

## **Ravi Varma (1848-1906): Notes**

After Chawla, 2010 (a comprehensive monographic study); Venniyoor, 1981 (full biography & monograph); Manoharam, 2002 (a guide to most collections with an essay); Neumayer & Schelberger, 2003; Neumayer & Schelberger, 2005 (a careful chronology with lists of paintings from each year; and lists of what remained of the Varma brothers' art library); Pal, 2009 (a complete and recent biography); Guha-Thakurta, 1993; and my own notes on works and some buildings seen in situ at Vadodhara (Baroda), New Delhi, Mumbai (Bombay), Chennai (Madras) and Thiruvananthapuram (Trivandrum) in 1991 and 2009. Unfortunately I lacked opportunity to visit Mysore and Hyderabad.

### **Precursor discourses domestic**

Visual sources:

Tanjore popular painting.

Mural painting in Trivandrum and other South Indian palaces.

Literary sources:

Major Edward Moor, FRS, *The Hindu Pantheon*, 1810, (illustrated) re-published with revisions by Rev. W. O. Simpson in 1864, and 1968.

Numerous Sanskrit, Malayalam, and *Kathakali* theatre written and oral literary sources.

### **Art worlds and patronage**

Princely and noble patrons (a full list of which would run to several hundreds of names):

Ayilyam Thirunal, Maharaja of Travancore 1860-1880

Raja Ramachandra Tondaiman of Pudukottai, 1879

Vishakhram Thirunal, Maharaja of Travancore 1880-1885

Srimoolan Thirunal, Maharaja of Travancore 1885 until Varma's death in 1906

Maharaja Sayajirao III of Baroda, 1881, 1888

Maharajah of Mysore, Sri Chamarajendra Wadiyar X, 1885-6,

Maharajah of Mysore, Sri Krishnaraja Wadiyar IV, 1904,1906

Maharana Fateh Singh of Udaipur, 1901

Nizam of Hyderabad, Mahbub Ali Khab Asaf Jah VI, 1901-2

Indian officials

Sir T. Madhava Rao [Row], Dewan of Travancore to 1872, Dewan of Baroda 1875-1891

Sir Sessaya Sastri, Dewan of Travancore, 1872-1877, Dewan Regent of Pudukottai 1877-

..By constantly looking at your paintings, I have started admiring the pretty faces of your women. (Sastri asked for copies of *Krishna with Gopis*, *Nair lady inside a mosquito net*. Pal, 2009, 95).

Rai Pannalal Mehta, 1901

British Governors and other British officials:

Lord Napier, Governor-General of Madras 1867-1872

Duke of Buckingham and Chandos, Governor-General of Madras, 1880

Sir Arthur Havelock, Governor-General of Madras, 1903

Lord Ampthill, Governor-General of Madras, 1905

H, B. Grigg, British Resident of Travancore, circa 1885

Sir George Moore, president of Municipal Council of Madras, 1902

Many Indian judges, lawyers, merchants and their wives:

Unnamed female portraits:

Varanasi singers, Lucknow dancers, Parsi theatre actresses, Marathi women singers, Hyderabad prostitute model for *At the bath* 1901, Parsi lady in 1898-9, Indian classical singer Anjanibai Malpekar model for *Mohini* 1902-3, female relative of print workshop foreman called Rajibai, who also modelled for Frank Brooks.

### Working practice

Use of Roberson's tube colours from London, also available from local Indian account holders such as art schools and officials and retail stores.

List of works completed mid-September to mid-December 1902, about eighty days, or on average about one full size whole portrait every twenty days:

life size whole length portraits:

Sir George Moore (1)

Sir Arthur Havelock (1)

Half-length portraits:

Justice Sir Bashyam Iyenagar (0.5)

Justice Subramaniam Iyer (0.5)

Lord Govind Das (0.5)

Small portraits:

Mrs Naidu (0.25)

Hon Mrs Wilkinson (0.25)

(given in Chawla, 2010, 316)

### Precursor discourses foreign

Stylistic Issues:

Portraits until 1880

Works of beautiful women straddled portraits and social scenes (Pal-111)

Picked moments of high emotion. Mitter: past history imagined as present melodrama.

He combined the techniques of European salon art and used them to depict recognizably Indian scenarios and characters. It was the perfect narrative language of the times. (Pal-111)

The agenda of the nationalist project was to establish a new Indian identity that acknowledged its past proudly but also was in step with the modern, liberal philosophies of the West. (Pal-112)

C. Raja Raja Varma painted landscapes via a Gombrich-like use of a simplified 'schema' and its constant correction [which] underlies the capturing of a successful likeness in a European naturalist portrait, or the veracity of a landscape painting. (Mitter, foreword to Neumayer & Schelburger, 2005, ix)

C. Raja Raja Varma, Diary, July 1901

A mill owner... wants his whole length portrait to be painted. He is an old man and readily agreed to our terms. We shall begin the work soon. His son is an intelligent young man and is an amateur photographer. We mean first to take a photo of the old gentleman in the position in which we intend to paint him. (Neumann & Schelburger, 2005, x, cited by Mitter)

In the widening network of communication between socially disparate gentlemen artists and their patrons, Ravi Varma with his popular pictures bridged the gap between the scientific study of ancient Indian history and literature, and a nascent Hindu nationalism. The pictures were accepted on account of their high idealism as the anglicized middle class understood it, and the veneer of Indian-ness was considered indigenous enough to be taken as a true national model. (Neumann & Schelburger, 2005, xvi)

#### The Modern

..we confront an artistic career that epitomised the ‘modern’ in its own historical context. It marked the point at which the changing world of court painting in the South merged with new patterns of professionalism and colonial success in colonial India. (Guha-Thakurta, 1993, 45)

Two main themes in artist’s life and work repeated in the biographies:

1. artist’s struggle to teach himself the techniques of European oil painting whilst denied any help.
2. his traditional Hindu upbringing, his religious and spiritual bent of mind, his education in Sanskrit and Malayalam classics and *Kathakali* literature, and his own experimentations with composing Sanskrit and Malayalam verse. (Guha-Thakurta, 1993, 46)

Cites Kapur 1989:

Here is not only the struggle of the artist to gain a technique, but the struggle of a native to gain the source of the master’s superior knowledge, and the struggle of the prodigy to steal the fire for his own people..For what is at stake is not only native talent but national destiny.

(Guha-Thakurta quoting Kapur 1989, 1993, 46)

Side by side with portrait painting Ravi Varma branched out into genre studies of figures. Although based on live models (often photographs of models), these female figures in his paintings were consciously cast as regional, national and feminine ideals.

Aristocratic homes, dress, and demeanour, and the very attributes of a leisured way of life became critical in defining a feminine image, both genteel and sensual, and in differentiating it from those of common peasant women.....with their openly exposed bodies, (Guha-Thakurta, 2003, 48)

*Galaxy of Musicians*, 1889

What first arrests the eye, here, are the rich colours, plushness and intricacy of the varieties of costume and ornaments. Then the eye moves to the glowing faces, to the play of inward-looking interlocking glances of the group of women, that seal them off from the spectator’s gaze and contain them within an imagined rarefied space of the ‘nation’. (Guha-Thakurta, 1993, 51)

Sources for subjects of *Puranic* depictions

- 1 direct reading of Sanskrit and Malayalam classics.
- 2 Malayalam and English translations from Sanskrit.
- 3 Drawings of upper class men and ladies for figural types, including Ravi Varma’s own family.
  - Nude drawings done later in life from actresses and probably some prostitutes.
- 4 European neo-classical imagery for forms and compositional formats – semi-nudes, dramatically poised figures like *Judith*, sometimes through studio or official museum copies in princely collections, often through etchings and lithographs.

