THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN MALABAR

Chapter-IV

THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN MALABAR

Efforts for mass education that got momentum in Malabar during the early half of the 20th century corresponded with the spread of political consciousness in the region. As mass education spread far and wide, political consciousness of the people also was on the rise. People from all walks of life began to organize themselves. This chapter has been devoted for the study of growth and development of political awareness among the people of Malabar. The formation of a unit of the Indian National Congress in Malabar, and the growth of it into a mass movement are discussed here. The founding of the Congress Socialist Party, Karshaka Sangham and the Trade Unions is also examined.

Before going deep into the situation in Malabar on the eve of the 20th century, how the resistance movements had developed and challenged the dominance of the colonial rule is to be considered.

Malabar was under a number of chieftains before the coming of the British. They quarrelled among themselves for one reason or the other. An attempt to bring Malabar under a unified rule was materialized by Tippu through his invasions, which resulted in many major changes in the socio-economic fabric of Malabar in the dying decades of the 18th century. With the defeat of Tippu in 1792, the entire Malabar came under the grip of the British.

After the defeat of Tippu, the British were free from any serious threat from any part of extreme south. Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja offered another
brave resistance in Malabar against the mighty British Empire in the early 19th century. Even though he was defeated, the spirit he bequeathed has been remarkable. There were also other revolts by Ravi Varma of Padinjare Kovilakam, and several land lords and Chiefs, including Manjeri Kurikkal and Unni Mootha Mooppan. When Wayanad was occupied by the British, the Adivasis led by the Kurichya Chiefs rebelled against them. However, all these rebellions were suppressed and the British consolidated their power.

Having gained supremacy over Malabar from the Mysore Empire, the British tried to implement many reforms that totally negated the existing traditional socio-economic relations. The economic exploitation on the part of the Janmis increased with colonial support. The colonial system destroyed the traditional political structure of Malabar consisting of Rajas, ruling chieftains, Samantas or feudal lords and Naduvazhis or rulers of the sub districts. They were never concerned about the agonies of the common people and hence the interests of the down trodden were neglected. The Government entrusted the Janmis with the privilege of collecting taxes from the tenants. Whenever the Government wanted more money from the Janmis, the ultimate sufferers were the poor tenants. This was the situation prevailing in Malabar. As we have already discussed the economic impact of the reforms in the first chapter, the political impact of this policy is given a little space here.

The agrarian discontent was mainly confined to the poor tenants. Many outbreaks resulted in against the ruthless exploitation of the poor peasants. Since the Mappila peasants led the movements, they came to be called the Mappila revolts. Many uprisings occurred from the middle of the 19th century to the first decades of the 20th century.
All these indicate the fact that there were resistance movements in Malabar even before the dawn of the 20th century. At the same time they were neither united nor properly organized. Moreover these movements were confined to certain areas only. So it was possible for the Government to suppress them without much effort.

These elements (the Chieftains, Rajas, Samantas etc.) along with the Nambudiris and land owning Nairs were consolidated into the class of Janmis1 who became landed proprietors and tax paying farmers with considerable power over tenant cultivators including eviction and reassignment of land to another cultivator.

The colonial administration in 19th century created opportunities for the rise of a middle class. The combination of the social and cultural activities of the middle classes and those of the enlightened sections of the upper class, with the spontaneous discontent of the peasant masses – the combination, very often, in the same persons or group, of the social reformers, the leader of cultural life, the organizer of the caste association- was the initial form in which really National Movement took its first form.2

E.M.Sankaran Nambudiripad writes:

"The movement was not yet the National Movement in the real sense of the term, since it was not directed against the national oppressor – the British imperialists- nor was it even a genuine anti feudal movement, since it was not directed against the princely order, nor for the total abolition of the landlordism. It was however, the beginning of the National Democratic Movement, since it united the cultivating and landless peasants with the enlightened section of the feudal, ruling classes."

1 K.K.N.Kurup, Peasantry, Nationalism and Social Change in India, p.30
2 E.M.S. Nambudiripad, Kerala: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow, p.126
3 Ibid.
The political milieu in India became more vibrant with the formation of the political organization, the Indian National Congress, which was founded in 1885. The emergence of the Congress gave the educated Indians a common platform for the first time in India, where they could exchange their opinions and mould their political aspirations.⁴

Even when the Indian National Congress was founded in 1885, the people of Kerala had great interest in it. Many people from Kerala had links with the Indian National Congress. They were T.M. Nair, V. Ryru Nambiar, C. Sankaran Nair etc. In the very beginning, the Indian National Congress was not a popular movement. There was no strong organizational set up for the Indian National Congress. The main activities of the Congress were to pass resolutions, conduct special sessions and annual meetings and submit memorandum.⁵ This was continued for a few decades.

When all other states—including our neighbouring states—were turbulent, the situation in Kerala was this:

While the Bengalis and the Maratis and the Parsis were strongly participating in the activity of the Congress and even they had been thinking of becoming extremists, and in Tamil Nadu the extremist movements were in full swing under the leadership of Subramania Bharati and V.P.S. Ayyar, politically Kerala was sleeping.⁶ This was not deliberate. Kerala lacked many advantages that the other states had enjoyed. If there was a capital city to attract the educated and new ideologically equipped youth with

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⁵ Perunna K.N. Nair, Keralathile Congress Prasthanam, p. 9
⁶ E.M.S. Nambudiripad, Keralacharithram Marxist Veekshanathil, Chitha, Trivandrum, 1997, p. 191
Government offices, universities, factories and port the political activities in Kerala would have started earlier.

This is evident, as Kerala had created a Ramakrishna Pillai without all these facilities.7

**The Early days of the National Movement**

Many of the pioneers who led the National Movement had been in Madras or other cities, and early nationalism was mainly an urban phenomenon. A prominent person to take part in the early activities of the Indian National Congress was C. Sankaran Nair. He presided over the Amaravati session of the Indian National Congress in 1897. But even after that the political atmosphere in Malabar was not so ripened for political activities.

The activities of the Indian National Congress began in Kerala when a meeting of the organization was held in Calicut in 1903. But nothing was heard about it till the formation of the First Congress District Committee in 1910 in the British Malabar.8 C.Kunhirama Menon was elected as the secretary. However, no serious political activity was undertaken even after the formation of the District Congress Committee.9

A Provincial Conference of the District Congress was held at Calicut in 1913. C. Vijayaraghavacharyar of Salem was able to create political stir among the people.10 His speech was so inspiring.

The real political activity in the name of the Indian National Congress was really started, when K.P. Kesava Menon returned to Kerala after his

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7 Ibid, p.192
8 Perunna K.N.Nair,*Keralathile Congress Prasthanam*, p.12
9 Ibid
10 P.K.K. Menon,*The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala*, p.69
education in England. He tried to change the character of the National protest. An organized political protest could only be witnessed in 1916, when he was prevented by the District Collector to use Malayalam for his speech.\textsuperscript{11} As part of the war activity, some people decided to give Panakkizhi to the governor of Madras. The municipal chairman C. V. Narayana Menon convened a meeting in Calicut for this purpose. In the meeting Kesava Menon began his speech in Malayalam. The Collector wanted him to speak in English. Kelappan was reluctant. The Collector stuck to his decision. Most people assembled there boycotted the meeting in protest.\textsuperscript{12} This was the first spark of disobedience that grew into a great fire in the political atmosphere of Kerala.

During those days the character of the Indian National Congress was neither radical nor pro-poor. The rich and the \textit{Janmis} were the main supporters of the Indian National Congress then.\textsuperscript{13} Many of the leaders of the Indian National Congress were either former kings or big \textit{Janmis}. Kollankode Raja, Mankada Raja, Samudiri, Kadathanad Raja, Chirakkal Thampuran, Nilambur Thirumulpad etc. were in the reception committees for organizing the conferences of the Indian National Congress.\textsuperscript{14}

The accepted policy of the Indian National Congress at this time was to hold annual meetings in taluks, districts and provinces. People with varying shades of political opinions used to meet and pass resolutions unanimously. Those who took active interest in the holding of such conferences were

\textsuperscript{11} A.K.Gopalan, \textit{Keralam Innale Innu}, Chintha, Trivandrum, 2004, p.43
\textsuperscript{12} Perunna K.N.Nair, \textit{Keralathile Congress Prasthanam}, p.13
\textsuperscript{13} A.K.Gopalan, \textit{Keralam Innale Innu}, p.43
\textsuperscript{14} N.E.Balaram, \textit{Keralathile Communist Prasthanum}, Prabhath, Trivandrum, 1973, p.30
mostly members of the affluent and aristocratic families.\textsuperscript{15} So there was no space for the grievances of masses in the meetings of the Indian National Congress.

