

## INGEMINATING THE RESISTANCE TO WESTERN MEDICINE IN TRAVANCORE: WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SUBALTERNES

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### Abstract

*Who Health Organization in its preamble to the constitution categorically defines Health as a “state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”. A man cannot thrive in the society with ailing mental or physical health. He is supposed to have a healthy connection with the outside world, so that he could exchange ideas with the society. Even the progress of a nation is dependent on its healthy population. It is an important aspect in every human beings life. Hence any kind of discrimination in the sector will have far reaching impact on the development of a nation.*

*The introduction of Western medicine in India was an epoch making event the History of India, as it changed the very fabric of the treatment protocols in the state. Travancore a small native state under the British was in the forefront of this altering. She hence became the foundation on which the foundation of Kerala’s health sector was based. But the introduction of the alien form of treatment was not an easy task as invited stiff resistance from its populace.*

**Keywords:** Health, Travancore, Resistance, Subalternes, Treatment-Diseases

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### Introduction

India was a country that offered various kinds of treatment to its populace when other parts of world were lagging behind in the well being sector. Traces of advanced Medicare in India can be traced from the Indus Valley civilization. The treatment frameworks of the locals were advanced to the point that they even attempted surgery.<sup>1</sup> They utilized herbs and animal products for treating the ailed. The form of drainage system that was prevalent in civilization is a perfect example of their idea of sanitation and health. The influx of the migrants from various parts of the world brought about a drastic change in the way which people were treated during the time.

The Aryans who migrated to the mainland brought in new forms of treatment. The Vedas which produced infinite knowledge contained references of various medicines and treatment. Atharva Veda has given vivid descriptions of diseases and treatments that were freewheeling in the vicinity. Ayurveda the indigenous type of medication has its source in the Vedas.<sup>2</sup> It was the foundation of India’s health services for a very long time. Buddhism and Jainism assumed a huge part in consummating and spreading of Ayurveda around the world like rest of India

Travancore a little local state in south India likewise depended on Ayurveda for curing its ailments. The state of Travancore assumed a spearheading part in the foundation of present day medicinal services in the State. Unlike in education, government institutions dominated medical activities in Travancore from the beginning.<sup>3</sup> With the assistance of the evangelist activities the state accomplished extraordinary statures in the field of Health. Travancore gave more significance to health division contrasted with other local states and presidency. Even though the main aim of the missionaries was the conversion of upper caste Hindus the, contribution given by them in the field of health cannot be forgotten.

The British who came to India for their narrow minded needs was not keen on the advancement of health of the colonized individuals. They used western medicine to treat their locals and not to the normal man of India. It was just in the late nineteenth century they began to offer significance to the requirements of colonized. The spread of scourges in the state constrained the British to reevaluate their strategy as many of the Europeans also started to get

infected. The rulers of the land who were very much interested in the welfare of the people played an important role in the development of modern medicine in Travancore.

The progressive attitude of the royal family also contributed for the development of modern medicine in Travancore. They modernized the health care systems of Travancore through the western lines and contributed to the higher standard of health in the state. Even though they modernized the public health through the introduction of modern medicine, the importance given to indigenous medicine like Ayurveda continued.

The westerners used medicine as a tool to enforce their hegemony in the society. They were critical about the indigenous medicine which was in vogue. They wanted the native people to be steadfast for the modern form of treatment given to them. The viability of the framework pulled in the consideration of the imperial family. The spread of epidemics in the state and the effectiveness of the British medicine were the reasons that lead the royal family to promote the alien system of treatment. At first the advantage of treatment was bound to the illustrious family and the administration authorities. Be that as it may, later it was stretched out to the detainees and open. The European system of medicine was started in the year 1811 under the auspicious of Rani Gouri Lekshmi Bhayi.<sup>4</sup>

The Health sector of Travancore was not as effective as it has been depicted in history books. This field was confronting harsh climate amid the seventeenth and the eighteenth century. Deaths due to different plagues were common. Loss of life was high in Travancore contrasted with other local states. Small pox, cholera and intestinal sickness were taking lives in and around the state. The poor way of life and absence of open cleanliness caused serious issues in the Health sector. Condition likewise assumed an incredible part in dramatically overemphasizing the circumstance. The absence of nourishment in the state made the general population more defenseless against ailments. Degraded neediness in Travancore had its effect on the wellbeing part. Lack of education and absence of knowledge about diseases increased the deaths in the state. The indigenous treatment frameworks which were pervasive in the state were thinking that it's hard to manage the circumstance.

The superstitions of local individuals limited them for utilizing solution for specific ailments. Diseases like leprosy were seen as a curse caused because of the transgressions of the past life. . Death toll began to increase year after year. The lack of trained professionals in the field aggravated the issue. The government was finding it difficult to deal with this challenge. The royal family used western medicine as response to deal with the spread of diseases.

