CHAPTER 1

FREEDOM STRUGGLE IN KERALA: HISTORICAL DIMENSIONS

Kerala, since the dawn of history to the day remained an integral part of the Indian subcontinent. It is one of the smallest states of the Indian union and comprises the narrow coastal strip bounded by the Western Ghats on the east and Arabian sea on the west in the southern most part of Indian peninsula. Traditionally, Kerala extended from Gokarnam to Cape Comorin, but in historical times its area was combined to the Malayalam speaking territories on the coast. It lies between 8° 18' and 12° 48' North latitude and between 74° 52' and 77° 24' East longitude. It has a total area of 15002 sq. miles and a coast line which is nearly 360 miles long. According to the Census of Kerala 1991 this part of the country which occupies 1.27 per cent of the total land area has a population of 2.90 crores which forms 3.44 per cent of the total Indian population of 84.6 crores. Geographically, the territory of the state may be divided into three natural divisions viz., the high land, the mid land, and the low land. The low

land adjoining the sea, the mid land lying between the low land and the mountains and the forest clad high land on the extreme east.  

Although this is a specific study on the relevance of Gandhism in the post independence politics of Kerala, it is only logical and essential to have a brief study on the social, political and cultural characteristics of this region.

Origin of the Name Kerala

The beginning of Kerala history is shrouded in the mist of tradition. According to the Parasurama legend the land of Kerala was a gift of the Arabian sea to Parasurama one of the ten Avatars or incarnations of Lord Vishnu. Legend is that Parasurama threw his axe across the sea from Gokarnam to Kanyakumari and water receded up to the spot where it fell. The tract of territory so thrown up is said to have constituted the land of Kerala.

An examination of some of the theories regarding the origin of Kerala is worth mentioning. From very ancient times the coastal belt between the Western Ghats and the

Arabian sea in the peninsular India was designated Kerala in Sanskrit literature. The words Kerala and Chera have been used as synonyms by all early writers on Kerala. An attempt is made by some scholars to derive the name Kerala from the name 'Kera' (coconut) which is one of the characteristic products of the west coast. But this view is not shared by all writers. Gundert observes that the name 'Keram' is the Canarese pronunciation of the word 'Cheram' and he describes 'Keralam' as 'Cheram' the country between Gokarnam and Kanyakumari. The word charal in Tamil means the slope of a hill or a mountain and according to some writers the word must have got itself corrupted in course of time into cheral giving its name to Kerala or Chera country. This theory emphasises the mountainous character of Kerala as the basis of the origin of the name. There is another view that the word Keralam (Cheralam) is made up of the two words cher (sand) and alam (region) and that it literally means the slushy land. If Cheralam is a compound of the two words 'cher' and 'alam', it may be pointed out that the word is capable of a different interpretation. Cher means added and hence Cheralam means the land which was added on. The word 'Cheralam' might have got itself Sanskritised as Keralam.

This derivation would make the land of Kerala a reclamation or addition to the land from the sea lending support to the Parasurama legend.

Kerala in the Sangam Age

In the earliest known history of South India there were three flourishing kingdoms, namely, the Chera, the Chola, and the Pandya. Of these the Chera country corresponds to the modern Malayalam speaking area of Kerala. By the first century AD, the Kerala country seems to have been united under a powerful dynasty known in history as the Cheras.5 The first well lighted epoch in the history of the Chera is reflected in the Sangam literature. The first five centuries of Christian era are referred as the Sangam Age. The Sangam Age which comprised the first five centuries of the Christian era was the formative epoch of Kerala history.6 Kerala during this period formed part of the larger unit of Tamilakom. The land was divided into five divisions viz., Venad, Kuttanad, Kudanad, Puzhinad and Karknad. During this period Kerala was ruled mainly by three powers viz., the Ays in the South, the rulers of Ezhimala in the North and the Cheras in the region lying in between.

5. K. M. Panickar, n. 1, p. 5.

The history of Kerala from Sixth to Ninth century is lost in obscurity. The Sangam Age was followed by a long historical night. The long historical night came to an end about AD 800 with the re-establishment of Chera power under Kulasekhara Varma.

Religion

Religious toleration has been one of the cornerstones of Kerala culture. Even in the ancient period, Kerala became a meeting ground of all the Indian and the most important world religions. In addition to the native religions like Jainism, Buddhism, and Hinduism, religions like Christianity, Judaism and Islam also found here a fertile soil. The Jain religion might have come to Kerala in the Third Century BC. The Jains believe that it was Chandra Gupta Mourya and Bhadrabahu who introduced the Jain religion in South India. Though Chandra Gupta came only upto Sravanabelgola his followers visited different parts of South India and preached Jainism. Budhism, it is assumed, came to Kerala during the reign of Asoka in the Third Century BC. The Sangam works contain several references to the active effort of Buddhist missionaries to spread the message of Buddha.

