CHAPTER I

POLITICAL HISTORY

South Travancore was under the control of several kings and chieftains at different times. South Travancore had no independent political history of its own. Its political, economic and social developments largely depended upon the history of Travancore. The early history of Travancore traces its descent from the old Chera dynasty, one of the three great dynasties of ancient Tamil country. From the eleventh to the sixteenth century the Nambudiris ruled Travancore.\(^1\) South Travancore remained a part of the erstwhile princely state of Travancore till 1947.\(^2\)

With the advent of the British, Travancore attracted the attention of the foreign masters. In course of time the British exercised their influence over Travancore through the Resident. The British exercised their power over Travancore through their Resident posted at Trivandrum. For its individual existence, Travancore had no other option but to accept the political supremacy of the British, and obey in every respect the dictates of the Madras Government. Such a relationship continued throughout the British period.\(^3\)

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The period of study from 1858-1956 begins from the closing years of Marthanda Varma Uthram Thirunal and it ends with the rule of Sri Chithirai Thirunal, who lost his throne with the independence of India.

**Marthanda Varma Uthram Thirunal (1847-1860)**

In 1847 A.D., Rama Varma Maharaja died and was succeeded by his brother Marthanda Varma Uthram Thirumal. He followed a liberal policy during his period. He improved the financial condition of the state by introducing an effective system of collection of revenue. He declared the royal proclamation of 1853 and abolished slavery. During his reign a crisis developed in South Travancore. The core of the crisis was the agitation of the ‘Shanar’ Christians of Nanchilnad for securing their women the right to wear the upper garments on par with the women of the higher castes.

The agitation took a serious turn and the king called the army to maintain law and order. In 1859 he issued a royal proclamation abolishing all restrictions imposed on the women of lower classes. An important achievement during his reign was the construction of a new navigation canal.

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between Trivandrum and Nanchilnad. The canal was christened after the king as ‘Anantha Victoria Marthanda canal.’

**Ayilyam Thirunal (1860-1880)**

Ayilyam Thirunal succeeded Marthanda Varma when he died in 1860. With the assistance of Dewan T. Madhava Rao (1858-1872) Ayilyam Thirunal Maharaja introduced several beneficent reforms. One of the Diwans appointed by Ayilyam Thirunal was Nanoo Pillai, a product of the English school run by the London Mission at Nagercoil. He was an able administrator.

The period of Ayilyam Thirunal witnessed improvements in the field of agriculture. The theory till then in practice had been that the Government was the sole owner (Jenmi) of all the lands in the state, with the right of cultivation alone left to the ryots, with no right to them either to transfer or to alienate or inherit. Ayilyam Thirunal issued a Proclamation in 1865 A.D., known as the ‘Pandara Pattom Proclamation’. The proclamation provided the right of ownership over the ryots of the lands they held and thereby they were entitled to either transfer or inherit the lands.

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In 1867, another proclamation was issued according to which the tenants were not liable to be ejected, so long as they paid the stipulated rent and other customary dues. These two proclamations were termed as the “Magna Carta” of the Travancore ryots.\textsuperscript{15} By the Royal Proclamation of 1865 reduction of wet-land tax in Nanchilnad was implemented.\textsuperscript{16}

Separate Tamil schools were started in South Travancore during his period. Hospitals were opened and the preliminary survey for the construction of Kodayar dam was commenced during his period.\textsuperscript{17} The construction of the Kuzhithurai Bridge was completed and it was opened on 1 August 1871 at 5.30 p.m by Ayilyam Thirunal.\textsuperscript{18}

**Ramavarma Visakham Thirunal (1880-1885)**

After the death of Ayilyam Thirunal his brother Ramavarma Visakham Thirunal ascended the throne in 1880.\textsuperscript{19} After three months of his accession to throne, Dewan Nanoo Pillai retired from service and was succeeded by Rama Aiyangar.\textsuperscript{20} Ramavarma Visakam Thirunal was a reputed scholar who initiated some reformative measures. He reorganised

\textsuperscript{15} *Ibid.*
\textsuperscript{17} *Ibid* and Daniel, *op. cit.*, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{18} File No. 15586, *General Section*.
the police force by separating the functions of the police and the magistracy.\textsuperscript{21}

The most important measure introduced by him was the inauguration of a revenue survey and settlement. He extended grant-in-aid to elementary education. He encouraged native industries. He improved the irrigation system of South Travancore.\textsuperscript{22} In 1885 after a short but eventful reign of five years, Visakham Thirunal passed away.\textsuperscript{23}

