

## INTRODUCTION

*“The whole country presents a ground of green and is for a considerable part of the year from the abundance of moisture covered with a rich verdure, but it is too woody to admit of much extent of pasturage ”- (Lts.Ward and Conner, Memoir of the Survey of Travancore and Cochin States, Vol.I, Government of Kerala,1994, p. 40 ).*

*“Travancore has been a country of forests from the earliest times. Nature had fitted it for the production of vegetation of all kinds by the character of its climate by the warmth of its atmosphere and by the almost perennial moisture which prevails. Probably nowhere in the world are the conditions of growth due to heavy rainfall and heat, so favourable as in Travancore, and consequently we find the ground completely covered with trees or shrubs, wherever it is not cleared for cultivation.” - (T.F.Bourdillion, Report on The Forests of Travancore, Government Press, Trivandrum, 1893, p.11).*

*“Since I have been in India I have had a great desire to visit the state of Travancore. I have for many years heard so much of its exuberant natural beauties and its arcadian charm. Here nature has spent upon the land her richest bounties” (V.Nagam Aiyya, The Travancore State Manual, Travancore Government Press, Trivandrum, 1906, p. 5)*

Inextricably interconnected are the above observations made by Lieutenants Ward & Conner, who made a Trigonometrical Survey of Travancore, Bourdillion who made the first detailed survey of the forests of Travancore and the Curzonian remark that was something more than a usual comment from a Viceroy. The subject of observation was the bountiful nature of Travancore, especially its forests that contained a rich biota of plants and trees. It is pertinent to note that the amazingly significant drive of the explorers like Ward and Conner who made their survey from 1817 to 1820 was maintained in all its spirits by the subsequent explorations of the native state made by European travellers who were drawn from

different walks of life; administrative people, scientists, especially botanists and foresters, military men and ordinary travellers. These journeys and explorations resulted in the creation of a vast stock of data about the forest wealth of Travancore, especially its timber resources which formed the knowledge base of the colonial authorities in formulating forest policies on the lines of those prevailing in British India. Subordination of the native state through signing the treaty of subsidy, friendship and mutual alliance witnessed the intrusion of colonial power in its policy making and day to day administration. One such domain was the forest management where one could see the replication of British Indian forests laws that facilitated a safer and speedier exploitation of timber resources.

Focussing on the theme of Making of the Modern Forests of Travancore and the concomitant emergence of the Timber Empire destined to serve the colonial power, the thesis engages with environmental history on a specific plane interacting with the political and economic history of the native state to unravel the intricacies connected with the trade in timber. Under the gaze of the colonial power, via its variegated agencies of exploration/travel in the latter half of the eighteenth century and then through a concerted governmental gaze of the Empire in the opening decades of the nineteenth century, the native forests were brought under the global market economy of timber. Consequently, the rich sylvan resources of Travancore were controlled and managed by European capital and industries in the latter half of the nineteenth century until their departure from India. The creation of the Timber Empire as discussed in the thesis is not perceived as an autonomous realm of trade and commerce but as a system that was deeply conceived, thoroughly organised and completely subverted to serve the colonial empire. The forest that was discovered was brought under the administrative control of the empire through regulations and administrative reforms synchronous with the British schemes for India, and was later extended to serve the interests of the private timber traders, both European and native. The 'Empire' was to benefit from such changes and the native ecological world was systematically brought under the order of ecological imperialism.

