Chapter III

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT OF COCHIN

Introduction

The political movements in Cochin offer almost a contrast to those of Travancore in respect of their origin, character and course of events. There is no such phase in the modern history of Cochin as the one marked by the Memorials in the politics of Travancore. The fact that the princes of the large-sized Cochin royal family entered into matrimonial relations with Nair families ensured for the Nair community a privileged position in the civil services and there was no need for them to petition or protest in regard to denial of jobs as in Travancore. The communal overtones associated with the movements in Travancore were also by and large absent in Cochin. Whereas the Government of Travancore proceeded with liberal social reforms like Temple Entry, the Government of Cochin not only followed a policy of caution in this field but even opposed the move for Temple Entry. At the same time, in Travancore the Government adopted a policy of opposition to the popular demand for responsible government while in Cochin it implemented a liberal policy of conceding this demand by stages.

Mention should also be made in this context of the personal factor. Sir R.K. Shanmukham Chetti who was the Dewan of Cochin in the crucial thirties was much different from Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar, his counterpart in Travancore at the time, in his outlook and approach. This was mainly because the former was a leading light of the non-Brahmin movement in the Madras Presidency before he accepted the office of the Dewan of Cochin. There was almost a competition between the two to be in the limelight of publicity. If Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar stole the national limelight by advising the Maharaja of Travancore to issue the historic Temple Entry Proclamation (1936), Sir Shanmukham sought to win encomiums by introducing Dyarchy and thus initiating the policy of introducing responsible Government in Cochin by stages, for
Chapter IV

POLITICAL UPEHAVALS IN MALABAR

Genesis of the National Movement

The Malabar District, being part of the erstwhile Madras Province, participated in full in the mainstream of Indian politics. The establishment of the Indian National Congress in 1885 was an event which captured the imagination of the people of Malabar. The delegates from Malabar used to attend the early annual sessions of the Congress, though there was no organised political activity as such in those days. Sir Chettur Sankaran Nair presided over the Amaravati session of the Congress in 1897. It may be noted that he was the only Keralite who adorned the Presidency in the long and chequered history of this organisation. In 1903 a Political Conference presided over by the veteran Congress leader, C. Vijayaraghavachariar of Salem, was held at Calicut under the auspices of the Congress. However, not much was heard of the organisation for some years thereafter.

In 1908 a District Congress Committee was formed in Malabar, but it made its presence felt only during the period of the Great War (1914–1918). The All India Home Rule League founded by Dr. Annie Besant in 1916 had its branch in Malabar. Manjeri Rama Iyer (Anagarika Raman of later days), a leading figure of the Calicut Bar, was its President and K.P. Kesava Menon its Secretary. The latter also functioned as the Secretary of the Malabar District Congress Committee of which K.P. Raman Menon was the President. V.K. Krishna Menon was one of the active workers of both the Congress and the Home Rule League in Tellicherry. The Home Rule League and the District Congress Committee worked in close cooperation with each other in organising meetings and processions in the District. The tempo of political activity in Malabar reached a high crescendo during this period thanks to the enthusiasm of the workers of these organisations.

An incident which took place at Calicut in 1916 served to focus public attention on the rising tempo of political activity in Malabar. A
Chapter V

AIKYA KERALA MOVEMENT

Background

One of the most important of the popular movements of modern Kerala was the movement for the establishment of Aikya Kerala. It was a peaceful State-wide movement which embraced all sections of the Malayalam speaking people and gathered strength and momentum over a period of more than three decades. The Malayalam language with its rich literary heritage had all along served as an important factor in the emotional and cultural integration of the people of the three areas of Malabar, Travancore and Cochin which today comprise the State of Kerala, but that by itself could not ensure the political unification of the region for obvious reasons of historical compulsion. History records two missed opportunities for the political unification of Kerala. The first was when the Zamorin of Calicut failed to bring Kerala under his hegemony owing to Portuguese opposition and the other when Martanda Varma of Travancore could not complete his work of political unification owing to the opposition of the Dutch. The ideal of pan-Kerala unity remained in the womb of time. It was vigorously pursued in modern times by leaders in all parts of Kerala and consequently, the Aikya Kerala movement acquired the dimensions of a people’s movement.