It was the Aryan immigrants who brought the Brahminical religion to Kerala. The Aryanisation of Kerala was a slow but steady process from Third Century BC. The vigorous propaganda of Sankaracharya and other Hindu reformers considerably increased the influence of the Brahminical religion. 8

Christianity was introduced in Kerala in the First Century AD itself. According to historical traditions and beliefs, St. Thomas who landed in Kerala in AD 52, converted several Brahmins and others and founded seven churches. Apart from the Christians the Jews also formed a part of the community in Kerala from very early days. According to tradition they came to Kerala coast in AD 68 in order to escape from religious persecution at home.

It is believed that Islam reached Kerala during the days of its founder Mohammed, the Prophet. Arabic records suggest that a few missionaries sent out by the prophet in his 57th year might have reached Kerala. If this is true, Islam might have entered Kerala in the Seventh Century AD itself.

Jainism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam have exerted considerable influence on the culture of Kerala.

8. K. V. Eapen, n. 3, p. 60.
Over the years they lived side by side influencing each other. The most significant feature of Kerala life since the earliest times has been the wide sense of tolerance and mutual respect among the different communities who had made their home in this land.9

The advent of the Aryan immigrants brought about other significant social changes as well.10 As a result the caste system took deep roots in the soil of Kerala. The Avarnas had to suffer a lot due to this.

After the long historical night an illustrious line of kings known as the Kulasekhara's ruled over Kerala from AD 800 to 1102. The history of the Kulasekhara Empire otherwise called the second Chera Empire was brought to light only recently. The reconstruction of the history of the Kulasekhara has turned out to be an important contribution which has helped to fill in a major gap in our knowledge of the early history of Kerala.11 It has also helped to correct the wrong impression entertained by scholars that Kerala during this period was cut up into a number of petty principalities which with their endless

9. Ibid., p. 61.
10. A. Sreedhara Menon, n. 6, p. 83.
11. Ibid., p. 105.
feuds and alliances more or less formed a world apart.\textsuperscript{12} The history of the second Chera empire clearly demonstrates that Kerala was a homogenous political unit at least for three centuries from AD 800 to 1102. During the reign of the 13 Kulasekharas there was tremendous progress in trade, language and literature, education and learning, and religious harmony. During the period following the break up of Kulasekhara Empire Kerala lost its political unity.\textsuperscript{13} A number of independent swarupams (states) rose in different parts of the country. Of these Venad, Kolathnad, Cochin and Calicut were prominent. Venad in the South rose to political prominence in the 12th Century AD with the disappearance of Kulasekharas as the imperial power of Kerala. The Kolathiris in the north consisted of the principalities of Kumbla, Nilaswaram, Kottayam, and Kadathanad. The ruler who was called Kolathiri was the eldest male member of the family. The four other members immediately junior to Kolathiri were designated as Tekkelamkur, Vadakkelamkur, Nalamkur, and Anchamkur assisted him in the administration. The Perumpadappu Swarupam or Cochin Royal House had its capital at Chitrakudam in the Perumpadappu village till

\textsuperscript{12} K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, \textit{The Pandyan Kingdom} (London, 1929), p. 52.

\textsuperscript{13} A. Sreedhara Menon, n. 6, p. 144.
the end of the 13th century AD. Its capital was transferred to Cochin in 1405. Calicut or Kozhikode was the major power in northern and central Kerala in the medieval period. Its rulers known as the zamorins were among the most cultured and accomplished sovereigns of Kerala.

Arrival of the Portuguese

Kerala on the eve of the arrival of the Portuguese presented the tragic picture of a feudal polity. Calicut and Venad were the really major powers at that time. The Kolathiris and the Cochin Raja had already come under the influence of Zamorins. Apart from the rulers of various kingdoms there were a number of Nair chieftains or madampis and a few Namboothiri chieftains too who exercised effective authority in their respective domains.14 The landing of Vasco da Gama at Calicut in May 1498 marked the beginning of a new epoch in the history of Kerala. The immediate object of the Portuguese was an expansion of trade. They had in their mind the grand vision of building up an empire in India by bringing the local powers under subjection. The bitter rivalry between the zamorins on the one side and the Raja of Cochin, Kolathiri, and other minor powers on the other created

conditions favourable for the partial realisation of Portuguese dream at least for a short period.\textsuperscript{15} With the help of Cochin and Kolathiri against the Zamorins and later with Zamorins against Kunjali Marakar the Portuguese were able to establish their control over Kerala. But the Dutch shattered the dreams of the Portuguese.

