

## FORMATION OF *KOCHI RAJYA PRAJAMANDALAM*

The advances of the national movement in British India, and the accompanying increase in political consciousness about democracy, Responsible Government and civil liberties had an inevitable impact on the people of the princely states. This led to the formation of numerous local organizations in the states. Some of the states in which *Prajamandals* or State Peoples Conferences were organized were Mysore, Kathiawad, Baroda, Hyderabad, the Deccan states, Jamnagar, Indore, and Nawanagar. State Peoples Conferences were held at the time of the annual sessions of the Indian National Congress and anybody present could be enrolled as a delegate from the states.<sup>1</sup> These processes came to a head in December 1927, with the convening of the All India States People's Conference (AISPC) which was attended by political workers from different states. The men chiefly responsible for this initiative were G R Abhayanagar, Maiklal Kotari, and Balwanthrai Mehtha. The conference dwelt at length the difficulties of the Congress in dealing with the problems of the princely states. The conference therefore advised the people of the states to be prepared to stand on their legs, and work for their liberties and emancipation.<sup>2</sup>

Regarding the state people affairs, Gandhi wrote "I would like the state to grant autonomy to their subjects and would like the princes to regard themselves to be trustees of the people whom they rule drawing for themselves only a small or

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<sup>1</sup> File No.17/1947, *AISPC Papers*, NMML

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*

definite percentage of income have certainly not lose hopes that the princes will deem it a pride to become real trustees of their people. I do not seek to destroy their states. I believe in the conversion of individual or societies.”<sup>3</sup>

The first All India States Peoples Conference brought to the surface the popular demand for Responsible Government and civil liberties under the aegis of the Indian rulers setting the tone of agitation for popular rule in the Indian states. The British government and the Princes seemed to be interested in maintaining the status quo. The people in British India had secured elementary constitutional concessions which they desired to enlarge, while the people in the states were demanding Responsible Government for themselves as well as a fair share of voice in any future constitution for India. The Princes were disinclined to satisfy their subjects on the points, even though, Viscount Peel in his speech in the House of Lords reminded them of the need for raising the standard of administrative efficiency, demanded by enlightened public opinion. The people of Baroda, Mysore, Hyderabad, Travancore and other states held a number of meetings to secure Responsible Government from their respective rulers with the approval of the British government.

The South Indian States Peoples Conference was held under the auspicious of the Travancore States Peoples Committee at Trivandrum, in 1929 under the Presidentship of Sir Viswesarayya<sup>4</sup>. In his presidential address at Trivandrum, Mr. Viswesarayya demanded that the state government should at least be a constitutional monarchy associated with representative institutions and the

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<sup>3</sup> File No. G /27/1934, part 2 *AICC Papers*, NMML

<sup>4</sup> At the time of Montague Chelmsford reforms he was associated with a committee of princes and ministers of Indian states, in the discussion of the problems of the status of the states.

legislation of the central government as far as they were paying taxes indirectly to the Government of India.<sup>5</sup> At its Lahore session in 1929, the Congress changed its goal from Dominion Status to 'complete independence'. On 27 February 1931 the AISPC presented a memorandum to Mahatma Gandhi, stating that the Congress would be untrue to itself if it did not seek the protection of the states people on new constitution for India.<sup>6</sup>

As pressure from the state people were mounting up, the Indian National Congress took a serious view of the grievances of the people. The issue of Responsible Government in Indian princely states became a matter of great concern and it reflected in the resolution at the Nagpur session of 1920, which urged the sovereign princes of India to take immediate steps to establish full Responsible Government in their states.<sup>7</sup> From there onwards, the grievances of the people of the princely states engaged the attention of the Congress and it exhorted the ruling princes to take immediate steps to introduce Responsible Government based on representative institutions in the states and to issue immediately proclamations or enact laws guarantying elementary and fundamental rights of citizenship, such as rights of association, free speech, free press and security of person and property. This session of the Congress further assured the people of the Indian states of its sympathy with and support in their legitimate and peaceful struggle for the attainment of full Responsible Government in the states.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See the presidential address of the Viswesarayya at the South Indian States people Conference, 1929.

<sup>6</sup> Memorandum of the Indian States Peoples Conference presented to the working committee of the Indian National Congress., 27 February 1931, Bombay, AISPC.

<sup>7</sup> Resolution of the Congress, AICC and the working regarding the Indian states, *AICC Papers* G.351938, vii, p.121, NMML.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.115-117.

### **Formation of political parties in Cochin**

The political awakening among the masses and the rise of nationalism led to the formation of a number of political parties in Cochin. The *Maharajas* of Cochin always tried to promote political activities in the state. Emergence of Indian National Congress as an all India organization and the commendable work of Malayalam newspapers prepared the ground for the growth of political parties in Cochin.<sup>9</sup>

A number of political parties like Cochin Congress, Cochin State Congress, the Progressive Party, The Unionist Party and The Democratic Party were formed in Cochin besides the branches of Communist and Socialist parties.<sup>10</sup> Among them, the Cochin Congress functioned as a branch of the Indian National Congress, till the formation of *Kochi Rajya Prajamandalam*. The Cochin State Congress formed in 1936, played a vital role in the genesis and growth of the freedom struggle in Cochin. The leaders of the Cochin State Congress were T K Nair, K Aiyappan, Panambilli Govinda Menon, E Ikkanda Warriar, P Kumaran Ezhuthachan, K M Ibrahim and T C Iyyukutty. The Cochin State Congress was not connected with the Indian National Congress.<sup>11</sup> The Cochin State Congress functioned as an opposition party and they held their first annual conference on 8 February 1939, under the Presidentship of Mr. Raghava Menon, M L A of Madras.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> S. Raimon (et.al), *History of Freedom Movement in Kerala*, Vol.3, 1938-1948 p. 207.

<sup>10</sup> K P Madhavan Nair 75<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebration Committee, *K P Madhavan Nair Upaharagrandham*, 1979.

<sup>11</sup> C Achyutha Menon, *Smaranayude Edukal*, (Mal) pp.77-78.

<sup>12</sup> *Fortnightly Report of the first half of February*, 1939, p.1.

The Cochin Congress Party had its first annual convention at Thrissur in the second week of May 1940. K T Bhasyam, the President of the Mysore State Congress, in his inaugural address pleaded for the amalgamation of the Cochin Congress and the Cochin State Congress, as there was practically no difference between the two.<sup>13</sup> He said that with a single united party in the state, the attainment of Responsible Government would be easier. The convention passed a resolution thanking the *Maharaja* and the Diwan for the partial Responsible Government granted and requested the *Maharaja* to grant full Responsible Government without delay.<sup>14</sup>

When elections were to be conducted to the Cochin Legislative Council, mainly two parties, Cochin State Congress and Cochin Congress Party contested in the elections. Cochin Congress succeeded with Ambattu Sivarama Menon as the first Minister.<sup>15</sup> The performance of Dr. A R Menon, as the Minister for rural development was not very satisfactory and he was replaced by T K Nayar, as the minister for rural development.<sup>16</sup>

In December 1939, a third party, Progressive Party, was formed in the Cochin Legislative Council. The Progressive Party was composed of members who seceded from the Cochin Congress Party and the Cochin State Congress Party with a few independents.<sup>17</sup> The Cochin State Congress Party moved a motion of no confidence in the Cochin Legislative Council against minister for the transferred subject, on the ground that the minister had not accomplished as much as expected

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<sup>13</sup> F R No.10/40, Second half of May 1940, see also *Mathrubhumi*, 8 June, 1938, p.3.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2.

<sup>15</sup> F R No.10/40 May, 1940, See also *Mathrubhumi*, 8 June 1938, p.3.

<sup>16</sup> *Record of the Administration of the Cochin State*, 24 November 24, 1942, p.80.

<sup>17</sup> *Fortnightly Reports*, 23/29, First half of December, 1939.

of him. The official members and the leaders of the Progressive Party abstained from voting and the motion was defeated by 22 votes as against ten.<sup>18</sup> The second annual meeting of the Cochin State Congress was presided over by the Raja of Nilambur, MLA (Central), and he also advised the two parties to join together for achieving the goal of Responsible Government. The meeting passed a resolution urging the introduction of full Responsible Government in the state.<sup>19</sup> In February 1940, a few leaders from Cochin Congress and Cochin State Congress joined together and formed a new party known as the Unionist Party. Puthur Achyutha Menon, K P Viswambharan, A K Devassy, S Viswanatha Aiyyer, etc. were the leaders of the party. This party had the strength of 24 members in the Legislative Council and T K Nayar was its leader. There was also a District Congress Committee in Cochin under KPCC. But because of its policy of non interference in the affairs of princely states, it was not able to conduct any political activity against the government.<sup>20</sup>

In the neighboring state of Travancore, a party called Travancore State Congress was formed in February 1938, on the model of *Prajamandalam*, for achieving democratic government in Travancore. The constitution of the party is similar to that of Indian National Congress. Pattom A Thanu Pillai was elected as its President and an eleven member working committee was also elected to coordinate, guide and control the activities of the State Congress. The object of the State Congress was the establishment of Responsible Government under the aegis of His Highness *Maharaja*, and this was to be achieved by peaceful means. The

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 7/40, first half of April, 1940.

