

Formation of The Travancore State Congress

Dr.V.KARTHIKNISHA,

Assistant Professor in History

Sree Ayyappa College for Women, Chukankadai

ABSTRACT

The princely states of Travancore and Cochin had their own struggle and agitations to fight for the peoples rights in these states from the very beginning of the British period. On February 23,1938 a new organization called the Travancore state congress was born at a meeting of prominent leaders, under the chairmanship of C.V.Kunjuraman It's aim was the achievement of responsible Government on the basis of adult franchise and protection of the rights.

Key words:

Travancore, Congress, Political Party, Organisation, Legislature, Dewan.

Introduction:

The Indian National Congress was organized by A.O.YHume in 1885, it did not spread to Travancore and other parts of India. The congress party too, did not think of expanding its activities because the meantime the people of Travancore found that the unit of Indian National Congress that was functioning in Travancore too was not active. The congress party remained a silent spectator and watching the course of events. There were

both communal and political organizations in the state organized by the leaders to represent the grievances of the people either to the Dewan or to the King.

People's Movement:

The introduction of western education awakened the people. They could understand that political and economic situation in the state was unfavourable to their interests and hence, they demanded a share in the administration under the guise of shaping or revamping administration, they imported outsiders for public services. This was highly distaste to the people. They felt that the government had snatched away the opportunities of the Travancoreans. During the administration of Dewan T. Rama Rao their attitudes aggravated and they began to demand a share in the administration. Mr. Parameswara Pillai of Madras Bar spearheaded an agitation for the removal of the Dewan Rama Rao a Marathi Brahmin. He wrote articles in the newspaper and published vehemently criticizing the administrative policies of the Dewan. But it did not; produce any result immediately.

Formation of State Congress

The Political disturbance in the State, the hands attitude of the Indian National Congress and the oppressive nature of the Dewan C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer of Travancore, made the political leaders to form a political organization of their own. The leaders also arrived at a conclusion that without forming a political party of their own: it would be difficult for them to right for responsible Government. Already there had been agitation in

Mysore, Orissa, Hyderabad, against the Princely system of administration. The people could understand the plan of the leaders and this evoked unprecedented support and enthusiasm among the people.

The Political leaders of Travancore could understand that the situation was ripe for them to start a political organization. They took immediate steps for the organization of a political party in Travancore.

Understanding the situation the congress leaders took immediate steps for the organisation of a political party. On 17th February 1938 they conducted a preliminary meeting at Trivandrum. In the meeting, it was decided to organize a Political party for protecting the interests of the minority communities and for the establishment of responsible Government in the state. After arriving at the conclusion to form a political party, the meeting was postponed to the following week. As decided the next meeting was organized on 23rd February 1938. C.K.Kunjuraman, an Ezhava leader presided over the meeting. In the meeting, it was decided to organize a new political organization called the 'Travancore State Congress'.

Now the members of the Joint Political Congress party decided to convene the working committee meeting. After the formation of the state congress the leaders decided to prepare a constitution for the congress party. A meeting was convened on 25th February at Thycaud, Trivandrum. The constitution of the organisation was drawn up. The

constitution provided a president, Secretaries, working committee members and propaganda Secretaries. In the meeting, Pattom A. Thanu Pillai was elected the President, P.S. Narayana Pillai and K.T. Thomas was elected as Secretaries. M. Madhava Variyaras the Treasurer. The constitution provided a public committee to propagate the ideals, the aims and abasis of the congress committee to the people. The aim and objectives of the Travancore State Congress were to make the people to understand and learn about the working of the congress. Basing on this the congress party issued its first press statement on 26th February 1938. The statement disputed the communication of the Dewan, C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer.

The statement was that the Dawn was not conducting responsible Government. It also welcomed the timely announcement of the British Parliament about the policy of non-intervention in the affair of the state. However the Primary objectives declared in the first meeting was the attainment of responsible Government by legitimate and peaceful means with universal adult franchise and with adequate safeguards for protection of minority interests. Thus from the beginning itself, the party insisted upon the realization of a democratic of Government, responsible to the people and representative of all communities and classes. The state congress adopted the following programmes.

1. to secure for the people a detailed declaration of fundamental rights. Which guarantee freedom of speech and expression, freedom of press and association.

2. to foster communal harmony and unity
3. to safeguard. He interests of individual and agricultural labours.
4. to protect and develop the national and economic prosperity of the state especially by encouraging internal trade and industry.
5. to secure for the Indian States their lawful and legitimate place in an all India Constitutional scheme by establishing co-operation and unity between native states and British India on the other.

The attitudes adopted for the achievement of these demands varied according to the nature of policies formulated by the Government. Their declared objective however, was to secure these by just and peaceful means and therefore, they took non-violence as a principle. The state congress sought help and guidance from the congress leaders of India and tried to act in accordance to the suggestions of M.K. Gandhi. However, departure from declared lines of action too was attempted.

There are different views about the organization of the state congress. Nilkan Perumal, a Pro-government political worker of Madras, wrote; ‘the communal-minded joint political congress was rebaptised as the nationalistic state congress; its planks and programme were to work for responsible Government E.M.s. Namboodriripad, a communist leader of Malabar, contented that ‘a federation of the Ezhava, Muslim and Christian communities subsequently transformed itself into the state congress. These

views focused on certain particular issues of interest. However, it should be recognized that different forces had exerted their influences in shaping the political currents in the state. Among them the successful culmination of the abstention agitation, developments in the Travancore Legislature, the explanation in the British Parliament on British Policy towards states and the Haripura decision of the Indian National Congress worked as ingredients and quickened the process of its organization. The Organisation of state congress was accepted by the people. In an attempt to live upto the expectation of the people the congress party started its work and fixed attainment of responsible government as it goal.

Conclusion:

The formation of Travancore State Congress was not an accident. It took time to get shaped. Earlier, Civil Right League 1919 fought for the cause of the people. Before that the people's movement was led by the communal leaders. During this period, Mahatma Gandhi Organised the Non-co-operation movement.

Hence the sympathizers of Gandhi in Travancore organized the congress committee to discuss the progress of the non-co-operation movement to promote boycott of foreign goods and educate the people about the movement. Actually they had no intention to involve in the local issues of Travancore.

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