Chapter - I

INTRODUCTION
Since the formation of Kerala state no government had completed its five year term of office till 1975. There are many factors responsible for the instability of governments in Kerala. The main reason that can be attributed to this was the community rivalry for political domination. No single community could achieve and retain power without the support of the other communities. Therefore, coalition government became inevitable in Kerala. Politics in Kerala became a game of numbers. The strength of a party in the Assembly depended on the support of the communities. Political instability became the order of the day from the time when parliamentary system was introduced in Kerala. No Chief Minister or leader of a political party was successful in maintaining unity between different parties. No single party was powerful enough to come to power. Therefore coalition consisting of different parties had to be formed. In the proposed coalition theory different groups within each political party became the actors.

A coalition government is formed when two or more political parties come together on the basis of a common agenda. The coalitions in Kerala were formed either around the Communist Party or the Congress Party and the rest of the parties formed a third party power which
supported the party which was in a dominating position. The coalition
game was played between these two major parties with the support of
minority community parties. These winning coalitions occurred in various
permutations and combinations under the leadership of Communist Party
or the Congress Party. When the Communist Party was split into CPI and
CPI (Marxist) in 1964 the latter became the dominant party and
governments were formed under the leadership of Congress Party or CPI
(M).

After the reorganization of the state the first election was
conducted in 1957 and a ministry was formed under the leadership of the
united Communist Party of India with the help of some independents. All
other parties in Kerala were unwilling to come together. The Communists
who had the support of the largest community in the state managed to win
60 seats in the Assembly of 126 and with the help of 5 Communist
supported independents. This was the first Communist government in the
world to come to power through ballot box.

The new government had to face many problems from the
beginning of its establishment. The dominant sections who voted the
Communist Party to power were the backward Communities and hence the
conflicts were between the advanced communities and backward communities. The difference of opinion began to arise when some important bills were introduced in the Assembly. The important among them were the Land Reforms Bill, the Agrarian Relation Bill and Education Bill. The prominent communities like the Nairs, Christians and the Muslims were the owners of agricultural lands and they did not like any bill which took away their lands. When the Education Bill was introduced there were some vested interests for the Christians, the Muslims, the Nairs and Ezhavas who had a number of schools.

When their interests were at stake, they joined together to start a Liberation struggle to overthrow the government. They succeeded in their efforts to bring down the government. In the election that followed in 1960 Pattam Thanu Pillai, the PSP leader became the Chief Minister. He could not complete his term due to the differences of opinion among the parties. In the next election in 1962, R. Shankar became the Congress Chief Minister. P. T. Chakko was the prominent Minister in the Cabinet. The Nair Community felt that it was not given the prominence it deserved. R. Shanker could not stand against the communal card played by his enemies within the Congress Party and the government fell down in 1964.
The Chief Minister was not able to satisfy the groups within his party and other groups belonging to different communities. In the mid-term election in 1965 the Congress party fielded its own candidates for all the 133 seats in the Assembly. In the election no party was able to win a sufficient majority to form a government. In the next election in 1967 there were two United Fronts one under the leadership of Congress Party and the other under the leadership of Marxist Party. The leftist United Front under the leadership of Marxist Party consisting of CPI, RSP, PSP and Muslim League came out with a considerable majority. The government was formed under the leadership of E.M.S Namboothirippad on 6th March 1967. All the constituent parties had their representatives in the Cabinet compared to the previous ministries. Heterogeneity was the main feature of the new government which consisted of different political, caste and communal interests.

Differences of opinion began to emerge in the very beginning of the establishment of the new government because there was strong feeling among other parties that CPI(M) had attempted to take control of the Coalition members. Many issues came forward which became the bone of contention between the partners of the coalition government. The lifting
of prohibition was opposed by the Muslim League on religious ground. The Communist Government’s decision to invite the multinational capitalist group Birlas to Kerala was severely criticised by the opposition parties. The Muslim League obtained many privileges from the government making use of the favourable atmosphere. Recognition of Muslim schools, appointments in important positions, establishment of Muslim majority district at Malappuram and promotion of Arabic language were viewed with scepticism by the communities creating disharmony in the relationship between parties. Corruption charges were raised against two ministers belonging to the C.P.I paving the way for the ultimate fall of the ministry. The developments within the parties of the ruling Front became so acute that the Chief Minister was unable to put them under control. He found it extremely difficult to manage the smooth running of the government. When the CPI ministers were forced to resign from the ministry it became a minority government and consequently the Chief Minister had to submit his resignation. When the government came into power it had a substantial majority, but due to the in fights between the coalition partners over different issues, the government had to accept its defeat. The leadership could not prevent its fall.
Taking into consideration the new circumstances the CPI came forward to form a government with the support of Muslim League and Congress Party. Kerala Congress and R.S.P also gave their support to the United Front. C. Achutha Menon was unanimously made the leader of the new government and the ministry was sworn in on 1st November, 1969. The Congress supported it from outside.