<sup>19</sup> F R No. 12/40, 1940.

<sup>20</sup> Perunna K. N Nair, *Keralathile Congress Prasthanam*, (Mal.) p. 56.

party was basically secular and humanistic and upheld the principles of popular sovereignty and equality in all walks of life.<sup>21</sup> The working committee of the State Congress submitted a memorandum to the *Maharaja* of Travancore in May, 1938, on behalf of the people for the introduction of Responsible Government and modernization of the system of administration.<sup>22</sup> There were a number of organizations formed in Travancore against Travancore State Congress. The higher officials of Travancore state service took initiative to organize *Bhaktha Sangham* (Legislative Union) consisting of Government servants and loyal subjects. The aim of the organization was to inculcate in the masses a strong sense of deep attachment of the person and the throne to the *Maharaja* and to deprecate all attempts that may be made by the organizations like State Congress, Youth league etc to create disturbance and spread disaffection in the country against royal house and the government established in Travancore.<sup>23</sup> The Travancore State People's League was inaugurated on 13 April 1938, at Changanassery, with a view to make propaganda against all anti government movements and for maintaining peace in the country.<sup>24</sup>

### **Formation of *Kochi Rajya Prajamandalam***

None of the political parties formed in Cochin did not conduct any political activity or tried to work for the attainment of Responsible Government in the Cochin state. Under these circumstances, the Congress leaders in Cochin realized the need for the formation of a new organization for attaining Responsible

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<sup>21</sup> *The Hindu*, 25 Feb, 1938.

<sup>22</sup> *Travancore Today*, pp.1-3.

<sup>23</sup> Note of the Chief Secretary to Government to the Land and Income Tax Commissioner, 31 October, 1938, C S File No. 314/38, KSA

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*

Government in Cochin.<sup>25</sup> The newspapers published from Cochin on January 23 1941, contained the request of the Congress leaders that ‘time had already exceeded to form a new organization in Cochin, in this existing political situation and a meeting of the national leaders of Cochin will be organized at Cochin on January 26 to think about the formation of a new organization’.<sup>26</sup> The initiative came mostly from the youngsters because they were frustrated with the performance of ministers, who represented both the Cochin Congress and the Cochin State Congress. V. R Krishnan Ezhuthachan, the Cochin District Congress Committee President, published a statement that highlighted the pathetic situation of political parties in Cochin, through the columns of news papers.

On 26 January 1941, a meeting of the young Congressmen was convened at *Padinjare Nadakavil*, Thrissur. It was attended by 30 young men and was presided over by V. R Krishnan Ezhuthachan. Leaders like S. Neelakanda Aiyer, C. Kuttan Nair, K N Nambeesan, M N Sivaraman Nair, T Parameswara Menon, G S Dharasingh, E Gopalakrishna Menon, Fransis Thottungal, K E Narayanan, C P Ummar, K V Vittaprabhu, E Gopala Menon, C SekharaWarrier, K P Fransis, E Sankarankutty Warriar, AC Antony, Ullatikulam Mathai, M A Kaku, P Narayana Menon, T S Bandhu, P R Damodara Menon, M A George, Ramu Painikal, Vattaparambil Sankarankutty Menon, V P Joseph, I P Balagopal, C Ramadas, A F Thomas, C A Kuttunni, and V K Achyutha Menon participated in the conference. V R Krishnan Ezhuthachan said in his speech:

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<sup>25</sup> P Narayanan Nair, *Aranootandilude*, (Mal.) Thrissur, 1973, p.142.

<sup>26</sup> *Kochi Rajya Prajamandalam*, *op.cit*, p.77.



“It has become a necessity to unite the people of Cochin State to achieve their political aspirations. The existing political parties like Cochin Congress, Cochin State Congress and the Progressive party did not follow the path of Indian National Congress and the people were highly dissatisfied with their activities. So it was necessary to build up an organization which will lead them to achieve their political rights. In this situation we have to think about the formation of a new organization like *Kochi Rajya Prajamandalam*.” Thus in 1941, a new political party named *Kochi Rajya Prajamandalam* was formed.<sup>27</sup>

The *Prajamandalam* was against the sovereignty of the *Raja*. It wanted to ensure equality, social justice and welfare to all. The party resolved to end landlordism and consequent exploitation. Respect for minorities and a strong stand against the communal disharmony were the hallmarks of the party. G S Dharasingh proposed the name and he himself introduced the resolution to that effect in the meeting. The party decided not to contest in the elections until the *Prajamandalam* gained strength as a mass organization. A committee was appointed to draft the constitution of the *Prajamandalam*.<sup>28</sup>

The *Kochi Rajya Prajamandalam* was formally inaugurated at *Manikandanalthara* at Thrissur on 9 February 1941. S Neelakanda Aiyer was appointed as its president and V R Krishnan Ezhuthachan as its secretary. G S Dharasingh and M.A Kaku were appointed as Joint Secretaries, and E Gopalakrishna Menon and P Naryana Menon were the conference Secretaries,

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<sup>27</sup> *Mathrubumi*, 3 February 1941.

<sup>28</sup> *AISPC Papers*, p.501.

and Ullatikulam Mathai was its treasurer. Other prominent leaders of *Prajamandalam* were E Ikkanda Warriar, M.K Menon, P.R Krishnan, K Aiyappan, and C. A Ouseph .<sup>29</sup> P Madhavan Nair, C.R Iyyuni, C. Kuttan Nair, Parameswara Menon, Panambilli Govinda Menon

V R Krishnan Ezhuthachan stated in the first meeting of *Prajamandalam* that the aim of Indian National Congress was to establish swaraj. This swaraj is also meant for the 561 princely states of India. Though the princely states were under the control of a *Raja*, they too were controlled by the British. So the people of Princely states have to make their own contributions to the freedom struggle. As the policy of Indian National Congress was not to interfere in the internal affairs of the princely states, the people of Cochin have to form a separate organization for achieving the goal of Responsible Government.<sup>30</sup> The *Prajamandalam* party wanted to organize many socio economic activities. Popularisation of *Khadi*, Anti liquor movements, progress of education, Improvement in the condition of labourers and factory workers etc. were included in its agenda.

From January 1941 onwards, meetings of the organization were held all over the state and more than 100 meetings were held in six months. In connection with the Gandhijayanthi celebrations, the *Prajamandalam* observed 4<sup>th</sup> October 1941, as Responsible Day. The meetings organized by the *Prajamandalam* strongly criticized the Government policy against the Responsible Government.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> *Fortnightly Reports of the Madras State Agency*, 9/1941.

<sup>30</sup> *Dheenabandhu*, 1942, p. 2.

<sup>31</sup> Perunna K N Nair, *Keralathile Congress Prasthanam*, p.139.

The formation of *Prajamandalam* evoked mixed responses from different quarters. On the one side, it was hailed as a mobile venture on the part of the youngsters who were really dedicated to the cause of the people. Leaders like Sahodaran Ayyappan felt that when certain persons were not able to achieve their intentions, they proceeded to the formation of a new party. The Cochin Diwan and the administrative bodies were against the formation of the *Prajamandalam*. Even the people's Minister, Dr.A.R Menon, ridiculed the formation of *Prajamandalam*.<sup>32</sup> After the formation of *Prajamandalam*, an office was opened at Thrissur. But most of the people of Cochin didn't show any trust in *Prajamandalam* because the parties like Cochin Congress and Cochin State Congress were a total failure.<sup>33</sup>

V R Krishan Ezhuthachan identified our distinct features in the formation of *Kochi Rajya Prajamandalam*. It was not concerned with the sovereign power of the *Maharaja*, as he was against the attainment of full Responsible Government. It was formed not for the mere attainment of the Responsible Government, but to ensure the socio- economic equality and welfare of the people, It was against the exploitation of the Jenmis capitalists and feudal forces, It wanted to champion the cause of affiliated section of the society and thereby attain social justice. It will not contest in the elections and take part in the exercise of power till the attainment of popular support. They also took up the question of agrarian reforms and formulated the demands of the tenants in connection with the Tenancy Reforms Act in force and organized a state wide *jatha* to popularize these demands. Thus arose the first

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<sup>32</sup> M.K Sanu, *Sahodaran Aiyappan*, (Mal.), p. 63.