- 5 Theatrical scenography seen largely in Bombay.
- 6 Photographs.
- 7 Illustrated European art magazines and illustrated news magazines.

#### Depictions in two related themes

- 1 Classical *nayikas* and romantic pairs
- 2 Spectacular scenes with dramatic episodes. (Guha-Thakurta, 1993, 51-52)

In both these paintings [*Shakuntala*, 1898; *Hamsa-Damyanti*, 1899], the male lover, though absent from the pictorial frame, forms a pivotal point of reference in the narrative. His presence and gaze transfixes these feminine images, rendering them into ‘desirable’ ideals, even as a set of other signs and codes –like the presence of the swan in the Damayanti painting – transports these figures from their immediate environs to the world of the epics and the ranks of a national mythological pageantry. (Guha-Thakurta, 1993, 53)

Three different phases of Indian nationalism in art: Ravi Varma; Abanindranath Tagore; Nandalal Bose

The pertinent question is not who was more nationalistic or the true nationalist, but what concepts of nationalism they had and how they related to changes in nationalist politics, and by extension, to the issue of colonialism.  
(Sivakumar, 2003, 69)

..Ravi Varma’s choice of the medium of oil painting is comparable to the adoption of English as a language of literary expression: these being the most effective instruments to render visible the reality of a binary vision, or to articulate the simultaneous belonging to the twin worlds and times that colonialism brought into focus. The combined impact of ‘illusionism’ in painting and ‘realism’ in literature heralding easel painting and the new literary forms of the novella and the short story, left the traditional artist/narrator in a state of limbo  
(Sheikh, 1993, 80)

In effect what Ravi Varma attempted was a retrospective view of a whole tradition of Indian, especially Hindu, culture. He could not have observed its contours from the inside: European naturalism gave him an external vantage –point.  
..That he was eulogised in his own life time speaks of a lacunae, even of unfulfilled desire, that his audience may have felt in the identification of their own needs.  
(Sheikh, 1993, 83)

### **antecedence of endogenous and exogenous, nested endogeny Singularity or plurality of styles**

#### **Art worlds**

Art worlds: art schools and salons

#### **Training for artists teachers**

Ramaswamy Naidoo: water colours

Ramaswamy Naicker of Madurai: oil colours

Arumugham Pillai, who as Naicker’s assistant may clandestinely have helped Ravi Varma.

Theodore Jensen: British portraitist of Danish origin working in London, active in India circa 1868 whose oil painting technique Ravi Varma is said to have been allowed to observe for about a month.

European book illustrations and prints (extensively listed in Neumayer & Schelburger, 2005)

### Contemporary discourses with period of artist's activity

After 1855 British annexation of Thanjavur (Tanjore) meant painters now without patronage dispersed, Tanjore painting brought to, and rudiments taught in, Travancore by Alangiri Naidu.

1871 address of Lord Napier, Governor of Madras to Native Christian Literary Society in Madras, praised possibilities of Indian Mythology as subject matter for painting:

...how vast a field is opened for the Indian Pencil. The form of Indra, with his attendant breezes hovering over the famished plains of Hindustan, might surely more than rival the triumphant flight of the Indian Aurora with her galaxy of Hours...All that is needed is to promulgate their beauty and complete their fame in their purer and nobler passages and with the powers of European Art, they should engage the service of the national pencil as they have fastened on the national memory and animated the national voice.

(cited Pal-2009, 90; full text in Neumayer & Schelburger, 2005, 298, citing Pillai, 1928.)

1878 views on art of Sir Seshayya Sastri:

*Lady with flower* is too large for my drawing room. But I would like to have a look at it. You doubt whether I would like to have *Harischandra and Taramati*,. It is true, I do not like to keep paintings depicting tragic scenes in my house. I am not interested in *Bombay Singers* which is only a social scene. By constantly looking at your paintings, I have started admiring the pretty faces of your women. So I would like to have paintings of *Krishna with Gopis*, *Coronation of Rama* and *Sita's Swayambara*. I would like to have a copy of *Nair Lady inside the mosquito net* which you had presented to the Prince of Wales. (Neumayer & Schelburger, 2005, 299-300).

1880s-1890s Impact of theatrical sense

Theatres with proscenium stages with interchangeable sceneries had existed in Bombay since the beginning of the nineteenth century, and the Varma brothers frequented the English as well as the Parsi theatres there [and elsewhere heard performance of Shakespeare plays in Hindi or *Hamlet* in Urdu]. The mythological imaginations of Ravi Varma follow closely the dramatic possibilities of that stage. There is not a single mythological painting by Ravi Varma which could not be staged as *tableaux vivants* on such a stage; or the other way round: Ravi Varma's mythological dramatization never grew above the possibilities of the provincial European theatre. His dramatization of mythological themes is at times so close to scenes from European theatre that he captioned oleographs with verses from the European classics. (Neumayer & Schelburger, 2005, 24)

1891 Essays by Balendranath Tagore in family journal *Sadbana* (1891-92)

...exemplify the attempts of this new cultural elite to assert through Ravi Varma's work, certain weighted notions of 'modernity' and 'Indianness' in art, and through these, one dominant code of aesthetic sensibility. They also indicate a move to define around the artist's paintings a new middle-class art culture, by drawing Ravi Varma out of the narrow circuit of wealthy patronage, and offering prints of his work for appraisal by the educated literati.

...a writer like Balendranath raised a number of crucial questions – regarding how far literary moods and metaphors could be correctly transposed on to paintings, or how far

the 'Western' academic style could be compatible with 'Indian' themes. (Guha-Thakurta, 1993, 54)

1894 Balendranath Tagore in *Chitra o Kavya* published in Calcutta.

We need, today a kind of artistic talent that, with the help of the brush, can give form and life to (this) ancient mythic imagination. In language, it is conveyed partly through description, partly through suggestion, partly through the author's own style, leaving the whole sense to be freely construed in the mind of the reader. This cluster of beautiful ideas and emotions – the part which is stated, and the parts implied but left unstated – have to be metamorphosized into line and form. This the real task before the (country's) new artists (translated and cited by Guha-Thakurta, 1992, 130)

1903 Catalogue of *The Industrial Arts Exhibition*, Calcutta

...good colouring but there is something wrong with the drawing of head and shoulders ...All these were very much admired by the Indian visitors but to European observers they were all a little out of perspective and some of the colour seemed slightly over-vivid and out of balance, so that the general effect was not particularly pleasing (cited by Neumayer & Schelburger, 2005, 21)

1904 E.B. Havell, 'Some notes on Indian Pictorial Art', *The Studio*, accused Varma of a 'painful lack of the poetic faculty'. (cited Pal, 112)

1906 October 4, *The Hindu* obituary of Ravi Varma

[His] painting has exerted a unique influence on the minds of our countrymen. His *Puranic* representations, have an extraordinary vogue at present and it will not be long before this will diminish to any extent (cited Chawla, 2010, 295)

1906 October 10, *The Hindu*, memorial text by 'Arlyne':

His shall be the glory of having regenerated the Hindu religion in India. His shall be the pride of having diffused a taste in the arts through the length and breath (sic) of 'the land of Bharata'. To him shall belong the honour of having sown the seeds of an aesthetic faculty even in lay unappreciative minds. His shall be the rare fortune of having lived a thousand lives in one, for he still lives and shall ever live in his pictures. (cited by Chawla, 2010, 298)

