NATIONALIST ANTECEDENTS IN COCHIN

The chapter explains about the early Congress activities in Cochin and the factors which led to the rise of nationalism among the people of Cochin. It also explains the early agitations led by the people of Cochin against the Diwan’s rule. The focus is to examine the political system which the state authorities created by the turn of the twentieth century. As the princely states were generally surrounded by the British provinces, they were mostly in an encapsulating environment and this very often determined their own politics. The political activities in the princely states found a model for their activities in British India.¹ But a comparison in the development of the princely states would be unfair beyond a point. It is primarily because, the objective of the government in the princely states had varied fundamentally from that of British India.²

The early history of Cochin is shrouded in obscurity. According to tradition, the Raja of Cochin was a decendent from the Kulasekharas of Mahodayapuram.³ The original seat of Perumbadappu Swaroopam, as the Cochin Royal family was known, was at Perumpadappu in Ponnani. Perumbadappu Swaroopam moved to Cochin in 1405 A D, which was originally the land of Edappilly Kings. Edappilly comprises of Edappily proper and Punithara and Thrippunithura and had been ruled by Nambudiri Brahmans of Elangaloor Swaroopam.

The coming of the Portuguese and their interplay of politics and trade brought Cochin to the limelight of Kerala polity. The Portuguese had established their power in Kerala by the sixteenth century. In 1505 Francis D Almaeida was appointed as the first Portuguese Viceroy in India. The Portuguese converted the port of Cochin as the head quarters of their commercial empire in Asia. The Portuguese influence began to decline in the west coast when they were defeated in 1663 and ousted from the town of Cochin by the Dutch.

The Dutch conquered the Portuguese strongholds in Ceylon and expelled them from the island in 1658. This was followed by the conquest of Portuguese strongholds of Cranganore, Quilon, Purakkad and Cochin. By the treaty of 1791, the Cochin Raja undertook to become a vassal of the English and to pay an annual tribute. The company agreed to help the Raja in recovering the territories captured from Cochin by Tippu, but he was to exercise control over them under the supreme direction of the Company. The Raja also ensured the English of all protection due to a faithful ally. In 1800, Cochin was placed under the control of the Madras government. Cochin State thus came under the political control of the British.\(^4\)

The imperialist policy of Britain, in the princely states of Cochin, deeply stirred the feeling of the people. British imperialism caused disruption of social and economic life in the country. The tyranny of the Resident and their high handed attitude towards the native people made the state simmering with discontent. The people could no longer bear the strain of economic drain and political suppression.

and shameful intimidation.\(^5\) Reaction to the British imperialism exploded in the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century, in the form of revolts led by Veluthambi in Travancore, Paliyathachan in Cochin, and Keralavarma Pazhassi Raja in Malabar. Their anti-colonial activities served as a valuable source of inspiration for the people of Kerala, during later days of the national movement.

The nationalist movement in Cochin was largely identified as the struggle for Responsible Government. As the rulers worked as the propellers of the British imperial power, the resistance to the British rule in Cochin soon emerged as the fight against the royal autocracy. This movement which was primarily constitutional in character, adopted methods of direct action and agitation to achieve its declared ends which included the realization of Responsible Government for the people as well as the achievement of economic and social justice. In Cochin, the agitations which took place in the nineteenth century was generally for the establishment of a good government, and those of the later period were for the achievement of Responsible Government. Towards the beginning of the twentieth century, the nature and purpose of the agitations changed and an intensive struggle for democratic government was started.\(^6\)

**Role of English Education**

Cochin made tremendous progress in the field of education in the nineteenth century. The spread of education was rapid. The Christian missionaries played an important role in the introduction of western education. In Cochin,

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\(^5\) C. Achyutha Menon, *Cochin State Manual*, p.25.  
\(^6\) *Hundred Years of Legislative Bodies in Kerala*, Century Souvenir, 1888-1988, p.9.
western education was started by Rev. J Dawson, who opened an English school, at Mattancheri in 1818. Gradually, English schools were started at different parts of the state. In order to foster education, a set of rules were framed for giving grants in aid to private agencies. In 1890, a great impetus was given to education of masses by the organization of departments of vernacular education in Cochin. In 1892, the vernacular and English departments were amalgamated and placed under the control of Diwan. Primary education received special attention during the period between 1911 and 1935. Education of Harijans, Scheduled Tribes and backward classes were also given special attention at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The spread of English education broke the intellectual isolation of the Indians and brought them in to contact with the European culture. Modern ideals of democracy and Responsible Government brought by the English education opened a new era of political thought in Cochin. It fostered a new sense of personality, self respect, and vitality. This kindled the spirit of nationalism and vitalized the quest for Responsible Government in Cochin.

Role of Literature and Press

The press in Cochin had done yeoman services to popularize the ideas of freedom and democracy in the minds of middle class, and later in the masses. It

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7 Proceedings of Cochin Legislative Council, 1927, p.22.
8 M. J Koshi, Genesis of Political Consciousness in Kerala, p.18.
9 Proceedings of Cochin Legislative Council 1927, Feb. p.22
brought to light the evils of administration in the state, and demanded the establishment of Responsible Government in the state through its columns.\textsuperscript{10}

Cochin had given birth to a great number of writers like Vallathol Narayana Menon (1878-1958). He expressed, in stirring words, the political aspirations of a people crusading for their country’s liberation from the shackles of imperialism. Number of his lyrics have an intimate thematic hearing up on India’s cultural awakening and the independent movement. Vallathol’s Nationalism and plea for liberty were founded on the love of humanity at large. Pandit Karuppan, K. Aiyyapan, and G. Sankara Kurup, also contributed much to the social and political awakening of the people through their literary work.\textsuperscript{11}

Newspapers published from Cochin like \textit{Paschimataraka, Cochin Argus} and \textit{Western star} exposed the defects of the existing administration and subjected the rulers to intense criticisms through their articles and editorials. The high literary rate of Cochin probably added to the growth of newspapers in the state.\textsuperscript{12} Many other papers started in 1920’s like \textit{Lokamanya} from Thrissur by Kurur Neelakandan Nambudiripad, \textit{Baje Keralam} by Paliath Cheriya Kunjunichan etc. served to awaken the patriotic urge for liberation.\textsuperscript{13} The news in the columns of newspapers regarding the bold steps of freedom fighters in other parts of India made the political atmosphere of Cochin tense.\textsuperscript{14} There were not less than twenty one newspapers and thirteen weeklies in the state. With the help of these

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{10} M. J Koshi, \textit{Constitutional Reforms in Travancore and Cochin}, p.41.
  \item \textsuperscript{11} N V Krishna Warrier, \textit{Contribution of Indian writers to Indian Freedom Movement}, p.20.
  \item \textsuperscript{12} \textit{Record of the Administration of the Cochin State, 1943-44}, (RAC)
  \item \textsuperscript{13} Prajamandalacharitrarajanamasithi, \textit{Kochi Rajya Prajamandalam}, p.43.
  \item \textsuperscript{14} \textit{Ibid.}, p.44.
\end{itemize}
newspapers the political parties were able to popularize their political ideologies policies and methods of struggle.

The British government always protected the princely state to curb freedom of expression and prevent dissemination of progressive ideas. In 1912, the government of Cochin passed a Press Law and again in 1936, a Newspaper Regulation. Later, in 1940, the press emergency powers were used to curtail the freedom of press and political activities. In 1921, *Navasakthi* wrote against the policy of the princely states, the enactment of repressive laws in the native states was derogatory to the dignity of ancient families. When the newspaper regulation was introduced in the Cochin Legislative Council in 28 March 1936, the opposition staged a walkout in protest. Many newspapers faced problems like imposition of heavy security during the Quit India movement in the state. The Cochin government proceeded against the editor of *West Coast Review*, N S Venkuswamy for his article “Abject Surrender” criticizing the administration of foreign Diwans. In 15 October 1934, the *West Coast Review* reported “it is indeed regrettable that there is no such thing in public opinion in the state and there is every reason to doubt whether the future of the Diwan is safe in his hands.”

Some important publications from the Cochin state that had played significant role in political and social movements in Cochin were *Deepam, Gomathi, Malabr Mail, and Express. Deepam* was published from Ernakulam by Thomas Paul in 1931. It had circulation in Travancore also. When C P Ramaswamy Aiyyer became Diwan, he prohibited the circulations of *Deepam*

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15 R L Handa, *op.cit.*, p.66.
16 *West Coast Review*, 15, October, 1934, p.4
in Travancore. Kunnath Janardanan Menon was the editor of Gomati. It was started as an evening daily in 1930. The Malabar mail was started from Ernakulam in 1936 by Isaac. The Express under the leadership of Balakrishnan was published from Thrissur. This was the first newspaper with socialist readings in Cochin. Apart from the print media, public opinion was shaped through dramas, street plays folk songs and the like in Cochin which contributed to the struggle and transition of the society.

