of the modern medical system in Travancore. Travancore administration reports indicate that sections of lowered castes were treated from as early as 1879-80 in the government hospitals.¹²⁸ However, for a large majority of the untouchable castes, hospitals remained a distant dream. Separate wards or enclosures were made for the treatment of the lowest ranks away from the main hospital complex. Within the hospital complex, members of each community were allocated separate cooking spaces.¹²⁹ The missionary hospitals had a more sympathetic approach to the conditions of the lowest sections than the government hospitals. The fact that most of the converts to Christianity were from the lower sections would have been one factor that encouraged the missionaries apart from their faith in the service of God. The missionary medical activity worked in close quarters with the lower masses of the population. What is attempted here is not presenting anecdotal evidence that appears contrary to the principles upheld by important members of the ruling elite. Rather, these are pieces of evidence that revealed the general mindset of populations, even the educated elites, while they became subjects of colonial medicine.

The earliest documentation of the practice of western medicine in Travancore is *The Annual Medical Report of the Travancore Residency for the year 1842, stationed at Trevandrum* by

¹²⁵ Sunitha B Nair, "Social History of Western Medical Practice in Travancore: An Inquiry into the Administrative Process," in *Disease and Medicine in India: A Historical Overview*, ed. Deepak Kumar (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2001), 222.

¹²⁶ P K Govinda Pillai, TSMPPA 1911, dated 18.2.1911, Discussion on the Disabilities of the Pulayas, 121-123.

¹²⁷ SMA, 14 March 1930, 330, the Dewan responds by saying that the demand will be considered by the government, without giving any assurances.

¹²⁸ TAR 1879-80, 57.

¹²⁹ Somerwell, *Knife and Life*, 132.

Colin Paterson, the British physician to Swati Tirunal.¹³⁰ He was appointed as the Raja's physician in 1842. The report describes the topography, prevalent diseases, and prevalent modes of treatment administered for the diseases. While a list of diseases and their treatments are described, there is not much reference to the patients or their socio-cultural backgrounds. The native responses to western medical practices also curiously remain absent in the reports. Paterson, looking at the prevalence of venereal diseases, blamed it on the loose morals and nominal marriage customs of the natives.

We see a classification of the diseases affecting the region and prescribing the drugs suited to them. Most of the potions administered were rudimentary mixtures of compounds. The lack of cleanliness and the lack of resources enabling a healthier lifestyle is stressed. However, he acknowledges this not as a mistake of the affected people but rather the prevalent conditions existing in the country as a whole.¹³¹ However, it must be understood that what became the hegemonic western medicine had such humble beginnings. The Paterson report throws an interesting light on the diseases prevalent in the state and the general living conditions of the people of the state. It is also an interesting account of a western medical practitioner in a colony in the embryonic stages of colonial medicine. However, Colin Paterson's time in Travancore reveals another important event in Travancore. He was appointed the personal physician of the Raja Swati Tirunal, and when he was removed from that post in 1852, the Raja requested the British Resident Gen. Cullen, with whom the Raja had a bitter relationship, to reinstate him to the post. The Raja's request went unheeded by the Resident.¹³² The precarious position of the Raja to the colonial power is revealed here, also the patronizing of modern medicine by the Royalty of Travancore from as early as the 1840s.

In the words of Sir Madhava Rao, "Doubtless much saving of life was actually effected, though the natives, as a rule, have less confidence in the effectiveness of the European system of remedies for cholera than in the case of other diseases."¹³³ However, this situation was changing rapidly, and the people were increasingly gaining confidence in western medicine, as seen in the words of Dewan himself in his letter to Brigade Surgeon J.M. Houston, who was

¹³⁰ Achuth Shanker S and Catherine Logen, "Colin Paterson and His Medical Report 1842," *Journal of Kerala Studies*, Vol XXXIII, (2006): 82-113.

¹³¹ Ibid. 106.

¹³² Ibid. 106.

¹³³ TAR, 1045 ME (1869-70), Nagam Aiya, *Travancore State Manual Vol III*, 504.

the Durbar physician of Travancore, on his retirement. Thanking him for his services, the Dewan acknowledges the increasing confidence European medicine has received among the people, as evidenced by the growing number of hospitals and dispensaries across the state.¹³⁴ The same report also shows an upsurge in the number of patients that availed of these facilities.

The single most active agent of colonial biopolitics was colonial medicine. However, colonial biopolitics cannot be reduced to colonial medicine alone. Those other aspects of colonial biopolitics are elicited here. Thereafter, the real effects of colonial biopolitics are attempted to be explored in greater detail in chapter V.

Vaccination

The discovery of smallpox vaccination in the year 1796 by Edward Jenner enabled modern medicine to eradicate one of the most feared diseases in human history. By the 19th century, vaccination had become one of the most important developments in the field of medicine and public health across the world. However, this was far from an easy path, not uniform in its spread, and had its own contextual challenges. Smallpox vaccination across the world, as Bhattacharya and Brimnes assert, was a “phenomenon that was simultaneously global and local.”¹³⁵ It soon became a “commodified global technology,” significantly shaping global history.¹³⁶ Vaccination played a singular and dominant role in the medicalization of both the individual body as well as the general population. Technologies of security and population intersected in vaccination. Vaccination thus can be regarded as the first major biopolitical intervention in Travancore, marking a new beginning in which the body became an active subject of government by the state. ‘Life’ and its embodiment, the ‘body,’ was assimilated into politics and its visible/tangible forms of administration more than ever before. Medicalization of the body, as Turner argues, needs to be understood as a part of a rationalization of society through the scientific categories.¹³⁷ The deeply divided and hierarchically ordered caste society responded to these biopolitical interventions differently. The educational status of the community, caste positions, social and cultural mobility, and aspirations of the communities

¹³⁴ *Report on the Administration of Travancore*, 1888-89, 163.

¹³⁵ Sanjoy Bhattacharya and Niels Brimnes, “Introduction: Simultaneously Global and Local: Reassessing Smallpox Vaccination and Its Spread 1789-1900,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 83, no. 1, (2009): 1-16.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.* 1-16.

¹³⁷ Bryan S Turner, *Medical Power and Social Knowledge* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1987), 214.

all shaped each community's response to biopolitical interventions. Medicalization of the body and the governmentalization of the state was a process that developed simultaneously and was mutually constituted.

In a colonial context, the success of vaccination helped assert the superiority of western medicine over indigenous medical practices and facilitated new governmental and medical intervention strategies.¹³⁸ However, this was far from a linear and uniform process indubitably accepted by the people. Smallpox was the most feared and dreaded of Indian diseases. Inoculation or variolation was the preferred choice for countering smallpox that existed in many non-western societies before the import of the Jennerian vaccination. Inoculation is believed to have reached Europe through Constantinople as early as 1717.¹³⁹ The earliest attempts to counter smallpox in south India were through an attempt to promote variolation that began as early as 1800, which was soon diverted to a focus on vaccination.¹⁴⁰ While the colonial officials initially had a sympathetic approach to variolation, the indigenous practice employed to check smallpox and often hailed its success: it was soon regarded as wanting and inefficient as it was found to have the risk of seriously affecting the inoculated person and also making them a potential carrier. In the early days, they also employed the same technique among their own soldiers when and where smallpox vaccination was not available.¹⁴¹ Later, finding it beneficial, it was also extended to family members of the soldiers and Indian sepoys.¹⁴² The variolation efforts of the company were fully endorsed by the Madras government. However, the colonial attitude to variolation became more hostile with the success of vaccination, so much so that it was soon branded the "murderous trade."¹⁴³ Variolation employed by the British authorities in the 19th century certainly had indigenous roots, which they refused to acknowledge; instead, it was presented as a European technique.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁸ Arnold, *The New Cambridge History of India*, 71.

¹³⁹ Dominik Wujastyk, "A Pious Fraud": The Indian Claims of Pre-Jennerian Smallpox Vaccination," in *Studies in Indian Medical History*, ed. G Meulenbeld & Dominik Wujastyk (New Delhi: Motilal Banarssidas, 2001): 121.

¹⁴⁰ Brimnes, *Variolation, Vaccination*, 227.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.* 202.

Brimnes gives evidences of variolation techniques being used on company soldiers in Madras presidency as early as 1787, where variolation was not really popular. It became so popular in the early 19th century that nearly 26000 people were inoculated through the native practice by the company. 203.

¹⁴² *Ibid.* 202.

¹⁴³ Arnold, *Colonizing the Body*, 138.

¹⁴⁴ Brimnes, *Variolation, Vaccination*, 219.

The emergence of the cowpox vaccination made vaccination much easier and more popular. Brimnes argues that, unlike variolation, vaccination, being a European technique, “enabled the colonial authorities to conceive their campaign as a contest between European benevolence and indigenous prejudice.”¹⁴⁵ For a brief while, variolation was diffused with the new technique of vaccination, resulting in a greater number of people being vaccinated.¹⁴⁶ Smallpox prevention in colonial south India witnessed the diffusion and coexistence of three models of smallpox prevention: native variolation, British variolation, and the newly emerged vaccination.¹⁴⁷ *This indicates that the expansion of colonial medicine was not always marked by the complete displacement of existing practices but rather its appropriation and diffusion.* In the early days, the strategy was the cooption of the existing systems and structures to help the penetration of native society better. However, modern medicine constantly strived to gain monopolistic control over various other forms of indigenous medical practices, enabled by the backing of colonial authorities. This quest for hegemony led colonial medicine to employ strategies to delegitimize other indigenous medical traditions once it managed to establish its control in the society.

The attempts to ban variolation by the colonial state were criticized for being hasty and based on prejudice.¹⁴⁸ The influence of inoculation was often regarded as detrimental to the spread of vaccination as areas where variolation was less prevalent were found to show a greater reception to vaccination.¹⁴⁹ There is no evidence for the prevalence of variolation in South India and Travancore, unlike some other parts of India like Bengal and Orissa. However, indigenous medical practices existing in the state did pay attention to smallpox, but those practices were more focused on alleviating the miseries caused by the disease than prophylactic in nature.¹⁵⁰ These practices were also enmeshed in a religious and cultural understanding that would be deemed ‘unscientific’ in the eyes of modern medicine.

Travancore followed a path different from Madras in its endorsement of vaccination and modern medicine. Ever since the arrival of vaccination in India in 1804, many of the native

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. 203.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. 204.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. 207.

¹⁴⁸ Variolation was banned in India by the Wellesley government in 1804, but it was not strictly enforced by the government. Arnold, *Colonizing the Body*, 151.

¹⁴⁹ Bhattacharya & Brimnes, *Introduction: Simultaneously Global*, 1.

¹⁵⁰ Pulney Andy, “On the Use of Margosa leaves in Smallpox,” *The Madras Quarterly Journal* (1867): 105-107.

states, including Travancore, expressed an active interest in it.¹⁵¹ Systematic efforts were initiated by the state to promote vaccination in Travancore. Vaccination against the deadly smallpox was the first to receive the state's attention. The Dewan of Travancore himself set an example by undergoing smallpox vaccination in 1804, which was hailed by colonial medical officials.¹⁵² Vaccination was introduced in Travancore in the year 1813, and a separate vaccination department was founded in 1865-65.¹⁵³ Unlike the presidency towns where the colonial state was halfhearted in its efforts in vaccination due to the high economic costs it incurred, the Travancore government showed a stronger political will in extending vaccination to its people. Vaccination efforts in Travancore were not immune to colonial intervention. The East India Company regularly vaccinated its native and European troops stationed in Travancore.¹⁵⁴ Early vaccination attempts in Travancore were under the watchful eyes of the colonial government in Madras, while the administrative and financial responsibilities to promote vaccination rested with the Travancore government.¹⁵⁵

The vaccination department in the state remained under the Durbar Physician in its early days. It was revamped by 1860 and was more thoroughly organized under the vaccine superintendent. The increasing penetration of vaccination and the resultant state intervention is clearly manifested in the royal proclamation of 1878, which made it compulsory for anyone entering government service and in government schools, jails, and anyone depending on state charity to be vaccinated for smallpox.¹⁵⁶

The state employed considerable resources for propaganda measures to create awareness among the public on the importance of vaccination. These propaganda measures included promotional cinemas, lantern lectures, awareness drives, wall posters, exhibitions, newspaper advertisements, etc.¹⁵⁷ The Public Health Department also appointed propaganda officers to spread awareness about appropriate health practices and sanitation in the state. The medical education officer was entrusted with organizing public exhibitions displaying charts and health

¹⁵¹ James Anderson, *Correspondence on the Extermination of Smallpox* (Madras: Francis Lawrance, 1805) 18.

¹⁵² *Ibid.* 18.

¹⁵³ Velu Pillai, *Travancore State Manual, Vol III*, 758.

¹⁵⁴ Aparna Nair, "Vaccinating Against Vasoore: Eradicating Smallpox in the 'model' Princely State of Travancore, 1804-1946," *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 56 no. 4 (2019): 6.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 6.

¹⁵⁶ Velu Pillai, *Travancore State Manual, Vol IV*, 209. Smallpox Vaccination Proclamation 1878, *The Regulations and Proclamations of Travancore, Vol VII*, 346-348.

¹⁵⁷ *Proceedings of the Joint Sitting of the Legislature*, 24 July 1934, 13.

statistics to create awareness among the people.¹⁵⁸ A public health library was also created under the educational officer for the same purpose. Pamphlets, posters, and bulletins on health, diseases, hygiene, and nutrition remained popular measures employed by the state to dispense new ideas on health, diseases, and precautionary measures.¹⁵⁹ Promotion of vaccination, anti-malarial campaigns, plague measures, mosquito control, hygiene, and sanitation were the primary focus of the health education campaigns. On occasions, the state even conducted special conferences on plague for the prominent merchants and citizens of the city. The public propaganda initiatives and lectures were so exhaustive that nearly 2 lakh people attended the 1041 lectures that the Health Educational officer of the state organized.¹⁶⁰ A Health propaganda van was purchased by the government in 1937, and it soon gathered the attention of the public. Films on leprosy, tuberculosis, malaria, plague, venereal diseases, sanitation, and hygiene were frequently shown to the public.¹⁶¹ Considerable attention was also paid to maternity care and child welfare. This was deeply admired and appreciated by the Maharani Sethu Parvathi Bayi herself.¹⁶²

These public health propaganda initiatives of modern medicine and its biopolitical rationalities were not only aimed at creating awareness but an appeal to the communities and the masses to be willing participants in its initiatives by creating a public health conscience. This is inseparable from the modern state's biopolitical project of creating a healthy, manageable, responsible, and governable subject, realized through new knowledge systems like modern medicine and the science of sanitation and surveillance.

Dr. Pulney Andy, a native doctor who was trained in Britain and specialized in vaccination, was brought from Madras and appointed as the superintendent of vaccination.¹⁶³ Twenty-seven vaccinators and a head vaccinator were appointed to assist him.¹⁶⁴ A vaccine depot was established in Trivandrum in 1890-91.¹⁶⁵ Human lymph was initially used for vaccination, to which many people objected as they doubted the virus was obtained from the lower orders and

¹⁵⁸ TAR, 1929-30, 192.

¹⁵⁹ TAR, 1934-35, 201.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 201-202.

¹⁶¹ Velu Pillai, *The Travancore State Manual*, Vol III, 810-811.

¹⁶² *Ibid.* 811.

¹⁶³ TAR, 1041, 71.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 71.

¹⁶⁵ Aiya, *Travancore State Manual Vol II*, 526.

thus affected their purity conceptions and intense caste consciousness.¹⁶⁶ Whereas the native inoculators used preserved dried matter for inoculation, it was a British practice to use fresh matter to increase efficiency. Thus, the basic techniques of vaccination remained the same as that of variolation, which was an arm-to-arm technique. Examining these two practices, Arnold asserts that what distinguished vaccination from the ritualistic world of variolation was its “raw secularity.”¹⁶⁷ As shown earlier, the diseases were being removed from its ritualistic and religious world and became a ‘secular’ concern through the practices of modern medicine. This was a feature that has been traced to the emergence of biopolitics in the European context as well, where biopolitical practices led to the secularization of health and illness and gradually replaced the Church as the key institution controlling the life processes of the individual.¹⁶⁸

Later, with the emergence of the Jennerian vaccination, the usage of lymph obtained from cows replaced the arm-to-arm technique, enhancing its efficiency and appeal. The British even thought that the cultural and symbolic significance of the cow in Indian society would enhance the appeal of cowpox vaccination among the Indians. Whenever cow lymph was not sufficiently available, human lymph continued to be used for vaccination. In 1894-95, a separate department for vaccination, vital statistics, and sanitation was established in Travancore. The state was divided into four units, each under a sanitary officer, checking the registration of deaths, births, state of public health, and sanitation.¹⁶⁹ The Public health laboratory, which would further boost the work of the existing vaccine depot, was set up in 1933.¹⁷⁰

The support the Travancore sovereign extended to vaccination can be seen in Maharajah Ayilyam Tirunal’s own words,

“I hope I am not too sanguine in expecting to see before many years elapse, If not the total disappearance, the considerable diminution of the scourge of smallpox in this country. It has been repeatedly proved that this is a thoroughly preventable [sic] disease. I take this opportunity earnestly to impress this fact on the minds of all my

¹⁶⁶ Ulloor, *Progress of Travancore*, 531.

¹⁶⁷ Arnold, *Colonizing the Body*, 143.

¹⁶⁸ Turner, *Medical Power*, 219.

¹⁶⁹ Ulloor, *Progress of Travancore*, 532.

¹⁷⁰ *Proceedings of the Joint Sitting of the Legislature*, 24 July 1934, 13.

native subjects, and to urge them to seek for themselves, for their children, for their friends, and for their servants, the great protection of vaccination. They will see the strength of my conviction in the fact that there is no member of my own family that has not had this protection conferred at an early age.”¹⁷¹

Despite the efforts of the state, vaccination was still looked upon with suspicion by some sections of society. The Smallpox vaccination was so dreaded by the population that children would be hidden by their parents, and the adults would run for their lives to avoid being found and vaccinated. Ravages caused by smallpox and the native response frequently found their place in popular vernacular literature. U K Kumaran’s *Thakshankunnu Swarupam* and N S Madhavan’s *Lanthan Batheriyile Luthiniakal*, both give a vivid picture of dreaded smallpox spread in the state and the native response to vaccination.

Cultural and religious factors resulted in the slow and uneven reception of vaccination. The upper castes resisted vaccination for religious reasons and found the arm-to-arm vaccination and human lymph usage, particularly of the lower castes, polluting.¹⁷² Like many other diseases, smallpox was also associated with the fury of the native goddess *Sitala/ Chutala/ Mariamman* in the native imagination. Epidemics were regarded as visitations of these native deities. People practised many religious rituals and ceremonies to please these goddesses and cure them of the vagaries of smallpox. The native name for the disease smallpox was *vasuri*, derived from the Sanskrit word *Masurika*, meaning gram or disease of gram-like eruptions.¹⁷³

Smallpox was so dreaded that people were often left to die on the streets or in homes unattended.¹⁷⁴ Some native attendants alone took care of the ones infected. These attendants were people who had been cured of the diseases.¹⁷⁵ They provided palliative care in the form of clearing phlegm from patients’ throats, cleaning their eyes, feeding them, and helping the patients alleviate the pain.¹⁷⁶ However, caste continued to play an important role in these native ideas of care. The fear of being defiled by lower caste attendants’ touch was found to be as

¹⁷¹ TAR 1041, 62-63.

¹⁷² Velu Pillai, *Travancore State Manual*, Vol II, 680.

¹⁷³ Andy, *On the Use of Margosa*, 105-107.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. 105.

¹⁷⁵ Devaki Nilayamgode, *Antharjanam: Memoirs of a Namboodiri Woman* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011), 96.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. 97.

scary as being infected with the disease itself in the native worldview.¹⁷⁷ It also made the care of the women infected with smallpox further difficult as they could be attended to only by same-caste women attendants cured of the disease and not by men, particularly of a different caste.

Unlike the indigenous practice of variolation, which did not completely dismiss the religious belief system surrounding smallpox, the new practice of vaccination was completely dismissive of the cultural and belief practices surrounding it. The native treatment of the disease included the usage of neem or margosa leaves.¹⁷⁸ Dr. Andy mentions the efficacy of margosa leaves in treating smallpox and cites instances of patients recovering from its early stages by him administering neem leaf tablets and decoction to them.¹⁷⁹ The belief system surrounding the disease also contributed largely to the native resistance to vaccination. People also thought vaccination was an attempt by the Britishers to ‘put their marks’ on the Indian population.¹⁸⁰ The natives also feared that attempts to counter the disease would lead to the anger of the goddess *Sitala/ Chutala*.¹⁸¹

However, the general reception of the public to vaccination, as evidenced by the poet historian Ulloor, is that “except among the Namputiri [sic] Brahmins there is no sentimental objection or noticeable opposition on the part of the people.”¹⁸² Reflecting on the increasing appeal of vaccination, James Anderson, physician general of Madras, notes, “Progress towards extermination of smallpox is become so promising, that, I have little doubt, the cow-pock lancet will soon be as familiar to the Hindoos as the plough or the shuttle.”¹⁸³ To popularize vaccination among the natives, the colonial officials also engaged in ‘pious frauds’ by which the new discoveries on vaccination were attempted to be portrayed as already finding its

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. 96.

¹⁷⁸ Andy, *On the Use of Margosa*, 105.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. 106-107, However, Dr Andy admits that it is ineffective once the disease has advanced and matured. He also cites the lack of statistics to convincingly prove the efficacy of the medicine and encourages people to take up an extensive study to prove its efficacy.

¹⁸⁰ Arnold, *The New Cambridge History of India*, 74.

¹⁸¹ Nilayamgode, *Antharjanam*, 99. The goddess of smallpox was also called Mariyamman, temples dedicated to Mariyamman are fairly common in Southern parts of Travancore and Tamil Nadu.

¹⁸² Ulloor, *Progress of Travancore*, 533.

¹⁸³ Anderson, *Correspondence for the Extermination*, 18.

mention in native texts to claim for it a certain cultural and religious legitimacy and acceptance.¹⁸⁴

The superintendent himself attests that the prejudices against vaccination were slowly declining, as is seen in the increasing number of Nambutiris and Mahomedans, who until then had shown a strong aversion to vaccination.¹⁸⁵ If it was the upper castes who were mostly averse to vaccination, it was the vaccinators who were reluctant to vaccinate the lowest castes of the Pulayas and others for fear of contamination. This, too, was changing, although at a slow pace, as seen in the increasing number of Pulayas who were vaccinated.¹⁸⁶ It was also suggested that if members of the lower castes were trained as vaccinators, it would further increase the vaccination results among those castes.¹⁸⁷ As a result, two Pulayas were trained as vaccinators with a view to better-spreading vaccination among the lower castes.¹⁸⁸ The results showed that the caste of the vaccinators made no difference compared to the general success rate of the vaccinations conducted by people belonging to any other caste. The same was the case with women vaccinators. Women vaccinators were appointed in Travancore to promote the vaccination of women who were averse to vaccination for fear of being touched by unfamiliar men. This was a consistent strategy employed by the state in Travancore and elsewhere to employ members of the same community as vaccinators to promote vaccination among certain communities.¹⁸⁹ The aversion to vaccination was all the more a serious problem among women of upper castes, particularly Brahmins and the Mahomedans. The appointment of female vaccinators yielded favourable results. The success rates of vaccination conducted by women made no significant difference from those conducted by men. However, there have been instances where the sanitary commissioner found the female vaccinator's work unsatisfactory.¹⁹⁰ In 1923, the sanitary commissioner reported to the state to discourage the appointment of female vaccinators in rural areas, citing the remoteness of the areas and

¹⁸⁴ Wujastyk, *A Pious Fraud*, 121-155.

He argues that these 'frauds' were motivated by humanitarian considerations than deliberate attempts to deceive literally. In any case it is evidence of the various ways by which vaccination was attempted to be spread among the natives, 154.

¹⁸⁵ TAR, 1042, 97.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. 97. Around 2000 Pulayas were vaccinated that year.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid. 97.

¹⁸⁸ TAR, 1045, 1869, 114.

¹⁸⁹ Brimnes, *Variolation, Vaccination*, 211.

¹⁹⁰ TLC, 2nd Session, 7 August 1930, 846.

challenges they faced in the rural areas. However, the sanitary commissioner's report citing the unavailability of female vaccinators in times of need owing to their frequent leaves and maternity demands seems to be questioned by members of the assembly.¹⁹¹ The traveling vaccinators who moved from house to house played the most crucial role in the spread of vaccination in Travancore.

Dr. Pulney Andy, who was the vaccine commissioner, observed that the resistance to vaccination was on the decline. Communities like the Nambutiris and Mahomedans had initially been averse to vaccination but, realizing its usefulness had finally accepted it.¹⁹² According to the same report, there was a significant rise in the number of lower caste Pulayas who were vaccinated.

It is important to keep in mind that the opposition to vaccination was not something unique to colonial contexts. Even in the West, vaccination was often resisted by a significant set of populations.¹⁹³ The opposition ranged from disbelief in its efficacy to the arbitrary ways in which it was carried out. However, colonial contexts provided a context in which the resistance to vaccination could be evidenced as proof of native superstitions and 'irrational native resistance' to modern medicine.¹⁹⁴ It can be seen that the construction of the natives as the 'irrational other' was often not based on specific pieces of evidence of resistance but rather a general condemnation of the socio-cultural world of the natives by selectively appropriating and exaggerating instances.

Often, the caste and religion of the people who opposed vaccination or were reluctant to get vaccinated were identified, resulting in a narrative that certain communities were more opposed to vaccination and modern medicine. The specific attention vaccination received in the census and various government reports further resulted in the creation of generalizing narratives about communities. It was observed that in the early days of vaccination, it was the Christians and the lower castes who were found to be submitting themselves to vaccination

¹⁹¹ Ibid. 846.

¹⁹² TAR, 1040-1044, 97.

The Reports states the number of Pulayas vaccinated as 2000. It also stressed the need to have more Pulaya vaccinators to improve the vaccination schemes among the lower castes.

¹⁹³ Alison Bashford and Claire Hooker, *Contagion: Historical and Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 39.

¹⁹⁴ Niels Brimnes, *Variolation, Vaccination*, 199-228.

more than other communities.¹⁹⁵ The closer proximity and familiarity these communities had with the medical missions could be one reason for this. It has also been observed elsewhere that the idea of ‘native resistance’ or ‘indifference’ to vaccination and colonial medicine was often magnified and used to justify the inaction of the colonial state itself.¹⁹⁶

Several instances where native resistance was motivated not by a reluctance to change or religious and cultural concerns but by a secular and informed critique of vaccination have also been observed. M R Madhava Variar, a lawyer and a trained homoeopathic doctor, moved a resolution against compulsory vaccination in the legislative council. Variar was against the arbitrary imposition of vaccination and requested the government that the conscientious objection of people to vaccination be taken into account and vaccination not be made compulsory for people.¹⁹⁷ He argued that medical freedom is an inalienable right of the citizen and thus needs to be protected. He also cited Western authors and reports to argue against compulsory vaccination to strengthen his case.¹⁹⁸ He cites Dr. Osler’s *Modern Medicine*, among others, and argues that “it is unwise for the physician to force the operation upon those who are unwilling to and give assurances of absolute harmlessness.” He further cites Newman “Against the body of a healthy man, parliament has no right of assault whatever under the pretence of public health.”¹⁹⁹ What is seen here is that the resistance to vaccination is not coming from naïve native cultural prejudice but is motivated and expressed in a new language and vocabulary of inalienable rights and ownership of the body.²⁰⁰ That the native opposition to vaccination and biopolitical strategies were the products of ignorance and motivated by religious or cultural ideas alone is debunked here. It is asserted here that it was not only through biopolitical interventions new corporeal sensibilities about the body were created but also through resisting it that the body was configured and its individuality and autonomy asserted. The autonomy of the body against state and medical interventions is attempted to be upheld by Variar here. However, Variar’s position failed to get significant support from the rest of the members of the council, indicating the rising popularity of vaccination and modern medicine among the educated class in Travancore. It is also important to understand here that Variar’s

¹⁹⁵ Anderson, *Correspondence of the Extermination*, 18.

