Chapter VII

ADMINISTRATION WITH A VISION
Achutha Menon was fortunate enough to complete his term as a Chief Minister. In addition to the usual term he had the rare opportunity to remain as the Chief Minister of the extended period during the time of Emergency. As an administrator he was able to prove himself to be one of the most efficient administrators in the history of Kerala. Many of the Chief Ministers failed to come out of the jacket of the party man after taking over the responsibility of the head of the state administration. They used to come down to the level of a mere party man by taking decisions according to the whims and fancies of the leaders of his own party even transcending the sphere of the legality. Achutha Menon, on the other hand, was never a party man when he took decision on issues relating to the development of the state. There were a number of instances in which he had disagreed with the opinion of his own party on certain issues about which he knew that his stand was correct. He had no hesitation to stay ‘No’ to any undue recommendations from anybody however important he might be in the political and administrative hierarchy. This chapter examines Achutha Menon as an administrator.

‘Justice to the people’ was the motto that guided Achutha Menon as an administrator. He was very particular that all the people
irrespective of their education, position and social status should get justice from the government. He refused to accept unlawful recommendations from any quarters. Since everybody came to know about this attitude of Achutha Menon people were not courageous enough to approach him. Even when his own party men approached him after getting the approval of the party, the Chief Minister was not prepared to oblige unless it was justified by rules and regulations. He did not even hesitate to mark disagreeing notes in some of the files which were sent to him by other ministers after taking favourable decisions on it, if he found that there was something wrong in it. This was equally applicable to the ministers belonging to his own party. He was not prepared to compromise on an issue which was considered to be unjust and beyond the limits of rules. He could not tolerate undue delay in such matters. His Cabinet colleagues had developed absolute faith in his impartiality and love for justice even though they were unhappy in the beginning. Dr Prasannan, Secretary of Legislative Assembly during the period quotes the opinion of T.K Divakaran in a casual conversation with him.

“I used to send to the Chief Minister some files which need not to be sent to him as per practice. I do it specifically with the intention
of getting the impartial opinion of the Chief Minister. Due to complexity and sensitiveness of some issues you may not be able to find out the real truth in it. In such cases Achutha Menon could have pointed out the reality of the situation.”

The official residence of the Chief Minister was quite different from the residences of other ministers. The house was never crowded with visitors mainly due to two reasons. First, it was very difficult to get permission to visit the Chief Minister unless the reason was fully justified. Secondly, Achutha Menon never entertained any recommendations from any quarters, whether personal or party wise. Moreover nobody was courageous enough to put forward any recommendations at his face. Neither did he encourage any pressure from political party circles without the approval of his party. It was not easy to get the consent of the party for personal and petty matters. As a person the Chief Minister had no personal interests and he never gave anybody the slightest hope or promise to get things done.

In case somebody approaches him after overcoming all these difficulties and getting the party consent for visit his experience will be quite different. The visitor might not be facing a smiling Chief Minister.
While going through the file he might not have cared to request you to be seated. But you can present the matter before him and you could be certain that he had carefully listened to each and every word uttered by you. He would not have given you a ray of hope in the answer. If your demand was genuine and did not exceed the limits of rules and regulations prescribed by the government you could rest assured that your grievances were redressed without much delay. No intermediary can help you in this regard. The usual system followed by ministers namely submission of representations, receiving all of them with smiling face and giving them promise to look into them could not be exercised. After the visiting time nobody would be allowed to continue in the office room. This serious attitude would have alienated him from common people and perhaps would have made him unpopular. In spite of this attitude which did not help to improve his popular image, he came out victorious from the Kottarakkara constituency with a good margin of votes in the bye election.

In the next general election the coalition of the political parties under the leadership of Indian National Congress, projected the image of Achutha Menon in seeking votes from the people. Within a short span of time the people of Kerala could recognize the man who was at the
helm of affairs who could deliver goods without creating much hustle and bustle. Even though Indian National Congress got majority of seats as the single dominant party, it did not raise claim for the leadership of government because it could realize that they could regain power due to the clean image of C. Achutha Menon.