\textbf{Arrival of the Dutch}

The most significant event connected with the establishment of Dutch power in Kerala was the capture of Cochin from Portuguese in 1663. Internal disputes in the Cochin Royal family provided a golden opportunity for the Dutch intervention.\textsuperscript{16} The Dutch success in Cochin raised their prestige and so several local powers sought their protection. But the defeat of the Dutch in the famous battle of Kolachal (1714) by Marthanda Varma of Travancore (Venad) was a severe blow to the Dutch. By the treaty of Mavelikara the Dutch agreed not to interfere in the affairs of Travancore and also promised to help Travancore in the event of an attack by any European power. The treaty marked the complete humiliation of the Dutch and their eclipse as a political power in Kerala.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., p. 177.

\textsuperscript{16} K. V. Eapen, n. 3, p. 157.
Then Marthanda Varma entered into a treaty with Cochin in 1757.

The Mysorean invasion under Haider Ali and Tippu Sultan in the latter half of the 18th century was also due to the lack of unity among the rulers of Kerala. The fall of Malabar before Tippu prompted him to have his invasion of Travancore. But he was compelled to retreat on the news that British had declared war on Mysore. The British defeated Tippu and by the treaty of Srirangapattanam Tippu formally ceded Malabar to the British.

British Power in Kerala

Like the Portuguese and the Dutch, the English also came to Kerala for the purpose of trade. But fortunately for them they were able to control the country for a fairly long period. Malabar came into the hands of the British through the treaty of Srirangapattanam. Travancore and Cochin were also compelled to yield to the British. By the treaties of 1723 and 1795 between the British East India Company and Travancore, Travancore accepted British supremacy and the Company promised help to the state in the event of external aggression. A similar treaty was also made in 1791 between the British and the Cochin Raja. Thus during a decade or two after
the exit of Tippu the whole of Kerala came under the political control of the English East India Company. Thus by 1800 Kerala was divided into three distinct political units viz., Travancore, Cochin, and Malabar.

Administrative set up in Travancore, Cochin and Malabar from 1800-1935

The beginning of enlightened administration in Travancore may be associated with the reign of Marthanda Varma (1729-1758) and Dharma Raja (1758-1798). The death of Dharma Raja and the accession of Balaramavarma (1798-1810) witnessed a reversal of the policies of his predecessors. The new ruler was weak and inefficient and power went into the hands of his ministers. He was compelled to dismiss his ministers and appoint Velu Thampi as Dalwa or Dewan--Prime Minister--who introduced several reforms in Travancore. The next ruler was Rani Gowri Lakshmi Bai (1810-15).

The other rulers of Travancore included Rani Parvathi Bai (1815-1829), Swathi Thirunal (1829-1847), Uthram Thirunal Marthanda Varma (1847-1860), Ayilyam Thirunal (1860-1880), Vishakam Thirunal (1880-1885), Shri Mulam Thirunal (1885-1924), Sethu Lakshmi Bai (1924-1931) and

17. A. Sreedhara Menon, n. 6, p. 267.
Sri Chitra Thirunal Bala Rama Varma (1931-1949). It was in 1888, a legislative council was constituted for Travancore with Dewan as president. Its members were nominated by the king. In 1904 on the advice of the Dewan another legislative institution, the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly, was inaugurated and it consisted of both elected and nominated members.

The administrative set up of Cochin was also almost like that of the Travancore. The King acted like a constitutional head and power went into the hands of the Dewan. The foundations of a centralised system of administration was laid down during the reign of Saktan Thampuran (1790-1805). The period immediately following the death of Saktan Tampuran was one of political turmoil and hence very little progress could be achieved in the field of administration.\(^\text{18}\) The failure of the revolt of Paliyath Achan in 1809 led to the installation of his rival Kunhikrishna Menon as Dewan or Chief Minister. On mismanagement of the affairs of the State, Menon was removed from office in 1812. In that year Col. Munroe was appointed as Dewan of Cochin. From the time of Munroe's appointment, to 1947 Cochin was served by a long line of Dewans.