1907 January, Ramananda Chatterje in *The Modern Review*, Varma was a painter,

Who helped in the work of nation-building, at least as far as Hindu India is concerned...with the exception of his style everything else in his pictures is Indian. But his foreign style, as far as we have been able to observe, does not detract from the usefulness of his paintings as sources of enjoyment and instruction or as an influence that makes for nationality (cited Chawla, 2010 298)

1907 August, Ananda Coomaraswamy, in *The Modern Review*:

...his pictures are such as any European student could paint after perusal of the necessary literature and a superficial study of Indian life. (cited Chawla, 2010, 302)

It has, indeed, been his reward for choosing Indian subjects, that he has thus become a true nationalizing influence to a certain degree; but had he been also a true artist with the gift of great imagination, his influence must have been tenfold greater and deeper. He is the landmark of a great opportunity, not wholly missed, but ill availed of. Theatrical conceptions, want of imagination, and a lack of Indian feeling in the treatment of sacred and epic Indian subjects, are Ravi Varma's faults. No offence can be greater than the treatment of serious or epic subjects without dignity... (cited by Pal-2009, 96)

### Use of other art as exemplary for own

Pre-1868 works in Tanjore manner

Copy of painting of *Judith*, 1886, in Sri Chitra Gallery, Thiruvananthapuram

Collection of photographs, nude European models in classical poses, friends, their daughters, courtesans, prostitutes.

### Successor discourses, 'followers' of

brother C. Raja Raja Varma or Raja Varma (1860-1904, sister Mangala Bai Thampuratti (1866-1954); children: Kerala Varma, (b. 1876 in Mavelikara, disgraced, went missing 1912); son Rama Varma (b.1880 in Mavelikara, studied Sir J.J. School of Arts, Bombay, married to Srimathi Gowri Kunjamma, sister of Dewan PGN Unnithan); elder daughter, Ayilyam Nal Mahaprabha Thampuratti.

### Social and Historical Issues

1855 Slavery abolished in Travancore

1859 Lower caste women allowed to cover their breasts in presence of higher castes in temples.

1869 Reminder notice that this was allowed issued.

1889 publication of first modern Malayalam novel by O. Chandumenon, *Indulekha*, written in vernacular elite Malayalam, its subject was Nair society and issues concerning matriliney which it supported. It cites, *inter alia*, ideas of T.H. Huxley, Charles Darwin, and early debates of the Indian National Congress.

1891 Malabar Marriage Commission appointed of which Chandumenon was a member.

1896 marriage became legal institution in Kerala.

In aristocratic Kerala society there was a caste distinction between Nambuthiris who were Brahmins, and others. Only the oldest Nambuthiri male could marry with a Nambuthiri and inheritance was patrilineal. For other Nambuthiri males contractual polygamous relations were possible with Nairs, a Sudra upper caste, for whom marriage was usually uxorilocal as members of a *taravad*, a joint family kin group which held property in common but inherited through a system of matriliney, or *Marumakkathayam*, 'descent through one's sister's children' (Devasia in Chandumenon, 2005, 228).

The senior male role was taken by the *tampuram*, which in Ravi Varma's case was the maternal uncle Raja Raja Varma (1812-1884), a painter and sculptor of ivory.

Inheritance practices in the Nair community came under pressure principally from three groups: colonial authorities (and along with them a few very westernized Nairs), younger sons within the *taravad* – the *anantharavans*, and Nair men who were resentful of Nambuthiri rights over Nair women. Colonial authorities were disturbed by the 'unnatural' matrilineal form of inheritance and the relatively free arrangements that governed sexual relationships. However, they were also concerned that the joint ownership and indivisibility of *taravad* property would hinder the development of a money economy and discourage qualities of initiative and self-interest and habits of thrift and saving that were necessary for capitalist accumulation and growth of market economies. (Devasia in Chandumenon, 2005, 230)

The Nair system of sexual relations was a scandal, for colonial as well as for 'Hindu' nationalism that was in the making. (Devasia in Chandumenon, 2005, 232)

### Colonial domination

In constructing a system of domination the British did not adopt the method of cultural displacement by destruction as in the case of the colonial depredations in Africa and South

America. Instead they preferred persuasion if possible and coercion only if necessary. The colonial cultural policy and practice in India adopted both expropriation and appropriation of the indigenous. The colonial agenda was, therefore, janus-faced; retrieving and commending the past achievements of Indian civilization on the one hand, as the Orientalists and the archaeologists did, and on the other, taking steps to subject the 'natives' to an ideological-cultural system, privileging the Western. (Panikkar, 2007, 10)

Unlike in the African and Latin American countries, colonialism did not destroy indigenous culture in India: it only sought to hegemonize through a controlled and guided process of acculturation. The ideological apparatuses of the state played a crucial role in this process by actively intervening to reorder the intellectual and cultural domain of the 'natives'. (Panikkar, 2007 153), to create a 'dependency complex' or 'sense of provinciality' (Mannoni and Shils in Panikkar, 2007, 154)...by locating the cultural ideal in the achievements of Western society (Panikkar, 2007, 153)

[The intelligentsia's] engagement with the tradition, however, was not revivalist, but creative and critical which led to a hybridity of sorts, combining often traditional sanction for argument and legitimacy with notions of political justice and political advantage, As a result the modernity they advocated was based on a dual critical engagement with traditional cultural practices, on the one hand, and the western, on the other. Therein was posited the possibility of an alternative modernity, which the Indian intelligentsia tried to construct, through a selective appropriation and expropriation of the traditional and the Western'. (Panikkar, 2007, 12)

[for the modern Indian elite culture] The contemporary cultural situation arose not out of a synthesis of traditional and colonial culture, but out of a struggle against both which was initiated and elaborated by the intellectuals (Panikkar, 2007, 48)

The lack of integration between political and cultural struggles had important implications. When the anti-colonial movement gained strength and popularity after 1919, cultural struggles understandably lost much of their potency. For they could have maintained their vitality only by drawing strength from the political movement. In the absence of such a link, as the political movement became increasingly popular, the cultural struggle became weaker and weaker Secondly, at a time when the political movement was the dominant force. A transformation of backward elements of culture was possible only through an integration with it. As this did not happen, backwardness in culture not only continued to exercise its influence over the popular mind, it also succeeded in dominating it. (Panikkar, 2007, 53)

[Talking of two Malayalam novels by Mukundam] In the minds of many, colonialism created a false consciousness, which led to the romanticization of the colonial as superior and worthy of emulation. (Panikkar, 2007, 148).

Naturally, the contradictions, ambiguities, and uncertainties of the middle class in social and cultural life, arising out of the hegemonizing colonial culture and the contending traditional cultures, set the context in which literary expression found expression in the nineteenth century. The cultural perspective of the Indian middle class was neither entirely hegemonized by the colonial nor confined within the traditional, but was posited as a dialogue between the two. They looked beyond the colonial and the traditional – neither received their unqualified approval. The dialogical possibilities of the novel as a literary genre created the space for incorporating this cultural ambience. (Panikkar, 2007, 156)

[In the Malayalam novel *Indulekha*] Despite the influence of English education, Madhavan and Undulekha [the main protagonists] are not colonial cultural stereotypes. Their personalities are a complex admixture of the colonial and the indigenous, reflecting cultural introspection that embodied the intelligentsia's alienation from the struggle against colonial culture. They are neither completely hegemonized by the colonial, nor fully distanced from the traditional. Thus their identity is rooted in a new cultural taste, anchored in both the Western and the indigenous, without fully identifying with or rejecting either of them. In the field of politics as well, this duality is evident: the acceptance of British rule on the one hand, and the transition to national consciousness on the other. Capturing this historical process is what makes *Indulekha* a classic. (Panikkar, 2007, 166)

1897 Ravi Varma's printing of image of Tilak may show intervention in politics

The ostensible lack of political commitment in the diary (of C. Raja Raja Varma) is a sign of the wariness with which the Varma brothers had to present their political opinions in front of their socially heterogeneous clientele, which included members of the higher echelons of the British administration as well as the native feudal aristocracy, and also members of the national bourgeoisie. (Neumayer & Schelburger, 2005, 19)

### **Social milieu**

Predecessors of Ravi Varma were closely inter-married with the Travancore royal house, and a local militia victory over a Dutch attack in 1739 had earned Kilimanoor local autonomy in 1753.