When Achutha Menon was again made the Chief Minister of Kerala in 1970 he followed the same style of functioning. He tried to avoid visitors as far as possible. Instead, he spent most of the time at the secretariat by discussing burning issues of the people of the state with experienced, well informed and expert officers who could guide him in finding solutions to the problems. The time he could get in between official conference and meeting with inevitable visitors was utilized for going through files that were dealing with the problems of common man. He could write his own comments and remarks on the margins of files with his own hands without the help of his stenographer. But these activities conducted by him were officially known as ‘low visibility’ events which never helped him to glorify his image. Inauguration of functions, laying foundation stones for bridges and buildings which were openly celebrated with much fanfare and public receptions were not
considered to be events of ‘high visibility’ which could magnify the image of the ministers. But Achutha Menon was least interested in such events and he did attend such celebrating events if they were intimately attached with the progress of the state.

The emergency brought about some new trends among the political parties. The Kerala Congress was brought to the ruling front by the intervention of Mrs. Indira Gandhi. When the Kerala Congress joined the Ruling Front almost all the communities were represented in the front which made it more stable. Therefore, the ministry under Achutha Menon became the first in the history of Kerala to complete the full five years term with the extension over a couple of months. The different opposing forces like Congress, CPI, and Muslim League, RSP and Kerala Congress representing leftist ideas, communal interests and socialist ideology worked together and Achutha Menon was able to give practical leadership to such a coalition.

The Achutha Menon’s ministry began to implement the programme decided by the Liaison Committee of the United Front. One of its prestigious steps was the implementation of the Land Reform Act which was announced by the previous government led by CPI (M).
According to the Act the government gave ownership rights to landless homestead dwellers (*Kudikidappukar*) who were allowed to purchase the land on which their homes were built upon a limit of ten cents in villages and five cents at the district headquarters. As per the new regulations government had assigned homestead rights to about 20,000 cases. More than 2000 acres of land was utilized for this purpose.³

The UDF government was not able to implement the clause dealing with the Land Ceiling. According to the provision of the Bill Land Ceiling was necessary in the case of family members. According to the bill ten standard acres of land could be maintained by a family of five members and one standard acre for every additional member. Another provision was that unmarried adults could not possess more than five standard acres. These provisions were acceptable to CPI and RSP but the Congress and the Muslim League could not tolerate the provisions. Therefore, the UDF did not insist on in the implementation of this part of the bill. This attitude of the UDF had been explained by some economic experts as the implementation of democratic socialism.⁴ The UDF government following such a policy under the leadership of a Communist
Party was claimed to be the only popular government of its kind in the whole of India at the time.\textsuperscript{5}

The One Lakh Housing scheme was a unique programme introduced in India by any state government for the first time. As the result of the land reforms many Kudikidappukars became owners of land but most of them could not afford to make their own house there. It was this situation that paved the way for the new programme namely One Lakh Housing scheme introduced by Achutha Menon government. When the project was studied it was found that a house with minimum requirements could be constructed at the cost of Rupees 2500/- an initial investment. The land owners had to give rupees hundred and the remaining rupees 2400 would be met by the government. The ingredients of the house would be supplied by the government free of cost. Each panchayath should organize a popular Committee which should raise the necessary funds to construct hundred houses within its limit. The land required for the construction of the houses was purchased by the government and the responsibility for constructing the houses was given to the panchayaths. With the help of District Collector the Panchayath president was able to
raise the required fund. The government was able to complete the construction of 66000 houses throughout the state\textsuperscript{6}.

The One Lakh Housing Scheme introduced in Kerala during the time of Achutha Menon was a novel experiment. It was able to prove that with the support of the people and initiative by the government such experiments could be successful. An important feature of the project was that poor people could be helped by people irrespective of their party affiliation and religious and caste differences. The Panchayath president belonging to the Marxist Party which was the strong opponent of the government also co-operated with the movement.