\(^{18}\) Ibid., p. 285.
The administrative set up in Malabar was quiet different from that of the princely states of Travancore or Cochin. Malabar became part of Madras presidency on 21 May 1800. A Collector and 9 subordinate collectors were in-charge of administration. It may, however, be made clear that the progress of British Malabar was not so spectacular as that of the princely states of Travancore and Cochin.¹⁹

Political Movements in Travancore, Cochin and Malabar

The history of political movements in modern Travancore had three phases. These are the constitutional agitations conducted by the educated middle class for equality of opportunity in public employment, the struggle for social equality waged by the lower castes and minorities and finally struggle for responsible government. The constitutional agitation which began with the presentation of the Malayali and Ezhava memorials in the last decade of the 19th Century had its genesis in the growing demand of the educated middle class for an increased share of jobs in public services.²⁰ The agitationists did not think in terms of resorting to direct action for achieving their ends. They accepted the

¹⁹. Ibid., p. 291.
method of action of the Indian National Congress in British India. The Malayali Memorial of 1891 was the first step towards this end. Its aim was to change the practice of importing Brahmins from Kannada and Tamil areas into the administrative service in Travancore. On 1 January 1891, a petition called Malayali Memorial signed by 10,028 persons belonging to all castes and creeds was presented to the Maharaja Sri Mulam Thirunal. The initiative was taken by Kandathil Varghese Mappila, G. P. Pillai, K. P. Sankara Menon and others. The attitude of the government was not helpful to the demand and non-Travancoreans were still appointed in government services. But it marked the emergence of a new educated middle class as a countable force in Travancore. The vigorous public campaigning which followed symbolised the beginning of modern political movement in the state. The submission of the memorial marks the awakening for the first time of the educated sections in Kerala. 21

The Ezhava Memorial

In spite of the active association of a few Christian leaders like Kandathil Varghese Mappila and Ezhava leaders like Palpu, the Malayali Memorial was, for all practical purposes, a Nair sponsored affair. One reason for this

was that the educated class belonged to the Nair community. Another reason was during this time, the leadership of all progressive movements in Travancore were vested in the hands of Nair community.\(^{22}\) Even if the demands of Malayali Memorial were accepted the Ezhavas could not get any benefit because they were denied entry to public service and even to public schools on grounds of caste. This prompted the Ezhava community to organise. Accordingly the Travancore Ezhava Sabha was organised under the leadership of Palpu, which presented a memorial known as Ezhava Memorial, signed by 13,176 persons to the Maharaja on 3 September 1896. This document known as the Ezhava Memorial of 1896 demanded that the Ezhavas also be made beneficiaries of all those rights and privileges which were being enjoyed by their brethren who had become converts to Christianity.\(^{23}\) The Government's reply to the Ezhava Memorial endorsed by the Dewan was given on 31 October 1896 and it reflected their traditional reactionary attitude.\(^{24}\) The Government said that any revolutionary change in the existing social order would engender caste antagonism which would not only arrest the social progress but do violence to communal harmony. Thus

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Ezhava Memorial failed to produce any immediate results. However, it marked the beginning of the long drawn out struggle to be waged by the backward classes within the community in Travancore for securing social equality and justice. It was these early efforts (Malayali Memorial and Ezhava Memorial) that laid the foundations of the subsequent and more widespread agitations for the recognition of Fundamental Rights.

Another factor that helped the awakening of political consciousness and public opinion in Travancore was the rise of newspapers. Among the journalists, K. Ramakrishna Pillai of Travancore occupied a unique position in those days. When he was the editor of Swedeshabhimani he criticised the actions of Maharaja's favourites and the corruption and nepotism of the Dewan. This led to the suppression of the paper and banishing the editor from the state. Rama Krishna Pillai lived the rest of his life as a political exile in Malabar. On 28 March 1916 he died at Cannanore an exile from the home land of Travancore. By his birth and his death he effected the emotional integration of Travancore with Malabar. He remained

27. Ibid., p. 22.
throughout his career a fighter for the freedom of expression who underwent several hardships willingly shared by his cultured wife. 28

Rise of Mahatma Gandhi on the Political Horizon of India

The rise of Mahatma Gandhi on the political horizon of India produced its echo in Kerala also. He entered Indian public life through the Indian National Congress which he dominated from 1920 onwards. 29

Rise of Indian National Congress

The Indian National Union formed by A. O. Hume in association with various national leaders in 1884 called for a conference in Pune in December 1885. As the conference received the unanimous support of all Indian leaders, it assumed the name Indian National Congress. The birth of the Indian National Congress was an unprecedented phenomenon in the political history of India. 30 It marked the entry of the educated middle class into National politics.