**Sri Mulam Thirunal (1885-1924)**

After the demise of Ramavarma Visakham Thirunal in 1885, Sri Mulam Thirunal assumed sovereignty.\textsuperscript{24} His ruling period was a record of many-sided progress. For the first year and a half of his rule, Rama Aiyangar continued to be the Dewan and vigorously pushed forward the reforms he had already introduced. P. Rajagopalachari was the next Dewan and he was succeeded in 1914 by M. Krishnan Nair. Krishnan Nair was the Chief Justice of the High Court, Trivandrum before he took over as the Dewan. In 1924, Bahadur T. Ragaviah succeeded M. Krishnan Nair as Dewan.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{22} Gopalakrishnan, M., *op. cit.*, p. 92-93.
\textsuperscript{23} *A Judicial History of Travancore Issued on the Occasion of the Golden Jubilee of the High Court*, Trivandrum, 1932, p. 27.
\textsuperscript{24} Velu Pillai, T.K., *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 365.
\textsuperscript{25} *A Judicial History of Travancore Issued on the Occasion of the Golden Jubilee of the High Court*, Trivandrum, 1932, p. 28.
He bestowed his keen attention upon the development of agriculture, education, communication, medical services and land revenue settlement. He erected an efficient, well-organized administrative system on the foundations laid down by his illustrious predecessors. Education received his sincere attention. Travancore achieved the highest percentage of literacy in India. Learning of Malayalam and Tamil was encouraged side by side with English education. Primary education was made free and college education was expanded.

The king paved the way for the emergence of a democratic form of Government. In 1888, he inaugurated the Legislative Council and in 1904 the Assembly was named after him. The Legislative Council afforded opportunity for the representatives of the people to have a say on matters of public interest. To start with the members of the Assembly were nominated by the king but later on they were elected by eligible voters who were members of the public whose tax assessment was Rs. 100 per annum and above. Subsequently, towards the end of his reign, the limit was reduced to Rupees five per annum.

In 11 September 1914, a regulation for the establishment of village panchayat courts was passed. Accordingly village panchayat courts were

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established in municipal centres. Agriculture also received considerable attention. More irrigation facilities were introduced in Nanchilnad comprising the whole of Agasthiswaram and Thovali taluks and a portion of Kalkulam taluk. Nanchilnad witnessed scarcity of water and in order to tide over the situation, the Pandyan Kal and the Puthanar were widened. The Kodayar Project was completed during his reign. The project greatly benefited the people of Nanchilnad.

**Regency of Sethu Lakshmi Bai (1924-1931)**

Sri Mulam Thirunal died on 7 August 1924. The demise of Sri Mulam Thirunal posed a problem since the heir apparent to the throne Sri Chithirai Thirunal was just twelve years old. Hence Sethu Lakshmi Bai, the senior Maharani, took over as the regent. She assumed ruling powers on 1 September 1924. The credit for the abolition of the Devadasi system, which was in vogue in some of the temples in South Travancore and that for putting an end to the cruel practice of animal sacrifices in the temples under the control of Devaswom Department, should go to this queen.

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Sri Chithirai Thirunal (1932-1949)

Sri Chithirai Thirunal was born on 7 November 1912. On 6 November 1931 Sri Chithirai Thirunal ascended the throne and thereby the regency of Sethu Lakshmi Bai came to an end. He was the last ruler of the dynasty. Sri Chithirai Thirunal went to Bangalore on 20 April 1931 to undergo a course in administrative training and returned in July 1931.

Sri Chithirai Thirunal spent some days at the secretariat where the heads of departments explained to him the constitution and working of the several departments. Early in 1931 he visited all the important government offices and institutions at the capital, as well as a few institutions in the mofussil.

The period since 1931 witnessed many sided progress. In 1932, the king passed the Legislative Reforms Act which extended the franchise widely. He constituted the Legislature and it comprised of two chambers namely the Sri Mulam Assembly, the Lower House and the Sri Chithra State Council, the Upper House.

39 *Ibid*.
40 Gopalakrishnan, M., *op. cit.*, pp. 93-94.
The Sri Mulam Assembly was constituted with seventy two members and the Sri Chithira State Council, with thirty seven members. In the Sri Mulam Assembly, the four taluks of South Travancore were represented by one member each. C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer assumed charge as the Dewan on 8 October 1936. His tenure is very important. His administration introduced many social and economical reforms. However, his period is marked by many political upheavals. In 1936, itself the Temple Entry Proclamation was issued by which all the temples in South Travancore along with other temples in the state were thrown open to Hindus of all castes. It was a reform of far reaching importance to the people of the state and was the first of its kind in India.  

In 1937, the Travancore University was established. In 1938, the trunk road connecting Trivandrum with Kanyakumari was reconstructed and paved with concrete. Agricultural and industrial sector too received due attention during this time. Christian institutions were patronised as in the past and made liberal contributions were made to the expansion of higher education.

However, the reign of Sri Chithirai Thirunal was a period of political unrest. The later years of the reign were, unfortunately, days of turmoil and

41 Ramachandran, P., A.C. Sundaram Pillai-Life and Work, Nagercoil, 1988, p. 3.
43 Gopalakrishnan, M., op. cit., p. 94.
agitation all over the world. The Second World War and the struggle for independence in India clouded the atmosphere. Inside Travancore also the agitation for a more democratic system of administration gained momentum.\textsuperscript{45} He ruled till 1 September 1949 when the monarchy came to an end.\textsuperscript{46} During the period of the Travancore rulers the State witnessed steady progress. They took care to maintain cordial relationship with the British.