The topography of Travancore is ideal for the natural regeneration of plant life due to the climate of the land. This has resulted in the existence of vast natural forests in the state which is a treasure house of biodiversity. The gaze and itinerant science of the Europeans made the forests of Travancore visible to the Europeans. They, through their system of knowledge making, documentation, itinerant science, law etc., revealed the wilderness of Travancore forest and transformed them into 'modern' entities. With the Subsidiary Treaty of 1795, colonial forest policies along with its administrative hierarchy entered the native state. Under the pretext of bringing 'progress' on the hills (forests) large tracts of forested lands were cleared to introduce plantations. Timber Plantations provided a strong base for the timber trade and industry of Travancore. Development of timber trade provided a ground conducive for the emergence of timber merchants both native and Europeans as a new, powerful social class. The advent of a sphere of merchant capitalism induced by timber traders in Travancore paved the way for rapid deforestation through excessive timber felling.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Out of the forested spaces of Travancore, an erstwhile princely state in India, was to emerge a timber empire which was the necessary outcome of the gaze and strategies of the coloniser. The most valuable trees of Travancore became part of the scientific data base of the Empire within a short span of time and determined to a greater extent its commercial utility in India and outside. It is pertinent to note this structural transformation in the environmental history of the native state during the colonial interregnum, wherein the stage was already set by some native timber contractors who were great suppliers of timber in the early colonial days. Once, the context of the empire emerged together with the attendant realities of the policy of ecological imperialism that was set in motion by the British administration in India, the forests of Travancore, a physical landscape under the native Raja became a property legalised for colonial plunder under the convenient rubric of global timber trade. Henceforth, the trees of the Raja in the forests of Travancore became a commodity to further the goals of colonialism. The colonial timber empire of

Travancore became a virtual power site of the British, where trees became timber and timber became the empire's property.

The paradigm shift in the colonial political movements in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed a great global ecological transformation. Many scientific agencies were introduced for controlling the environment of the colonies. In India the transfer of power from the company to the crown after the sepoy mutiny was a great epoch as far as Indian environmental history is concerned. The British government tightened its hold over Indian economy after the mutiny, resultant to which Indian forest and its management became one of the major areas that underwent drastic changes. The exploration of forest resources using scientific tools and technologies resulted in locating, extracting, and marketing the timber products on a global scale. Colonial forest policies were enacted with this end in view which led to the large scale transformation of the native ecological world.

The waning of the oak forest in England and the subsequent pursuit for a similar quality timber led to the exploration of teak resulting in the efficacious expansion and consolidation of the Empire. Pursuant to this they sent Enquiry Commissions all over India for finding the quantity of teak and other hard wood and soft wood timbers. These commissions consisted of natural scientists, surgeons, military officials etc. A large number of doctors both physicians and surgeons were employed in the service of the East India Company as full-fledged professionals and scientists in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> c due to the imperative requirements to know the flora, fauna, geography and geology which were hitherto unfamiliar, for both commercial purposes and to counter environmental and health hazards. The travelogues, reports and theories of these officials provided a plethora of information about the geography, the nature and the wild etc., of the colonies. These informations were transmitted all over the world through conferences, pamphlets and other publications. They became the sites of power of the Coloniser. The knowledge of the economic and commercial viability of the sylvan resources of India was clearly tapped out through surveys of the forests and this was a major motive behind the reservation of Indian forest.

The forest history of our country could be better understood by knowing the forest of a particular locality. If we analyse the forest history of every princely state it is evident that forests of these places underwent drastic changes and that they carry a strong colonial legacy. The seeds of the British Indian Forest Act were disseminated to all princely states, including Travancore. This colonial environmental policy shift was a historical turning point in the forest history of the native state.

The triumph of the British Empire was their spirit of research and enquiry. This spirit of enquiry together with sophisticated technologies constituted the axis of the Empire. Their constant pursuits and explorations led to innovative knowledge and created novel developmental ideologies. These developmental and scientific ideologies based on natural sciences, especially botany were the main paradigms that decided the future of the Indian forests including that of Travancore. Carl Linnaeus, a Swedish botanist and the father of taxonomy, considered botany as an economic science to which he articulated two basic economic responsibilities. First is the survey of new resources for which he familiarized in Europe the idyllic of the philosophical traveller who would examine record and illustrate any aspect of the natural world. Second, the adaptation of plants which added to the nation's wealth and power was made the responsibility of the botanists. Pursuant to the Anglo- Gurkha war, Himalayas were opened to the Europeans which resulted in a great botanical bonanza. Nathaniel Wallich, one the first naturalists, took advantage from this bonanza by undertaking a survey of teak trees in British Burma from 1825 to 1827. Later, this provided the foundation stone for the forest conservancy in India. Travel was the indispensable means of unlocking the plant wealth of Southern Asia. Wallich had a vast collection of plant specimens from India which made him an influential figure in the commodification of Indian plant-life.