Even though the number of publications was relatively few, than what was in British Malabar and Travancore, Cochin had a considerable circulation of these publications. The nationalist newspapers that had influenced the state and sympathized with the movements in Cochin were Mathrubhumi and, Al Ameen from Calicut, Malayala Rajyam from Quilon and Malayala Manorama from Kottayam.

In Kerala, literary renaissance coincided with socio-religious renaissance and both resulted in the growth of political consciousness. The Sahodara Movement of K. Aiyyapan and its voice, fought for Responsible Government, ban on untouchability, and inter-communal marriages. The firing speeches of Aiyyappan in the Cochin Legislative Council and the articles he wrote in the Sahodaran, inspired the depressed classes and emboldened them to demand liberty and equality.17

Nationalism in Cochin was thus largely the contribution of literary and social renaissance caused by the English education and the awareness of native

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17 N. V Krishna Warrier, op.cit, p. 22.
people about western culture. People became conscious of the fact that the evils from which they were suffering were the direct outcome of the political system under which they lived. Educated men realized the benefits of united action and took the lead in the agitations for the redress of popular grievances.18

The paramount supremacy of the British government was a thing of gradual growth. The ideology behind paramountcy justified their political decisions towards the princely states. Many princes began to complain, during the 19th century itself, against the British encroachment on their internal affairs. A classic example of these phenomena can be seen in Cochin. The Maharaja proclaimed his intention to abdicate in 1913.19

Since the British alliance with the Cochin, the rulers experienced differences of opinion with the paramount power. On such occasions the rulers had nothing to do but to yield to the pressure of the British to maintain their position. Since the signing of the treaty with the British in 1799, the English established their control over the state practically in all matters, though the rulers of Cochin conscious of their situation had already lost their power to oppose the British raj.

Ramavarma, the Maharaja of Cochin, has been very much annoyed by the attitude of the British Resident in getting clearance for some of his proposed reforms. Certain schemes for Advisory Council, Cochin State Tenancy Regulation Bill etc. which were brought to the notice of the government of Madras were kept pending for a long time. The Maharaja announced these schemes on his 60th birthday in 1913. He also announced constitutional reforms to secure public

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19 George Berkemer, op.cit, p.119.
opinion and criticism on important matters of states an advisory council scheme, revival of village, Panchayat etc. Moreover, for appointing a successor to Mr. A R Banarjee, the then Diwan, the Maharaja suggested a panel which was not considered by the government of Madras. He made it clear in one of his letters to the governor of Madras the reason for his abdication.

“In the first place I candidly tell your Excellency that my desire is to retire partly due to the difficulty I feel in carrying out the administration in the phase of obstructions unwittingly caused these long delays.” It is instructive to note that as early as 1913-14 a Maharaja in a princely state thought in terms of popular curb on executive power only to see that his hands were tied with imperialism. The Maharaja’s son, also his biographer, writes, “on the 7 December 1914, my father handed over the administration of his successor. The abdication was an unprecedented event and even part from his uniqueness there are other circumstances.”

As in other princely states of India the ruler of Cochin had to remain the royal supporter of the British rule in India suppressing the popular movement and reform from the above, as we have seen that no reform was permitted to be introduced which was detrimental to the interest of the colonial regime. The administration was articulated by Diwan from outside. The case of abdication and the attempts of Mr. Bore, the Diwan, to continue under his successor are examples of English dominance over the executive. Cochin continued to receive British

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20 Report of the Administration from 16 August to 1912-15, August1913, para.20, p.5.
22 File No.136, DO Correspondence Maharajas letter to Lord Pent Land, The Governor of Madras, dated 19 November, 1913, RAE.
23 P K K Menon op.cit., p.38.
civilians as Diwans though highly competent locals were available here. What we find here is the old state apparatus was selectively neutralized and taken over to the extent necessary in assuaging internal security. At the same time it was buttressed with immense cohesive forces at the disposal of the colonial state and responsibility devolving on to the unfortunate local ruler.

The correspondence between the Resident and the state and the office notes of the Diwan would reveal the contradiction in terms of real power and authority exercised by the princes. The Diwan noted, the sovereign power in every country is, as your highness is aware absolute and the working of this sovereign power viewed in three aspects. viz. first as legislative secondly as executive or administrative and thirdly as judicial.24 The Maharaja wrote his reply stating that

“Your views about the sovereign power, its divisions and distribution are more correct. The Maharaja openly admits his position quite realistically in the letter to the Diwan.”25

”The major portions of the executive and the supervisory powers are already vested in the Diwan, the Raja reserving himself few important items and this too only nominally”26

The Diwan explains the nature of power theoretically exercised by the Raja. The king’s judicial power vested in appeal court, the right and duty inherent

24 File 136 DO Correspondence Confidence office notes of His Highness by Diwan P Rajagopalachari on February 1898, para2.
25 Ibid., Confidential Camp, Kanjirappily, 6 March 1898, para 2.
26 Ibid., para3.
in him to decide cases.\textsuperscript{27} Regarding the executive power, like control and administration, he stated ‘I have always thought it is vested in the Diwan and that only person who should be allowed to question any act of the Diwan in his administrative capacity is his Highness.’\textsuperscript{28} The \textit{thittooram} or the royal order appointing the Diwan specifies his position. It says,

“You are requested to pay an annual subsidy due to the British government and to perform your duty consulting the British government in all necessary matters, so as not to affect the friendship and confidence reposed by us on that government.” The above line clearly indicates the limitations of so called sovereign or absolute in terms of real power. The king was actually diverted of many of his prerogatives and subordinated to paramount power articulated through two main levels, British Resident and the Diwan. As already seen, the Cochin state had European civilians as Diwans as they could safeguard the British interest. Even the intervention in the judiciary by the Diwan was evident.

“I think that these attempts were made by the judiciary to weaken the executive machinery should put a step. Cochin is just in a state of transition. Our accounts are being overruled in every direction, the survey and settlement bill affect interest of powerful middle class in the state from which class the whole judiciary is recruited.”\textsuperscript{29} The attitude of the Diwan as evident from contempt he

\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Ibid.}, para 5 cannot incure expenditure exceeding rs.300, cannot appoint any post carrying a salary of Rs. 30 or more cannot write off revenue without his highness sanction.
\textsuperscript{28} \textit{Ibid.}, Para 6.
\textsuperscript{29} File No.134, Copies of papers useful for reference taken from the DO Correspondence between his highness and the Diwan Note banded over by His Highness to Diwan, RAC
had shown to judiciary and particularly the educated class of the native from which
they were recruited.

In fact the Diwan, in the name of Maharaja, was the executive authority.

At the time of Diwans appointments the Raja handed over to him a note specifying
his powers and duties. The following are the extracts indicative of the powers and
the expectations of the ruler when the Diwan was appointed to do.

1) To see the standing orders strictly carried out. Many of them are mere dead
   letters now.

2) To see better departments of work enforced on all officers

3) To enforce the testing of the work done by the principal subordinate
   officers, by their heads and communicate to the government at fixed
   intervals.

4) To define the powers of each one of the officers and to make them solely
   responsible.

5) To see the powers vested in the heads of the departments to make
   appointments to make promotion etc.

6) To thoroughly overhead the revenue and account system and to remodel
   then after the British Indian fashion as much as judicious and possible.

7) To introduce such system as would give little chances as possible as every
   give collected from the people to go to any other place than public treasury

8) To introduce such reforms as would improve the prosperity of the state
   with as little increase in taxation on the people as possible.
9) To see the various natural resources of the state which are being almost wasted converted in to the best possible revenue in the state and means of happiness prosperity and living of the people

10) To see the water supply in each and every *taluk* improved and there by men and cattle and paddy lands were protected from droughts which had been telling much up on him especially from the past two to four years.

11) To take early steps to improve and encourage agriculture as much as possible for it is the chief industry and source of wealth of the people. etc.

12) To consult the *Raja*, know his views and take his advice in all important and new matters before undertaking to them an order to avoid conflict of opinion about the conduct and character of any man.⁴⁰

It is to be noted that such instructions were given to the Diwan excepting to act as a deputy of the ruler. The following letter indicates the state of affairs and a reaction of the *Maharaja* when a second class register was appointed for Thrissur taluk.