Congress and Linguistic States

It has been mentioned earlier that the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee which came into existence in 1921 on linguistic basis included the whole of the Malabar District and the States of Travancore and Cochin. This was taken to mean that the Congress had committed itself to the idea of linguistic states in a free India. The first All Kerala Provincial Conference under the auspices of the Congress met at Ottappalam in 1921. It was for the first time that representatives from Malabar, Travancore and Cochin attended a conference of such political
of states in India, the Aikya Kerala Committee demanded the formation of a new Kerala State comprising of Malabar, Travancore, Cochin, Coorg, Nilgiris, Guddalore, South Canara, Mahe and Lakshadweep. It may be noted here that the Travancore Government under Pattom Thanu Pillai did not cooperate with the work of the Dhar Commission.

The Indian National Congress at its Jaipur session (1948) set up a high level committee consisting of Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhai Patel and Pattabhi Sitaramiah to consider the Dhar Commission’s recommendations. In its report (J.V.P. Report) the Committee counselled the utmost caution in proceeding with the proposal for the linguistic reorganisation of states. At the same time, it also made it clear that the formation of the linguistic states of Kerala and Karnataka would have to wait till a final solution was found for the Indian States problem.

**Formation of Kerala State (1956)**

The formation of Travancore-Cochin on July 1, 1949 as a Part B State of the Indian Union by the merger of the two princely states was an important step towards the realisation of the ideal of Kerala State. T.K. Narayana Pillai and E. Ikkanda Warier who headed the Governments of Travancore and Cochin respectively at this time welcomed the formation of the new State as the first step towards the formation of Aikya Kerala. V.P. Menon, the Secretary of the States Ministry, Government of India, also gave expression to the same view. However, the optimism of these leaders was not shared by all. K. Kelappan resigned the Presidentship of the Aikya Kerala Committee as he thought that the formation of the new State with a Maharaja as Head of State (*Rajpramukh*) would not be helpful to the formation of a democratic Kerala State. Kelappan’s place as President of the Committee was taken by K.P. Kesava Menon and it continued its efforts in pursuit of the cherished goal with greater vigour.

Another Aikya Kerala Conference held at Palghat in November 1949 on the initiative of the Aikya Kerala Committee adopted a resolution calling for the formation of a Kerala State without a *Rajpramukh*. However, one of the obstacles which the movement had to face at this time was the stand taken by an influential section of Malabar Congressmen in favour of a Southern State (*Dakshina*)
Samsthanam) by bringing about the merger Travancore-Cochin into the Madras Province. The Political Conference held at Palghat in April 1953 under the auspices of the Malabar Pradesh Congress Committee formally endorsed the above proposal. The Travancore-Cochin Pradesh Congress Committee and the Government of Travancore-Cochin were, however, in favour of Aikya Kerala. They were opposed to the idea of a Southern State. A conference which was held at Calicut under the auspices of the Aikya Kerala Committee, however, helped to influence public opinion in Malabar in favour of the formation of Aikya Kerala.

It was at this juncture that the States Reorganisation Commission consisting of Syed Fazl Ali (Chairman), Sardar K.M. Panikkar and Pandit Hridaynath Kunzru was appointed by the Government of India (December 1953) to go into the question of linguistic reorganisation of states in India. The Government of Travancore-Cochin, the Aikya Kerala Committee and several public organisations and cultural bodies submitted memoranda before the Commission setting forth their views. After careful consideration of the question in all its aspects, the Commission rejected the demand for a Southern State. It recommended the formation of the State of Kerala by merging the four Southern Taluks of Tovala, Agasteeswaram, Kalkulam and Vilavancode together with some parts of Shencotta in the neighbouring Tamil speaking State and adding on the Kasargod Taluk of South Canara to the new Malayalam speaking State. As already mentioned, the new State of Kerala was formally inaugurated on November 1, 1956. This marked the successful culmination of the Aikya Kerala movement.