\textbf{South Travancore in the freedom struggle}

In 1919, a committee was formed in the state to popularize the idea of Civil Disobedience and boycott of British goods. This committee demanded the establishment of responsible Government in the state.\textsuperscript{47} In 1938, the Haripura Session of the Indian National Congress passed a resolution distancing Indian National Congress from the freedom fights in princely states. This lead to the formation of a local organization called Travancore State Congress in February 1938 under the leadership of C.V. Kunju Raman. The first president was Pattom A. Thanu Pillai.\textsuperscript{48} The political activities of the Travancore State Congress were influenced by the State People’s Conference convened at the initiative of the Indian National Congress.\textsuperscript{49}

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{46} Gopalakrishnan, M., \textit{op. cit.}, p. 87.
\textsuperscript{48} http://www.kerala.gov.in/history and culture/emergence.htm. p.4.
\textsuperscript{49} Sreedhara Menon, A., \textit{op.cit.}, p. 231.
C.P. Ramasami Aiyar, the Dewan of Travancore followed a policy of suppression of mass movements and the press. Disturbances at State Congress meetings, individual assaults on leaders by unknown persons and lathi-charge by the police became more and more frequent. The publication ‘Tamilian’ was closed down as it was critical of the Dewan. Its editor P. Chithambram Pillai besides his other activities was stressing for the inclusion of Tamil as the official language.\(^{50}\)

On 25 February 1938, the Working Committee of the State Congress met at Trivandrum, prepared a memorial against the Dewans administration and submitted it to the Maharaja on 30 May 1938. The memorial demanded that the powers exercised by the Dewan to be given to a Cabinet of Ministers. It further sought grant of adult franchise, declaration of fundamental rights, repeal of restrictions upon the press and dispensing with the services of Dewan C. P. Ramasamy Aiyer. It had allegations of irregularities in administrative acts and financial transactions by C. P. Ramasamy Aiyer.\(^{51}\) In 1946 the government announced some administrative reforms which were cosmetic. All the power remained in the hands of the Dewan.


Salt Sathyagraha

In 1930, when Mahatma Gandhi undertook Salt Sathyagraha, the leading patriots of South Travancore such as Dr. M. E. Naidu, Therur Subramania Pillai, A.C. Sundaram Pillai and M. Siva Thanu Pillai took active part in the movement.\(^{52}\)

Nanchilnad Congress Youth League

The direct voice of the Indian National Congress was not heard in South Travancore state. However, there were sporadic events demanding freedom. On 16 May 1931, a meeting was held in the maidan opposite to Municipal Office, Nagercoil at 5 p.m. About 200 people attended the meeting. M. E. Naidu presided over the meeting and he urged the need for the formation of a Congress Committee at Nanchilnad, a subscription of four annas being demanded from each member, or in the alternative, to work in the Bharata Khadar Nilayam. One Nagendran was selected the president of the Congress Youth League.\(^{53}\)

Shaik Thampi Pavalar, one of the speakers, deplored the lack of enthusiasm in South Travancore in the matter of boycott of foreign cloth and urged the audience to do propaganda work in that direction and in the matter

\(^{52}\) Ramachandran, P., \textit{op.cit.}, p. 3.

\(^{53}\) File No: 895/1931, Confidential Section, p.4. Nagendran was a petty merchant of Kottar, studied upto fourth Form, had moderate means. He was an Ezhava by caste and was about twenty five years old during 1931. His full name was Kumara Velu Panickar Nagerdra Panicker, but he had taken away the caste name, being a self respecter.
of popularization of Khadar. M.E. Naidu stated that picketing of foreign cloth should be commenced at Nagercoil within a week and that Nagendra would enlist volunteers.\textsuperscript{54}

The people of South Travancore led by their leaders participated in the Salt Sathyagraha, though in a smaller way. However, there are no records to suggest that there was any movement at the grass root level with people’s participation demanding the end of British rule.

**Quit India Movement**

The people of South Travancore occasionally participated in the protest movements organized by the leaders led by Mahatma Gandhi. In 1942, the Indian National Congress started the ‘Quit India Movement’ demanding the British to get out of India immediately. The impact of the movement was felt in South Travancore too where there was some unrest and as a result leaders were arrested and jailed.\textsuperscript{55} The leaders who participated in the ‘Quit India Movement’ and courted arrest were M. E. Naidu, P.S. Moni and others.\textsuperscript{56}

In the meantime, in 1946 Britain announced its intention of granting independence to India. As per Clause VII of the Independence Act of India, the paramountcy of the British Crown ceased to exist when India attained

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{56} Manickavasakam, M.E., *op.cit.*, p.13.
independence on 15 August 1947.\textsuperscript{57} However, the Government of India act 1935, according to which an Indian state may accede to the Union of India by an instrument of accession executed by the rulers thereof was still in force. This led Sir. C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyar, the Dewan to advice the Maharaja to declare that Travancore State would remain independent, causing unrest within the state. There was an attempt on the life of the Dewan. Finally on 13 August 1947, the Maharaja Chithirai Thirunal gave consent for the accession of Travancore state to the Indian Union. A standstill agreement was signed and this resulted in Sir. C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar resigning his office on 19 August 1947.\textsuperscript{58} As in the rest of the country people of South Travancore celebrated independence on 15 August 1947.