The *Raja* observed

“I have also to tell you that I should like you’re telling me privately or in person before you officially suggest appointments which you are not empowered to make without my sanction.”³¹

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³⁰ File No. 136, Copies of papers useful for reference taken from the DO Correspondence between his highness and the Diwan Note banded over by His Highness to Diwan, RAC
The Diwan often crosses his authority particularly when the ruler is weak, if they were only answerable only to the British. This had been often a constant problem for the princes of Cochin as these Diwans were nominees of British in defense to the wishes of the state rules. In international matters, the Raja exercised sovereignty subject to the advice offered by the government through their Resident. The states were restricted to act independently in matters affecting seriously the finance of the state such as the introduction of railways, adjustment of land revenue and other measures resulting increased taxation measures, which interfere with constitution and powers of the courts of justice and civil and criminal powers the fiscal measures such as the imposition of the export and import duties etc.

As already seen, the Diwan was the highest executive officer of the state. The crucial position of the Diwan and the contradictory political space available to the Raja would help us to define the nature of authority in this political formation. The Diwan was formally executive officer but this legal jargon conceals the substance of power he enjoyed. An additional element of asymmetry that inclined against the king was that the Diwan had accesses to and in turn represented the political will of colonialism through the Resident.

To assist the Diwan, in matters of revenue administration, there was an officer called Diwan Peshkar. The communication between Diwan and the Maharaja was through the Sarvadhikarykar. There was a secretariat at the British
model which controlled different departments of the state like Revenue, Judicial, Public works etc.\textsuperscript{32}

There was a high court and subordinate district court and \textit{Munsiff} courts to exercise civil jurisdiction. Criminal jurisdiction was exercised and controlled by the session’s court and sub Magistrate court. Village court decided litigation up to the value of Rs.50\textsuperscript{33}

Thus, by the turn of the century the centralization of administration modelled on British India was almost complete. The local autonomy was shattered and in turn controlled from above, rendering the path open to power brokers and feudal elements. The gulf between the local level and the state level was widened further giving way to autocracy and increase bureaucratisation.\textsuperscript{34} Thus Cochin was made a puppet state of paramount power through the Residency. This contradictory process accompanied by modernization led to the demand for popular participation in the administration of the state.

\textbf{Anti Diwan Agitations}

In Cochin, the Diwan enjoyed a crucial position as the executive officer of the state. His accesses to the colonial state through Resident further contracted the political space of the sovereign. The administrative process through which the political will of the paramount power as personified by the Diwan became the

\textsuperscript{32} A 31, Sign Manual Copies of Acts of the year 1113, Cochin State Act no. Xx of 1113 part V, Section 51-52.

\textsuperscript{33} Act No. XX of 1113 part iv subsection i states the chief High court of Cochin and shall his highness other wise directs consists of three judges one of whom shall be the chief justice. Port on administration, 1910 appendix proceedings of Diwan indicates that the reorganization and expansion of villages appointing more revenue staff for revenue Collection after settlement was an act of extending the arm of increased bureaucratization.

\textsuperscript{34} F 136, Office Note for His Highness Para16, states that Diwans (authority defended administrative power beyond question R A C.
target of the people movement. The movement in the beginning of the century were directed against Diwan who were drawn mainly from outside. The foreigners were unsympathetic and unaware of the local problems of the princely states. This, in turn, created agitation against Diwans from outside.

The early agitations in Cochin against the British domination were liberal and constitutional. The people adopted the method of sending petitions to the Madras government demanding enquiry in to the abuses of the administration of Cochin. The first of such attempt was made in 1834, against Edamana Sankara Menon, the then Diwan, who was corrupt and oppressive. He and his relatives and dependents misused public money. Several petitions signed by large number of people of all classes were sent to the Resident Colonial Cadogan, complaining of several grievances, but the Resident took no notice of them. So, a group of people consisting of Brahmins, Nairs, and native Christians prepared a memorandum containing specific charges against the Diwan, whereupon on, he ordered the resident to institute an enquiry in to the charges. An examination of the accounts and other records established the charges brought against the Diwan and as a result Sankara Menon was dismissed from the service. The success of this agitation inspired people to assert more political rights. They began to think on the line that they should at least be consult on the important questions of the day.

The latter half of the nineteenth century witnessed another popular agitation of the similar type. In 1859, the people moved against Diwan Venkata Rao. There was a quarrel between Diwan and the secretary to the Maharaja, Parameswara

35 A Sreedhara Menon, A Survey of Kerala History, p.375.
Pattar. The Maharaja interrupted in the quarrel and demanded the removal of the Diwan. In this squabbles General Cullen, the Resident, supported the Diwan. But the Diwan had no backing of the people, because of his reckless highhandedness. Deputations of leading persons visited the Governor of Madras, and pressed the dismissal of the Diwan who worked against the Raja of Cochin. When the Madras Governor visited Cochin in 1859, around 10000 people surrounded the Bolgatti residency, and demanded the immediate withdrawal of Venkata Rao. Realizing the pressures of the public opinion, the Diwan was asked to retire in 1860. It was another victory of the popular voice. The popular agitations of the nineteenth century made tremendous changes in the relationship between the government and the people in the state of Cochin. The popular right to be consulted on the important affairs of the state was practically admitted.

The movement for Responsible Government in Cochin State begin, when P Narayana Menon, a native of Cochin was appointed as Diwan in 1927. A Malayalam newspaper Samadarsi wrote with great exuberance,

“With the appointment of a native, disgraceful and dangerous practice of borrowing officers from British services for higher posts in princely states would be broken once for all in the Cochin state.” The movements against the foreigners, paradesi Diwan are nearly rid as colonialism itself. It started on 1830 and continued unabated till the last Diwan A F W Dixon. As in other princely states like Mysore this provided grievances around which mobilization occurred.

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38 Ibid., p.38.
40 Ibid., p.20.
41 Samadarsi, 15 February, 1922, in NPR, P.222 TNA
42 Ibid.,
lending continuity to state level politics. The notable point however that is the early movements were narrow representing elite responses to the development of power while the later movement’s witnesses mass participation and popular struggle. In the case of Cochin, these straddles achieved a qualitatively different height in the movement against Diwan Shanmukham Chetty.

**Early Political Activities**

The Indian National Congress did not extent its activities to the Kerala region, until 1907. Delegates from Travancore, Cochin and Malabar attended the meetings of the Indian National Congress, ever since its foundation in 1885. The Amaravathi session of the Indian National Congress held in 1897, was presided over by C Sankran Nair, a lawyer from Malabar. As victims of the colonial rule the people of Malabar, had taken more interest in attending the meetings of the Congress. 43

A District Congress Committee was established in 1910, in Malabar, with C Kunjirama Menon as its Secretary. But its leadership was in the hands of petty landlords and aristocrats. 44 It was with the arrival of K.P Kesava Menon and with the activities of Home Rule movement in 1916 that real political activities began in Kerala. But after the Manjeri conference, the Congress fell in to the hands of extremists. Later, it was with the entry of Mahatma Gandhi that mass participation became effective, throughout India. 45 The advent of Gandhi to the forefront of the freedom struggle changed the outlook of the organization.

By 1919, Congress committees were formed in Cochin and Thrissur. But organized and systematic Congress activities began in the Cochin state only by 1921. The limited aims of the Congress did not demand mass participation and hence class demands of the peasants and workers hardly appeared in Congress programmes. The Nagpur session of the Indian National Congress under Mahathma Gandhi’s leadership decided to organize DCC’s in the princely states. The Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) was organized in 1921 for the activities in the areas of Malabar, Cochin and Travancore. Its headquarters was Calicut and had to cover the activities in the districts of Tellicherry, Palakkad, Thrissur, Cochin and Travancore. The Cochin District Congress Committee had its head quarters at Thrissur. In 1925, Kuroor Neelakandan Nambudiripad was elected as the President of the Cochin District Congress Committee and he continued in office for 12 years. A few Congress workers were members of the Legislative Council. The first secretary of the Cochin Congress Committee was Muthedath Narayana Menon. Other important Congress leaders of Cochin were Kannandhodathu Velayudha Menon, C K Kartha, S Neelakanta Aiyer, E Ikkanda Warrier and Chowara Parmeswaran. Through KPCC, the Congress organized many social and political activities in Kerala like activities against untouchability, constructive programs like Khadi and popularization Hindi language etc.

