

MODULE-1
EARLY RESISTANCE AND BRITISH CONSOLIDATION
TOPIC- REVOLT OF VELU THAMPI DALAWA

PRIYANKA.E.K
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
LITTLE FLOWER COLLEGE, GURUVAYOOR

- Champakaraman Velayudhan, popularly known as Veluthampi Dalawa a real hero in the history of Kerala.
- The revolt of Veluthampi, the Dalawa of Travancore, is a significant episode in the annals of Indian resistance movements against the British.
- In the end of eighteenth and early nineteenth century, Travancore was ruled by Sri Balarama Varma of Travancore dynasty who was although a good hearted was weak and inexperienced.
- Thus the administration of Travancore State was controlled by the trio consisting of Jayanthan Sankaran Namboothiri, Sankaranaranayanan Chetty and Mathu Tharakan.

- They were doing all kinds of inhuman deeds and corruption in the State which created discontent among the poor populace of Travancore.
- Veluthampi, as the champion of the oppressed organized a large force, marched to the capital and persuaded the Raja to dismiss the unpopular ministers.
- Veluthampi was elevated to the high office of Dalawa on the advice of Macaulay in 1801.
- As per the agreement with Raja, Jayanthan Sanakaran Namboothiri was exiled and his associates, Mathew Tharakan and Sankaranarayan Chetty were whipped, their ears were cut and they were dismissed from service.
- He was raised to the status of Minister for Finance and Commerce.

- Velu Thampi born in Kalkulam near Nagercoil district in 1765.
- During the reign of Bala Rama Varma, he was appointed as the Karyakar(Tahasildar) of Mavelikkara
- The new Dalawa, Veluthampi introduced lot of new reforms to strengthen the government and to improve the finances of the State.
- Expenditure of the State was curtailed down and income was increased.
- Veluthampi administered the State with the support of, Col. Macaulay, the British Resident of Travancore and Cochin.

- His period as the minister (1801-1809) was a glaring example to how a debt and corruption ridden state can be led to prosperity.
- To increase revenue, he carried out a systematic resurvey of all garden and paddy lands in 1802 and assessed the revenue taking into consideration the produce of the land.
- Title deeds (kandezhuth) were given to the cultivators.
- A new Revenue code was framed and a novel system of keeping accounts was started.
- This resulted in a great increase of revenue.
- His system of Nalvazhi (daily account for the receipt of money) was the fore runner of the modern feature of revenue administration.
- Velu Thampi supplemented the land revenue with higher returns from trade and commerce.

- Corrupt officials were executed or exiled.
- He had done lot of measures for the developments of trade in the State.
- He made attempts to improve trade in the Ambalappuzha town, which was constructed by Raja Kesavadas, the former Diwan of Travancore and developed Kollam as a great trading centre.
- He took great interest to open markets (chanthas) and roads in various corners of the State.
- Markets were opened at Vaikom and Changanassery and it was he who constructed Kollam- Chengotta road.
- He made Pathiramanal of Vembanattukayal as suitable for human life.

- The increased revenue was spent to clear the debts.
- He also introduced criminal code which was 'barbarously severe'.
- Thus within a short span of time, Veluthampi evolved order out of chaos, placed the administration on a sound footing, improved the financial conditions of the state and proved his mettle as an administrator.
- But the later life of Veluthampi was in trouble and he faced a tragic end.
- He had done the affairs of the Govt. firmly and strictly without fear or favor.
- This alarmed his enemies who plotted to dismiss the Dalawa.

- But the Resident always supported him and due to his intervention that Veluthampi was reinstated as Dalawa.
- There was also a mutiny of the Nair militia when Thampi attempted to stop their double allowance. He suppressed the mutiny with the help of Company's forces.
- The price of this help was a new treaty with the company. The revised treaty of perpetual friendship and Alliance which signed on 12th June 1805 gave the British specific power to keep a subsidiary force in Travancore and to interfere in its internal affairs.
- It also increased the tribute to be paid to the Company. The treaty virtually sounded the death knell of Travancore as an independent kingdom

- But the time of staining of the relationship of Travancore and Company has come within a short span of time when Veluthampi found that the Resident was interfering in the internal affairs of the state using the treaty as a pretext.
- When the tribute to the company fell in to arrears, Macaulay insisted on its payment worsened the relationship of Travancore with the Company.
- Further the Resident cancelled an order issued by the Dalawa attaching the landed properties of Mathu Tharakan who owned an enormous amount of the State.
- This activity of the Resident infuriated the Dalawa.
- Now each of them attempted to get rid of the other- Dalawas appealed to the Madras Governor to recall the Resident and the Resident asking the Raja to dismiss Velu Thampi.