<sup>33</sup> Perunna K N Nair, *Keralathile Congress Prasthanam*, *op.cit.*, p.40.

independent class organization of the peasantry in Cochin the 'Cochin State *Karshaka Sabha*'.<sup>34</sup>

Within a few days after the formation of *Prajamandalam* the walls of Cochin state were filled with the slogans like 'abdicate the local rulers' 'Down with imperialism', 'Expel the British' etc. C.Kuttan Nair, one of the important leader of *Prajamandalam*, was arrested and sentenced for more than one year.<sup>35</sup> It was during this time that few students of *Maharajas* and Trippunithura Colleges were dismissed from the College because of their participation in the independence day celebrations on January 26 1941, at Trippunithura. P Sekharan, E S Gopalan, N V S Sankarankutty Warriar etc were dismissed from the Trippunithura College. The *Prajamandalam* working committee meeting held at Ernakulam on April 2, protested against the dismissal of the students.<sup>36</sup> The meeting also demanded the passing of Verumpattakudiyan bill which was presented in the Cochin Legislative Council.<sup>37</sup>

In 1941, heavy monsoons in Cochin state led to floods and it caused destructions in various parts of the state. It caused loss of life and property, destruction of road, railway and communication.<sup>38</sup> During this period the *Prajamandalam* concentrated their attention on relief and welfare measures. The Cochin government began various welfare measures but it didn't reach all. For this purpose, the *Prajamandalam* party formed the Cochin flood relief committee and worked actively among the people. The Madras Education Minister, C J Varkey

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<sup>34</sup> *Dheenabandhu, Prajamandalam Visheshalprathi*, 1948 p.5.

<sup>35</sup> Kerala History Association, *Keralachritram*, (Mal) p.761.

<sup>36</sup> Ravi Kuttikad, *Maharajasinu Pranayapurvam*, Ernakulam, 2000 p.167.

<sup>37</sup> *Kochi Rajya Prajamandalam, op.cit.*, p.31.

<sup>38</sup> *Fortnightly Reports*, F R No. 10/41.

was elected as its President, V R Krishnan Ezhuthachan and C Achytha Menon as its Secretaries and S Neelakanda Aiyer as its treasurer.

The *Prajamandalam* leaders like V R, Krishnan Ezhuthachan, C Achyutha Menon, and G Dharasingh, visited the flood affected areas, collected information and prepared a report on the destruction and submitted it to the government. Their report stated that 50000 houses were destroyed, and fifteen lakhs Rupees was the estimated loss. Rupees Fifty lakhs was the loss of the farmers and agriculture, and about 50 people lost their life.<sup>39</sup> They printed small pamphlets and through it requested for economic aid. The *Prajamandalam* workers collected rice, clothes, medicines, building materials, seeds for agriculturists, instruments for laborers, and distributed them among the people. K P Menon in his article '*Thohzilalikal Desiya Nethrutwathil*' in '*Prajamandalam Smaranakal*,' had written that the *Prajamandalam* workers actively worked in the medical unit under the leadership of Dr. V R Narayana Menon, against the spreading of cholera'. The *Prajamandalam* workers reached everywhere with Ayurveda and Homeopathy medicines against measles. The *Prajamandalam* leaders' engaged in the famine relief activities for about five to six months. The *Prajamandalam* leaders also gave assistance to the workers of Sree Ramakrishna Mission who had visited Cochin during that period.<sup>40</sup> The *Prajamandalam* workers received aid from Madras, Bombay, Ceylon etc. This helped the *Prajamandalam* party to get the confidence of the people in the party.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> P S Velayudhan, *E Ikkanda Warriar*, Biography, p.27.

<sup>40</sup> *Prajamandalama Charitra Rachanasamithi*, *Prajamandalama Smaranakal*, (Mal.) p.120.

<sup>41</sup> *Report of Cochin Flood Relief Committee*, R A E.

The Cochin flood relief committee held its meeting under the presidship of M Madhava Prabhu in the Cochin Municipal Office. The meeting discussed the work of the central relief committee, *taluk* committee, revenue department, panchayat members etc. According to their estimate the assistance given by the Relief Committee was following:

Table- 2.1

## Financial Assistance given by the relief committee

	Taluks	Destructed houses	Grant given in Rs.
1	Cochi, Kanayyanoor	6774	25288
2	Mukndapuram	12469	48374
3	Trissivaperur	11304	41869
4	Talappily	3354	13141
5	Chittor	82	435
6	Kodungaloor	2506	5656
7	Total	36489	134763

*Source: Mathrubhumi, 17 June 1941.*

To distribute the financial assistance houses were divided in to 1000 central units and the school headmasters of the *taluks* were given the duty to distribute this aid.<sup>42</sup>

In the villages of Cochin, agriculture dominated over other economic activities. During this time the farmers of Cochin faced so many problems. Tenants became the victims of rack renting, eviction, poverty and starvation. After meeting the cultivation expenses and paying the rent to the land lord, the tenant cultivators

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<sup>42</sup> *Mathrubhumi, 17 June 1941.*

get absolutely nothing.<sup>43</sup> In many cases he may even run in to debt. L M Pylee, a member of the Cochin Legislative Council, presented a resolution in 1938 which clearly explained the pitiable condition of the agricultural labourers.<sup>44</sup> A number of *Prajamandalam* leaders like K M Ibrahim, P Kumaran Ezhuthachan and K T Mathew put forward the question of farmers in the Legislative Council. Soon after the formation of *Kochi Rajya Prajamandalam*, it was decided to form a separate organization of agricultural labourers for demanding their rights.<sup>45</sup> As a result of this, a meeting of the *Prajamandalam* held at Avinissery, under the leadership of C Kuttan Nair, formed a new organization called Cochin Karshaka Sabha. V R Krishnan Ezhuthachan was elected as its first president and C Achytha Menon as its General Secretary. The committee printed and distributed short pamphlets about the problem of agricultural laborers and worked actively among the agriculturalists. The pamphlets printed by the *Prajamandalam* workers explained briefly about the problems connected with the agriculture.<sup>46</sup> The government was not giving proper attention to the problem of agricultural laborers. Along with agricultural products like tapioca, rice and pulses, products like coconut and arcunut, were produced on a larger scale intending the market. The agricultural department which was established for the improvement of agriculture was not giving proper attention in the implementation of modern agricultural products, better seeds, manure, modern agricultural implements, modern cultivation methods etc.. Seed, animals, wages, arms and manure were the main items of expenditure connected with agriculture. But most of the farmers borrow seed and they do not own it by himself. The expenditure of cultivation increased after the war.

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<sup>43</sup> EMS Nambudiripad, *Kerala Yesterday Today and Tomorrow*, Culcutta, 1968, p.95

<sup>44</sup> PCLC, Vol. No.1-111, part 1, 1938

<sup>45</sup> V R Krishnan Ezhuthachan, *Athmakatha*, p.195

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p.196

The following table shows the increase of expenditure

Table- 2.2  
Expenditure in 1945 compared with that of 1931

Item	Expenditure in 1935	Expenditure in 1945
Seed	1.20ps	Rs.3.00
Manure	0.10ps	0.40ps
Dung	0.06	0.40ps
Ash	26ps	0.80ps
Animals		
Ox	0.50ps	Rs.3.00
Bull	0.50ps	2.50ps
Wage of ploughing	0.60ps	2.80ps
Labour cost		
Male	0.20ps	Rs.1.00
Female	0.40ps	1.40ps
Cost of living		
Dress	Rs.3.00	Rs.12.00
Rice	Rs.3.80ps	Rs.13.00
Coconut	0.80ps	Rs.1.60 ps
Arcunut	0.20ps	Rs.8.00
Banana	Rs.1.80ps	Rs.5.00
Jackfruit	Rs.10.00	Rs.50.00
Mango	0.40ps	Rs.1.40ps
Pulses	0.80ps	Rs.2.80ps
Horse gram	0.16ps	0.80ps

*Source: V R Krishnan Ezhuthachan, Athmakatha, p.208*

The above table shows that when the price of rice increased by 3 percent, the expenditure of agriculture increased by 5 percent. The price of other products also



increased with agricultural price. This shows that the feudal lords and big agriculturist can survey only in this situation.<sup>47</sup>