28. Ibid.
30. Ibid., p. 346.
From 1885 onwards the Indian National Congress met every year, its influence spreading rapidly among the people of India. Three main topics engaged its attention. (1) Representative government and expansion of the number and functions of legislative councils both in the provinces and at the centre, (2) Indianisation of higher services, (3) Indian poverty.\textsuperscript{31} When Mahatma Gandhi started his political movements in India through Congress—a Congress Committee was formed here on the initiative of such leaders like Barrister A. K. Pillai and V. Achutha Menon.

**Vaikom Satyagraha**

Satyagraha was an important weapon at the hands of Gandhi to fight against evils. Satyagraha according to Gandhi postulates the conquest of the adversary by suffering in one's own person and there is not the remotest idea of injuring the opponent.\textsuperscript{32} The object of satyagraha is to convert and not to coerce the wrong doer. Literally it means truth force and has different forms viz., non-cooperation, civil disobedience, Hijrath, fasting and strike. He used satyagraha not only against

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{32} I. Sundaram, *Gandhian Thought and Philosophy* (Delhi, 1979), p. 25.
the British but also against social evils of the land. Untouchability was a social evil and eradication of untouchability in any form was a significant goal before Gandhi.

The Indian National Congress under Mahatma Gandhi's leadership adopted eradication of untouchability as one of the main planks of its Constructive Programme. This had special relevance to Kerala where untouchability had been observed over the centuries in the most irrational and oppressive manner. There was the strange custom of denying to the untouchables the right of passage through the approach roads leading to temples. The Coconada session of the Indian National Congress (1923) had adopted a resolution calling upon Congress workers all over the country to take constructive action for the removal of untouchability. T. K. Madhavan, one of the noted members of the Congress, attended this session established personal contacts with Gandhi, C. R. Das and C. Rajagopalachari and secured official support of the Congress for the campaign against untouchability in Kerala. It was in this background that a meeting of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee met at Ernakulam in February 1924. Kelappan, T. K. Madhavan, V. Sankaran Namboodiripad and K. Velayuda Menon were specially

33. A. Sreedhara Menon, n. 20, p. 11.
authorised to tackle the problem. In accordance with the programme of Provincial Congress Committee, K. P. Kesava Menon, A. K. Pillai, K. Kelappan and Kurur Neelakantan Namboodiripad undertook a propaganda tour in Travancore and the party reached Vaikom on 28 February 1924. At that time there was a strange custom of denying to the Avarnas in the Hindu community the right of passage through the approach roads leading to the temples including Vaikom Temple. The propaganda Committee requested the Savarna leaders and Devasom authorities to remove this injustice. But their efforts proved fruitless and the leaders realised that satyagraha was the only possible course to be adopted. Thus was inaugurated the great satyagraha at Vaikom on 30 March 1924. Mahatma Gandhi blessed the struggle and extended his full moral support to the satyagrahis. Gandhi carefully watched and nursed the satyagraha at every stage.34 Gandhi congratulated and inspired the satyagrahis and asked them to change the minds of the opponents through love.35 The news of the satyagraha and the consequent arrests spread like wild fire and there was a large influx of volunteers from every part of the country. National leaders like

34. P. K. K. Menon, n. 21, p. 119.
35. K. Ramachandran Nair, Gandhijiyum Keralavum (M) (Trivandrum, 1979), p. 93.
C. Rajagopalachari, S. Srinivas Ayankar, E. V. Ramaswami Naiker and the like visited Vaikom and gave a boost to the morale of satyagrahis.

A significant development connected with Vaikom satyagraha was the Savarnajatha organised under the leadership of Mannath Padmanabhan, the leader of the Nair Service Society. The leaders of the Jatha met the Regent Maharani Setu Lakshmi Bai on 12 November 1924 and submitted a petition requesting prompt steps for eradicating untouchability. Gandhi himself visited Vaikom on 9 March 1925 and after discussions with Pitt, the Police Commissioner finalised the terms of compromise for the early withdrawal of the struggle. Accordingly the approach roads to the Vaikom Temple were thrown open to all Hindus. Gandhi expected that all states of India would follow the example of Travancore in the problem of untouchability.36 The everlasting result of the Vaikom Satyagraha was the famous proclamation of Temple Entry of 1936 which Gandhi called the bedrock of freedom.37 Gandhi said that the fame and credit received by Travancore through Temple Entry Proclamation was due to the Maharaja, his mother and the Dewan.38

36. Ibid., p. 484.
38. K. Ramachandran Nair, n. 35, p. 493.
Nivarthana Agitation

The Nivarthana agitation or Abstention Movement was a movement on the part of the Christian, Muslim and Ezhava communities to secure representation in the legislature in accordance with their numerical strength as against property qualification. The leaders of the agitation were C. Kesavan, N. V. Joseph and P. K. Kunju. They organised a joint political Congress of these three communities. The agitation spread to all parts of the state and C. Kesavan was arrested and imprisoned. Meanwhile the government appointed a Public Service Commission to ensure fair representation for the backward communities in the Public Services and also widened the franchise by reducing property qualification. In the election of 1939 the candidates of joint political Congress came out victorious and T. M. Varghese, one of the leaders of the joint political Congress became the Deputy President of the Sri Mulam Assembly.