The Varma brothers [Ravi Varma and C.Raja Raja Varma] were wanderers between worlds. They participated in the culture of the highly anglicized bourgeoisie of Bombay, as well as the feudal aristocratic life of princes. They became friendly with American actors, sea captains, Parsi capitalists, and nautch-girls at feudal courts. That they were open to learning from all of them becomes clear from the diary. (Neumann & Schelburger, 2005, 17)

Ravi Varma wished to travel overseas but was un-willing to break the Brahmin-imposed taboo of excommunication if he as a member of the warrior caste crossed the 'black waters'. Others, such as Maharaja Sayajirao III of Baroda and his second wife Maharani Chimnabai II, would break the taboo and travelled extensively in Europe.

The social complexities of Kerala caste divisions are beyond [my] current non-Indian imagination. For a schema see Padmanabha Menon, [1924] 1984, vol.3, p. 17-26.

## Ravi Varma (1848-1906) Chronology

### Life stages, citations from artist and peers about styles and works in sequence

- 1848 April 29 born at Kilimanoor (the land of parrot and deer), Travancore. Full name Ravi Varma Coil Thampuram (Thampuram means 'Prince' in Malayalam).  
Father was Ezhumavail Neelakanthan Bhattatiripad, Namboodiri Brahmin & Sanskrit scholar, mother Uma Ambabai Thampuratti (Thampuratti means 'Princess' in Malayalam) (d.1886, a Nair of kshatriya caste, poet, and writer whose Tulu operatic work *Parvati Swayamvaram* was published by Raja Ravi Varma after her death). Siblings were brother C. Goda Varma (1854-1904, a musician), Ravi Varma's brother was C. Raja Raja Varma or Raja Varma (1860-1905) & sister Mangala Bai Thampuratti (1866?-1953, works by her and Raja Raja Varma are in Sri Chitra Gallery, Thiruvananthapuram).  
In this year T Madhava Rao came to Travancore as a tutor to the princes on nomination of the British Resident.
- 1853 aged five years, Ravi Varma said to have filled walls of Kilimanoor Palace with drawings of animals and everyday life. Uncle Raja Raja Varma his first teacher, following on from Travancore portrait painter Alangiri Naidu (works by whom exist in Old Palace Museum, Trivandrum, of 1845 on ivory, as well as a portrait of 1839.
- 1855 British annexation of Mathura Court of Travancore due to lapse in lineage. Abolition of slavery in Travancore.
- 1857 Travancore state on British side during the Great Indian Uprising (like Hyderabad, Kashmir, Mysore) and its Raja awarded a nineteen-gun salute in 1858.
- 1857 Sir T. Madhava Rao (b. 1828 in Madras, KCOSI 1866) became Dewan or Chief Minister of Travancore. (See Wikipedia.com for a detailed biography)  
Rioting of lower castes occurs over obligation to uncover chests in temples in presence of higher castes; protest stems from Christian mission in southern Travancore in 1828 (Neumayer & Schelberger, 2005).
- 1859 obligation on lower castes to bare breasts in temples before higher castes removed.  
Circulation of a notice that bosoms should not be bared in temples was repeated in 1869. (Neumayer & Schelberger, 2005).
- 1860 future patron, Ayilyam Thirunal, became Maharaja of Travancore.
- 1861 Ravi Varma was presented to Maharajah, to whom offered three small paintings.  
Maharajah ordained that he study painting.
- 1862 Ravi Varma, aged fourteen, said to have gleaned knowledge of water colour painting from Ramaswamy Naidoo in Travancore Palace at Thiruvananthapuram (short name is Trivandrum) to which location he moved. Also had access to Maharajah's library. Said to have gleaned knowledge of oil painting from Ramaswamy Naicker of Madurai then working in Thiruvananthapuram via agency of his assistant Arumugham Pillai. Reports of meeting indicated hostility resulted between Naicker and Ravi Varma. Naicker was also politically linked to Maharajah's rival, his brother and heir, Vishakham Thirunal.
- 1862 Ayilyam Thirunal married his second wife, Nagercoil Ammachi.
- 1866 Ravi Varma, at eighteen years married late to Pururuttathi Nal Bhageerathi Amma Thampuram (Kochu Pangi) (name also romanized as Poorooruttati Naal Mahabrabha Thapuratty) of Mavelikara, who may then have been twelve years' old. She was the younger sister of Maharani Lakshmi Bai of Travancore royal family. Marriage allowed Ravi Varma to have a studio at the royal palace. Ravi Rama was to have the following children with her, who under matrilineage belong to the House of Mavelikara:  
eldest daughter: Ayilyam Nal Mahaprabha Thampuratti [1871/2-1919, also a painter, mother of Sethu Lakshmi Bai (1895-1985) senior Rani and later Regent of Travancore (1924-31)]; son Kerala Varma, (b. 1875 in Mavelikara, not mentioned after 1890, disgraced because he 'turned profligate'; went missing in 1912); second daughter, Thiruvadira Nal Kochukunji Thampuratti, (grandmother of Chithira Thirunal Balarama Varma, Maharajah