**Travancore Tamil Nadu Congress**

As independence was approaching, the passion for the formation of a Malayalam speaking state by merging the territories consisting of the whole state of Travancore and Cochin and the Malabar, which was a part of the then Madras Presidency was gathering momentum. The initiative for the formation of the new state called Kerala, was taken up by Kelappan a Sarvodaya leader. The Travancore State Congress, the Cochin Praja Mandal and the Indian National Congress of Malabar came together with the

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., pp. 96-97.
purpose of establishing a Kerala state and established the Aikya Kerala Council to fight for that cause.\footnote{Razak, A.A. \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 45-46.}

In South Travancore, above seventy nine percent of the people were Tamil-speaking.\footnote{\textit{Report of the State Reorganisation Commission}, New Delhi, 1955, p. 86.} They had a feeling that they were discriminated against the mainstream Malayalee population of the state. They feared that they will lose their hold in social, economic and political sphere. In May 1938, leaders of the Tamils discussed the issues created by the domination of Malayalam upon the Tamils, exclusion of Tamils from public services and collection of oppressive taxes from them.\footnote{\textit{The Hindu}, Madras, 17 May 1938.} In October 1938, a meeting was held at Rajakkamangalam of South Travancore, and a resolution was adopted demanding more governmental efforts for the promotion of Tamil.\footnote{\textit{The Hindu}, Madras, 17 October 1938.}

On 26 January 1945, an All Travancore Tamilian Conference was held at the Victoria Jubilee Town Hall, Trivandrum. Dewan C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar who inaugurated it, addressed the gathering and spoke about the growth and importance of Tamil language and literature.\footnote{C.P. Ramaswamy Ayer, Speech at the All Travancore Tamilian Conference, 26, January 1945. D. Dis. 341/1946/ C.S.} This conference passed a resolution requesting the Government to make Tamil as the court language in the taluks of Thovalai, Agasthiswaram, Kalkulam, Vilavancode, Shencottah, Devicolam and Peermade and to appoint Tamil
speaking officers in these areas. But the event was essentially cultural in nature and had little political significance.

The Travancore State Congress, on 18 November 1945, passed a resolution in favour of the formation of a United Kerala State by merging the State of Travancore, Cochin and the Malabar. However at that time, the Tamils too had representation in the Travancore State Congress. The very idea that the Malayalees were forming a linguistic Kerala State for them, prompted the Tamils to think of their own future in the future state. This move taken by the Travancore State Congress was received with suspicion by the Tamils and they feared that they will lose their hold in social, economic and political spheres.

Hence the Tamils desired to organize themselves for safeguarding their interests. Under this background on 9 December 1945, a social organization called the All Travancore Tamil Nadu Congress was formed at Edwin Memorial Hall, Neyyoor. Nesamony was the key person behind the formation of the All Travncore Tamil Nadu Congress and Sam Nathaniel was elected as the President of the organization.

When discussions were going on in the Sri Mulam Assembly in 1946 for the formation of All Kerala linguistic province the members expressed

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64 Bharathi, (editorial) 1 February, 1945 (News Paper Abstract), D. Dis. 1485/1945/C.S.  
67 Razak, A.A., *op.cit.*, pp. 53-55
the idea that the Tamilian citizens of South Travancore were willing to join with the province of Tamil Nadu then known as the Madras State.  

Finally on 8 October 1947, at Allan Memorial Hall, Nagercoil a political party namely the Travancore Tamil Nadu Congress, exclusively to represent the Tamils, was born at the initiative of A. Nesamony who played a major role throughout the life of the merger movement. Nathaniel was the president of the new organization too. However the organization derived its full strength from Nesamony.

The T.T.N.C. enlisted support from different sections of the population in its march towards attaining a separate district for the Tamils and to merge it with Tamil Nadu then called the Madras state. The other leaders like Sivathanu Pillai, K. Sivaraman Pillai, P. Thanulinga Nadar, N.A. Noor Mohamed, T.T. Daniel, T. Thomas, R. Thanu Pillai, A. Kunjan Nadar, R. Ponnappa Nadar, P. Ramaswamy Pillai and many leading members of the Tamil areas and others became members of the T.T.N.C and worked for the growth of this organization.