Inoculation was presented in the state following two or three years of its disclosure by Edward Jenner.<sup>5</sup> It was after this the preventive medication had its initiation. Gouri Lekshmi Bhayi period saw radical changes in the Health sector of the state. She was upheld by a visionary Resident Col. Munro. He assumed an integral part in the advancement of Public wellbeing in Travancore. It was under his actuation that immunization segment was set up in 1813. The principle need of the area was to manage the spreading of little pox in the state. Dr. Proven who was the primary western specialist in Travancore and the Durbar doctor was delegated as the leader of the inoculation division.<sup>6</sup> He began to advance immunization in Kollam area too. Be that as it may, the dynamic strategy confronted a sudden turn around when individuals declined to get immunized. Dread of the overall population about the result of the inoculation constrained them to avoid it. To make inoculation mainstream the Travancore imperial family under Gouri Lekshmi Bhayi volunteered for the immunization. Dr. Proven made sure that everybody is legitimately immunized.

The introduction of vaccination in the state was not an easy task. Individuals in the state detested and declined getting immunized. The higher caste people especially Brahmins were in not ready to get vaccinated. They feared that they will forfeit their bhramanyam if they get vaccinated. Cow was considered to be an important part of Hindu culture. It was worshiped and given equal status of a mother. This constrained individuals to avoid inoculation as cow lymph was

an imperative segment in immunization. Uneducated individuals in the nation trusted that they would procure the state of a bovine and will have cow heads made them avoid getting immunized.

There was a common belief that humans who get vaccinated would undergo a structural transformation and acquire the attributes of a cow in facets like sound and body. Even educated masses kept away from getting vaccinated. They dreaded about the reactions of inoculation. They thought that the vaccination could lead to other diseases.<sup>7</sup> They also believed that vaccination without an effort to rectify the sanitary condition in the state would not bear fruit. The bad sanitary condition in the state generated and spread diseases.

Dread of inoculation kept them far from taking treatment. The government was compelled to make a move against the individuals who were not willing to get inoculated. In the year 1850-1851 more than five hundred individuals went without getting immunized in which eighteen were indicted and thirteen were sentenced. The government tried to entice people by giving curative care also. The standard vaccinator was given medicinal preparing in restorative treatment with the goal that individuals will have more confidence in the framework. The pay of the calling was additionally climbed to welcome consideration of youth. A suggestion was additionally made by Patterson to print the treatment method in both English and the local dialect and to convey it among the majority. He felt this would expand the certainty of the general population in western prescription.

The critical factor to be noted here is that higher caste populace was more hesitant to get inoculated than the lower class masses. If we analyze the caste wise vaccination in Travancore we can see that it was the inferior castes that congregated the charts. The number of subalterns who got vaccinated increased year after year. They believed in the efficiency of vaccination compared to the higher castes, but this extravaganza named western health care was restricted to the lower caste people when it came to the treatment of diseases. The higher castes were given separate wards and individuals of the lower standing were not permitted enter these wards.<sup>8</sup> the wards saved for higher positions got more attention than that of the lower standing wards. Pulayas were not permitted to enter inside government healing facilities in the nineteenth century. It was just in a later stage that it was opened to them. A kitchen was converted to a ward for the Pulayas after a petition was submitted to the government in 1905.<sup>9</sup>

The activities of Medical evangelists likewise fared along these lines. They likewise gave exceptional inclination to the high class Hindus or the twice born. The Catherine Booth Hospital which gave better treatment to the majority in Travancore dispensed exceptional benefits to the high caste Hindus.<sup>10</sup> A private ward and kitchen were provided for the caste Hindus who were keen in protecting their purity of their religion. The important factor to be noted here is that the Missionary Hospitals outnumbered the government hospitals six to one.

Yet at the same time a significant number of the subaltern class populace declined to make utilization of the facilities given by the government. They were profoundly established in their superstitions and trusted that *nattu vaidyans* and nearby divinities were sufficient to treat their sicknesses. For instance they made offerings to goddess to *mariamman* when troubled with sicknesses like small pox instead of going to Hospitals. Be that as it may, the adequacy of these medicines was faulty as the quantity of deaths because of plagues expanded amid these years.

## Conclusion

The significance given to the lower caste in the health sector was high compared to the education sector. Yet, it was insufficient to manage the scourges that were freewheeling in the state. The ironic factor to be noted here is that the lower class Hindus who was ready to get vaccinated was kept aside when it came to treatment of diseases. But it rarely mattered to them as they opted for local medicines and practices that were in vogue during that time. The

effectiveness of modern medicine can be pointed as another reason by which people became attracted to the system. As time progressed popular emotion for better treatment found its expression through petitions submitted to the government. The government was hence forced to act as a result of these petitions. In short the initial resistance of the masses died down with the improvement in education and the awareness created by social religious reformers.

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