Political Developments in Cochin

The political movements in Cochin offer almost a contrast to that of Travancore. There is no such phase in the modern history of Cochin as one marked by the
memorials in the politics of Travancore. The communal aspect associated with the movements in Travancore were also by and large absent in Cochin. Whereas the government of Travancore proceeded with liberal social reforms like Temple Entry, the government of Cochin not only followed a policy of caution in this field but even opposed the move for temple entry.

The demand for representative institutions arose in Cochin by the beginning of this century. As a result a proclamation for the formation of a Legislative Council was issued on 2 December 1920 with the approval of the Government of Madras. The Legislative Council of Cochin which was inaugurated on 3 April 1925 had 30 elected and 15 nominated members with Dewan as ex-officio president.

Beginning of Congress Activity

The national movement which gathered momentum in British India under the leadership of Gandhi had its impact on Cochin. The Kerala Provincial Congress Committee formally started functioning in 1921 and Cochin state was one of the five districts comprised in its jurisdiction. The work of the Congress was led by leaders

39. A. Sreedhara Menon, n. 20, p. 34.
40. Ibid.
like Muthedathu Narayana Menon, E. Ikkanda Warrier, Kurur Neelakantan Namboodiripad and Paliyath Cheriya Kunjunni Achan. The visit of Mahatma Gandhi to Cochin in 1925 served to generate mass enthusiasm in favour of Congress.

According to the provisions of the Government of India Act 1919 the scheme for introducing dyarchy was announced. But the system of dyarchy failed to satisfy the political aspirations of the people.

Political Developments in Malabar

The Malabar district, a part of the Madras Province of British India participated in full in the mainstream of Indian politics. The establishment of the Indian National Congress in 1885 was an event which captured the imagination of the people of Malabar. The delegates from Malabar used to attend the early annual sessions of the Congress though there was no organised political activity as such in these days. A District Congress Committee was organised in 1908, and K. P. Kesava Menon and V. Krishna Menon were the prominent leaders of Congress.

Non-Cooperation and Khilafat Movement

The assumption of leadership of the Indian National Congress by Mahatma Gandhi by 1919 symbolised the
beginning of a new era in the history of political agitation in Malabar. The decision of the Nagpur session of the Congress (1920) to give up passive constitutional methods of agitation and resort to non-violent non-cooperation as a means of achieving Swaraj sounded the signal for widespread boycott of foreign goods, courts of law and educational institutions. The Non-cooperation Movement of Malabar acquired new dimensions when the Congress and Khilafat movements decided to work together.

Malabar Rebellion

The Malabar rebellion and its suppression was a sad event in the history of Malabar. The Muslims and the Hindus suffered a lot. There is no doubt regarding the genesis of the rebellion of 1921. It was born out of police repression. Its chief cause was the excessive violence used by the authorities to suppress the Khilafat Movement and not any Janmi-Kudiyan conflict or dispute regarding mosque. When police atrocities became unbearable they gave up the vow of non-violence and decided to meet violence with violence itself.  

41. Ibid., p. 43.
Salt Satyagraha

The salt satyagraha which was launched by Mahatma Gandhi on 12 March 1930 had its impact in Kerala, Payyannur was the main centre of satyagraha in Malabar. K. Kelappan, T. R. Krishnaswami Iyer, E. Mouidu Maulawi were the leaders. The police party attacked the volunteers and manhandled them. Leaders were arrested and sentenced to nine months rigorous imprisonment. Following the Gandhi-Irwin Pact 1931 the Civil Disobedience Movement stood temporarily withdrawn.

