CHAPTER V

THE FORMATION OF STATE CONGRESS

Even though the Indian National Congress was organised by A.O. Hume in 1885, it did not spread to Travancore and other parts of India. The Congress Party too, did not think of expanding its activities because the leaders were very busy in making preparation for freedom movement. In the meantime the people of Travancore found that the unit of Indian National Congress that was functioning in Travancore too was not active. The Congress Party remained a silent spectator and watching the course of events. There were both communal and political organizations in the state organised by the leaders to represent the grievances of the people either to the Dewan or to the King.

5.1. People’s Movement

The introduction of western education awakened the people. They could understand that political and economic situation in the state was unfavourable to their interests and hence, they demanded a share in the administration. Under the guise of shaping or revamping administration, they imported outsiders for public services. This was highly distaste to the

1 Nayanar, E.K., My Struggle, New Delhi, 1982, p. 12.
2 Agur, C.M., Church history of Travancore, Madras, 1903, pp. 568-570.
3 Daniel, D., op.cit., p. 17.
people. They felt that the government had snatched away the opportunities of the Travancoreans. During the administration of Dewan T. Rama Rao (1887-1897) their attitudes aggravated and they began to demand a share in the administration.

Mr. Parameswaran Pillai of the Madras Bar spearheaded an agitation for the removal of the Dewan Rama Rao a Marathi Brahmin. He wrote articles in the newspaper and published pamphlets vehemently criticizing the administrative policies of the Dewan. But it did not produce any result immediately.

5.2. The Travancore Memorial

On the 11th January, 1891, the leading communities, the Nambudiris, the Nayars, Ezhavas, Syrians, Latin Christians and Angli-Indians, landlords, merchants and officials jointly submitted a memorial to the Maharaja (Sri Mulam Thirunal – 1885-1924). The Memorial was called the Malayali Memorial or Travancore Memorial. K.P. Sankara Menon, P. Palpu and G. Parameswaran Pillai were the leaders of the Memorial. The memorial

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5 Ibid.
was signed by over 10000 citizens.\textsuperscript{10} Thus, they made their demands for fair share in the administration.

5.3. The Congress Committee 1919

It was during these circumstances, Gandhiji started the Non-Cooperation Movement against the British. It had its impact in Travancore also. The inhabitants of Trivandrum organised a Congress Committee. The purpose of the organisation of the Congress Committee was:

a) For holding meetings and discuss the progress of the Non-Cooperation Movement.

b) To take processions and Jathas.

c) To promote the boycott of British goods.

d) To educate the people about the need for boycotting foreign goods.\textsuperscript{11}

After the First World War there was widespread depression in the State. In the meantime the Congress Party organised the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930-1932. The Congress Party encouraged the young men to participate in the movement. Encouraged by the Congress Committee, several young men went to the British provinces and took active part in the Civil Disobedience Movement. Under the leadership of Ponnara

\textsuperscript{10} Menon, P.K.K., \textit{op.cit.}, p. 8.

\textsuperscript{11} Sreedhara Menon, A., \textit{Kerala District Gazetteer}, Trivandrum District, Trivandrum, 1962, p. 239.
G. Sreedhar, K. Kumar and Amsi Narayana Pillai went to Malabar\textsuperscript{12} a part of the then Madras Presidency\textsuperscript{13} and joined the Satyagraha at Malabar. In Ambalapuzha, Alleppey and Trivandrum shops dealing with foreign goods were picketed.\textsuperscript{14} However the workers who participated in the programmes of the Indian National Congress contributed to the political awakening.

During the Devaswom proclamation the Civil Rights league was organizing the people. But when the Vaikom Satyagraha was started it was a problem to the congress. In the conference held at Bombay on 25\textsuperscript{th} September 1932, the Congress passed a resolution that among the Hindus no one shall be regarded as an untouchable. Mahatma Gandhi too visited Vaikom and other places even then he did not advise, the leaders to start a Pradesh Congress Party. During the period of constitutional reforms too, the leaders of the Congress Party did not direct or request the people to form a Pradesh Congress organisation.

