Chapter X

Conclusion
Achutha Menon was the first Chief Minister in the history of Kerala who could adorn the position consecutively for the seven years (1969-1977). Moreover, he was the first Communist Chief Minister in the state to complete the term of his office and also the first Communist Chief Minister to do so. Even though as a Communist he was not able to implement Socialism in the State, he was able to bring into practice some of the human aspects of the ideology through the parliamentary system of democracy. During the last two years the shadow of Emergency had blackened his image as an administrator. Achutha Menon was subjected to criticism by people who had the view that he had completely surrendered himself before the Prime Minister in power. But as a disciplined member of the Communist Party of India he had to submit himself before the party in spite of his personal objections. In fact he was prepared to leave his office no sooner than when his term was over. It was his party which insisted that he should continue in the position.

When the coalition government under the leadership of E.M.S Namboothiripad fell down, Achutha Menon was the member of Rajya Sabha. The CPI had to give leadership to the new coalition government without the Marxist Party. When the party was looking for a leader to the
new coalition Achutha Menon was the unanimous choice. The new coalition government wanted to continue in office without the support of two leading parties namely the Congress and the Marxist Party. So the leader of the new set up should be a man of integrity and diplomacy who could manage the parties with different political ideologies like the Muslim League, Revolutionary Socialist Party and PSP. Time could prove that he was the most suitable choice to be the Chief Minister

Immediately after the oath taking ceremony as the Chief Minister he declared in the first Press Conference that he did not want to continue in office even for a minute if he had to depend on the support of the Congress. This statement of the Chief Minister was essential to inform the Marxist Party that he could continue in power without the support of the Congress. The new developments that took place in the All India Scenario resulted in the division of the Congress and the divided Congress under the leadership of Mrs. Indira Gandhi was acceptable to the CPI.

Kerala witnessed a series of governments in the recent past and none of them was able to complete its term of office of five years. Achutha Menon was destined to give leadership to a ministry which broke the tradition by completing the five years. Differences of opinion were
bound to take place in a coalition of political parties which had different political ideologies. But the credit goes to its leader who could manage the show without any breaking points. He had the unique quality of solving the problems through discussions and conciliation. Though the leader of a Communist Party which stood for the interest of the working class, Achutha Menon always stood for the welfare of the entire people of the state. The principle of ‘Dies Non’ which meant ‘no salary for no work’ was implemented by Achutha Menon in Kerala. He was compelled to resort to such an action due to the irresponsible and indisciplined attitude of the trade unions which completely forgot the welfare of the people when they declared strikes on unjustified reasons. His own party turned against him on this issue. The criticism raised against him by his own party was a severe experience for him. He told his party that he was prepared to withdraw Dies Non but the party had to find out somebody else to be the Chief Minister. It was this uncompromising attitude of the Chief Minister that compelled his party to take a favourable attitude in the case of Dies Non. The Marxist Party continued their struggle against the system of Dies Non and was able to withdraw it when they came to power.
Achutha Menon introduced a good number of bills and amendments in the Assembly which were able to bring forth number of socio-economic reforms in the state. The Land Reforms Bill was introduced for the welfare of the landless labourers and the bill was brought under the 9th schedule so that labourers were saved from further legal battles. He introduced certain amendments in the Land Reforms Bill by which the wages of agricultural labourers were fixed and many favourable facilities were granted to them.

Establishment of the Agricultural University was a turning point for the agricultural development of the state. The Chief Minister had to face lot of difficulties in the process of the establishment of the University. He had to take disciplinary action against a senior I.A.S officer who stood on the way of purchasing suitable land for the project. The officer was suspended from the service and was compelled to retire from the service. Later Achutha Menon said that he had no regrets over his actions against the I.A.S officer because he gave more consideration for the interest of the people than protecting the interest of an officer.