P.K.K. Menon thinks thus:

\begin{quote}
"The educated class of Malabar, though imbued with the spirit of the Congress and anxious to disseminate its message, were not yet able to exercise much influence on the popular mind as many of them had their own avocations outside Kerala that gave them little opportunity to come in to direct contact with the masses." \textsuperscript{16}
\end{quote}

In the early decades of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, the English educated professionals belonging to the upper castes like K.P.Kesava Menon, K.Kelappan, M.P.Narayana Menon, G.Sankaran Nair, Manjeri Rama Iyyer, K.Madhavan Nair and a good number of similar personalities turned out to be nationalists and many of them even bid goodbye to their professions at the time of Non Co-operation Movement. These professionals joined the movement mainly because of their commitment to the motherland and the upliftment of their countrymen.\textsuperscript{17}

Almost all of them belonged to the professional class especially advocates and the middle class people. Majority of them were upper castes like Nairs, Nambudiris etc. The organized activity of the Indian National Congress began during this time.

The Home Rule Movement under the leadership of Annie Besant also had started its activities in Kerala.\textsuperscript{18} This movement was rather moderate.\textsuperscript{19} This was a unified social movement in India. Even though it never had the depth

\textsuperscript{15} P.K.K. Menon, The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala, p.72
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid, p.68
\textsuperscript{17} K.K.N.Kurup, Nationalism and Social Change :The Role of Malayalam Literature, p.53
\textsuperscript{18} Moidu Mouli, Moulaviyude Atmakatha, p.15
\textsuperscript{19} E.M.S.Nambudiripad, Keralacharithram Marxist Veekshanathil, p.193
of the Non Co-operation Movement of the 1921, the Home Rule brought to
the people that the political activity was not merely speaking but acting
together.20

In May 1916, the first Malabar Political Meeting was convened at Palakkad.
Annie Besant chaired the meeting. Kesava Menon put forth the resolution
that India be given complete independence.21 This meeting was a landmark
in the history of freedom struggle in Kerala. It was attended by a large
number of people from all parts of Malabar and Cochin.22 In the next year
itself, the second District Conference was held at Calicut in 1917, which was
presided over by C.P.Ramaswamy Iyyer. Issues like post war reforms, self
Government for India, the Arms act, Elementary education, Tenancy
question etc. were discussed.23

The district collector did not permit to make a temporary shed at
Mananchira for conducting the second political meeting. The authorities
seemed to be restless and so they rejected the plea for holding the meeting at
Mananchira. Then the meeting was to be conducted at the residence of K.P.
Raman Menon.24

Even during this time, the organization was dominated by the rich. The
political meetings were largely attended by the Janmis and the rich. The
resolutions passed were never progressive in content and language.25

20 K.P.Kesavamenon, Kazhinha Kalam, Mathrubhumi, Calicut,p.53
21 Perunna K.N.Nair, Keralathile Congress Prasthanam, p.15
22 P.K.K.Menon, The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala, p.72
23 Ibid, p.73
24 Perunna K.N.Nair, Keralathile Congress Prasthanam, pp.15-16
In 1917, the Montague-Chelms Ford committee visited India to know about the opinion of the people on administrative reforms. The representatives of the Home Rule led by Annie Besant met him. K.P. Kesava Menon was also a member of the delegation.²⁶

Annie Besant was arrested in the middle of 1917, an event that excited the national feeling of the people of Malabar.²⁷ The response of the people was spontaneous. They protested by observing a hartal.

After the First World War, it was clear that the "memorandum" style of functioning would yield nothing for the people of India. Instead, district conferences were to be held and the resolutions should be given as memoranda. A newsletter called New India was circulated to give the message of the Indian National Congress to the people. The propaganda reached all over Malabar.²⁸

The Home Rule and the Indian National Congress formulated many activities to spread the national feeling. Branch committees of the Home Rule and the Indian National Congress were formed in several villages in Malabar District.

Many public meetings were held and thus political consciousness was aroused.²⁹

The Third Malabar District Conference of the Congress was held at Thalasseri in 1918 May. It demanded self Government—a Government

²⁶ K.P.Kesavamenon, Kazhinha Kalam, p.54  
²⁷ P.K.K.Menon, The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala, p.74  
²⁸ E.M.S.Nambudiripad, Keralacharithram Marxist Veckshanathil, p.192  
²⁹ P.K.K.Menon, The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala, p.71
responsible to the people.  

Even in 1918, the kings and the landlords continued to be active in the functioning of the Indian National Congress. The elder king of Chirakkal participated in the Thalasseri conference of the Malabar area in 1918. The district collector deplored this.

The Fourth political conference was at Badagara in May 1919. The meeting was presided over by K.P.Raman Menon.

Annie Besant was not in favour of mobilizing massive resistance with the support of the masses. Dr. Besant opined that District Conference should concentrate attention on specific problems of regional interest and suggested improvements on the general system of administration.

The character of the National Movement changes.

It was in the years after the end of the First World War that the Indian National Congress shed its reformist stance and acquired the character of a political movement. In the process of transition, there was a conflict between the leaders of the Home Rule Movement and the Indian National Congress in Kerala. This conflict surfaced during the Fifth Political Conference at Manjeri in 1920 presided over by Kasthuri Ayyankar. This conference was a turning point in the political history of Kerala. The opposition between the moderates and the extremists was so strong that it emerged clearly in the conference.

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30 Ibid, p.75
31 K.P.Kesavamenon, Kazhinha Kalam, p.57
32 P.K.K.Menon, The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala, p.78
33 Ibid, p.72
34 E.M.S.Nambudiripad, Kerala: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow, p.127
35 Perunna K.N.Nair, Keralathile Congress Prasthanam, p.21
The Janmis and the vested interests rallied behind the moderates. This was also because a number of activists who joined the Congress came from the ranks of the tenants particularly Kanakkar, whose interests were often opposed to the Janmis. The peasants and the workers were among the extremists. A complete independence resolution was tabled in this conference. It also expressed its disappointment on the Montague-Chelms Ford reforms. K.P. Raman Menon proposed and I.A. Subharayar seconded the resolution. Annie Besant pressed to remove the part that the reform was 'unsatisfactory and unacceptable'. The Raja of Nilambur seconded. However, the majority was against the amendment by Annie Besant. At last Annie Besant and her supporters left the meeting in protest. A strong debate also took place on the Khilafat reforms and the problem of the Janmi tenancy. It was the last of such conferences.

The following resolutions were passed in the conference:

1. Congratulated Sankaran Nair for resigning from the membership of Viceroy's executive council.

2. Pleased for the regulation of the working hours in the factories

3. Demanded the prohibition of child labour.

4. Wanted the Government to repeal planter's labour law

5. Freedom of the press should be established.

6. Civil liberties of the people should be protected.

36 Ibid, p.22
37 K.P. Kesavamenon, Kazhinha Kalam, p.69
The Manjeri conference revealed the rising tide of nationalism in Kerala.\textsuperscript{38}

After the Manjeri Conference, the Indian National Congress was revitalized\textsuperscript{39} and it accepted a new face in its organizational activities. The policy of the Indian National Congress became more favourable for popular demands.

The activities of the Indian National Congress gathered momentum by the 1920s. In 1920 in Nagpur, Swaraj was declared as the aim by the Congress leaders. The move to form the State Congress Committees including the native states also began. The Kerala Provincial Congress Committee was formed in 1921.\textsuperscript{40}

K. Madhavan Nair was the secretary and U. Gopala Menon the joint secretary.\textsuperscript{41}

Arrests of political leaders began in Malabar as the Indian National Congress began to pose political demands. K. Madhavan Nair was arrested. And K. P. Kesava Menon stopped practice in Madras and took over the charge of the secretary. He was the first to renounce practice as lawyer, as made mandatory by the Congress.\textsuperscript{42} The politics in Malabar became turbulent. The National Movement began to get more support from the people. Gandhiji arrived in Malabar in 1920 for giving impetus to political activities.\textsuperscript{43} The arrival of Gandhi was an increased inspiration to the people.

