

the *Karyakkar*, corresponding to the modern Tahsildar, who was responsible for the proper administration of the larger unit called *Mandapathumvathukkal*. Another important administrative reform of Marthanda Varma was the framing of the annual budget called *Pathivukanakku*, fixing allotment for the various items of expenditure such as Devaswoms, Palaces, Revenue and Military establishments, Pensions, etc.

Dedication of the Kingdom to Sri Padmanabha

The reign of Marthanda Varma marks a new epoch in the history of the temples of Travancore. The Maharaja took a keen interest in the affairs of the Padmanabhaswami temple. The repairs and the construction of additional structures in the temple were begun in 906 Kollam Era (1731 A.D.) and completed in 908 Kollam Era (1733 A.D.). The idol of Sri Padmanabhaswami was reconsecrated with twelve thousand *salagramams*, (sacred stones believed to represent the incarnations of Vishnu) obtained from the bed of the river Gandak¹. A large single piece of granite slab cut out of a solid rock at Thirumala, four miles north of Trivandrum measuring 20 ft. square and 2½ ft. thick was brought and placed in front of the idol. It is called the *Ottakkal mandapam*. The stone corridor in the temple known as *Sivelippura* 420 ft. from east to west and 226½ ft. from north to south was also erected. The corridor is 20 ft. in breadth and 23 ft. in height, and is supported by numerous granite pillars, heavily and beautifully sculptured. The great tower, the eastern *gopuram* of the temple, the foundation of which was laid as early as 741 Kollam Era (1566 A.D.) but the progress of which was delayed so long for various reasons, was undertaken and executed up to the 5th storey in a short time. A golden flag-staff was also fixed. A large number of endowments was made to the Sri Padmanabhaswami temple of which the *Palpayasa Madham* was the most important. The scale of the *Utsavam* was enlarged, and the *Bhadra Dipam* and *Murajapam* were inaugurated, the model being the religious ceremonies performed by Karthavirarjuna as described in the Puranas. Several *Uttupuras* (feeding-houses) and *Vazhiampalams* (rest houses) were constructed in various parts of the country. In December, 1749 Marthanda Varma took the momentous step of

1. Even today 12000 handfuls (*pidis*) of rice are used for daily *Nvedyam* (offering) to Sri Padmanabha in view of the fact that 12000 *Salagramams* have been used in making the idol.

dedicating his dominion to Sri Padmanabha. Thenceforward, the King and his successors became the servants of Lord Padmanabha, and ruled the Kingdom in his name and as a sacred trust¹. Marthanda Varma assumed the title Sri Padmanabha Dasa, and since then the Maharajas of Travancore have always added this title to their names. It may be stated in this context that Marthanda Varma's devotion to Sri Padmanabha did not stand in the way of his adopting a firm policy towards the *Ooralers* of the temple. He kept them in check, and prevented them from asserting their power at the expense of the King. The Maharaja's action in securing a large portion of the lands of Suchindram Devaswom in Tovala Taluk in perpetual mortgage to the State was motivated by his desire to curb the power of the *Ooralers*.

Cultural progress

The reign of Marthanda Varma also saw the progress of literature and arts. The annexation of neighbouring states brought to Travancore great poets and learned men like Ramapurathu Warriar and Kunjan Nambiar. Trivandrum served as a great centre of intellectual and artistic activity in those days. Sculpture, music, painting and fine arts flourished. Puranic scenes were depicted in the mural paintings in the Trivandrum temple and those of Sri Ramaswami in Padmanabhapuram. The histrionic art received liberal patronage. Rama Panivadan wrote his *Sethuraghavam* under royal command to be enacted on the occasion of the Murajapam. The *Balamarthanda Vijayam* of Devarajakavi is a Sanskrit drama which has for its hero Marthanda Varma himself.

1. It is interesting to recall in this connection that at the time of the integration of the native States of Travancore and Cochin, H. H. Sri Balarama Varma Chitra Thirunal expressed his inability to take the oath of office as the head of the United State declaring his loyalty to the Constitution of India, and to the new Union. The reason for this was that His Highness felt that on account of the dedication of the State to Sri Padmanabha and the special loyalty and devotion the ruler of Travancore owed to that deity, it would not be proper for him to take such an oath. Eventually instead of taking the oath, the Maharaja addressed a letter to Sri V. P. Menon, Secretary, States Ministry, Government of India, assuring the Government of India that to the best of his loyalty he would protect and defend the Constitution of India and that of the United State of Travancore and Cochin. The letter was read out by the Chief Justice of the State in the presence of the Maharaja at the time of the inauguration of the Union on 1st July, 1948. *Story of Integration of States*, V. P. Menon, pages 280-281.