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46 Perunna K.N Nair, *op.cit.*, p.28.
48 *Kochi Rajya Prajamandalam*, p.40.
With the Haripura session of 1938, the Congress considered politics in the princely states as an internal affair between the Indian rulers and their subjects. But the struggle for Swaraj, throughout British India, raised the tempo of political life in these states. National movements in these states appeared in the form of struggle for Responsible Government. The waves of nationalism and political consciousness which swept through the whole sub continent of India had its impact in the princely states of Cochin too. An increasing number of people got convinced that self government was indispensable for the sake of economic political and cultural progress of the state. The Home Rule League held a meeting at Thrissur in 1914. However, the works of these organizations were confined to the urban centers and among the educated class and consequently it could not stir any agitation or political activism. A local organization named Cochin Mahajana Sabha was formed in 1918, by C Achyutha Menon and C Ramachandra Iyyer based at Thrissur. In the same year it convened a meeting at Thrissur and demanded Responsible Government.

There had been efforts in the early days to convert the Cochin Mahajanasabha in to a political party which however did not succeed. Thereafter, political affairs were managed by organized efforts of few prominent individuals. Till 1920s there were very limited political activities or politicization of the masses through modern organizations or vertical linkage with the all India organization.

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50 AICC Papers, G 103, (1938), pp.917-918.
51 EMS, Nambudiripad, Onnekal Kodi Malayalikal Adimatwathilninu Swatharythilek, p.23.
52 Perunna K N Nair, Congress in Kerala, Cochin, 1986 p.121, also see the History of Cochin State Prajamandalam, Mal. Cochin, 1885, p.17.
53 C. Achyutha Menon was the celebrated author of the Cochin State Manual
The protest movements of a very limited character were based on local issues. The western educated people of the state represented the savarna group and hence their activities were confined to their class position. This phase was marked, as we have seen, by the agitation for civil liberties. Nationalism, as an ideology spread gradually among the people through the Non Cooperation Movement of 1921-22 at all India level. In this movement also collaboration of the elite sections with the colonial state could be personal. These collaborations pressurized the government for granting concessions that would protect their interest.

The Congress politics in the early 20s were drawn from the upper strata of the society. It was only during the Non Cooperation Movement that a few Congress men from Cochin participated in the movements outside the state. However, a faint echo of the movement was felt in Cochin also. They boycotted the schools and courts to participate in the Non Cooperation Movement. It is also to be noted that on 16 February 1921, Kurur Neelakandan Nambudiripad and N Narayana Menon were arrested by the Cochin government and convicted with six months imprisonment. This was the first political arrest in the Cochin state. The activities of the Congress were merely confined in conducting meetings by inviting leaders from outside.

The Non Cooperation Movement had its characteristic implication in British Malabar. The Khilafat and the Non Cooperation Movement, generated national sentiments in Malabar, which can be generally termed as Mapplia

54 Mention may be made to a few names Kurur Neelakandan Nambudiripad, C N Krishnan Nair, C K Raja, C K Kartha, I P Ignatius, Kochu Krishnan Nair etc.
rebellion. The agrarian discontentment against landlordism later took shape of a communal violence.\textsuperscript{55} This communal riot, disharmony and economic grievances transcended the border and had repercussions in the Cochin state. The fire of communal passion sparked off in Cochin when C Rajagopalchari visited the state to preside over a meeting held at Thrissur on 20 February 1921. He congratulated the Khilafat volunteers and explained the importance of the Non Cooperation Movement. The meeting was disturbed by stone pelting by a group of people called loyal forces or anti non cooperators. Many of the participants were injured.\textsuperscript{56}

The above incident created a terror atmosphere in the Cochin state particularly in Thrissur town in February 1921. The Christian, Ezhava alliance wanted to have a procession with music, condemning the Non Cooperation Movement carrying with them a portrait of the emperor. The Ezhava procession stopped the music under the orders of the police on approaching the mosque. But the Christian procession continued to go to the mosque with music and the Muslims got ready to oppose it and this ended in a communal violence.\textsuperscript{57}

The Christians who, according to the Resident, were the ardent supporters of the British, decided that no meeting should be allowed to pass unchallenged and prepared in advance for a show down. The Nairs sent for their collaboration with the Mappilas of Malabar while the Christians received reinforcement from co-religionists from outlying parts. What actually happened, as reported by the

\textsuperscript{55} Perunna K N Nair, \textit{History of Prajamanadalam}, p.40.
\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Kochi Rajya Prajamandalam}, p.40
\textsuperscript{57} Parayil Shamsudin, \textit{Swatandrya Samara Senanikal}, p.75
Resident, was that the Christians burst the barriers and made a rush for the Hindus in that area.\(^{58}\)

The communal riot in Thrissur revealed two important aspects of the emerging consciousness in Cochin. One, of the influences of an all India mobilization against the colonial regime, the other and more importantly the structural changes in society giving new economic status to new group taking advantage from changing economic condition. One newspaper, \textit{Samadarsi}, reported that the Diwan supported the Christians against Nairs.\(^ {59}\) Another newspaper held the government responsible for the riot and alleged that it was organized by them. It called the government satiric and exhorted the people of Cochin that they should leave no stone unturned to make it once a government deputed official to put up a counter show to the Non Cooperation movement.\(^ {60}\) The \textit{Malayala Manorama} reported that the communal rivalries and the national sentiments of certain persons against the policy of the Cochin durbar towards the depressed classes were the reasons for the riot. It was also observed that the Non Cooperation and the Khilafat movements had a share on it. They blamed the Diwan of Cochin for patronizing the loyal demonstrators and the action of personally handling the situation without waiting for the police and the magistrate to tackle the situation.\(^ {61}\) Many newspapers supported the view that it was communal in character.\(^ {62}\)

Criticizing the communal collaboration of the Cochin government, \textit{Kerala Chandrika}, reported “not one or two, even 100 Vijayaraghavacharies will be able


\(^{59}\) \textit{Samadarsi}, 26 March, 1921, in NPR, p.424 (TNA).

\(^{60}\) \textit{Kerala Chandika} 11 April, 1921 in NPR (TNA).

\(^{61}\) \textit{Malayala Manorama}, 22 March 1921 in NPR.

\(^{62}\) \textit{Ibid}
to repress the Non Cooperation and the Khilafat which will only bounce up, the more they have pressed down. The Christians in alliance with both should have presumed to fight this mammoth alliance of Hindus and Muslims in rank lunacy worse than that of the members of inmates of lunatic asylum.63

The Thrissur disturbances of March 1921, as it is officially called, was suppressed with the help of military which Madras government dispatched consisting of 75 armed police with D S P Sawyer as its head.64 Though the criticism from the public and through media pointed to the negligence of the state in such situations, the incident stirred up popular sentiment against the state. The government, as an attempt to save its face, took steps to help the refugees in Cochin State. Thus, a public meeting was held at the behest of the government and a central relief committee was set up. Mobilization for public subscription to relief was also taken up. A relief camp was set up at Thrissur. It had been reported that at one time there were as army as 8452 persons in the relief camps set up by the state for the refugees. They were provided with food and accommodation. These camps continued their operation for four months from October 1921 to January 1922. The government had spent Rs.17995 for their relief aid.65 In the meanwhile, the prohibitory order was withdrawn stating that the normal conditions prevail in all parts of the state.66

The Christian and Ezhava pockets of the Cochin state namely Thrissur, Ilangunthupuzha, Palluruthi etc. witnessed such communal clashes. The Ezhava

63 Kerala Chandika 11 April, 1921 in NPR (TNA).
64 File No. R 11, Record of the Administration, part 3, March 199 to 13 April 1922, para 123, p.99.
65 Ibid. para, 125, p.100.
66 Diwan Vijaya Raghavchari to Resident Mr. Bikket dated 1st April 1922 in the Huzur Secretariat Files, RAC.
Christian alliance was directed against the dominance of Nairs who enjoyed status and power.\textsuperscript{67} The colonial state was generally in constant hunt for collaborators, and this was often unilinear either. Traditional class analysis had reserved the comprador role either for the big landlords or industrialist. The state patronage of Christian separatism, ideological alignment apart, proves that the officials fished lower in the hierarchy of collaborators. This was often covered by the jargons of social change which was considered as the enlightened monopoly of the British destitute. It had a quaint economic logic as Christians in Cochin were predominantly traders and not producers. With less objective reasons to oppose and greater interest in collaborating with the Raj, even on All India scale, mercantile capital was more pliable than industrial capital.