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{38} P. K. K. Menon, The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala, pp. 79-82
\item \textsuperscript{39} E. M. S. Nambudiripad, Keralacharithram Marxist Veckshanathil, p. 195
\item \textsuperscript{40} Perunna K. N. Nair, Keralathile Congress Prasthanam, p. 23
\item \textsuperscript{41} Ibid, p. 24
\item \textsuperscript{42} P. K. K. Menon, The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala, pp. 86-87
\item \textsuperscript{43} Ibid, p. 83
\end{itemize}
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In 1921, the first Kerala State Conference of the Indian National Congress was held at Ottappalam and decided to make the Non Co-operation Movement a success. At the Ottappalam Conference, a resolution for regulating relation between the landlords and the tenants in Malabar was proposed, but there was great difference of opinion among the members and thus the issue was postponed. The conference hailed the decision of the Nagpur session of the Indian National Congress to boycott all the schools by Government or aided by it, instead national institutions were to be established.

The Conference appealed lawyers to boycott practice. It also called up on the people to boycott foreign goods and to encourage Ayurveda. It was also decided to contribute generously to the Tilak fund. The importance of the Ottappalam Conference was that the delegates came from all over Kerala and were not confined to Malabar as they were at Manjeri.

The Non Co-operation Movement was there in full swing; a large number of lawyers had given up practice. As the people belonging to all walks of life thronged the Congress, the organization that had roots only in the cities like Palakkad and Calicut began to have supporters in almost all the villages and towns of the entire Kerala. This clearly indicated the increase in political consciousness of the people.

The cultural advancement and social reform movement got impetus from political movement. The middle class entering the field of political struggle was radical in every respect. What they wanted was not just constitutional

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44 C.K.Moosad, Kelappan Enna Maha Manushyan, p.99
46 C.K.Moosad, Kelappan Enna Maha Manushyan, p.21
reforms but basic changes in the existing social order. It was a combination
of all those factors that together made a real National Democratic Movement
- the movement of the entire people for freedom from alien rule; the
movement of the peasants for freedom from the landlord exploitation; the
movement of the Malayali nation for national unity; the movement of the
masses belonging to the lower castes, as well as of the progressive men
belonging to the higher castes, for major and basic changes in the existing
social order; the movement of the intellectuals for the development of
modern progressive Kerala.\textsuperscript{47}

It was in the princely states of Travancore that the early phase of rise of
political consciousness in Kerala, the phase of social reform etc. was stronger
and deeper. When the National Democratic Movement entered its second
phase, the phase of political struggle, the princely states lagged behind
Malabar; it was in Malabar that National upsurge during 1920-21 took
stronger roots than either in Travancore or Cochin.\textsuperscript{48}

In 1921 February in protest against the arrest of the Congress leaders, there
was strong Hartal in Malabar. Students boycotted the classes and the
advocates the courts. The municipal chairperson C.V. Narayana Menon
resigned.\textsuperscript{49} During this time Kurur Nilakandan Nambudiripad was jailed for
writing an article in the Lokamanyan. This created much uproar in the
community.\textsuperscript{50}

\textsuperscript{47} E.M.S.Nambudiripad, Kerala: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow,p.130
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid, p.131
\textsuperscript{49} Perunna K.N.Nair, Keralathile Congress Prasthanam,p.30
\textsuperscript{50} E.M.S.Namabudiripad, Atmakatha, pp.68-69
E.M.S.Nambudiripad writes:

"The Political National Movement in Malabar entered all castes and communities as a matter of fact, the fraternization the Hindus and the Muslims was one of the specific features of the Movement, while the Movement in the states was more or less confined to the Hindus and that, too, mainly to the caste Hindus."^{51}

The Non Co-operation Movement of 1920 was conducted in combination with the *Khilafath Movement*. The *Khilafath Movement* was very strong in Malabar.^{52} When the *Khilafat* and the Congress united, there was greater unity among the people in showing enthusiasm and dedication.^{53}

E.M.S.Nambudiripad thinks that there were three main reasons for the outbreak of the *Mappila* rebellion:

1. The opposition of the *Kudiyans* towards the *Janmis*.
2. Propaganda of the Indian National Congress and the *Khilafat*.
3. Religious fanaticism of the *Mappilas*.

He concludes that the uprising began from agrarian discontent and became a popular movement but failed to gather momentum due to the incapability of the leadership. The movement did not succeed in gaining any of the goals because of the lack of self confidence among the people. It achieved the character of a communal movement due to the brilliant propaganda by the bureaucracy. The failure of the movement has a message that without a proper organization of the peasants and a good leadership any struggle of

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^{51} E.M.S.Nambudiripad, *Kerala Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, p.131
^{52} Perunna K.N.Nair, *Keralathile Congress Prasthanam*, p.24
^{53} Ibid, p.25
this kind would succeed. More over a moderate middle class organization could not make the movement a success.\textsuperscript{54}

The movement was neither well planned, skillfully led, nor had any agenda. But it was a serious effort against the imperialism. The bravery of the Muslim brothers thrilled many people.\textsuperscript{55}

It was a painful fact that the \textit{Kudiyans} belonged to the Muslims and the \textit{Janmis} the Hindus in Ernad. Therefore, the British succeeded in changing the rebellion into \textit{Mappila} rebellion.\textsuperscript{56}

After the Malabar Rebellion, no political activity was possible in Malabar. The people were against the Congress every where.\textsuperscript{57}

The Muslim population was skeptical towards the Indian National Congress. They believed that they were badly let down by the Congress, when they needed help.

A political stalemate was witnessed in Malabar.\textsuperscript{58} The \textit{Mappila} uprising made it impossible to involve Gandhian style of following in south Malabar.\textsuperscript{59} The Congress leaders were put in Jail; many Congress Committees were dissolved.\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{54} E.M.S.Nambudiripad, \textit{Prbhatam,} September 13, 1939.
\textsuperscript{55} A.K. Gopalan, \textit{Ente Jeevitha Katha,} p. 18
\textsuperscript{56} C.K. Moosad, \textit{Kelappan Enna Maha Manushyan,} p. 69
\textsuperscript{57} K.P. Kesavamenon, \textit{Kazhinha Kalam,} p. 116
\textsuperscript{58} Perunna K.N., \textit{Keralathile Congress Prasthanam,} p. 48
\textsuperscript{59} Robin Jeffrey, \textit{Politics, Women and Well being,} p. 118
\textsuperscript{60} K.P. Kesavamenon, \textit{Kazhinha Kalam,} p. 125
After 1921, the Congress activity in Ernad taluk was confined only to Ramanattukara. But it was very important that the message of the Congress and Swaraj had spread all over Malabar.

The Congress got a great blow as it was against its declared goals. They also believed that the Congress or the Khilafat would never appear again.

On April 21 1923, the all Kerala Political Conference was held at Ottapalam under the chairmanship of T. Prakasam. For the first time all the leaders of the Congress were at one dias. The conference was supplemented by a literary conference presided over by K.M.Panicker. It emphasized the importance of Malayalam language and literature.

Even though the flame of the National Movement still burnt in Malabar during 1922-27, the activities of the Indian National Congress in these years were at a low ebb. The Congress activities did not attain a mass form since the majority of the commoners stood away from the main stream. However the political Conferences of the Indian National Congress continued.

On April 16, 1927 the Third Kerala State Political Conference was held at Calicut. It was presided over by B.G.Horniman, the editor of the Bombay Chronicle. The major resolutions passed in the Conference were:

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61 A.K. Gopalan, Ente Jeevitha Patha, p.97
62 E.M.S.Nambudiripad, Keralacharithram Marxist Veekshanathil, p.211
63 Ibid, p.209
64 Perunna K.N.Nair, Keralathile Congress Prasthanam, p.32
65 P.K.K.Menon, The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala, pp.113-14
66 E.M.S.Nambudiripad, Keralacharithram Marxist Veekshanathil, p.213
67 Perunna K.N.Nair, Keralathile Congress Prasthanam, p.53
1. Pledged the Government to stop sending of Mappila women to the Andamans.

2. Sympathised with the freedom movement in China.

3. Appealed the Government to release M.P. Narayana Menon.

4. Demanded legislation for the interest of the tenants. The significance of the Third Political Conference was that it took major decisions that directly influenced the commoners.

The Fourth political conference too was distinctive with the complete independence resolution. This resolution was passed in the fourth Kerala State Political Conference at Payyanur, presided over by Jawaharlal Nehru in May 1929. The Resolutions of the Payyanur conference were:

1. Kerala should be a separate province in future.

2. Congratulated the heroes of the Berdouli Satyagraha.

3. Deplored the deportation of the Mappila women to Andamans.

4. Responsible Government should be established in princely states.

5. Complete independence would be the aim of the Congress.

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68 P.K.K. Menon, The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala, p.139
69 Perunna K.N. Nair, Kerala ithe Congress Prasthanam, p.59
70 P.K.K. Menon, The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala, p.145
Robin Jeffrey writes about the political mood in Kerala:

"The Gandhian Nationalist Movement emboldened Malayalis to challenge the British, use techniques of propaganda and protest culture to Indian in Kerala and caste discrimination constantly. The nationalist fervour of the 1920s and 30s combining with Kerala’s social problem, interested personally.”