Guruvayur Satyagraha

Guruvayur satyagraha of 1931 was a landmark in the history of Malabar. The temple was not thrown open to all. The problem of untouchability in its wretched form existed in Malabar. K. Kelappan, A. K. Gopalan and N. D. Damodaran pioneered the satyagraha. Kelappan, who did a lot for the promotion of untouchables on the basis of Gandhian ideology was the leader of Guruvayur satyagraha. Though the satyagraha did not result in the immediate opening of Guruvayur temple or other temples in


Malabar to avarnas, it helped to focus public attention on the age-long social evil of untouchability in Malabar. The sources of inspiration for the Travancore Temple Entry Proclamation of 1936 were the different movements including Guruvayur satyagraha. 45

Rise of Travancore State Congress

The Haripura session of the Indian National Congress in February 1938 resolved that while the Congress committees functioning in the Indian states should not engage themselves in parliamentary activity or direct action in the name of the Congress independent organisations may be encouraged to carry on internal struggles in these states. Gandhi's view was that the demand made by the people of princely states for responsible government was just and proper. For that purpose they should organise themselves into a movement. The active involvement of Congress in this regard would be a hindrance to achieve their aim. 46 It was under such circumstances that a meeting of prominent leaders was held in the office room of A. Narayana Pillai, a lawyer at Pulimoodu, Trivandrum in February 1938 with C. V. Kunjuraman on the chair and it was resolved to

45. Ibid.

46. EMS Namboodiripad, Indian Swathanthriya Samara Charithram (M) (Trivandrum, 1976), p. 182.
launch the Travancore State Congress with Pattom Thanu Pillai, an outstanding lawyer and public figure of Trivandrum as its first president. The committee of Indian National Congress was formally dissolved.

The Travancore State Congress started an active campaign for the achievement of responsible government in Travancore. The Dewan Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Ayyar adopted all possible measures to break up the new organisation. The Dewan tried to create communal discord by pointing out that it was a Christian dominated body. The Dewan sponsored another organisation called the Travancore National Congress in which leaders of Nair Service Society took an active part. However this policy of divide and rule on the part of Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Ayyar failed to yield dividends.

The Dewan Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Ayyar resorted to manifold measures of repression. Meetings and demonstrations were banned and A. Narayana Pillai was arrested on a charge of sedition. Leaders like K. P. Nilakanta Pillai, Anne Mascrene and M. R. Madhava Warrier were manhandled. None of these measures could dishearten the people who had rallied under the banner of

47. A. Sreedhara Menon, n. 20, p. 21.
48. Ibid.
The Dewan soon started a reign of terror to suppress the State Congress. In these circumstances the State Congress presented a memorandum to the Maharaja impressing upon him the imperative need for the early grant of responsible government and also bringing to his notice the repressive policies of his Dewan and the vagaries of his administration. The Dewan retaliated by declaring State Congress and its ally All Travancore Youth League as disloyal and subversive bodies. He cancelled the licences of Malayala Manorama and Kerala Kaumudi which published news relating to the activities of State Congress. On 26 August 1938, the State Congress started a widespread Civil Disobedience Movement. The 1938 State Congress struggle, a struggle that was far more extensive than the 1921 Malabar movement; for, while the latter was confined to certain Taluks of Malabar, the 1938 Travancore movement embraced the whole state of Travancore. The State Congress leaders like Pattom Thanu Pillai and T. M. Varghese were arrested in Trivandrum and this was followed by the arrest of other leaders elsewhere in the state. The State Congress decided to hold a massive demonstration under the

49. Ibid., p. 22.
50. Ibid.
leadership of Accamma Cherian on the birthday of the Maharaja on 12 November 1938. Having realised the gravity of the situation the government announced the withdrawal of the ban on the State Congress and the unconditional release of its leaders.

Though the ban on the State Congress and on meetings and processions had been withdrawn, the organisation was not in a position to pursue its normal political activities in the face of the arrests and other repressive measures which still continued unabated. The State Congress therefore concentrated its attention to strengthen its organisational framework. A delegation of State Congress leaders met Mahatma Gandhi and apprised him of the situation. C. P. Ramaswamy Ayyar had by now made it a condition of withdrawing the earlier memorandum which contained personal allegations against him for an amicable settlement. Gandhi advised the leaders to withdraw the memorandum in order to demonstrate that their action was not motivated by any personal malice. The senior leaders accepted Gandhi's advice but the younger elements disapproved this action and left the Congress and strengthened the ranks of the Youth League. Some of the activists with communist leanings formed themselves into a