As an administrator, Achutha Menon was not prepared to accept all the suggestions of even senior IAS officers. Very often most of the ministers used to agree with the recommendations of IAS officers but Achutha Menon was an exception to the rule. His strong action against Ramankutty, a senior IAS officer, shows his uncompromising approach in the matter of administration.

The idea of establishing an Agricultural University in Kerala was put forward by the Cabinet in 1967 when EMS Namboothiripad was
the Chief Minister. A special officer was also appointed for the purpose but the special officer submitted his report to the government when Achutha Menon was the Chief Minister. Dr. C. K. Nair, special officer recommended that 1000 acres of land at Mannuthi in Trichur District was suitable for the establishment of the Agricultural University. The Cabinet approved the report when the new government came to power. It appointed K.K Ramankutty, revenue board member, to study the report and make his recommendations. The terms of reference before the commission were (1) Whether 1000 acres at Mannuthi was sufficient for the Agricultural University. (2) Whether the place suggested by the department of Agriculture on 29.5.1970 was suitable for it. (3) Is it possible to find out any other place more suitable for the University? (4) Whether the suggestion by department of Agriculture was based on any other considerations.  

Ramankutty submitted a report without conducting a detailed investigation into the matters. He reported that the place at Mannuthi was not suitable and monetary benefits favourable for CPI was the reason for selecting the land. Moreover, Ramankutty had leaked out the details of the
report before it was submitted to the government. When the report was
submitted the government was not satisfied with it and it was referred to
the opinion of Justice M.U Issac. Justice M.U. Issac made a thorough
study of the report and came to the conclusion that the report of
Ramankutty was full of mistakes because he wrote the report without
going through the relevant records and files. He also recorded that the
press conference conducted by Ramankutty revealing the contents of the
report before submitting it to the government was against the conduct rules
of All India Services.\(^7\)

After going through the report submitted by Justice Issac the
Chief Minister was convinced about the irresponsible attitude of
Ramankutty. He decided to take action against him. Even though his
cabinet colleagues and some senior government officials advised him not
to go for a punishment, the Chief Minister was very particular in dealing
with the case. This decision was based on a principle that if Ramankutty
was allowed to go free it would be a precedent liable to be followed by
others.\(^8\) Achutha Menon after consulting with the Union Service
Commission decided the punishment against Ramankutty. He was granted
compulsory pension after deducting rupee 50 from his monthly pension.\(^9\)

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The punishment against Ramankutty was one of the very rare incidents that a senior IAS officer had to face from the Chief Minister for his irresponsible behaviour. When asked whether Achutha Menon was regretful about the severe punishment given to Ramankutty, he answered that he had no regrets about the punishment.10

Compared to other states communal tension did not prevail in Kerala. This was because the effects of partition had no impact among the people of South India. Moreover except a few families in Northern Kerala most of the Muslims in Kerala are converts from other native religious groups. The common traditions and social behaviour were responsible for the mutual understanding that existed among the Muslims and other communities. Another fact that prevented communal tension in the society was the high literacy prevailing among the people. The influence of leftist political organizations which have great influence among the common and working class people is another factor which prevents the people from becoming communal in their outlook. But religious organizations were powerful and they organize their festivals and other celebrations with great enthusiasm. Almost every religion and its subgroups have their own separate organizations which work for educational, economic and social
developments of their respective communities. Nair Service Society, Sree Narayana Dharma Parimala Sangam, Muslim Educational Society and many Christian Organizations work among the people. The Indian Union Muslim League is a political party which is highly influential in Malabar playing a key role in the political system in the state. In spite of this there are certain elements in all religious groups who propagate communal tension in order to achieve their political and selfish ends. They exploit the opportunity when there is a minor clash of interests among two communities by spreading false propaganda against each other paving the way for communal clashes.