Towards Mass Movement.

The All India Congress Committee met in Lahore in 1929 and adopted the resolution for complete independence.\(^2\) The Civil Dis-Obedience Movement was also declared by it. There was suspicion among the leaders about the possible failure of the movement. Madhavan Nair and Gopala Menon argued that the salt Satyagraha should not be held as there would be rebellion as in 1921. However, Kelappan struggled had to get consent of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee in favour of the Satyagraha.\(^3\) The Kerala Provincial Congress Committee met at Badagara in March 1930 and launched the Civil Disobedience Movement.\(^4\)

However, at the same time, Kelappan wanted that the Satyagraha should be held. If the salt Satyagraha was not held in Kerala, it would be highly disgraceful, he said. A resolution in this respect was proposed and was accepted. Kelappan was given the leadership to conduct the same.\(^5\)

When the jatha was about to start, Madhavan Nair made a speech congratulating the jatha and he donated Rs.500/-\(^6\)

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\(^{11}\) Robin Jeffrey, Politics, Women and Well-being, p.118
\(^{12}\) P.K.K. Menon, The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala, p.147
\(^{13}\) E.M.S. Nambudiripad, Keralacharithram Marxist Veckshanathil, p.217
\(^{14}\) P.K.K. Menon, The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala, p.181
\(^{15}\) A.V. Sreekanta Poduval (Editor), Athyuthara Keralam swathanthryasamarthil, p.52
\(^{16}\) Ibid, p.54
A procession on foot from Calicut to Payyanur started on April 13, 1930. Many receptions were there. Gandhiji also congratulated them. The Payyanur journey of Kelappan commenced the salt Satyagraha in Kerala. Muhammed Abdu Rahiman, P.Krishnapillai and R.V. Sarma led the movement at Calicut. They had to suffer much at the hands of the police.

Kelappan took out March from Calicut to the Payyanur beach to break the salt law; T.R.Krishna Swamy Ayyar led another from Palakkad to Payyanur.

In May, to break the salt law, many assembled in Calicut under the leadership of Kelappan, Abdurrahiman sahib, Krishna swami Iyyer, R.V.Sarma, P.Krishnapillai and Madhavanar. The police lathicharged and many were wounded. Ramankutty Panicker, Kunhiraman Adiyodi and K.P.Narayanan died. They were students. The law was broken at the Calicut beach. E.M.Sankaran Nambudiripad got three year term of imprisonment and a fine of Rs: 100/.

The leadership of Gandhi and the Russian revolution, the depression of 1930s led towards a new way of fighting imperialism. In this context in May 1931, a Political Conference was held at Badagara. Kelappan warned the people from resorting to violence during the Salt Satyagraha.

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77 C.K.Moosad, Kelappan Enna Maha Manushyan, p.99
78 E.M.S.Nambudiripad, Atmakathathu, p.133
79 Perunna K.N.Nair, Keralathile Congress Prasthanam, pp.62-63
80 C.K.Moosad, Kelappan Enna Maha Manushyan, p.102
81 E.M.S.Nambudiripad, Oru Indian Communistinte Ormakkurippukal, Chintha, Trivandrum, 1987, p.50
82 K.K.N. Kurup, Charithra Gaveshanaprabanthangal, p.61
83 E.M.S.Nambudiripad, Atmakatha, pp.140-42
The common people did not fear to face the repressive forces led by the colonial administration. During the Salt Satyagraha, the participation of the masses was rather significant. The march to Payyanur to break the salt law proved beyond doubt that people from all walks of life were ready to fight imperialism and for complete independence.84

The strike in 1930 was responsible for bringing almost all the people to the forefront of the freedom struggle. This was because throughout India there was a programme before the people. Besides the middle class, the peasants and the workers took part.85 The movement had considerable influence in North Malabar, that included Payyanur, and sowed the seeds of a powerful democratic movement in the area.

In 1931, Gandhi Irwin pact ended the salt Satyagraha. Then the people were allowed only to hold picketing at the toddy shops. This was only brought to practice in Malabar.86

The village political meetings were the salient features of the Disobedience Movement. Before one week, the place of the meeting and the agenda would be declared and the leaders who would take part announced. The police would soon round up the place.87

The main feature of the Civil Dis Obedience Movement was the participation of the common people in large numbers. This was entirely different from the Non Co-operation Movement of 1920-21.

84 P.K.K. Menon, The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala, p.59
85 A.K. Gopalan, Ente Jeevitha Katha, p.22
86 E.M.S. Nambudoripad, OruIndian
   Communistinte Ormakkurippukal, Chinthai, Trivandrum, 1987, p.45-
87 A.K. Gopalan, Ente Jeevitha Katha, p.31
In 1931-34, during the Civil Disobedience Movement, many youngsters participated. When the movement was suddenly stopped, those who jumped in to the movement renouncing what they once had, became disappointed. They felt unhappy towards Gandhi and his methods.

The second Civil Disobedience campaign in 1932 was only a shadow of the first in Malabar. Even though the movement had more participation from the masses than the Non-Co-operation movement of 1920-21, it could not boast of being a genuine mass movement because, the majority of the common people kept aloof even during this phase. During 1930-32 the peasants and other people did not participate in the political activities. The middle class youth and students participated in the struggle.

In 1932-34, the Civil Disobedience Movement changed into the individual Satyagraha. This brought the message of the Congress to the people. The activists tried to unite the labourers and the farmers to strengthen the National Movement.

After the withdrawal of the Civil Disobedience Movement, the Congress leaders concentrated their attention in social activities. The leaders then turned attention towards the position of the deprived classes. In September 1931, the Congress decided to hold picketing at the Guruvayur temple.

The Guruvayur Satyagraha involved both political and social aspects. The Civil Disobedience Movement could achieve some sort of success. If the Congress leadership was under the old moderate style of functioning, the

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88 T.J. Nossiter, T.J., Communism in Kerala, p.71
89 E.M.S. Nambudiripad, Keralacharithram Marxist Veekshanathil, p.219
90 K.K.N. Kurup, Charithra Gaveshanaprabanthangal, p.61
91 T.J. Nossiter, Communism in Kerala, p.71
Civil Disobedience Movement would have had the same fate as the Non-Co-operation movement of 1919-20. A.K. Gopalan has argued that the Congress leadership tried to transform the struggle against imperialism into social reform movements just like anti untouchability etc. But throughout India, a large number of youths and students actively took part in the movement and hence their motive did not succeed. In December 1933, Gandhi came to Kerala. He was received with much enthusiasm and was given a warm welcome. A huge amount of money was also given to him. Suvarna Kumari Menon remembers herself donating a golden bangle to the fund.

The Birth of the Congress Socialist Party.

After the withdrawal of the Civil Disobedience Movement movement, the Indian National Congress was invigorated. Even before the commencement of the Civil Disobedience Movement, there had been a number of left wing people within the Congress Party. They were not at all satisfied with the strategies adopted by the Indian National Congress.

In 1934 the Civil Disobedience Movement was stopped. This compelled the youth to lose interest in the programme of the Congress. A progressive group was formed within the Congress. The Leftists held majority in the Provincial Congress Committees that had been reconstituted in 1934.

The withdrawal of the Civil Disobedience Movement disappointed the young men. At Kozhikkode, a new Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee was

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92 A.K. Gopalan, Keralam Innale Innu, p.60
93 E.M.S. Nambudiripad, Atmakatha, p.179
94 Interview with Smt. Suvarna Kumari Menon
95 Ibid
constituted under the leadership of Kongattil Raman Menon, K.P. Kuttysankaran and A.K. Gopalan.96

They believed that the main thing that brought about the failure of the Civil Disobedience was the non-participation of the majority of the peasants and the workers.97

The common people never believed that the movement was organized for the protection of their rights. Without the support of these groups, the National Movement would not have any remarkable progress.

With the failure of the Civil Disobedience Movement, peace prevailed all over Malabar. A table and a chair in the corner of the Mathrubhumi office was the Congress office.98

The paradigm shift that could be witnessed during this period was that the control of the Indian National Congress being captured by a group of dynamic young men from the hands of the so called Chalappuram Gang, which was the nick name for the old leadership. They had never tried to bring a movement harnessing the support of the peasants, workers, students and teachers. As these people were marginalized, the upper middle class and the caste Hindus vanguarded the struggle.