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{12}] Menon, P.K.K., \textit{op.cit.}, p. 195.
\item[\textsuperscript{13}] The name Madras was derived from the name of a Telugu ruler or chieftain called Mandarasu. Thurston, E., \textit{The Madras presidency with Mysore and Coorg and associated states}, London, 1918, p. 2. In 1639, Francis Day, a member of the Masulipalanam obtained land grant from Damerala Venkitappa Nayak, the son and successor of Chinnappa Nayak. In memory of him, the name Channapattanam was derived. In 1640, Francis Day, of Madras Medical Service built a small fort at Chennapattanam and that was called Fort St. George. In course of time the East India Company planted number of isolated settlements for trade along the Coromandal coast. Sadasivan, D., \textit{The Growth of Public Opinion in the Madras Presidency}, Madras, 1964, p. 8. In 1653, Madras was made a separate presidency adding Andra and Malabar coast as a part of it. Newell, H.A, \textit{Madras the birthplace of British India}, Madras, 1919, p. 23.
\item[\textsuperscript{14}] Menon, P.K.K., \textit{op.cit.}, p. 195.
\end{itemize}
5.4. The All Travancore Joint Political Congress

The constitutional reform of 1932, did not satisfy the demands of the people. Hence in an attempt to secure their demands, they decided to launch an agitation. To lead the agitation, they wanted to have an organisation. Hence on 17th December 1932, a meeting of the Christians, Ezhava community and the Muslim communities were held at London Mission Society otherwise called the L.M.S. Hall, Trivandrum. Leaders representing the S.N.D.P. Yogam, the Muslim Service League, the Muslim Association, The Travancore State Catholic Congress, Latin Christians Mahajana Sabha, Kerala Christian Service League and South Travancore Christian Association were present. The meeting was presided over by E.J. John, an active Congress leader. After long deliberations, the leaders decided to form an organisation called the All Travancore Joint Political Congress.  

On 9th January 1933, the Joint Political Congress submitted a Memorial to Dewan Austin (1932-1934) demanding certain concessions including filling up of the official seats. But the government planned for a conference. Thus the aim of the Joint Political Congress did not materialize. So it announced Abstention Movement.

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5.5. The Travancore Provincial Congress Committee

The political situation after the formation of the Abstention Movement was changing. The Indian National Congress found it necessary to formulate its policy in relation to the former. The Congress also had feeling that in Travancore, the Congress did not have a firm footing. Hence the congress party appealed to the people of the state to organize Congress Committees in their states. Accordingly in October 1937, the people who had Congress bend of mind in Travancore organised a committee at Trivandrum called the Travancore Provincial Congress Committee. Pattom A. Thanupillai, M.R. Madhava Warrier, K.T. Thomas, E.V. Krishna Pillai, G. Ramachandran, K. Parameswaran Pillai of Changanassery, V. Achutha Menon and G. Sreedharan were the leading members of the Travancore Provincial Congress Committee.

After the formation of Travancore Provincial Congress Committee, the Congress Party planned for a political conference. The venue of the conference was selected at Trivandrum. The conference was convened on 27th November 1937. Pattabi Sitaramayya, a prominent Congress leader

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17 State Congress Memorandum, 30 May, 1938, D.Dis. 300/1948/C.S.
18 *The Hindu*, 4 November, 1937, p. 11.
presided over the meeting. The conference adopted a manifesto out living the party programme in Travancore. The objectives of the manifesto were:

1. Creation of Responsible Government on the basis of fully elected popular legislature.
2. Formation of Kerala Province consisting of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar.
3. All Popular demands to be scrutinized and supported to achieve their ends.\(^{19}\)

### 5.6. The Wardha Resolution

The Congress understood the popular feelings of the people of many states including Travancore. The Congress came to the conclusion that it was high time that it should depart from the old policy and a fresh policy should be laid down towards the Indian states.\(^{20}\) The Congress Working Committee that met at Wardha on 6\(^{th}\) February 1938 adopted a resolution declaring its general policy of non-intervention in the internal political struggle in native states.\(^{21}\) The resolution declared that

1. The Congress Committee in the states shall function only under the direction and control of the Working Committee and shall not engage in any parliamentary activity.