If there is a clash between trade union and interests of the common people Achutha Menon always stood for the people. The strike
organised by the engineers of Electricity Board and strong attitude taken by the Chief Minister towards it was able to prove that Achutha Menon stood with the people during critical periods. When the Engineers tried to sabotage the supply of the electricity to the people the government had to adopt some draconian measures to prevent it. In normal cases he could not have adopted such strong steps.

Achutha Menon is subjected to severe criticism for his attitude during the time of Emergency. When Emergency was implemented K.Karunakaran became the centre of unusual powers granted to him by the Central government. The Home minister found special interest in enjoying the powers allowed to him by the Emergency. Achutha Menon was aware that the Home Minister had become the centre of administration directly granted to him by the Prime minister. Even though there was a committee consisting of Chief Minister, Home Minister and other important ministers to review the arrest and detention of people, the committee was never convened. The reports regarding the Assembly session were submitted to the Central government by the Public Relations Director and signed by the Home Secretary, the Chief Minister was out of the picture.
During the period of seven years when Achutha Menon was the Chief Minister, we could see a dual personality in him. The Chief Minister before the Emergency period was a sincere, serious and well balanced personality who stood for socialism and ultimate welfare of the people. He never moved an inch away from his principles which were meant for the happiness of the ordinary people. Such an impartial and reasonable administration Kerala had never experienced. But during the time of Emergency the personality of Chief Minister was different from the previous person. He had to continue as the Chief Minister because his party insisted him to do so. His party did not object the Emergency. As a disciplined party member he had to follow the line of the party. His home minister K. Karunakaran wanted to enjoy the extra ordinary powers which were provided by the special situations. On the other law Achutha Menon always wanted to keep himself away from the glories of power. A man who could never tolerate the inhuman developments that took place during the time of Emergency, he was completely helpless before them. In fact Mrs. Indira Gandhi was ruling Kerala through Karunakaran. The humiliating experience during this period compelled him to put an end to his political career.
During the formation of the ministry after the election in 1970, Achutha Menon had to face many difficult problems in the beginning. The Chief Minister as a head of the coalition government had to face pulls and pressures from different quarters. It was very difficult for the leaders to satisfy different political parties. This led to considerable erosion of the traditional powers of the Chief Minister to select to his own team of ministers. The responsibility of selecting a minister was handed over to the concerned political party. The Chief Minister had to accept the nominee sent by the party. This was actually taking away one of the powers of the Chief Minister whose prerogative to select his cabinet colleagues was an accepted criteria. Achutha Menon accepted it as a reality and adjusted himself to the changed circumstances. Due to the changed attitude he was able to muster respects of his coalition partners. His inimitable knack for compromise and political maturity raised his image as the Chief Minister. Inspite of the differences of opinion which existed within the political parties he was able to lead the ministry for a short period when the EMS ministry collapsed in 1969. The achievements and the performance of his first ministry were highly appreciated by all sections of the people. His decision to advise the governor to dissolve the Assembly and seek fresh
mandate when differences of opinion within the coalition partners became uncontrollable was the best step that could be taken at that time. It proved the fact that even though Achutha Menon was prepared to compromise on certain issues for the proper functioning of the government he could not tolerate unprincipled power politics.

Even though the state assembly elections were over by 17th September 1970; the ministry could not be formed till 4th October due to the clashes of interests among the coalition partners. One of the reasons for the delay in the formation of the ministry was the reluctance of the Congress and RSP to join the ministry because they could not accept the part played by Muslim League in the ministry. They were afraid that the coalition with the Muslim League would damage their prospects in the forthcoming elections in the parliament in 1972. Jana Sagh, was likely to exploit the situation by criticizing the Congress alliance with the communal organisation, the Muslim League. Another factor within the Congress Party was the concern of the Muslims within the Congress Party because they had the fear that if the Muslim League was allowed to emerge as a powerful force their chances in politics would be diminished. The RSP was afraid of the fact that a coalition with the Congress and
Muslim League would tarnish its image as a revolutionary party. It was due to the diplomatic and tactical approach from the part of Achutha Menon that gave them the courage to become part of the coalition. They became convinced that the leader of the coalition could solve the problems that emerged among them.