¹⁹⁶ Ramasubban, *History of Public Health*, 92, Arnold, *Colonizing the Body*, 245.

¹⁹⁷ TLC, 10 February 1925, 907.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid. 907.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. 908.

²⁰⁰ Ibid. 907-8.

critique of modern medical interventions is also significantly shaped by developments in Europe.

It is important not to place the native resistance to vaccination in the simple dichotomies of tradition-modernity, reason-superstition, or as a general cultural aversion to modernity. It should rather be understood within the 'specific contextual interactions.'²⁰¹ Efforts to educate the people on the need for vaccination and other health and sanitary practices should be understood as part of the initiatives in which the individual becomes an active agent in caring for themselves. Self-government was crucial to the new rationalities of biopolitics.

Alison Bashford has shown that the resistance to vaccination was also a result of a fear of contagion: a fear of being administered the same disease to counter the very disease was something new and alien to the people.²⁰² The fact that the arm-to-arm vaccination that prevailed in the early days had a greater probability of infecting the receiver was also a reason for the resistance. This also helps to qualify the idea that native resistance was not entirely irrational and unfounded.

Although vaccination was initially confined to the major towns, later attempts were made to extend it to all parts of the state and also to all communities. Attempts were made to vaccinate the jungle or hill tribes who were reluctant to be vaccinated.²⁰³ The remoteness of their location also served as a barrier to extending vaccination to them. By 1934 primary and re-vaccination were made compulsory in Travancore.²⁰⁴

However, it is interesting to note here that Dr. Palpu, an eminent physician and later a renowned social reformer specializing in vaccine preparation, could not find a job in the Travancore medical service due to his caste position as an Ezhava. It could be an irony then that he went on to become in charge of the Mysore vaccine department, another Hindu princely state, where he would be honoured for his services in curbing smallpox and cholera efficiently. Caste practices and prejudices lingered on to the possibilities opened by even modern medical systems. As much as the colonial state was invested with racial prejudice in its spread of modern medicine, the native state was invested with caste prejudice in its endorsing and

²⁰¹ Sanjoy Bhattacharya & Niels Brimnes, Introduction, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 83, no. 1 (2009): 1.

²⁰² Bashford, *Contagion*, 39.

²⁰³ TAR, 1869, 1045, 112.

²⁰⁴ *Proceedings of the Joint Sitting of the Legislature*, 24 July 1934, 13.

dispersion of modern medicine. Modern medicine was still far from an egalitarian affair in its colonial settings.

Even when the government claimed that hospitals were places where people of all castes could come without prejudice, separate wards and cooks of their own caste were provided for the upper castes and the lower castes. It is also claimed that, as a result, Brahmins were also increasingly making use of these hospitals.²⁰⁵ The government is found to have made extra efforts to extend vaccination and medical facilities to the significantly lesser number of unenthusiastic upper castes, Nambutiri Brahmans, which could have been better utilized for other numerically greater lower castes.²⁰⁶ The history of colonial medicine is rife with these instances of accommodation of indigenous cultural values and practices, which helped in alleviating the aversion to colonial medicine and helped in its increasing popularity.²⁰⁷

Despite its early penetration, vaccination still was not a complete success. Poor quality of lymph, the climactic challenges in preserving them, and ignorance of the vaccinated in post-vaccination care all contributed to poor success rates. Many a time, re-vaccination had to be undertaken as the first attempt often failed.

Having discussed the emergence and the historical contexts in which modern medicine unfolded in Travancore, the focus now will be on the specific questions of what this unfolding did to the understanding of the body. Medicalization of the body was, among other factors, one of the most important aspects of writing a history of the body. The flourishing of modern medicine was to have a serious impact on the perception of the body, as evidenced in the vocabularies of resistance seen in the context of opposition to vaccination. Modern medicine, its associated practices, and discourses created a new subjectivity that transformed the body into a set of governmental regulations that disrupted the traditional conceptions of the body

²⁰⁵ TAR, 1041, 68.

²⁰⁶ Aparna Nair, *Vaccinating Against Vasoori*, 16.

²⁰⁷ Arnold, *Colonizing the Body*, 251.

Period	Average Vaccination per Annum
1040-44	37708
1045-49	78520
1050-54	78716
1055-59	81186
1060-64	86929
1065-69	99996
1070-74	131373
1075-79	163206

Table 4.1. Quinquennial statistics of vaccination from 1865-1904.²⁰⁸

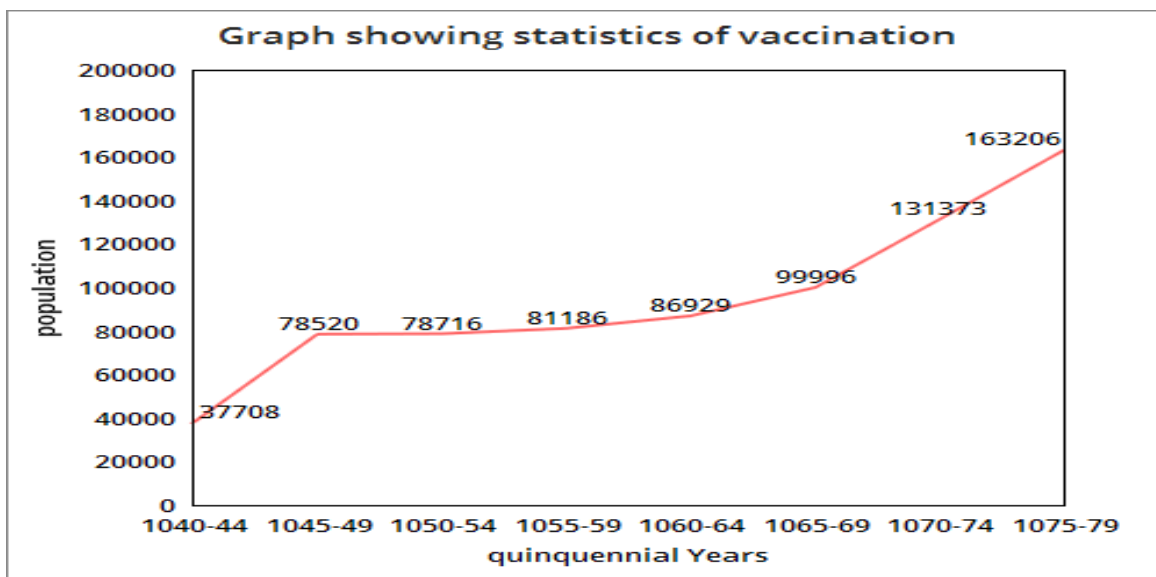


Fig 4.1: Graph showing statistics of vaccination from 1865-1904²⁰⁹

²⁰⁸ Aiya, *Travancore State Manual* Vol II, 526.

²⁰⁹ Ibid. 526.

Sanitation

The shift from a miasmatic theory of diseases to the germ theory of diseases brought sanitation to the forefront of the concerns of colonial medicine. Sanitation was a central concern of the colonial state and the project of colonialism. Such was the role of sanitation in the project of colonialism that it could be called “imperial cleanliness” or “colonialism by known laws of sanitation.”²¹⁰

Discourses on sanitation were also shaped by a general prejudice about the natives as unclean and lacking personal hygiene. This was sometimes attributed to the impoverished conditions in which the majority of the people lived and also the tropical climate of the East. The changing nature of sovereignty had an important role to play in the new sanitary schemes. Sanitation and sanitary reforms had by now become an important concern of the practices of government. The towns had become the point of intervention in which the movement and circulation of both people and goods were to be regulated, ensuring the safety of the general population. The new sanitary administration put in place by biopolitics was more concerned with the apparatus of security than territorial control over the towns.

The prevalence of such diseases as cholera and smallpox necessitated the interference of the state and forced the government to take the issue of sanitation seriously. Thus, by the late 1880s, sanitation became an important priority of the state. A special department for sanitation, vital statistics, and vaccination was established under the sanitary commissioner in 1071 (1895-96).²¹¹ The sanitation and vaccination departments were, until then, under the Durbar Physician, the chief medical officer of the state. The Town Conservancy and Improvement Regulation of 1904 was modelled after the Municipality Act of British India. The state was divided into four administrative units, each placed under a sanitary officer under the supervision of the sanitary commissioner.²¹²

The importance of sanitation and public health by the early 20th century, as reflected in the words of a popular author, also reveals its changing nature and ascending importance, “the maintenance of public health is a community function, and the maintenance of proper

²¹⁰ Alison Bashford, *Imperial Hygiene: A Critical History of Colonialism, Nationalism and Public Health* (New York: Palgrave, 2004), 1.

²¹¹ TAR, 1895-96, 9.

²¹² Aiya, *Travancore State Manual Vol II*, 535.

sanitation and public health is a governmental duty.”²¹³ Public health, thus, at the same time, becomes a governmental and community duty. The health of the population figures as a concern both to the community and the government. The new logic of public health made people active agents in the process. Sanitation, by then, was becoming widely articulated in the mainstream discourses as the character of modern civilization as well. Populations, apart from being governed, are made to govern themselves in tune with the new rationales of government employed by the state with the backing of modern medicine. Policy measures have started to be directed against the prevention of diseases rather than curing them. The emergence of the public health department was an important step in this direction.

The science of sanitation was a landmark introduction to the history of human bodies and diseases. This science of sanitation marked a shift from what was, until then, a “geographical system of control in which the human body as an individual figure was absent.”²¹⁴ As Armstrong stresses, this new space of hygiene “introduced into the geographical map of public health, that of the volume of the human body.”²¹⁵ It is in this context that the public health initiatives and sanitary sciences initiated in Travancore need to be understood. While it brought the individual body to the fore of the concerns of the government, it also invested the body with new knowledge potentialities which were absent until then.

The new science of sanitation engaged in the ‘production of the corporal world and the non-corporal world, and the surveillance or policing of the relation of these two worlds was central to it.’²¹⁶ Such a conception enters the logic of government and its policies in framing the new governmental initiatives in matters of public health and sanitation, thereby assuring the health of the population.

Whereas the premodern relations of power and established order were rooted in the prevention of possibilities of comingling of bodies for fear of ritual contamination or purity, the new

²¹³ V Achutha Menon, *Socio Economic Reconstruction of Travancore* (Trivandrum: B V Book Depot & Printing Works, 1937), 101.

²¹⁴ David Armstrong, *A New History of Identity: A Sociology of Medical Knowledge* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 7.

By geographical system of control, Armstrong stresses the idea of quarantine which dominated the medical discourses from the middle-ages. While quarantine focused on the securing and segregation of spaces, sanitation focused on the individual body and its relation to spaces, and to other individual bodies.

²¹⁵ Ibid. 7.

²¹⁶ Ibid. 8.

science of sanitation and public health that individualized bodies prevented this comingling not for fear of ritual purity but fear of contagion and spreading infectious diseases. The commingling of bodies and spaces that facilitated such commingling of bodies like schools, jails, hospitals, public fairs, and markets came under the careful watch and surveillance of the new science of sanitation and public health. Each body, irrespective of its caste, was a potential carrier of risk and potentially at risk. This does not mean that, with an understanding of the ontological equality of the body brought about by clinical medicine, caste bodies ceased to exist. Caste and its power on bodies took new forms of existence and reincarnated itself anew under these conditions.

The introduction of new sanitary science was something that cannot be dissociated from the practices of western medicine and biopolitical rationalities. As Armstrong clearly illustrates, “Clinical medicine provided the internal map of the human body while sanitary science defined the boundaries within which it was contained.”²¹⁷ Thus, with the new science of sanitation and public health, the boundaries within which the bodies existed become a concern or focus of modern medical practices. Sanitary science focused its attention on the idea of population. The science of sanitation and public health, with its focus on the population, was integrated into the modern rationalities of government. In other words, the science of sanitation, along with modern medical practices, among other activities, becomes a crucial function of colonial governmentality. That sanitation was closely connected to the Department of Statistics, which itself was a discipline central to rationalities of government, thus should not be surprising.

The sanitation department was reorganized under the sanitary commissioner. Under him were four district inspectors and four taluq sanitary officers.²¹⁸ These district inspectors were to be trained medical officers. They also supervised the vaccination initiatives in the state.²¹⁹ These inspectors were also to record the success of vaccination and re-vaccinations. The vaccinators were to periodically inspect the vaccination data against the population registers and check the entries.²²⁰ The vaccinators were also entrusted with the additional responsibility of collecting and recording vital statistics and submitting them to the sanitary commissioner.²²¹ This added

²¹⁷ Armstrong, *A New History of Identity*, 15.

²¹⁸ TAR, 1895-96, 120,

²¹⁹ Ibid. 122.

²²⁰ Nagam Aiya, Vol II, 500.

²²¹ TAR, 1895-96, 122.

to their duties, and their strength was further increased to shoulder the additional labour. The vaccination project, as seen here, transformed the body into a medium of modern medicine as well as a statistical object. While vaccination acted on the individual bodies, these bodies were identified as a constituent of the larger category of the population, which was a central feature of biopolitical administration.

From State Medicine to Public Health.

Public health played a vital role in the history of colonial medicine, aiding in its growth and spread. Asserting its role in the project of colonial medicine, Roy MacLeod has termed it the “handmaiden of European medicine.”²²² In colonial contexts, discourses on public health were one of modern medicine’s most potent tools. Much like colonial medicine, whose initial concerns were the health of the Europeans, the early concerns of public health and modern sanitary regimes were the alarming rate of European morbidity in Indian cities like Bombay.²²³ The perennial European fear of the unsanitary conditions in the East and the resultant prevalence of various diseases fastened the spread of western medicine in the colonies. David Arnold, in his seminal analysis of western medicine and the reasons for its impeding growth in its initial days, has identified the failure of western medicine to transform from state medicine to public health.²²⁴

Unlike the directly ruled presidencies that Arnold focuses on, this transformation seems to have occurred in Travancore relatively earlier. Within a few years of its initiation in Travancore, western medicine diversified itself to focus on public health as its main concern. The absence of a significant population of Europeans in the form of army men and other company officials added a different dimension to the Travancore context, unlike the presidencies. The trajectories of western medicine in Travancore thus did not have the ‘enclavist’ origin of colonial medicine of the presidencies.²²⁵ However, Travancore, much like

²²² Roy MacLeod and Milton Lewis, ed. *Disease, Medicine and Empire: Perspectives on Western Medicine and the Experience of European Expansion* (London: Routledge, 1988), x.

²²³ Mridula Ramanna, *Western Medicine and Public Health in Colonial Bombay 1845-1895*, (London: Sangam Books, 2002), 1.

²²⁴ Arnold, *Colonizing the Body*, 3.

²²⁵ Arnold has shown how the enclavist nature of western medicine denied Indians access to it in the early days. Ibid. 63.

For the importance of enclavism in shaping colonial medicine, Nandini Bhattacharya, *Contagion and Enclaves: Tropical Medicine in Colonial India* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012), 1-18.

the other princely states, was not entirely insular to the British concerns with the prevalent diseases in India. The early concern of the colonial state was the threat of diseases to the British troops stationed in these states. Attempts were made to map and record the occurrence and prevalence of diseases in particular regions.²²⁶

Concerns on modern public health are believed to have emerged in Europe in the 19th century as a response to the health challenges posed by industrialization and the resultant urbanization and capitalist advancements.²²⁷ The state was the most active agent in shaping public health policies and initiatives in its initial days and continued to play an important role throughout its history. The huge economic and infrastructural requirements needed to ensure and shape public health policies made it a central domain of the state. However, public health initiatives in the country were seriously impeded by inadequate financial resources, the vastness of the country, its huge population, lack of transport and communication networks, and the general apathy and indifference of colonial administration. The government often lacked the financial resources or interest that were required to ensure the necessary conditions of sanitation and hygiene for the people. As Hume has shown, the colonial state often weighed the financial costs involved in ensuring sanitary reforms over the social costs, resulting in greater mortality of the people.²²⁸

Public health emerged as a distinct administrative domain as a result of the governmentalization of the health of the population, and this is something unique to the modern state.²²⁹ Central to the concerns of public health is the population, and this is brought about only by a change in the rationales of the government that is at once individualizing and totalizing. Alison Bashford argues that “public health was in part a ‘spatial form of governance’ aimed at curtailing the movement and interaction of people and matter.”²³⁰ She further argues that central to the concerns of public health was segregation, and race had a predominant place in it.²³¹

²²⁶ James Annesley, *Sketches of the Most Prevalent Diseases of India: Comprising a Treatise on the Epidemic Cholera of the East* (London: Thomas & George Underwood, 1825).

²²⁷ Milton K Lewis and Kerrie L MacPherson, ed. *Public Health in Asia and the Pacific: Historical and Comparative Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 5.

²²⁸ Hume, *Colonialism and Sanitary Medicine*, 717.

²²⁹ Kalpagam, *Rule by Numbers*, 223.

²³⁰ Bashford, *Contagion*, 2.

²³¹ *Ibid.* 2.

Lewis and MacPherson identify three distinct phases or revolutions in the history of public health and preventive medicine that have shaped its character and strategies the world over. The first was the sanitary and hygiene movements of the 19th century that linked environmental and sanitary practices to disease control.²³² The second phase recognized the role of individual and societal behaviour and practices in matters related to health. The third phase is characterized by the internationalization of health and the new public health strategies institutionalized after the foundation of the WHO in 1948.²³³ These three phases have been identified as reciprocal and constituting a mutually overlapping relationship.²³⁴ It can be argued that these three phases together constituted a new biopolitical administration.

However, in the case of Travancore, it can be observed that the evolution of public health and the subsequent internationalization of public health concerns happen in a dependent colonial context. It is also seen that the internationalization of public health that Lewis and MacPherson identify began much earlier, as evidenced by Travancore's encounter with global biopolitics as early as the late 19th century, which is explored in Chapter V. The institutionalization of public health in Travancore received an impetus with the Rockefeller initiatives in the arena of public health and sanitation. There was a sudden reorganization of the existing public offices according to the instructions and advice of the foundation.

The diversification of colonial medicine to public health involved the use of the new science of sanitation, town planning, and a persisting concern with the health of the populations and its effective management/ government. The biopolitical concerns of western medicine ushered in a governmental rationality that sought to govern and manage the population efficiently. Colonial medicine was primarily a biopolitical enterprise concerned with the 'security of life and property.'

The public health department emerged in Travancore as a result of the amalgamation of the medical department and the Department of Sanitation. Legislative debates indicate that there have been debates and disagreements among the members on the efficacy and utility of the amalgamation of these two separate departments and the formation of the Department of Public Health. In the words of one of the members, "Public health is the foundation of all progress,

²³² Lewis and MacPherson, *Public Health in Asia*, 1-2.

²³³ Ibid. 1-2.

²³⁴ Ibid. 1-2.

not only here, but everywhere.”²³⁵ There was a lot of criticism of the government for unifying these two departments. The majority of members cited the example of Madras and other presidencies of British India and even England to assert that the Department of Public Health and Medicine should remain separate.²³⁶

What is to be noted here is that the formation of the Department of Public Health was not merely a change in nomenclature alone. It reflected a larger trend in administering the health of the population across the world. The idea and institutionalization of public health are crucial in the exercise of biopower and governmentality. It involves the coming together of the science of sanitation, surveillance, and the medicalization of the individual body and populations. The *municipalization* of public health was also an important feature of colonial medicine.²³⁷ Town improvement committees were formed in all the major towns of Travancore. The sanitary commissioner of Travancore also became the ex-officio member of the town improvement committees.²³⁸ Health and sanitation became the primary function of the municipalities. There were also attempts to transfer the hospitals to municipalities in the state as well.

It has already been stressed in the previous chapter how colonial biopolitics, in its unraveling, created its own hierarchies and reconfigured existing social hierarchies and was far from an egalitarian enterprise. While the emergence of new categories of governance like ‘population’ resulted in furthering the focus and reach of ‘government’ to a greater number of people from all caste groups, it was still exclusive and unequal. Even sanitation, which had become the crucial concern of the new public health initiatives of the state, was extended unevenly. The areas where the lower caste groups lived were avoided or paid less attention to by the public health department.²³⁹ Even during the pandemic, the predominantly lower caste areas received much lesser attention, resulting in greater mortality rates in the said areas.²⁴⁰ Grievances were raised against the government for having neglected the health concerns of the lower castes.²⁴¹

²³⁵ SCSC, 22 August 1933, p 317.

²³⁶ TSMA, 10 August 1933, p 549-550.

²³⁷ Arnold, *Colonizing the Body*, 274.

²³⁸ *Travancore Gazette* 1904, vol XL II, Part 1, 564.

²³⁹ SMA, 14 March 1930, as raised by V. John, nominated member, 331-332.

²⁴⁰ Ibid. 332.

²⁴¹ TSMA, 23 July 1936, 279.

It was also frequently brought to the notice of the government through discussions in the assembly that the lower castes were frequently turned away from hospitals, and the government should ensure their access to health care like the rest of the population.²⁴² The location of the hospitals also proved detrimental to the lower castes from accessing them, as they were often located at pagodas and palace premises or at certain important person's houses, further denying the lower castes access to them.²⁴³ Frequent petitions were also made to the government expressing grievances on the denial of hospital access to lower castes.²⁴⁴

There were also instances where the doctors, for fear of contamination, would not touch the 'polluted' (untouchable) bodies of the lower castes and instead used a stick or a piece of wood to diagnose the diseases.²⁴⁵ That cultural prejudices ran through the new systems, giving it a distinct identity, is a unique feature of colonial medicine.

On the contrary, there were numerous instances where the public health department was accused of employing more Christians as a matter of favouritism based on religion, which was denied by the director of Public Health. This is also a clear indication that the colonial biopolitical regimes offered possibilities of social mobility that were made use of by different communities differently.

By the first quarter of the 20th century, the state had made considerable progress in the above-mentioned fields, which also indicates a greater intervention of medical and health initiatives in people's lives. As indicated by the census of 1921, the average death rates due to cholera and smallpox in the state had fallen to 1107 and 1716, respectively, from 2989 and 3221 in the previous decade.²⁴⁶ The relative success it achieved in reducing the death rates further strengthened the zeal and appeal of modern medicine.

Medicine, Surveillance and the New Science of Sanitation.

Inherent in the new sciences of sanitation and public health was a certain policing or surveillance of the human body and its relationship with both its surrounding natural environment and also with the other bodies. This could be realized only by a state that enabled

²⁴² Ibid. 279-80

²⁴³ Somerwell, *Knife and Life*, 177-78.

²⁴⁴ *Mithavadi*, May 1916, 4 (7): 11.

²⁴⁵ TSMA, 10 August 1933. The issue was raised by T. T. Kesavan Sastri, 557.

²⁴⁶ *Census of Travancore 1921*, 8.

such an infrastructural penetration. Sanitation by the 19th century had become the new civilization and its benchmark. The increasing global cooperation and the consensus it generated regarding sanitation significantly impacted the sanitary policies in the colonial world as well. Florence Nightingale and the discourses she generated on sanitation played a crucial role in universalizing sanitation and subsequently made it an important focus of colonial regimes.²⁴⁷

A fundamental reconfiguration of the body is already witnessed here. It is dislodged from its natural environment and relations of power to be invested with the potentialities of risk and thereby also become the concern of the new science of sanitation. This policing of the body differed from existing notions of untouchability, where particular bodies were to be policed to ensure the purity of other bodies. Here, all bodies needed to be policed, as all bodies carried risk. At the same time, the socio-economic backwardness of the lower classes and castes posed significant challenges to the demands of the new sciences. Often, instead of acknowledging this, the blame was passed on the general lack of sanitation among these classes due to their reluctance or something cultural.

As asserted in the introduction, law and legislation were the key allies of biopolitics and remained the crucial link of disciplinary and governmental power.²⁴⁸ Many stringent laws were passed to ensure the health of the population. Surveillance of the population was a central objective of these legislations. The Epidemic Diseases Act 1897, The Plague Regulations 1073 (1898), and the Public Health Act 1941 all are evidence of laws with the objective of surveillance of the population being passed in the wake of some health emergencies like epidemics.

Travancore passed the Epidemic Diseases Act in the year 1897. The act gave extraordinary powers to government officials to inspect people and ships on suspicion of being potential carriers of diseases and thereby a threat to the health of the population.²⁴⁹ The Act also contained provisions for penalizing anyone disobeying or violating the provisions. A willing submission and obedience to the government in the wake of an emergency was sought by the

²⁴⁷ Mridula Ramanna, "Florence Nightingale and Bombay Presidency," *Social Scientist* 30, no. 9/10 (2002): 31-46.

²⁴⁸ Chapter V, *The Birth of Colonial Biopolitics*, 5.

²⁴⁹ *Acts and Proclamations of Travancore* (Trivandrum: Travancore Government Press, 1948), 363-364.

provisions of the act. These were not isolated acts. The draconian Travancore Plague Regulations 1073 would be another such example of draconian laws being initiated by the state in the name of health emergencies, giving the state unrestricted control to enter into the lives of the population, ensuring greater control over it.

Apart from Evacuation, inoculation, and disinfection, the rules contained in the Plague Rules extended well into all aspects of social life. The Plague Inspectors could inspect any vessel and its cargo coming into the ports of Travancore.²⁵⁰ Plague stations were set up across the state and along the borders, and passes were issued for the people to regulate people's movements. Fairs and festivals regarded as the biggest threat were often restricted. Such measures as health certificates, plague inoculation certificates, and passport exemption certificates were imposed on the people to monitor and surveil them. Daily reports and statistics were collected by the state and were followed by swift action. Female passengers were protected from inspection by men, and women nurses were specifically employed by the state for this purpose.²⁵¹ The circulation of goods and people within the state and across states becomes a health and surveillance concern rather than an economic concern of the state. Another provision of the Plague Rules authorized the officials to inspect any houses or buildings or persons suspected of Plague. It can be observed here that emergency powers were often written into these acts. Modern medicine acquiring a surveillance character is observed in these acts.

Both internal and international pilgrimages and religious fests in which people assembled in large numbers that were part of Indian cultural life were deemed a sanitary and public health threat by the colonial state. The same was even raised during international sanitary conferences as one of the primary causes of the spread of cholera.²⁵² These instances were also used to reaffirm the European prejudice that the Indian cultural practices and lack of sanitary and hygienic practices were responsible for the spread of diseases. However, this was a situation that posed a great challenge to the colonial state, as any attempts to stop pilgrimages would be regarded as interventions in the religious life of the Indian people. As a result, the colonial state often traded this path rather cautiously, choosing not to force pilgrims into quarantine or

²⁵⁰ Travancore Plague Rules, in *The Regulations and Proclamations of Travancore with Rules*, Vol III. (Trivandrum: Subodhini Press, 1915), 28-194.

²⁵¹ Ibid. 28-194.

²⁵² Ramasubban, *History of Public Health*, 91.

attempting to prevent people from pilgrimages, thereby affecting the people's religious sensibilities.²⁵³

The contagion theory of diseases, which believed that human beings were the carriers of cholera and transmitted these diseases, dominated the public health policies of the colonial state at this point. It is interesting to note here that, unlike the colonial state, the Travancore state did not face the same risk in intervening in these matters as it was officially a Hindu state.

Situations in Travancore were no different as annual religious festivals and fairs like the *Aluva Shivaratri*, the *Murajapam* festival, the *Ashtami* at Vaikkom, the Suchindram car festival, and St Xaviers Festival at Kottar, etc., witnessed a large number of people assembling with no sufficient sanitary mechanisms for support. These occasions posed great public health risks and a challenge for the sanitary department, and the government had to make special arrangements during these times. The threat posed during such events was so high that the government even came out with orders that prohibited people other than the upper castes from sleeping in the streets.²⁵⁴ The government reasoned that as people slept on the streets, the scavengers were not able to do the cleaning work on those days, leading to unsanitary conditions and public health risks.