Meanwhile the founding conference of the Congress Socialist Party was held in April 1934, at Bombay as a pressure group within the Indian National Congress, which was attended among others by P.Krishnapillai, E.M.Sankaran Nambudiripad and A.K.Gopalan.

96 Perunna K.N.Nair, Keralathile Congress Prasthanam, p.85
97 A.K.Gopalan, Ente Jeevitha Katha, p.62
98 Ibid, p.68
The Congress Socialist Party was a powerful force within the Congress that pushed through a series of left wing resolutions including rejection of Gandhian methods at the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee Meeting in October 1934.\(^9\)

The left within in the Congress and the Socialist Movement were born in Kerala in Kannur central jail. The person responsible for this happening was a political prisoner named M.P.Thiwari from Bihar.\(^10\)

The Indian National Congress stopped the Civil Disobedience Movement from 1930 to 1934, even though it was not successful in attaining independence (that had been the aim of the movement).

This movement has surely given the Congress many fighters. They were ready to rock the foundation of the Colonial Government. Some of the congress leaders believed that no result could be gained through direct fighting violating the Government laws, and it was better to struggle through lawful way in order to help the people. Even Gandhi once said that he had agreed to enter the legislature and the ministry so that it was possible to avoid a blood bath in the Civil Disobedience Movement. The people in the Congress who had the spark of revolution in them were anxiously waiting for a new programme. Many believed that it was not possible to attain freedom by a group of persons going to the jails.

The right wing of the Congress had never given a clear programme to the country. The main activity was Harijanodharanam (Harijan upliftment). During this time, Nehru was released from jail and he wrote a book –

\(^9\) T.J. Nossiter, Communism in Kerala,p.70
\(^10\) E.M.S.Nambudiripad,Atmakatha, p.158
"Whither India?" This book contained the plight of the Indian freedom struggle and the need for a new programme. He also wrote that the Indian National Movement was against the Imperialistic regime, which intended to win food and other amenities. The same kind of struggle went on everywhere in the world. This also had to be taken into account while thinking about the freedom struggle. The struggle could also be considered as a move in favour of socialism and freedom. More over he had written that the world was prosperous, but poverty persisted. This should be stopped. He asserted that unemployment and poverty could only be alleviated through Socialism. This invited a strong debate among the Congress activists.\(^{101}\)

The Congress state committee of Kerala, after the Civil Disobedience movement, met in the Town hall at Calicut. After the conference another meeting was held by some of the members. They thought about the ideas of Nehru. A decision was taken that the Congress Socialist Party Kerala should be founded. There were many among them who had been jailed during the movement. K. Kelappan was also there. Most of the Congress activists believed that Socialism be adopted. But at the same time leaders like K.Raman Menon did not participate. Chandroth Kunhiraman Nair proposed the need of such a party. A committee was formed in which C.K.Govindan Nair was president and P. Krishna Pillai secretary. It must be noted that the assembled members did not have any clear idea about Marxism Leninism or about the responsibilities of the Socialist Party.

The reasons why they joined together were:

1. The Congressmen in Kerala believed in revolutionary activities.

2. The inactivity should be done away with. Hence a new programme was necessary. For that Acharya Narendradev, Jayprakash Narayan etc. met in Patna and declared the formation of the All India Socialist Party. The Bombay session of the Indian National Congress also hailed the formation of the All India Socialist Party. In May 1934, the Congress Socialist Party came into being.

E.M. Sankaran Nambudiripad and others worked within the Congress as extremist group. The gap between the two groups increased in the Shoranur session of the Indian National Congress in 1934. In October 1934, the left wing leaders dominated Kerala Provincial Congress Committee.

The so-called Chalappuram gang persuaded the Gujarati merchants to stop funding the Congress. Their aim was to paralyze the activities of the Congress.

The Congress leaders began individual Satyagraha. But the common people did not give any attention to it. So it did not have much effect in Malabar. During 1935 Rajendra Prasad visited Kerala to raise funds for the Indian National Congress. He addressed as many as 57 public meetings. Whenever any leaders of the Indian National Congress found their way to Kerala, they were given great welcome. The moderates in the Congress went on with

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102 Ibid, p.72
103 Perunna K.N. Nair, Kerala Thile Congress Prasthanam, p.85
104 Ibid, p.86
105 E.M.S. Atmakatha, p.251
106 Ibid, p.178
the traditional Gandhian style of functioning like preaching of *khadi*, picketing of toddy shops etc. People had mocked at *khadi* once. But by 1936-37, they began to co-operate and use the same. There was picketing throughout the day. There were cases against the activists. The leadership was in the hands of the middle class educated group.¹⁰⁸

The Congress Socialist Party in a year established Committees in almost every village in Malabar outside the *Mappila zone*¹⁰⁹ and tried to broaden popular support. In 1936, the Congress working committee memberships split equally between left and right.

The president post was abolished and Raman Menon became general secretary. The Socialists were allowed to have a free hand on the labour front.¹¹⁰

The second Congress of the Congress Socialist Party (C.S.P.) was held in January 1936. It endorsed the proposition on Marxism and also decided to admit Communists as its members.¹¹¹

The Socialist ideology began to receive serious attention from the common people in a large scale. In Malabar, Socialism developed within the organizational framework of the freedom struggle in Travancore and Cochin along with the struggle for responsible Government.¹¹²

The “Starvation Procession (*Pattini Jatha*)” led by A.K.Gopalan in 1936 was a unique incident in the history of the National Movement.

¹⁰⁸ A.K. Gopalan, *Ente Jeevitha Katha*, p.28
¹⁰⁹ T.J. Nossiter, *Communism in Kerala*, p.72
¹¹⁰ Ibid, p.73
¹¹¹ Ibid, p.75
¹¹² Ibid, p.77
Apart from the goal of winning freedom, the Indian National Congress had taken no other steps to alleviate the grievances of the common people.

The right wing leaders of the Indian National Congress were against untouchability and other social evils. But they never opposed the caste system prevailing in the state. They never fought for getting reasonable price for the agricultural produce or for getting wages to the peasants at a higher rate.

Even though some resolutions were passed in the conferences, they rested in the paper. The people were starving. Thus the procession was most timely to open the eyes of the Government. It had great impact on the people in Malabar and many areas of Tamilnadu.¹¹³

In July 1937 C. Rajagopalachari - led ministry assumed office in Madras. Malabar was represented by Kongattil Raman Menon.¹¹⁴ When he died, E.M.Sankaran Nambudiripad was elected.¹¹⁵ He was a well-known leftist by then. Within the Congress, there appeared the socialist ideology and the seeds of democracy. They believed that the Congress led by Gandhi would not be able to rally the majority of the people behind him against the British to achieve freedom; for which a more left leaned programmes were necessary.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ E.M.S.Nambudiripad, Atmakatha, p.253
¹¹⁴ Perunna K.N.Nair, Kerala ilite Congress Prasishnam, p.93
¹¹⁵ Ibid, p.94
¹¹⁶ E.M.S.Nambudiripad, Atmakatha p.165
The success of the left wing was when the Congress Socialist Party regained control of Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee in 1933 and E.M. Sankaran Nambudiripad was elected as the General Secretary.117

The seeds of Communism had already been sown in the minds of the people. The Communist group worked in the Congress Socialist Party led by E.M. Sankaran Nambudiripad and P. Krishnapillai. They preached the ideology of Communism. Many people were attracted towards it.118

During 1938-39 the Congress in Malabar was a typical example for how united the organization was against the imperialistic administration.119 By then there were three factions within the State Congress Committee: The Right wing (The Gandhian), the Left led by the Communists and the national Muslims under the leadership of Muhammed Abdu Rahiman. As the second and the third groups decided to work together, they got majority in the elections to the KPCC in January, 1939.120

In 1939 there was a meeting at Bakkalam presided over by Muhammed Abdu Rahiman. The right wing of the KPCC boycotted the meeting. The meeting called up on the people to reject the idea of Federation. In the Malabar District Board elections the right wing tried to defeat the KPCC candidates.121

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117 T.J. Nossiter, Communism in Kerala, p. 74
118 Perunna K.N. Nair, Keralathile Congress Prasthanam, p. 94
119 E.M.S. Nambudiripad, Keralacharithram Marxist Veekshanathil, p. 251
120 Perunna K.N. Nair, Keralathile Congress Prasthanam, p. 405
121 Ibid, p. 406
Dr. K.K.N. Kurup writes:

"Where there was no proper National Movement, the peasant movements had been in a weak position. The nationalist and peasant movements helped the growth of the Communist Movement".