The T.T.N.C. leaders and volunteers did propaganda work throughout South Travancore. In the Thovalai and Agasthiasaram taluks

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69 Travancore Tamil Nadu Congress here in referred to as T.T.N.C.
71 *The Dinamalar*, 1 November 1956, p. 9.
propaganda work continued in full speed and vigour, but without violence and reaction from the police.\textsuperscript{73} There were a number of Tamil scholars and writers whose contributions lighted the flames of aspiration for the merger.\textsuperscript{74} Tamil scholars like Desiga Vinayagam Pillai, P. Jeevanandam and Chidambaram Pillai inspired the Tamils through their speeches and writings.\textsuperscript{75}

Nesamony had a steady rise in the politics of South Travancore. He was elected in 1944 for the Travancore Legislative Assembly from Kalkulam and Vilavancode constituency along with Sridharan Pillai. In the Travancore Legislative Assembly, franchise was given only to the tax payers and adult franchise was far away. In his maiden speech in the Assembly Nesamony raised his voice demanding adult franchise. Adult franchise was implemented in the next election of 1948.\textsuperscript{76}

Since Dewan’s rule came to an end on 4 September 1947 a royal decree was promulgated declaring that elections were to be held to form a body to draw up a constitution for the State. All eligible by age were to be given voting rights.\textsuperscript{77} The election for the Constituent Assembly took place on 8 February 1948. On the eve of the 1948 General elections, the

\textsuperscript{73} Daniel, D., \textit{Travancore Tamils Struggle for Identity}, op.cit., p.175.
\textsuperscript{74} Gopalakrishan, M., \textit{op.cit.}, p. 97.
\textsuperscript{75} Maria John, B., \textit{Linguistic Reorganisation of Madras Presidency}, Nagercoil, 1994, p.79.
\textsuperscript{76} Razak, A.A., \textit{op.cit.}, p.68.
\textsuperscript{77} http://kerala-history.nrksite.com/history5.htm, p.9.
Travancore State Government adopted a policy of repression of the Tamils.\textsuperscript{78} Newspapers such as the Grama Thoothan, Devi, Nadar Nanpan, Bharathi, Thina Thanthi and Thyaga Nadu lent their support to the cause of the Tamils.\textsuperscript{79}

On 27 January 1948 the police broke up the Tamil meetings and beat up the people. At Marthandam, Eraniel, Kulasekaram and Nagercoil leaders and people were beaten. In the police firing at Mankad Devesahayam was killed and at Painkuzham Chellian and one more person was killed and injured many. In the election, the T.T.N.C. party emerged victorious in all the fourteen constituencies and it helped the party to gain recognition and to play a key role in the making and unmaking of the Travancore ministry.\textsuperscript{80}

The elected body however decided that since India as a whole had a constitution, Travancore need not bother to make one of its own. They continued as a legislative body. On 24 March 1948 by a royal decree a democratic government was created in Travancore with Pattom A. Thanu Pillai as Chief Minister, Dewan’s rule came to an end.\textsuperscript{81}

The Tamils of South Travancore looked at the union of Travancore with Cochin with eyes of suspicion. They doubted whether they would ever be allowed to join with Tamil Nadu. The T.T.N.C. under the leadership of

\textsuperscript{78} Gopalakrishnan, M., \textit{op.cit.}, p.97.
\textsuperscript{79} Maria John, B., \textit{op.cit.}, p. 79.
\textsuperscript{80} Sreedhara Menon, A., \textit{op.cit.}, p.244.
\textsuperscript{81} http://kerala-history.nrksite.com/history5.htm, p.9.
Nesamony took up the issue on 13 April 1949 by launching a demonstration against the union which had been decided upon even while no firm decision had been taken as to the future of the Tamils of Travancore. A Satyagraha was also organized by them. On the 14 and 15 April 1949 demonstrations of T.T.N.C were moving about Nagercoil exhorting the public to defy the laws and shouting anti-government slogans. The police managed to disperse the demonstrators without the use of any force.\textsuperscript{82}

The meeting organized on 15 April 1949 was watched by the police from a distance but it caused absolutely no hindrance or inconvenience to the conduct of the meeting. Owing to the early termination of the satyagraha no necessity arose for the forceful intervention of the police at any place or any time during the four days of its duration.\textsuperscript{83}

Reorganisation of the Indian States was announced on 8 June 1949. On 1 July 1949 the states of Travancore and Cochin were integrated. The new state was called as Travancore-Cochin and the Travancore Maharaja was appointed as its Rajapramukhan. The Raja of Cochin was given a pension and retired.\textsuperscript{84}

After the union of Travancore and Cochin the legislatures and the ministries of the two states were combined to form the legislature and the

\textsuperscript{82} Travancore Information and Listener, May 1949, p. 8.  
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{84} http://kerala-history.nrksite.com/history.htm, p.9
ministry of the new state of Travancore-Cochin.\textsuperscript{85} Pattom A. Thanu Pillai continued as the Chief Minister in the new set up also. However his ministry resigned on 17 October 1949 after disputes about expansion.\textsuperscript{86}

The next popular ministry of the Travancore-Cochin State was headed by T.K. Narayana Pillai as Chief Minister. A. Ramakrishna Karayalar spoke in the Assembly about the anti-Tamilian policy of the Government. He brought to the knowledge of the house that Tamil people were illtreated and Tamil Government employees were found fault with unnecessarily, promotions were denied to them and they were transferred to far off places.\textsuperscript{87}