Kumaran Asan, the renowned poet, criticizes practices like lack of proper sanitation as uncivilized and unsuited to a civilized government. Caste, he said, was hampering the aspiring goals of a civilized government, and as such, those practices should be done away with. It is interesting to note that Asan's speech criticizing such privileging caste practices employs a narrative that pronounces the importance of cleanliness and sanitation practices.²⁵⁵ The same is seen in the writings and ideologies of many lower-caste social reformers of the period. The new discourses on cleanliness and hygiene were effectively made use of by the social reform movements to effectively counter the traditional hierarchies of purity and pollution that manifested in the form of untouchability.

²⁵³ Amna Khalid, "Of cholera, colonialism and pilgrimage sites: rethinking popular responses to sanitation," 74 - 97. Also, Mark Harrison, "The Great Shift: Cholera theory and sanitary policy in British India," in *Society, Medicine and Politics in Colonial India*, ed. Biswamoy Pati and Mark Harrison (London: Routledge, 2008) 41-42.

²⁵⁴ Kumaran Asan, Speech in Praja Sabha, *Mithavadi*, 4 (7), May 1916: 9-14.

²⁵⁵ Ibid. 9-14.

Summary

This chapter has attempted to show that modern medicine was institutionalized in Travancore in a uniquely dependent colonial context. The chapter attempted to show that, unlike the traditional perspective, modern medicine was not merely a result of the benevolence of Travancore sovereigns. Instead, modern medicine needs to be understood as an active agent in the project of colonial governmentality and biopolitics. The trajectories of modern medicine also revealed the changing notions of government in which the body became a subject of medical intervention, security concerns, and surveillance.

It also showed that modern medicine and its practices were effectively appropriated by the natives themselves in crafting an identity for themselves that would enable them to challenge the existing notions of power. While it is not argued here that all existing primordial conceptions of power and identity ceased to exist but were refigured and rewritten, it also showed how the diverse social groups responded to this shift and effectively appropriated it. The new knowledge systems were effectively internalized by the people, in this process, submitting themselves to the new political rationalities of the state.

The history of colonial medicine also revealed the changing notions of sovereign power in which the traditional notions of sovereignty undergo a radical shift in its idioms of power in a princely state. The princely state started advocating a new vocabulary of sovereignty that was concerned with the health and welfare of the population. Sovereignty and its primary feature, juridical power, was reconfigured to express itself in a vocabulary and idiom that had as its primary focus and concern the ‘wellbeing’ of its subjects. Thus, this chapter noted the new orientation towards rational governance, turning on the centrality of concerns on public health, sanitation, and modern medical interventions. Now, we shift to internalizing these new rationalities around modern governance in the next chapter.

Chapter V

The Birth of Colonial Biopolitics

Having situated the theoretical framework of governmentality and biopolitics in the introduction, this chapter argues that the 19th century witnessed the permeation of life by the technologies of politics in a way unparalleled in Travancore's history. Under conditions of colonialism and the colonial pressures of adopting 'good government,' sovereign power was radically altered by the combination of disciplinary and governmental power. It is argued that a distinct form of administering life and the body that can be called colonial biopolitics emerged in Travancore by the late 19th century. Colonial governmentality created avenues wherein the 'technologies of the self' and 'technologies of dominations' interacted in new ways in the creation of the subject.¹

Colonial engagement with the body could not just be reduced to the field of colonial medicine. Nevertheless, colonial medicine often remained the most crucial site of colonial biopolitics. Medical knowledge was invoked in altering traditional and customary beliefs and practices in diverse fields such as judicial processes, social reforms, punishment systems, schooling, and other domains regulating human activities. The new science of modern medicine, along with its other technologies of government, dislocated the body from its existing environment and destabilized the existing understandings and knowledge of the body in 19th-century Travancore.

Medicine is identified as the crucial link that connects "the discipline of the individual bodies by specialists and the regulation of populations by panopticism."² Colonial biopolitics and its key ally, colonial medicine, created regimes of truth that the subjects internalized and complied with to become the subjects in accordance with the rationales of government. As Foucault had argued persuasively, governing oneself and one's own conduct was central to governmentality. The governmentality model emphasizes the subject's appropriation of conduct and rationalities

¹ Foucault defines technologies of self as techniques which "permits individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being so as to transform themselves." Michel Foucault, *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, eds. Luther H Martin, Huck Gutman and Patrick H Hutton (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 18.

² Bryan S Turner, *The Body and Society* (New Delhi: Sage, 2008), 36.

of government and gives room for counter-conduct. Rather than being mere onlookers and receptors of power, the colonized effectively appropriated the possibilities colonial governmentality opened in challenging the existing order and colonial power.

However, it is acknowledged that the nature of this interaction was complex, which is already discussed in the chapter ‘*Sovereignty to Governmentality*.’ It is argued that, with the imposition of the new knowledge regimes and institutions, the colonial state and its rationalities held considerable authority over the policies of the princely state. It was marked by the colonial state’s unequal power relation over the princely state. These new forms of biopolitics and public health infrastructures instituted by the late 19th century were to determine the nature and practices of government in Travancore considerably. Further, ‘the right of death’ had transformed to ‘the ‘power over life.’³

This transformation, however, was neither absolute nor did the juridical power of the sovereign nor the ‘right of death’ cease to exist with the emergence of governmental power. Thus, the three forms of power - juridical, disciplinary, and governmental or biopower- are not tightly conceptual compartments or cordoned-off operative zones functioning independently.⁴ Further, there is no linearity of one form of power succeeding the other, nor does one form of power not coexist with the other.⁵ Thus, there is a complex interaction between these three forms of power in actuality. Therefore, this triangle has as its “primary target the population and as its mechanism the apparatus of security.”⁶ Concerns of security, associated primarily with the third form, exert considerable influence over the framing of laws and disciplinary mechanisms. In this light, the reality was an ensemble of these various forms of power existing simultaneously and influencing each other.

In a princely state like Travancore, where colonial governmentality and biopolitical rationalities emerged and percolated through the existing juridical and institutional structures,

³ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Vol 1* (New York: Vintage, 1990), 133- 159.

The concepts ‘Right of Death’ and ‘Power over Life’ as two distinct forms of power are explained in the introduction.

⁴ Foucault, *Security Territory, Population: Lectures at the College De France 1977-78* (New York: Picador, 2007), 10. Foucault’s triangulated model of power is explained in the introduction, 13.

⁵ Ibid. 8.

⁶ Michel Foucault, “Governmentality,” in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, ed. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 102.

biopower continued to be “haunted by the ever-present spectre of sovereign power exercised through political decisionism.”⁷

In elaborating on biopolitics, Thomas Lemke argues, “Foucault’s thesis that Modern politics tends to become biopolitical does not imply that sovereignty and the ‘power over death’ play no role anymore. On the contrary, the sovereign ‘right of death’ has not disappeared but is subordinated to a power that seeks to maintain, develop and manage life.”⁸ What is witnessed here is not one form of power replacing another, but rather an overhaul of subjectivities in tune with the introduction of this new form of power. The body in this process “becomes an entity bearing new variables.”⁹ It is not implied here that with the investment of these new variables, other existing or primordial identities or markers that the body bore ceased to exist. However, these new variables enabled and equipped the bodies to counter and resist certain practices of domination. The existing cultural and social hierarchies often limit the possibilities to make this interaction complex and ambiguous.

With the introduction of colonial biopolitics, it is not argued that the rationalities of biopolitics completely replaced the existing juridical forms of power and disciplinary techniques. The point is that biopolitical administration found its clear expression and articulation through existing juridical institutions rooted in disciplinary power. Sovereignty in the context of Travancore is now subordinated to a form of power that focuses on fostering and optimizing life. While the disciplinary forms of power concentrated their attention on the individual body, biopower focused on the population as an aggregating category of governance. However, while the individual remained the point of intervention, the population was crucial to the techniques of governmentality and biopolitics.¹⁰ The population is not a mere collection of juridical subjects.¹¹ Population introduces a new conception of the governed: they are not subjects bound together in a territory under the obligation to the sovereign alone; they are defined in relation to matters of life and death, health, habits, illness, fertility, and longevity.¹² Population

⁷ Michael Dutton, “The Paradoxical after-life of Colonial Governmentality,” *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture* 16, no 5 (2010): 635-649.

⁸ Thomas Lemke, *Bio-Politics: An Advanced Introduction* (New York: New York University Press), 39.

⁹ Michel Foucault, “The Politics of Health in the Eighteenth Century,” in *The Foucault Reader: An Introduction to Foucault’s Thought*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Penguin, 1984), 279.

¹⁰ Foucault, *Governmentality*, 100, 102.

¹¹ Foucault, *Security, Territory*, 74.

Following Thiers, Foucault says, “The King reigns but he does not govern,”

¹² Mitchell Dean, *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society* (London: Sage, 2009), 161.

is not merely a collection of subjects but also a “particular objective reality about which one can have knowledge.”¹³ The new knowledge of medicine, statistics, epidemiology, demography, and census defined and facilitated the constitution of the population as a unit of governance central to biopolitics and governmentality.

The members of the population are, thus, no longer a mere collection of various castes and communities and such primordial identities but are “bearers of a regulated and responsible freedom both by disciplinary and bio-political practices,” this is itself a condition of the possibility of a democratization of sovereignty.¹⁴ The peculiarity of the Travancore situation made the people of Travancore the subjects of the sovereign and part of the general population that came in with the idea of colonial governmentality simultaneously.

The privilege of hygiene and the function of medicine as an instrument of social control have been identified as the two essential characteristics of 18th-century *noso-politics*.¹⁵ The second point that medicine was increasingly becoming an instrument of social control manifests itself more clearly in a colonial context like Travancore under the perpetual threat of a colonial takeover. This was realized through the infusion of medical knowledge through new medical discourses and the practical intervention of colonial medicine. Alongside this, biopolitics offered the possibility of thinking about governance without relying solely on the formal state apparatus.¹⁶

Law and legal changes remained significant in the new regimes of biopower. Security concerns make the “old armatures of law and discipline function in addition to the specific mechanisms of security.”¹⁷ A transformation from the sovereign model of power to disciplinary and governmental power did not limit the vital role that law and legal institutions played in society. As juridical power was an essential characteristic of sovereign power, the popular perception of equating juridical power with the law leads to the assumption that law and legal power have become redundant in the wake of a transition from sovereignty to biopower. Tadros’ caution

¹³ Ibid. 161.

¹⁴ Ibid. 164.

¹⁵ Foucault, *Politics of Health*, 279.

The term *noso-politics* refers to a nascent idea of biopolitics which Foucault later developed into biopolitics.

¹⁶ Foucault says, “the center of initiative, organization and control for this politics should not be located only in the apparatuses of the state.” Ibid. 274.

¹⁷ Foucault, *Security, Territory*, 10.

in distinguishing juridical and legal power is the most useful here. Law was the predominant instrument of modern biopower, and legislation was its key tool; it also remained the crucial link between disciplinary and governmental power.¹⁸ The series of legal and legislative changes initiated in Travancore in the 19th and 20th centuries can be fruitfully analyzed through this framework, as it is through these legislations and legal changes that colonial biopolitics unraveled itself in the state.

The history of Travancore reveals a distinct form of colonial governmentality, given its unique colonial experience. The political history of Travancore is discussed elaborately in the second chapter. The rise of democratic institutions working under the patronage of the sovereign and missionary activities from as early as the first decade of the 19th century and the indirect colonial rule gave rise to a situation entirely different from the directly ruled presidencies. Indirect though it was, the colonial intervention in Travancore was decisive and brought considerable economic, social, and administrative changes. The unraveling of colonial governmentality was a process that often worked in tandem with the existing state structures and was sometimes antagonistic to the same structures and political authorities. The rhetoric of colonial governmentality often covered itself in the garb of humanism and progress, successfully masking the severe repressions and subjugation of the natives by an alien power. In the case of Travancore, the apparatuses of biopower and the elaborate structures employed were colonial in nature, but they functioned through ‘local power networks and knowledge structures.’¹⁹ In such a context, the older structures, rather than becoming redundant, remained to function according to the ‘new rationales.’

While in the West, governmentality echoed the principles of liberalism, the idea of colonial governmentality was wielded in the discourses of welfare and reform within a colonial context, whereas its actual functioning was in the management and normativizing of crises.²⁰ Colonial

¹⁸ Victor Tadros, “Between Governance and Discipline: The Law and Michel Foucault.” *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies* 18, no. 1 (1998): 75-103.

¹⁹ Aparna Nair, “Magic Lanterns, Mother-craft, and School Medical Inspections: Fashioning Modern Bodies and Identities in Travancore,” *Tapasam*, (April-Sep 2012): 87-113.

²⁰ Sarah Hodges, “‘Looting’ the Lock Hospital in Colonial Madras during the Famine Years of the 1870s,” *Social History of Medicine* 18, no. 3 (2005): 382 also, Sarah Hodges, *Contraception, Colonialism and Commerce: Birth Control in South India 1920-40* (London: Routledge, 2016), 9.

governmentality emerged as a response to the various crises that plagued the colonial regime in its colonial contexts.²¹

Travancore Encountering Global Biopolitics

Colonial biopolitics, while being specific interventions depending on the regional context, was also significantly shaped by global scientific modernity. This is best exemplified by the interventions of such international philanthropic agencies as the Rockefeller Foundation in the arena of public health and sanitation in the princely state of Travancore from as early as the 1920s. The early twentieth century was marked by increasing cooperation among countries globally, especially in the field of public health and medicine. Internationalization of public health was not merely the cooperation of countries of the world and global agencies with a shared ideal and objective. This came about as a result of a new understanding of man-as-species and constituting a global mass, as asserted in the Introduction. Internationalism in the field of global health, however, was entangled with nationalism and imperialism and was ridden with inequalities built into the international society.²²

From the early 20th century, the Rockefeller Foundation was active in advancing public health and new scientific practices of medicine globally.²³ Rockefeller Foundation ventured into the domain of public health and sanitation with the founding of the Sanitary Commission for the eradication of hookworm disease in 1909 in the United States.²⁴ Philanthropy initiatives in the field of medicine and public health were motivated by an interest to protect and further the commercial and capital interests of these corporations. However, there were greater aspirations behind these global health initiatives than securing the health of the labour force. The Foundation actively funded research in molecular biology in the United States in the 1930s, hoping that this new knowledge would aid instruments of social control and help optimize

²¹ Gyan Prakash, *Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 125.

²² Sunil Amrith, "Internationalising Health in the Twentieth Century," in *Internationalisms: A Twentieth-Century History*, ed. Glenda Slug and Patricia Clavin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 245.

²³ Shirish N Kavadi, "Parasites Lost Parasites Regained: Rockefeller Foundation's Anti-Hookworm Campaign in Madras Presidency," *Economic and Political Weekly* 42, no. 12 (2007): 130-137.

Kavadi gives an account of the Rockefeller initiatives in the eradication of hookworms in Madras Presidency, while the trust's initiative in Travancore remains largely unattended to date from the perspective of global biopolitical advancement.

²⁴ E R Brown, "Public Health in Imperialism: Early Rockefeller Programs at Home and Abroad," *American Journal of Public Health* 66, no. 9 (1976): 898.

human behaviour.²⁵ The colonies often served as tropical laboratories of biopolitical experiments for these global philanthropic agencies and the colonial authorities alike. Modern public health practices and infrastructures were institutionalized in the global peripheries with the initiatives of these transnational agencies from the 1930s.²⁶

The internationalization of public health initiatives unified “previously fragmented experiments in medicine and sanitation” based on the new discourses of scientific and technological knowledge.²⁷ The transnational characteristics of such global philanthropic agencies were of “particular significance in the genealogy of biopolitical globalization.”²⁸ However, these initiatives often fell short of their objectives when these foundations worked along with the government.²⁹ Asia had by the 20th century become the focus of global health initiatives striving for a ‘world free of diseases.’³⁰ The advancements in health and hygiene, in short, ‘world health,’ in the 19th and 20th centuries the world over, is to be situated in a global history of biopolitics that moved beyond national boundaries.³¹ This global biopolitics is to be understood as a “vital politics of population on a newly large field of play.”³²

Travancore was no exception to these global developments, which concentrated on global health initiatives. It could no longer remain an isolated Hindu state in the far south of the Indian subcontinent untouched by these global developments. By the early 20th century, Travancore was put on the global map of scientific modernity and thus encountered global scientific practices of modern medicine, which were an integral part of global biopolitics and modern governance. On the economic front, the Travancore state was already integrated into the

²⁵ Lily E Kay, *The Molecular Vision of Life: Caltech, the Rockefeller Foundation and the Rise of the New Biology*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

²⁶ Sunil Amrith, *Decolonizing International Health*, 186.

²⁷ Ibid. 21.

²⁸ Alison Bashford, “Global Biopolitics and the History of World Health,” *History of the Human Sciences* 19, no. 1 (2006): 72.

²⁹ Shirish N Kavadi, “Working through Government and Working in close Cooperation with Government: A Perspective on Rockefeller Public Health Program in Colonial India,” in *Philanthropic Foundations and the Globalization of Scientific Medicine and Public Health*, ed. Benjamin B Page and David A Valone (Lanham: University of America Press, 2007), 96-112.

³⁰ Sunil Amrith, *Decolonizing International Health: India and South East Asia 1930-65* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 1.

³¹ Bashford, *Global Biopolitics*, 88.

Bashford also argues that in this scenario, “the national, the colonial, the regional and the international morphed into the global not sequentially but haphazardly and in many ways simultaneously,” unlike the globalization thinkers would like to believe that the nations seamlessly merged into the global. Ibid. 74.

³² Ibid. 67.

flourishing world economy by the 19th century.³³ European capital had come to play an essential role in the Travancore economy by the 19th and early 20th centuries.³⁴ The flourishing cash economy, plantations, small-scale industries, and commercialization of agriculture also played an important role in the development of extensive public work activities in the state. This resulted in the modernization of the state's existing transport and communication networks. The colonial government, without directly investing in these infrastructural initiatives, actively encouraged such measures.³⁵

This was also the time when philanthropic activities by various foundations gained much currency in the 'well-being of mankind throughout the world.'³⁶ Not only private philanthropy contributed to a 'global biopolitics' but also transnational organizations like the League of Nations International Health Board, WHO, etc. that institutionalized public health worldwide in the 20th century. The swifter and more efficient communication networks it established, and the standardization procedures and protocols it adopted in health practices played a crucial role in bringing about new ideas on the administration of life, which was fundamental to global biopolitics.

Travancore's integration into the global network of health began with it seeking the help of the Rockefeller Foundation in the wake of the spread of cholera in the state. The Travancore legislative council proceedings reveal that the failure of the state to address the menace of cholera was the immediate reason that prompted the state to contact the Rockefeller Foundation and seek its help in checking the spread of cholera and halting the mortality rate, which was indeed high in Travancore.³⁷ In the government's words, the government's objective in seeking the Rockefeller Foundation's cooperation to send a representative to Travancore was to "act as a consultant in health and to help the Government to organize a public health department

³³ Kooiman, *Conversion and Social Equality in India: The London Missionary Society and South Travancore in the 19th century* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1989), 9.

Commercialization of agriculture and the flourishing plantation economy were the important factors.

³⁴ K T Rammohan, "Mentalities of Development: The Case of Travancore, South-West India," *Social Orbit* 1, no. 1 (2015): 48-63.

³⁵ P Chandramohan, *Developmental Modernity in Kerala: Narayana Guru, SNDP Yogam and Social Reform* (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2016), 24.

³⁶ "Wellbeing of the mankind" remained the key slogan used by the Rockefeller Foundation in its philanthropic activities across the globe. This slogan had great appeal among the people and experts in Travancore like most other places.

³⁷ TLC Proceedings, 3rd council, 6 December 1928. This further strengthens the idea that often biopolitical and governmental initiatives emerge as a potential solution to some immediate crisis.

on modern lines in the State.”³⁸ Although necessitated by a health emergency/ crisis, the Rockefeller Foundation’s work in Travancore was to have a lasting impact on the institutionalization of public health in Travancore.

The Foundation responded positively to the request made by the state, and as per the agreement between the Foundation and the government, a representative of the Foundation, Dr W P Jacocks, an expert on public health, was sent to Travancore. The government bore the cost of setting up an office and staff for him. Dr. Jacocks was given the honorary title ‘Honorary Adviser, Public Health,’ and a three-member medical board was constituted to assist him in formulating the plan.³⁹ He was soon to submit a proposal for reorganizing the public health department in the state in May 1929.⁴⁰ His proposal demanded the setting up of a bureau of statistics, epidemiology, and sanitary engineering.⁴¹ It also demanded setting up a public health laboratory and extending the health units into the rural parts of Travancore for better public health initiatives.⁴² The Foundation began its work in Travancore by founding a local health unit in Neyyatinkara taluk, which was about 25 kilometres away from Trivandrum city, in 1931.⁴³ The foundation representatives stationed at Ceylon visited the station five times in the initial year.⁴⁴

The foundation’s initiatives had to face many challenges from their inception. The primary concern was the lack of valid and reliable data on existing conditions. As a result, the health unit's first initiative was to undertake a house-to-house health survey to understand the public health problems plaguing the state. Having found the existing vital statistics data unreliable, the survey also attempted to collect the most accurate data possible, as it was crucial for public health interventions. For this purpose, a Health Survey card was designed. The Card would collect such details of each house as the number of occupants, the names of each occupant, their age, sex, religion, vaccination status, housing conditions, birth, deaths, pregnancy and

³⁸ TLC Proceedings, 1 August 1929, 1025.

³⁹ Cited in M Kabir, *Beyond Philanthropy*, 14.

⁴⁰ TLC Proceedings, 1 August 1929, 1026.

⁴¹ *The Indian Medical Gazette*, 1931, 691.

⁴² *Ibid.* 691.

⁴³ *Rockefeller Foundation Annual Reports*, 1931, 108.

It is also curious to note here that the Rockefeller Foundation Annual Reports, which published annual accounts of the foundation’s work across the globe only mentions the total sum allotted to Travancore and not any details of how much of that sum allotted was spent and on what heads were they spent.

⁴⁴ *Rockefeller Foundation Annual Reports*, 1932, 132.

abortion status, condition of latrines, the income of the family, the length of their stay in the locality and even the condition of their livestock.⁴⁵ These elaborate surveys are testimonies to the increasing statistical penetration of the state into the lives of the people. In other words, 'life' has become the statistical and biopolitical subject of the state more than ever.

Undertaking malaria, hookworm, and filariasis surveys was the immediate concern before the Foundation.⁴⁶ Maternity and child welfare, public health propaganda work, and regular inspections of schools were also part of the early initiatives of the Foundation. One of the lasting legacies of the internationalization of public health was the attention it paid to rural public health in Travancore. The Neyyatinkara health unit remained the only such initiative of its kind by the Foundation in the state. The Foundation opposed the idea of setting up another health unit in Chertala at the state's request as it thought multiple units would affect the quality of service being rendered in one place.⁴⁷ The Foundation offered to work alongside the government of Travancore on the condition that expenses would be borne equally by the state and the Foundation. The council proceedings do not reveal data adequate to comment on the success of the Rockefeller initiative in Travancore. Elsewhere, it fell short of realizing its objective when it functioned through state cooperation. The Madras state is a case in point where the state, on more occasions than one, failed in fulfilling its responsibilities agreed upon, whether in the form of providing the infrastructure or shouldering the financial shares incurred in the process. The funds provided by the Rockefeller Foundation for public health and sanitation measures in Travancore were used for setting up pump connections in wells to provide clean water and also for the construction of borehole latrines.⁴⁸ By now, there was a greater realization and acknowledgment on the part of the state that the improvement of its general sanitary conditions is a fundamental prerequisite to ensuring the health of its subjects. This would lead to more state interventions in public health and sanitation.

In 1929, the Rockefeller Foundation extended a scholarship towards the expense of one person sent to Johns Hopkins University, America, for special training in public health as mutually agreed by the state and the Foundation, while the government bore the scholarship for the

⁴⁵ Ibid. 692.

⁴⁶ Ibid. 1025.

⁴⁷ M Kabir, "Beyond Philanthropy: The Rockefeller Foundation's Public Health Intervention in Thiruvithamkoor 1929-39," *CDS Working Paper* 350 (September 2003): 27.

⁴⁸ SCSC, 22 Aug 1936, Vol 1, No 3, 314.

second person.⁴⁹ After completing their training, these scholarship holders returned to serve in the state's public health department.

During a discussion on public health, a member of the legislative assembly draws a fascinating analogy between Travancore state's cooperation with the Rockefeller Foundation and the alliance formed by the state with the East India Company in the past, "while the latter protected the country from external threat and aggression the former is believed to protect the country from the threat of diseases and ensure the health and prosperity of Travancore."⁵⁰ Implicit in the above statement is also the idea that in modern societies, diseases and epidemics pose a greater threat than external aggression, thereby wanting greater cooperation by various agencies and the government. Whether the collaboration with the Foundation translated into greater health benefits for the population is not entirely clear, but it is clear that the people of Travancore and their representatives regarded this alliance highly because a Western agency was involved in health initiatives in their state.

Travancore was not the only state in the country that actively cooperated with the Rockefeller Foundation in the arena of public health. The Foundation was active in the Madras presidency and in the British Indian province of Burma.⁵¹ However, it is essential to note that the Rockefeller initiatives scrutinized the public education systems and the prevailing higher literacy rates of the regions before they undertook public health activities. The Foundation showed great enthusiasm in undertaking public health initiatives in states like Burma and Travancore, which had a high literacy rate and fairly established public education systems. In contrast, it showed little interest in the case of Punjab, which had a poor literacy rate.⁵² The literacy rates achieved by Travancore were found 'unusual' when compared to the other princely states and the rest of the country.⁵³ Travancore had India's second-highest literacy rate, next only to the neighbouring princely state of Cochin.⁵⁴ The Foundation's reluctance to

⁴⁹ TLC, 3rd Council, 1 August 1929, 27. Also, TAR, 1929-30, 74th Annual Report, 191.

⁵⁰ K Madhavan Pillai, in SCSC, Aug 22, 1933, 316-317.

⁵¹ *Rockefeller Foundation Annual Report*, 1928, 202.

⁵² The literacy rate of Travancore was 28.9 percent, that of Burma was 36.8 percent whereas Punjab had a literacy rate of 6.3 percent only.

Koji Kawashima, *Missionaries and a Hindu State: Travancore 1858-1936* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 124.

M Kabir, *Beyond Philanthropy*, 1-43.

⁵³ Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India 1885-1947* (New Delhi: Macmillan, 2008 (1983), 64.

⁵⁴ SMPA Proceedings, 1921, 11.

take up public health initiatives in poorly literate states revealed a greater chance of failing public health measures as long as the people were not active participants in the process. This is best reflected in the words of the Foundation's representative that for the success of public health, "it is necessary to have whole-hearted support and cooperation of the people in general, in addition to that received from the government."⁵⁵

It is argued here that the new public health initiatives were closely connected to advancements in modern education. Modern education and literacy played an active role in dispensing new knowledge about the body, health, sanitation, and hygiene, the internalizing of which was integral to the project of modern public health regimes. The flourishing vernacular press also played a significant role in disseminating new ideas about health, hygiene, sanitation, and public health. By the early 20th century, nearly 20 vernacular and English language newspapers were active in Travancore.⁵⁶ The press actively aided in creating new sensibilities on the body, its effective management, and its relationship with its surroundings.

With its well-established public education system, higher literacy rate, and fairly advanced medical system already in place, Travancore provided a fertile ground for Rockefeller public health initiatives. Central to the rationalities and ideologies of the new public health regimes was the 'care of the self' or making the individual responsible for their own health while subjecting them to interventions of modern medicine and surveillance at the level of the population.⁵⁷

This is evident in the case of the Foundation's attempts to create greater awareness among the people through its initiatives alongside other infrastructural developments for sanitation. The Rockefeller Foundation thus also started to invest in spreading public education to spread awareness of health and hygiene. The public education department was provided with cinema apparatus, including a projector and generator, a motor truck, and other equipment to engage

However, by 1941 Travancore had a literacy rate of 47.1 percent and Cochin had a literacy rate 41 percent, whereas the All-India rate was 15.1 percent, Cited in Barbara Ramusack, *The Indian Princes and their States*, 212.