The Verumpattkudiyan bill which was presented in the Cochin Legislative Council in 1940 was of no use to the tenants of Cochin.<sup>48</sup> *The Cochin Karshaka Sabha* strongly protested against the bill. The leaders of *Cochin Karshaka Sabha* demanded permanent rights of tenants in their land. They organized many rallies and protest meetings. Again on 13 February 1943, the Verumpattkudiyan bill was again presented in the Legislative Council and passed.<sup>49</sup>

The first annual meeting of the *Prajamandalam* was to be held at Iringalakuda in January 1942. But A F W Dixon, the Diwan of Cochin banned the meeting. The Diwan invited the *Prajamandalam* president S Neelakanda Aiyyer and Secretary V R Krishnan Ezhuthachan to discuss about some important matters relating to the annual meeting of *Kochi Rajya Prajamandalam*. He pointed out three important reasons to ban the *Prajamandalam* meeting. 1) The *Prajamandalam* meeting will make an objection against the price control measures introduced by the government. 2) During the war time the meeting will draw away the attention of the people and the government against the naval attacks and other safety measures. 3) Diwan has arrived just before two and a half months ago in Cochin and he need more time to introduce measure which was helpful to the people. So he need some time to introduce such measures, before a political upheaval.

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<sup>47</sup> V R Krishnan Ezhuthachan, *op.cit*, p.208

<sup>48</sup> *Proceedings of Cochin Legislative Council.*, Vol.IV, part 2, ,April 1 1940

<sup>49</sup> *The Huzur Secretariat File*,14/926/16183/1941/law, also see the Fortnightly Reports of the Madras State Agency, ending on 15 February, 1943.

In the Fortnightly Reports of the Madras State Agency on 15 January 1942 it was stated that “it was understood that the *Kochi Rajya Prajamandalam* and the Cochin Karshakasabha were carrying propaganda likely to create disaffection against His Majesty’s Government and the annual conference of the *Prajamandalam* was to take place on 10<sup>th</sup> \ 11<sup>th</sup> January. On 3 January, the Cochin Government issued an order prohibiting the members of the association from holding or taking part in any public meetings or assemblies for one month, without obtaining the written permission of the Government.”<sup>50</sup>

Following the order, a number of *Prajamandalam* leaders including the president and secretary were arrested. The *Prajamandalam* president S Neelakanda Aiyyer was arrested in front of the Iringalakuda police station.<sup>51</sup> But the *Prajamandalam* was rather determined to hold the meetings on the appointed day at Iringalakuda itself. A F W Dixon, the Diwan mobilized the armed forces at large numbers and took all the precautionary measures to prevent the first annual meeting.<sup>52</sup> The *Prajamandalam* leaders who started from Thrissur, Chalakkudy, Kodungalloor, Cochin, and Trippunithura to take part in the meeting were arrested by the police on the way itself. Some of the leaders arrested include T S Bandhu, P Narayana Menon, N V S Warriar, K.Karunakaran, E.Raman Kutty, K Gopi, E P Menon, A V Menon, P S N Nambudiri, C.S Warriar, N N Kammath, and I G Paili.<sup>53</sup> But, instead of all these arrests and harassment, Gopalakrishna Menon, V Sankrarakutty Menon, and M T Kochumani, succeeded in entering the venue at

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<sup>50</sup> *Fortnightly Reports* FRNo.1/42 January 15.

<sup>51</sup> *Matrubhumi*, 11, January, 1941.

<sup>52</sup> *Prajamandala charitrarajanasamithi, Prajamandalasmaranakal* .p.103.

<sup>53</sup> *Mathrubhumi*, 11, January 1941,

the *Aiyankavumaidanam* at Iringalakuda by 6 'O'clock in the evening and hurled the National flag. Thereafter they shouted the slogans like '*Kochi Rajya Prajamandalam Jai*', '*Bharath Matha Ki Jai*', and '*Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai*'.<sup>54</sup>

Gopalakrishna Menon announced the inauguration of the first annual meeting of the *Prajamandalam*. Though the leaders were arrested and subjected to most brutal treatment, they succeeded in breaking the ban. Later, the Diwan understood that the ban on *Prajamandalam* would affect the world war activities. So, on January 12 1942, the ban on the *Prajamandalam* was withdrawn by A F W Dixon and the *Prajamandalam* prisoners were released.<sup>55</sup> When the annual meeting of the *Prajamandalam* was inaugurated at Iringalakuda, at the same day, a meeting of the *Prajamandalam* leaders at Hajurjetty ground, Ernakulam protested against the Government's decision to ban the annual meeting of *Prajamandalam*.<sup>56</sup> The nationalist leaders like Sarojini Naidu, Dr. Pattabhi Sitharamayya, Pandit Govind Vallabha Bhatt, Balwanth Rai Mehatha, Kamaladevi Chathopadhaya and Dr. K B Menon, send messages to the *Prajamandalam* for its victory in the first annual meeting. The *Prajamandalam* declared that its objective was to work constitutionally. Resolutions were passed by the *Prajamandalam* demanding an open enquiry in to the conduct of the police.

On 14 August 1942, public meetings and processions were banned at Cochin. The *Prajamandalam* conducted meetings and processions even after the imposition of the ban.<sup>57</sup> A series of meetings were conducted at different parts of

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid* ., p.104.

<sup>55</sup> *Fortnightly Reports*, FR No.1/42, 31, January.

<sup>56</sup> *Kochi Rajya Prajamadalam*, p.111.

<sup>57</sup> *Fortnightly Reports*, F R No. 9/42.

the state. The ban lasted till 29 August 1945. Meetings were held at Thrissur and Iringalakuda. The leaders who were released from jail send a telegram to the Diwan of Cochin to make an enquiry regarding the ban on *Prajamandalam* and the arrest and brutal treatment of *Prajamandalam* leaders. The Diwan requested the *Prajamandalam* leaders to co-operate with the war efforts.<sup>58</sup> On February 11 the *Prajamandalam* observed as the All Cochin Dettinu day against the arrest of the *Prajamandalam* leader C Kuttan Nair.<sup>59</sup> As a result C Kuttan Nair was released from jail by February last week.

The *Kochi Rajya Prajamandalam* organized many constructive activities too. The Indian National Congress under the leadership of Gandhi, had given much importance to the constructive activities. The party had given importance to popularization of Khadhi, Untouchability, Anti liquor movements, and Hindu Muslim unity. All Cochin *Gramasevasangham* played an important role in organizing the constructive activities. Popularization of Khadhi was already started in Cochin after the formation of a District Congress committee in 1921. Thrissur, Ernakulam and Mattancheri were the centers of Khadi . Avinissery was the main center of weaving. The weaving activities were organized under Cochin Khadhi Grama Vyavasaya Association. Kurur Neelakandan Nambudiripad, W P Ignatius, T K Anathanarayanan, (Khaddar Ambi), M Kartyayani Amma, Anthapai, E IkkanaWarrier, etc. were the main Khadi workers during the period 1920, and V R Krishnan Ezhuthachan, K Sankar, G R Krishna Aiyyer, G S Dharasingh,

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<sup>58</sup> Kerala History Association, *Keralacharitram*, pp.761-762.

<sup>59</sup> *Kochi Rajya Prajamandalam, Op.cit.*, p.20.

M K Menon, C R Narayanan, T N Raman Ezhuthachan, Unni A Ramakrishnan, K L Poulouse etc. were the workers during the period .<sup>60</sup>

The traditional weavers of Kutthabmbilli and Eravathode were migrated to Avinissery and engaged in weaving activities. There were weaving centers at Thrippunithara, Mattancheri, Palluruthi Kumbalangi, Cheriakadavu, Kodungaloor Cherppu, Marathakara, Ernakulam, Chowra, Avinissery, Olarikara, Ambalapuram and Perumbilavu, under the direct control of Cochin District Congress committee. There was a weaving center at Cherppu under the direct control of the Cochin government. It was the result of a legislation passed by E Ikkanda Warriar to promote weaving at the schools of Cochin and to boost the Khadi village industries. Later the Khadhi Grama Vyavasaya association transferred its activities to *Akhila Bharatha Charka Sangham*. After the formation of *Kochi Rajya Prajamandalam*, a working committee was organized under its banner for organizing constructive activities. R Krishnan Aiyer, K N Nambeesan, V R Krishnan Ezhuthachan, M Pavizham and Kumari Kamala, were the members of the committee. The committee reorganized the constructive work programmes the committee popularized weaving of Khadi, opened new weaving centers at Thrissur, and Ernakulam ,tried to bring independent weaving centers under the control of Charka Sangham, and made a register of Khadi weavers. During the visit of Krishnadas Jaju, the *Akhila Bharatha Charkasangham* Secretary, meetings of the Khadi workers were organized.