In the meanwhile, due to the communal rift within the Travancore – Cochin Congress party and the formation of the Communist Party, the ministry of T. K. Narayana Pillai fell on 24 February 1951. A new ministry under the Chief Ministership of C. Kesavan was therefore permitted by the Union Government to function as a caretaker till the next election.\textsuperscript{88}

In the first general elections held between 10 December 1951 and 5 January 1952, the Travancore –Cochin Congress got forty four seats out of 108 seats for the Legislative Assembly. On behalf of the T.T.N.C. out of the

\textsuperscript{86} http://kerala-history.nrksite.com/history.htm, p.9
thirteen candidates contested eight won in the election.\textsuperscript{89} Nesamony who had contested for the M.P. seat of Nagercoil Parliamentary constituency in South Travancore also won with 1, 15, 893 votes.\textsuperscript{90}

On 12 March 1952, a coalition ministry headed by A.J. John was formed and A. Chitambaranathan Nadar represented the T.T.N.C. in the cabinet with the portfolio of Revenue. However, the T.T.N.C began to think of withdrawing its support to the Travancore-Cochin Congress due to a rift between the two. The idea of merger of the Tamil-speaking areas of Travancore-Cochin namely Kalkulam, Vilavancode, Thovalai, Agasthiwaram and Neyyatinkara in Trivandrum district, Shenkottah in Quilon and Devikulam, Peermedu in Kottayam district and Chittoor in Trichur district with Madras State was the main issue of conflict in the coalition cabinet.\textsuperscript{91}

The crisis became serious with the coalition partners when the talks at Delhi with the Travancore Tamil Nadu Congress leader, A. Nesamony, M.P., failed because of his demand for the formation of a separate District Congress Committee comprising of the eight Tamil taluks in the state as an alternative to the T.T.N.C. demand for a separate Pradesh Congress Committee. This was rejected because these taluks did not form a

\textsuperscript{89} The Hindu, Madras, 11 February, 1952.  
\textsuperscript{90} Maria John, B., \textit{op.cit.}, p.36.  
\textsuperscript{91} The Hindu, 9 June, 1953.
contiguous unit. As a result of the failure of the talks of the coalition partners with the Congress High Command, the General Body of the T.T.N.C. met at Nagercoil on 13 September 1958 and decided to withdraw from the Ministry.

Kamaraj, President of the Tamil Nadu congress Committee came from Delhi to have talks with A. Nesamony, M.P., T.T.N.C. leader, A.J. John, the Chief Minister, other cabinet ministers and some prominent Congress leaders with a view to bringing about a rapprochement to have continuance of a stable ministry in the Travancore-Cochin State. The talks however, failed. Consequently the sixteen-month old coalition Government fell on 23 September 1953.

In 1954 fresh elections were held and the T.T.N.C. contested the elections again as an independent party, campaigning for the separation of the Tamil-speaking taluks. The polling took place from 15 February 1954 to 29 February 1954. The Travancore-Cochin Congress secured only forty five seats out of the 117 seats. The T.T.N.C. won all the twelve seats in the Tamil speaking area improving its strength in the new assembly. But it did not extend its support to the Travancore-Cochin State Congress. The Proja Socialist Party which acclaimed majority formed the ministry headed by

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Pattom A. Thanu Pillai.\textsuperscript{97} The return of Pattom A. Thanu Pillai as the Chief Minister gave the signal to the persecution of the Tamils. In South Travancore, he employed his police in support of Nair landlords against the Tamil tenants.\textsuperscript{98}

When Pattom A. Thanu Pillai persecuted the Tamils the T.T.N.C. intensified their agitation for separation from the state. The leaders of the T.T.N.C. also began to carry on their agitation and propaganda work among the Tamilian labourers employed in the numerous estates in the taluks of Devicolam and Peermade.\textsuperscript{99}

Three of the leaders A. Nesamoni, A. Chidambaranatha Nadar and A.A. Rasak went all the way from Nagercoil to Devicolam covering a distance of over 200 miles and gave an ultimatum to the District Magistrate on 4 July 1954. The leaders violated the prohibitory order under section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure which was in force in Devicolam and courted arrest.\textsuperscript{100} They were duly convicted and sentenced to six weeks imprisonment. On 5 July 1954 a meeting was held at Sri Ram Talkies, Nagercoil to protest against the arrests of these three leaders. Thereafter,
even before the expiry of six weeks the arrested leaders were released from prison.\textsuperscript{101}

On 6 July 1954 a meeting was held at Mankarai at which A. M. Simon M.L.A and A. Nesamony M.P addressed the gathering. A list of works which had to be urgently carried out in South Travancore were specified by the speakers who emphasised how the government was not paying any attention to those works inspite of repeated demands.\textsuperscript{102}