- of Travancore); son Rama Varma [(1880-1967) studied Sir J.J. School of Arts, Bombay, married to Srimathi Gowri Kunjamma, sister of Dewan PGN Unnithan];
- 1867 Kerala Varma Valiya Koil Thampuram, Malayalam litterateur and educationalist, brought first oil colours from Madras for Ravi Varma.
- 1868 may have gleaned knowledge of oil colours from Theodore Jensen, British portraitist of Danish descent who had exhibited in London and whom Ravi Varma was allowed to watch for about a month as he painted in Travancore Palace. Jensen had been provided with an introductory letter to Maharaja by the Viceroy, Sir John Lawrence, and painted a portrait of *Ayilyam Thirunal and his wife*, like Ravi Varma. But Varma's portrait was informally judged superior.
- 1869 Sir T. Madhava Rao sends a circular against the baring of the upper body by Nair ladies during worship (Neumayer & Schelburger, 2005, 296 for text)
- 1870 Ravi Varma decided to become a professional artist during pilgrimage to Mookambika Temple, South Kannara District, Mysore, which he undertook with two relatives. Spent forty-one days performing *bhajans* (devotional songs) to seek blessing of Sarasvati, Goddess of Learning.  
On return route did his first *Family portrait of Kizhake Palat Krishnan Menon*, sub-judge of Calcutta court, and family, possibly from photograph.  
Also received highest honour from Maharaja of Travancore, a royal jeweled bangle, the Vira Sringhala.  
Ravi Varma received honorarium of Rs 50 per month as a palace artist.  
Around now his sister Mangalabbai Thapuratty was taught painting by her uncle Raja Raja Varma.
- 1871 Lord Napier's address in Madras (for extract see above in Notes).
- 1872 February, Madhava Rao, who had threatened to retire the previous year due to lack of use of his services, possibly because of the political influence of Maharajah's wife, was dismissed as Dewan but given a large retirement pension. There were continuing frictions between Maharaja Ayilyam Thirunal and his younger brother Vishakam Thirunal, only to be resolved on latter's accession to the throne in 1880. The poet and brother-in-law of Ravi Varma, Kerala Varma Valiya Coil Thampuram, was declared a traitor and put under house arrest until 1879-80. Ravi Varma was expelled from court and built a studio in Mannoor Madham in Mavelikara. Varma did many paintings of Hindu myths. Kerala Varma wrote *Mayurasandesam* (The Peacock Messenger) on same theme as poem by Kalidasa, about an expelled yaksha begging for a cloud to carry a message to his beloved.
- 1873 Ravi Varma said to have won a Medal and Certificate of Merit at the Vienna World Exposition but there is no evidence for this. Ramaswamy Naicker did send a painting called *A lady playing an Indian lute*, and a painting on ivory.
- This year Sir T. Madhava Rao became Dewan of Indore.
- 1873 Ayilam Thirunal gave Ravi Varma a letter to the Dewan of Madras, K. Rangunath. Ravi Varma won a Gold Medal at the Madras Fine Arts Exhibition (as also in 1874, 1876, 1904) for *Nair lady adorning her hair with garland of jasmine*. Met and congratulated by Governor Hobart. Also showed *Height and Depth* a woman giving alms to a beggar. Ravi Varma was invited to return to the Travancore court, unusually being accompanied by his wife.
- 1874 Varma won a Gold Medal at Madras Fine Arts Exhibition, exhibited *Tusker sporting with his Mate in a sheet of water*, *A Tamil lady playing a sarabat*, and *A Nair lady playing the veena* (also described as *Malayee Beauty reclining on a couch beneath a transparent curtain*), subject dressed in a shawl. (Neumayer & Schelberger, 2005, 298)
- 1874 Napier Museum of Art and Natural History was founded in Thiruvananthapuram, two years after Napier had left India.
- 1875 *Tamil woman playing a sarabat* presented by Maharaja of Travancore to the visiting Prince of Wales.

- This year Sir T. Madhava Rao became Dewan of Baroda.
- 1876 Ravi Varma won the Gold Medal at Madras Fine Arts Exhibition where he exhibited *Shakuntala Pataralekhan* (Shakuntala writing a love-letter to Dushyanta) the subject being dressed in the nineteenth century manner. This subject falls shortly before a famous translation of *Abhijnana Sakiuntala* by Kerala Varma. (see Guha-Thakurta, 2003, 51) Lord Buckingham, Governor of Madras, bought the work and also commissioned his own portrait, to hang at government house. *Shakuntala Pataralekhan* was also used to illustrate later editions of Monier-Williams' translation of *Shukuntala*.
- 1877-78 Travancore avoids the worst of Madras and Deccan famines. But Viceroy Lytton in Simla does not consider the famine to be as severe as reported and allows continued export of wheat. The Temple Plan implements compulsory relief camps for starving, both measures worsening the crisis.
- 1878 Ravi Varma on way back from Madras met Sir Seshayya Satri (former school friend of Madhava Rao) Dewan Regent of Pudukkottai (near Madurai) who invited him to Pudukkottai to paint members of royal house. C. Raja Raja Rama records this was 'the first time my brother and myself left Travancore on professional work' and that the paintings were 'at the instruction of Mr. Sashiashastri' [sic]. (Chawla, 2010, 77)
- 1879 December, date of portraits completed in Pudukkottai suggests their completion was after the visit in 1878 (Chawla, 2010, 77)
- 1880 May 30, Ayilyam Thirunal dies, Vishakhham (Vishaghom) Thirunal became Maharaja of Travancore and invited Ravi Varma to his coronation despite previous favour given to Ramaswamy Naicker; Maharaja granted Varma an interview, and asked for a painting of Sita from the Ramayana.  
The Duke of Buckingham, Governor of Madras, on a visit to Thiruvananthapuram, asked after Ravi Varma, but the Maharaja was upstaged by Duke's interest in Varma whom the Duke asked to sit down when Ravi Varma was summoned to audience. Ravi Varma declined to sit so all three had to stand, the Duke also declining to sit. He was consequentially declared *persona non grata*. *Sita's Ordeal* was sold by Maharaja Vishakhham Thirunal to Sir T. Madhava Rao, by then Dewan of Baroda, and Maharaja also gave away *Nair Beauty*.  
Madhava Rao sent two Ravi Varma paintings to Poona Fine Arts exhibition, including *Nair Beauty* where *Nair lady playing on her sitar* was awarded the Gaekwad Medal. (Pal, 123). This work was so liked by the Governor of Bombay Sir James Fergusson that he asked Varma to paint a copy and presented him with a photographic album of British royalty.
- 1881 Ravi Varma received first Baroda commission from Maharaja Sayajirao III to paint portraits of Gaekwad royal family members and high officials (listed in Neumayer & Schelburger, 2005, 300-301). Ravi Varma invited to attend investiture ceremony of Sayajirao, then aged eighteen years, and painted *Gaekwad in investiture robes*.  
[As Maharaja, Sayajirao was later a patron of the nationalists Dadabhai Naoroji (1852-1917, 1892-95 first Indian Westminster MP, and subject of portrait by Ravi Varma now at Sri Chitra Gallery) and Dr. Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar (1891-1956), writer of Indian Constitution (Pal, 130). Sayajiro told Curzon in 1899 that he had been giving RS1,000 annually to the Indian National Congress since its establishment in 1885. (Pal, 161)]  
At Baroda Ravi Varma painted *Sita Siddhi*, a Ramayana scene when Sita realizes she has been tricked by Ravana; *Sairindhi*, a Mahabharata scene when the melancholy Draupadi is forced to live apart from her husbands and undergo unwonted male attention; *Nala and Dayanti* on the moment when King Nala leaves the sleeping Damayati; *Saraswati*; *Lxami* (Pal-2009, 135-6, 145-148; Neumayer & Schelburger, 2005, 301). Later Ravi Varma went to live in Bombay for a month with his brother C. Raja Raja Varma where he spent much time at the theatre and circulated among the elite.
- 1882 Visited Bhavnagar in Kathiawar. Birth of Ravi Varma's last child, a daughter. Meeting with the Maharaja of Travancore was set up in Bombay but this ended in recriminations. The