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<sup>60</sup> Prajamandala Chaitra Rajanasamithi, *Prajamandalamasmaranakal*, p. 379.

As part of the Second World War efforts, the Congress organized National service societies. A meeting of the *Prajamandalam* and the Cochin Congress committee was held on February 8 at Thrissur, K A Damodara Menon, the editor of *Matrubhumi* inaugurated the All Cochin National Service Society. It tried to build up National service societies at different parts of Cochin. The aim of these societies was to promote agriculture which would help to solve the food deficiency during the world war period and it also gave training to the people to defend themselves from the attacks through air.

In February 1942, a no confidence motion was moved in the Cochin Legislative Council against the people's minister Dr. A.R Menon by T K Nair.<sup>61</sup> The resolution was passed and A R Menon resigned. T K Nair became the next minister and he continued in this post till July 11 1945. After the appointment of Cripps Mission, the *Prajamandalam* observed April 19 1942 as *Naturajyayaprajinam* in order to get the attention of the British Government towards the question of Responsible Government. The *Prajamandalam* organized meetings and passed resolutions in different parts of the country on this topic. The *Prajamandalam* also organized protest meetings against the prohibition of the publication of *Mathrubhumi* by the Madras government.<sup>62</sup> C Kuttan Nair, Moothedath Narayana Menon, Vemblassery Achutha Menon, Prof. P J George etc participated in the meeting. There was also a strike organized at Cochin against the arrest of K P R Gopalan in the Morazha case. There was also a police strike at Cochin during this period, because of the inadequate payment given

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<sup>61</sup> *Fortnightly Reports*, F R 7/40

<sup>62</sup> *Kochi Rajya Prajamandalam, op.cit;* p.118.

to them. Many meetings and processions took place in the state during this period. So the Cochin Government banned all the meetings and processions for six months. The *Prajamandalam* demanded the withdrawal of the ban because it would affect the war activities.<sup>63</sup>

After the formation of the *Prajamandalam*, the right and the leftist forces worked together in *Karshakasabha* and Cochin District Congress Committee,<sup>64</sup> In 1941, with the attack of Hitler on Russia in the Second World War, the attitude of the communist leaders changed and they began to associate within the war efforts. In 1942, the ban on the communist publications was withdrawn by the Indian Government. The difference between the Communist and the Congress leaders were reflected in the works of the Congress, *Prajamandalam* and the *Karshakasabha*.<sup>65</sup>

The difference between the Congress and the Communist were seen first in the student's organization. There was a split in the Cochin Student's Federation and the students who followed the Congress ideology formed another student's organization called the Students National Organization. The leaders of this organization were K Bagyanathan, C M Pothuval, Putezathu Raman Menon Junior Cyriak Nithari, K C Dayanandhan and K C Ippan.<sup>66</sup>

The Government of Cochin rendered financial assistance and remained sincere in the war efforts. But even in the midst of such war efforts the members of Cochin Legislative Council tried to keep alive the demand for full Responsible

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<sup>63</sup> FR No.9/42, May18.

<sup>64</sup> E M S Nambudiripad, *Kerala the Yenan of India*, p.15.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*,p.16.

<sup>66</sup> *Keralacharitram op.cit.*, p.764-765.

Government or at least the next installment of the reforms.<sup>67</sup> In 1941, T K Nair moved a resolution seeking further steps towards complete Responsible Government by placing the department of education, medicine and public work under popular ministers. The second resolution moved by T V Subramanian Aiyer recommended the Government to make an announcement establishing full Responsible Government under the aegis of His Highness, the *Maharaja*. But there was no apparent change on the part of the government. They were not prepared to consider the resolutions.<sup>68</sup>

As a result of the war, food problem became acute. Import of food materials and introduction of rationing failed to settle the food problem. The District Congress committee met at Thrissur on July 16 and discussed the food problem. As a result of this meeting the *Prajamandalam* and the Congress together observed July 21 as the All Cochin food problem day.<sup>69</sup> The *Prajamandalam* workers formed *Kerala Kshama Duritha Nivarana Committee* under the leadership of K G Sivaswamy and its secretary was G S Dharasingh. The workers of Travancore state Congress also helped the *Prajamandalam* workers to distribute food and medicine to the people of coastal regions of Kerala.<sup>70</sup>

On July 14, the Vardha Congress Working Committee demanded the immediate withdrawal of British and decided to organize the Quit India movement. The AICC meeting of 7, 8 August, 1942 passed the historic Quit India resolution.<sup>71</sup> The All India Congress committee decided to launch a non violent mass struggle

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<sup>67</sup> Madras State Agency No.C 498/42 Dt, 18 Sept., 1942, pp.178-181.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., FR No.449/42-5.

<sup>69</sup> *Kochi Rajya Prajamandalam op.cit.*, p.125.

<sup>70</sup> *Prajamandalasmaranakal*, p.162.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*



under the leadership of Gandhi. At that night itself Gandhi and the national leaders were arrested from all parts of India. Hartals and strikes were organized all over India against the arrest of Gandhi and other national leaders.<sup>72</sup> Quit India movement of 8 August heralded the beginning of a new age in the history of the Indian National Congress. The slogan 'Do or Die' emboldened the Indians to rededicate themselves to the cause of freedom.<sup>73</sup>

On 5 August All India Congress Committee, decided to conduct the All India Princely States Conference at Bombay. The *Prajamandalam* President, S Neelakanda Aiyer and General Secretary V R Krishnan Ezhuthachan, were invited to attend the meeting. Gandhi and Nehru participated in the meeting and they stressed the importance of participation of princely states in the Quit India movement.<sup>74</sup>

Cochin was actively involved in the Quit India Movement. *Kochi Prajamandalam* played an active role in the organization of activities at Cochin. Hartals and strikes were organized at Thrissur, Ernakulam, Mattancheri, Iringalakuda, Trippunithura and Kodungaloor. On 9 August students actively participated in the movement. Laborers also organized strikes. At Ernakulam public meetings were conducted under the presidship of Panambilli Govinda Menon, in protest against the arrest of its national leaders. On 9 August, the Cochin government issued a fourteen days ban in Cochin on processions and meetings.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> *Fortnightly Reports* FR No.5/42

<sup>73</sup> *Kerala Charitram, op.cit*, p.763.

<sup>74</sup> *AICC papers*, F No.6/10/1942.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 5/42 15<sup>th</sup> August

Even in the midst of restrictions, S Neelakanda Aiyer, President of the *Kochi Rajya Prajamandalam*, attempted to hold a meeting at Thrissur on the evening of the 15 of August. It was spoiled by the state police. The police resorted to a mild lathi charge and Neelakanda Aiyer was arrested along with two others. K Karunakaran, who was then at the age of twenty three, came forward and lifted the national flag by shouting the slogans like 'British Go back', 'Gandiji Ki Jai'. It rather intoxicated the people and with added vigour, they came forward. There was one day strike at the Tata Oil Mills at Ernakulam and there were strikes in some colleges and schools. The plantation workers of Thrissur also actively participated in the movement.<sup>76</sup>

At a meeting held at Mattancheri on August 16, Dharasingh, Dharma C Krishnadas etc. were arrested and many of the women leaders like Vimalabhai Popatlal, Muktha Bhai, and Mrs. Dharasingh were injured in the lathi charge. Many of the leaders of Legislative Council, the Thrissur Bar Association etc. demanded an enquiry about this lathi charge. The government made an enquiry by the District Magistrate and explained the reason for the lathi charge as the sudden attack from the side of the people. But this enquiry didn't satisfy the people and the press.<sup>77</sup> G P Murphy, the Colonel Resident for the Madras state, in his confidential reports on the disturbances in India, informed the Home government of the three Madras states (viz. Cochin, Travancore and Pudukottai).<sup>78</sup> Cochin had shown itself to be more likely to get inflamed and protest meetings in defiance of the

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<sup>76</sup> *Fortnightly Reports*, FR No. 15/42.

<sup>77</sup> *Kochi Rajya Prajamandalam*, *op.cit.*, p.133.