**The Linkage of Caste Organizations**

The waned image of INC in Malabar after the Malabar rebellion, naturally had its effects in the Cochin state. The failure of the INC to fight on issues further defeated its popularity. The formation of Legislative Council in 1925 raised the hope of the interest groups to catch loaves and fishes. Moreover, it placed the disposal of the contenting parties to raise their voice on common platform. These lessons of the communal riot compelled the INC to change its programmes, eliciting their grievances of the masses which would entail the popularity of the Congress and base at the lower level.

\textsuperscript{67} Commissioner of police to Diwan Narayana Menon dated 10 January 1924, in the *Hazur Secretariat Files*, RAC.
The Vaikom Satyagraha, of 1924-25, launched against the age old custom of untouchability in Travancore state, increased the popularity of the INC. The Satyagrahis made Cochin state, the base of their operations as Travancore issued prohibitory orders and arrest warrants against the activists. The question was taken up at an All India level and the agitation had its desired results. This led to the votaries of agitation to ask for more, and for getting the temples themselves opened. For the Congress, the Vaikom Satyagraha was a touch stone of Gandhian concept of non violent passive resistance which never worked so well before. The SNDP Yogam was the prime association to mobilize and lead the masses to demand temple entry. The Ezhava leader, T K Madhavan, who worked with Civic Rights League and later in Congress got Gandiji’s blessings for an agitation for temple entry in Travancore. In January 1924, the KPCC, searching for way to reestablish itself after the set back of the rebellion met at Ernakulam and elected K Kelappan as convener of an anti untouchability committee.

When the SNDP Yogam championed the cause of the depressed classes, the INC, having lost its base and also to counterpoise the Christian alliance with the Ezhavas, sided the Ezhavas. Here, we notice the alliance of the Ezhavas with the Congress and also with the Nairs, who were active even earlier in INC for removing the disabilities attached to the depressed classes. Through this Congress could win the support of the masses as a political organization for the anti colonial struggle. Championing the cause of the Ezhavas, the Vaikom Satyagraha gained, for the Congress, a broader space which hitherto has been lacking. The Thrissur

68 Record of the Administration of the Cochin State, CO Confidential part 1 /Diwan C G Herbert April 1935 April 1940,Ernakulam, 1941 chapter xvi, para 974, p.365.
69 Robbin Jeffery, Travancore Status Class and Growth of Radical Politics, p.34
riot fought between the Congress and the Nairs on one side and Christian- Ezhava alliance on the other contributed to the breakage of the caste bloc that was being formed.

The movement outside the state naturally penetrated the state boundaries more so when Cochin was encapsulated by British Malabar. The anti imperialist struggle has always found its sympathetic adherences in Cochin. But at this stage, it was confined to a few urban centers as Congress was not active in the internal politics of the state. The Congress decision to boycott the Simon Commission was effectively put in to practice by the Congress supporters of the Cochin State. There were demonstrations carrying placards and shouting slogans against Simon Commission in major centers. Student’s wing was also very active in the demonstrations. In 1928, a meeting of the State People’s Congress and All Kerala Tenants Conference was held under the auspicious of the state. Several national and state leaders participated in it. Among the participants, special mention may be made to KPCC President K P Madhavan Nair and NSS General Secretary Mannath Padmanaban. The All Kerala Tenants Conference was presided over by Lala Lajpat Rai. The meeting passed resolutions demanding change of non interference policy of the INC in the princely states and also demanded Responsible Government in Cochin. The visit of all India leaders like Gandhi in 1926, and 1927 and Nehru in 1927 increased the popularity of the Indian National Congress.

**Government of India and the Princes**

The government of India, in the meanwhile, decided to reassert their relationship with the Indian princes. The British encroachment on the power of the
princes, even in the internal affairs, compelled the government to look into the matter. As for the princes, their major contention was non-interference in the internal affairs. They register their protest through the Chamber of Princes and challenged collectively the legal and constitutional validity of these interferences. The Government of India appointed the Indian States Committee in 1928 to investigate the princely grievances. The committee was chaired by Harcourt Butler, W H Holds Worth and Cidny S Peel. Sir Butler was an advocate of the mutual interferences in the internal affairs of the state. But the committee refused to define paramountcy and stated that

“Paramountcy must remain Paramount, it must fulfill as obligation defining or adopting itself according to the shifting necessities of time and the progressive development of the states.” 70

The encroachment upon the power of princes was expressed by the Maharaja in following terms.

“He seemed to be anxious to have such more power than I could possibly allow them of course there were no charge for my yielding to his interest. I am prepared to stand firm and put my feet against the attempt to encroach on my prerogative.” 71

The Diwan supported the assumption of power by the Maharaja though he was aware of the exceedingly powerful role of the paramount power through the Resident. He informed the Maharaja, his deep sense of gratitude for the fine

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70 Butler was Foreign Secretary from 1907-09, Holds Worth was a jurist and Sidney peel a financier, see for details Barbara N Rum sack, op.cit., p.98.

71 Ibid
manner in which His Highness has stood by me on the onslaught of the Resident against the Diwan. The delicate affair between the state and the paramount power was always hostile and the British interpreted treatise and obligations as warranted by the situation, always making the rulers of the princely states helpless and ineffective.

The Indian states committee mainly inquired in to 1) the relationship between the Paramount power and the Indian states with particular reference to the rights and obligations arising from treatise and engagements and sanads 2) usage sufferance’s and other causes and 3) to enquire the financial and economic relations between British a India and the Indian states and make recommendations that the committee might consider desirable or necessary for their satisfactory adjustment.\textsuperscript{72} The Butler Committee recommendations were not very much appreciated by the princes because on the question sovereignty they declared that definite rulers could not be laid, that the existing practice should continue. The committee opined “it was hazardous to specify instances specifying interventions and corrections should be left to the entire discretion of Viceroy and political department.”\textsuperscript{73}

In the matter of financial relations, the committee’s recommendations did not bring any great material benefit to the states. With regard to the treatise and obligations, the committee maintained that the political department of government of India demands its continuation. The Second Round Table Conference from September to December 1932 worked to make the outline of the future federation.

\textsuperscript{72} R 13, \textit{Record of the Administration of the Cochin State Party}, 14 April, 1925 to 6 October 1930 Ernakulam 1938, para. 389, p.102, RAC.
\textsuperscript{73} C P Ramasway Aiyar later became the Diwan of Travancore.
more concrete. The government of Cochin reacted to the decision of the Second Round Table Conference in the following way.

“The present decision certainly does not concede to the states a position to the conference more in keeping with their prestige and importance than which they obtained at the First Round Table Conference.” 74

A federal structural committee was appointed to go into the federal frame. The committees’ proposal included introduction of corporation tax and tax on commercial stamps under the federal finance. The princes feared that there would be increased intervention in their powers and also proposed structure of the federal legislature became a cause to worry. In general, the princes were distressed about the consequence of such a structure. Many states openly defected from the federation scheme. However, the Chamber of Princes met at Delhi in March 1932 to discuss the so called Delhi pact proposed by C P Ramaswamy Aiyar. Though there were disagreements on many points, majority of the princes voted to federate on 1 April 1932. 75

In the third Round Table Conference, the case of Cochin was represented by Raghavia assisted by Ramavarma Thampuran. Diwan, Herbert submitted a memorandum on 1 February 1932 on the broad outline of the interest of the Cochin state in delineating the treaty obligations and subsidiary alliance with the British. He stated that the terms of the treaty were never carried out in their entirely by the British East India Company. 76 Many other points relating to finances and revenue

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74 Ibid
75 For Details, see Barbura N Rumsack, op.cit., para-257-261.
76 R14, Record of the Administration, op.cit, para 758, pp 246-249.
were highlighted in this report. The third Round Table Conference was not successful as disunity prevailed among the princes.

**All India Federation and the Cochin State**

The government constituted a committee of the Legislative Council to work out the modalities of the states entry to the proposed All India Federation. Negotiation between the British and the Indian princes ensued from 1935-39. Many of the princes, considered the Federation would be possible. The official decision of the Government of India was to inaugurate the Federation by 1938. But the instrument of accession acceptable for the princes was never achieved.\(^{77}\)

The Legislative Council Committee consisted of 9 elected members, the Diwan as its chairman and secretary to the government and legal advisor were co-opted members.\(^{78}\) The committee discussed at its length the implication of states to Federation. The committee came to the conclusion that the rights and obligations of federating states would be regulated and controlled primarily by the instrument of accession by the ruler. It had a conviction that the interest of the state would adequately be safeguarded and advantageous for the state to enter the proposed Federation provided the entire revenue of the state was preserved and securing the rights already contained under Harbor agreement including the states share of customs revenue.