It should be in this broad view that we must study the survey reports and memoirs of Travancore written by Ward and Conner, Bourdillion, Horsley etc. The entire geography and the forest wealth of Travancore were vividly portrayed through the gaze of such itinerant officers and their documentation. Their reports

served as the basis for the future management and administration of the native forest. Royle in his 'illustrations' in 1839 associated India with the tropical world and he placed Travancore as one among the tropical regions of India along with Malabar, Chittagong, Bengal, and Lower Assam. He appreciated India's natural resources, and the contributions its botany could make to trade and empire. The understanding of the great economic viability of the forest resources of Travancore led to the introduction of commercial forestry in the guise of scientific forestry, following which a series of rules and regulations were introduced in Travancore. The first Travancore Forest Act was promulgated in 1887 by which Reserved Forests were created in the native state, the main aim of which was the protection of the most prized timber trees, especially teak. The reservation of the forest was the first step in the establishment of the 'Colonial Timber Empire' in Travancore. The word 'colonial timber empire' is used to denote the success of the British in monopolising Travancore timber trade through replication of colonial laws and regulations and bringing it under an exploitative bureaucratic network of control and management. A brisk timber trade existed in Travancore during the colonial period. It also denoted the emergence of a timber lobby who were so powerful and influential and acted as the binamies of the British. Even the timber policies of the Travancore government were decided at their will.

### **Forest Historiography**

Forest historiography of Travancore is a comparatively weak area of academic scholarship, in spite of a plethora of primary sources available. The imperial gaze of the Europeans and consequent exploration of the Travancore forest and its uses were a great matter of concern here. Their vision, definition and approach towards our forest were totally different from the traditional notion. According to Sivaramakrishnan, "David Arnold's *Tropic and the Travelling Gaze* brings to the forefront the issue of landscape representation and how a focus on these cultural and imaginative productions of nature, landscape, tropical forest and so on, were important to both colonial understanding of the lands they came to rule and manage, and scientific endeavours to improve, regenerate and classify these lands in service of natural sciences and colonial government". Arnold uses the

term ‘tropicality’ to signify the understanding and depiction of the tropics in European thoughts and practical knowledge. Exploitation and exploration nurtured new outlook on tropics as places of abundance and fertility. It acts as an abode for diverse flora and fauna and plenitude of natural resources. Their itinerant writings and botany vividly portrayed the natural world. Thus in the process of Empire building proficient itinerants played an important role. There are references about Travancore forests and its management in books like *The Forests of India*, by E. P. Stebbing, *Forestry in British India* by Berthold Ribbentrop and *History of Forests in India* by Richard P. Tucker. Another important literature on Travancore forest is *Keralathinte Vanangal Noottandiloode* (Forests of Kerala through Centuries) in Malayalam, authored by C.K. Karunakaran, a retired Conservator of Forest. It dealt with the forest history of Kerala from 1801 to 1970. The book revealed the history of deforestation during the colonial (1800-1947) and post-colonial periods. He divides the period from 1801 to 1850 as the period of deforestation, 1851 to 1900 as the emergence of the scientific forestry, 1901 to 1940 as furtherance in forest management, and 1941 to 1950 as a period of war and the concomitant over exploitation of forest resources. He also dealt with the forest infringement committees which were formed for enquiring cases regarding forest encroachments. He further gave a detailed description of the forest history of Travancore, Cochin, and Malabar. The thesis of M. Amruth, scientist at the Kerala Forest Research Institute, Peechi entitled, *Changing Regimes of Forest Management: Institutional Change and Modes of Participation in the Western Ghats of Kerala* also engage with the forest history of Travancore. It deals with the forest management practiced in the Western Ghats, particularly in Travancore.