Achutha Menon continued to be the Chief Minister of Kerala from 1969 to 1977, the first Chief Minister in the history of Kerala to complete the five year term. The period of seven years was an eventful period. Marxist Party considered CPI as its enemy number one and played all the tricks under its control to bring down the ministry. Another important development during the period was the imposition of Emergency by Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister. During the period of Emergency, K. Karunakaran the Congress Home Minister began to exercise his extraordinary powers in the state with the support of the Prime Minister. The emergence of Naxalite movement was another significant event during the period. The custodial death of the Naxalite leader Varghese and the cold blooded murder of the Engineering student Rajan gave sleepless nights to the Chief Minister. With an insignificant majority
at hand, a relentless and strong opposition waiting to exploit any opportunity, differences of opinion within the ruling party, the leader of a government had to face innumerable problems one after another. Perhaps no other Chief Minister in the state had faced such a difficult situation in his tenure of office. It goes to the credit of C. Achutha Menon who was able to overpower all these problems with ease.

The study proposes to find out the methods adopted by C. Achutha Menon to overcome the enigmatic situations during the tenure of his office. Despite the strong opposition from the other Communist party and communal forces working together against the government, Achutha Menon had the rare acumen and diplomatic tactics to solve all the problems one after another successfully. He was able to achieve something which all other Chief Ministers with more political support and vast experience failed to reach. This study with reference to the extraordinary achievements of C. Achutha Menon as Chief Minister aims at the reforms that served to improve the position of landless tenants and agricultural labourers by providing rights of ownership of lands, to put control over the private college managements, and to provide shelter to one lakh homeless poor people bringing about changes of far reaching
consequences. Through these measures the state could bestow upon the unprivileged sections of society a certain degree of social status. They were able to play an important role in shaping the social, economic and educational developments of the state. These rare achievements were attained mainly due to the ability of the man who was at the helm of affairs during the eventful years.

The study constitutes ten chapters. Chapter II is concerned with the background in which the new changes had to take place. The political and social conditions paving the way for the new developments are explained in this chapter.

Chapter III attempts to picture the changes that took place in the field of education especially in the field of higher education which was under the control of private managements. The unification of fee in the colleges under the government and private sectors and the direct payment to the college teacher are explained in details.

Chapter IV deals with the establishment of centres of excellence which changed the very face of the state which was far behind other states in the fields of Science and Technology, Health and Social
Sciences. These institutions were constituted on international standard moulding outstanding scientists and experts who could contribute to the welfare of the state.

Chapter V outlines the far reaching changes that took place in the land relations and conditions of the agricultural labourers. It also highlights the changing fortunes of the new landowners. One lakh housing schemes is another topic discussed in the chapter.

Chapter VI brings forth the efficient parliamentarian in Achutha Menon. With a strong opposition party under the leadership of veteran E.M.S Namboothiripad he had to wage a relentless and continuous war on the floor of the House.

Chapter VII evaluates Achutha Menon as an administrator who worked for the progress of the state keeping himself away from the undue influence and interference from political parties. His only objective was the welfare of the ordinary people who were deprived of many good aspects of life. His clear and unbiased conscience was the guiding force which controlled him.
Chapter VIII deals with the strikes of Service organizations which were conducted during the period under the instigation of the opposition parties. The controversy created regarding the establishment of the Titanium Complex under private sector is also reviewed here.

Chapter IX deals with two important episodes which affected the image of Achutha Menon who always stood with justice but had to close his eyes before some unexpected developments which were beyond his control. The emergence of Naxalite movement in Kerala and the death of two young men associated with it had thrown some shadow on his personality. The other episode was the imposition of Emergency and the political developments in Kerala attached to it.

Chapter X recapitulates the important findings presented in the foregoing chapters and arrives at certain conclusions based on the observations made in the light of the study.

There are three appendices throwing light on the personality of Achutha Menon as a humanist administrator. The Bibliography at the end of the study indicates the various primary and secondary sources
consulted. The photographs given at the end bring forth some of the key personalities of the period under review.