During the time of Achutha Menon’s ministry there occurred two communal riots in Tellicherry in Malabar and Poovar in Thiruvananthapuram. There occurred a communal violence in Tellicherry on 29th December 1971 between the Muslims and the Hindus. It was an unprecedented development and it continued for a few days. According to reports the riots began between the two communities when somebody threw footwears at a religious procession of the Hindus. In the disturbances that followed many houses were looted and burnt and more
than a hundred people suffered injuries. Properties worth several lakhs were damaged.

All the political parties came forward accusing each other regarding their role in the riots\(^2\). However, the two political parties namely CPI (M) and Jan Sangh who had considerable followers in Tellicherry had to play a decisive role in the communal clashes that took place there. CPI (M) was the most prominent political force in the Kannur district. Jan Sangh was also having roots in Tellicherry because of the activities of Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh. The CPI (M) which was the main opposition party in the state took the opportunity to malign the image of the Ruling Front and accused the government for its inability to handle the situation. The party wanted to utilize the situation by tarnishing the image of Congress which had gained popular support due to the role played by Indira Gandhi, the Congress Prime Minister in the Bangladesh war. Jan Sang also wanted to diminish the image of the Congress. So they accused the Congress Home Minister for not taking suitable measures to suppress the riots. The Jan Sang also wanted to accuse CPI (M) for inflaming the riots due to its wide popularity among the people. Another important factor pointed out by some section
of the people was the fact that the riots were organized by the Hindu communal forces as a reaction to the political concessions gained by the Muslim League due to their partnership in the government.\textsuperscript{13}

Apart from the severe criticisms raised against the government by opposition parties, there began to emerge differences of opinion among the coalition parties. Muslim League began to feel that the communal riots assumed wider propositions because of the failure of the Congress Home Minister to handle the situation effectively\textsuperscript{14}. The Muslim League accused the CPI(M) as the chief culprit for its political move to tarnish the image of the ruling coalition. The followers of the Muslim League also began to complain that the party should have retained the Home portfolio with it.

In spite of the severe criticism raised against it the government succeeded in containing the riots. Fortunately the authorities were able to prevent the riots from spreading to other parts in the state. The Chief Minister himself took initiative in giving leadership for many measures to prevent the riots from spreading. His appeal to the people through radio on 31\textsuperscript{st} December 1971 to maintain communal harmony had the desired effect. He informed the people that sufficient police forces had
been deployed in the areas and people could be confident that all measures had been taken to control the riots. He directed the Home Minister K.Karunakaran and Education Minister C.H. Mohammed Koya to visit Talecherry. Finally the government ordered a judicial enquiry into the developments in Tellicherry. The government also allotted a special team of officers for relief works in Tellicherry for the people who had suffered in the riots. The enquiry commission headed by Justice Joseph Vithayathil after making enquiry was able to find that some political parties were responsible for instigating the people for the riots. He also reported that local authorities failed to take adequate preventive measures to deal with the situation. It became clear that some political parties had played decisive role to make a mountain out of a mole hill when communal tension of insignificant nature began to prevail in Tellicherry. It was due to the mature leadership and timely decisions taken by the cabinet under the leadership of Achutha Menon that the riots were brought under control.

Though the communal situation in Kerala remained calm and quiet for sometimes, another riot occurred in Poovar in Thiruvananthapuram on 7th March 1972. Poovar is a traditional region of fisherman belonging to two communities namely Muslims and Latin
Catholics. Insignificant clashes between the fishermen used to take place over minor events. The problems were solved by themselves if there was no outside interference. It was very often found that minor incidents were developed into major clashes if political groups began to make their presence felt in the clashes. Taking into considerations these hard facts the government took all necessary measures to suppress the riots before it began to spread. The efforts were more successful when all the political parties including the opposition appealed to the people to cooperate with the police to maintain peace and harmony in the area. Inspite of the timely interference of the police many houses were looted and burnt. When the riots continued for days the police had to resort to firing on 10th March 1972. The Chief Minister himself visited the spot of riots and appealed to the people to cooperate with the peace efforts.