*Cochin Forests and the British: Techno-ecological Imperialism in India* is authored by Sebastian Joseph. This book scrutinises a variety of archival material to trace the forest reforms in Cochin and their impact on the rich ecological life of the region. The book reveals a detailed picture of the history of forest policy in Indian context and also elaborates the forest historiography of India. It also provides a brief account of the ecological historiography of Cochin and Malabar states and then proceeds to the history of the evolution of colonial forest policy in Cochin. The book examines the working of the forests tramway in Cochin which

was constructed for the transportation of teak timbers to the nearest ports and railway lines. The author argues that this technological innovation was not only a financial burden on the state but resulted in the over exploitation of the forest resources of the state. Moreover, it throws light on the history of timber trade in Cochin which has similar aspects to that of the trade in Travancore. This book on a higher plane deals with ecological transformations in a native state which was the immediate neighbouring state of Travancore and therefore helps in arriving at some generalisations, about forest legislations and patterns of timber trade.

The thesis of K. V. Kunhikrishnan, titled *Forest Policy and Administration in British Malabar, 1800-1947*, focuses on the advancement of colonial forest policy in Malabar and its aftermath. It unfolds the history of forest management in Malabar, then a region under Madras presidency and now part of Kerala state. This helps in locating the forest history of Malabar, from where the notions of scientific forestry and commercialisation of teak timber advanced to other regions in British India and the native state of Travancore. How and under what control mechanisms, colonial forest policy got transmitted to regions nearby can be gauged from the arguments of Kunhikrishnan.

### **Review of Sources**

The sources which I have consulted are mainly primary sources available in the archives. I have visited Central Archives Trivandrum, State Archives Trivandrum, Regional Archives Ernakulam, Archives of Malayala Manorama News Paper, Kottayam, Archives of Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra. These original records collected from various archives shed light on the teak plantations of Travancore, forest policy legislations, the working of the Forest Department of Travancore, rules of timber working, timber agreements between the Raja and various timber contractors, and the volume of timber trade. Records collected from the State Archives Trivandrum include the confidential letters of the conservators of forest addressed to the Resident and the Dewan, correspondence between the Raja of Travancore and the British Resident, revenue files, development files, forests records of the colonial period, PWD files, Cover files, political files etc. The conservators letters throw light on the setting up of the

Forest Department, various timber agreements, methods of timber extraction, name of timber contractors, timber smuggling etc. The proceedings of the Travancore Legislative Council provided the records of debate on the unlawful working of the Forest Department and the debates against the forest policies and also about the deviations affected in the working plan.

The Secret and Political Diaries gathered from the Archives of Maharashtra shed light on the subsidiary treaty signed by Travancore in 1795, several commercial agreements entered into by the Maha Raja of Travancore with the East India Company, Timber Contracts signed in 1802, the detailed description of the agreements, the survey reports of the forest of Malabar Coast by the East India Company, the report of Olephant John which gives a detailed picture of the forest in Travancore and Cochin countries, the prices and the method of obtaining timber from these countries etc. They reveal the definitive instructions to the Raja of Travancore about his dealings with the Commercial as well as the Political Resident of Travancore, and also the company's attempt to thwart the timber expeditions of the Arabs and the Persians from the Malabar Coast to gain the monopoly of timber in the area.

The records of the Royal Proclamations or the Neettu written in *Ola* (palm leaf documents) collected from the Central Archives, Trivandrum gives a clear picture regarding the commercial agreements of Travancore during the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> c and the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> c. Informations about the timber contractors of Travancore during the above said period are derived from these documents. They also provide us knowledge about the channels of timber trade, the working of timber by the contractors, the great demands for Travancore timber from foreign countries, and the mal practices crept in the timber business. The records shed light on the lending of money by the contractors to the government for conducting various traditional festivals and also for other activities. These records speak about the default made by the contractors in terms of paying the contract money to the government and the subsequent steps taken by the government in extracting the default money from such contractors.