⁵⁵ Cited in M Kabir, *Beyond Philanthropy*, 28.

⁵⁶ Jeffrey, *Decline*, xxiii.

⁵⁷ Michel Foucault, "The Political Technology of Individuals," in *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, ed. L. H. Martin., H. Gutman and P.H Hutton (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 147. This is can be identified as a moment Foucault identifies as "the care for individual life is becoming at this moment a duty for the state."

in health propaganda.⁵⁸ The foundation representatives frequently visited the state to inspect the progress of the activities of the Foundation. The Foundation's annual report mentions the initiation of a comprehensive public health program in Travancore under trained personnel from the Foundation.⁵⁹ The Travancore state even requested the Foundation's assistance in undertaking a public health survey.⁶⁰

By the time the Foundation stopped its public health activities in the state, nearly 5.3% of its population had received hookworm treatment, which was the primary focus of the Foundation's campaigns.⁶¹ This was a significant number and showed the importance the Foundation had come to attain in public health initiatives in the state. The decision to wind up the public health activities is attributed to the fact that the Foundation had achieved its desired goals of testing the drug's efficacy against hookworm on a significant scale for its usage elsewhere in the world.⁶²

The Foundation paid considerable attention and efforts to the malaria epidemic, which was another serious health threat in Travancore. The Foundation's efforts aided in identifying the disease vector and the prevailing sanitary conditions that led to its spread. The Foundation soon expanded efforts to check the spread of malaria to various parts of the country.

The Foundation's relationship with the state was soon strained by the Foundation's inability to counter the threat of cholera, typhoid, plague, and other diseases that affected the state, causing great human casualties. Some of the plans proposed by the Foundation to reorganize the public health institutions and the financial cost required for that were found unfeasible by the state. Some of the Foundation's measures were found ineffective in countering the public health threats like cholera. The Foundation refused to continue its financial aid to the Neyyattinkara health unit as a result. By 1939, the Foundation's activities had become non-existent in Travancore, with other global concerns occupying its central concerns. This was also the time the Foundation shifted its attention to advancements and research in medical care

⁵⁸ *Rockefeller Foundation Annual Report*, 1932, 132.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 132.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 202.

⁶¹ Kabir, *Beyond Philanthropy*, 17.

⁶² *Ibid.* 17.

from public health.⁶³ Direct medical care and the markets it created now occupied the predominant concerns of the Foundation.⁶⁴

The Rockefeller Foundation in aiding and organizing public health institutions in Travancore was motivated by the same concerns and interests that it had elsewhere in the world: the tropical world as a laboratory for furthering its understanding of diseases, their causes, the ecological and social factors, the efficacy of drugs and medicines and other effective ways of countering them. In short, these global ‘philanthropic initiatives’ were motivated by a biopolitical objective rather than humanitarian and philanthropic considerations. As a result, the foundations’ interventions in the non-western world were in consonance with its shifting global interests rather than the realities they encountered.

It is important to note the role played by such global corporates and international organizations across the globe towards the making of a ‘global community.’ The overemphasis on the role of the state in global history is identified as one reason why the role of non-state actors is not given the importance they deserve.⁶⁵ While the attempt is not to trace the role of these non-state global actors, their presence and activities in the state are looked at to drive the central arguments of the thesis that the health of both the individual and the population has become the focus of global networks of power and various such actors actively shaped consciousness and embodiment. Such organizations and networks have existed along with the state and significantly contributed to the practices of the ‘art of government’ of the bodies. The international organizations “assume that there is another world, one that is produced by forces that cut across national frontiers.”⁶⁶ “These forces create networks of shared interests and concerns that go beyond national interests and concerns.”⁶⁷

While trade and commercial concerns remained an important factor, to assume that mercantilist interest alone motivated global cooperation in the field of health and sanitation is found wanting in explaining the sudden concern internationally with the ‘welfare of humanity.’⁶⁸

⁶³ Saul Franco-Agudelo, “The Rockefeller Foundation’s Antimalarial Program in Latin America: Donating or Dominating,” *International Journal of Health Services* 13, no. 1 (1983): 51-67.

⁶⁴ Ibid. 63.

⁶⁵ Akira Iriye, *Global Community* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 5.

⁶⁶ Ibid. 6.

⁶⁷ Ibid. 6.

⁶⁸ Mark Harrison, “Disease Diplomacy and International Commerce: The Origins of International Sanitary Regulation in the Nineteenth Century,” *Journal of Global History* 1, no. 2 (2006) 198.

While such practices as quarantine had been prevalent as early as the 15th century, necessitated by trade and commercial relations, sanitary and health concerns had not translated into greater international sanitary cooperation until the early 19th century.⁶⁹ The growth of liberal ideas, the evolution of modern medical practices, the inconvenience and inefficiency of quarantine, and the need to ensure the safety and security of commerce forced greater cooperation among the nations and devise more liberal alternatives.⁷⁰

This is closely connected to the idea of ‘the unification of the globe by disease’ as coined by Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie in the context of plague and other epidemics in the early modern period.⁷¹ Taking cues from this concept, Valeska Huber argues that by the time of the sanitary conferences in the face of the cholera epidemic, concerns have “unified the globe against the disease.”⁷² Colonialism and global networks of trade by the end of the 19th century had linked the colonizer and colonized world epidemiologically than ever before. The plague continued to be the biggest threat in the early 19th century. The early quarantine efforts were all directed against plague and not cholera, which wasn’t deemed such a significant threat around this period.⁷³ However, by the 1840s, cholera was regarded as the greatest foe humankind was facing with its virulence, causing more deaths than wars and famines. As such, it demanded greater cooperation from all the countries in the world.⁷⁴ This further strengthens the claims made earlier that a certain internationalism in the field of health, which assimilated the peripheral and colonial metropolis, was seen from the second half of the 19th century. However, this internationalism was definitely Eurocentric.⁷⁵ The colonized states figured in this discourse vis-a-vis their connection with the European colonizers more as a threat to the health of the empire than equal partners.⁷⁶ The advancement in the steam engine, railways, and

⁶⁹ Ibid. 198-199.

⁷⁰ Ibid. 205-207.

⁷¹ Valeska Huber, “The Unification of Globe by Disease? The International Sanitary Conferences on Cholera 1851-1894,” *The Historical Journal* 49, Issue 2 (2006): 453.

⁷² Ibid. 454.

⁷³ Harrison, *Disease Diplomacy*, 207.

⁷⁴ *Indian Medical Gazette*, “The Cholera Congress,” January 1, 1866, 7.

However, Harrison argues that cholera was marginal to the discussion on plague even at the first sanitary conference in 1851 at Paris. 207.

⁷⁵ Akira Iriye, *Cultural Internationalism and World Order* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 50.

⁷⁶ Huber, argues that the sanitary conference organized from 1851 was regarded by European states as part of their civilizing efforts of the Orient. The primary aim of these conferences for them was the “defense of Europe against a threat emanating from Asia,” Huber, *Unification*, 461.

greater and faster transportation it enabled posed a significant health threat: the swifter communication of diseases. The West became more vulnerable and closer than ever to epidemics like cholera that originated in India.

The international sanitary conferences organized in the wake of the threat of the pandemic witnessed the international community putting pressure on the Indian government over the state of affairs in India and the sanitary threats it posed to the world.⁷⁷ The third international sanitary conference paid particular attention to the spread of cholera, and India's role as its primary source came under greater global attention.⁷⁸ As a result of these conferences, several institutional mechanisms were placed along these communication networks to protect the West from the transportation of diseases from the East.⁷⁹ The Commission of Public Health was one such office set up to ensure the safety and security of Europe. The political developments led to finding more amicable solutions to the impractical and arbitrary quarantine practices detrimental to most nations' interests. This necessitated the need for greater cooperation among nations. As Harrison asserts, "The sanitary conferences of the late nineteenth century provided a context in which such disputes could be moderated and their political impact blunted by international consensus."⁸⁰

Within this context of vested global interests, concerns, dependent and unequal colonial context, and claws of persisting social systems based on religion and caste, the bodies existed, and their governments were shaped in 20th-century Travancore. The unraveling of western medicine in Travancore thus needs to be placed in this new governmental order rather than the diametrical opposites of the native versus colonial binary. This 'unification of the globe' and Travancore's absorption into it is crucial in situating its transition with the emergence of colonial governmentality.

British India figure in prominently in these discussions to frame policy matters related to global health care. Arnold too emphasizes this point that health of the colonizer was the main concern of colonial medicine.

⁷⁷ Radhika Ramasubban, "History of Public Health in Modern India," in *Public Health in the Asia and the Pacific: Historical and Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Milton K Lewis and Kerrie L MacPherson (New York: Routledge, 2007), 91.

⁷⁸ Mark Harrison, "The Great Shift: Cholera theory and sanitary policy in British India 1867-1879," in *Society, Medicine and Politics in Colonial India*, ed. Biswamoy Pati & Mark Harrison (New York: Routledge, 2018), 37-60.

⁷⁹ This included, quarantines, constitution of an international health board and also transforming the middle east as a filter to protect the West. Ibid. 37.

⁸⁰ Harrison, *Disease Diplomacy*, 217.

The genealogy of public health has two distinct genealogies: the philanthropic-missionary and the governmental-political.⁸¹ We can see them converging on most occasions and also, like in the case of Travancore, the complex nature of their interaction. These two categories can in no way be neatly separated. The philanthropic-missionary approach to public health was part of the governmentalization of health and population and shared the same rationalities of government that focused on optimizing the health of the population.

It was not only global philanthropic heavyweights like Rockefeller that were involved in the healthcare activities in such colonies/ states as Travancore. The state sought cooperation with organizations such as YMCA, Boy Scouts, etc., in spreading awareness about public health and sanitation through lantern lectures, propaganda, awareness campaigns, and cinemas in schools and rural areas.⁸² It was not only European and colonial organizations and non-state agents involved in Travancore's public health initiatives. Native organizations like Ramakrishna Mission and Veera Kerala Gymkhana, among others, actively engaged in extending relief and medical facilities to the people. Native organizations also collaborated closely with the government in its public health initiatives, especially during the vagaries of epidemics.

Smaller contributions and sponsorships were extended from different parts of the world in the arena of healthcare, as is seen in the case of milk canteens that were started across Travancore for expectant and nursing mothers and children under the age of five.⁸³ These canteens, begun by the Friends Ambulance Unit Calcutta, were run on the private contributions made from various other countries that were part of the empire and the United States.⁸⁴ What is seen here is the close cooperation with which the state is working with non-state agents in medicine and public health. The global concern with the well-being of the health of the populations, in itself a product of European governmentality, was extended to the colonies that came into its contact in various forms.

⁸¹ Alison Bashford, *Imperial Hygiene: A Critical History of Colonialism, Nationalism and Public Health*. (New York: Palgrave, 2004), 7.

⁸² SCSC, 22 August 1936, 316.

⁸³ TAR, 1943-44, 136.

⁸⁴ Ibid. 136.

Private initiatives in the form of subscriptions and individual philanthropy provided substantial funds for new hospitals and dispensaries.⁸⁵ Almost every scholar of colonial medicine has underlined that the shortage of funds and other resources was always a constraint in the administration of western medicine in India. As a result, colonial medicine often relied on individual contributions and patronage. What is regarded as colonial medicine would not have been so successful without the role of private players. Indian cultural tradition of philanthropy and charitable works played an important role in patronizing colonial medicine.⁸⁶ This is best exemplified in the case of Travancore, where it is seen in the shifting role of the state as the patron of western medicine and western medicine, in turn becoming the ‘new charity’ of the state. The role modern medicine played in the discourses of the ‘charitable state’ has already been stressed in the previous chapter. Apart from their political/ administrative role, the ruling family members of Travancore also contributed significantly in their individual capacity to the funds required for hospitals and medical care. Apart from the dedicated state funds, the rulers contributed generously from their privy purses to the government, missionary hospitals, and various organizations.⁸⁷

The close interaction between the princely states and the presidencies meant greater cooperation between these two states, especially in health matters, as epidemics posed a considerable danger to the people of both states. Public health authorities of Madras presidency also made frequent interventions in the nearby princely states. Warnings and precautionary measures on health and prevention of epidemics were regularly published in government gazettes of Travancore by officials of Madras presidency. ‘Scientific’ and scholarly advancements made in the metropolis and the presidencies immediately found their resonance in Travancore. This was not only through the administrative powers of the presidencies, but often, the Travancore state made efforts to make these advancements accessible in Travancore.

In one such instance, the Raja of Travancore wrote a letter of appreciation to Dr. M C Furnell for his lecture on ‘Water,’ which stressed the importance of clean water and hygiene in

⁸⁵ David Arnold, *Colonizing the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth Century India*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 247.

Stressing on this, Arnold says, “The tradition of charity and religious duty continued and found fresh outlets under colonial rule.”

⁸⁶ Ibid. 270.

⁸⁷ Several such instances are seen. *Speeches of Sri Chithira Tirunal Balarama Varma*, 36.

countering cholera. In his letter, the Raja also mentions that the lecture was being published in the government gazette in parts, and it has also been translated into Malayalam for the benefit of the general public in the state.⁸⁸

Fairs, religious gatherings, and festivals meant the active participation of people from both these states. These assemblies, like Arnold, have shown, posed a great danger in spreading epidemics and other diseases. Several different sources can be seen in Travancore gazettes on preventing people from plague and other epidemic-infested areas from attending these religious fairs in fear of spreading them to people of this state. Measures were taken to deny them permission and turn them back to their respective territories.⁸⁹ This was seen in the cases of such big festivals as *Aluva Sivaratri* and *Thrissur Pooram*, which witnessed the participation of people from all around South India. Quarantine was imposed on ships visiting the ports of Travancore from other epidemic-affected parts of the world. References could be seen to how ships from Aden, Durban, and other parts of the world were put into quarantine, fearing the spread of the plague.⁹⁰ This further strengthens the earlier point that the globe was connected more than ever. This closer connectivity meant greater risk, which demanded greater cooperation in the face of the threat of diseases. Evidence of quarantine being imposed in ports of Malabar on the face of the plague outbreak in Baghdad in 1800 has been narrated by Logan.⁹¹

Another example could be the systematic publication of data and statistics on the plague and its resultant casualty in the Fort St George gazettes. These gazettes regularly published updated statistics on the extent and gravity of the epidemic.⁹² On more than one occasion, the Travancore state expressed concern about its subject population being affected by epidemics that spread from parts of Madras presidency like Tinnevely in its annual reports.⁹³ Tinnevely and the floating population around it and other parts of Madras presidency were deemed a threat to the relatively better cared-for population of Travancore by Travancore officials. What

⁸⁸ M C Furnell, *Cholera and Water in India* (London: J & A Churchill, 1887), 31.

⁸⁹ *The Travancore Government Gazette*, 1905 February 7, Number 7, Part II, 132a.

⁹⁰ *The Travancore Government Gazette*, 1904 February 6, Vol XL II, No 6, part I, 122. Also 1905 March 18, Vol XIII, no 12, Part I, 354. Numerous such references can be seen in the Travancore gazettes.

⁹¹ William Logan, *The Malabar Manual*, Vol II, 216.

⁹² Fort St George Gazette, 1911 Feb 14, Issue 7, part IA, 110, numerous references of similar notifications can be seen in the FSGG from 1908.

⁹³ TAR, 1895-96, 121.

is emphasized here is that territorial divisions could not be strictly adhered to in matters like the threat of epidemics. The danger and proximity of epidemics necessitated greater collaboration and efforts, undivided by territorial divisions. The threat of epidemics also brought the Travancore state and the Madras presidency to work together. In the wake of Cholera that was spreading in Devicolum and Munnar, Travancore invoked the Epidemic Diseases Act II of 1073 (1897) to prevent the movement of people who had not been inoculated against cholera from the bordering British Indian territories to Travancore in 1944.⁹⁴ Central to the argument here, populations were mapped and pigeon-holed, and attempts were made to control and predict the movement of the people. The medical and sanitary officials of Travancore and the Madras presidency jointly conducted various experiments to counter the menace of the plague. The Travancore state, finding it beneficial to the state, shared the cost of these experiments.⁹⁵ This is among numerous instances where the two states work closely to eradicate epidemics and ensure public health.⁹⁶ Much like the unification of the globe by diseases earlier highlighted, it can be seen that the subcontinent was unified under colonial administration under the threat of diseases more than ever by the early 20th century. This demanded greater cooperation between directly ruled and indirectly ruled territories in colonial India.

This strengthens the premise of governmentality studies that government is an activity not limited to formal state apparatuses. The art of government and practices of government transcends the borders of the state when it comes to governing the population. The need to strengthen the borders became an ever more pressing need in the face of the diseases and their increasing spread, and securing the health of the populations of Europe became the primary concern.⁹⁷ By then, ever-increasing global communication networks have certainly accelerated the spread of diseases. Such global initiatives were aimed at standardizing procedures and protocols to counter the threat of diseases and secure the populations. Population had by now become the single most concern of global biopolitics.

⁹⁴ *The Travancore Government Gazette*, January 1944, dated 1.4.1944, 746.

⁹⁵ SCSC, 24 November 1933, 110-113.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* A sum of Rs 6250, half of the cost incurred in the experiment was paid by the Travancore state, 110-111.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* 454.

It is within this context that the introduction and expansion of various apparatuses of biopolitics in Travancore need to be understood. The public health works in the state were restructured, with Dr. W P Jacocks of the Rockefeller Foundation being made in charge of the department.⁹⁸ Members of the legislative assembly are found hailing his contributions to organizing the medical department of the state on modern footings.⁹⁹

The diversification of the department and its concerns happened during this time. Hookworm treatment, public health education, medical entomology, plague control measures, and epidemiological and vital statistical investigations all became part of the concerns of the public health department. The sanitary and public health departments were amalgamated to form a single department and put under the charge of the Deputy Director of Public Health.¹⁰⁰ The activities of the department in countering the epidemic and ensuring the general health of the population were found satisfactory.¹⁰¹

Discussions in the assemblies often invoked references from Standard English texts of medicine and health and quotes from renowned doctors on the ideal practices of public health and personal hygiene. Hygiene, until then, was regarded as a trait one inherited through fixed notions of caste. As purity was central to the discourse of caste, hygiene was considered a virtue of the privileged. With menial jobs being duty enforced through the scriptural sanctions and customs discovered and constructed on its basis, personal hygiene remained a caste privilege. This notion started taking a back seat. With one being identified as a part of the general population, individual health also became a concern of this new regime. As contagious diseases knew no caste bounds, it was important to maintain the health of the population regardless of the individual's caste. However, the regional context was not favorable, providing equal opportunities and access to everyone, cutting across distinctions. Notions of caste-based purity continued to shape notions of hygiene and influence practices of western medicine, resulting in an alienation of the lower castes. However, they could not be kept entirely away from the concerns of colonial biopolitics. The unequal access to western medicine will be explained in the latter part of the chapter.

⁹⁸ T K Velu Pillai, *Travancore State Manual, Vol IV* (Trivandrum: The Government of Travancore, 1940), 310

⁹⁹ SCSC, 22 Aug, 1933. 311.

¹⁰⁰ Velu Pillai, *Travancore State Manual, Vol IV*, 311.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. 311.

Caste, rather than withering away, is transformed in its interaction with colonial biopolitical initiatives and interventions, continuing to exist and exert its influences through it. The dominant ideas about caste and its hierarchies are incorporated into the various knowledge systems and discourses devised and employed as part of colonial governmentality. Nevertheless, colonial biopolitics largely dislocated the body from its essentially religious and caste location.

Authoritarian Governmentality or Epistemological Conquest

Central to the colonial project is the production of knowledge.¹⁰² Epistemological conquest is “the transmission and absorption of new categories and modes of thought either displacing or coexisting in a situation of dominance with older categories and modes of thought rising not only through a scholarship but more importantly through the interventionary power of colonial rule.”¹⁰³ The ‘superior’ knowledge system of the colonial world disrupts the established order of things in the colony. With the backing of colonial domination, this knowledge system translates itself into newer techniques of government. In other words, the colonial state and its rationalities were constituted by the new knowledge systems in place. The colonial state effectively appropriated these knowledge systems to sustain its domination, and any attempts to understand and demystify the colonial state and its specificities necessitate interrogating its knowledge practices and epistemological foundations. Governmentality studies facilitate precisely this.

Forms of epistemological conquest rather than confrontation often take the form of a syncretism of knowledge systems in which western knowledge is deemed superior. This percolates into the practices of government through various ways, including missionary discourses, western medical systems, the media, global interventions, legislations, etc. What is seen is the transformation of knowledge into forms of power. It is within this context that subjectivities are shaped in a dependent colonial context.

¹⁰² Epistemological strategies of colonial knowledge production have been addressed by various scholars from several different perspectives, that includes C A Bayly, Bernard S Cohn, Arjun Appadurai to name a few. While they significantly differed in their perspective, they have all agreed on the claims of European knowledge of its superiority in its syncretism with non-European forms of knowledge.

¹⁰³ U Kalpagam, *Rule by Numbers: Governmentality in Colonial India* (Hyderabad: Orient Black Swan, 2015), 4.

Colonial medicine, in its alien setting like India, was an integral part of the larger colonial power-knowledge nexus. It very much functioned as an authoritarian form of knowledge, often undermining all the other forms of medical and therapeutical practices that existed in the colony before its arrival. There were multiple forms of challenges to western medicine in its alien setting like India. Colonial medicine thus always remained an “incomplete process.”¹⁰⁴

The Travancore state, home to other indigenous practices of medicine like Ayurveda, also promoted such streams and practices of medicine through generous grants and the establishment of grant-in-aid *vaidyasalas*. However, the active support of the colonial state and the hegemony of western medicine was not something that indigenous forms of medicine could ever claim. The native state still extended considerable support to Ayurveda. This support of the state for both native and western medicine is identified as the main reason for the relatively high standards of health in Travancore compared to the rest of the country.¹⁰⁵ However, modern medical practitioners frequently expressed their concerns about the qualifications of traditional medical practitioners. They are believed by practitioners of western medicine as creating more problems than solve them. Sometimes, it is even lamented that there are no ways to control the traditional practitioners due to the absence of a medical registration act in the state.¹⁰⁶

The support of the colonial state gave western medicine an authority far superior to its appeal. This state backing and the power knowledge nexus gave western medicine a hegemony over its rival forms of medicine and could influence the life of the general population in such a short period that no other forms of medicine could. The populations were subjected to the policies of state medicine whether they liked it or not. The arbitrariness of colonial medicine and the fear it generated among the people is found in plenty of popular literature and memoirs.¹⁰⁷

The state employed several strategies that included financial benefits offered for the promotion of modern medicine and its practices like vaccination among the natives. Native inoculators were offered double the salary for administering the vaccine in place of variolation in many

¹⁰⁴ David Arnold, “Of Prisons, Tropics and Bicycles: A Conversation with David Arnold,” Rahul Deb Roy, *Asian Medicine* 6 (2010-11): 149-63.

¹⁰⁵ Kawashima, *Missionaries*, 115.

¹⁰⁶ *The Indian Medical Gazette*, 1931, 691.

¹⁰⁷ Devaki Nilayamgode, *Antharjanam: Memoirs of a Namboodiri Woman* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011), 98-100.

parts of South India.¹⁰⁸ Over time, colonial medicine, both through active state support and educating the native populations –through its discursive and non-discursive practices breached this native resistance and actively subjected them to the practices of modern medicine. The colonial context witnessed not the mere coexistence of multiple knowledge systems but a contestation for dominance in which colonial medicine backed by colonial power was disproportionately equipped against other knowledge systems.

Western medicine reordered health practices, social and cultural norms, and gender roles. This was at times resisted and sometimes internalized by the populations. Where it was resisted, sometimes force was used by the state. The colonial state, through its initiative, also managed to create active partners in the order of colonial medicine at every layer, from specialist doctors to compounders to clerks and peons. Travancore state also supported the colonial state in these initiatives. The state also provided native doctors scholarships to study in western medical schools and get trained in modern medicine. Colonial medicine was not always medicine practised by the colonizer; it was also medicine practised under colonial conditions. Colonial medicine, in this sense, always had something local to it and was not the uniform manifestation of a global phenomenon.

While there is no denying that the anti-colonial movement in Travancore resisted and gave stiff opposition to colonial rule in the form of the national movement, from a biopolitical administration point of view, its legacies remained so integral to the modern regime. The modern nationalist regime that replaced colonial rule continued the processes initiated by colonial governmentality, its disciplinary and biopower models, and practices of government. The subjectification processes initiated by colonial medicine and governmentality continued unchallenged under a different model of the national government (Nation-state). Modern medicine and the biopolitical rationalities that guided it were among the most critical factors that marked the shift of a Hindu princely state to that of a ‘modern’ state in Travancore.

It can be observed that the municipal towns and centres often received better attention from the state in matters of healthcare and sanitation, whereas the internal regions and smaller towns seldom received attention despite the members pleading for the construction of hospitals and better access to modern health care. Managing crises rather than an interest in the general

¹⁰⁸ Ian Glynn and Jennifer Glynn, *The Life and Death of Smallpox* (London: Profile Books, 2004), 118.

welfare of the population thus remains a distinguishing feature of colonial governmentality, as underlined earlier.

One important problem here is whether the colonial state or its discursive practices in this colonial context had the resources and penetrative power to interfere in the life of the populations as it did in the metropole. The kind of elaborative mechanisms in the West, like public schools, factories, hospitals, etc., are absent in the European form. The answer could appear to be no; it did not have the same elaborate tools as in the West. However, the different contexts of colonial regimes invested it with specific hegemonic power. Existing juridical institutions were modified along European lines. New institutions like schools and hospitals were established. Fundamental to it was the authority it brought along with it in the form of race or the rule of colonial difference. The idea of colonial governmentality and colonial biopolitics was also centred on European racial superiority. This European pretension with race and the inherent superiority it brought along was questioned through its techniques by the colonized populations. The criticisms raised by the colonized often rested on the effective use of the same biopolitical tools put in to administer the colonized populations. The attempts to subject the colonized to biopolitical strategies also gave rise to a situation whereby the colonized themselves appropriated the practices and effectively used them to counter both the waning sovereign power and the colonial power.

What separates biopolitics from other forms of power is the possibilities it offers to the subject. The colonized populations often effectively altered the institutions of disciplinary and biopolitical administration to suit their needs. The generation of obedient subjects was crucial to the ideas and practices of both disciplinary and biopower. But in practice, it was not a goal that could be attained. The social and political conditions of the sovereign state and the colonial state were scrutinized and objected to through this window of possibilities offered by biopolitics. The colonized population, junior partners as they were, managed to launch their demands effectively and started exploring the emancipatory potentials offered by colonial governmentality.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Sarah Hodges, in her study on contraception and colonialism demonstrates the possibilities offered by the contraception campaigns and the mass production of contraceptive tools and how the colonized women did make use of it to further their desires and control over their own body. The noteworthy point here is, she locates this emancipatory potential of colonial biopolitics also outside the formal state structures, in a whole lot of discursive and non-discursive practices working at times contradictory to and more often hand in hand with the formal state,

Biopolitics was often integrated into the colonial project through its disciplinary mechanisms and institutions. It often functioned through juridical institutions rather than replacing the sovereign institutions and the initial disciplinary forms of power initiated in the colonies. The disciplinary regime of colonialism effectively handpicked the biopolitical tools to ‘govern better.’

Another important question that arises is how egalitarian the practices of modern government were. Or to what extent did the avenues of modern techniques of government were opened up for the people divided by caste, region, and community? Many studies have keenly underlined the important role played by colonial modernity in the emancipation of, especially, lower castes. Colonial education policies have been regarded as the single most important factor in the rise of subaltern consciousness in Travancore.¹¹⁰

Punishment, Torture, and Biopolitics.