Even though the opposition party made their maximum efforts to fish out of the troubled waters by accusing the United Front government for its inadequate method of handling the communal riots, the government was successful in containing the riots without allowing them to spread to other parts of the state. The parties of the United Front were able to stand united behind the government in dealing with the situation
even though minor differences of opinion began to appear between them. They faced the situation with faith and mutual understanding. One of the main reasons for handling the situation smoothly and successfully was the mature and charismatic leadership of C. Achutha Menon.

Many occasions emerged when the differences of opinion between the coalition parties were on the verge of a split. It was due to the exceptional skill and diplomacy of Achutha Menon that avoided it. Such a situation emerged when the Central government introduced the controversial act namely Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) in May 1971. It was introduced in the context of India’s involvement in the independence struggle in Bangladesh. The act appeared to create strong differences of opinion among the partners of the United Front.

The differences of opinion were bound to emerge mainly because the major partner in the United Front was Congress which was the ruling party at the centre. It was bound to support the Central Government. But many of the parties in the Assembly including some of the parties belonging to the United Front were against MISA. During two occasions non official resolutions were introduced in the Assembly requesting the House to condemn the act. The ruling coalition was put in a very difficult
situ. The CPI, being a leftist party was always against such black laws, had to oppose the Act. The Revolutionary Socialist Party was also against the Act. All the political parties and the public were observing with curiosity how the United Front was managing the situation.

It was the practical and cunning attitude taken by Achutha Menon that saved the United Front from the difficult situation. He declared that the MISA would not be applied in Kerala. He also made an unusual statement that the ministers of the United Front would abstain from voting in the Assembly and the ruling party members were allowed to vote according to their conscience. The CPI and the RSP voted with resolution introduced by CPI(M) opposing the MISA. The Indian Union Muslim League stood with the Congress to support it. The PSP another partner of the United Front absented itself from the House. The resolution opposing the MISA passed by a majority of one vote. Even though the Congress called the supporters of the resolution as enemies of the country the crisis in the United Front came to an end. Definitely the credit for saving the ruling coalition from such a difficult situation goes to the stand taken by Achutha Menon.
In the Assembly of 1969 the Marxist MLAs accused Achutha Menon for the firing against innocent people in 1959. The firing against the people who participated in the Liberation struggle in 1959 resulted in the death of some people. Achutha Menon was the Home Minister at that time. The police was forced to resort to firing when people became violent and out of control. Firings took place in three places namely Angamali, Pulluvila and Vettukadu. This issue was raised in the Assembly in 1969 when Achutha Menon was the Chief Minister. They accused him for the death of innocent people. In his reply Achutha Menon accepted the responsibility of the firing. Giving answer to the members of the Assembly Achutha Menon said, “I take up the complete moral responsibility of the events you have mentioned. I don’t lack the manliness in me to reject the fact that implicates my responsibility in it since I was in charge of the Home Department.”

During 1959 the Home portfolio was under the Chief Minister EMS Namboothiripad. As the Chief Minister found it difficult to carry on his duties of Home Minister due to heavy engagements the responsibility was handed over to Achutha Menon. Achutha Menon was able to prove as an efficient Home Minister and this fact was widely accepted by all others.
including the Chief Minister. When this issue was raised in the Assembly in 1969 after ten years it was done with political motivation.

It was one of the criticisms raised by the CPI (M) that the government led by CPI did not possess any power since it was controlled by vested interests represented by parties like Muslim League and Congress. The Achutha Menon government through its measures was able to disprove the arguments raised by the opposition when it strongly dealt with the agitation by the CPI (M) employees of the Kerala State Road Transport Corporation. The government was able to take strong measures against the agitation on the principle that the employees were recruited in violation of rules and procedures. It was generally alleged that the CPI (M) led government had made a number of recruits in the KSRTC without following any rules and regulations. The government appointed a Tribunal to go into the details regarding the appointments of the employees. Before the strong action taken by the government, the CPI(M) had to acknowledge the decision taken by the government.