'Memoir of the Survey of the Travancore and Cochin States' by Lieutenants Ward and Conner was the earliest source that describes the forest of Travancore. This is written in two volumes. The first volume deals with the survey of Travancore state and the second volume deals with the memoir of Cochin State. This is a significant work that throws light on the geographical and topographical knowledge of Travancore and Cochin states. These surveys were conducted basically for satisfying the commercial, revenue and military needs of the British.

The book deals with every aspect of the Travancore state such as the origin of the name, its extent, boundary, administrative divisions, places in Travancore, its physical features such as climate, rivers, forests, sea coasts, mountains and its people, races, castes etc. It also provides an authentic account of Travancore forests and its working. They also describe the earlier working of timber, by renting each river, which allowed the contractor to cut as much timber as he could transport by one stream.

'Report on the Administration of Travancore Forests' by T F Bourdillion was the first authentic report on the working of Travancore forest and its administration. It was in June 1886 that Bourdillion was asked to prepare a report on the forests of the state, to mark and define the tracts that should be reserved in future, to prepare a report on its resources very particularly the extent of the teak forests. This report was written in two parts. The first part contained three chapters. The first chapter gave a general description of the country, its geography, climate, physical features and population. The second chapter described the forests of the state in detail by giving a river wise description of the forest area and portraying the characteristics of the forests. The population residing in them, system of hill cultivation, fire damages to forests, details of the principal timber trees, etc., were also vividly described in this chapter. In the third chapter he described the past and present management of the forests, conservation measures to be taken, proceedings regarding the felling, delivery and sale of timber, forest offences etc. The second part of the report gave suggestions for the future working of the department. He pointed out the area where improvements were needed and where the present systems should be maintained.

Memoirs of Horsley, N. Parameswaran, Douglas Hamilton, proceedings of the Travancore Legislative Council, Administrative Reports of the Travancore Government, Forest Administration Report of Travancore, Working plans, Budget Estimate Reports of the Travancore state etc. have been elaborately examined. Besides I have visited libraries of Kerala Forest Research Institute Peechi, Centre for Development Studies Trivandrum, Central Library Trivandrum, University Library, Library of Legislative Assembly, Forest Library Vazhuthacadu, Sree Moolam Library Peermade, Panchayath Library at Kuttykkanam, Libraries of Divisional Forest Offices at Malayattoor, Kottayam, Thekkady, and also Panchayath Offices located at Peermade and Kumili. Sketches and maps available in various Divisional Forest Offices are also included in the thesis.

### **Objectives of the Study**

- 1) To understand the environmental and forest history of a native state.
- 2) To analyse the impact of the British forest reforms in the native state and its economic and environmental significance.
- 3) To explore the mechanisms used by the coloniser in documenting the forest resources of the native state for analysing the relationship between power and knowledge.
- 4) To analyse the effects of commodification of forest resources and the subsequent emergence of a timber empire in the woodlands of Travancore.
- 5) To analyse the structure and organisation of timber trade under the natives as well as the Europeans which promptly facilitated a pattern of trade on the lines of the imperial power.

### **Research Questions**

- 1) How and when the forest of Travancore was re-discovered by the Europeans?
- 2) Why did the coloniser abstain from confronting with the native timber merchant?
- 3) At what point of time emerged a system of timber imperialism in Travancore and how was it sustained?

- 4) What were the patterns of trade in Travancore and how was it integrated with the capitalist world economy controlled in many ways by the British capital.
- 5) What was the impact of implantation of the colonial forest policies in Travancore?
- 6) How were the woods reconfigured by the Native state under the reforming zeal of the British?
- 7) What was the ecological impact of the British intervention upon the natural environmental landscape of Travancore?
- 8) Whether the timber merchants succeeded in establishing a sphere of colonial capitalism in Travancore?