<sup>78</sup> *Express letter* No.C 498/42-1 Dt.28<sup>th</sup> August 1942.

government ban have so far been held in almost every town or place of importance in the state, the most prominent of its localities being Ernakulam, Mattancheri and Thrissur. On dispersing the gatherings as a result of which about 30 of the police personal and a dozen of the members of the public received minor injuries. Students held strikes in Ernakulam, Thrissur and many other places. The minister for Rural Development (leader of the State Congress Party) was called on to disassociate himself from the states national war front organization. So far about 15 leaders had been arrested in the Cochin state.<sup>79</sup>

The Councillors of the Thrissur Municipality resigned in protest against Government's failure to institute a judicial enquiry in to the police lathi charge at Thrissur.<sup>80</sup> On 15<sup>th</sup> August 1942, eight members of the Legislative Council, Dr. A.R Menon, Ikkanda Warriar, Panambilli Govinda Menon, C.R Iyyuni, Puthur Achytha Menon, Mrs. Iyyuni, C K K Kaimal and P K Madhava Menon., resigned their membership from the Legislative Council. Bar Association at Thrissur decided to appoint a committee of their own to enquire in to the alleged police lathi charge of 15 August.<sup>81</sup> In 1943, the leftwing leaders planned to conduct a march to the Aghakhan palace. M Manakkalath, K.K Bhaskaran etc. from Cochin were arrested on their way.<sup>82</sup>

Students also actively participated in the movement. P Ramachandran, a student of the Maharajas College, hoisted the National flag at the top of Cochin

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<sup>79</sup> S Raimon, (et.al) op.cit., p.230.

<sup>80</sup> *Fortnightly Reports* FR No 42/ 4<sup>th</sup> February

<sup>81</sup> *Fortnightly Reports*, FR N 498/42sep.18.

<sup>82</sup> *Keralacharitram op.cit.*, p.765.

Secretariat.<sup>83</sup> School students were also arrested for writing slogans like ‘Dixon go back’ etc. on the walls.<sup>84</sup> Many of the government servants resigned their job. Some of them like Sankranarayana Menon from Kozhinjampara, Iswara Warriar from Nallappilli etc. were arrested and deported to Malabar. With the spread of Quit India movement, the Government imposed censorship on press. Students from Vivekodayam High School, C M S High School, St. Thomas College Thrissur and *Maharaja’s* College Ernakulam, actively participated in the movement. The students of Thrissur reached at the residence of the Education Director for conducting a fasting satyagraha, but they were brutally suppressed by lathi charge.<sup>85</sup> On 15 September the student strikers entered the class room of St. Thomas College, Thrissur and disturbed the students who were writing the university examination by making a great deal of noise.<sup>86</sup> The strikers were defiant and refused to listen to the college authorities. Three people including a former MLA was arrested and detained on the ground of instigating the students.<sup>87</sup> In view of the students strike, the institutions that were closed had not been reopened till the beginning of October 1942.<sup>88</sup> The Maharaja’s College was reopened on 15 October and the College authorities obtained pledges of good behavior from students except the leaders. The leaders who attempted to create further struggles were arrested.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Ravi Kuttikad, *Maharajasinu Pranayapurvam*, p.169.

<sup>84</sup> *Fortnightly Reports*, FR No 20/42 October

<sup>85</sup> *Kochi Rajya Prajamandalam*, *op.cit.*, p.136.

<sup>86</sup> *Madras State Agency* No C 498/42dt.18, Sept.1942, pp. 178-181.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, F R No. 449/45-2.

<sup>88</sup> *Copy of Express Letter* No. C 498/42-6

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, No.C 498 /42-8

Three students from Sanskrit College Trippunithura were dismissed from the College for taking part in the independent day celebrations.<sup>90</sup>

The Quit India movement of 1942 had its repercussions in the Cochin state for one year. The Socialist leaders like Dr. K B Menon and Mathai Manjuran, who were at Bombay in the beginning of the Quit India movement, returned to Cochin and boosted the movement. The Socialists burned the military camps at Vytila and Fort Cochin. A starving procession was organized under the leadership of Mathai Manjuran to the house of Cochin *Maharaja* at Trippunithura and submitted a memorandum mentioning the food shortage. They demanded the introduction of rationing, reorganization of workers of Cochin etc. Malabar Special Police was brought to Cochin during this period, to maintain peace.<sup>91</sup> On the 26 December, a few enthusiastic youths in Cochin attempted to celebrate Independence Day at places like Trippunithura, Ernakulam, Mattancheri, Thrissur and Chowara. In all these cases, except that at Ernakulam, the attempts took the form of breaking the ban on public meeting and offenders were detained in most cases.<sup>92</sup>

During the period of Shammukham Chetty, there was a press censorship in Cochin. Accordingly, there were only very few newspapers which have government license. To issue this license Rs.500 is to be given as bail. The license was cancelled when any unfavorable condition occurs. Then again Rs.2500 was to be deposited to renew the license. The *Prajamandalam* secretary

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<sup>90</sup> *Fortnightly Reports*, No.5/41 March 19

<sup>91</sup> *Keralachritram op.cit.*, p.765.

<sup>92</sup> *Copy of the Express Letter* No.C 498/42-631 January, 1943.

V R Krishnan Ezhuthachan, C Kuttan Nair and K N Nambeesan strongly protested against the press censorship in Cochin through news papers.<sup>93</sup>

Though, there was a press censorship in Cochin, several pamphlets and newspapers were distributed. *Swatantra Bharatham* which was printed in Malabar, was distributed throughout Cochin during this period. When the distribution of *Swathantra Bharatham* was banned by the government, another news paper known as *Samarakahalam* was printed in Cochin. Later it was stopped by the arrest of its leaders A P Nambiar and K C K M Mather.<sup>94</sup>

The news paper *Dheenabandhu* started by the Prajamndalam leaders, has to pay a huge license fee during the period of Quit India movement. V R Krishnan Ezhuthachan and K P Madhavan Nair were the leaders who took initiative for the news paper. When the news paper was banned in Travancore, copies of the newspaper were distributed there by the *Prajamandalam* leaders. The newspaper had contributed much to the growth of freedom movement in Malabar, Travancore and Cochin.<sup>95</sup>

The pamphlets of V R Krishnan Ezhuthachan were confiscated by the Cochin and Madras governments and banned its further publications, because of its seditious nature. The *Deenabandhu* magazine under him was banned by the Cochin government in 1944 December and its edition of November 24 was confiscated.<sup>96</sup> By 1944, because of the people's pressure, the Government declared

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<sup>93</sup> *Matrubhumi*, 4 January, 1941.

<sup>94</sup> *Keralathile Congress Prasthanam*, p.44.

<sup>95</sup> Interview with Pavizam Madhavan Nair, also see K P Madhavan Nair, *op.cit.*, p.36.

<sup>96</sup> Perunna K N Nair, *op.cit.*, p.159.

its intention to disperse the Legislative Council, and decided to conduct an election to the council by 1945 December.<sup>97</sup>

The Quit India movement boosted the prestige of the *Prajamandalam* as a political party.<sup>98</sup> One hundred and forty three political prisoners reached at Viyyor central jail during the Quit India movement.<sup>99</sup> The Congress leaders who were arrested during this period include S Neelakanda Ayer, Chowara Parmeswaran, E IkkandaWarrier, Panambilli Govinda Menon, Puthur Achytha Menon, G S Dharasingh, K N Nambeesan, K Karunakaran, M K Menon, T S Bandhu, C A Abdulkadar, K V Vittaprabhu, C P Ummar, P T Jacob, I G Paik, V Iswara Warrier, Abraham Madamakal, N Ramankuttyachan, I Karunakaran, Mathai Manjuran, R M Manakalath, P R Krishnan, Dr. K P Kumaran, N T Sankarankutty Menon, K G Nambiar, P Narayana Menon, P Govindakutty Menon, C Ramdas, K V Gopalan, K Gangadhara Menon,, V K Achyutha Menon, Bhaskara Menon, N J Joseph, Jacob Ilanjikal, K V Ittira, N R Swami, E N Neelakandan Nambudiri, V R Krishnan, V S Menon, A P Nambiar, K C K M Mather, K V Vasudevan Embrandiri, K Narayanankuty Menon K Parameswaran Nambudiri, T P Chakrapani Warrier, C K Anantha Narayana Aiyer, M M Poulouse, N Sadanandakini, Sarvothama Pai, Dorai Pandyanadar, E J Joseph, Muhammad Haneefha, C K Parameswaran, Kuppuswamy Chettiar, Subbayyan Chettiar, V R Ranganatha Bhatt, Dharma C Krishnadas, K P Menon, M K Sankarankutty Ezhuhthchan, M R Krishnan, T Parameswara Menon, Dr. Bhaskavanal, P Sankaran Kutty Menon, Mullakal Chaku, Mariappan Pillai, V.R Ramayyar, C Sekhara

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<sup>97</sup> *Fortnightly Reports*, FR No.2/42.