\(^{77}\) Barbara N Rumsack, *op.cit.* p.266.

\(^{78}\) The members of the committee from the legislature were Ambday Sankara Menon, M Sivarama Menon, V K Kutty, M V Cherian, T K Nair, P Raman Menon, K Aiyyappan and Varky Mooathedean, Press Communiqué, *Huzur Secretariat Papers*, Political and Public Department, 15 March, 1937.
The committee recommended that the state should press for the amendments suggested by the constitution committee by the chamber of princes. The following recommendations were also made by the committee, keeping in view of the interest of the state involved.

1. The retrocession to the state of civil and criminal jurisdiction over the railway land within the state.

2. Securing the state a share of the existing revenue and other rights secured under the harbor agreement

3. To retire to the state of the capital expenditure incurred on the construction of the port in case the state decided to accede to them relating to the major ports in the federal legislature.

4. The continuance of the existing arrangements under which the state gets duty free salt for its internal consumption and the retention of its share of the excise duty in matches. The committee also considered other aspects like the day today administration of all aspects which should be retained by the state itself. Suitable safeguard for the preservation of the rights and privileges of the ruler, restoration of the territories under treaty with the British government, the high court of Cochin should be reorganized as a high court for purpose and suitable machinery to return representation in both houses of federal legislature.\textsuperscript{79}

The apprehension of the state regarding the powers and revenue in the context of accession was quite genuine. The princesses out of compulsion voted for

\textsuperscript{79} Press Communiqué, \textit{op.cit.}
the proposed Federation. The British were feeling uneasy about the rising idea of nationalist agitation particularly in the aftermath of the Civil Disobedience Movement. The princes being British protégées could be manipulated to contain the demand for complete Responsible Government or Poorna Swaraj. The international events like Second World War hailed the process of accession to Federation, in other words the Federation never became a reality. The states also experienced intensifying popular agitation and the Congress intervened for varying reasons, more publically in oppositional politics in the state. The state politicians were emboldened to organize public rallies princely attention changed from constitutional negotiations to the containment of local opposition.

The Civil Disobedience Movement

The Civil Disobedience movement of 1930 had attracted the attention of the masses. Many people joined Congress at this time as a party in the struggle for attaining freedom. In the thirties, the Congress strategy at the state showed a marked change. The caste organizations like NSS and the SNDP Yogam have close ties with the Congress at this phase. The social and economic disabilities with the people of the state were discussed at the meeting of the Congress and the increasing association with caste organizations of lower classes gave them popular appeal. Even though native states were not brought under the preview of Civil Disobedience movement, many Congress men from Cochin participated in it and courted arrest. In Cochin as a part of this movement, Congress leaders picketed

80 Leaders from Cochin participated in the CDM in Malabar and Courted arrest some of them were Kurur Neelakandan Nambudiripad, C K Kartha, C K Narayanaswmay K Krishna Aiyyer K K Menon, P A Shamsuddin, N N Nambudiripad, Muhmed Abdul Rahiman, R Krishnan Kutty Nair, E
liquor shops and boycotted foreign cloths. The centers of their activities were mainly Ernakulam, Thrissur, Kodungallor, Trippunithura and Chittor. They also convened a public meeting. The picketing of shops continued for ten months and in connection with it 29 persons were arrested.\textsuperscript{81} Students and women were active participants in this movement. The student unions of St. Thomas college, Thrissur represented by members like V R Krishnan Ezhuthachan, E M Sankaran Nambudiripad, Sankaran Elayath. and M S Krishna Nambudiri, to name a few, participated in the anti colonial struggles. They started a camp at Thrissur to give protection and treatment for Malabar Congress volunteers.\textsuperscript{82}

The class character of the participants of Civil Disobedience movement make obvious the changes that were taking place in the social and political structures. The caste associations created a broader horizontal ties that cut across the state borders. The radicalization of a younger generation within each caste, give way to a broader expression of political reality. The reforms introduced by the legislature, like Cochin Nair Act and \textit{Tiyya} Act giving opportunities to a younger generation also helped this processes. In ideological terms, nationalism and socialism influenced the groups and hence increased participation in Civil Disobedience movement.

The Cochin government actively supported the colonial state by suppressing these movements. On the floor of the legislature, Kumaran Ezhuthachan complained that the revenue officials and teachers have been asked to

\footnotesize{Gopala Menon, V Raman Menon, C Chandra Sekharan etc. were the Notable women participants were M Karthyinan Amma, and Lekshmi Kutty Amma.}  
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{81} P K K Menon, \textit{op.cit}, pp.230-31.} 
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{82} \textit{History of Kochi Rajya Prajamandalam, op.cit.}, p.48.}
do propaganda work against sipping etc. as a result of circulars issued from the revenue department and education department.\textsuperscript{83} In 1932, the Madras government instructed the authorities to close down the camp at Thrissur set up for nationalists. Accordingly, the government of Cochin proceeded against the members of the camp and sixty of them were arrested and convicted with six months imprisonment.

Admist these repercussions in Cochin, in Malabar, K Kelappan the Congress leader, started temple entry Satyagraha at Guruvayoor in 1931, in Cochin the supporters of this movement organized Thrissur Temple Entry Satyagraha Committee. As credited religious head of the whole of Kerala, telegrams and memorials were sent to the Maharaja requesting him to issue temple entry proclamation. On 4 January, when Gandhiji was arrested, Ernakulam and Trichur towns observed hartal. In the same period, many national leaders like Sarojini Naidu, Rajendra Prasad, Dr. Thakkar Bappa, S Sathya Murthy and others visited the state. The government did not take any positive action regarding the temple entry issue.

The legislature was made a battle field for reforms and more in the 30 s with such questions as temple entry. The communal and caste alliances now formed by blocs in the constitutional body stalled its proceedings. This new avenue to protest and agitate was much more powerful than popular front at that point of time. The mass mobilization was on a large scale possible since political education was not limited to the urban centers but spread to rural areas. K Achyutha Menon

\textsuperscript{83} Proceedings of Cochin Legislative Council, 5 August 1930, RAC.
submitted a note to the Legislative Council indicative of a shift in the traditional mentality and to accept the changes required for transformation. He categorically stated

“customs and traditions handed down from generation to generation which constitutes the guiding principle does not permit states interferences unless when it has a definite answers that the beneficiaries as a class desire bonafide such legislation are not averse to radical change of this sort “.84

The council was flooding with resolutions moved by members representing various interests. E Ikkanda Warrier moving a resolution stated in the council “this council recommends to the government to throw open all the roads, schools, wells and tanks and temples maintained or subsided by them and accessible to the caste Hindus to the non caste Hindus.”85

K Aiyyappan, the Ezhava representative and a radical was impatient at the government attitude towards the depressed classes and he exhorted “The council recommends the Government to request His Highness, the Maharaja, to issue a proclamation abolishing untouchability and inapproachability in the state.”86

Admidst these uproars in the Legislative Council, outside the walls, movements were gaining momentum when Gandhiji was arrested on 4 January 1932. Ernakulam and Thrissur observed hartals. The Cochin state was politically linked to the network of the Congress, though Congress did not officially involved

84 Ibid., p.368.
85 Ibid., Para 977, p.368.
86 Ibid.
in state politics at this juncture. But the signs of an all India mobilization were in
terging and many national leaders like Sarojini Naidu, Rajendra Prasad Dr. Thakkar
Bhappa, S Sathymurthy and others visited the state.

Thus, it is to be noted that if Non Cooperation movement was more local
oriented in Cochin, the Civil Disobedience movement had more national
orientation. But still the real issues of the people of the state found less expression
in their activities. This was because the logic of politics at one level was different
markedly from another. This whole movement appears to be peripheral which
failed to lay inroads in to the roots of the struggle.