By 1939, Communist cells existed in Calicut, Ernakulam, and Trivandrum and the party co existed in many parts of Malabar with the local congress organization. Immediately after the Wardha session of the All India Congress Committee, 90 Malayali Congress Socialist Party members met separately at a village near Tellicherry, in Malabar on October 1939 to transform the Kerala Congress Socialist Party to Kerala Communist Party of India.

Throughout Kerala the Communist Party workers had earned a reputation even among their political opponents for their sincerity and simplicity. In their own way they had lived an ascetic life. There is an argument that the break up of the joint family system was certainly a factor in the social experience of that generation of young men who provided the leadership of the emergent Communist Movement in the 1930s. By 1939, the communist activities gained momentum in major towns of Kerala. In the 10th Kerala State political Conference held at Kottakkal in 1940, there was a compromise between the two factions and included four right wing members in the KPCC executive. On September 15, 1940 the KPCC decided to observe anti oppression day opposing the central leadership. There were clashes between

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122 K.K.N. Kurup, Peasantry Nationalism and Social Change in India, p.128.
123 T.J. Nossiter, Communism in Kerala, p.83
124 Ibid, p.93
125 Ibid.
126 Ibid, p.66
127 Ibid, p.83
the police and the people at Thalasseri, Mattannur and Morazha. The High Command intervened and a Committee was constituted led by Pattabhi Sitaramayya to look into the matter. The KPCC was dissolved and an ad-hoc committee was formed.  

The Communists and the Congressmen seriously differed on the idea of supporting the British during the Second World War. The Communists at first opposed the war and the stand taken by the British Government. But when the Soviet Union was attacked, they changed their stand and supported the Government in fighting a war against the Fascists. Many of the Communists joined the army and fought. In the villages anti-Jap programmes were conducted. The Government lifted the many restrictions on the Communists. But even the strong supporters of the Party could not swallow what the leaders told them. At the same time the Indian National Congress was against the war that was to be fought on the side of the British. The Kerala Provincial Congress Committee decided to launch individual Satyagraha, which the leftists strongly opposed. Anti war slogans were shouted and then the Individual Satyagraha started. About one thousand men were arrested in Malabar alone.

The activities of the Communists during the period can be summarized thus:

1. It made the Congress a strong and popular organization
2. It helped to extend the influence of the organization to the princely states

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128 Perunna K.N.Nair, Kerala Congress Prasthanam, pp.406-407
129 Ibid, p.101
130 Ibid, p.103
3. It founded different unions among the peasants, teachers and students.\textsuperscript{131}

During the Quit India Movement Kelappan, Madhava Menon and many others were arrested.\textsuperscript{132} but after the August struggle, they were released. The Congress organizational work started again.\textsuperscript{133} As Abdurrahman Sahib came out of the prison, the political activity in the state became strong.\textsuperscript{134} K.Kelappan made an important ideological declaration in a book titled 'Congressum Communisavum' (The Congress and the Communism)\textsuperscript{135} wrote that Congress did not like the slogans and speeches that promoted the struggle between the different classes. The Congress was also opposed to the policy spread by the Communists that the Janmis and the rich should be eliminated. There was serious difference between the Congress and the Communists in that matter.\textsuperscript{135}

He also wrote that the revolution by the proletariat and the Government by them would not yield good governance. The Congress believed in peaceful transformation. The aim of the Congress was to attain freedom through peaceful means.\textsuperscript{136} The Congress stood for the peaceful coexistence of different classes.\textsuperscript{137}

During the Quit India struggle, the Congress, and the Socialists and the Communists followed different strategies. The Congress Socialist Party and then the Communist Party tried to bring about a different method of approaching the people and they tried to bring the message of the National

\textsuperscript{131} E.M.S.Nambudiripad, Keralacharithram Marxist Veekshanathil, p.225
\textsuperscript{132} Perunna K.N.Nair, Keralathile Congress Prasthanam, p.109
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid, p.123.
\textsuperscript{134} Moidu Moulavi, Moulaviyude Atmakath, p.171
\textsuperscript{135} K.Kelappan, Congressum Communisavum, Kerala Provincial Congress Committee, Calicut, 1948, p.22
\textsuperscript{136} Ibid, p.23
\textsuperscript{137} Ibid, p.31
Movement to the villages.\textsuperscript{138} While the former involved in independent movements, the Congress Socialists and the Communists launched mass struggles including different mass organizations such as the Peasants, workers, students, teachers etc. The mass base of the National Movement was thus broadened. The Communists and the Socialists proved the potential of the common man whom they could depend on. All these movements brought political awareness to the people. Each and every member of the society was part of the ongoing political struggle.

The founding of National Schools

Parallel to the political struggle, there were efforts by the political leadership to interfere in the field of education, for they felt that education was an important tool to spread the national feeling. As a result many National schools came into being. The aim of these schools was to facilitate education realizing the Indian culture and tradition.

The call for founding of National Schools was well heard in Kerala. On line with the Wardha model, a school was started in North Malabar-the Vijnanadayini School at Vellikoth. It became a centre of nationalist movement.\textsuperscript{139} It began functioning in 1926. At Vijnanadayini the children were taught Sanskrit, English, Malayalam and History. The Headmaster was P.Kelu Nair. Other teachers included V.M.Kunhambu Nair, V.M. Krishnan Nair, T.Kunhiraman Namibiar, Kottayil Kelu Nair, E. Raghava Panicker and Damodara Datta.

\textsuperscript{138} K.K.N.Kurup, \textit{Charithra Gaaveshanaprabanthangal}, p.69
\textsuperscript{139} A.V.Sreekanta Poduval(Editor), \textit{Athyuthara Keralam Swaythanthrya Samarathil}, p.110.
They taught without any remuneration. The spinning of khadi and the anti-untouchability movement and other creative programmes of the Indian National Congress were the main activities there. Due to these activities, this school became a centre of the National Movement in northern Kerala. K.A. Keraleeyan, Gandhi Krishnan Nair, Vannan Ambu etc. were the products of this school. K.Madhavan was also a product of this school. Instead of praising the king, the students there sang Vande Mataram. The curriculum was arranged in such a way that every body would have a love for the mother land. They gathered funds for the Berdouli Satyagraha by collecting Pidiyari (handful of rice). The collection was done singing the Naleyane nattil, the song composed by the students of Nileeswaram Rajas High School. On March 18, 1932 Pattabakki was played at the Vellikkoth school that contained strong political message. In the public meeting A.K.Gopalan spoke; A.C.Kannan Nair chaired.

Another school of this kind was built in Valluwanad taluk in the 50 cents bought for the purpose at Chundampatta.

The school was called the Labour Welfare School. In 1935 Babu Rajendraprasad inaugurated it.

There were attempts to tarnish the image of the National schools. In north Malabar Panathathatta Kannan Nair, the co-operative inspector tried to take children from the Sanskrit school to other schools and also tore the dhotis of those who had worn khadi. In these circumstances, the school authorities

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140 K.K.N.Kurup, A.C.Kannan Nair Oru Padanam, p.126
141 A.V.Sreekanta Poduval, Athyuthara Keralam Swathanthrya Samarathil, p.112.
142 Ibid, p.111
143 Ibid, p.113
144 K.K.N.Kurup, A.C.Kannan Nair- Oru Padanam, p.132
145 E.M.S.Nambudiripad,Oru Communistinte Ornakkurippukal,p.138
decided not to request for recognition of the Government, the committee took this decision unanimously.146 The National schools produced a number of political leaders for Kerala

Nationalists and Education.

After the Malabar Rebellion of 1921, the entire area was in fear. This atmosphere attracted the attention of many leaders. They wanted a series of relief measures to be undertaken to reconstruct the district. The activists of the Servants of India Society took a leading role in the reconstruction. G.K.Devadhar, who was a leader of the Servants of India Society, visited Malabar. He was much moved by the impact of the rebellion on the poor people of Malabar.

Devadhar and his colleagues toured many places throughout the country and collected about ten lakh rupees for taking up various relief measures in Malabar.147 They visited various places in Malabar and understood that the basic thing that the people lacked there was education. With proper education, the superstitions and other communal problems could be ended, they believed. A Trust was constituted at Calicut for eradication of the social evils and for imparting education to the illiterate masses Malabar. The trust began four schools in Malabar. They were at Tanur, Nediyirippu, Manjeri and Quilandy. The school at Gopalapuram, Quilandy was for imparting education to the students belonging to the backward classes.