<sup>98</sup> *K P Madhavan Nair Upharagrandham*, *op.cit.*, p.49

<sup>99</sup> *Kochi Rajya Prajamandalam*, *op.cit.*, p.142.

Warrier, A Damodara Menon, A C Antony, Madhavan Pillai, M R Nambeesan, Raman Menon, Rappai T Krishna Aiyer, Sankara Narayana Menon, Reghunatha Rao, Shanmukhan, J.N Prabhu, N.V.S Warrier, K. Madhava Menon and P Subramanian Aiyyer. C Achyutha Menon, Prof. T J George, George Chadayammuri, G M Nennmeli and A M Jaleel were the Communist leaders arrested. Kumari V K Thankam was the only women political prisoner.<sup>100</sup>

Though most of the prisoners were released after a few months, some of them were sentenced for a long period. The prisoners selected Chowara Parameswaran, as their captain in jail, and organized sewing, study classes, Hindi classes etc. in the jail. By November 1943, all the political prisoners were released from the Viyyur central jail. Before their release they decided about their future political programs. They decided to strengthen the *Prajamandalam* for the aim of establishing national independence and Responsible Government in Cochin. They decided to disperse the Cochin Progressive Party, and the Cochin Congress, and the Congress leaders who didn't become their members decided to become the members of the *Prajamandalam* party.

After the Quit India movement, the political situation became worse. Congress was banned in all over the states. Most of the national leaders were in jail.<sup>101</sup> The meeting of the KPCC, which was held in February 1942, at Kozhikode, decided to form *Gramasevasangams* in each village. On 25 November, a meeting of the Congress leaders held at Kozhikode gave birth to this organization. V M Govindan Nambeesan, the leader of Hindi Prachar Sabha, was its secretary.

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<sup>100</sup> Kerala Charitram, op.cit., p. 7.

<sup>101</sup> Gramakshemam ( Mal. Journal),1941, September p.63.



Its aims were 1) to protect people from economic crisis during the war time 2) to fight for religious harmony, 3) to boost Khadi and other village industries to achieve self sufficiency to the villages. 4) To cooperate with other organizations in the matter of village self sufficiency. The ideology behind this organization was that, villages were the life of a nation and the villagers were the most suffering people. So it was only through the reconstruction of villages that one can solve all the problems. It worked for two years, and it had its committees in the taluks of Malabar, Cochin, and Travancore. It had more than 10000 members and 200 regional units. Its activities were concentrated towards food scarcity, measles, cholera, etc. and it also started many village industries.<sup>102</sup>

In Malabar, the officials interfered in the activities of *Gramasevasangham*. But it got economic aid from foreigners. The *Prajamandalam* leaders who were released from jail after the Quit India movement started their activities through *Gramasevasanghams*. An office of the All Cochin *Gramasevasangham* was opened at Thrissur. V R Krishnan Ezhuthachan and K N Nambeesan were its secretaries. When measles and cholera spread in different parts of Cochin the workers of the *sanghams* visited every house, and had undertaken cleaning activities, and supplied food and medicines to them. A Special committee was formed under the secretariship of K Narayanankutty for measles relief activities under the *Gramasevasangham*. By the efforts of *Gramasevasanghams*, old age study centers, sewing centers etc. were formed in different parts of the state.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p.64

<sup>103</sup> V R Krishnan Ezhuthachan, *Niyamasabha Prasangagal*, p.25.

The *Deenabandhu* magazine was restarted in March 1944, under V R. Krishnan Ezhuthachan on 2 October, 1944, at the occasion of Gandhijayanthi; the *Kasturba Smaraka Deseeya Nidhi* was collected and handed over to Gandhi.<sup>104</sup> The *Kasturba Smaraka Nidhi* was collected in memory of Kasturbagandhi who died when she was a prisoner at the Aghakhan palace. It was collected mainly for the welfare of children and women. On this occasion, G S Dharasingh, Joint Secretary of *Prajamandalam*, represented Cochin State. Dharasingh made a discussion with Gandhi regarding the activities and reorganization of *Prajamandalam*. Gandhi gave some directions regarding the strengthening of *Prajamandalam* to attain Responsible Government.<sup>105</sup>

The reorganization of *Prajamandalam* started by July 1944. Committees were formed in different parts of Cochin and began to make new membership in the party.<sup>106</sup> By the end of the month, a meeting of the *Prajamandalam* leaders was held at Ernakulam at the house of Panambilli Govinda Menon and took the decisions to disperse the Legislative Council which had extended its period, due to war. The *Prajamandalam* declared that its aim was the establishment of a Responsible Government based on adult franchise. The meeting also decided to dismiss the communist leaders from the party due to their attitude in the Quit India movement.<sup>107</sup> Communist leaders like C Achutha Menon, E Gopalakrishna Menon, etc. gave up their relationship with the *Prajamandalam*. The *Prajamandalam* tried to make a memorandum which demanded the government to withdraw the

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<sup>104</sup> *Kochi Rajya Prajamandalam, op.cit.*, p.154.

<sup>105</sup> *Prajamandala smarankal; op.cit.*, p.38.

<sup>106</sup> *Kerala Charitram, op.cit.*, p. 765.

<sup>107</sup> *Kochi Rajya Prajamandalam, op.cit.*, p.156.

ban on the public meeting in Cochin. The *Prajamandalam* prepared a memorandum to this effect and began to collect signs of the voters from the villages.<sup>108</sup> Because of the Congress Communist split, the Cochin Karshaka Sabha split in to two, one under the leadership of V R Krishnan Ezuhuthachan and another under the leadership of C Achyutha Menon. The Cochin Karshakasabha which was under the leadership of C Achutha Menon became a part of the All India Kisan Sabha and the Karshaka Sabha under the leadership of Krishnan Ezhuthachan changed its name as All Cochin Kisan Congress and it became a part of the All India Kisan Congress.<sup>109</sup>

The student's federation of Cochin also changed its name as All Cochin Students' Congress and became part of the Student's Congress. The young people became active in the activities of *Prajamandalam*. M V Joseph, P G Ramachandran and M P Padmanabha Menon were the leaders of the organization. The Cochin Youth Congress also actively worked under the leadership of R M Manakalath, C Kochanujan and A D Joseph. There was also the All Cochin Women's National organization under Mrs. Pavizham Madhavan Nair, A Padmini, Mrs. S K George, and Kumari Kamala.<sup>110</sup>

In October 1944, the working committee meeting of *Prajamandalam* was held at Iringalakuda and the *Prajamandalam* party repeated their demand for the dispersal of the Cochin Legislative Council and the need for a new election. For this purpose the party organized a protest programme.<sup>111</sup> The temple entry

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<sup>108</sup> *Prajamandala Smaranakal, op.cit.*, p. 38.

<sup>109</sup> *Kerala Charitram, op.cit.*, p.765

<sup>110</sup> Perunna K N Nair, *op.cit.*, p. 159.

<sup>111</sup> *Prajamandalama Smaranakal, op.cit.*, p.109.

movement became one of the agendas of the working committee of *Prajamandalam*. A committee was formed for this including the leaders like Kurur Neelakandan Nambudiripad, E Ikkanda Warriar, K P Madhavan Nair, Panambilli Govinda Menon, Puthur Achytha Menon, S Neelakanda Ayer, M K Raja, and K N Nambeesan.<sup>112</sup>

In the mean time, the term of five Municipal Councils, Ernakulam, Mattancheri, Thrissur, Iringalakuda, and Chittoor were extended to one more year.<sup>113</sup> During this period, A F W Dixon resigned the Diwanship and Sir George Bogg took up his position. The Legislative Council which had been in power for seven long years (1938-1945) was dissolved by the government in 1945. The decision of the government to disperse the Legislative Council was welcomed by the political parties of Cochin. The meeting of the *Prajamandalam* was held in December at Ernakulam, to decide its future activities.<sup>114</sup> There are two opinions regarding its participation in the elections. Some of them argued that it was clearly stated in the *Prajamandalam* manifesto that it will not contest in the elections until it gained 10000 members and more than 100 local committees. Another group argued that if *Prajamandalam* had to be strengthened as a political organization it had to contest in the elections. The *Prajamandalam* decided to form 100 local committees and 10000 memberships within one month and after that will took the decision of election. In accordance to the decision, the working committee members of *Prajamandalam* began to work more enthusiastically.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> *Dheenabandhu*, *Prajamandalam Visheshalprathi*, p.1.