52. A. Sreedhara Menon, n. 20, p. 24.
radical group within the league with P. Krishna Pillai as the moving spirit.

During the Quit India Movement of 1942 the prominent State Congress leaders were behind the prison bars. The radical wing of the Youth League comprised of the Communists had decided to cooperate with the government in its war efforts following the entry of the USSR in the Second World War. At the end of the war C. P. Ramaswamy Ayyar announced constitutional reforms based on universal adult suffrage with an irremovable executive. The State Congress rejected the scheme on the ground that it only sought to perpetuate the autocratic rule of the Dewan. The catchy slogan 'American Model Arabikkadalil' (American model in the Arabian sea) which rent the air in those days gave clear expression to the feelings of popular disapproval of the proposed scheme of reform. The leadership and the sacrifices of Pattom Thanu Pillai, C. Kesavan, T. M. Varghese, Accamma Cherian, A. J. John, Mamman Mappila, C. V. Kunjuraman, R. Sugathan, R. Sankar, P. T. Chacko, Anne Mascrene, Ponnara Sreedhar, P. Krishna Pillai, A. K. Gopalan, K. Damodaran, Sreekantan Nair and so on made the campaign of the State Congress for responsible government remarkable.

53. Ibid., p. 25.

Rise of the Cochin State Praja Mandal

For the establishment of responsible government in Cochin a new political organisation was formed by N. Neelakantan Iyer, V. R. Krishnan Ezhuthachan and C. Achutha Menon in 1940. It was organised by a group of young men who stood for the establishment of responsible government on the basis of universal adult franchise. On 26 January 1941 a new political organisation called the Cochin State Praja Mandal came into existence under the presidentship of V. R. Krishnan Ezhuthachan. It consisted mainly of Congressmen who had left the Cochin Congress in the wake of the latter's acceptance of dyarchy. It was resolved that the first session of the Praja Mandal be held at Irinjalakuda in January 1942. A. F. W. Dixon, the then Dewan of Cochin, banned the session but the leaders decided to go ahead with their plans for holding it. The government could not prevent the strength of the Praja Mandal through arrest and other repressive methods. During the Quit India Movement of 1942 the Praja Mandal organised several meetings and demonstrations in different parts of Cochin State.

56. A. Sreedhara Menon, n. 20, p. 39.
This helped to boost its prestige as a political party. In the election of 1945 to Cochin legislature 12 candidates of Praja Mandal got elected. The Praja Mandal members functioned as the opposition bloc in the Cochin Legislative Council. In July 1946 the annual conference of the Praja Mandal met at Eranakulam and decided to start a state wide agitation for the achievement of responsible government in Cochin. The Praja Mandal members decided to boycott the session of the legislature which scheduled to meet on 29 July 1946. The Praja Mandal organised hartals, public meetings and processions throughout Cochin and introduced a vote of no-confidence on the ministers in the legislature. When the vote of no-confidence motion got majority, the Maharaja decided to transfer all departments except law and finance into the hands of the popular ministers responsible to the legislature. The reserved subjects were to be administered by the Dewan. With the support of the progressive party and socialist party the Praja Mandal organised a coalition government on 9 September 1946 under the leadership of Panampilly Govinda Menon. On 14 August 1947 the departments of law and finance were transferred from the Dewan. As a protest the Dewan resigned and thus

59. Ibid.
60. A. Sreedhara Menon, n. 20, p. 40.
Dewanship came to an end in Cochin. Meanwhile the Praja Mandal became an organ of the Indian National Congress and in the subsequent election it won a majority in the legislature. The new government under Ikkanda Warrier came into being on 20 September 1948. By this time the Government of India with Sardar Vallabhabai Patel as the head of states ministry, had initiated steps at the national level for the integration of the Indian native princely states with the union of India. During the period of Ikkanda Warrier ministry, on 1 July 1949, the integration of Cochin with Travancore took place with the hearty cooperation of its ruler. The new United State of Travancore and Cochin was to have its capital at Trivandrum and the High Court at Ernakulam.

The Maharaja of Cochin having retired in favour of Sri Chitra Tirunal, the Maharaja of Travancore, the latter was to become the head of the united state of Travancore and Cochin with the title of Rajpramukh. The covenant of integration was signed by the two rulers in the last week of May 1949. It was made clear that the Rajpramukh would

62. A. Sreedhara Menon, n. 20, p. 43.
63. Ibid., p. 44.
64. Ibid.
have no hereditary claim to this office. The Legislative Assembly of the new state was to consist of all the members of the Representative Body of Travancore and the Legislative Assembly of Cochin at the time of integration. The Rajpramuk was to function as a constitutional head. The members of the outgoing ministries in the two states constituted the new ministry of Travancore Cochin with T. K. Narayana Pillai who headed the Travancore Ministry at the time as the Prime Minister. The new head of state and members of his Cabinet were sworn in on 1 July 1949. The event marked the end of monarchy and the beginning of democratic rule in the history of Kerala.

65. Ibid. p. 45.
66. Ibid.