146 K.K.N.Kurup, A.C.Kannan Nair Orupadanam, p.105
147 Interview with Assainarkutty, Tanur.
The main activities of the D.M.R.T were to fight against the social evils and also to spread education to the down trodden.\textsuperscript{148} The National Schools spread the spirit of nationalism which inevitably led the masses, especially the peasants and the workers, towards attaining political consciousness.

**The Peasantry and Political Consciousness.**

To get support from the masses, the Congress Socialist Party and then the Communist Party organized different sections of the people who were the sufferers of exploitation by the Colonial regime.

Malabar had witnessed agrarian unrests even from the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. The Mappila uprisings were mainly intended to solve economic problems. But the unrest was greater with the dawn of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. There were a number of taxes like vasi, nuri etc. levied by the Janmis. The Janmis and the Government together exploited the peasantry with cruelty.

During the dawn of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, the agrarian classes joined the National Movement and played pressure tactics on the Government to see tenancy legislation enacted for Malabar.\textsuperscript{149} The Janmis looted the agricultural produces under the pretext that the tenants failed to pay Pattam or the Janmi's share. The peasants were a marginalized group until the National Movement gathered momentum. The Indian National Congress gave little attention to the downtrodden classes in the early period of the National Movement, as the upper middle class led it. They could not understand the pulsations of the marginalized sections. But after the formation of the

\textsuperscript{148} Kunhali, V (Editor), Kerala Society Historical Perceptions (T.M.Vijayan, The DMRT and its functions in Malabar), pp.134-41

\textsuperscript{149} K.K.N.Kurup, Peasantry, Nationalism and Social Change in India, p.35
Congress Socialist Party within the Congress, the situation changed dramatically.

Dr. K. K. N. Kurup writes:

"Those who took part in production were organized on the basis of class and they spread the national consciousness at all level. This was the plan of the Congress Socialists. So the peasant movement and the political consciousness entered simultaneously."\(^{150}\)

The leaders were of the view that the national struggle should be revamped covering various sections of the common people. The interests of these people should be put forth and given prime attention. Continuous famines and depression had been the problems of the peasants. When they were told about the political and social rights that were waiting for, they got much elated.

The people’s struggle against the imperialism and its main pillars—the land lords—was the history of political renaissance in Kerala.\(^{151}\)

The common people had gained social consciousness to some extent from the activities of the social reformers. Sree Narayana Guru and others were in favour of the liberation of the people from the bondage of casteism and also were in favour of providing educational and social rights to the backward classes.

In Malabar Vaghbhatananda played a major role in propagating the need for ending caste discriminations. He further demanded even for political rights. He was a major factor behind the politicization of the common people in north Malabar.

151 Ibid, p. 61
Many of his (Vaghbhatananda) disciples like T.V.Ananthan, M.T.Kumaran, T.V.Kutty joined the National Movement and were arrested. He supported Gandhi during the Civil Disobedience Movement. He was in favour of temple entry for all irrespective of caste identities. He chaired the first meeting of the *Abhinava Bharat Yuvak Sangham* in 1936.\textsuperscript{152}

The *Abhinava Bharat Yuvak Sangham* worked in Chirakkal taluk, centred at Karivellur. T.T.Krishna Poduval and others began this movement. The aim of the organization was to end poverty and increase production. A.V.Kunhambu, M.P.Appumaster etc. gave this organization a political dimension and working plan. This organization was the forerunner of the *Karshaka Sangham*.\textsuperscript{153}

The first days of the *Karshaka Sangham* in the words of K.A.Keraleeyan:

> "I met him for the first time in Karivellur, Manakkad. I was there to conduct activities of *Karshaka Sangham*. Kunhambu had just come from North India. He was a freedom fighter. He had run a night school at Malkad. From that night school, the seeds of the *Abhinava Bharat Yuvak Sangham* could be found. When I went there, Kunhambu was holding a chalk piece and was standing near the black board. There were letters on the board. I also sat there. There were a number of younger and elder people in the class who did not know how to read and write. They were very much interested in the class. Besides teaching the letters, Kunhambu taught them the happenings all over the world. All those sat in the class became strong participants of the political struggle in Karivellur."  \textsuperscript{154}

The seeds of political education was sown in the minds of these classes and which produced many peasant leaders. Some of them became shining figures in the political realm as well.

\textsuperscript{152} Ibid, p.53
\textsuperscript{153} Ibid, p.63
\textsuperscript{154} M.N.Kurup, A.V.Kunhambu, Prathibha Books, Mavelikara, 2000, p.8]
With the formation of the Congress Socialist Party, a number of progressive people joined together and founded the *All India Kisan Sangham*. Swami Bhrahmananada, Karyananada Sarma, Mussafir Ahamed, Acharya Narendra Dev, Rahul Samkrityayan, Indulal Yajnik etc were the founding members of the organization.\(^{155}\)

The manifesto of the meeting clearly indicated that the aim of the movement was to get freedom from the financial exploitation; the peasants and the workers and the other exploited group had to get complete economic and political power. The activities of the union were aimed at getting political and economic rights and freedom from all types of exploitation.\(^{156}\)

Under the chairmanship of A.K.Pillai, the first meeting of *Chirakkal Taluk Karshaka Sangham* was held at Parassinikkadavu in November 1936. In 1937, *Akhila Malabar Karshaka Sangham* was established under the presidentship of P.Narayanan Nair. K.A.Keraleeyan was elected as the secretary.\(^{157}\)

Those who led the peasant movement were political leaders as well. KrishnaPillai, K.Gopalan, K.A.Keraleeyan, K.P.R.Gopalan, Vishnu Bharathiyan, A.V.Kunhambu, V.V.Kunhambu, E.K.Nayanar and A.Kunhikkannan were some of them.\(^{158}\)

These political figures virtually alleviated the belief among the peasants that the spirit of the National Movement and the interests of the peasants were different. They began to think that their interests depended on the success of the political struggle that had been going on.

\(^{155}\) K.K.N.Kurup, *Athunika Keralam Charithra Gaveshana Prabanthangal*, p.63  
\(^{156}\) Ibid.  
\(^{157}\) Ibid, p.64  
\(^{158}\) Ibid, p.66
The *Karshaka Sangham* spread the message among the people against the Land Lordism, Imperialism and Capitalism.\(^{159}\)

The activities of the *Karshaka Sangham* were far and wide. It linked the interests of their groups with those of the main stream. Thus Imperialism and Capitalism became the enemies of the poor peasants. Kunhambu intensified the activities of the *Karshaka Sangham* and the educational activities alike.\(^{160}\) To link their grievances with the existing political system, political education was given to the peasant masses.

Literature was also supportive of the peasants in educating them to attain their rights. Literature fomented the growth of National Movement and growth of class organization in Malabar.\(^{161}\) *Pattabikki, Rakthapanam* etc. propagated the ideology of the working class.

Another remarkable thing is that the peasant movements were led by political figures. Kunhambu taught the peasants and the youth about the political situation in Malabar, Travancore and Cochin. *Pattabikki*, the famous play written by K. Damodharan was played at many places in Karivellur. An *Adhyayana Samajam* was also conducted. He participated in the summer school at Mankada, which was a Muslim dominated area. The slogans like 'nquilab Zindabad' and 'Congress Zindabad' were shouted. The Muslim agricultural workers participated in the *jatha* that welcomed the 'students' to the school.\(^{162}\)

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\(^{159}\) P. Narayanan Nair, *Ara Nootantiilute*, p.116

\(^{160}\) M. N. Kurup, *A.V. Kunhambu*, p.94

\(^{161}\) Perunna K. N. Nair, *Keralathile Congress Prasthanam*, p.12

\(^{162}\) M. N. Kurup, *A.V. Kunhambu*, p.124
Classes for the elder people known as the *Vayojana classes* were started by the *Sangham*. The political situation and the condition of the peasants were taught in these classes. They also started *Vayanasalas* and *Sthree Samajams* which were known as *Mahila Sabhas*.\(^{163}\)

Here is an example how the common man reformed with the activities of the *Karshaka Sangham*:

Alora Krishnan joined the *Karshaka Sangham*. He was the worker of a *Janmi*. He joined the night classes conducted by the *Karshaka Sangham*. He learned the basics of reading and writing. He became one of the leading public speakers of the *Karshaka Sangham* in about 1½ year. He even wrote poems.

