

Travancore Tamil Nadu Congress

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Abstract

The erstwhile Travancore Princely State was located at the south-west extremity of India. In this state the low caste people were ill-treated by the high caste people. So a long drawn struggle was started by Nesamony, the founder of the Tamil Nadu Congress. The Congress fought for the rights of the depressed classes and at the same time demanded that the Tamil speaking areas, Kalkulam, Vilavancode, Agasteeswaram, Thovalai, Neyyattinkarai, Chenkottai and Devikulam of Travancore should be united with the Tamil State. The Travancore Tamil Nadu Congress was started in 1947 and proceeded to demand for the upheaval of the downtrodden communities and for the union of the Tamil speaking areas of Travancore with Tamil Nadu. Their continuous struggles resulted in the liberation of the low caste people and the union of Tamil speaking areas with Tamil Nadu.

Key words: *Travancore, Nesamony, Tamil Nadu Congress, liberation*

Introduction

The Princely State of Travancore, located in the south-west extremity of the Indian Peninsula was dominated by the Nair Community people who were termed as the high caste people. The low caste people, mainly the Nadars and the Ezhavas were deprived of all their rights and they were treated as slaves. Under these circumstances the educated people of South Travancore wanted to bring in a great renaissance in the lives of the people. So they wanted to form an organization against the high caste people. This organization came to be known as Travancore Tamil Nadu Congress.

Origin of the Travancore Tamil Nadu Congress

The most acclaimed leader of the depressed community in South Travancore was Nesamony. He was born in Palliyadi, a small village very near to Nagercoil on June 12th 1895. Having been educated at Trivandrum he obtained his law degree and began to practice law in the Nagercoil court.

While he was practicing law the social situation in South Travancore called him to save their lives from the yoke of the high caste people. To safeguard the rights of the downtrodden and at the same time to relieve the Tamil speaking areas, Thovalai, Agasteeswaram, Vilavancode, Kalkulam, Neyyattinkarai, Peermedu, Devikulam and Chenkottai from Travancore Nesamony began to form the Travancore Tamil Nadu Congress.

On 8th August 1947 a meeting was held at Allen Memorial Hall in Nagercoil by Nesamony. On that day itself he declared the gathering as a party naming it as Travancore Tamil Nadu Congress.

Another leader from Nathaniel was unanimously elected as the President of the Travancore Tamil Nadu Congress. Certain other leaders Chidambaram Pillai, Sivathanu Pillai and Razaak were elected as the executive members of the party. "Pot" was selected as the symbol of the party. The flag of the party had a green base and a pot in the centre. All those who had attained the age of 18 were entitled to enroll themselves as members of the party. Nesamony conducted meetings throughout South Travancore and his extempore and vociferous speeches attracted the attention of many people thronged to listen to him.

In Devikulam and Peermedu Congress meetings were held under the leadership of Nesamony. On 29.08.1954 Nesamony, Chidambaranathan and Abdul Razak started agitation in Devikulam. The Government of Travancore under Pattamthanu Pillai began to control the agitation. Nesamony and others were arrested.

There was a great agitation throughout South Travancore that the Congress leaders including Nesamony should be released from prison. The Travancore Tamil Nadu Congress leaders advised the party people to celebrate 11.08.1954 as the day of independence for the people of South Travancore.

Agitations started throughout South Travancore. Many people were arrested. The government resorted to firing. In the firing nine people were shot dead. Many people were wounded. The party men underwent untold sufferings. Police took many men to the stations and were severely wounded. There were untold mourning throughout South Travancore. Many men ran away from their houses and took asylum in forest areas. Many family members had nothing to eat. Daily police men searched the houses of the members of the Travancore Tamil Nadu Congress members during night hours. Women could not live peacefully in their houses.

So all the members of the Travancore Tamil Nadu Congress proceeded to the house of Nesamony. Nesamony assured that all the grievances of the people could be redressed through the court. He filed a suit before the courts of Padmanabhapuram and at Trivandrum. But these courts did not do full justice to the people of South Travancore. Nesamony filed a suit before the Supreme Court of Delhi and got a direction that the Mysore Court could enquire the cases associated with South Travancore. He spent a lot of money from his pocket and argued for the people of South Travancore in Mysore Court. He got success and all the cases registered against the people of South Travancore were completely withdrawn. Thus the Travancore Tamil Nadu Congress party safeguarded the people against all the cases.

The agitation continued and the Maharaja of Travancore Sree Chithirai Thirunal wanted to have personal talks with Nesamony, the leader of the Travancore Tamil Nadu Congress. Sree Chithirai Thirunal Maharaja sent his personal secretary Vaithyanatha Iyer to have talks with Nesamony. The Maharaja did not like to have a disintegration of a state which had a long standing existences of nearly 190 years. But the personal secretary informed the Maharaja that Nesamony would not withdraw his struggle till the Tamil speaking areas of South Travancore were mingled with Tamil Nadu.

In 1953 the Government of India constituted a Committee known as State Reorganization Committee. The State Reorganization Commission also recommended that all the Tamil speaking areas of South Travancore should be united with Tamil Nadu. On 1st November 1956 the Tamil speaking areas of the erstwhile Travancore State was united with Tamil Nadu.

On 1st November 1956 the celebration of declaring the speaking areas with Tamil Nadu was acclaimed. In Nagercoil at the Sethu Lekshmi Bai Higher Secondary School compound the celebration was held. Kamaraj, the former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu with other Tamil Nadu ministers Bhakthavatsalam and Subramoniyam were present on the occasion and legal union of the Tamil speaking areas with Tamil Nadu was declared.

But still even in this there is a grievance. The Tamil speaking areas of Devikulam and Peermedu still remain within Travancore. The demand of the Travancore Tamil Nadu Congress would fully realized only when these two areas are brought under Tamil Nadu area.

However the Travancore Tamil Nadu Congress could achieve its demand within 10 years. After the union of the Tamil speaking areas with Tamil Nadu, the demand of the Travancore Tamil Nadu congress was fulfilled. So Nesamony openly declared that the party should be wound up. So on 26.01.1957 the General Body meeting of the Travancore Tamil Nadu Congress Party was disbanded and amalgamated with the Congress party.

Conclusion

The Travancore Tamil Nadu Congress was begun on 8th August 1948. Within a short span of 10 years the party fulfilled its aim of uniting the Tamil speaking areas with Tamil Nadu for long year the Malayalee domination prevails in South Travancore and because of the struggle Malayali domination was once for all put to an end and the depressed classes began to enjoy their rights. Thus the Travancore Tamil Nadu Congress party fulfilled the two important expectations, union of Tamil speaking areas with Tamil Nadu and maintaining the equality of the low caste people along with the high caste people.

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