On 6 July 1954 the Working Committee of the T.T.N.C met at Nagercoil and chalked out the future course of action to be followed by the organization. P. Ramaswami Pillai M.L.A was appointed the first Dictator and an Action Committee of five members was also formed. The office of the Action Committee was opened at Panagudi in the bordering district of Tirunelveli in the Madras State.\textsuperscript{103}

On 7 July 1954, the Action Committee met at Panagudi and finalised the scheme for Satyagraha inclusive of no-tax campaign, to be conducted on a non-violent basis. In a meeting held at Nagercoil, T.T. Daniel, M.L.A told the audience that they should not pay water tax to show their opposition to the government.\textsuperscript{104} Other political parties like the Communist Party,

\textsuperscript{101} Travancore Gazette No. 51, dated 21 December 1954, p.9.
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid, p.8.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid., p. 8.
\textsuperscript{104} The Dinamalar, dated 12 July 1954, p. 3.
Tamilarasu Kazhakam and the Dravida Munnetta Kazhakam pledged their whole-hearted support to the fight planned by the T.T.N.C.\textsuperscript{105}

In 1954, the merger movement reached its zenith. Harthals, public meetings and processions became the way of life.\textsuperscript{106} The Action Committee of the T.T.N.C. decided to observe the 9 August 1954 as the “Deliverance Day” demanding the separation of the Tamil taluks of South Travancore and made preparations for observing the day as effectively as possible. But the general strike was conducted on 11 August 1954 since the employees of the State Transport Department had organised a transport strike on that day.\textsuperscript{107}

There were huge jathas and processions and other demonstrations at several places in South Travancore in connection with the observance of the Deliverance Day on 11 August 1954. But it was only at Kuzhithurai and other localities in the vicinity of Kuzhithurai that demonstrations took a dangerous turn.\textsuperscript{108}

The police had to open fire at five different places. At Marthandam two rounds were fired and one of these shots resulted in the death of one Ponnayyan of Themanur. The other shot did not hit anybody. Two rounds

\textsuperscript{105} Travancore Gazette No. 51, dated 21 December 1954, pp. 10-11.
\textsuperscript{106} Gopalakrishnan, M., \textit{op. cit.}, p. 100.
\textsuperscript{107} Travancore Gazette No. 51, dated 21 December 1954, p. 17.
were fired at Thoduvetty market place. One Pappu Panicker and another
Ramayyan were hit by those shots and both of them were killed.\textsuperscript{109}

Four rounds were fired in the first instance at Pudukkadai. As a result
of the firing four persons died and they were Peer Muhamed, Chellappan
Pillai, Nadankutty Kumaran and Anpudayan Arulappan. Eight other persons
also sustained injuries as a result of the firing at this place.\textsuperscript{110} The
Government sanctioned payment of a sum of Rs. 500 each to the widows or
dependents of the persons who died in the police firing.\textsuperscript{111}

The police officers and constables also received cut wounds and
contusions caused by stones pelted against them.\textsuperscript{112} K. Sankaran, District
Magistrate, Trivandrum conducted an enquiry into the incidents and the
report was submitted on 21 August 1954. Eleven M.L.As were arrested in
connection with the T.T.N.C. agitation.\textsuperscript{113}

On 12 August 1954, the police atrocities continued in Nagercoil area.
All the taxies were brought under the custody of the Kottar police station
and the drivers were instructed not to hire taxies to the public and if they did
so their lives were threatened. Nesamony M.P. hired a taxi to go to the court

\textsuperscript{109}Travancore Gazette No. 51, dated 21 December 1954, p. 19.
\textsuperscript{110}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{111}Proceedings of the Travancore-Cochin Legislative Assembly -Second Session-1955,
\textsuperscript{112}Proceedings of the Travancore-Cochin Legislative Assembly, Second Session-1955,
No: 20, p.1845.
\textsuperscript{113}Ibid.
but the Traffic Inspector threatened the driver and forbade from proceeding. The advocates were not allowed to go by car into the Magistrate Court by the order of the Circle Inspector, Ganapathy Iyer.\footnote{Proceedings of the Travancore-Cochin Legislative Assembly, 2 April 1955, p. 1040.}

Police also arrested many people and took their money and jewels without any records. Thousands of people were attacked brutally and arrested.\footnote{Ibid.} The Reserve Police were encamped in various places like Nagercoil, Thuckalay, Kuzhithurai and other places of South Travancore for many months though there was no trouble and that was a real terror to the people.\footnote{Ibid, p. 1042.}

The people who were imprisoned also suffered a lot in the prisons. Hundreds of people were put in one room and they did not have place to sit or stand. Due to severe beatings in prison a few people passed away immediately after their release. One person named Paulian died soon after his release from Thuckalay jail. He had many wounds in his body.\footnote{Ibid, pp. 1040-1041.} Another youngster Maria Dhas passed away immediately after his release.\footnote{William, M., Speech, Proceedings of the Travancore-Cochin Legislative Assembly, 1955, p. 1688.}