Chapter 1 explained in detail how the bodies were controlled, regulated, and shaped in their everyday setting in the precolonial world. The life world of bodies in the precolonial world was mapped in the chapter. Punishment was the most visible manifestation of power on the bodies. The nature of political power that validated such forms of punishment to act on the bodies has been addressed in the same chapter, whereas the transformations such political authority have undergone in the face of colonialism are analyzed in chapter two. This part focuses on those aspects of punishment and regulatory mechanisms that changed in the wake of colonial biopolitics.

It has already been stated at the beginning of this chapter that deductive aspects of power transform in favour of a form of power focused on investing the body with capacities. This form of power that sought to optimize, regulate, and invest the bodies with productive power compatible with the art of government is what is called colonial biopolitics.

While precolonial modes of punishment had death as an ultimate form of punishment, as deterrence was among the chief aims of punishment, the utility of that body (which transgressed boundaries to warrant death in the first place) continuing to live did not outweigh

Hodges, *Contraception, Colonialism and Commerce*, 1-21.

¹¹⁰ Among other works, an important work which shares such a perspective is R N Yesudas, *A People's Revolt in Travancore*.

the message sent out by killing it. This was aimed at preserving the established order of things and subverting any kind of opposition to the extant order and hierarchies. This was no longer the case in the wake of new rationalities of government shaped by colonial biopolitics.

This was revealed with the example of the death penalty debates and Travancore's eventual abolition of it in 1944, explained at length in chapter III.¹¹¹ The importance of the emergence of biopolitical technologies in facilitating the end of death penalties and other sovereign expressions of power was already underlined in locating the transformation from Sovereignty to Governmentality in Chapter III.

Colonial regimes are marked by an interesting paradox: while the colonial regimes restricted the use of violence by the native sovereigns, it continued to remain a key feature of colonial rule.¹¹² There is no question about the fact that torture continued to exist as part of penal repression despite its outlawing by the state. It should also be noted here that torture existing in the non-official domain of society is not what is talked about here. Such torture and violence on the body never stopped in society. However, the social sanction had changed, and the traditional rights that facilitated and justified it were stopped.

Such corporal punishments like whipping and lashing continued to exist as part of state punishment despite its regulations.¹¹³ Torture and violence have forever remained persisting problems and known secrets in colonial settings' judicial processes and punishments.¹¹⁴ The persistence of torture also meant that despite the triumph of biopolitical technologies and the governmental rationalities of colonial governmentality, the body continued to remain the target of penal repressions.

Epidemics, Medicine, and the Security of the Population

The emergence of the apparatuses of security distinguishes this phase, and the threat of epidemics plays an important role in it. Concerns about security are one of the primary

¹¹¹ Travancore state officially banned all forms of death penalty on November 11, 1944.

¹¹² Deana Heath, "The Tortured Body: The Irrevocable Tension between Sovereign and Biopower in Colonial Indian Technologies of Rule," in *South Asian Governmentalities: Michel Foucault and the Question of Postcolonial Orderings*, ed. Stephen Legg and Deana Heath (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 226.

¹¹³ For example, Criminal Circular No II, Proceedings of the Sadr Court of Travancore awarding whipping, 1 September 1881, 38.

¹¹⁴ Anupama Rao, "Problems of Violence, State of Terror: Torture in Colonial India," *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 3 no. 2 (2001): 186-205.

constituents of modern governmental rationality.¹¹⁵ Security concerns entered the state policies and legislations from the late 19th century, resulting in the strengthening of the security apparatuses and surveillance of the populations. The previous chapter has underlined how the state's security concerns were further aggravated and shaped by the increasing global cooperation and interaction.

The frequency and vagaries of epidemics contributed significantly to the modernization of medicine and public health in Travancore, like the rest of the country. The element of risk gets a prominent place in the policies formulated to counter the menace of epidemics. While the focus remained on the health of the populations, along with it rose the need to safeguard the population from the risk of epidemics and various contagious diseases. The three main epidemics, cholera, plague, smallpox, and endemic malaria, which posed the greatest health threat to the subcontinent, also posed a significant threat to Travancore. The influenza epidemic of the early 20th century, which caused the most significant human casualty across India, did not considerably impact Travancore, as it is hardly mentioned in the government reports of the period.¹¹⁶

It has already been shown how the population was taking shape as a category around which policies began to be formulated. Epidemics were a concern that received much attention from colonial medicine both in the princely states and the presidencies. The imminent danger such epidemics posed was central to this focus on preventing epidemics. While in the presidencies with a significant white population, ensuring and protecting their health remained a crucial concern of colonial medicine. However, in princely states, in the absence of a significant white population, the main concern remained the health of the native population, which was under serious threat by these epidemics.

Various legislative measures during this period indicate the state's increasing penetration in controlling and managing the population. The Epidemics Diseases Act of 1897 (Act I & II 1073) is the best case in point.¹¹⁷ This act, invoked in the immediate aftermath of the Bombay plague, finding the existing regulations and laws insufficient to counter the threat of epidemics,

¹¹⁵ Gordon, *Governmental Rationality*, 20.

¹¹⁶ Chinmay Tumbbe, *The Age of Pandemics 1817-1920* (Noida: Harper Collins, 2020), 162.

¹¹⁷ The Act which was modelled after the Indian Epidemics Act 1897, was initially adopted for 6 months and later made permanent in the wake of frequent bouts of epidemics and added to the statute book of Travancore. *Acts & Proclamations of Travancore, Vol I*, 364.

provided the executive with extraordinary powers to regulate the populations. Emergency and exceptional powers were often written into these acts, giving the state unrestricted powers in the case of such exigencies. The act contained elaborate provisions to check the spread of epidemics, including inspection, segregation, quarantine, and hospital admissions. Violation of the provisions of the act was made a penal offence as per section 188 of the state's penal code.¹¹⁸ Epidemics and their resultant medical emergencies or the 'extraordinary situations' they created allowed the state to further its penetrative power to manage the populations in more diverse and efficient ways. As mentioned in the thesis, managing crises remained an important feature of colonial governmentality.

As seen in the Leper Act of 1077 (1902), the lepers selling fruits and other food products were considered a threat to the population's health. The pauper lepers with sores displaying them to seek alms were regarded as causing great annoyance to the population. It should also be noted that the act demanded the locking up of lepers in leper asylums only in the cities with a higher population, and it mandated the locking of only such lepers wandering in the streets and involved in begging.¹¹⁹ The Travancore Prevention of Begging Act was passed in the year 1945. The act made seeking alms and exposing wounds or deformities to extort alms a punishable offence.¹²⁰

The effective management of the population also led to a systematic exclusion of groups not belonging to this ideal of healthy subjects. Those excluded included the lepers, the paupers, the lunatics, the criminal tribes, etc. This exclusion was central to the modern idea of government and the management of populations. It can be seen here that these laws and legislations were motivated by a new modern fear of the infectious and contagious body. These acts thus sought to empty the public space of such threats and secure the public space for the general population. This is further aided by institutional mechanisms like asylums and sanatoriums, which has already been designed and designated to enable the removal of such threat from the public domain to the institutional care of the state.¹²¹ These spaces created their

¹¹⁸ Ibid. 364.

Interestingly the state also provided legal impunity and protection to anyone who acted in good faith of the act.

¹¹⁹ Leper Act, Act III, 1077, *Travancore Acts and Proclamations: Volume I*, 753-765.

¹²⁰ Travancore Prevention of Begging Act, 1945, *Travancore Acts and Proclamations: Volume XIV*, (Trivandrum: The Government Press, 1932), 244.

¹²¹ The conditions of the asylums and sanatoriums especially in the peripheral towns were often in a sorry state and remained overcrowded and unattended. Wellesley Bailey, the founder of The Leprosy Mission in India, on

regimes of truth and created their subjectivities. Surveillance remained a key objective of modern medicine. The previous chapter has shown how a modern sanitary and public health regime focused on securing the population's health dominated the state's policies. (See Chapter 4, 48-56)

While it is true that the population emerged as an essential category in deciding policies as part of the apparatuses of security, the population was by no means a monolithic entity. The idea of the population was represented in the language of the native press often, as a community. That individual health and cleanliness need to be maintained to ensure the health of the community as a whole was a recurring theme in the press.¹²²

The political rationality of modern power is characterized by two distinct and seemingly contradictory forms of power: one that is totalizing and centralizing and the other individualizing and normalizing.¹²³ Biopolitical administration remained a confluence of both individualizing and totalizing power at the same time. While the self-governing individual remained its micro-unit of intervention, the population remained its primary concern. The crucial difference from disciplinary power here is the focus on such categories as population, which was intervention not on the individual body but at the level of generality. The health of the population could not be realized by achieving the health of the individual alone. It had to be ensured by the regulation and management of the population.

This would also mean governing the medical conduct of the individual and surveillance of the population. From its initial days, the unfolding of colonial biopolitics maintained this crucial

his visit to a Leper Asylum in Alleppey says that it was a 'charity shed' rather than an asylum, where patients were lodged in one long shed and lying in sand with sores. This further strengthens the idea that it was not the care of the infected, but the security of the population that was the greater concern of the state resulting in the emptying and cleansing of the streets from these potential threats.

Wellesley Bailey, *A Glimpse at the Indian Mission- Field and Leper Asylums in 1886-87* (London: John F Shaw, 1887), 41- 42.

¹²² G M Dsouza, *Shareera Prakriti Sastravum, Arogya Sastravum*, (Science of Body features and Health Science) 1112 (1937), Thrissur, 34-35. Is one of several examples that talks about the health of the individual and the community and its mutual constitution.

¹²³ Building on ideas of pastoral power Foucault uses the term *Omnes et Singulatim* to refer to power employed to govern populations, that is at once totalizing and individualizing at the same time. "On the one hand, the shepherd must keep his eye on all and each."

Foucault says the primary function of pastoral power is to "constantly ensure, sustain, and improve the lives of each and every one." 307.

Michel Foucault, "Omnes et Singulatim: Towards a Critique of Political Reason," in *Power: Essential Works of Michel Foucault 1954-1984, Vol III*, ed. James D. Faubion (New York: The New Press, 2000), 298-325.

connection between the individual and the population. So it can be seen that there are two seizures of power of the bodies: first, an individualizing one and second, massifying (non-individualizing), one directed not at man-as-body but at man-as-species.¹²⁴

In the words of a native author who hails the importance of public opinion in shaping public health,

“This great achievement [high standard of public health] is not at all the result of any voluntary attempts on the part of the local councils, the parliament, or the government. It is the individual citizen and nobody else who as the final authority has decided whether or not he, his family, his community, and the country should be free from diseases that are easily preventable.”¹²⁵

The internalizing of the self of the biopolitical power and its objectives is evident in the words mentioned above. It is also stressed in the same article that the individual's health has now become part of not only some civic responsibility but also significantly constituting and shaping “National Health.”¹²⁶

With the institutionalization of public health, the idea of the population is grounded firmly into the logic of medical administration and, thereby, in biopolitical administration. In the words of a native legislator on the role of the public health department and its focus on population, “There is nothing nobler for statesmanship to achieve than conferring value on human life, and this work at grappling with our preventible [sic] diseases is one of the means of conferring value upon our people.”¹²⁷ In the same context, he also stresses the role of public health in improving people's efficiency and thus bringing about economic regeneration of the country. There are numerous instances where the individual's health is hailed for its economic utility and value. In the words of another native Doctor, “the Standard of public health in a country is an index of the civilization and education of its citizens.”¹²⁸

¹²⁴ Michel Foucault, *Society Must be Defended: Lectures at the College De France 1975-76* (New York: Picador, 2003), 243.

¹²⁵ Dr. M K Gopala Pillai, “Public Opinion and Public Health,” *The Malayala Rajyam Annual*, 1931. Emphasis in original. (page number absent).

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ SCSC, 22 August 1933, 321.

¹²⁸ Gopala Pillai, *Public Opinion and Public Health*.

Throughout these native imaginations and articulations, what is seen is the internalizing of a biopolitical rationale. The individual is here made responsible for the care of their body, health, and the self. In a profoundly caste-ridden and hierarchical society like Travancore, where the idea of a public sphere was in its nascent stages, public health as constituting and shaping public opinion was an important direction in the ‘governmentalization of the state.’ This came about as a product of the new rationales of government’ instituted by colonial governmentality.

Statistics and Governmentality

The production of statistics was central to the project of governmentality in general and colonial administration in particular. The significance of statistics in modern governance is underlined by Hacking: “Statistics has helped determine the form of laws about society and the character of social facts. It has engendered concepts and classifications within human sciences. Moreover, the collection of statistics has created, at the least, a great bureaucratic machinery. It may think of itself as providing only information, but it is itself part of the technology of a modern state.”¹²⁹

The second half of the 19th century witnessed a steady growth in the efforts towards greater statistical data being collected and effectively employed in governance. Surveys, travelogues, census, administration reports, and revenue documents all contributed to a rich statistical archive. The production of colonial surveys and various taxonomies with their concerns on population, climate, and resources were exercises in colonial governmentality.¹³⁰ These surveys and the elaborate knowledge production undertaken by the colonial government were central to the colonial governmentality project. The statistical knowledge thus produced was authoritarian in character and provided the interventionary space for state policies. Statistical data provided vital justification for colonial biopolitical administration. The concern of security, which was a crucial component of governmental rationality, finds in the new knowledge system of statistics its most faithful ally to conquer the aleatory in the social domain, as is shown in this chapter.

¹²⁹ Ian Hacking, “How should We Do the History of Statistics,” in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, ed. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 181.

¹³⁰ David Arnold, *The New Cambridge History of India: Science, Technology and Medicine in Colonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 23.

Modern medicine, being the most potent tool of colonial governmentality and biopolitics, made the best use of the available statistics to further its efficiency and penetration. Wherever statistics and data were not available, it created its own statistics, and efforts were made to collect data on people, places, and diseases.

Monumental works of colonial ethnography, often employing the latest developments in colonial science, were produced by the late 19th century. Volumes of data that mapped the people, geography, flora, fauna, and their cultural and social environment were produced.¹³¹ These attempts mapped the native social and natural world, translating into authoritarian knowledge about these societies, making them more intelligible and governable to the colonial regimes.

Influenced by the colonial project of archiving and enumeration, the state of Travancore also gave attention to the collection and record of data. The collection of records as such was not new to the state as the state had a fairly elaborate collection and records of data with respect to revenue, *devaswom*, and judicial administration. But what changed is the role of the numbers, and the vital role statistics started to play in the project of the government. The role statistics and numbers played would follow Hacking's observation that "It has itself become the technology of the modern state."¹³²

It is important to understand that the precolonial state also produced data and statistics in its own ways. However, the two modes of production of statistics were bound by two distinct rationalities of government. They differed significantly in objective and character. As a result, the precolonial records of *Jananamaranakanakku* (Record of Births and Deaths) differed significantly from the vital statistics initiated in the late 19th century. They were maintained by the Village officers, who were not often showing any great interest in their collection and its records. The *Jananamaranakanakku* was often criticized for being faulty. While the *Jananamaranakanakku* was a mere record of births and deaths in the state or a particular

¹³¹ Edgar Thurston, *Caste and Tribes of Southern India* (Madras: Government Press Madras, 1909). Could be the best example in the South Indian context.

Francis Buchanan, *A Journey from the Madras through the countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar* (London: W Bulmer and Co, 1807). Is regarded as one of the earliest works in this direction.

Another example would be, Lieutenants Ward and Connor, *Geographical and Statistical Memoir of the Survey of the Travancore and Cochin States* (Trivandrum: Travancore Sircar Press, 1898).

¹³² Hacking, *How should We Do the History of Statistics*, 181.

territory, the record of vital statistics that was intrinsically connected to the new medical regimes and science of sanitation called for a deeper inquiry into these numbers and demanded interventions based on them. Having found the existing systems of collecting *jananamaranakanakku* wanting, Nagam Aiya, in his commentary to the census of 1891, proposed the setting up of Life statistics with permanent staff dedicated to the collection of data in every *proverties* that would also periodically aid in the regular census collections whenever it was undertaken.¹³³ Vital statistics were “crucial for the intelligibility of populations in the 19th century national public health.”¹³⁴ As a result, the health of the individual, community, and populations was all inquired about, acted upon by the state, and integrated into the creation of notions of national public health. On the re-election of the Statistical Committee of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1866 to aid in the economic and vital statistics of the country, he described it as “an unparalleled field of research, almost untrodden is thus opened to the statistician.”¹³⁵

Vital statistics, crucial to the public health department to ensure health care and identify areas of concern, were absent until 1893-94 in Travancore. The sanitary commissioner was put in charge of the vaccination, vital statistics, and sanitation departments.¹³⁶ Aiya cautions on the accuracy of the statistics but, at the same time, does not dismiss its usefulness and the insights it offers. The whole territory was brought under the rubric of government through data collected. Births, deaths, and infant mortality were all documented. With such data gathered, the causes of death received better attention. The causes were identified and isolated, and their prevention was sought. Birth and death now become an important concern of the state in its exercise of power in its everyday operation.¹³⁷ Elaborate mechanisms to record statistics of birth and death were put in place by the end of the 19th century in Travancore. Vital statistics were gathered and published systemically and regularly. In addition to the decennial census and the gazettes that carried statistical information about the state and its people, the Travancore government began to periodically publish the ‘Statistics of Travancore’ from 1919-

¹³³ Aiya, *Travancore State Manual*, Vol II, 498-499.

¹³⁴ Alison Bashford, “Global Biopolitics and the History of World Health,” *History of the Human Sciences* 19, no. 1 (2006): 70.

¹³⁵ *Indian Medical Gazette*, 1866, 194.

¹³⁶ Aiya, *Travancore State Manual*, Vol II, 499.

¹³⁷ Turner, *Body and Society*, 4.

20.¹³⁸ The Health cards and health surveys devised during the time of the Rockefeller initiative, already described in the chapter, were yet another example of the increasing statistical penetration in people's lives.

Sanitation had begun to be recognized as the most crucial step in keeping diseases away. Cholera and such epidemics have been attributed to a lack of proper sanitation, clean drinking water, and the general state of filthy living conditions prevailing in the state. Births and deaths of people were gathered as per community and religion.¹³⁹ Statistics were generated not only of deaths and births but also lunatics, lepers, deaf-mutes, and blinds. The state's attention to the population's health can be seen in the collection statistics of infirmities from the maiden census. Such data was often prepared and compared to that of Madras presidency and other princely states.¹⁴⁰ The data thus collected were further segregated based on religion, calling for intervention among specific communities. Numbers increasingly performing a governmental function or pedagogical function, as discussed in the introduction, is what can be seen here. These statistics thus gathered engage in a comparative function with former years as well as with that of other states and between various communities, with the objectives of improvement. The index thus is used for showing progress and improvement often. The data collected were not entirely foolproof, and the officials were aware of it as well. As Aiya would say, the statistics show a smaller number of females affected by defects and diseases could not only be that the females were more immune than the males but that they could better conceal the details from the enumerators.¹⁴¹ The effects these statistical inquiries created in the minds of the subjects have been captured by the enumerators. People were concerned that being identified as infirms in the public records would seriously affect their prospects.¹⁴² These are evidence of exercises through which the colonized were seeking the truth about themselves as construed by the colonizers and constituted their self-image exactly as construed by the colonizers. The state recorded the literacy rate, educational qualifications, civil conditions, means of

¹³⁸ *Statistics of Travancore*, (Trivandrum: The Government Press, 1919-20).

¹³⁹ *Travancore Census 1891, 1901*.

¹⁴⁰ Aiya, *Travancore State Manual*, 522.
Travancore Census 1875, 279-280.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.* 523.

¹⁴² *Travancore Census 1875*, 280.

livelihood, economic status, profession, etc., and the state began to analyze its role in fulfilling its functions via the statistics it produced.

The sanitary commissioner stood at the apex of the statistics generated by various departments. This included the Town Improvement Committees, Conservator of Forests, Registrations, Prisons, Police, and various such departments.¹⁴³ With the systematic record of birth and deaths, birth and death rates and life expectancy became a crucial concern of the state. The statistics thus generated were broken down into sex ratios, monthly birth-to-death ratios, etc. Similarly, mortality rates began to be recorded, and therefore, a greater record of the causal diseases began to be identified, and ways to counter them began to be investigated more than ever. Cholera, smallpox, dysentery, and plague were all identified as important reasons for the increasing death rates. These identifications called for interventions regarding the prevalent diseases from the part of colonial medicine. Urban and rural statistics regarding death began to be generated and studied. In the domain of criminal administration, statistical knowledge was widely used. The government gathered and furnished the minutest details on prisons like age, juvenility, gender, diseases, health, morbidity, and caste of the prisoners.¹⁴⁴

The body figured as an important object of governance in the new statistical order. The body became a quantifiable commodity, and its capacities became something to be optimized in tune with the rationalities of colonial governmentality. What is seen here is thus the integration of new statistical knowledge into public health measures and determining its course of events. In other words, the question of life or the biological features that distinguished the human species entered politics or the integration of life itself into the realm of government. The biological facets of the human species thus become part of the political strategy.

Census

The census is an important constituent of modern state power. It is a distinctly modern technology of power. While premodern societies also employed enumerative techniques, the rationalities of modern power are quite distinct from them, as elaborated in the previous section. Statistics was central to the project of colonial governmentality, as asserted already, and the census was its most concrete manifestation. The emergence of the population as an

¹⁴³ Aiya, *Travancore State Manual*, Vol II, 500.

¹⁴⁴ *Statistics of Travancore*, Fifteenth Issue 1933-34, (Trivandrum: The Government Press, 1933-34).

aggregating category of governance/ unit of government was enabled by the systemic generation of data through the census. Statistical and demographical pursuit of the modern state established itself through the census. The census documented, mapped, and enumerated all aspects of the government of the state and created spaces of intervention for the government by creating new categories. The modern state and its rationalities of government demanded a thorough record and documentation of its demographic and social statistics. Census was central to the modern state's attempt to make sense of its people, geography, infrastructure, and diversity and document and order along its rationalities. The data thus generated was correlated to political and economic conditions and often called for interventions. The anomalous and the deviant of the society were identified and distinguished and became the subject of the new knowledge system. Numbers and statistical matrices generated through censuses began to play a greater role in the practices of government from the late 19th century.

The first scientific census along modern lines in Travancore was conducted in 1875 by a Royal proclamation of 26th November 1874.¹⁴⁵ It was modelled after the British Census of 1871 and was regarded as an important initiative in the modernization of Travancore. However, before the census of 1875, there were three earlier attempts, from 1816 to 1854, to compile a census of Travancore, which were not regarded as successful, and its data were found to be inaccurate.¹⁴⁶ The earliest attempt in 1816 was undertaken by Lieutenant Ward and Connor as part of the East India Company's attempts to survey and map India. The emergence of the modern census also created greater grounds for the penetration of modern medicine and colonial biopolitics in Travancore. The decennial censuses that were produced were not simply a record of numbers but were an important constituent of the modern state and became an authoritative knowledge form through which the modern state legitimized itself. The population as an aggregating category of governance was further cemented with the systematic production of the census.

From basic classifications of population, birth rate, sex ratio, and mortality, the census diversified itself into collecting and recording almost all aspects of human life. Fertility, density, endemic diseases, migration, insanity, etc., were recorded in the census. The

¹⁴⁵ *A Report of the Census of Travancore 1875* (The Travancore Government Press, Trivandrum, 1876), I.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 1.

emergence of these new categories indicates that more aspects of life came under the purview and object of government. That census and other enumeration strategies of the colonial state resulted in the objectification of Indian culture, people, and identities, resulting in deeply influencing Indian self-perception and identity formations, which have been explored in detail by scholars like Bernard Cohn.¹⁴⁷

Apart from the record and classification of population, various censuses were employed for industrial censuses, analyzing economic conditions, and even a cattle census was started in Travancore. The enumerators employed in census collection were used to collect 'special inquiries' about the people and resources. The census data thus created moved beyond enumeration to create more statistical matrices along which the society was mapped, classified, and intervened upon. The census remained the best index that mapped the increasing infrastructural penetration of the state. Thus, The census unleashed an intense statistical activity in the state that had the people participate in it. Notably, the census also played a crucial role in integrating the princely states with the Indian state. Statistical inquiries in the princely states corresponded with the British government's efforts to statistically map India. From 1881, the state census followed the decennial national census. The state censuses were integrated with the national and imperial censuses.

The data in the first three censuses shown in the below table is said to be inaccurate and not based on any scientific evidence as they were nascent attempts by the state to formulate a statistical record for the state. By 1931, the collection of censuses had become a humongous activity demanding the efforts and cooperation of both state and non-state machinery. A census department was constituted under the census commissioner. The total cost incurred by the state in the process was 1,50,800 Rupees, a significant sum. 3618 supervisors, 35,981 enumerators, and 21,605 private personnel were employed in the collection of the census data.¹⁴⁸ The census commissioner, N. Kunjan Pillai, also underlines the willing cooperation extended in collecting census statistics by the public.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ Bernard S Cohn, "The Census and Objectification in South Asia," in *An Anthropologist Among The Historians and Other Essays* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987), 224-254.

¹⁴⁸ *Census of India, 1931, Vol XXVIII, Travancore, Part I-Report* (Trivandrum: Government Press, 1932), vii.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.* vii.

Table 5.1. Population of Travancore¹⁵⁰

Year	Population
1816-1820	9,06,587
1836	12,80,668
1854	12,62,647
1875	23,11,379
1881	24,01,158
1891	25,57,736
1901	29,52,157
1911	34,28,975
1921	40,06,062
1931	50, 95,973

The Census Regulation III of 1105 (1930) imposed a penalty on anyone who obstructed the work of the census officers and on anyone who deliberately furnished wrong information to the census officers.¹⁵¹ Jeffrey shows that census data became a battleground in which various communities attempted to elevate their social and religious status.¹⁵² That modern census and the various taxonomical regimes institutionalized under colonial conditions resulted in the solidification and strengthening of existing identities, and their reincarnation into a distinctly modern form is something that has long been established. Statistics and statistical knowledge that formed a crucial component of governmental rationality played a crucial role in

¹⁵⁰ Gathered from the Travancore Censuses from 1875-1931.

¹⁵¹ The Travancore Census Regulation, (Regulation III 1105, in *The Regulations and Proclamations of Travancore, Vol VII*, (Trivandrum: The Anantha Rama Varma Press, 1937), 36-41. The penalty amounted to 3 months imprisonment or a fine of not less than 50 Rupees.

Cohn shows, that census collection was always constrained by rumours, preventing people from furnishing accurate information to the state. Such rumours included, that the fourth male child would be taken away for conscription and the accurate measure of land would increase in the land tax etc. Cohn, *The Census*, 239.

¹⁵² Robin Jeffrey, *People, Princes and Paramount Power: Society and Politics in the Indian Princely States* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1978), 143.

reconfiguring the functioning of the Travancore state and its political rationalities along the lines of governmental power.

From Public Health to Anxieties of National Health

The emergence of 'National Health' as a concern is an important development that takes shape in the early 20th century. The concern with 'National Health' was not something unique to Travancore. It can be seen that Travancore is often replicating the discourses of 'National Health,' which had gained currency in many parts of British India and the princely states alike with the strengthening of the national movement. The political changes and assertions of a national identity that strengthened in Travancore from the late 19th and early 20th century significantly contributed to the creation of the ideas of national health.