After the formation of Kerala in 1956 there was a general feeling among the people of the state that Central government was neglecting it. The reason for the neglect was that the Congress party was
not in power in the state. The situation had changed when Achutha Menon ministry came to power and Congress was a major partner in it. Moreover Communist Party of India adopted a pro-Congress policy at the national level. Achutha Menon as Chief Minister was very particular to adopt a strong attitude towards the Central government to accept the reasonable and justifiable demands of the state. According to him it was the Constitutional responsibility of the Central government to concede the deserving demands of the state. He was not prepared to compromise on the issue. He was not against organizing a strike against the centre on this issue. Achutha Menon demanded that the centre should convene a meeting of the National Development Council to discuss Centre-State economic relations. When the state government had taken an important decision regarding the nationalization of foreign owned plantations in the state, the centre did not take a favourable attitude. In this connection the State Assembly had already passed a bill which was submitted for the approval of the Centre. When it was found that the Central Government was not in favour of it, Achutha Menon along with other CPI (M) leaders came out openly to criticise the centre. The conflict between the Centre and the state Government came to a point affecting the relations between
the Congress and CPI in Kerala. However Achutha Menon managed to avoid a break up in the relation. These developments were able to bring out the fact that Achutha Menon was not prepared to accept any compromise when it affected the interests of the state. It also shows how he was able to avoid break up in the relationship between the ruling partners.

In the cases where the life of the people was affected Achutha Menon never allowed the political partiality to come to the front. It was the usual practice adopted by the Chief Minister of the state to avoid the suggestion put forward by the opposition parties even though some of them were progressive and useful for the development of the state. But Achutha Menon had no hesitation to accept the suggestion made by any section of the people irrespective of their party allegiance. When A.K Gopalan, Vetaran Marxist leader started the revolt for land reforms namely *Michabhoomi Samaram* Achutha Menon wanted to put an end to it because he was fully aware of the mass appeal of A.K.Gopalan. A.K.Gopalan started an agitation demanding the government to earmark the unauthorized lands occupied by the land owners and distribute them among the landless people. Without criticizing the activity of
A.K. Gopalan, Achutha Menon took immediate steps to introduce the land reforms in the state. He directed the Revenue Minister to take immediate steps to introduce the land reforms act. The government began to find out the extra land available throughout the state, took them under government control and began to distribute them among the landless people. This decision had two implications on it. Firstly it reduced the significance of A.K.Gopalan’s movement and secondly it was able to distribute land to the people who had no land of their own for many years.

The leader of the opposition party did not have a separate room in the secretariat. When Achutha Menon became the Chief Minister he saw EMS Namboothiripad the opposition leader, running here and there without a proper place to sit down and organize his activities. He found it intolerable to see a former Chief Minister wandering here and there without any official accommodation. Achutha Menon immediately arranged a room for the opposition leader to carry out his official responsibilities.

Achutha Menon was accused of corruption charges for appointing his relative in a Company under the control of the government. It was K.M Mani the leader of the Kerala Congress who raised the
allegation on the floor of the Assembly. Achutha Menon’s answer to the question was straightforward “I am not sure whether such an appointment was made. I have a relative named C. Achuthan. I don’t know whether he was appointed in the TCC. I will make complete enquiry regarding the issue”30. Achutha Menon was not satisfied with the answer given to the member who raised that issue on the Assembly. He ordered the Industry’s Minister to enquire about the appointment and if it was done, he directed him to suspend the order. The order was implemented on the same day.