- Maharaja discontinued his allowance and considered excommunicating Ravi Varma on various grounds of impiety. Sir T. Mdhava Rao intervened, Ravi Varma returned to Kilimanoor and made a ritual monetary present to his uncle as *gurudakshina*, the portrait of whom is in Sri Chitra Art Gallery.
- This year Sir T. Madhava Rao resigned as Dewan of Baroda after a disagreement with the new Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III.
- 1883 Ravi Varma painted *Lakshmbai Thampuratty* who is shown with hands of the books *Near Rome or Europe Described* and *The Young Ladies' Book*. (Neumayer and Schelburger, 2005, 301). In his painting *Kerala Koil Thampuram* the subject stands close to a bookshelf with *Byron's Poetical Works* and *Chamber's Encyclopedia of English Literature*. (Neumayer and Schelburger, 2005, 301).
- 1883 winter, Ravi Varma participates in Calcutta Industrial Exhibition.
- 1884 death of maternal uncle, Raja Raja Varma. Ravi Varma is in mourning for one year with no shaving nor travelling.
- 1884-7 Ravi Varma spent many periods in Mavelikara where he did many landscape sketches and several portraits.
- Madhava Rao wrote to Ravi Varma;  
There are many of my friends who are desirous of possessing your work. It would be hardly possible for you, with only a pair of hands, to meet such a large demand. Send, therefore, a few of your select works to Europe and have them oleographed. You will thereby not only extend your reputation, but will be doing a real service to the country. (Neumayer & Schulberge, 205, 302; Pal-2009, 153)
- 1884 Swahayya Sastri invites Ravi Varma to Pudukottai where met new governor of Madras, soon thereafter met Maharaja of Mysore, Sri Chamarajendra Wodeyar.
- 1885 Ravi Varma and Raja Varma were invited to Mysore for a commission to paint portraits of the royal family. Ravi Varma was given an elephant, the paradigmatically royal animal, as part of recompense.
- 1885 August, Vishakham Thirunal died, and his nephew Srimoolan Thirunal became Maharaja of Travancore (ruled 1885-1924). The previous hostility to Ravi Varma was not continued, and he was invited to the coronation.
- 1885 December 28-31, first meeting of Indian National Congress in Bombay.
- 1886 Ravi Varma and Raja Varma were invited to Mysore for a further commission.
- 1886 death of Ravi Varma's mother, Umayamba Thampuratti, for whom he would be in mourning for a year.
- 1887 Ravi Varma sent paintings to the colonial exhibition in London and later to Calcutta. Ravi Varma and Raja Varma went to Mysore for portrait commissions. Later in 1899 he made a probable visit to Mysore where he painted *Galaxy of Musicians*, *Lady in moonlight*, *Malabar Lady*, *Suckling child*.
- 1888 Ravi Varma received second Baroda commission from Maharaja Sayajirao III (whom he met at Ootacamund, a South Indian hill resort) of fourteen mythological paintings drawn from Ramayana and Mahabharata for Durbar Hall in new Lakshmi Villas Palace. Fee was Rs. 50,000 (a well-sized diamond was worth Rs 1000). In the late 1890s Varma charged Rs1,500 for a full-length portrait, Rs700 for a half-length portrait, and Rs300 for a bust). (Pal-2009, 163-4). Paintings were *Nala Dayamanti*, *Radha and Mandhava*, *Bharata and the Lion Cub*, *Arjuna and Subhadra*, *Vishvanitra and Menaka*, *Shantanu and Ganga*, *Kamsa Maya*, *Disrobing of Draupadi*, *Harischandra and Taramati*, *Keechak and Sairandhyri* (also titled *The Beauty and the Beast*), *Sita Swayamvaram*, *Birth of Krishna*, *Devaki and Krishna*, *Shantanu and Satyawati*. (Neumayer & Schelburger, 2005, 304; Pal-2009, 183-185) These were completed by Ravi Varma with a team of C. Raja Raja Varma, Mangalabai Thampuratty, Kilimanur Khunjan Varrier. Final payment was Rs 50,000.

- He also painted a copy of *Judith* by Jean-Joseph Benjamin Constant. (see Pal, 157-8; Neumayer & Schelburger, 2005, 303 date this to 1886)
- Ravi Varma and Raja Raja Varma completed a four-month tour of India, from Madras to North to gather materials. In Bombay, Ravi Varma knew the Judge Mahadev Govind Ranade, Dadabhai Naoroji, and British artist Frank Brooks (who helped to find models), Paris-trained painter N.N. Writer, and the Professor of Painting at Sir J. J. School of Art in Bombay, John Griffiths.
- 1889 publication of novel in Malayi O. Chandumenon, *Indulekha*, its subject was Nair society. This year also saw *The Hindu* newspaper published daily, culmination of the diffusion of newspapers since the 1860s. (Chawla, 2010, 44-45)
- 1890 Baroda commission paintings completed and were first exhibited in Thiruvananthapuram;
- 1891 death of Ravi Varma's wife Bagheerathi who was less than forty years' old.
- 1891 November, Ravi Varma and C. Raja Raja Varma left Baroda for Bombay where the Baroda commission paintings were exhibited for two months during which time Ravi Varma returned to Mavelikara for his wife's funeral. Many photographs of the works were sold at the exhibition (See S. N. Joshi, *Half-tone reprints*, 1911, not seen by Clark).
- 1892 February, Baroda commission paintings were exhibited in Baroda at Laxmi Villas Durbar Hall. They were seen in April by the reformer and religious thinker Vivekananda who thought them the only thing worth seeing in Baroda (Pal-2009, 202). Ravi Varma met Vivekananda two months later.
- Ravi Varma remained in Bombay after Baroda exhibition for nearly a year, rented a studio in Khotachiwadi, South Bombay. He knew the photographer Lala Deen Dayal (b.1844, 1885 court photographer to Nizam of Hyderabad) who may have told Ravi Varma about the Columbian Exhibition in Chicago. Ravi Varma discussed with Dadabhai Naoroji plans for a printing press for the purchase of which he would use the Baroda commission monies, and for which he sought a financial backer. Govardhan Das Khatau Makhanji, of a textile family, became engaged in financial support.
- [1832 first lithograph of Indian subject printed, *Interior of a native hut*, also religious images of Ganesh and Krishna.]
- 1870s local lithographic printing took place in Bombay and Calcutta, Calcutta Art Studio (from 1878), Chore Bagan Art Studio, and near Poona was Chitrasala Press (again from 1878) of Vishnu Krishna Chiplunkar. Work on sale included images of Rama, Sita, Lakshaman, Hanuman, historical figures with patriotic resonance, and of a caged parrot. On this theme the nationalist Chiplunkar wrote,
- It is a great disaster when a bird whose God-given power is to move whenever he pleases, unrestrained on the strength of his beautiful wings, must remain chirping in a confined place! The same applies to a nation. (Pal, 2009, 208-209).
- Chiplunkar was a friend of the nationalist agitator Bal Gangadar Tilak with whom he set up two newspapers *The Maratha* in English and *Kasari* in Marathi. (See Pal-2009, 240-241).
- 1893 Aurobindo Ghosh (Sri Aurobindo) arrives in Baroda to work in the state service until 1907, and teach at Baroda College, and probably met Ravi Varma during his brief visit in 1894. Aurobindo later refers to Ravi Varma as 'this great debaser of Indian taste and artistic culture', a viewpoint not shared by Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad of Baroda (cited Chawla, 2010, 91-92, 299).
- 1893 Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad of Baroda sponsored ten works showing women from different parts of India, *Oil Paintings illustrative of The life of Native People* by Ravi Varma which were sent to World's Columbian International Exhibition in Chicago and shown in Ethnographic Pavilion. Paintings were accompanied with by-line notes supplied by the artist: *Bride being led to the marriage Pandal, Kuravas of Southern India, Remembering the sister, Near the well, There comes Papa, A Muslim lady at the bath, At the bath, Malabar Beauty, Expectation, The Disappointing News, The Bombay Singer or Poverty* (1893, Trivandrum Gallery). (Neumayer &

Schelburger, 2005, for a list of these details, 6-7, 306; Pal, 2009, 218-220, titles differ slightly between these two records).

Vivekananda spoke at the World Parliament of Religions held at same time in Chicago.

Photographs by Raja Deen Dayal at the same exposition also won a Gold Medal.

Ravi Varma received two Gold Medals and diplomas. Certificates of Merit citations for Ravi Varma read:

1 Ravi Varma, Thiruvananthapuram, Travancore, India. Exhibit: Paintings in Oil. The series of well-executed paintings give a good idea of the progress of instruction in art. They are true to nature in form and color and present the costumes, current fashions and social features. K.Buenz, President Departmental Committee, John Eaton, Independent Judge, and other signatories.

