

## **Cultural Achievements of the Cochin Kingdom**

**Minor Project under UGC order No.MRP(H)/13-14/KLMG0009/UGC-  
SWROtd.15<sup>th</sup> Feb 2014**

### **Summary of the Project:**

Man is a cultural being.Culture finds it's best expression and flourish in a free society. Cultural elements have always acted as an element of power generation and physical and mental subordination also.

Kochi,as a powerful swarupam rose into prominence ,after the Periyar flood of 1341 A D. Many indigenous and foreign works lay testimony for the existence of the existence of this Nadu.The ruling family.'Perumpadappu Swarupam' an important Nadu of medieval Kerala,played a major role in the political,social,economic and cultural history of medieval kerala.Kochi rose as a busy international trading hub after the coming of the Portuguese ,though there was a considerable Chinese and Jewish traders ,before their advent.

The history of Kochi royal family says that it has gone through so many ups and downs due to the internal dissensions and also internal threats from the neighbouring Nadus and also from the foreign powers.The swarupam also produced many influential rulers like Rama Varma Sakthan Thampuran and Pareekshith Thampuran.

Kochi has always been noted for it's cosmopolitan nature and is rightly described as the 'ethnographic museum' ,as it have people belonging to different races fromdifferent parts of the world.The existence of different groups in harmony,even now,is a testimony to the policy of tolerance of the Kochi rulers.This inturn,has helped in the economic and cultural prosperity of the swarupam too.

The swarupam seems to have a feudal nature as it was the system prevalent all over Kerala during that time. As a result, casteism and upper class hegemony in all areas were the order of the day. All major contributions in the different areas of life has been produced by those in the higher strata.There were some rulers ,who wanted to reform Kochi in the modern lines. This was mainly made possible with the support of the officials,especially the European officers associated with the Swarupam.Considerable changes were brought in Education,Medicine,Judiciary,transport ,communication etc.

Education was one area ,where the swarupam tried to bring democratization.The result was opening of many schools and colleges for imparting modern education.Many English and Vernacular institutions were opened.Schools for the depressed classes and vocational training was opened. Fee concessions were given and night schools

were opened. Libraries were set up to impart a reading culture. The setting up of the first printing press is an example of the encouragement given by the rulers. Language and literature, both Malayalam and Sanskrit progressed. Many of the literary stalwarts of that time were either close associates of or patronized by the Kochi rulers. Apart from these great contributions are seen in the areas of astrology, medicine, Allopathy and Ayurveda, Archaeology, ethnographical studies. Art and architecture was another major area which attained progress during this time. The legacy of the Royal family could also be seen in the field of transport, communication, electrification of Kochi etc. The railways and the tramway lay testimony to the encouragement given by the rulers in this aspect.

Though many policies were initiated by the rulers to bring people of all groups into the mainstream of development, we can see that the mostly benefitted were the upper strata of the society. As the society was designed in the feudal lines, there was a considerable influence of the so called upper classes, in all activities of the state. Moreover, very less number of people from the depressed classes is seen to have benefitted from the reforms.

#### **Findings:**

Culture is an ideological apparatus, always used as an element of power generation and physical and mental subordination. The royal family of Kochi, known as the Perumpadappu Swarupam, had played a considerable role in the political, economic, social and cultural progress of Kochi in particular and has influenced the history of Kerala as a whole. Though the political apparatus of the Swarupam was not as strong as we see it in the neighbouring Venad or Nediyrippu, the kingdom has produced some outstanding rulers like Sakthan Thampuran and Pareekshith Thampuran, who sowed the seeds of modernization in the Kochi kingdom. Efforts were made by some of the rulers to introduce reforms in the field of education, medicine, judiciary, transport, communication etc. Many steps were taken to bring reforms in the lower strata of the society also. There were instances when the rulers raised funds for the public works, in spite of severe financial constraints faced by the Swarupam. In spite of all this, it is noticeable that much of the benefits and contributions came from the upper strata, mainly because the society of that time was feudal in nature. Much of the efforts of democratization did not find fruit as those who were closely associated with the royal family happened to be from the upper classes of the contemporary society.

GEETHA PC

Principal Investigator