<sup>113</sup> *Dheenabandhu*, 1948., p.2.

<sup>114</sup> *Kerala Charitram*, *op.cit.*, p.761.

<sup>115</sup> *Election Manifesto of Prajamandalam* R A E,p.8.

In the *Prajamandalam* working committee meeting held at Thrissur, in 1945, the *Prajamandalam* secretary submitted a report that probably 11000 members have joined the *Prajamandalam* and 107 local committees were established in different parts of the state. Thus, the meeting decided to contest in the elections. Some of them like R M Manakalath, C K Kochanujan, A D Joseph etc. stood against the decision. But most of the *Prajamandalam* leaders supported the party's decision to contest in the elections. They argued that *Prajamandalam* should take part in the elections to represent the peoples need for Responsible Government in the Legislative Council.<sup>116</sup> In the working committee meeting Panambilli Govinda Menon, put forward a resolution in which it was stated that "the Cochin Legislative Council had exceeded its time, and it was the right time that the *Kochi Rajya Prajamandalam* had taken the decision to contest in the elections." The *Kochi Rajya Prajamandalam* was a political party which was formed with the aim of establishing Responsible Government in Cochin. The party had won the minds of people with its activities. Now it is the time to enter in to the Legislative Council to put forward the demand for Responsible Government."<sup>117</sup>

After a long discussion, the *Prajamandalam* decided to contest in the elections. The following decisions were also taken in the meeting.

- 1) All candidates should take a solemn pledge that once they win the elections, they will not use their position for the achievement of self interest and will serve the nation according to the aims and programs of the party. They should resign their membership of the Legislative Council whenever

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<sup>116</sup> *Kochi Rajya Prajamaandalam*, *op.cit.*, p.165.

<sup>117</sup> Harikumar L V, *Biography of Panambilli Govindha Menon*, p.38

the party finds it desirable and they will resign their membership of the Legislative Council if they left the party owing to any reason, and they will try their maximum for the implementation of the programs of the *Prajamandalam*.

- 2) The members of the party who won the elections should not accept minister ship in the state either independently or with alliance with any other party.
- 3) An election manifesto prepared on the basis of primary rights enlisted on Karachi resolution of the Indian National Congress and constructive programme of Mahatma Gandhi should be published and the Legislative Party should try its best for its implementation.
- 4) The parliamentary working board should have the right to control the working of the legislative party and to take disciplinary action against its Legislative Council members required
- 5) The working committee members of the *Prajamandalam* Party should resign their membership from the committee if they wanted to contest in the forthcoming elections.
- 6) If the existing ban on the public meeting and demonstrations were not removed even after the elections, the *Prajamandalam* Legislative Party should demand the withdrawal of this ban in the very first meeting of the Legislative Council itself, and the Legislative Council members should resign if the ban was not withdrawn by the Government in three months.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> *Election Manifesto of Prajamandalam*, RAE , p.9

Under these conditions, the *Prajamandalam* passed its official resolution to contest in the election. S Neelakanda Aiyer, K P Madhavan Nair, Chowara Parameswaran, Prof. S K George and C A Abdul Khadar, were elected as parliamentary board members. The working committee meeting which was held on 30 January at Ernakulam discussed about the election and formed a finance committee under the leadership of K P Madhavan Nair, Panambilli Govinda Menon, C Kuttan Nair, E Ikkanda Warriar and V Raman Menon , and a propaganda committee consisted of V R Krishnan Ezhuthachan, Chowara Parameswaran, R M Manakkalath, Panambilli Govinda Menon, M.N Sivaraman Nair. S Neelakanda Ayer was selected as the president of *Prajamandalam* and K P Madhavan Nair was elected as its secretary and treasurer. Most of the progressive workers of Cochin welcomed the *Prajamandalam* decision to contest in the elections.<sup>119</sup> The party issued an election manifesto. Some of the relevant portions of the manifesto are

1. To ensure freedom to each and every citizen to express his opinion freely to organize themselves and to convene public meetings aimed at achieving the cherished goals which are in no way against rules and laws.
2. To have freedom for religion and worship to each and every citizen in such a way that it will in no way affect the law and order situations and the morals.
3. To have equality for all citizens before the law irrespective of religion, caste or creed.

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<sup>119</sup> *Kochi Rajya Prajamandalam op.cit.*, p.165.

4. To have equal rights to all citizens to make use of public wells tanks, roads, schools and such other public places which are sponsored by public purposes.
5. To have the Government impartial in the matter of religion.
6. To introduce adult franchise,
7. To introduce free and primary education.<sup>120</sup>

*Express*, a news paper from Thrissur reported that “it was the right decision of the *Prajamandalam* to contest in the elections. Its main aim was not the minister ship but to serve the people.” Many of the people were against the decision and most of the youngsters were putting forward the questions like what is the use of entering in the Legislative Council, but many of them believe that the *Prajamandalam* leaders entering in the Legislative Council will always do good to the people.”<sup>121</sup>

In the election manifesto it was clearly stated that the solution to the problem of unemployment can be possible only through the development of the industry. Industrial and scientific education should be made available to everyone in the country, which would enable the young man and woman to undertake or to start productive industries. It was also stated that the Legislative Council and the government should try their best to bring harmony and mutual friendship among the people belonging to the different sections in the society.\* The manifesto also

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<sup>120</sup> *Election Manifesto of Prajamandalam*, RAE, p.10.

<sup>121</sup> *Express*, p.12



has mentioned about the food problem of Cochin and the *Prajamandalam* party has been working to solve this problem.<sup>122</sup>

Thus, the decision of the *Prajamandalam* to contest in the elections was remarkable for many reasons. In the first place, it was a land mark in the history of the state because it was for the first time that an organized party with a definite programme and mass following had placed its program before the electorate and asked for its verdict. Again it was remarkable because the determining factor was political considerations and not personal considerations as before. These facts are evident from the election manifesto issued by the party. Thus the *Prajamandalam* placed a definite programme before the electorate which touched political, economic, social, and cultural spheres of the people and was really novel not only to the people of Cochin but also to the people of other princely states of India. Thirdly, the election was remarkable because the declared policy of the party in the council would be that of responsive cooperation. M K Raja, member of *Mulankunathukavu* says 'we offer our cooperation only to the extent to which we believe we will be able by the cooperation to obtain from the Government such measures and concessions which will serve as the good of masses. When we came to represent, we cannot forfeit our right to fight for our rights whenever we think that they are being jeopardized by the members on the other side of the house'.<sup>123</sup>

As we make a comparison between the Travancore State Congress and *Kochi Rajya Prajamandalam*, a number of similarities can be seen between the

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<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, p.12.

\*The Election Manifesto, Appendix- I

<sup>123</sup> *Proceedings of Cochin Legislative Council*, 30 November, 1944

two in organization, working and agendas. While the ruling families of Cochin were more liberal towards the idea of Responsible Government, Travancore government was against this idea and followed a massive suppressive policy. So in Travancore we can see the formation of organizations like *Bhaktha Sangham*, Travancore State Peoples League etc. Other than the aim of Responsible Government, both these parties organized many socio economic activities. Students' participation can be seen in both the states, in the struggle for Responsible Government. Both *Kochi Rajya Prajamandalam* and Travancore State Congress worked for a united Kerala from its beginning.

Thus, the *Kochi Rajya Prajamandalam* was formed when the existing political parties were inefficient to attain the goal of Responsible Government. From the beginning of its formation it had to face many difficulties. But in spite of all these difficulties it began to work actively for attaining the goal of Responsible Government. Immediately after its formation, it began to work for the aim of Responsible Government. Its activities were concentrated among the masses which helped the party to attain the confidence of the people. The activities of *Prajamandalam* among the people of Cochin during the time of flood helped the party to attain the confidence of the people. During the period of Quit India movement also the *Prajamandalam* actively worked in Cochin to popularize the activities connected with the Quit India movement. Many young leaders among students joined the party and actively participated in the movement. Apart from the aim of Responsible Government it organized many socio economic activities. The leaders of *Prajamandalam* actively worked through *Gramasevasangam* which

provided much help to the people of villages. Another feature of the *Prajamandalam* party was that it took a strong decision that it will not contest in the elections until it gained the popular support of the people. The *Prajamandalam* began to submit resolutions through the Legislative Council till the achievement of Responsible Government.