2. Ravi Varma, Thiruvananthapuram, Travancore, India. Exhibit: Oil Paintings illustrative of the life of Native People. This exhibit of ten paintings in oil colours by Ravi Varma, court painter to several presidencies in India, is of much ethnological value. Not only do the faces of the high caste ladies which are portrayed give the various types of the localities, but the artist's careful attention to the details of costume, and articles used in the social and ceremonial life he has depicted renders the paintings worthy of special recommendation. W. Terry President Departmental Committee, Alice C. Fletcher, Individual Judge and other signatories.

(as per those copies on display in Sri Chitra Gallery, Thiruvananthapuram in 2009)

1894 From this year until 1904 Ravi Varma and C.Raja Raja Varma spend long periods in Bombay each year. They purchased colours and obtained European art magazines and books here, (Chawla, 2010, 95) In this year electric lighting reached Bombay, and Calcutta in 1899. (Chawla, 2010, 42)

1894 Ravi Varma Fine Arts Lithographic Press begins operation. First three prints were *The Birth of Sakuntala*, *Saraswati*, *Lakshmi*. (Pinney, 2006, 64, thinks *Lakshmi* is a more plausible contender). The Press employed the Germans, Fritz Schleicher (1862-1935, who owned the press from 1903-1935) and was skilled at portraits as head of printing team, and Gerhardt, to be in charge of drawings and who was skilled at foliate backgrounds. It had two steam driven lithographic cylinder speed-presses which could print up to eight hundred impressions an hour. Other Indian artists who later worked for the press included Mahadev Visvanath Dhurandhar (1867-1944, studied then taught at Sir J.J. School Bombay from 1896) and Dadasaheb Phalke (1870-1944, studied at Sir J.J. School, 1885-90; studied printmaking in Germany and introduced photo-lithography to India; from 1913 active in developing Indian film industry). (Neumayer & Schelburger, 2005, 4). In addition to the prints from Ravi Varma and these artists the Press also published hundreds of thousands of postcards, product advertisements and consumer labels for tobacco, matchboxes etc.

1894 Frank Brooks commissioned *Lady with a fan* from Ravi Varma for which the model was Rajibai Moolgavkar., a relative of the foreman of the press, she was also the model for Ravi Varma's *Hamsa Damayanti* and *Shakuntala looking back*. Ravi Varma also referred to photographs of the distinguished classical singer Ajanibai Malpekar (1883-1974), another Goanese, in his works.

1894 November 18, until April 1895, Ravi Varma and C. Raja Raja Varma took Prince Aswati Thirunal on tour of central and northern India.

C. Raja Raja Varma later privately published *A narrative of the tour in Upper India of His Highness Prince Martanda Varma of Travancore*, Bombay: Education Society Steam Press, 1896.

1894 November, During Bombay sojourn through his friend Judge Ranade, Ravi Varma took close interest in a court case on obscenity of imported German oleographs. The judges were, it appears, of opinion that naked figures of classical subjects were not obscene, in that the artist had higher ideals than those of merely exciting the sensual appetites of the spectators. The pictures in question might have been classed among them, had it not been

- for the introduction into them of modern silk umbrellas and apparel, which divested them of their idealism. For this reason they upheld the decision of the lower court and dismissed the appeal. (cited Chawla, 2010, 103);  
Also met Dadabhai Naoroji.  
Ravi Varma painted a durbar scene for Pudukottai (another version also painted by a court artist), and portraits. (Pal-2009, 19, 231-233)
- 1895 January 1, C., Raja Raja Varma began his diary which he kept until his sudden death in 1904.
- 1895 January 5<sup>th</sup>, visited J. J. School with superintendent Griffiths and (one presumes) Ravi Varma criticized qualities of Griffiths' work *Temple Steps* as 'poor in colour, poor in execution, and poor in design'. (in *A Narrative...*, 1896, cited Neumayer & Schelburger, 2005, 201-202; Chawla, 2010, 104)  
During Ravi Varma's Calcutta sojourn he visited Jorasanko, and enjoyed seeing works of the young Abanindranath Tagore who was not there at the time.  
Ravi Varma's son Rama Varma became his assistant.
- 1896 Loss of a maternal uncle Raja Raja Varma (Ithamar Vishakam Thirunal Valiya Koil Thampuram (not the uncle who died in 1884) meant Ravi Varma and C.Raja Raja Varma spent year in Kilimanoor in mourning.
- 1896 August 31 & November 26, Ravi Varma continues to pursue Dewan of Travancore about setting up an art gallery in Thiruvananthapuram. This was only to be achieved in 1941. (for text of letters see Neumayer & Schelburger, 2005, 9-10, p209-212)  
Paintings on Puranic themes were completed for the Maharajah of Travancore.
- 1896 October, outbreak of the plague in Bombay which was only to be eradicated there in 1905.
- 1897 June, Chapekar brothers murder the administrator of the draconian regulations to control the plague, Shand. The portrait of Bal Gangadhar Tilak, accused of inciting the murder and one of the leaders of the anti-British agitation, was printed by Ravi Varma Press in perhaps the Varma brothers only current political intervention. (Neumayer & Schelburger, 2005, 18)
- 1897 November 27, *Draupadi at the Court of Virata*, first Puranic painting for Trivandrum Gallery completed. Others were *Damayati and the Swan*, 26 July 99, *Shakuntala looks back in Love*, 2 May 98; *Virata's Court*, *Draupadi and Simbika* 2.5.98;; *Sairandbri* (Draupadi on an errand) 189?; (listed in Neumayer & Schelburger, 2005. 310)
- 1898 May, Ravi Varma returned to Bombay to negotiate loan which would buy out Das. The deal was finalized by late August with loan from a Dr. Balachandra Krishna.
- 1898 June 21, Varma brothers visit a print seller to ascertain what kind of German prints are selling best. These were largely semi-pornographic figures of nude or near-nude women in mythical landscapes.  
Plague scare in Bombay forced Govardhan Das to relocate press from Kalbadevi to Ghatkopar further up on the Eastern side of Bombay, until 1901. Then moved to Malavli near Lonalva.
- 1898 December 27, Ravi Varma, C.Raja Raja Varma, and second son Rama Varma arrive in Lonalva.
- 1899 January, Ravi Varma went to Karli near Bombay where he completed *Hamsa Dayamanti* and *Lady giving alms*. He was accompanied by Schleicher who would eventually set up press there.  
Ravi Varma's father died, followed by period of voluntary mourning.
- 1900 First meeting of Ravi Varma with Lord Curzon when the Viceroy visited Thiruvananthapuram.  
Ravi Varma's granddaughters was reluctantly adopted into Travancore royal house after recommendation by British Resident G.T. Mitchell, possibly on Ravi Varma's suggestion as a way out of a succession crisis (Pal-2009, 248-9; Neumayer & Schelburger, 2005, 311)  
Ravi Varma visited Calcutta and stayed with the prominent nationalist Surendranath Bannerjee. Also called on Viceroy in Calcutta.