### **Hypothesis**

The eighteenth century witnessed a phenomenal growth in the timber trade of Travancore which was managed by native merchants who were manipulative in their methods to procure timber for both the external and the internal markets. The emergence of these timber merchants and their influence at the court of the native ruler signalled the powerful presence of a new trading class in Travancore. On a simultaneous plane, the timber resources of the native state were effectively documented by the British under the political economy created by them in the aftermath of the signing of the subsidiary treaty. It created a particular political ecology in which the newly arrived European industrial capitalists found an opportunity to corner the most valuable trees in Travancore through both the indigenous as well as the western channels of trade. The emergence of the timber economy in the colonial setup virtually turned the forests of Travancore into sites which catered to the needs of the British Empire with an uninterrupted supply of commercially valuable trees. The native state fascinated by the forestry management systems of the British eventually lost vast areas of extensive forests, and also incurred heavy loss of revenue as a result of the decrease in the cubic feet price of timber owing to the lobbying done in the state for the benefit of the European timber buyers and sellers. Timber trade imperialism was the end result of

the experiments in scientific forestry that was mooted in the princely state of Travancore ever since the subsidiary treaty was signed with the British in 1795.

### **Methodology**

The methodology followed in the thesis is descriptive, analytical and interdisciplinary designed to uncover the intricacies involved in analysing the history of forest working in Travancore under the rubric of environmental history. Environmental history is not seen here as the history of deforestation and bio diversity loss, but as one which is inextricably linked with the deeper ramifications of the political history of the native state. In the whole thesis a total historical perspective is attempted through integration of political, forest (broadly environmental history), technological and economic history. Primarily following a qualitative methodology, the thesis adopts a quantitative method to place on record the trends in the timber trade of Travancore through statistical method. Prosopography, i.e., the study of history through biographies is also used to study the life and career of Mathu Tharakan, a timber baron during the period of East India Company. Oral history method is used to bring more light on the life and time of the timber magnate, Angoor Rowther through an unstructured interview method.

### **Theoretical Framework**

England with the capital accumulated after the industrial revolution and sophisticated technologies controlled international market by the latter half of the eighteenth century. This capital accumulation helped the British Empire in reaching out to new spaces and further explorations. She became one of the major economic centres of the capital world economy by this time. India was attracted by this 'world economy' for her rich natural resources. Coming to the native state of Travancore, her forest resources especially the sylvan assets became a major centre of attraction.

The history of Timber trade in Travancore explicates the large scale influx of western capital into the native state. This capital accumulation resulted in the opening of large scale plantations of tea, coffee and of sylvan resources, mainly

teak. The timber plantations led to the emergence of big timber barons both native and foreign. They with the huge capital at hands controlled the entire trading mechanisms of the native state resulting in the development of a phase of timber imperialism. During this phase Travancore got inextricably connected with international timber trade. There was a resource flow from the native state to England creating a core- periphery relationship, wherein Travancore acted as the periphery and England as core. Thus the present study can be brought under the World Systems theory of Wallerstein, which explains the emergence of a world economy acting as the core of international trade with huge capital and technologies at hand subordinating those nations weak in technology and with less capital but rich in resources. Forest enactments in Travancore based on Indian and global contexts, a centralised but subordinated native government, high timber demand in world market, opening of timber plantations due to high timber demands, all these together acted as a commercial system that controlled and dominated the global timber market.

### **Arguments**

- 1) The native ecological world was systematically brought under the order of ecological imperialism.
- 2) Discovered through the gaze of the colonial power, the native forests were brought under the global timber market economy controlled and managed by European capital and industries.
- 3) The system of Timber Empire was thoroughly organised and completely subverted to serve the colonial empire.
- 4) Agencies of scientific forestry got transformed into agencies of commercial forestry in the wake of excessive demand for timber.
- 5) The agencies of scientific forestry such as working plans, Forest Department, Forest Schools, Forest Exhibitions, and Forest Utilization Branch, became sites of state authority and power.
- 6) The lucrative trade practices of the native merchants were subjected to the interests of the imperial timber trade networks and strategies.