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\(^{19}\) *The Hindu*, 1937, p. 23.


\(^{21}\) *The Hindu*, 29 November 1937, p. 23.
2. It should not enter into any direct action in the name of or under the auspices of the Congress.

3. For all political activities independent organisation should be started or continued in the state.\textsuperscript{22}

The resolution was approved and ratified by the Annual session of the Congress at Haripura, on 19\textsuperscript{th} February 1938.\textsuperscript{23}

Thus the Wardha resolution and the subsequent approval of the resolution at Haripura session of the Congress came like a bolt from the blue to the provincial Congress Committee. It was aiming that at least the Annual Session at Haripura would support their idea for a responsible government and the formation of the Kerala province. The Congressites in Travancore felt that the Congress Party had departed from the spirit of the Congress Party. They also felt that they had pinned their faith on the Congress Party. But it had betrayed the Congress Committee and the hopes of the people were dashed to the grounds.\textsuperscript{24} The Congress Party at Travancore had been expecting guidance and support from the National Congress Party to their fight for political rights. But the Wardha resolution and the subsequent approval of the Haripura Session of the Congress caused frustration to the

\textsuperscript{22} \textit{The Hindu}, 7 February, p. 10.


\textsuperscript{24} \textit{The Hindu}, 11 February, 1938, p. 9.
political leaders of Travancore. With frustration and sad feeling, the Congress leaders decided to dissolve the Provincial Congress Committee and decided to form a party of their own.

5.7. Formation of State Congress

The political disturbance in the state, the hands of attitude of the Indian National Congress and the oppressive nature of Dewan C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer of Travancore, made the political leaders to form a political organisation of their own. The leaders also arrived at a conclusion that without forming a political party of their own, it would be difficult for them to fight for responsible government. Already there had been agitation in Mysore, Orissa, Hyderabad, Rajkot and Kashmir against the princely system of administration. The people could understand the plan of the leaders and this evoked unprecedented support and enthusiasm among the people.

The political leaders of Travancore could understand that the situation was ripe for them to start a political organisation. They took immediate steps for the organisation of a political party in Travancore. The Congressites

26 Sreedhara Menon, A., op.cit., p. 236.
could also understand the unprecedented enthusiasm among the people of Travancore.\(^{28}\)

Understanding the situation, the Congress leaders took immediate steps for the organisation of a political party. On 17\(^{th}\) February, 1938, they conducted a preliminary meeting at Trivandrum.\(^{29}\) In the meeting, it was decided to organize a political party for protecting the interests of the minority communities and for the establishment of responsible government in the state.\(^{30}\) After arriving at the conclusion to form a political party, the meeting was postponed to the following week. As decided the next meeting was organised on 23\(^{rd}\) February 1938. C.K. Kunjuraman, an Ezhava leader presided over the meeting. In the meeting, it was decided to organize a new political organisation called the ‘Travancoe State Congress.’\(^{31}\)

Now the members of the Joint Political Congress Party decided to convene the Working Committee meeting. The Working Committee at Changanasseri on 6\(^{th}\) July 1935 and took formal decision to join the Travancore State Congress. The meeting adopted the following decisions.

1. To accept the resignation of the party members formally sent to the secretary.

\(^{28}\) Gilbert, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 21-23.


\(^{31}\) The Hindu, 23 February 1938, p. 12.
2. To dissolve the Joint Political Congress and give way to Travancore State Congress to function.

3. All the members of the Joint Political Congress to join the Travancore State Congress.

4. To dissolve the Joint Political Congress.

Thus, the abstentionists and the Joint Congress alike gave way for the Travancore State Congress to function.