- Direct and indirect clashes between the Company soldiers and king's soldiers took place here and there.
- Veluthampi who had only a ragtag army and so it found difficult to go war with the army of the company.
- Veluthampi decided to organize an open armed insurrection with the help of anti-British elements against the British.
- He therefore reached into an agreement with Macaulay ignoring the advice of the King.
- This agreement was later used by the resident officer to create rift between the King and the Minister.

- The Company was gearing up for an open confrontation.
- This time he approached Paliathachan of Cochin who had similar grievances with the Company and Zamorin of Calicut.
- They collected men and arms on a large scale. All these made an open war inevitable.
- The revolt began with the night attack on the Residency at Kochi (Boghatty palace) under the leadership of Paliath Achan.
- But the attack on the residency failed to capture Macaulay as he had already managed to escape to a British ship anchored in the harbor.
- The rebels consisting of 600 men plundered the Residency, broke open the jails at Kochi and set all prisoners free.

- In an outbreak at Alappuzha, 636 Englishmen were killed. But the attempt at Kollam failed to achieve its desired results.
- The situation had become desperate for Velu Thampi who staged a strategic retreat to Kundara where he set up his headquarters and issued a call to arms.
- He camped at Kundara with his army and there he declared open war against the Company.
- He described the presence of British harmful to the cultural integrity and self pride of Kerala.
- This declaration which he made on 1st Makaram 984ME (Jan 11, 1809) has been known in the history of Kerala as the famous '**Kundara Proclamation**'.

- Through this declaration he exhorted the people to rally under his banner for a patriotic struggle against the British.
- It has show the concern for the maintenance of social forms in general and the caste system in particular.
- The document reads: “it is the nature of the English nation to get possession of countries by treacherous means. And should they obtain ascendancy in Thiruvitamkur, they will practice all unjust and unlawful things”.
- He raised the following arguments against the British in his proclamation:

- 1. They would put their own guards in the palace, Sarkar buildings, for gates, destroy the royal seal, and do away with honorific palanquins and other distinguishing marks.
- 2. They will suppress the Brahmins and prohibit worship in temples
- 3. They will make sale and every other thing a monopoly of the state. They may measure up and assess themselves as absolute owners of waste lands, impose exorbitant taxes on paddy lands, coconuts etc.
- 4. Low castes people will be inflicted with heavy punishments for slight offences.
- 5. They will put up crosses and flags of Christianity in temples, compel intermarriages with Brahmin women without reverence to caste or creed.
- 6. And practice all the unjust and unlawful things which characterize Kaliyuga.

- He proclaimed: “Let us therefore exert ourselves to keep off impending calamities sketched above and Endeavour that no disparagement may be imputed to us in guarding our homes, the charitable institutions and the manners and customs of our land”.
- This proclamation was the first one in this kind which called to the people at large too unites against the oppressors.
- It provided the motivation for a mass upsurge of unprecedented dimension.
- The proclamation had made great impact and motivated the mass for an unprecedented upsurge against the English.

- The mass rose against the British. With 3000 men and 18 guns Velu Thambi renewed the war.
- He sends part of his forces to Kochi to help Paliath Achan and with the rest he proceeded against the British.
- But both Paliath Achan and Veluthampi failed miserably and the tide of the revolt decisively turned against Veluthampi.
- In this time the British army entered Travancore through Aruvamozhi and thrust in to the interior.
- They captured the old fort of Udayagiri and the old capital Padmanabhapuram and advanced towards Trivandrum, the new capital.
- The Raja, feared of all these events, sued for peace.
- Under pressure from Macaulay, Veluthampi was dismissed and the new Dalawa Ummini Thampi ordered for the arrest of Veluthampi.

- The responsibility for the losses was taken personally by Veluthampi in his personal meeting with the King following which fled to the jungles with the British in pursuit.
- The British then issued orders for the arrest of Veluthampi with a reward of Rs. 50,000/-, Veluthampi left the capital, reached Kilimanur where he gifted his sword to the local chief, preceded to the north and took refuge in the house of the Potti of the Mannadi temple.
- Velu Thampi who needed money sent out his servant to sell his gold and silver and this man was caught by the British.
- Upon interrogation, he revealed to them Thampi's hiding place.

- The enemies surrounded his hiding place. He then fled to the Bhagavati temple along with his brother Padmanabhan Thambi and committed suicide
- The British seized his brother and the body of Thampi removed to Trivandrum where it was exposed to the public at Kannanmoola. Padmanabhan Thampi was also hanged.
- Most of his relatives were transported to Maldives and some appear to have committed suicide, some died in prison. The rest were flogged and banished elsewhere. All these activities were carried out by Valuthampi's successor Ummini Thampi