Debates on child marriage are the best case in point, where anxiety regarding failing national health due to child marriage was frequently articulated across British India, and Travancore shared the same rhetoric.¹⁵³ The legislative measures undertaken by various princely states and British India to abolish child marriage are also cited for pressing for reforms in Travancore.¹⁵⁴ The inferior physical status of Indians to that of the Europeans in terms of height and weight is also attributed to the persistence of child marriages.¹⁵⁵ Travancore passed the Child Marriage Restraint Act in 1941, modelled after the Sarada Act of 1929.¹⁵⁶

It is interesting to note here that several petitions were made to the government seeking relaxation in the marriageable age, citing ailments of parents, poor economic conditions, and customs. The government, on many occasions, reacted sympathetically to these requests.¹⁵⁷ It is observed here that the state, which was unflinching in its demands regarding the general health of the population and its security concerns around the population, allowed itself to be

¹⁵³ TLC, 4th Council, 25 April 1932, 698.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. 699.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. 699.

¹⁵⁶ Child Marriage Restraint Act 1941, Act XX1, 1116 (1941), in *The Acts and Proclamations of Travancore, Vol XII* (Trivandrum: The Government Press, 1943), 492-495.

It should also be noted that child marriage was not widely practiced in Travancore as it was in the rest of the country. This is attested by the Census of 1931, which compares the child marriage figures in Travancore against that of India. The number of girls married between the age of 5-15 was 42 out of 1000 in Travancore, while the Indian average was 221 out of 1000. The Census shows that out of a total of 2.5 million women there have been a recorded case of 2484 married girl children in the age group of 5-10.

Census of India 1931, Vol XXVIII, Travancore Part I-Report (Trivandrum: The Government Press, 1932), 187-188

¹⁵⁷ Permission granted by the Dewan on the request of Kunju Vareed of Kaladi, dated 11.5.1123 (12.1.1948).

elasticized when it comes to the demands of the individual and individual families, retaining a certain benevolent character. [See Appendix. 1]

The public health and medical advancements made in the West remained the model to be achieved in the native imagination. Writings in the Press often quoted doctors and experts from the West. The members of the legislative assembly made it a point to mention or quote from a European doctor, author, or statesman, often believing that it would bring a sense of authority and legitimacy to what they intended to say. Nowhere was it seen more frequently than in the medical discourses in the public realm. The West thus remained a permanent presence in the discourses of colonial biopolitics, albeit an authoritarian presence.

The growing nationalist tide and political consciousness in the state from the late 19th and early 20th century saw the body becoming an important part of the nationalist consciousness and resistance. The health of the population was regarded as crucial to national consciousness. The nascent idea of the nation effectively appropriated the body as a site of contestation. The possibilities colonial biopolitics offered invested the body with the potentialities of resistance that would form an effective unit of national consciousness.

A preliminary survey of the advertisements indexing the consumer culture provides a clear indicator of the changing meaning and role the bodies were taken from the early 20th century in the national consciousness. The advertisements effectively appropriated the idea of a virile nation while placing the body as its central constituent. Healthy, able-bodied, fecund, clean, sanitized, and fastidious individual bodies entered the imagination of the new nation that was taking shape. The health of the population thus became an important constituent of national consciousness.

It has already been shown that western medicine was institutionalized under indirect rule, which marked a transformation from sovereign power to governmental power in Travancore. This transformation also witnessed the emergence of new rationales of government, which dislocated the body from its existing cultural location to the subject of the new power-knowledge nexus instituted by colonial governmentality in the state. These knowledge systems further legitimized the interventionary potentials of modern medicine. Colonial medicine and its associated knowledge networks, including statistics, began to shape governmental policies in the late 19th century. This shift also witnesses the body: both of the individuals and also as

a constituent of aggregating categories such as population, being disciplined, regulated, fostered, and surveilled. The body thus becomes part of the biopolitical rationalities of colonial governmentality. In short, life was becoming the focus of government more than ever by the 19th century in Travancore. Thus, the distinguishing feature of the emergence of colonial biopolitics was ‘life’ becoming part of political strategies or rationalities and being shaped by it.

The chapter employing the theoretical framework of biopolitics and its global connections has dismissed notions that the princely states followed an independent and relatively insular path of existence. The inherent paradox of biopolitics is visible in a colonial context as the same biopolitical strategies and techniques that enabled and enhanced certain lives could endanger, restrict, and obstruct other lives, as was shown in the systematic exclusion of many sections of society.

The biometrical interventions of the state were institutionalized beyond the domain of modern medicine into the security concerns of the state with the establishment of the fingerprint bureau in Travancore in the year 1905. Apart from its immediate utility in the law of evidence and criminal procedures, this was motivated by security concerns. The state’s anxiety over the wandering populations and the criminal tribes was one of the important reasons for the setting up of the bureau in the country.¹⁵⁸ The fingerprint bureau in Travancore was established under the instructions of the Resident and was brought under the registration department. While the procedures to set up the bureau were started as early as 1899, it was delayed by six years due to the unavailability of the necessary apparatuses.¹⁵⁹ The setting up of the fingerprint bureau was yet another evidence of the biopolitical strategies entering the security concerns of the state through the new identification strategies imposed on the body.

¹⁵⁸ Travancore passed the Criminal Tribes Act modelled after the Criminal Tribes Act III, 1911 of British India, despite not having any settlements of Criminal Tribes within its frontiers. When this question was raised the government response was that, the wandering populations enter Travancore and poses a security threat necessitating the act.
TLC 1914-17, 21.6.1915 (1-2)

¹⁵⁹ Letter from the Dewan to the Director of Registration, August 1899, Reproduced in *The Archives Treasury* ed. J Rejikumar (Trivandrum: Kerala State Archives Department, 2010), 235.

Discipline meets Biopolitics: The Case of Prisons and Schools.

Institutional spaces like hospitals, prisons, and schools were the primary instruments of disciplinary power in 19th and 20th-century Travancore. The period from the late 19th century witnessed the intersection of governmental and disciplinary power in institutional as well as non-institutional spaces. While disciplinary institutions continued to exist and remain significant, these institutions and their rationalities were radically transformed with the emergence of biopolitics. Along with schools, jails were arenas that received great attention and focus of colonial biopolitical interventions.

Systems of punishment were radically redesigned with the ongoing transformation from sovereignty to governmentality. It has already been shown how the precolonial world of punishments focused on the brutal application of power on the body and the systematic transformation it underwent with the changing rationales of government. Incarceration had become the chosen form of state punishment by the 19th century. Prisons became the ideal space for an institutional system of punishment through which the state took control over the body of the convicts. The power to punish that was scattered across the society till the 19th century now became a state prerogative through its institutional mechanisms. The language of reform had entered the vocabulary of the penal regime of the state by the late 19th century through both colonial influence and the awareness of penal changes across the world.¹⁶⁰

The prisons were the earliest institutional space to get the attention of modern medicine after the ruling family endorsed it in Travancore, followed by schools and government offices.¹⁶¹ The prisons thus provided modern medicine with a readily accessible system and inhabitants who could be made the subjects of biopolitics. The jails were spaces that housed a large number of people, and as a result, the health of the inmates became a crucial concern of the state. The body of the accused or the criminal is important in biopower in many ways as it serves as a readily accessible raw material for the application of its rationalities and techniques. What is traced here is a movement from the corporal application of power on the body of the prisoners to an investment of productive power on the prisoners' bodies.

¹⁶⁰ Elsewhere in the thesis, while discussing the death penalty I also argue that the penal reforms in the princely state had sometimes outpaced the colonial state.

¹⁶¹ TAR, 1930, 168.

The triumph of disciplinary power enabled the transformation of corporal punishment to the disciplining of individuals and the rise of new institutional structures, as the case of prisons would show. The prisons, with their focus on disciplining individuals, constantly surveilled the inmates and effectively made use of convict labour in the public infrastructural programs of the state. The emergence of biopower resulted in these institutions being governed through the new rationalities and techniques of biopolitics. In the case of the prisons, the disciplinary pursuits of the prison were integrated into the biopolitical strategies that invested the body of the convict with the new potentialities of biopower. The life of the inmates became a subject of new knowledge systems like medicine and its vital arms statistics and the new science of sanitation. These programs are to be seen not in isolation but as constituting a new rationality in which bodies came to be invested with a new form of optimizing power. The jails offered a space where the incarcerated offered the possibility of the application of biopower with the least resistance. As seen in the case of smallpox vaccination, the jails of Travancore were the first institutional space where the vaccination experiment was conducted in the state. The body of the prisoner and the spatial location of the prison thus gained crucial importance in the new biopolitical administration of the prison as both of them were identified as the point of intervention of the new science of government.

Attempts to systematically govern and manage prisons and the prisoners that began in the later part of the 19th century materialized into a concrete form with the Prisons Act of 1071 (1896). Until then, prisons in Travancore were managed by a set of regulations formulated in 1882 that were far from adequate and perfect. The act of 1071 was based on the British Indian Prisons Act.¹⁶² This act had numerous provisions by which the prisons and the inmates of the prisons were to be managed or governed with the new rationales of government. The most important among them was the medical intervention in the prison. As per the act of 1071, a medical officer was appointed in the central prison and other jails in the state. This medical officer was to be instrumental in bringing about a medicalization of the prisons and was responsible for the health of the prison population. His position was next only to that of the superintendent of

¹⁶² *Acts and Proclamations of Travancore Vol I*, 1010-1086 ME, (Trivandrum :The Government Press, 1948), 221.

TLC-2, 1891-94, Travancore Prisons Bill was moved on 22-9-1894, 2.

the prisons. The presence of a medical officer or, in his absence, a medical subordinate was made mandatory in all the jails in the state.

Jails were made part of the elaborate statistical program the state had already set in place. Every year, statistics related to the prisons were published in the annual reports of the state.¹⁶³ This included the number of inmates, their caste, ailments, and the medical aid extended to the prisoners. Statistics were also generated about the diseases that affected the inmates, the number of prisoners treated, mortality and expenses incurred, etc. Every prisoner brought to the jail was to be inspected by the medical officer. The medical officer decided the kind of labour assigned to each convict based on their health condition. The medical officers were also to report the mental status of the prisoners as a result of the punishments the prisoners were to undergo.¹⁶⁴

Considerable attention began to be paid to the health of the prisoner. Attention was thus paid to the prisoners' diet and the prison's material conditions. Travancore, for long, had followed the policy of allowing the prison inmates to cook their food based on their castes. In the early days, the prisons provided provisions for the prisoners to make their own food in the prisons.¹⁶⁵ The strict caste rules followed by the inmates were one reason for allowing the inmates to cook food in accordance with their religious beliefs. However, this practice was soon stopped, and all inmates began to be provided cooked food from the jails, ensuring a healthy diet. In addition, milk and purified water began to be provided to the prisoners to ensure better health. It was even reported by the state that providing cooked meals in the prisons under better sanitary conditions had improved the general health of the prisoners.¹⁶⁶

The Rockefeller Foundation, when it began the hookworm eradication programme in Travancore, experimented upon 30 prisoners with the consent of the government.¹⁶⁷ A mixture of chenopodium and carbon tetrachloride was administered to them, and their after-effects were studied so that they could be employed on the general population.¹⁶⁸ As seen here, there

¹⁶³ TAR published every year by the state had a report on the jails, which listed these statistics, often by the Durbar Physician.

¹⁶⁴ *Acts and Proclamations of Travancore Vol I*, 227.

¹⁶⁵ Velu Pillai, *Travancore State Manual*, Vol IV, 134.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 134.

¹⁶⁷ Cited in M Kabir, "Beyond Philanthropy: The Rockefeller Foundation's Public Health Intervention in Thiruvithamkoor 1929-39," *CDS Working Paper* 350 (2003): 15-16.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 16.

is an infusion of medical knowledge into the prisoner's life, or in other words, the inmates were subjected to the medical apparatuses of the state. Maintaining the prisoners' health became the state's duty, along with the disciplinary purposes the jails were already committed to. What is seen here is the integration of apparatuses of biopower into the already existing disciplinary model existing in the state.

The death of the prisoners also received considerable attention from the medical officers. The reasons for the death were to be ascertained and recorded by them. The diet, health status, and medical history were all to be strictly recorded by the medical officer.¹⁶⁹ The prisoner's health, diet, and clothing became the focus of these biopolitical concerns. The general sanitary conditions of the prison were a permanent concern of the state. Although the state was often constrained by economic resources to fix this, it nevertheless came up as a concern to be addressed, and the state had no doubt that this was an issue to be addressed. Special attention was given to ensure that diseases of an epidemic nature did not affect the inmates. Abysmal sanitary conditions in the jails were frequently cited as reasons for the casualties in the jails. Suggestions were made about the need to improve the conditions in the prisons, although they did not often materialize into any structural change in the conditions of the prisons. The reasons for this varied from official indifference to the lack of funds. Surveillance was central to both disciplinary and biopower. While disciplinary power relied on the existing structures of the prison, biopolitics made the management of the prison the work of specialists like medical professionals, public health and sanitation experts, and statisticians.

These developments were in stark contrast to the prisons in the first half of the 19th century. Until the 1860s, the jails were under the control of the revenue officials, and not much attention was paid either to the health of the prisoners or the material conditions of the prisons. Medical care in certain cases was provided by native physicians, and sanitary conditions were poorly attended.¹⁷⁰ This resulted in high mortality rates among the inmates of the jails. Corporal punishments did not cease to be part of the prison system. Whipping continued to be administered in cases of offenses committed within the prisons.¹⁷¹ However, stricter rules were

¹⁶⁹ *Acts and Proclamations, Vol I*, 227.

¹⁷⁰ Velu Pillai, *Travancore State Manual, Vol IV*, 132.

¹⁷¹ Prisons Act 1071, *Acts and Proclamations of Travancore Vol 1*, 239. as per the provisions not more than 20 lashes could be employed and importantly whipping was to be carried out in the presence of the Medical Officer and the Superintendent.

framed for its regulation. The British Indian model was often studied and employed in the prison administration of Travancore. Jail officers in Travancore were periodically trained in the directly ruled Madras presidencies on jail discipline and administration.¹⁷²

It is interesting to note here that despite the transformations in its government and the imposition of new knowledge systems, the jails in Travancore remained deeply divided along caste lines, which offered special privileges based on one's caste standings. Brahmins were provided food from the government-owned *Oottupuras* and always enjoyed special status.¹⁷³ The modern disciplinary institutions strangely perpetuated caste and such caste practices like notions of purity and privileges. Special treatment was offered to caste Hindu inmates so that their caste status was unaffected by coming into contact with inmates of lower castes. Special arrangements were made in jails for caste Hindu inmates to prepare their food. Clay walls were erected that separated the cooking areas of various castes to preserve their purity.¹⁷⁴ By the early 20th century, there was considerable opposition among the inmates themselves against the special privileges accorded to certain communities by the state in the prisons.¹⁷⁵ Memorandums and petitions were submitted by the inmates to the state on many occasions, but the state ignored these petitions mostly. It cannot be denied that primordial identities and privileges continued to cast their influence on the changing rationalities of government. However, these influences were subordinated to a power that identified human beings as constituting a species whose life became a subject of rationalities of modern power. In place of a brutal breaking down of the body as seen in the precolonial world of punishments, the body was invested with the potentialities of reform with the disciplinary apparatus of the prison.

Although theoretically incompatible with sovereign power, disciplinary power with its institutional spaces remained the chosen system of punishment of the state in the 19th and 20th centuries. The sovereign continued to have his influence over the disciplinary institutions as the fountainhead of the criminal justice system in the state. An example of this would be the right to pardon the prisoners by the sovereign. On such special days as the Maharaja's birthday,

¹⁷² Velu Pillai, *The Travancore State Manual*, Vol IV, 134.

¹⁷³ Ibid. 133.

¹⁷⁴ Samuel Mateer, *Native Life*, 331.

¹⁷⁵ Judicial File No 951/4914, Central Prisons Department, dated 13.4.1949

the Ruler pardoned chosen prisoners, asserting his position in the criminal justice system by upholding the sovereign monopoly over the life of his subjects.¹⁷⁶

Schools

Schools were the foremost institution through which disciplinary power entered the social body. Discipline was enforced equally through pedagogy and curriculum. Ever since the growth of the modern education system in Travancore, the systems of education and the disciplinary mechanism it sought to impose were inspired by the ideas of European schooling systems and pedagogy. Travancore was a state known for the early advancements it made in the field of modern education.

While the traditional systems of education still existed in Travancore, it was becoming less appealing to large sections of the people who desired upward mobility through the possibilities modern education offered. The missionaries also played a very important role in the spread of the modern education system in Travancore. Whereas the state institutions denied education to the lower castes because of the prevailing caste practices and notions of untouchability and ritual purity, the missionaries actively promoted education among the lower castes. The missionary role in spreading education among the lower castes was met with severe antagonism by the upper castes of the society, unlike the case of modern medicine, which was received more positively by the society.

From the early days of the establishment of modern educational institutions in the state, the state actively propagated new notions of body and health through them. Apart from being learning sites, schools also served as the most organized and easily accessible sites for enforcing a new biopolitical order through its strongest allies: statistics, medicine, and the science of public health. The focus of the new discourses of public health had shifted from the management of the environment to the management of interpersonal contacts or bodies.¹⁷⁷ This called for the better management of the bodies of the pupils. Physical training that aimed at the optimization of health was incorporated into the curriculum around this period. Schools were among the first institutional spaces where the biopolitical gaze of the state fell. The health of

¹⁷⁶ Confidential Section No 323/37/CS dated 23.9.1937 and Confidential Section No 331/37/ CS 24.9.1937.

¹⁷⁷ David Armstrong, *A New History of Identity: A Sociology of Medical Knowledge* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 47.

the students became a concern of the state, and along with it, the new discourses that sought to administer the bodies/children were institutionalized. Through its active intervention and supervision of the schools, the state fashioned a new sensibility of the modern body into the children.

The crucial role of schools in shaping public health consciousness is underlined in the words of a native author, “In this important task of quickening social consciousness, the school will doubtless be called upon to assume the major responsibility. Such a programme of health education will afford an effective means for developing a sanitary conscience in the rising generation.”¹⁷⁸ The author also laments that schools only cater to a small section of the general population and lauds the role played by newspapers in shaping a new consciousness of public health. He also stresses the need for the Press to become a propaganda vehicle in promoting new notions of health and sanitation.

Modern education and concerns about public health are intimately connected. The state held the idea that the better educated tend to attend to their health and the health of the younger ones.¹⁷⁹ This was further substantiated by statistical data that the infant mortality rate was found to be lower among the educated classes. The Rockefeller Foundation’s concern with the literacy rates of a region before undertaking their campaign is already explained in the chapter. However, it is also to be kept in mind that the literacy rate in the state in 1921 was only 21%, although it was undoubtedly an improvement over the 17% which was the literacy rate in the previous decade.

After the prisons, schools were the next institution where the state employed compulsory vaccinations. Primary and secondary vaccinations had been made compulsory for everyone attending schools and government employees.¹⁸⁰ The success of vaccination in schools helped in its popularization among the general public.¹⁸¹ Statistics were produced and also aided in the furtherance of biopolitical mechanisms in schools and other institutions. The annual statistics for 1895-96 show that of the total of 156530 students across all institutions, 95372 were vaccinated. This was at a rate of 60.9%, whereas the returns for the previous year were

¹⁷⁸ Gopala Pillai, *Public Opinion and Public Health*.

¹⁷⁹ *Census of Travancore* 1921, 8.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 8.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid*, 8

52%.¹⁸² Taluq-wise statistics of the number of students vaccinated were published systematically. These statistics show a greater number of students vaccinated in government schools and fewer students in private vernacular schools.¹⁸³

Apart from the students attending schools being made biopolitical subjects, the schools also had an important role to play in the new biopolitical administration. The schoolmasters were assigned the tasks of census collection, and the state found that the efficacy of census collection had improved dramatically under the efforts of schoolmasters compared to when private agents carried it out.¹⁸⁴

Imparting lessons on health and hygiene remained an integral part of schooling. The ideas of sanitation and hygiene were in tune with the rationalities of a biopolitical administration already being institutionalized in the state around this period. The students remained an active target in biopolitical administration. In this, they formed both a part of the general population, which had become the focus of biopower, and also a more specific unit of biopolitical administration as active agents trained in the new discourses of self-care. The government proposed strong measures regarding institutionalizing modern medicine and ensuring the health of the school children in the state. Constant monitoring was coupled with a surveillance system to ensure this. The Director of Public Instruction, under whom the educational institutions in the state fell, even proposed the appointment of one school medical officer in every high school in the state.¹⁸⁵ This school medical officer was to teach physiology, biology, personal hygiene, and elements of sanitation and nutrition.¹⁸⁶ The Medical teacher was to possess a qualification not below that of licentiate in medicine. It was also the duty of the medical officers to promote lessons in health education among the students. Teachers were trained to undertake health education initiatives in schools.

Schools and school children were periodically inspected for medical, health, and sanitary conditions. The Public Health Department employed eight doctors from the medical department to systematically conduct the school medical inspections.¹⁸⁷ Lady doctors were

¹⁸² TAR, 1895-96, 142.

¹⁸³ Ibid. 143.

¹⁸⁴ *Census of Travancore* 1921, 8-9.

¹⁸⁵ *Travancore Information and Listener*, Aug 1943, 25-26.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. 25-26.

¹⁸⁷ TAR, 195-36, 197.

appointed for the inspection of female students. The state also initiated mid-day meals and such schemes, ensuring the health of the children. Such supplements as shark liver oil and milk were added to the meal for those who were found deficient in health.¹⁸⁸ The school medical inspection work involved the complete physical inspection of the students for any physical defects, and in case of any such defects, it was informed to the parents.¹⁸⁹ The medical officers were also to ensure the treatment for the said defects at the nearby hospital, and they were also required to follow up on the issue after six weeks.¹⁹⁰ Aparna Nair has identified traces of European eugenic discourses in these classifications of ‘defective’ and ‘healthy’ children.¹⁹¹ These classifications enabled greater interventional spaces by the state and the medical discourses on the children’s bodies.

The number of schools that were inspected in the state had almost doubled from 199 in 1937-38 to 381 schools in 1938-39; during the same period, the number of students examined increased from 22,136 to 41,136.¹⁹² This significant rise shows the attention the state paid to issues regarding health in schools.

The Rockefeller Foundation’s public health initiatives in Travancore also focused on the schools and school children. Periodic inspections were conducted on the school children for such conditions as enlarged spleen and screening for hookworm diseases.¹⁹³ The foundation’s activities involved close working with government officials, school teachers, and community organizations. The schools provided the foundations with a readily and easily available sample size to carry out their studies and experiments.

Vernacular schools were notorious for the extremely harsh corporal punishments they employed.¹⁹⁴ This was to soon change with the coming of modern schooling with its focus on discipline and surveillance. In place of corporal punishments, the students were subjected to a mode of power that worked on the character of the students both through a disciplinary pedagogy and constant monitoring. Dramas, plays, health rallies, and essay writing

¹⁸⁸ Ibid. 25-26

¹⁸⁹ Velu Pillai, *Travancore State Manual, Vol III*, 809.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid. 809.

¹⁹¹ Aparna Nair, *Magic Lanterns*, 101.

¹⁹² TAR, 1938-39, 137.

¹⁹³ Kabir, *Beyond Philanthropy*, 27.

¹⁹⁴ Edgar Thurston, *Caste and Tribes of Southern India* (Madras: Government Press Madras, 1909), 433-440.

competitions were organized on health and hygiene for the students.¹⁹⁵ Health leagues and committees were also organized in the schools. To habituate the students to the practices of hygiene, health habit scorecards were popularized among the students.¹⁹⁶ Public cooperation was also sought in promoting public health education and ‘public health conscience’ in the schools.

These exercises show that the health of the population had become a very important concern of the state. The role of medicine in biopolitical administration was not merely the treatment of the sick and the injured. It was also the investment of the body with optimizing potentials through constant surveillance and the available medical resources. Care of the self, in which the individual would be made aware of the need and trained to care for one’s health, was another crucial element of biopolitical power. The schools became the state’s primary institution of biopolitical rationalities by the early 20th century.

Such initiatives like the Scout movements that proposed a new understanding of the body and health and which successfully spread the imperial ideology among the educated class were integrated into the modern education system in Travancore by the early 20th century.

The Public Health Department started such initiatives as the health inspection of primary school children. This scheme was soon found to be wanting, and the Director of Public Instruction laid out the proposal by which one school medical officer was mandatory among the teaching staff in every high school in the state. The medical officer so appointed was to have a qualification of not below Licentiate in medicine.¹⁹⁷ The school medical officer was to impart instructions on physiology, biology, personal hygiene, elements of sanitation, and nutrition.¹⁹⁸ Lady Doctors were to be appointed for the inspection of female students. Ensuring the health and hygiene of the students in schools also became the responsibility of the state. Midday meals, along with shark liver oil and milk, were provided to students found deficient in health.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁵ Velu Pillai, *Travancore State Manual*, Vol III, 811.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. 811.

¹⁹⁷ *The Travancore Information and Listener*, Aug 1943, 25-26.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid. 25-26.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. 25-26.

The Scout movement in Travancore: Disciplining the Natives to the Natives Disciplining Themselves

The Scout movement was founded in England in 1907 by Sir Robert Baden Powell, a British army officer.²⁰⁰ Initiatives in the metropolis, like the Scout movement, the YMCA, and the YWCA, played a vital role in spreading imperial ideologies across the world in the 20th century. These movements played an important role in disciplining and civilizing the native populations beyond the domain of the formal state apparatus. These movements were ideologically rooted in an imperial prejudice that the natives were to be guided to the path of self-discipline by the colonizers. The ideologies and objectives of these movements are inseparable from modern notions of power, that has already been underlined in the introduction. Scout movement and its ideologies need to be situated in the emergence of disciplinary power that had come to shape institutional spaces like schools and prisons in Europe and its eventual coexistence with governmental power that sought to govern and manage populations. The body and its disciplining had an important place in the scout movement. One of the distinguishing features of disciplinary power in the modern world, as asserted in the introduction, was its dislodging from its institutional space to the social plane. Movements and associations like the Scout movement were instances where a disciplinary form of power entered society through voluntary participation and involvement. A willing submission to disciplinary and governmental power runs through the ideology and goals of the movement, as shown here through the history of the Scout movement in Travancore. Initiatives like the Scout movement witnessed the production of the modern body that was healthy, docile, and useful as fundamental prerequisites of modern notions of citizenship, ironically under colonial conditions.

A study of the Scout movement in a colonial context can thus be a telling revelation of the very nature of colonial power, its practices, its complex interaction with the native society, and the fashioning of the colonized's subjectivities. That Scouting was closely tied to the ideologies of the empire has been explored by various scholars, mainly from the context of Africa.²⁰¹

²⁰⁰ Carey Watt, "The Promise of 'character' and the spectre of sedition: The boy scout movement and colonial consternation in India 1908-21," *South Asia* XII, no. 2 (1999): 37.

²⁰¹ Timothy H Parsons, *Race, Resistance and the Boy Scout Movement in British Colonial Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, Athens, 2004).

However, Scouting's connection with the ideologies of colonialism in the Indian context has not been adequately explored, although clues to such a connection can be seen in the writings of scholars like Eric Stokes.²⁰² Travancore was among the first Indian states that showed an active interest in the Scout movement from its early days. The government of Travancore actively encouraged and extended its support to the movement, and the movement soon gathered momentum with the support and participation of the natives.

The Scout movement, as envisioned by Baden Powell, was deeply imperial in its aspirations. *Scouting for Boys*, the inspirational treatise on which the scout movement was based, had as its focus the expansion of the empire and underlined the role of the scout ideology in such an expansion. Rosenthal argues that scouting was "conceived as a remedy to Britain's moral, physical and military weakness."²⁰³ These weaknesses were further exposed during Britain's colonial encounters. Anxieties regarding the decline in the physical prowess of men who could make it into the army and thus serve the British national interest were a central concern of the scout movement.

The creation of morally and physically strong men who would protect Britain from the industrial and military threat of the outside world remained a crucial objective of the scout movement.²⁰⁴ A Royal charter was conferred on the scout movement as a recognition of their services in 1912.²⁰⁵ The scout movement, soon after its inception, spread to different parts of the world and soon attained global popularity. The Boy Scout International Bureau was established in 1920, and the scout movements across the world were to be registered with and recognized by the bureau.²⁰⁶

Comparative studies on Baden Powell and Rudyard Kipling have revealed beyond doubt how Powell's own treatise was inspired and informed by Kipling and his writings on India. Studies

²⁰² Eric Stokes, *The Political Ideas of English Imperialism: An Inaugural Lecture Given in the University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 33-34.