The States People and the Congress Attitude

The Indian National Congress pursued a policy of neglect and ambiguity
towards princely India and political movements there.87 The left perception
towards Congress policy had always been ambivalent. It is true the INC had
distanced itself from the active political mobilization in the native states before
1920. The colonial policies of non intervention and the autocratic attitude of the
princesses increasingly contracted the space between the INC and the state people
organizations. Though the Congress as an organization insisted on holding itself
aloof from involvement with the states, the Congress member’s sympathized with
the issue of the states people. In the thirties there were an increasingly affinity
between these two political forces, to organize an all India states people conference
to counter and balance the aspirations of the princesses in its chamber.88 Scholars
are of the opinion that the Congress policy of non interference in the states peoples

issue was a conscious policy decision to avoid two fronts because of limited resources available to direct against the colonial state and left autocratic princesses and their relatively resources poor subjects to stalemate each other. The INC strategy was that popular sovereignty in a free India would render the princely aristocratic.

On the whole, the issue was that whether the Congress in that Indian states should be permitted to going to electoral and agitational politics. The Indian National Congress also faced strategical problems in the great variety of the princely states and found it impossible for them to formulate a policy which would please all. The Congress leaders were thus understandable reluctant about the involvement in princely states because they felt that it was an infertile ground for struggles. Caught in this dilemma, the Congress leaders simply said as little as possible on British India “between 1920-35, the working committee passed resolutions on the state only on occasion and half of them were merely reiterations of earlier policies.” It was in the Haripura Session of the Congress that the left and the right wing were divided on party policy towards the Satyagraha started by the people of the states. A compromise resolution was adopted allowing Congress committees authorization. Though the Congress, throughout, had the sympathy towards the cause of these state people, it was not willing to make further accommodations towards the state peoples cause. The All India State People’s Conference wanted Gandhi to make a Congress policy in clear terms.

89 Ibid., pp.253-46.
90 Vanaja Rangaswmy, op.cit., p.84.
91 The Haripura Session of the INC 19-21, February 1938, was a historic one. The left wing dominated the Congress working committee in 1939. Subash Chandra Bose a candidate of the left was able to defeat Pattbhui Sitaramayya in the Presidential Election. See for Details, Bibin Chandra, India’s Struggle for independence, New Delhi, 1989, p.309.
The last phase of anti Diwan Agitation

The culmination of the agitation against foreign Diwans or imported Diwans in the Cochin state discussed above could be traced to the late 30s. The proliferation of education, literacy and social associations and growth of indigenous professionals intensified the hostility towards the outsiders in the princely administration. The changed political atmosphere and the struggle within the legislature poured oil to the boiling pot.

It was in this background that Sri Shanmukham Chetty became the Diwan of Cochin in 1935. There was a great pressure in the legislature for Responsible Government on the one hand and on another he was open to the charge of corruption and nepotism. He was a true representative of colonial state and believed in the virtue of the system. He introduced the system of Diarchy in Cochin. According to the system, the powers of the Cochin Legislative Council were enhanced. It was made directly responsible through a popular minister for the administration of certain departments of the state government. The council comprised of fifty eight members of whom thirty eight were to be elected. The Diwan was the ex-officio President of the council and an elected Deputy President presided over its deliberation in his absence. The departments like Agriculture, Veterinary, Cooperation, Public Health, Ayurveda, Panchayath, Upliftment of the depressed classes, Industries etc. were transferred to the charge of ministers. But the system of Diarchy, with its inherent contradictions and shortcomings, failed to satisfy the political aspirations of the people of Cochin.
One of the actions that triggered the popular upsurges against the Diwan was the transfer of the state funds from the National Bank of India and the appointment of the Diwan’s brother in that bank.\textsuperscript{92} During this period, the people of Thrissur organized a popular agitation against the decision of the government of Cochin to entrust the distribution of electric power in Thrissur town to a favourite company called Chandri Company of Madras. Orders had been issued by the government entrusting the monopolistic right of distribution of electricity in Thrissur to an individual from outside, alleged to be a favorite of Diwan. Public opinion expressed itself strongly against this move. This popular agitation in the year 1936 was commenced with a huge public meeting at Thrissur. All groups of people including the Syrian Christians who had been keeping away from popular movements participated in it. The agitation, though confined to the limits of Thrissur town, assumed the character of a popular upheaval, and brought within its fold members of all communities. Diwan Shanmukham Chetty made every attempt to suppress the agitation with iron hand. A resolution was unanimously passed requesting the Maharaja to remove the Diwan from his post. The agitation ended in popular victory by entrusting the distribution of electricity back to the Municipality.\textsuperscript{93}

The electricity agitation which was directed against the Diwan attained a qualitatively different height. This paved way for the unity of the people against the state. The agitation brought the powerful Christian community of Thrissur in to the national mainstream. Thus, it is obvious that the movement against the Diwan

\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., p.136.

\textsuperscript{93} It is interesting to note that Thrissur Municipality continues the electric supply by date even after an electricity board was formed in Kerala.
of Cochin was actually fought against colonialism.94 Some of the leaders of the agitation like C R Iyyunni were arrested. Leaders like Ikkanda Warrier and Dr. A R Menon also came to the forefront of the struggle during this period. Regarding the economic interest of the trading community of Thrissur, who took part in the agitation EMS Nambudiripad wrote

“This agitation of the native capitalist from outside the state brought the powerful Christian community of Thrissur in the side of the struggle for political democracy.”95

In the Legislative Council E Ikkanda Warrier stated that the agitation was a product of the injustice penetrated by the government.96

Sri Shanmukham Chetty also had to face attacks of popular antagonism on issues like the prosecution of the editor of West Coast Review on charges of sedition and the arrest of Mr. Cherian Manjuran, a prominent labour leader in 1937. All these events caused widespread resentments among the people. Protest meetings were held and resolutions were passed throughout the state condemning the actions of the Cochin government.

The dynamics of the political changes in Cochin was a reflection of the caste-class formation. In the legislature, the various sections represented economic and ideological interests of each groups. The representation given to the lower strata by nomination and reservation almost runs parallel to the dominance of the elite wing. But, it should not be viewed as an autonomous realm of authority, but

94 Sreedhara Menon A, Political History of Modern Kerala, p.51.
95 E M S Nambudiripad, op.cit. p.151.
96 Legislative Council Proceedings, 1936, p.387.
often co existed with the elite in the anti colonial movement. But the dominance of the interest groups often led to faction fighting in the legislature for power. The rise of two important political parties, each claiming alliance to Congress, was a product of this processes. The Congress organization in Cochin was hampered by communal caste problems which went beyond factionalism. A splinter group within Congress demanded proportional representation to all communities in the state service and the legislature. Thus, the splinter groups were to clash in on the communal feeling of Ezhavas and Christians.

The political like Cochin Congress and Cochin State Congress, had no real popular base as they rarely fought on issues. In the absence of escalating struggles against common enemy, the leaders engaged in petty factional wrangles leading to split, coalitions and formation of new parties. The Congress committee was nominated by the left wing at this juncture. The position taken by the Congress towards people of the state gave an edge to the left oriented group within the Congress. Moreover the economic grievances of the state were aired more strongly during the thirties. This gave up lopsided turn to the growth and development of the Congress party in the state. The long drawn conflict between the state people and the Indian National Congress showed up clearly the divergence of the aims and priorities of the state and that of the British Indian nationalists were concerned, the state peoples cause was now to be sustained to the Congress aims. In Kerala, it strengthened the communist party.

The radicalization of the Congress under the young leadership of the socialists in the thirties and the growth of the leftwing politics had significant
implication for nationalist politics in Cochin. This all India trend was reflected by specific factors in the princely states. The Congress strategy of soft peddling in the struggles in the height of the national unity failed in integrating the princely states. This opened up the space for the left wing to formulate their grievances and build up platform for a more broad based anti imperialist front. The soft line of the Congress also facilitates manipulative politics and factionalism. By the end of thirties a younger generation of radicals, less exposed to power and position, could use these policies and mobiles people with greater idealism.

In Cochin, the communists settled peasant grievances which they represented better than the Congress. This coupled with the impeccable anti imperialist record of many of its leaders helps to explain their emergence and sustained growth.

Since Second World War, the national movement went out purely on social redeems and cultural limits. It acquired the character of a political movement with the all India struggle against colonial state. But the position taken by the Congress in the twenties towards the state people failed to combine the radical potentialities of the masses. On the contrary, radical and progressive youth wings were formed within the caste organizations. Ideologically, rationalism, atheism, and materialism influenced these caste organizations, Sahodara Movement was a case in point. These new forces emerged in the thirties which were drawn in to the fold of the

97 For a general discussion of the all India frame work and the nationalist movement and the Congress, See Bipan Chandra, et.al discussions on the communist Congress and the anti colonial movement., in Economic and Political Weekly, 18th April, 1934, pp730-736 also in Bipan Chandra The Long Term Dynamics of the Indian National Congress, presidential address of the Indian History Congress, 45 Session, 27-29, December 1985, pp1-49.
democratic and radical movements. These left oriented groups were ideologically outside Congress but organizationally within it. This process paved the way for the communist movement having a strong base among the masses.