Leaders like Kosal Ram, President of the Congress Committee of Thirunelveli, L.S. Karayalar, President of the Tamil Nadu Congress
Committee and some members of the Legislative Assembly of Tamil Nadu and one Member of Parliament visited various parts of South Travancore to know about the actual situation. They met hundreds of affected people but due to police interference people were not able to explain their sufferings.\textsuperscript{119}

One of the wounded persons namely Parcel Chellappa\textsuperscript{120} of Marthandam was admitted in the Government hospital, Thuckalay and L.S. Karayalar went to the hospital to see him. But the police prohibited him from entering the hospital.\textsuperscript{121} While eleven M.L.As were arrested, A. Nesamony who escaped arrest moved bail for those arrested, but it was rejected by the High court. Therefore, Nesamony moved the Supreme Court, which transferred the bail applications to the Mysore High court. The Mysore High Court released the leaders on 3 January 1955.\textsuperscript{122} After the Deliverance Day also the Travancore-Cochin Government followed severe anti-Tamil policy. Due to that many people vacated their native places and went to neighbouring places of Madras State.\textsuperscript{123}

The Ministry of Pattom Thanu Pillai had a downfall on 8 February 1955 due to the rivalry between Pattom Thanu Pillai and Panampilly

\textsuperscript{119} Proceedings of the Travancore-Cochin Legislative Assembly, 2 April, 1955, p. 1041.
\textsuperscript{120} Personal Interview dated 12 December 1990. Parcel Chellappa was a native of Marthandam and his home was near L.M.S.G.H.S.S. Marthandam. He had wounds in his leg due to beatings with the gun’s handle. He also told that many people from Marthandam were arrested from their homes without any reason.
\textsuperscript{121} Proceedings of the Travancore-Cochin Legislative Assembly, 2 April 1955, p. 1042.
\textsuperscript{122} Gopalakrishnan, M., \textit{op.cit.}, p.100
Govindra Menon, President of the Travancore-Cochin Congress Party. The main reason for the collapse of the ministry was the agitations in South Travancore organized by T.T.N.C. for the merger and the police atrocities of Pattom’s government. Hence T.T.N.C. withdrew its support to Pattom’s Ministry which lasted only for eleven months.\textsuperscript{124}

In March 1955, Panampilly Govinda Menon became the Chief Minister in an alliance with the T.T.N.C. Soon there was a rift. The T.T.N.C. fought for the secession of the Tamil taluks while the other group rejected the suggestion of the State Reorganization Commission proposing the secession of the Tamil speaking taluks from Travancore-Cochin and their incorporation into Madras State. Panampilli Govinda Menon failed to prove his majority and resigned on 11 March 1956.\textsuperscript{125} The fall of the Panampilli Ministry was followed by the promulgation of President’s rule in the state.\textsuperscript{126}

During the year 1955, there were ten social welfare schemes organized by the government. Not even a single project was allotted for the people of South Travancore. For each scheme Rs. 25,000 was given. Twenty seven organizers were appointed for this scheme and among them twenty were Nairs. Sufficient representations were not given to other

\textsuperscript{124} Victor, M., \textit{op.cit.}, p.12.

\textsuperscript{125} \textit{Ibid.}

The Travancore Government continued its anti-Tamil policy. T.T. Daniel a member of the Legislative Assembly represented to the government the grievances of the people of South Travancore and blamed the government that they were not doing any welfare measure for the people of the area thinking that they would soon join with the Madras State.128

The popularity of the T.T.N.C. led the All India Congress Committee to recognise the party. Meanwhile Sardhar Vallbahai Patel, the then Deputy Prime Minister of the Indian Union assured the Tamils of Travancore that their demand for the merger with Madras State would be considered while the scheme for the reorganisation of the states on the linguistic basis was taken up. On this assurance, the proposed agitations in South Travancore were suspended.129

The Indian Parliament based on the recommendations of the State Reorganisation Commission, passed the States Reorganisation Act in March 1956. Under Section 120 of the States Reorganisation Act 1956 (Central Act 37 of 1956) the four taluks of Agasthiwaram, Thovalai, Kalkulam and Vilavancode were grouped together to form the new district “Kanyakumari District” and the Senkotta taluk was merged with the then

129 Gopalakrishnan, M., op.cit., p.98
On 1 November 1956, Kanyakumari District of Tamil Nadu emerged with Nagercoil as its headquarters. The formation of this district fulfilled the long cherished aspirations of the people of South Travancore. The Kerala State also came into existence on 1 November 1956.

Thus the political history of South Travancore had many ups and downs. The people of South Travancore and the leaders of the T.T.N.C. toiled much for the formation of the present Kanyakumari District. Many sons of the soil sacrificed their lives for the sake of the inception of Kanyakumari District. Leaders were barbarously beaten and brutally treated in the jails. Innocent people were arrested from their homes, roads, market places and fields. Even ladies were attacked by the police. The seeds sown by the leaders and the public have borne fruits which are enjoyed by the present generation of Kanyakumari District.

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130 The Fort St. George Gazette, No. 8, Madras, Wednesday, 3 July 1957, p. 76.