²⁰³ Michael Rosenthal, *The Character Factory: Baden Powell and the Origins of the Boy's Scout Movement* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 3.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.* 4.

Rosenthal argues that it was not just an efficient military force the Scout movement aimed to create but rather an efficient citizenry that would remedy the declining moral, military, and material prowess of Britain. The British setback in the Boer war was identified as one important catalyst that led to this self-scrutiny by Britain.

²⁰⁵ Saul Scheidlinger, "A Comparative Study of the Boy Scout Movement in Different National and Social Groups," *American Sociological Review* 13 no. 6 (1948): 740.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.* 741. By 1939, nearly 53 separate associations were registered with the bureau.

have further exposed both Kipling and Powell for sharing the same imperial aspirations in their writings.²⁰⁷ *Scouting for Boys*, the master text of the Scouts, is the best case in point. In her introduction to the new *Scouting for Boys*, Elleke Boehmer argues that the text “remains riddled with verbal excesses of a racist and class-based nature.”²⁰⁸ In his brilliant exposition of the Scout movement, Michael Rosenthal cautions against looking at the Scout’s success as a result of mere youthful fantasy for adventure and the outdoors, masquerading its powerful ideology.²⁰⁹ This ideology played an important role in furthering imperialism as well as making the youth useful citizens in the service of the empire. Scouting, as envisaged by Powell, was “never a simple set of rules and games but rather a coherent, self-contained system of education intended to shape the entire life of the boy and to implant in him a set of values and even emotional responses that would make him most useful to the state.”²¹⁰ A careful analysis of this statement reveals that what Powell echoes is the concerns and anxieties of modern power: how best to transform its subjects into useful and docile subjects.

The Scout movement began in India in 1908 in the central province under the initiative of the Scottish missionary Rev Alexander Wood.²¹¹ This was followed by the foundations of the Girl Guides movement in 1911 at Jabalpur. Inspired by the English Scout movement, Annie Besant introduced the Indian version of the Scout movement in 1917. Both these groups worked independently in the initial years. The Baden Powell and Beasant groups amalgamated to form the Boys Scout Association of India at the earnest of the Viceroy and the Governor of Madras, Lord Willingdon.²¹² Watt identifies the period from 1908-1921 as the most crucial period in scouting history in India.²¹³ In Britain, scouting aimed to make better citizens by advocating discipline and emasculating the youth with love for the country and service and discipline at its fore. While many scholars have looked at military training as an integral part of the Scout movement, Warren makes the case that Baden Powell and the Scout movement maintained

²⁰⁷ Lore Piers, “Mowgli and the Wolf cubs as Imperial Products: Rudyard Kipling’s Jungle Book as Inspiration for Robert Baden Powell’s the Wolf Cub’s Handbook.” MA dissertation submitted to Ghent University, 2016.

²⁰⁸ Elleke Boehmer, *Scouting for Boys*, xxiii.

²⁰⁹ Rosenthal, *Character Factory*, 6.

²¹⁰ Ibid. 10.

²¹¹ Watt, *The Promise of Character*, 42.

²¹² C P Ramaswamy Aiyar, Speech delivered on 15th September 1937, *Speeches of Sachivottama C P Ramaswamy Aiyar, Dewan of Travancore* 1937 (Trivandrum: The Government Press, 1944), 282-283.

²¹³ Watt, *The Promise of Character*, 37.

strict opposition to military training.²¹⁴ He also argues that historians have exaggerated the aspects of military training and social control elements in understanding the Scout movement's content.²¹⁵ However, another important aspect of Scouting is stressed by Boehmer when she argues that *Scouting for Boys* succeeded because it appeared to place the ordinary, individual boy at the very centre of the imperial world.²¹⁶

Scouting from its inception cannot be delineated from the exigencies of the empire. The imperial initiatives and aspirations of the empire also meant the transplantation of ideas and institutions that it thought would facilitate the furtherance and sustenance of the empire in the colonies. It is in this context that the study of Scouting in these princely states needs to be understood.

Right from its inception, the Scout movement carried with it the spirit of the empire. In its initial days, the Scout movement was reluctant to open its ranks to Indians.²¹⁷ It was believed by the Europeans that Indians were not yet ready for the movement. Initially, Baden Powell himself was against the participation of Indians in his Scout movement.²¹⁸ However, after 1911, a favorable approach was taken to include the Indians in the Scout movement as there were mounting requests and interests by the Indians to be part of the Scout movement.²¹⁹

Scout movement should be placed alongside other imperial endeavours like missionary activity and other organizations and the setting up of public schools for the colonized. Each of these served its designated role in aiding the spread of colonialism and its ideologies to varying degrees. Scout movement in the colonial contexts, rather than remaining a colonial tool of making lesser partners of the natives to cater to the imperial needs, was effectively appropriated and interiorized by the natives themselves in fashioning a disciplinarian ideology. The scout movement was actively encouraged by the princely states of Travancore and Cochin.

²¹⁴ Allen Warren, "Sir Robert Baden Powell, the Scout movement and citizen training in Great Britain, 1900-20," *English Historical Review* 101, No. 399 (1986): 376.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.* 376.

²¹⁶ Boehmer, *Scouting for Boys*, xiv.

²¹⁷ Watt, *The Promise of Character*, 42. This was true in the case of Africa as well. In the context of Africa and Asia, the Scout movement was looked upon by the colonial state to train a group of natives who would be modelled after Europeans in judgment and thereby prevent the rise of anticolonial nationalism. Parsons, *Race, Resistance*, 4.

²¹⁸ Watt, *The Promise of Character*, 46.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.* 43.

It is argued here that such initiatives as the Scout movement opened spaces of colonized-colonizer interaction outside the ones conventionally conceived, where imperial ideologies were facilitated outside the formal realms of the colonial state. These ‘disciplinary’ endeavours played a crucial role in fashioning the modern self among the colonized. These spaces made the colonizer internalize a certain logic that would legitimize colonial ideology without resorting to violence but sustain their domination at the same time. This is evident in the case of the Scout movement in Travancore, where the Scout movement did not have a nationalist character, even in the face of a vibrant national movement across the country.

One important question that remains and needs to be explored in detail is how the various colonized states (both princely states and directly ruled provinces) gave much support to the movement and helped it flourish despite its explicit imperial aspirations. The native engagement with the scout movement and its appropriation often overlooked its colonial content, indicating new perspectives regarding the native engagement with colonial institutions, one not just based on the opposition but shared aspirations and goals. The native elites enthusiastically endorsed these imperial institutions and took pride in their association with them. For the state and the members of the movement, the benefits of the Scout movement: values of the citizenry, chivalry, courage, discipline, civility, and an agile and healthy body were more important than the colonial roots and ideologies of the movement.

In Travancore, Dewan C P Ramaswamy Aiyar also served as the Chief Scout, whereas Dr Mary Lukose, the surgeon general and Durbar physician of Travancore, was the Chief Commissioner of Guides in the state.²²⁰ Other prominent members of the Travancore society who were proclaimed Scouts included the former defense minister of India, V K Krishna Menon.²²¹ Menon also played an active role in spreading the movement in Madras, Cochin, and Travancore. Lousie Ouwerkerk, the author of *No Elephants for the Maharaja*, who spent ten years in Travancore, also played an important role in the spread of the Scout and Guides movement among the natives.²²²

²²⁰ C P Ramaswamy Aiyar, speech delivered at Attingal Boy Scouts Association, 23 January 1937, *Speeches of Sachivottama* 1937. 104-110.

²²¹ Jairam Ramesh, *A Chequered Brilliance: The Many Lives of V K Krishna Menon* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2019), 30-31.

²²² Louise Ouwerkerk, *No Elephants for the Maharaja: Social and Political Change in the Princely State of Travancore (1921-1947)*, ed. Dick Kooiman (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 1994), 8.

While the European Scout movement was critical of anticolonial nationalism, the colonial scout associations across the world acquired a nationalist character after independence.²²³ Travancore also witnessed a similar trajectory. The scout movement in Travancore was more organized and aligned with the preaching of the Theosophical movement of Annie Beasant. C P Ramaswamy Aiyar, who always prided himself on being a Scout, credits Beasant for the vibrant Scout movement in Travancore.²²⁴ The presence of native leaders made the movement more popular among the people. While maintaining an imperial outlook, the scout movement often adapted itself to the local conditions so as not to be perceived as a foreign ideology. This was a feature that was seen across Scout movements among different social groups and contexts.²²⁵

‘Character’: A new semantics for discipline

Central to the philosophy and teachings of the Scout movement was its focus on shaping the character of its members. Such was its insistence on ‘character’ that the movement is equated to that of a ‘character factory.’²²⁶ The native public opinion was hugely in support of this philosophy of the Scout movement. This is best seen in the good press the movement received in the 1930s and 40s. Character training aimed to equip the young to face the challenges of the world, rather than an intention to militarize the population or a cure to the idea of national weakness, was regarded as the main idea of Baden Powell.²²⁷ Rosenthal’s position that the Scout movement’s central preoccupation was to create an efficient, disciplined, and obedient citizenry seems more convincing in the colonial context than an attempt to create a militarized society that would eventually pose a risk to colonial domination.

The vernacular press gave much publicity to the Scout movement and often appealed to the people to join the movement. The Press, in the context of these princely states, almost entirely ignored or was unaware of the imperial roots or aspirations of the Scout movement. Their appreciation of the movement rested on the concerns of character and the vitality it would bring

²²³ Parsons, *Race*, 5.

²²⁴ C P Satabdi speech delivered at the Boys Scout Association Ralley at Bhaktivilas on 12th November 1939, *Speeches of Sachivottama Sir C P Ramaswamy Aiyar* (Trivandrum: Government Press, 1944), 138-139.

²²⁵ Scheidlinger, *A Comparative Study of the Boy Scout Movement*, 748.

²²⁶ Rosenthal, *Character Factory*, 7.

²²⁷ Allen Warren, *Sir Robert Baden-Powell*, 397.

in the youth by instilling disciplined habits and training in them.²²⁸ Citizenship values and civic values that the Scout training provided received the greatest attention from the Press. It is seen that the native Press often romanticized the movement and its role in shaping childhood and adolescence, in achieving certain goals of moral and civic quality rather than trying to understand its ideologies or principles.

Scouting and the new pedagogy on body and health/ and the care of the body

Scouting bases its primary disciplinary discourses on the idea of bodily health, or the body is central to the Scout's disciplinary regimes. *Scouting for Boys* lists down at length instructions on health and body care the Scouts need to follow. Primarily an instruction manual for the boys, the *Scouting for Boys* contained a strict disciplinary and moral code to be followed by the Scouts.

It has already been shown that with the increasing prominence and spread of colonial medicine, the health of the population had become a central concern of the state. This resulted in the body being governed by the new rationalities of medicine and science. These new rationalities were intimately connected to the practices and rationalities of government. These rationalizations of government placed the individual at the centre of the new biopolitical administration. In this context, the Scout movement's insistence on discipline and such practices as bodily cleanliness, hygiene, sanitation, and physical prowess received an immediate appreciation from both the native population and the government.

Manuals on health for the scouts frequently appeared in the press. These columns or write-ups list the correct practices that need to be cultivated by individual scouts. A connection was clearly established between these individual practices and the character of the Scout. The Scout movement emphasized a life in which health and bodily discipline were important. The scout stressed the usefulness of youth to society and the state through the discipline he possessed in his life. A healthy body following the right diet, sleeping patterns, and exercises were all part of this disciplinary regime propagated by the Scout movement. What is stressed through these principles is that the individual body as an entity to be disciplined and trained became crucial to the state and society in terms of its usefulness and docility. A healthy body became a thing

²²⁸ Vignanabodhini (Trivandrum: The Kerala Vilasam Publishing House, 1937), 9-14.

useful for the state, and an unhealthy one a burden to society. The central concern of the movement thus became the optimization of the body. In other words, the anamopolitics of the body, wherein the body is subjected to discipline, meets the optimization of the body in the Scout movement.

Creating new notions of Masculinity

The unprecedented success the Scout movement and *Scouting for Boys* received in Britain is also attributed to the national anxieties about diminishing masculinity among the citizens “that the failing strength of the nation was mirrored in the alleged deterioration of the male physique at the time.”²²⁹ *Scouting for Boys* promised to address this question precisely by ensuring military-style discipline. The declining moral, physical, and emotional standards of the youth were an important concern that motivated the scout movement. The anxieties generated by colonialism and the challenges posed by the Industrial Revolution played a key role in it. Romantic notions of chivalry and courage were grounded in the ideology of the Scout movement. Physical activity and being close to nature, which were regarded as values on the decline, encouraged to bring in a spirit of both adventure and unity to scouts. The challenges of the times have created a docile, lazy, and effeminate youth that put the nation’s health at risk; the scout movement was concerned with making useful, military-ready citizens out of them. These citizens that the Scout movement envisaged creating were the quintessential masculine English boy. Thus, it positioned the adventurous, chivalric, masculine English man at the centre of the scout ideology. *Scouting for Boys* was undoubtedly also a manual on masculinity and manliness. The body of the young scout was placed in relation to the health of the society and the strength of the state. The young scout was advised to cultivate masculine traits and the correct practices of health and cleanliness. The body of the scout was invested with political content, in terms of its usefulness to the nation, while subjecting it to a disciplinary mechanism. This disciplinary mechanism was also one of self-government.

Scout Movement in Travancore

The Scout movement in Travancore was the branch of the Indian Boys Scouts Association started by Annie Beasant. Following the English practice of the King of England assuming the

²²⁹ Boehmer, Introduction, *Scouting for Boys*, xii.

patron of the Boy Scout movement, the Travancore ruler assumed the position of chief patron of the Scout movement. Sri Chithira Tirunal, the Maharajah of Travancore, thus became the Chief Scout in the state by 1926.²³⁰ The extensive patronage of the movement by the ruling family is seen in the fact that The Elaya Raja was the chief Cub and the First Princess was the Chief guide in the state.²³¹ Prominent members of the state government were part of the Scout movement. C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyar, the famous Dewan of Travancore, was a member of the movement and was also the provincial Scout commissioner of Madras for eight years before he became the Dewan of Travancore where he also became the chief Scout Commissioner.²³² He was even awarded the Silver Wolf for his services to the Scout movement.²³³ The Scout movement in the state was patronized by the state. The Maharaja's birthday celebrations were marked by a parade in which the Scouts participated in the rally along with the military.²³⁴ Sri Chithira Tirunal, the ruler, himself often contributed financial assistance to the movement from his privy purse.²³⁵ The Maharajah, in his address to the Scouts on the occasion of his Birthday celebrations, said that the movement is not just an addition to the school curriculum but also inculcating the necessary discipline, cheerfulness, and sense of security to the youth to make them fit to live in the society.²³⁶ He urges the movement to be spread beyond the patronage to the whole of society and expresses his disappointment that the registered numbers of Scouts have not risen to his expectations. The Raja often expressed his idea that the movement, despite its patronage from the state, should ideally remain non-official.²³⁷ Aiyar echoes the same sentiments when he says that it must be primarily a “work done by the people, for the people and within the people.”²³⁸

²³⁰ C Madhavan Pilla, *Scout* (Alappuzha: Vijayabhanu Press, 1936).

²³¹ Velu Pillai, *Travancore State Manual*, Vol II, 760

²³² A Padmanabha Aiyar, *Souvenir of the Sashtiabdapurthi of Sachivothaman C P Ramaswamy Aiyar*, (Trivandrum: ARV Press, 1940), 10.

Aiyar joined the movement in 1917, he also claimed that he was one of the first six Scouts in the country.

²³³ Ibid. 10.

²³⁴ Velu Pillai, *Travancore State Manual Volume IV*, 566.

²³⁵ Sri Chithira Tirunal speech delivered on 7th November 1931, at the Annual Scout Rally at Trivandrum. *Speeches and Messages of His Highness Sir Balarama Varma, The Maharaja of Travancore*, (Trivandrum: ARV Press, 1938), 13.

²³⁶ Ibid, Sri Chithira Tirunal speech delivered on 31 October 1932, 34.

²³⁷ Ibid, *Speeches and Messages of His Highness Sir Balarama Varma*, speech delivered on 14th November 1936, 140-141.

²³⁸ C P Ramaswamy Aiyar Speech at Attingal, 23 January 1937, *Speeches of Sachivottama*, 1937, 109.

On more occasions than one, he stressed the need to maintain the movement's universal character and the need to keep the movement alive along the line envisaged by Baden Powell. According to the Raja, the movement's goal was to transcend the identities of caste, race, and region and strive to realize the larger ideals of citizenship, brotherhood, and harmony.²³⁹ On the occasion of his 60th birthday, the Scouts organized a rally to felicitate the Dewan. The Scouts of Travancore performed various military-style drills on the occasion.²⁴⁰ A fair idea can be gathered on the nature and the spirit of the Scout movement in Travancore from the words of Dewan C P Ramaswamy Aiyar himself in his response,

“I wish to mention one fact—the more it is emphasized, the more it is borne in mind, the better for all of us—that the *Scout movement is not a military movement. It does not aim at levelling down individual characteristics and making a machine of the man.* The aim, the object, the ideal of the Scout movement is to develop human personality, so that the many-sided activity- individual initiative and mental evolution might be the object and the ideal of the young man and the young woman.” (Emphasize mine).

This is different from the conceived wisdom that the Scout movement had at its focus on military training and its connection with national security at its focus. This indicates that the Scout movement focused more on shaping the individual character to inculcate the correct training and management of the self rather than making the Scouts junior partners to the military. However, elsewhere, sources also point to the active involvement of Scouts in aiding the Navy and the military in various capacities.

Aiyar goes on,

“Scout movement is designed as an open-air movement. ‘Open-air,’ what does that mean? Just as the sun pours its beneficent rays upon all and sundry and opens the bloom and the flower and ripens the fruit and brings the health-giving and nutrition-giving rain, so does the Scout movement take the little boy and the little girl, open their inner impulses to those influences of nature and of nature's good that go to a man who lives in the open air and thinks with an open-air aspect. That is the first function of the Scout movement. The next is this.- It is no use being a passive recipient of outward and spiritual influences. You should take part in the great activity which is called ‘Life’,

²³⁹ Ibid, speech delivered on 4th November 1937, *Speeches and Messages of His Highness*, 159.

²⁴⁰ Velu Pillai, *Travancore State Manual Volume II*, 791.

which is a temporary loan to us given for a short time by the Maker of all things, and for that purpose, the aim, the motto, the ideal of the Scout movement is 'Be prepared,' Prepared in your body to be healthy, because without health you cannot work. Prepared in your mind to be the recipient of the great influences that rain upon us. Prepared to meet evils when they come; not to be elated when good comes. Good comes along with evil. Prepared to help your neighbors, prepared to help the dumb animals, prepared for social service, prepared for all the various occasions and calls which dire and depressing humanity makes upon those who are blessed by life and possibilities of service. Service and Preparation—these are the ideals of the Scout movement.”²⁴¹

C P Ramaswamy Aiyar lamented that despite the best efforts by the state and the Raja, the number of Scouts in the state was only 3000 to 4000 students. He expressed his desire to see a day when all the students enrolled in Travancore schools would proudly join the Scout movement.²⁴² In his own words

“I want a combined drive to make the Scout virtue, the Scout practice and the Scout program universal. Not otherwise shall we solve the many difficult problems ahead of us. Without hard work, mental and physical, we shall not achieve the result for which we are craving and what is necessary is a carefully designed and well-thought-out initiative to make every person in Travancore either a Scout or a Girl Guide or an active instead of being a passive participant in the movement. We do not want spectators. We want action.”²⁴³

He continues,

“Let my appreciation be only just the beginning of the great fight, fight in the Scout sense, fight to make every one of us realize that the enemy before us is sloth, is ignorance, is darkness. As a remedy for the bodily disunity which is one of the handicapping factors of Indian life there is not anything like the Scout movement; because in the Scout Jamboree there was no Hindu, no Muslim and I must say there were no Brahmin or non-Brahmin divisions in the movement. The Scout forgets his sectarian religion in the sight of the Universal God. He forgets his social status. He

²⁴¹ Padmanabha Aiyar, *Souvenir of the Sashtiabdapurthi*, 76.

²⁴² C P Ramaswamy Aiyar, Speech delivered on 12th November 1939 at the Scout Rally held at Bhaktivilas, 142-143.

²⁴³ *Souvenir of the Sashtiabdapurthi*, 79.

remembers that he is one of a regiment, one of a battalion, one of an army of persons willing to fight the demon of ignorance and disunity.”²⁴⁴

The rulers of Travancore were equally disappointed at the slow pace at which the Scout movement was spreading in the state. The lack of enthusiasm was attributed to the foreignness of the movement. Its practices, rituals, and traditions failed to inspire the ordinary people of Travancore.²⁴⁵ The government then proposes a reorganization of the movement “in order to make it a formative and creative movement, supplying a new outlook of freedom from communal, racial and religious differences and providing a common meeting ground for young people with facilities for common amusements and common life.”²⁴⁶ Inspired by the political climate of the 1930s, Scout movements in many Indian states decided to maintain its autonomy by dissociating itself from the Imperial headquarters. Cochin even passed a resolution to organize the Scout movement along a national character and disaffiliate itself from the Imperial headquarters of the Scouts.²⁴⁷ The Central provinces, Behar and UP, also followed the same path. However, Travancore refrains from severing its connections with the Imperial Scout organization and tactfully advocates a compromise. Aiyar made a plea for having a distinctly national character for the Travancore Scouts that can while maintaining its international virtues for the Scout movement.²⁴⁸ He also acknowledges the contribution of Kipling towards the ideals of the Scout movement and says that Kipling’s ideas on the Indian youth are limited by his North Indian experience.²⁴⁹

Scout Movement and Native government

The legislative councils’ discussions of Travancore and Cochin provide exciting insights into the scout movement. While the state and much of the Press ignored it, the people were concerned about the nature of the Scout movement and its imperial aspirations. This is best reflected in the question by member Mr. Govinda Menon in the assembly to the government whether the government was aware of the impression that the role of the Scout movement was

²⁴⁴ Ibid. 79.

²⁴⁵ Velu Pillai, *Travancore State Manual Volume Vol II*, 791.

²⁴⁶ Ibid. 791

²⁴⁷ C P Ramaswamy Aiyar, Speech at Travancore Boy Scouts Association, 15 September 1937, *Speeches of Sachivottama, 1937*, 284-285

²⁴⁸ Ibid. 284-285.

²⁴⁹ Ibid. 287.

to strengthen the hold of imperialism in India.²⁵⁰ The Director of Public Instruction, who answered for the government, dismisses it by saying he was unaware of such an accusation.²⁵¹ The member further asks if the Scout salutes the Union Jack, to which the DPI answers that every Scout has to salute both the Union Jack and the Cochin national flag.²⁵²

It is important to note here that while the members find problems in the scouts of the state saluting the Union Jack along with the Cochin National flag, the government is far from finding issues in such an act, nor does the government find it a threat to its authority. Neither the governments of the princely state nor the sovereign found the Scout movement a ploy to further imperialist expansion in the country or a threat to their authority. This could also be because of the princely state's acknowledgment of their subordinate position that they found vis-à-vis the colonial government.

The Scout movement was actively supported by the native governments and sovereigns of both Travancore and Cochin. This might appear contrary to the general belief that such activities as the Scouts, which were looked at suspiciously as vehicles of imperialist expansion actively aided by the state and as in the case of Travancore where many higher-ranking functionaries of the government were proud to be part of the Scout movement. Travancore Scout movement attempted to maintain its autonomy while being directly affiliated with the International Bureau as an independent national Unit and remained in cooperation with the All India Boys Scout Association. Travancore frequently sent its Scout contingents to participate in camps and Jamborees held in various parts of the country.²⁵³

The government frequently asserted that the Scout movement was not conceived as a military movement, and its primary focus was the development of personality and character. However, addressing the Scout rally in the wake of World War II in 1939, C P Ramaswamy Aiyar states that the Scout's role in the war was discussed, and it was decided that the Scouts would be equipped to be part of it in the event of an emergency. Aiyar also expressed his faith that the

²⁵⁰ CLC-1935-38, 16 August 1937, 1088-89.

²⁵¹ Ibid. 1088.

²⁵² Ibid. 1089.

²⁵³ Message by Maharaja Sri Chithira Tirunal to the Scout Contingent, February 1937, *Speeches and Messages of His Highness*, 144.

Travancore Scouts will not be found wanting when such an emergency arises.²⁵⁴ This clearly indicates that the Scout movement was also conceived by the government as an auxiliary force in case of emergencies.

It can be established beyond any reasonable doubt that the scouts were also made part of the war initiatives in cases of emergency. The sea scouts, the naval wing of the scouts, were engaged in such military and naval functions as defending the harbour and being involved as messengers, signalers, and tug crew in case of emergencies.²⁵⁵ This debunks the myth that the Scout movement was devoid of any imperial political content and remained at the level of moulding characters and shaping future citizens alone. The member poses the question of whether this will not affect the studies of the scouts, to which the DPI answers that the sea scouts work purely voluntarily and only as permitted by the laws of the colleges, and thus, their studies are not affected.²⁵⁶

The Legislative Council proceedings also highlight one major controversy that emerged after it was alleged that Baden Powell made slanderous remarks about India. It can be gathered from the discussions that follow that there was wide discontent among the Scouts, and many Scouts thus left the organization in protest. The members also allege that teachers even used force to prevent more Scouts from leaving the organization. However, the DPI responding on behalf of the government chooses to downplay the incident and reads out explanations made by Baden Powell through other functionaries of the Scout movement in which he claims his innocence. Powell says his words were distorted, and he did not mean to denigrate India.

To member Govinda Menon's question, if the government has any plans to dispense with the Scout movement, the DPI responds that the government has not thought about it.²⁵⁷ The Scout movement officially started in Cochin on 15 March 1923.²⁵⁸ It had a total strength of 2085 by 1923.²⁵⁹ The government actively aided the Scout movement financially as well as

²⁵⁴ C P Ramaswamy Aiyar, Speech at the Annual Scout Rally, 1939, *Speeches of Sachivottama C P Ramaswamy Aiyar, Dewan of Travancore* (Trivandrum: The Government Press, 1944). 91-93.

²⁵⁵ CLC, 1938-45, 5 December 1939, 115.

²⁵⁶ CLC, 1938-45, 5 December 1939, 115.

²⁵⁷ CLC-1935-38, 16 August 1937, 1089.

²⁵⁸ CLC, 1938-45, 28 March 1939, 1009.

²⁵⁹ Ibid. 1009.

institutionally in the form of liberal grants and opportunities.²⁶⁰ While the British state found the scouts useful to the moral and military regeneration of its youth, the native states found the qualities being imparted to its subjects by the scout movement especially useful in creating a disciplined and orderly subject. The native elites also took pride in the fact that they were part of such a movement that would instill in them values that would enable them to be efficient citizens. The movement was believed to make the young boy into a man of 'character' and courage. Aspirations for a good citizenry are thus a feature that was common to the scout movement in both the metropolis and the colonies.

Qualities gained through Scouting are connected to one's love for the country and responsibility to it. Such images and symbols as the flag have an important place in Scout's life. These symbols do have a place in expressing love for one's country/ patriotism, and responsibility to one's country was chief among the duties of the scouts. The uniqueness of the colonial context thus offered a challenge to the central ideologies of the movement. It is ironic to find here that a love for one's country does not come into conflict with a love for that of the colonizer, as it is seen that the scouts expressed their respect for the imageries and symbols of both Britain and the respective native states without any conflict.

