

RESOURCES FOR: THE *TREASURE OF TRIVANDRUM* DRAMA

Lesson 1

Treasure hunt words

(in correct order)

These sentences should be printed on card or strong paper then cut in half where indicated. Before Lesson 1, all the pieces should be hidden round the room (but in places relatively easy for the students to find – see Full Planning Schema). The students will search for them, take one each when they are found, and then find and pair up with the person who has the other half of their sentence. If there are more than 24 students, other sentences relating to the opening and contents of the Trivandrum treasure can be sourced from the internet to provide more two-part sentences.



A team of experts prepared to prise open //
the granite door of Chamber A

It took an hour for three men straining on iron //
bars to prise open the door

They emerged shocked //
and speechless

All over the floor //
gold coins lay about

There were heavy belts of gold, //
precious stones, and other ornaments

There was one sack full of diamonds and //
jewellery and studded with more diamonds



A statue of temple god Vishnu //
was 30cm high and jewel-encrusted

The value of the whole find has //
been estimated at \$18 billion

The statue of Lord Vishnu //
is itself estimated to be worth \$105 million

Armed guards have been //
placed around the temple to prevent looting

Traditional guardian of the temple treasure //
is the Maharajah, 91

He is “worried about consequences //
now the world knows of the treasure”

**RESOURCES FOR *THE TREASURE OF
TRIVANDRUM* DRAMA**

**The
Maharajah's
1st letter**



Kowdiar palace

From the Maharajah

HIS EXCELLENCY

Sri uthradom tirunal



Dear Journalists of TV India

I am too old to give interviews these days, but your respectful and thoughtful questions deserve an answer. I will try to answer them all, but then I have a request for you, because you journalists can help me with a very big problem I have, which is connected with the treasure you are asking about, buried under the Pad-manha-ba-swamy Temple, here in Trivandrum (or Travancore as it used to be called).

You asked how old the treasure is, who it belongs to, and where it came from. The temple itself is dedicated to the great god, Vishnu, and for many hundreds of years, pilgrims and worshippers have visited it, leaving offerings. Many of these pilgrims have been very rich, with some leaving Vishnu all of their treasures when they die. Over the years, the treasure of Trivandrum has become such a great treasure and therefore, belongs to Vishnu. The treasure is looked after by the temple priests, and the Maharajahs who head the Royal Family of Travancore are its traditional guardians. As today's Maharajah, this job falls to me.

You asked if there is more treasure than what has been found in Chamber A. You are right; there is a Chamber B, but nobody knows what is inside, as it has never been opened. Although, there are rumours, many rumours, that there is an even greater treasure hoard than in Chamber A, and other rumours of tunnels going from there to the sea, or to my palace. If so, I have never found them! If it is to be opened, I would have to give my permission.

You asked why it was opened now. The Government opened it. I was opposed to its opening, and I was shocked at the brutal and disrespectful way it was broken into. So it is I who has had soldiers put round the temple to guard the treasure from thieves. However, perhaps it is my destiny to release the treasure, and that is why I shall need your help, but first, let me tell you the strangest story of the opening of the treasure vault.

I believe Chamber A has been opened twice before. The first time it was opened was over 100 years ago in 1908. Apparently, when the doors were smashed open, the chamber was full of cobras and other snakes. The people who opened it feared that they had offended Vishnu, and he was frightening them away or punishing them with the snakes, so they quickly locked and sealed the doors again. I remember vividly the last time it was opened, in 1933. I was a young boy, about ten years of age, and I was very lucky to be there, though I was very frightened that it might be full of snakes again. This time, however, my father insisted that it would be done to honour Vishnu, not to offend him, and so the priests held a very beautiful and respectful ceremony, with soldiers and a big crowd and a procession, with my family at the front (I have sent you a picture that was taken at that very time; I am standing on the right, wearing a turban, with my father, my mother, and my older sister).

Imagine us, standing at that great steel door, waiting to see what was inside. Luckily, there were no cobras, thank goodness, just this wonderful treasure. Vishnu was not angry this time, and my father and the priests agreed to shut the chamber door again, and pray that it would never be re-opened until Vishnu decided that it was really needed. However, maybe it is my destiny now, because I was there then, and I am here again, and it has been opened once more. Even though it was broken into with iron bars, there were no cobras this time, so I believe that Vishnu wanted it open after all. Perhaps this is Vishnu speaking to us, telling us that now is the time of great need.

I have told you this long story because you also asked what will happen to the treasure – who will get it – and this is why I need your help. The temple priests, the State Government ministers, and my family and I have been worrying about how it can best be used. I cannot make up my mind between three choices. Even though the treasure is great, it is not big enough for all of these three worthy causes. I want to do what is best for India, for our State of Kerala. We have prayed to Vishnu for guidance, and we think he has given us a hard choice. So I need to know what the people of Kerala and Trivandrum City think. You are reporters; please go and find out which of these three plans the people would most like:

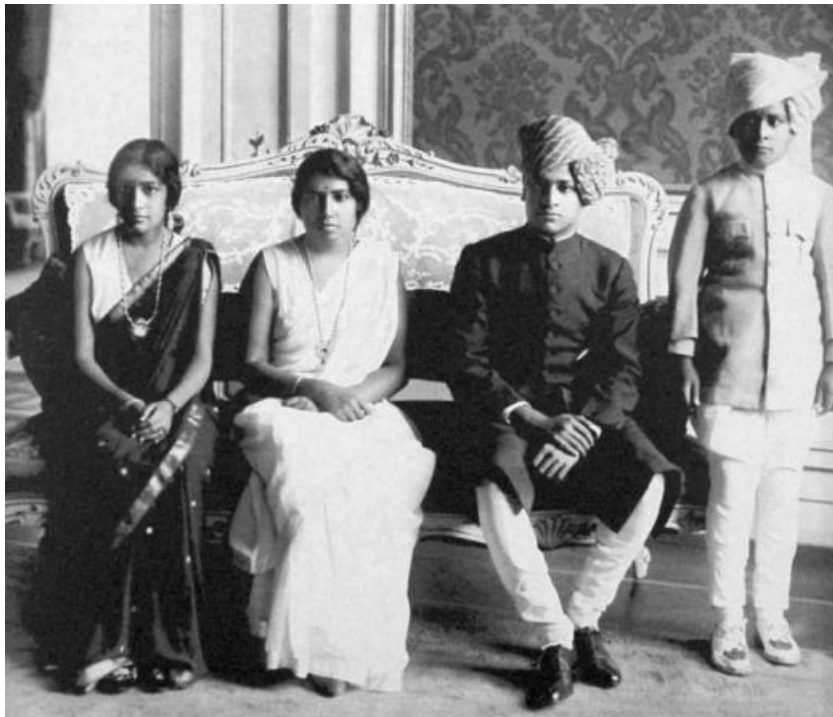
The Kerala State Government wants: To use the treasure to help build new roads, schools, and hospitals. (This will help the whole society for some years.)

The Temple Priests want: To use some of the treasure to rebuild our falling-down temple and build a tourist centre, where people will come from all over the world to see the rest of the treasure. (This will make even more money, which will help the people for many years.)

My family and I want: For every person in Kerala to get an equal share of the treasure after it is sold - nearly half a million dollars each - to spend how they wish. (This will significantly benefit every citizen, but this help will only be given once.)

With very best wishes, I look forward to hearing what you find out. Please come back to me with one single recommendation as quickly as possible. Perhaps Vishnu will give me some guidance through you.

Sri Uthradom Tirunal
Maharajah of Travancore



The royal family of Travancore, 1933
(I, Sri Uthradom Tirunal, am on the right, aged 11)

**RESOURCES FOR THE *TREASURE OF*
TRIVANDRUM DRAMA**

**The
Maharajah's
2nd letter**



Kowdiar palace

From the Maharajah

HIS EXCELLENCY

Sri uthradom tirunal





Wednesday

Namaste, Journalists of TV India

Firstly, let me say, I am deeply shocked and saddened by what you have told me, but I am very grateful to you, and I have a proposal to make to you.

I expected you to give me advice on my three proposals for the treasure, that is, which proposal the people wanted most. I did not expect you to find another even greater need, which is right under our noses. Many people believe, like me, that these cruel and wicked practices of child labour no longer exist. As I am so old and I almost never get out from the Palace and go to the areas where the poorest people live, I thought that today's laws protected children, but apparently that is not the case.

You then asked whether I too am involved, myself. For a moment, I was angry at your reporters' disrespect to me, but then I realised that it was brave and right of you to ask the question. However, I am horrified at your suggestion that my family might be involved in sustaining child labour. Yes, I have a very large family and two of my cousins own factories, but it has nothing to do with me and I cannot know what they all do. Nevertheless, I will have my officers investigate your claims immediately. If you are correct in your claims, you can tell your viewers that I will do all in my power to stop my cousin employing cheap child labour. I must warn you, however, that I have no power to force him to close down his factory. Furthermore, even if he does stop employing children, where will those children's families find money for food and clothing? We have no pensions in India as they have in rich countries like the United States and England.

Perhaps this, too, is where the Padma-na-bha-swamy Temple treasure comes in. I believe that all of these new discoveries that you have made may be the will of Vishnu. Perhaps he is angry and offended that children are being hurt and exploited in his own city. Perhaps he is indeed telling us what to do and suggesting that we use the treasure to stop child labour here. But, we must be careful not to offend the God even more.

If I do allow Chamber B in the Temple to be opened, we can show Vishnu some respect in the way it is done, far more than we did in greedily ripping open Chamber A. Only that way can we repair the dishonour we showed Vishnu in the past. This would be the first step, anyway. Then, whatever we find, we can add to the treasure from Chamber A and start together to end the wicked practice of child labour. But, you must show yourselves worthy of this great task. Are you serious, or are you just looking for a media story to sell television and make me and my family look bad?

Here is my proposal: I remember when Chamber A was first opened back in 1931, there was a great ceremony that my father had arranged. I don't remember the details, but there was **traditional dancing**, and a **procession**, and a **prayer sung** to honour the God. That showed the necessary respect for Vishnu to take away the snakes and let people see what was inside.



I know that as a television station, TV India produces spectacular shows. If you can get your production department and performers to demonstrate to me **a ceremony of sufficient respect** for the opening of Chamber B, I will permit the Chamber to be opened, and we can then decide what to do with the treasure. This task is in your hands; I look forward to seeing what you can create. I hope it will be worthy enough for us to proceed with opening Chamber B, and for us to then make your plans happen.

There is no time to lose. I want to see TV India's demonstration of the respectful ceremony you propose to accompany the opening of Chamber B by Friday morning. From this, you will see that I am serious about stopping this plague of child labour, and worthily using the treasure that Vishnu has given us. Let me see that you, too, are serious.

With respect,

Sri Uthradom Tirunal
Maharajah of Travancore