The work of the left parties in Cochin may be seen in the three distinct phases in the anti imperialist struggles. The period from 1934-39 was dominated by the socialist group within the Congress. From 1939 to 1944 since the formation of communist as a separate political party, the communist worked within the frame work of Congress for the agitation for Responsible Government. From 1941, the relation of the communists with the Prajamandalam party became beyond repair. These phases also marked strategically differentiated. In the first phase mentioned, they concentrated in building up mass base among the working class. In the second phase, they actively participated in the agitation for Responsible Government and there by widening their political base in the state. In the third phase of their activities, the ideological gulf between the Congress and the communists widened and they disassociated from the Prajamandalam party.

The Congress Socialist Party, formed in 1934, sympathized with the people of the state in the agitation for Responsible Government. They started a newspaper, Prabhatam, and propagated the communist ideas. At this juncture, the communist party had no organization of their own except the first proto Marxist

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99 See for details, on All India Development of the Socialist Party, See Bibin Chandra, et.al, India’s Struggle for Independence, New Delhi, 1989, pp.304-313.
organization, the Trivandrum based communist league of 1931, and it was not until 1939 that the state unit of the party was secretly established.\textsuperscript{100}

Before the formation of the Socialist Party within the Congress, the socialist ideas were spreading through the press. Towards the beginning of 1933, Kodungallor based agricultural labourer movement was started under the leadership of K M Ibrahim. Agrarian grievances were not alleviated by the government through legislations. The Depression of 1929-30 had also its effects on the condition of this section. Even before that, the great floods of 1924 had affected most of the villages in the coastal areas and water level of Periyar increased, above the normal level.\textsuperscript{101} Causing great havoc in the state, it destroyed crops to the extent of Rs.41429.85, throwing poor people of their existence. Though government had taken up relief measures, the condition of farm labourers and fishermen were miserable.

In December 1932, peasants and workers demanded scaling down the interest, necessary legislation giving fixity of tenure and stopping revenue recovery procedures. A conference of the agricultural labourers was convened at Eriyad in December 1932. The authorities acted strictly and prohibited the \textit{jatha} to be held in connection with the meeting. The \textit{jatha} defying the ban order ended in \textit{lathicharge} and arrest putting 60 of the members in jail. This movement had its characteristic echoes in other parts of the state such as Vaipin, Mukundapuram etc. This was the first agricultural union in Cochin which was motivated, ideologically, by socialism.

\textsuperscript{100} Its author was EMS Nambudiripad, The Paper exposed the exploitation of the colonial state and imperialist, see extracts from Malayalam prescribed books and pamphlets in F M 68, GO No. 1935, pp.4-5 (TNA).

\textsuperscript{101} \textit{Record of the Administration of the Cochin State}, part iv, 13 April 1922, to 14 April, 1925, Ernakulam 1938, Chapter xxxvi, Para 4, p.1 RAC.
This unity was achieved by spreading socialist ideas through meetings and circulation of newspapers. Two pamphlets with caption ‘Rakthalekha’ and ‘Viplava Lekha’ deserve special mention in this connection. It was circulated in Kodungallur by Manappat Kunjumuhamed Haji of Eriyad. This was intended to spread toiling ideas among the masses and attacked both monarchy and imperialism. The official version of the content of the pamphlet was ‘personal attack of a most reprehensible nature of His Highness and it is calculated to create disaffection and hatred towards His Highness’s government. It further incited people to revolution and bloodshed besides indirectly threatening the life of His Highness.’

The pamphlets were printed in Vaikom in Travancore, by one Muhamed. The government conducted enquiry as the pamphlets were of a very seditious inflammatory nature. The printer of these pamphlets Enu Muhamed and the brain behind it, Manapat Kunju Muhamed Haji, were arrested and convicted on charge of sedition. The early attempt of the small groups to mobilize and orient the peasants and the working class were spoiled by coercive forces of the state. Moreover, organizational structure to emulate the peasantry and working class were not fully developed at that time. By the end of thirties, the socialists confined their activities to the labour front through trade unions. In 1925, K K Warrier organized the labour brotherhood with a membership of three hundred. In the electricity agitation the younger generation of the trade union, played a significant
role. For the first time in the state members of the trade union conducted May Day procession in Thrissur town.102

The economic pressure and lack of civil rights coupled with faction fighting in the legislature by interest groups opened up an edge to the communists to work from below. They campaigned among the workers of major industrial and commercial pockets, conducted study classes, circulated pamphlets etc. The political vacuum created in the state by the Congress gave a clear opportunity for the socialists to step in. The Congress Socialist Party passed the native states thesis, introduced by Subrahmanya Sharma. The thesis implied the necessity to channelize the state people towards the anti imperialist struggle. Gandhian technique of mobilization was criticized, suggested strengthening the base of the states people conference emphasizing local struggles establishing communal harmony and linking the states people’s politics with that of the Congress.

In Cochin, by the end of thirties, the Congress Socialist Party was able to organize trade unions having a left orientation. With the active workers of this group, Sitaram Mills, Amballur Algappa textiles, Chalakudy Potteries, Beedi workers, Cochin Tin Factory, Harbour workers, Anthikad toddy tappers etc. organized trade unions. In 1936, the workers of Cochin tin factory went on strike, P S Nambudiri, the active organizer of the strike, was arrested and severely tortured by the government. The suppression of trade union activities had doubled their resolve and strength and solidarity. The second All Kerala Labour Conference, held at Thrissur on 25 April 1937, passed resolutions demanding better condition of work, increase in wages and affiliation of labour unions in

102 E M S Nambudiripad, Atmakatha, p.333
The Communist Party, as a result of ban on activities, had to work from underground until 1939, with the Congress Socialist Party and then with the *Cochin Prajamandalam* party. In 1939-40 the government invoking the Defense of India Act arrested and put behind bars many leaders of the Communist party. The *Kerala Karshaka Sabha* which was a branch of communist wing, brought to force the disability of the tenants and farmers. Thus, the first phase of the left movement was aimed at mobilizing the peasants and workers to the main stream of anti-imperialist struggle. More remarkable was their achievement in organizing the unorganized working class in Cochin against the colonial exploitation. The lower strata retained the homology of the caste and class.

The work of left oriented groups at Cochin has to be understood within the overall frame work of anti imperialism and not in purely class terms. While the Congress brand of anti imperialism mellowed in to a complex term of power brokers wire puling, the Congress Socialist Party and Communist Party fought imperialism better less charmed by temptations of office. They were able to bring broader sections of people in to the main stream. The use of economic demands in these processes lends an edge to the programme, but also tended to relapse economism at times. This explains why the growth of Cochin took place after independence when tenancy reform and agrarian problems became key questions.

A number of European powers like Portuguese, Dutch and the English came to Cochin and established their authority. Among these powers, the British who came to Cochin ultimately established their paramountcy in Cochin. The paramount supremacy established by the British had grown slowly and it justified
the political decisions towards the princely states. There was a gradual awakening among the people of the states clamouring for their democratic rights. The increased political awakening compelled the state to give way to democratic rights. The development outside Cochin had profoundly influenced the agitation for Responsible Government. The visit of Simon commission and the work of the States People’s Conferences were such events. The Home Rule League organized by Anie Beasent and the Cochin Mahajan Sabha and the Gokhale Memorial Association were the organizations which gave political awareness to the people of Cochin.

A number of factors contributed to the growth of nationalist movement in the Cochin state. The spread of education and western culture, growth of press etc helped to develop the idea of nationalism in the minds of the people. The English educated people clamoured for reforms, political consciousness and avenues for their increasing participation in the governance of the state. The educated class became the best propagators and followers of nationalism both because they were low paid and unemployed. The literary works of educated men and their articles in the contemporary newspapers flamed the fire of nationalism. The role of the student community of Cochin was by no means less significant than that of any other class of people. They stood with courage and enthusiasm in front of all the agitations connected with the national movement. The student activists have contributed much to popularize the anti British feeling among the public. The peasants and workers played an important role in accelerating the activities of the national movement in Cochin. The condition of the labourers and agricultural
workers, created much discontent among them and they began to agitate for their rights. Electricity agitation and similar movements helped to create political consciousness among the people of Cochin. People now realized their right to be consulted on important affairs of the state.