The *Janmi* was surprised to see all this. He exclaimed that he did not like the *Sangham* but it was interesting to see that the little fellow in his house had learnt to read, write and speak in public and lead the people of the village, even though he was speaking against him.\(^{164}\)

From 1939 to 1942 the slogan was 'Let *Janmism* and the British Government perish; do not help the wars; don't join the army, Inquilab Zindabad.'\(^{165}\)

It was not accidental that when the Indian National Congress began individual *Satyagraha* in 1940, many violent peasant struggles occurred. The *Karshaka Sangham* believed that struggles were to be conducted to attain their rights that were denied to them for centuries. As a result of this belief many peasant struggles occurred all over north Malabar. The Ḍayyur riot and the

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\(^{163}\) K.K.N.Kurup, *Athunika Keralam Charithra Gaveshana Prabanthangal*, p.75

\(^{164}\) A.K.Gopalan, *Keralam Innale Innu*, p.76

\(^{165}\) K.K.N.Kurup, *Athunika Keralam Charithra Gaveshana Prabanthangal*, p.75
death of a policeman in Kayyur was a turning point in the history of the
Kisan Sabha.\textsuperscript{166}

The many peasant struggles took place in places like Kayyur, Karivellur, Morazha were led by the Communists. In the Morazha case, K.P.R.Gopalan was sentenced to death. The political consciousness of Malabar rose to its maximum to get the safe release of the Karshaka sangham leader. He was set free after people from all over India pressurised for his release. Gandhiji also intervened. The peasant union brought the spirit of the freedom struggle to the minds of the common people.

**The Working Class and Political Consciousness.**

The working class had been politically inert before the dawn of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. Since the Indian National Congress had no activities to mobilize the working class, they stood aloof from the national mainstream. But the railway strike of 1928 heralded a new attitude among the working class.

There were no centralized trade unions during this period.

With the 1928 strike of the railway employees the first trade union in Kerala was founded. 1930-32 when the Civil Disobedience Movement was in full swing, the labour class had its rejuvenation. They supported the movement. They began to conduct such moves as their own.\textsuperscript{167}

The period from this struggle witnessed many unions coming to the field. Between 1928 and 1930 at places like Alappuzha, Calicut and Kannur Trade Unions were founded for the first time in Kerala. The Provincial

\textsuperscript{166} Ibid, p.79
\textsuperscript{167} P.Krishna Pillai, Sakkakkale Mannottu, p.383
Congress Committee that had the domination of the "left in 1935 passed many resolutions for the cause of the peasants and the labourers.\textsuperscript{168}

By 1931 there was a union called \textit{Vadakke Malabar Thozhilali Sanghatana}. In September 1932 the first anniversary of the union was celebrated at Calicut under the leadership of U.Gopala Menon. Mostly the handloom workers attended the meeting. The urgent resolutions relating to the rights of the workers passed, along with them, political resolutions were also passed. With the repeal of the Civil Dis obedience movement, the working class movement became strong.\textsuperscript{169}

With the founding of the Congress Socialist Party in Malabar, it stressed the need for uniting the workers, since the Socialist revolution could only be manifested through the efforts of the working class.

Almost all the towns in Kerala witnessed the founding of trade unions.

The Socialists within the Congress led all these movements. E.M.Sankaran Nambudiripad and P.Krishna Paillai were the founding leaders of the trade unions in Kerala.

The first organized strike of the working class in Kerala was in 1934-35. This resulted in the increase in membership of the trade unions in Kerala. The organizers of the struggle reached every nook and corner of the factories or small scale working areas with the message of the red flag.

\textsuperscript{168} A.K.Gopalan, \textit{Keralam Innale Innu}, p.56
\textsuperscript{169} P.Krishna Pillai, \textit{Sahhakkale Muinottu}, p.383
The effort was to organize the labourers to fight against the imperialist regime and favour the freedom struggle.¹⁷⁰

When the Congress Socialist Party started functioning in Calicut, there was a trade union office. There was also a night class for the working class. P.Krishna Pillai, P.K.Balan, H.Manjunatha Rao and P.K.Ramunni Nair led the classes. The basics of trade union culture and that of socialism, the importance of anti-imperialist struggle were taught. In 1938 there was an attempt to raise this night class in to a trade union school.¹⁷¹ Political education was thus imparted to the working class.

On 26 May 1935 the Samastha Kerala Thozhilali Sammelanam was held at Calicut. From that meeting the working class began to interfere in the political affairs of the state with increased enthusiasm.¹⁷²

In 1935 there was a strike at Feroke. The factory owners had to reduce the working hours to 54 hours in a week as per the law. But to evade this, the factory owners reduced the wages for half a day. This brought about widespread protest and strike. They also raised other demands as well. At last K.Kelappan intervened and an agreement was reached.¹⁷³

On February 9, Manari Appu, the trade union activist was expelled from the Thiruvannur Cotton Mill. A strong strike was organized. The socialists came for help. The strike was won.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁰ A.K.Gopalan, Keralam Innale Innu, p.56
¹⁷¹ T.Prakasam, Keralathile Trade Union Prasthanathinte Charithram, Prabhath, Trivandrum, 1979, p.70
¹⁷² P.Krishna Pillai, Sakhakkale Munnottu, p.383
¹⁷³ Ibid.
¹⁷⁴ T.Prakasam, Keralathile Trade Union Prasthanathinte Charithram, p.67
On November 11, 1935 there was another strike in the Cotton Mill. The workers demanded the recognition of the union, stoppage of the contract system, *bata* should be given to those who did not enjoy it, no cleaning of the machine would be done without proper wages. The strike lasted two months.\(^7\)

By the 1930s the character of the National Movement changed. It became somewhat radical involving all sections of the masses. The National Movement in Kerala had become a working class movement by the labouring forces. This shows the contrast of the National Movement in the 1920s and 30s. In the early phase, the educated middle classes who had dedicated themselves to the cause of freedom dominated it. But in the 1930s apart from them, a large number of peasants and workers, who later became members of the Communist Party, joined the freedom struggle.\(^6\)

An attempt to unite all the trade unions in Kerala was made in 1935 under the leadership of the Congress Socialist Party. The party wanted to bring the working class to the mainstream of the freedom struggle. In the same year the Congress Socialist Party in Kerala was also founded. The labourers and the common people jointly revolutionized the political history of Kerala.\(^7\)

A number of workers from all over Malabar participated in the meeting. P.Krishna Pillai was behind this move. N.C.Sekhar, K.K.Warrier, P.S.Nambudiri, K.P.Gopalan, P.K.Balan, A.K.Gopalan, E.M.Sankaran Nambudiripad and R.Sugathan participated in the meeting. Among other resolutions, there was a plea to the workers that they should take initiative

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\(^{175}\) Ibid, p.69  
\(^{176}\) K.K.N.Kurup, *Nationalism and Social Change: The Role of Malayalam Literature*, p.55  
\(^{177}\) T.Prakasam, *Keralathile Trade Union Prasthanathinte Charithram*, p.57
in the political struggle for independence. Complete freedom would be the ultimate aim of the Union.\textsuperscript{178}

From then on the political struggle in Kerala involved increased participation of the working class. The trade unions imparted political consciousness.

In the political struggle the labour class began to play a leading role in the Kerala society.\textsuperscript{179} The politically motivated members of the working class behaved vigorously to bring about radical changes. When the Congress came to power in Madras, the workers were so jubilant.

In September 1937, there was a declaration of rights by the working class in Kannur, Thalassery, and Calicut. More than ten thousand workers participated in the procession in Calicut.\textsuperscript{180} It was a remarkable event.

There were a number of trade unions in Malabar. Most of them were led by the Socialists. (Appendix-I)

Almost all of them belonged to the members of the beedi, coir and factory workers.

The night classes and the meetings of the trade unions and the political interpretations by the leaders equipped the working class with a new awareness that eventually led them towards the ultimate goal of winning freedom. The colonial regime, the leaders explained, would only bring famine, poverty and wage cuts. A Government by the Indian people would only guarantee an elevated position to the working class.

\textsuperscript{178} Ibid, p.72.
\textsuperscript{179} P.Krishna Pillai, \textit{Sakhakkale Muvottu}, p.57
\textsuperscript{180} T.Prakasam, \textit{Keralathile Trade Union Prashthanathinte Charithram}, p.88
While the working class and the peasants were organized on the basis of class, some other unorganized groups were also there. The political leaders did not give them much attention in the beginning. They later redefined the political structure of Malabar with their indelible presence. They were the Teaching Community and the Student Community.