After the formation of the State Congress the leaders decided to prepare a constitution for the Congress Party. A meeting was convened on 25th February at Thycaud, Trivandrum. The constitution of the organisation was drawn up. The constitution provided a president, secretaries, working committee members and propaganda secretaries. In the meeting, Pattom A. Thianupillai was elected the President, P.S. Narayana Pillai and K.T. Thomas were elected as Secretaries, M. Madhava Warrier was elected as the treasurer. T.M. Varghese, C. Kesavan, K.T. Thomas, E. John Philipose, P.K. Kunju, V. Achutha Menon, P.S. Nataraja Pillai, A.J. John, A. Narayanapillai and M.R. Madhava Warrier were elected as the Working Committee members. The constitution provided a public committee to propagate the ideals, the aims and basis of the Congress committee to the

people. C. Narayana Pillai, P.N. Krishna Pillai, K. Sukumaran and Miss. Anne Mascrene were elected as the members of the Committee.\textsuperscript{33}

After the constitution was drawn up, the state Congress Working Committee issued press statements and resolutions adopted from time to time. The aims and objectives of the Travancore State Congress were to make the people to understand and learn about the working of the congress. Basing on this, the Congress Party issued its first press statement on 26\textsuperscript{th} February 1938. The statement disputed the communication of the Dewan, C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer. The statement was that the Dewan was not conducting responsible government. It also welcomed the timely announcement of the British Parliament about the policy of non-intervention in the affairs of the state. It also requested the government to take speedy steps to grant responsible government.\textsuperscript{34} However the primary objectives declared in the first meeting was the attainment of responsible government by legitimate and peaceful means with universal adult franchise and with adequate safeguards for protection of minority interests.\textsuperscript{35} Thus from the beginning itself, the Party insisted upon the realization of a democratic form of government, responsible to the people and representative of all

\textsuperscript{33} The Hindu, 28 February 1938, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 25 February 1938, p. 12.
The State Congress adopted the following programmes:

1) to secure for the people a detailed declaration of fundamental rights, which guarantee freedom of speech and expression, freedom of the press and association, freedom of worship and religion and freedom of person including immunity from arbitrary arrest, imprisonment and deportation and detention without trial in the state;

2) to foster communal harmony and unity;

3) to safeguard the interests of individual and agricultural labourers;

4) to protect and develop the national and economic prosperity of the State especially by encouraging internal trade and industry; and

5) to secure for the Indian states their lawful and legitimate place in an all-India constitutional scheme by establishing cooperation and unity between native states on the one hand and between natives states and British India on the other.

The attitudes adopted for the achievement of these demands varied according to the nature of policies formulated by the government. Their declared objective however, was to secure these by just and peaceful means and therefore, they took non-violence as a principle. The State Congress sought help and guidance from the Congress leaders of India and tried to act
in accordance to the suggestions of M.K. Gandhi. However, departure from declared lines of action too was attempted.

There are different views about the organisation of the State Congress. Nilakan Perumal, a pro-government political worker of Madras, wrote; ‘the communal-minded Joint Political Congress was rebaptised as the nationalistic State Congress; its planks and programme were to work for responsible government.’\(^{36}\) E.M.S. Namboodiripad, a Communist leader of Malabar, contented that ‘a federation of the Ezhava, Muslim and Christian communities subsequently transformed itself into the State Congress.’\(^{37}\) Prakasam, A Cochin weekly, characterized its advent as ‘a result of the awakening to sense of liberty in the world particularly in India.’\(^{38}\) K.C. George, a Communist leader of Travancore, expressed a similar view.\(^{39}\) P.K.K. Menon, the editor, *The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala*, Vol. II, on the other hand observes: ‘The cry for a share in all branches of administration had transformed into a cry for responsible government.’\(^{40}\) These views focussed on certain particular issues of interest. However, it should be recognized that different forces had exerted their influences in


\(^{39}\) *Powranadam*, 31 July 1939, p. 4.

\(^{40}\) Menon, K.K.K., *op.cit.*, p. 375.
shaping the political currents in the state. Among them the successful culmination of the abstention agitation, the developments in the Travancore Legislature, the explanation in the British Parliament on British policy towards states and the Haripura decision of the Indian National Congress worked as ingredients and quickened the process of its organisation. The organisation of State Congress was accepted by the people. In an attempt to live upto the expectations of the people the Congress Party started its work and fixed attainment of responsible government as its goal.