In his letter to Tekkumbhagam Mohan, Achutha Menon explains the developments leading to the appointment of C. Achuthan in TCC31. K. P. Varma was an officer working under K.P.P. Nambiar who was the director of Keltron. Before becoming the Chief Minister of Kerala, Achutha Menon had made a request to K. R. Varma to help C. Achuthan by giving an appointment on the basis of his qualification. But after becoming the Chief Minister he had not made any such request to anybody regarding the appointment of his relatives. But when Varma became the Finance Manager of TCC he remembered the previous request made by Achutha Menon and his relative was made an attender of the company. Achutha Menon could have washed his hands off by saying that as Chief
Minister he had never made such a request. But he accepted the fact and ordered for the removal of his relative from the post.

The Department of Cultural Affairs began to develop into a significant department due to the personal interest taken by the Chief Minister. Usually the Department of Culture was not given much importance and was very often part of the Department of Education. Achutha Menon took special interest in the development of the institutions under the Department of Culture. He had a great vision regarding the cultural development of the state. Kerala had the tradition of having significant contributions in the field of art, literature, painting and performing arts. Very often they did not get sufficient encouragement from the government. When the Chief Minister began to take personal interest to maintain the cultural heritage of the state many new innovations were introduced.

Achutha Menon took keen interest in preserving the natural beauty of the state. He was always against constructing huge concrete structures destroying the natural beauty of the surroundings by disturbing the heritage of the place. Thiruvananthapuram being the capital of earstwhile Thiruvithamcore Empire had a number of buildings of great
architectural beauty. But they were constructed taking into account the natural beauty of the landscape and without disturbing the traditional systems prevailing in the surroundings. The buildings based on the Kerala architecture; in fact enhanced the beauty of the capital. The new government had no sense of maintaining the natural balance of the surroundings, destroyed many traditional structures and built new concrete buildings in their places giving a vulgar appearance.

Achutha Menon took keen interest in preserving the natural beauty of the surroundings. He was always against constructing huge buildings destroying the natural beauty and heritage of the place. In normal case the Chief Minister never used to pay attention when old buildings were removed to construct new administrative blocks in the capital. There was a strong proposal from the administration for constructing a new building in the Fine Arts College Campus in Thiruvananthapuram along with the existing buildings which had the traditional architectural beauty. According to the new plan an old beautiful building was to be destroyed affecting the scenic splendour of the area. The proposed new buildings would be a misfit in the area which was blessed with the presence of traditional buildings like VJT Hall, University College, Public Library, and
University Hostel. When the matter was brought to the attention of Achutha Menon he immediately took steps to cancel the proposal and allowed the area to continue undistributed with its traditional look\textsuperscript{32}.

The Chief Minister had clear opinion regarding the activities in the cultural field of the state. He had his own opinion about the individuals who could be given the responsibility of handling different departments of cultural affairs. C.S Gangadharan MLA proposed some suggestions in the Assembly to be taken for the development of Film Industry in Kerala\textsuperscript{33}. The demand of the MLA was accepted by the Chief Minister and necessary action was taken immediately. A Committee was constituted to study about the Film Industry in Kerala and submit recommendations for its development. The committee consisted of Ramu Kariat, K.S Sethu Madhavan, two eminent Film directors Kunjako, a film maker and K.Balakrishnan, an editor and a film critic. It was one of the most effective committees ever created for the study of Film Industry in the state. The state committee submitted the report and made some concrete recommendations for the development of film industry in Kerala including starting of studio by the government.
As Chief Minister Achutha Menon took personal interest in the
development of Sahithya Academy. He always wanted that only
suitable persons should be appointed as the office bearers of Sahithya
Academy. Political considerations should not come in the way of the
Academy’s activities. The appointment of P. Keshav Dev as the president
of Kerala Sahithya Academy was a decision directly taken by the Chief
Minister. The decision was followed by an unexpected visit by Keshav
Dev in the office of the Chief Minister. During the meeting Keshav Dev
requested the Chief Minister to make him the President of Sahithya
Academy. Keshav Dev was prepared to work as the President of Sahithya
Academy and bring about some changes in the functioning of the
institution. Achutha Menon was convinced about the sincerity of Keshav
Dev and without any objections he was made the president of Sahithya
Academy. It should be remembered here that even though Kesav Dev was
one of the strong supporters of Communist movement in Kerala he became
its severe critic later. This change of attitude of Keshav Dev did not
prevent Achutha Menon from appointing him as the president of Sahithya
Academy. The only criteria considered in the appointment was the
contribution made by Keshav Dev for Malayalam literature.
It was during the period of Achutha Menon that the first volume of Malayalam Encyclopaedia was published in year 1972\textsuperscript{35}. As the Chief Minister of the State he took very keen interest in the different stages of the publication. He made personal enquiries regarding the progress of the work. K.M George mentions that it was due to the support and encouragement of the Chief Minister that the publications became a reality\textsuperscript{36}. He further mentions that his two major projects namely comparative Indian Literature and \textit{Bharathiya Sahithya Charitham} were completed only with the help and encouragement of the Chief Minister.