Self-Discipline or the Government of Self: Interiorizing discipline

The voluntary participation of the natives helps us to reject binaries in the approach, which assumes that Scouting was entirely an imperial initiative and remained so throughout. The colonized were quick to use some of the avenues opened up through colonial connections favoring them. The colonial state, although reluctant in its earlier days, realized the possibilities offered by permitting Indians to be part of the movement. To their mind, it would ensure the training of a group that would be upright in character, trained militarily, and could be of use to the empire.

As Kalpagam has shown in her study on colonial governmentality, the colonial policies towards efficient government often led to unanticipated results, which the Indians used to their advantage. Similar was the case with Scouting in colonial contexts. Although initiated as an instrument of colonial social control, it also became an instrument to subvert colonial

²⁶⁰ Ibid, 1009, the grants were increased to 5000 from the existing 3000, apart from the government providing liberal grants for the construction of a new headquarters building for the movement.

authority.²⁶¹ While the focus of the Scout movement remained the disciplining of the natives, it was received by native states with much enthusiasm in disciplining themselves.

Mills and Robinson, drawing comparisons with the home guards and scout movement, have observed how both these organizations articulated the individual as one being observed and the one who observes at the same time.²⁶² They further argue that ‘the art of not being seen or observed’ was in tune with the new civic ideals of responsibilities and duties.²⁶³ This is yet another instance of ideological programs shaping embodied existence through such colonial initiatives as the Scouts.

The Scout movement had mechanisms in place to reward the members for their actions. The badge system, which the scouts aspired for, was one such mechanism that could ensure individual discipline and order within the ranks. The badges ensured, at the same time, both individual glory as well as the glory of the troop. These badges and such aspirations served an important role in the individuals governing themselves. To act or make a ‘good turn’ every day remained a motivation for the Scouts. Sources do not permit me to reflect convincingly on the attitude of the colonial state, specifically to the Scout movement in these two princely states. My focus here is to reflect largely on the native response and appropriation of the Scout movement both from the perspective of the common man and the ones in power.

While in the African context, the scout movement often took the shape of anticolonial resistance.²⁶⁴ Such open confrontations are not seen in the context of these princely states. This should not be surprising given the antagonism that the Travancore state had to early nationalist activities in the state. What is seen instead is the endorsement and internalizing of the values of the Scout movement and encouraging its furtherance at the behest of the state. It is best seen from the fact that the Sovereign himself had no qualms not just in promoting the Scout movement but being the Chief Scout of the land.

Scout movement can be regarded as one among the several non-coercive, non-state systems enforced under the colonial aegis that had as its aim to turning the natives into supporting and

²⁶¹ Parsons, *Race*, 6.

²⁶² Sarah Mills and James Robinson, “Being Observant and Observed: Embodied citizenship training in the Home guard and Boy Scout movement 1907-1945,” *Journal of Historical Geography* 38, no. 4 (2012): 412-423.

²⁶³ *Ibid.* 413.

²⁶⁴ Parsons, *Race*, 8.

making efficient yet junior partners in the colonial enterprise, thereby ensuring and enabling a permanence of the regime, by fashioning the colonial subjects to suit the requirements of the empire. In realizing this, the Scout movement was not free from the rationalities of modern power.

In this process, the Scout movement was successful in gathering support among the colonized as an initiative that was ultimately beneficial for themselves. By being part of the Scout movement, the colonized took it upon themselves to discipline themselves along the rationales set out by such imperial initiatives as the Scout movement. This internalizing of the disciplinary system is one of 'self-government.' Whatever the objective of the colonial state in promoting such movements as the Scouts, the colonized make the best use of it to inculcate in themselves the values propounded by the Scouts towards disciplining themselves.

Scouting was regarded as an extension of public school training and was expected to fill the vacuum in the absence of a vibrant public school system. In the native Press, Scouting was often regarded as a remedy to the 'failed' and inefficient educational systems prevailing in the country.²⁶⁵ Modern education, it was lamented, was too career-centric and failed to inculcate the necessary values of citizenship and civic responsibilities, which the Scout movement could fill.²⁶⁶

Proponents of the Scout movement, like Aiyar, credit the movement for instilling in the natives values of citizenship, which were alien to them. The colonial prejudice that the natives are inferior and devoid of those values is uncritically shared in these narratives. To native administrators like Aiyar, the Scout movement was essential for nation-building. He also makes it clear that conscription was not the motive of the scout movement. Indians, he believed, lacked leadership skills and discipline. To Aiyar, the scout movement was the remedy to the lacking and ailing Indian mind. He called the Scout movement the religion of humanity and despised the Scout movement in India being organized along regional camps.²⁶⁷ He looked at the scout movement as something that helped transcend the regional, religious, and caste boundaries and strengthen and promote values of citizenship and brotherhood. To him, the

²⁶⁵ V S Krishna Iyer, "A Plea for Scouting in Schools," *Gosree Vidyarthi* 2 no. 1 (August 1940): 16-25.

²⁶⁶ Ibid. 16-18.

²⁶⁷ CP Speech at Attingal, *Speeches of Sachivottama*, 1937, 109-110.

Scout movement was more universal than any other universal organization like the Rotary Club or League of Nations.²⁶⁸

At the Presidential address at the YMCA School of Physical Education, which had the active support of the Travancore state, Diwan Sir C P promised: “When the University of Travancore comes into being, one of its main preoccupations will be the care and training of the body.” He also calls for blending the Western and Eastern understanding of bodily exercises and the importance of caring for the body and keeping it in good condition. He also stresses the significance of physical exercise like gymnastics in the Greek tradition and advises the gathering to take inspiration from it.²⁶⁹

The imperial aspirations and ideological elements of colonialism present in the movement were often overlooked by its proponents for the benefit the movement provided- character, discipline, and an agile body. The imperial ideology of the movement masqueraded itself in the forms of essential and useful values of chivalry, citizenry, and civility, all associated with the Scout movement. The values of imperial childhood were planted into the colonies through initiatives like the Scout movements.

The Scout’s internalizing of the new idioms of discipline is reflected in the words of C P Ramaswamy Aiyar, “Discipline under rule may be possible, has been possible, but free and voluntary discipline, discipline without any impelling, compulsory force, discipline rendered voluntarily and spontaneously, that is not a quality which is abundantly patent in our public or in our private life. And for the purpose of eradicating that tendency, I can conceive of few movements, few organizations, so apt and so appropriate as the Scout movements.”²⁷⁰

Aiyar’s view reflects nothing but the goals of a modern rationality of power that seeks to create obedient, complying subjects who internalize a regime of self-government and discipline. In his words, “this movement stands of self-reliance and self-help, and healthy outdoor open life-outdooriness of mind and body alike.”²⁷¹ The history of the Scout movement in Travancore needs to be situated in the context in which the bodies were slowly dislocated from the

²⁶⁸ Ibid. 108.

²⁶⁹ C P Ramaswamy Aiyar, speech delivered on the 18th May 1937, at the inauguration of the YMCA college of Physical Education, *Speeches of Sachivottama* 1937, 210-213.

²⁷⁰ C P Ramaswamy Aiyar speech at Attingal, *Speeches of Sachivottama* 1937, 107.

²⁷¹ C P Ramaswamy Aiyar Speech at Travancore Boy Scouts Association, 15 September 1937, Ibid. 288.

traditional networks of power and invested with a power that had its focus on the optimization of the body. Central to that was a notion of the discipline and care of the self, as seen above in the words of one of its greatest proponents in Travancore.

It is not denied that the Scout movement primarily remained a marker of the privileged and the upper echelons of society. However, what cannot be overlooked here is the state and non-state entities confluence to govern the body with a new set of universals: a set of universals that dislocated the body from its traditional setting and invested it with new notions of raw secularity. Much like in the case of modern medicine, these initiatives, while being foreign to the Travancore society initially, were enthusiastically received and embraced by the natives, resulting in the fashioning of new subjectivities and ways through which they perceived themselves.

As asserted in the introduction, disciplinary power has moved from the carceral, pedagogic, and medical institutions to the social world in the modern world. The thesis has already made the case that disciplinary and biopower intersect from the late 19th century, radically transforming the conditions and practices of government with its rationalities.

The success of the Scout movement in Travancore is an example where disciplinary power moves beyond its institutional frameworks into the social body. (endorsing a new form of power-biopolitical) It is also argued that disciplinary power that aimed to discipline individual bodies and power that sought to optimize the human body intersects in such initiatives as the Scout movement to create new notions of colonial subjectivities, leading to its success and reception by the colonized.

Summary

Building on the Foucauldian models of power, the chapter argued that biopolitics, the phenomena by which 'life' becomes an object of politics, had become the distinguishing feature of governmental rationality in Travancore by the late 19th century. This resulted in the dislocation of the body from its precolonial social world and the reconfiguration of existing sovereign notions of power.

This chapter argued that unlike disciplinary power, where power was applied to man-as-body, biopower is applied to man as a living being or man-as-species, as a global mass that is affected

by overall processes characteristic of birth, death, production, illness, and so on. The chapter situated the medical, sanitary, public health, and governmental initiatives that brought about a radical shift in the government of the body in the 20th century in this transformation. Disciplinary power moving from its institutional spaces to the entire social plane and intersecting with biopower was mapped with the changes institutional spaces like schools and prisons were undergoing.

Travancore's integration into global networks of health and its impact on the institutionalization of public health and modern medicine in the state was situated in the larger context of the spread of global biopolitics and the unification of the globe by these new biopolitical interventions.

The chapter, through the history of the Scout movement in Travancore, has argued that by the early 19th century, various colonial ideological initiatives helped create a new sensibility of the body as a secular entity. The secularity of the body, as envisaged by these organizations and other institutional spaces, resulted in the fundamental dislocation of the body from its traditional social and religious location. It was argued that these ideological organs complimented the medical, statistical, and epidemiological interventions of the body and the biopolitical aspirations in achieving mastery over the body through its government.

The chapter mapped how the biopolitical project of creating a healthy, manageable, responsible, and governable subject, realized through new knowledge systems like modern medicine, public health, science of sanitation, and surveillance, was realized in the context of a princely state under indirect colonialism. The chapter located a transition where the juridical control and appropriation of the bodies were replaced by modern forms of power that invested the bodies with the potentialities of governmental power that were both individualizing and totalizing at the same time.

Conclusion

The crux of the current thesis is the various historical ways in which the body was trained, regulated, and acted upon by indigenous political power heavily influenced by the colonial model and also colonial pressure, to be socially, politically, and economically productive. The primary focus of the thesis is an inquiry into the political rationalities that shaped the government of the body in the 19th and 20th centuries in Travancore.

Employing the Foucauldian idea of governmentality and biopolitics, which focuses specifically on the practices of government that shape human conduct, the work explores how both state and non-state power, with its new rationalities and practices, shaped the government of the body in the context of princely Travancore from the late 19th century. Rather than linearly employing the Foucauldian notions of power onto Travancore, this work has attempted to inject spatial (geographical) and temporal (historical) specificities into the Foucauldian framework in a distinctly colonial context. Therefore, this work has extended the Foucauldian arguments to explicate developments in the colonial period in the semi-autonomous princely Travancore.

The present analysis, without dismissing the significance of the state in constituting modern power, has attempted to explore state and non-state forms of power in terms of the problematics of government, deploying the Foucauldian concept of governmentality and biopolitics within an indigenous context; some adjustments had to be made to the Foucauldian frame, which heavily slants to Western body politics.

Central to the Foucauldian idea of governmentality is that power and control in the modern state are located not in the body of the sovereign and its juridico-political apparatus but in the various norms, institutions, rationalities, and forms of knowledge dispersed across the society. In this light, the present analysis, without dismissing the significance of the state in constituting modern power, has attempted to explore state and non-state forms of power in terms of the problematics of government, deploying the Foucauldian concept of governmentality and biopolitics within an indigenous context. Therefore, some adjustments had to be made to the Foucauldian frame, which heavily slants towards a Western frame of body politics. The Foucauldian triad of modes of power, sovereignty-discipline-governmentality runs through the thesis, forming the central thread in exploring how the bodies were governed and regulated. How these forms of power intersected within a

colonial context and gave rise to new forms of native and colonial control is one of the thesis's main concerns.

Colonialism, with its specific political rationalities, was to transform the way precolonial societies were organized radically. The work looks at how various new knowledge systems like colonial medicine, the science of sanitation, new taxonomies, classifications, and enumerative techniques like census and its rationalities were integrated into Travancore's administrative and governmental structures by the late 19th century. Tracing a transformation in traditional notions of sovereignty, the work argues that the centrality of power located in the sovereign in an indirectly governed princely state got dispersed into diverse mechanisms of power, characteristic of colonial governmentality. The thesis further argues that, in this transition, the juridical control and appropriation of the bodies were replaced by modern forms of power that invested the bodies with the potentialities of governmental power that were both individualizing and totalizing at the same time.

Medicine and medical knowledge were crucial to these disciplinary normalizations and the biopolitical administration of societies from the 18th century. This is further explicated through a comprehensive mapping of the trajectories of modern medicine in Travancore. Medicalization of the body and the governmentalization of the state was a process that developed simultaneously and was mutually constituted. Modern medicine and its triumph enabled the dislocation of the body and diseases from its cultural and religious location to a medical and scientific concern, resulting in the secularization of diseases and health.

Employing the Foucauldian transformation from 'Right of Death' to 'Power over life,' it is shown that the sovereign power was subordinated to a power that sought to augment, nourish, and optimize life. It is argued that the foregoing of the death penalty, which was the legitimate expression of traditional sovereignty and the will of the sovereign, marked a shift from traditional notions of power located in the body of the sovereign to the governmentalized state of the 20th century. The thesis shows how sovereignty was recast and modified with the development of governmental and biopower in Travancore from the 19th century. How disciplinary and biopolitical power combined to shape governmental practices within a redefined framework of sovereignty formed the crucial concerns of the work. Disciplinary power moves from its institutional spaces to the entire social plane and intersects with biopower. The distinctiveness of such power and its rationalities are analyzed in the current work.

The thesis demonstrated how the attribution of the divine to the sovereign, an essential feature of precolonial sovereignty in India, was gradually broken down with the transformation to the impersonal rationalities of colonial governmentality. The traditional sovereign transitioned to an enlightened monarchy by claiming itself to be a model state defined by the conditions of colonialism, employing a new vocabulary of good government and welfarism. In this transition, the thesis has mapped the changing character of sovereign power from a form of power applied over the body of the subjects to the conditions where the bodies existed and defined life.

The thesis argues that the Travancore state, by the early 20th century, transformed itself into a hybrid state that employed two distinct languages of legitimation of modernity and modern governance and religious and ritualistic simultaneously, giving it a uniquely ambidextrous character. The state constantly oscillated between modern notions of governance and its religious and cultural roots to legitimize itself.

The linkages between political power and body or how it manifested on the body from the 19th century were traced through five chapters in the thesis.

The first chapter introduced the theoretical frameworks employed in the thesis. The context of the work, Travancore, was situated in this theoretical framework. A brief history of Travancore that helps locate the changing rationalities and practices of government from a sovereign princely state to a modern governmentalized state is also undertaken in the chapter.

The second chapter, ***Precolonial Body***, explores the strategies, practices, and norms that governed and regulated the body in Travancore until the 19th century. It was shown that the bodies functioned in a profoundly hierarchical social world inscribed by caste and religious symbols. It is argued that these symbols and markers that invested the body were aimed to deny qualified and dignified social and political life to the bodies by permanently dehumanizing them in the name of customs and conventions. Such practices marked Travancore society as untouchability and unapproachability, which were extreme forms of caste oppression aimed at ensuring the relative purity of the dominant sections of the society. The King stood at the apex of the judicial system, a complex web of customs, *acharams*, and unbreachable caste rules. Bodies in such a context remained primarily caste bodies.

It is argued in this chapter that, in the precolonial world, bodies were acted upon by forms of power that were deductive in their application. Transgressions were severely dealt with, and corporal punishments remained the preferred tool to deal with transgression. The chapter argued that the social life of bodies was marked by conditions of unfreedom like caste, untouchability, bonded labour, and slavery. These conditions of unfreedom were to be broken down from the late 19th century. In its place, new possibilities and ways of life emerged with new rationalities of government initiated under indirect colonial rule.

In the premodern world, juridical power was the hallmark of sovereignty. Through a description of the social world of bodies and their regulation, the chapter has shown that the juridical structures that regulated and controlled the body were deeply enmeshed in the caste and customary idiom. Cultural symbols marked and embedded the body within this deeply hierarchical semiotic world of symbols and signs. The powers of the sovereign in this context were inscribed directly on the corporal body. Sovereign power, marked by the 'Right to decide life and death,' found its most apparent manifestation on the body. In this light, the systems of punishment that focused on the body and the textual legitimization provided by the lawbook of the land were mapped in the chapter.

The chapter, to situate the changes being brought in the government of the body in the 19th and 20th centuries, which forms the crux of the work, explored in detail what the prehistory of biopolitics was in a princely state.

The third chapter, titled ***From Sovereignty to Governmentality***, mapped the transformation in traditional notions of sovereign power in its encounter with colonial governmentality. The chapter's central argument is that traditional conceptions of sovereignty transformed into the 'impersonal reasons of the state' shaped by governmentality from the late 19th century. The chapter attempted to problematize the concept of sovereignty by analyzing the historical transformations of sovereignty in Travancore from the 19th century to the 20th century. It has been shown how the problems of sovereignty were made more acute in the face of governmental power. It is seen that, with the emergence of governmentality, sovereign power retreats into the background while the juridical and semiotic world in which it functioned remained largely unchanged.

The chapter showed how sovereignty was recast and modified with the development of governmental and biopower in Travancore from the 19th century. The chapter's primary focus was how disciplinary and biopolitical power combined to shape governmental

practices within a redefined framework of sovereignty. The unique colonial experience of indirect rule and its transformation to an alternate power centre and its impact on the political power of the sovereign was also explored in detail in the chapter.

The chapter showed how the native sovereign's power was increasingly made precarious by the colonial state. Like the rest of the princely states, Travancore was integrated into the colonial world of symbols and titles while being hollowed out of actual political power. The modernization initiatives of Travancore state were located within this context of a threat of colonial annexation and the quest for colonial approval to be named a model native state.

As a result of this encounter, traditional sovereign power from the late 19th century began to express itself in the new vocabulary and idioms of modern government and reconfigured its legitimacy through these new modern rationalities of government. The chapter's central argument is that the 'Right of Death' that characterized sovereign power paved the way to 'Power over Life,' characteristic of biopower. Through an elaborate discussion of the death penalty, an essential feature of sovereign power, this transformation is clearly marked in the chapter. The conceptual shift in the approach to the death penalty resulting in abolition thus was located in the changing rationales of government in the chapter.

The chapter also demonstrated how the attribution of the divine to the sovereign, which was an essential feature of precolonial sovereignty in India, was gradually eroded through the transformation to the impersonal rationalities of colonial governmentality. The traditional sovereign transitioned to an enlightened monarchy by claiming itself to be a model state defined by the conditions of colonialism, employing a new vocabulary of good government and welfarism.

The fourth chapter, titled ***Modern Medicine in Travancore***, traced the institutional history of modern medicine in the state. How modern medicine, through active state and non-state support, fashioned a new sensibility of the body through various interventions formed the crux of the chapter. It is argued in the chapter that the history of modern medicine is inseparable from the history of colonial biopolitics and governmentality. The specificities of colonial medicine in a peculiar context like that of a princely state embracing modernity and modern forms of government were attempted to be explored in this chapter.

The pathways of modern medicine in Travancore were attempted to be tracked against the frameworks of the analyses of the impact of western science and medicine. Further, its

unique deployment in the Travancore context was explicated. The proactive role played by the missionaries and the state in institutionalizing modern medicine and its influence in fashioning a new consciousness of the body and its management is explored in considerable detail in the chapter.

The work has shown how the emergence of colonial medicine did not lead to the mere coexistence of different systems of medicine and knowledge systems but a contestation for dominance in which colonial medicine backed by colonial power was disproportionately equipped against other knowledge systems. It is shown in the chapter that the triumph of colonial medicine resulted in the fundamental dislocation of the body from its cultural and social setting to be invested with the new knowledge regimes of colonial medicine.

The chapter has shown how the natives quickly embraced the possibilities offered by modern medicine, thereby challenging the existing conditions and norms of the societies within which the bodies, healthy and diseased, existed. The success of modern medicine and the nuances of the natives' appropriation of modern medicine contested the dominant Western position of seeing the social life of modern medicine as a simple interaction between rational western medicine and irrational natives. It has been illustrated in the work that the people's resistance to bodily interventions of modern medicine was based on a sensibility of bodily autonomy and its ownership. Contesting the native-colonial binary, evidence of the native appropriation of modern medicine and its reception by the people, enabling them to craft new sensibilities of their bodies, has been laid out. There is thus native agency.

The history of vaccination and the emergence of the new science of sanitation and its impact on the colonized was also explored in detail in the chapter. It was shown how these new medical interventions in the form of vaccination and the new sciences of sanitation were among the first biopolitical interventions in Travancore that dislocated the body from its traditional networks and meanings and invested the body with new meanings. The chapter has also shown how modern medicine and its various technologies were intimately connected to the surveillance strategies of colonial regimes, forming an essential part of its technologies of governance. The chapter argues that modern medical practices played a critical role in making the 'modern governable subject' through the management of conduct and unleashing a surveillance regime, in other words, through the rationalities of disciplinary and biopolitical administration.

The princely state started advocating a new vocabulary of sovereignty concerned with the population's health and welfare. Sovereignty and its primary feature, juridical power, was reconfigured to express itself in a language and idiom that had as its primary focus and concern the 'wellbeing' of its subjects.

Chapter five, titled *The Birth of Colonial Biopolitics*, argued that a distinct form of administering the life and the body that can be called colonial biopolitics emerged in Travancore in the late 19th century. Building on the Foucauldian models of power, the chapter argued that biopolitics, the phenomena by which 'life' becomes an object of politics, had become the distinguishing feature of governmental rationality in Travancore by the late 19th century. This resulted in the dislocation of the body from its precolonial social world and the reconfiguration of existing sovereign notions of power, which was explored in the earlier chapters.

The chapter also analyzed Travancore's integration into global networks of health and its impact on the institutionalization of public health and modern medicine in the state. These developments were situated in the larger context of the spread of global biopolitics and the unification of the globe by these new biopolitical interventions.

This chapter argued that unlike disciplinary power, where power was applied to man-as-body, biopower is applied to man as a living being or man-as-species, as a global mass affected by overall processes characteristic of birth, death, production, illness, etc. The chapter situated the medical, sanitary, public health, and governmental initiatives that brought about a radical shift in the government of the body in the 20th century in this transformation. Disciplinary power moving from its institutional spaces to the entire social plane and intersecting with biopower was mapped with the changes institutional spaces like schools and prisons underwent. The significant role colonial medicine played in bringing about a new sensibility and regulation of the bodies has already been underlined in Chapter IV. The current chapter furthered the argument and situated it in the larger context of the emergence of colonial governmentality and biopolitics.

The ascendancy of biopolitical and governmental reason, focusing on fostering and flourishing human life, created its own margins and hierarchies. The effective management of the population also led to a systematic exclusion of groups not belonging to this ideal of healthy subjects. This exclusion was central to the modern idea of government and the management of populations.

The chapter, through the history of the Scout movement in Travancore, has argued that by the early 19th century, various colonial ideological initiatives helped create a new sensibility of the body as a secular entity. As envisaged by these organizations, the secularity of the body resulted in the fundamental dislocation of the body from its traditional social and religious location. The body began to be invested with new cultural variables like chivalry, courage, and masculinity and new universal values of citizenship, equality, and cooperation. The chapter argued that the imperial desires of these organizations and movements, however, cannot be overlooked as they actively aided colonialism's ideological and political project. It is argued that these ideological organs complimented the medical, statistical, and epidemiological interventions of the body and the biopolitical aspirations in achieving mastery over the body through its government.

Concluding the Work

Employing the Foucauldian notion of governmentality, the nuanced ways in which forms of power functioned in an actual historical context were mapped in the thesis. Contrary to the popular thinking that one form of power replaces another, the historical exploration of modes of power proves that in actual historical contexts, multiple forms of power intersect and often coexist. However, the thesis has shown that it is far from a smooth process. Various forms of power often coexist in tension and strive for ascendancy. In the case of Travancore, it has been shown in the chapter that under indirect colonialism, the traditional society was to undergo a complete transformation in its interaction with colonial governmentality.

The work has shown that the ascendancy of governmental power, with its new rationalities and techniques over traditional notions of sovereignty, led to the creation of the possibilities of democratization of sovereignty. Sovereign power was now subordinated to a form of power aimed at enhancing the people's lives with its rationalities, and its primary instrument remained laws and legislation. The thesis mapped the changing character of sovereign power from a form of power applied over the body of the subjects to the conditions where the bodies existed and defined life. This is inseparable from the modern state's biopolitical project of creating a healthy, manageable, responsible, and governable subject, realized through new knowledge systems like modern medicine and the science of sanitation and surveillance.

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The Indian Medical Gazette 1888-1949

The Travancore Information and Listener

APPENDIX I

Appendix I: Petition seeking the exemption to Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1948.

C179/48
17.1.48

Placed
reverse.

From
Kunju Varad Kunju Varad &
Rasa wife of Kunju Varad.
Payyappilil House.
Manikkamangalam.
KANNI.

To
The Dewan of Travancore.
TRIVANDRUM.

Petition presented under Section 11 of Act XXI
of 1116 for exemption of marriage.

Respected Sir,

We, the undersigned hereto bring the following
for your kind consideration and approval.

We are both ailing for the last 6 years and the
second petitioner is completely bedridden with Tuberculosis. Our only
daughter Elia is past thirteen years of age and has attained puberty
and is in her fourteenth year. Besides this daughter we have only two
minor sons. On account of our ill health there is nobody to manage
our affairs. In view of her serious ill health the second petitioner
is very anxious to see her only daughter married before anything un-
toward happens to her. In order to manage our family affairs and to
satisfy the sincere anxiety of the second petitioner we wish to have
our only daughter married at the earliest opportunity to Augusty
Guseph of Pallacerry House, Malayattur, who has attained majority
and who agrees to live with us and manage our affairs. Both the bride
and bride-groom are in good health and the marriage is not likely to
undermine the health and vigour of the future offsprings. The pro-
posed bride-groom Augusty Guseph is 20 years old and belongs to a
respectable family. Since the auspicious season for marriage is the
month of Makaram we request that the matter may be considered sym-
pathetically at the earliest opportunity and sanction accorded for
the marriage exempting the same from the operation of the Child
Marriage Restraint Act.

We beg to remain,
Respected Sir,
Your most obedient servants,

Manikkamangalam.
28th March 1123.

Kunju Varad Kunju Varad.
Rasa wife of Kunju Varad.

Respected Sir, I have the honor to endorse the

20/11/2011

Nov 4/1890
28th Nov 1123.

Kaippattoor Church
Kaladi - 11-1-'48

449
5287
No. G.C.660/23/Mis.

FROM

The Division Peisankar, Kottayam.

To

The Registrar, Huzur Secretariat, Trivandrum.

Subject:— Exemption from the operation of Child Marriage Restraint Act - application dated 28-5-123 from Kunju Vareed Kunju Vareed, Payyappallil house, Kaladi and his wife Rosa. ROC.No.179/48/Legis., dated 21-1-1948.

Sir,

With reference to the above, I have the honour to inform Government that Elia, the daughter of the petitioners is reported to be quite healthy and sufficiently grown up so as to be given in marriage. But the second petitioner Rosa is not bedridden as stated in the petition and she is seen to have been managing her house-hold affairs. In the circumstances the petition does not deserve consideration. The petition is returned

Yours faithfully,

Division Peisankar.

Submitted for order
28/4/48
C.P.P. 123, 27/2/48
27.2.48
The request may be declined
27/2
123

APPENDIX II

Map of Travancore

Source: *Census of India, 1911, Vol XXIII, Part I, Report by N. Subramhanya Aiyar*



Body and Governmentality: A Genealogical Analysis

by Abin Babu P



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