- 1901 January 23<sup>rd</sup>, Raja Raja Varma regrets passing of Queen Victoria in his diary: Her loss is universally mourned.
- 1901 January 29<sup>th</sup>, Schleicher made agreement to buy out the Press by paying Ravi Varma Rs 25,000 and taking over debt of Rs20,000.
- 1901 February 27<sup>th</sup>, visits a Mr Chinabhi Madhavalal in Ahmedabad for four portrait commissions and whose library included Cassell's new illustrated edition of the *National Gallery*.
- 1901 March 16, May, Ravi Varma, and C. Raja Raja Varma, Rama Varma went to Udaipur for a commission brokered by Fatehlal Mehta, advisor to Maharana Fateh Singh of Udaipur, but the Maharana supported another painter Kundan Lal, and asked Ravi Varma to copy portraits of the deceased Pratap Singh, Amar Singh, and Jai Singh. On arrival Ravi Varma and C. Raja Raja Varma had fever, and Rama Varma had smallpox.
- 1901 April 2, C. Raja Raja Rama wrote to Private Secretary to the Viceroy on behalf of his brother offering two oil portraits and two subject pictures from Indian history for the Nation's Gallery in memory of the late Queen to be erected in Calcutta, as well as Rs 500 for the Imperial Fund. The Victoria Memorial was opened in 1921 and only one painting was supplied, that of Sir T. Madhava Rao.
- 1901 July, after much prevarication the portraits were completed for Rs 1,800. (On Ravi Varma's prices and income see Neumayer & Schulbeger, 2005, p,20)
- 1901 July 20, Press sold to Shriram Pant for Rs 25,000 in installments, in effect to Fritz Schleicher. Contract included permission to reproduce eighty-nine of Ravi Varma's paintings.
- 1901 This year, Ravi Varma diagnosed with diabetes and has Ayurvedic treatment in Kilimanur.
- 1901 December, Ravi Varma was invited by the photographer Deen Dayal to work in Hyderabad, but he could not meet the Nizam as formally promised. Met Italian photographer Miss Sabrina who showed photographs of nautch girls and women from the *zenana*, through her negotiating with a prostitute to pose for *At the bath*, uncompleted since Udaipur. Portrait of Nizam done from a photograph, but not that by Deen Dayal.
- 1902 Ravi Varma went to Madras to meet the visiting Viceroy.
- 1902-3 lived between Madras, Trivandrum, Kotchiwadi studio Bombay, Kilimanoor.  
In Bombay met dancer and courtesan Anjanabai Malpekar, called Barabai by Ravi Varma, many photographs of whom were among Ravi Varma's papers. She was later rumoured to have been his mistress but she denied this. She was to be important in Marathi dance and stage.
- 1903 February, Ravi Varma submitted five works out of competition to Madras Fine Art Exhibition. Raja Raja Varma won Gold Medal for *Husain's Sagar*. But critiques had begun to appear about their works. Both did official British portraits in Madras.
- 1903 March, C.Raj Raja Varma comments on quality of books in a new library in Trivandrum and on borrowing beautiful edition of life and works of Meissonier.
- 1903 March 25, Ravi Varma becomes head of the Kilimanur lineage on death of his cousin, and thus in control of its finances.
- 1903 May 15<sup>th</sup>, C. Raja Raja Varma mentions sending photographs to Mr. Chatterji in Allahabad for publication in *The Prabasi*. This biographical material formed the base for future biographies (reprinted in Neumayer & Schelburger, 2005, 224-226).
- 1903 July 17, dated letter received August 11<sup>th</sup>, from Sir Arthur Havelock, former Governor of Madras, then Governor of Tasmania, testifying to the quality of his portrait. (full text in Chawla, 2010, 346)
- 1903 July 24<sup>th</sup>, C. Raja Raja Varma indicates he is writing an account of the art of painting in Travancore, probably the first such history.
- 1903 November 9, Ravi Varma Fine Arts Lithographic Press sold to Fritz Schleicher for Rs 25,000 plus Rs 6,000 debt, inherited the above right to print eighty nine paintings of Ravi

- Varma. Schleicher cut number of plates from thirteen to eight. Press kept running after Schleicher's death in 1935, was destroyed by fire in 1972, and closed in 1975, its remaining prints and stock auctioned in early 2000s. (Pal 2009, 269).
- 1904 Ravi Varma was invited to be a judge for forthcoming Durbar Art Exhibition. The Viceroy Lord Curzon, on behalf of the King-Emperor, bestowed upon Raja Ravi Varma the *Kaiser-i-Hind* Gold Medal (order begun in 1901, also awarded to Gandhi in 1915 but later returned by him). Ravi Varma defended title of 'Raja' since his ancestors had been the Rajahs of Beypore in Malabar and in the Marumakkathayam tradition, the name of the maternal uncle (eg Raja Raja Varma) was prefixed with 'Raja'.
- 1904 Raja Raja Varma won both Gold and Bronze Medals at Madras Fine Arts Exhibition
- 1904 July, Ravi Varma and Raja Varma went to Mysore for a commission of paintings on Hindu legends for Jag Mohan Palace.  
Varma's brother Gode died.  
Ravi Varma's other brother and his assistant C. Raja Raja Varma suddenly fell ill on the way to Bombay, and was discovered to have an inoperable tumour in his stomach.
- 1905 January 4, C. Raja Raja Varma died after surgery. Ravi Varma ceased accepting commissions.
- 1905 Raja Varma was posthumously awarded the Gold Medal at Madras Fine Arts Exhibition. Ravi Varma in Kilimanoor, assisted by his son Rama Varma, completed paintings for Maharaja of Mysore, for which received Rs 25,000, and delivered these in September. The nine paintings in this last-completed scheme on Hindu mythological themes, now in the Mysore, are *Setubandanam*, *Damayanti and the Swan* (After the message), *Bishma's vow* or *Matsyagandi*, *The Servitude of Sairandbri*, *Sri Rama breaks the bow* (1906), *Ravana fights Jatayu* (1906), *Vicotry of Indrajit* (1905), Krishna as Envoy, *Krishna and Balaram liberating their parents*. Neumayer & Schelburger, 2005, 233; Chawla, 2010, 114). These are not illustrated in Manoharam, 2002). Rama contracted smallpox there. Completed portraits including one of Governor of Madras in Mysore.
- 1905 February 8, Ravi Varma sends sketches of *Rama breaking the bow* the final version of which remains as the only one in its original place in the Durbar Hall (Chawla, 2010, 118)
- 1905 December 3, Ravi Varma reports completion of seven paintings, two narrow canvases remaining. (Chawla, 2010, 120)
- 1906 Ravi Varma invited to be a member of King George V entourage on his Mysore visit for the Khedda hunt for wild elephants and was given a car after which he returned to Kilimanur.  
Automobiles depicted in one of his last paintings *The Khedda Cam p*.
- 1906 June 13, Ravi Varma dispatches two small panels to Mysore.
- 1906 September 20<sup>th</sup>, Ravi Varma fell ill and on October 2<sup>nd</sup> died at Kilimanoor, Travancore, aged 58 years.
- 1907 posthumous critique by Ananda Coomaraswamy.
- 1935 Sri Chitra Gallery established at Trivandrum (later called Thiruvananthapuram).
- 1940s many works in Kilimanoor family collection given to Chitira Thirunal Bala Rama Varma, last Maharaja of Travancore, under advice of Dr H. Cousins, his art advisor (whose portrait by Sviatoslav Roerich is in Sri Chitra Art Gallery, Thiruvananthapuram), including *At the Bath* (discussed by Coomaraswamy). In 2009, family members maintained some of the works then handed over were now missing from Sri Chitra Art Gallery collection and there was a court case with the state government in process.
- 1976 Works by Ravi Varma decreed as National Treasures by Indian Government so making their export illegal.
- 1993 Art critic & conservator Rupika Chawla and the artist A. Ramachandran jointly curated a large Ravi Varma Exhibition at the National Museum, New Delhi. The exhibition was

opposed in a hostile debate by influential artists such as Bal Chabda, Laxma Goud, M. F. Husain, Tyeb Mehta, Akbar Padamsee, and Jagdish Swaminathan. (see Chawla, 2010, 305), but many distinguished art critics and historians wrote in the accompanying papers.

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