Achutha Menon had high respect and regard for scholars in different areas. When Prof. V.I. Subramanyyam started the Research Centre for the study of Dravidian languages and linguistics he extended him all his support and encouraged him in his efforts. Later Achutha Menon mentioned about him in one of his articles pointing out that V.I. Subramanyam was a world renowned linguist who had dedicated himself for the study of South Indian languages\textsuperscript{37}.

In the development and growth of literacy in Kerala the Literacy Movement had played a significant role. It had helped a great deal in spreading literacy in the remote villages of Kerala. C Achutha Menon
was, perhaps, the first Chief Minister who realized the role played by the libraries for the social renaissance in the state. He took special attention for spreading the message of library movement in the state\textsuperscript{38}. Kerala was the first state in India which introduced a Control Board for bringing all the libraries in the state under the direct patronage of the state government by issuing an ordinance. As a result of this decision every library in the state began to get an amount regularly as a grant for purchasing books and maintenance. When K Karunakaran became the Chief Minister he was not able to take necessary steps to make it a law by introducing a bill in the Assembly.

As an administrator Achutha Menon’s name stands as one of the most efficient Chief Ministers of Kerala. Most of the Chief Ministers in Kerala were not able to come out from their role as politician. They had to take decision taking into consideration all sections of the people. Top priority was given to the political interests when they took important decision. They had no hesitation to carry on with their decision even if they were aware that such a decision would be against the general interest of the state. But Achutha Menon would give top most priority to the interest of the state when he took an important decision affecting the life of
the people. He was not prepared to change his attitude even if his party advised him otherwise. As an administrator he was prepared to listen to the opinion of experts or people who had experience in the field and was prepared to correct his stand if he was found to be wrong. He had no hesitation to accept the responsibility of actions done by him even if the consequences of such actions were not good. He never compromised himself with anything due to the pressure tactics employed by politicians even if they belonged to his own party. Achutha Menon was by nature unable to make a negative reaction to all and sundry. He could not justify things which were not just and reasonable for the sake of his own safety or for the good image of his party. This open mindedness might be one of the reasons which enabled him to complete the term of his office for five years which happened to be for the first time in the history of Kerala.
Note and References

1. Dr. R. Prasannan, op.cit, p.89.

2. *Ibid*, p.90


4. E.J.Thomas, *op.cit*, p.120.


7. Terms of references mentioned in the appointment of Ramankutty.


9. Thekkum Bhagom Mohan, *op.cit*, p 100

10. Order of Punishment issued to Mr Ramankutty I.A.S

11. *Ibid*

12. *Malayala Manorama*, Kottayam 3\textsuperscript{rd} December, 1971


22. *Malayala Manorama*, Kottayam 8th November, 1971


25. Thekkumbhagom Mohan, *op. cit*, p. 28

26. Ibid, p. 29


32. Thekkum Bhagom Mohan, *op.cit*, p. 68.


37. *Ibid*