- 7) A sphere of timber merchant capitalism emerged in Travancore, where the capital of the native merchants together with the capital of European companies made large scale interventions in the field resulting in the rapid deforestation through excessive timber felling.

### **Chapter Format**

The thesis consists of five chapters besides an introduction and a conclusion. The first chapter gives an elaborate description of Travancore forests based on the different memoirs of various authors. It reveals how the imperial gaze penetrated into the nook and corner of the forests of a native state and the wonderful documentation they made. The diverse character and enormous wealth of our forest is explicitly portrayed. It also explains the bio diversity of the forests, different species of flora and fauna that existed in Travancore forests.

. The focus of the second chapter is on the timber trees and opening of timber plantations in Travancore. The characteristic features of major timber trees of Travancore are provided here. The utility of these timbers, their commercial viability, the area and height or elevations at which they grow are vividly portrayed. Area wise description of trees is also given to have an understanding about the tree growth in different areas. After giving a detailed description of the timber trees of Travancore the chapter further proceeds to the timber plantations with main focus on teak plantations. The introduction of plantations, its area wise description, policy legislations etc., are elaborated. How timber plantations provide a path to commercial forestry is also explained in this chapter.

Policy legislations are necessary for better management of plantations and forests as a whole. This led to the introduction of forest policy in Travancore on colonial lines. The Colonial forest policy along with its management tools are described in the third chapter. These policies were introduced in the name of scientific forestry for the better 'conservation' of our forests. Forest Department, Working Plans, Forest Schools, Forest Exhibitions, Forest Libraries, Forest Utilisation Branch which are all part of scientific forestry were introduced for better management of forests. But, if a dissected study is conducted, each of these parts makes it clear that all these are meant for conserving and managing the

forests for the regular supply of timber for commercial use. So 'conservation' means conserving the forests for the use of the Empire. The colonial forest policies in Travancore were tuned with the timber demands of the time. The enormous timber trade carried on in Travancore is explained in the next two chapters. The timber trade in Travancore is divided into two phases.

Huge demand for timber for continental wars and ship building and how the native forests were utilised for this purpose is explained in the fourth chapter. Mr. Olephants report shows the search for fine timbers for ship building in the Malabar Coast in which he stated that greater quantity of fine timbers could be procured from Travancore than from Cochin. Pursuant to this, we can see the subsequent timber agreements entered into with the Raja of Travancore by the East India Company. Gradually the British put an end of the timber trade of Travancore with all other countries and they emerged as the only timber business enterprise in Travancore. They with the help of powerful timber merchants like Mathu Tharakan began to develop a timber empire in the native state which reached its zenith in the second phase.

The fifth chapter vividly describes the second phase of timber trade where the main demand for timber was for the expansion of railways and to cater the needs of the two world wars. This phase also witnessed the emergence of a large number of major and minor timber traders in Travancore. It explains the method of timber working, the agreements entered into with different contractors, timber smuggling with the knowledge of forest officials, channels of trade, and also how the timber merchants became a powerful lobby in Travancore. The chapter also explains how they influenced the policy making of the government.

### **Relevance of the Study**

- 1) The thesis attempts a study on the environmental history of Travancore by integrating its political, economic, and forest history. No study had been done on Travancore state in this perspective.

- 2) It is important to study the timber trade history of the native state in order to understand the capitalistic structure that had crept into the state as part of colonialism and imperialism.
- 3) Understanding of the capitalistic structure helps us to analyse the role of political or administrative exigencies in the ecological transformation of a native state.
- 4) The shortcomings of the development programme of the modern state can be better understood through the scientific rationalities used by the British to serve their imperial interests.