When Achutha Menon reached general conclusions he did not hesitate to raise his doubts, if any, openly, he wanted to get it clarified. His mind was always like that of a scientist who wanted to clarify his doubts at any cost. According to N.E Balram it was this element of doubt that used to break new paths in his history\(^5\). Among the many doubts he raised in the party forums two aspects deserve special mention. One was regarding Euro Communism. Social revolution takes place depending upon the special situation prevailing in a particular country. This theory was insisted by the Italian Communist Party. Similarly in China when socialism was put in practice the Marxist Leninist theory should be mixed with some aspects of Maoism as well. Achutha Menon strongly believed that the social revolution could take place taking in to consideration the special situation prevailing in a country.
Another doubt raised by Achutha Menon was regarding the Soviet attack on Afghanistan. The Communist Party of India supported the action taken by Soviet Union against Afghanistan. Achutha Menon raised his doubts against it in the party forums. He could not justify the attack of Soviet Union on Afghanistan even though it was the line of the party. He also disagreed with the attitude of Russia in keeping a strong military force on the border of China claiming certain areas in China as its own. According to Achutha Menon two socialist countries should not show such belligerent attitude towards each other. Achutha Menon raised such questions in the party forums and expressed his views openly even though the official line of the party was against his views. Finally he had to accept the official line being a disciplined party member.

Achutha Menon was the only person among the members of the National Council of the CPI who questioned the action of the Soviet Union against its military tanks moving to Pruagu. But when the Emergency was declared he was not able to utter a word against it even though he was fully aware that the country was going through difficult days. He had no hesitation to remain as a silent Chief Minister for a period
of two years. It can be considered to be a sacrifice on his part for his party. He never justified the developments during the time of Emergency⁹.

Inspite of his heavy schedule and official engagements, Achutha Menon managed to maintain his intellectual activities. In his personal diary relating to the period of Chief Ministership we can see that he gave importance to keep himself abreast of the developments in the field of literary and cultural activities¹⁰. He found time in reading and writing in spite of his heavy schedule of programmes as the head of the state. The personal diary kept by him gives a clean picture about his intellectual activities. Though he was not strictly regular in writing the diary he made systematic notes on the memorable events in his life, both official and personal¹¹. During the period of his Chief Minister he wrote his diary for 624 days in the years between 1964 and 1977. The diary notes during the years before it are not available¹². The notes include details about the persons he had met, the books he had read, the film he had seen and the experiences during the periods are explained in brief but they are sincere, sometimes heart rendering.

T.N Jaya Chandra IAS who was his private secretary during the period mentions about his punctuality and consciousness. Achutha
Menon was part of history making important contribution to the people of Kerala and attaining certain achievements which his predecessors could not do. As an active politician, as the head of the state for seven years, as a minister in the cabinet of the first Communist government, as a writer and cultural activist he had a lot of lively experiences. He had a flourishing style in Malayalam. But he was reluctant to write an autobiography. When asked by Jayachandran about it his reply was “If I write it I have to tell the truth. It may give pains for many who are still alive. I am not prepared for it”.

It was his creativity and courage that keep Achutha Menon out of the ranks of skillful tacticians who were successful in the administration but did not have any commitment to the people. There are many such successful administrators in the independent India but Achutha Menon was different from them because through his achievements he was able to rise to the level of a statesman and thinker. His courage, creativity and moral uprightness made him more than a great Communist leader heading a united front and coalition; it made him a great leader of his people, a status achieved by rare people.
Notes and References

1. K.C John, *op.cit*, p.34


8. Dr. R. Prasannan, *op.cit*, p.213.


10. Diary of Achutha Menon, April 15, 1976, p.9

11. T.N. Jayachandran, Diary of Achutha Menon, p.15

12. Ibid, p.16.

13. Ibid, p.16.