

Aikya Kerala Movement: Realisation of a Dream

Pradeep.K

Research Scholar (Full-Time)
Dept. of History
Karyavattom Campus
University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram.

ABSTRACT

The National question or the question of formation of states on a linguistic basis and of state autonomy in a federal set up, was along with the agrarian question, the most powerful force behind the post war revolutionary upsurge swaying millions of people throughout India. The formation of modern Kerala was the outcome of a series of socio-political, cultural, linguistic and administrative factors. The fulfilment of a long process of historical evolution, become the need of the day. A number of agencies and individuals contributed to the realization of this goal. It represented the cultural, political, administrative, emotional and linguistic unification of Travancore Cochin and Malabar.

Keywords: *Revolutionary upsurge, Modern Kerala, Historical Evolution*

INTRODUCTION

The political parties played an important role in the genesis and growth of the unification of Kerala. Large number of meetings were held in different parts of Kerala and series of resolutions were passed in the sessions of the Indian National Congress to have a common state for the Malayalees. The communist party also contributed for the formation of the slogan of United Kerala. However, the party did not satisfy with the practical unification of the democratic movement throughout Kerala, but through a series of articles and pamphlets, raised the programmatic slogan of uniting all the homogeneous Malayalam speaking majority areas of the Madras presidency and the states of Cochin and Travancore into one province without the two Maharajas.

The mass media, especially the newspapers played a decisive role in strengthening of feeling of oneness among the Malayalees. In 1923, K.P. Kesavamenon in his editorial in the first issue of Mathrubhumi wrote on 'Aikya Keralam'. Although the people of Kerala speaking a common language, united by common history, common traditions and common customs are now under four separate governments. The concept of 'United Kerala' was promoted and propagated by the national minded poets and great writers of the period. The very tillers of the Vernacular newspapers i.e., Mathrubhumi, Swadeshbhmani, Malayala Manorama, Kerala Kaumudi, Malayala Rajam, Kerala Sanchari, etc are calculated to inculcate the spirit of unity in the name of land and language.

The communist party and other political parties, including the Kochin Rajya Mandalam followed an uncompromising stand and they were rather resolved to attain the unification of Kerala, joint rallies, demonstrations etc were being organised to voice this united demand. The annual session of the prajamandam held at Ernakulam on 21 July 1946 decide to observe July 29 1946 as "Responsible Government Day". On 29 July 1946, the Maharaja, sent a message to the Legislative Council known as Aikya Kerala message. This statement initiated a controversy and opinions were expressed both for and against this proposal. The communist and congresites viewed it with favour whereas the Tamilians, who constituted about one third of the population of Travancore opposed it. In the Sri Mulam Assembly V.S. Krishnapillai and M.L. Janandhanan Pillai, Tamilian members moved adjournment motions stating that the Maharaja's announcement had created serious anxiety and alarm, among the Tamilian citizens in the Taluks of Thovala, Agasteeswaram, Kalkulam, Vilavancode, Shencottah and Devikulam. This motion furnished grounds for the Diwan to argue against the formation of a Kerala province. The political parties, the Travancore state congress, the Cochin prajamadal and the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee pledged to work towards the realization of this objective. In order to mobilize public support, the held propaganda meeting and conferences in Travancore, Cochin and Malabar. On 26 and 27 April, 1947 they convened a United Kerala conversion and Trichur under the chairmanship of K. Kela President of Kerala Pradesh Congress committee. Nearly 300 delegates from Travancore participated in the conversion.

After the United Kerala conversion at Trichur in April 1947 the leaders of the Tamilnadu Congress decided to press their demand for a separate district in Travancore. The Tamilnadu Congress adopted an independent course of action. On 18 July 1947 the working committee of the Tamilnadu Congress met at Nagercoil under the Presidentship of S. Nathanier. The meeting unanimously decided to start direct action against the Dewan's declaration of independence in case their demand for a separate Tamil district with the right of self determination was not conceded before 15 August. To mobilize public support the leaders did active propaganda work both inside and outside the state. Seeking the help of the congress leaders of Madras presidency, delegations of Tamil leaders visited Madras and Madurai. They organised Tamil volunteer corps and circulated leaflets to mobilize support. Radicals among the leaders engaged in anti government propaganda and denounced payment of tax to the government.

In the meantime Travancore and Cochin get merged to form the state of Travancore-Cochin. Against this, the TTNC launched a civil disobedience movement and many leaders of Nanchilnad like A. Gandhiraman Pillai, P.S. Mani, S. Nathaniel and R.K. Ram were arrested. The intervention of K. Kamaraj, leader of Madras Congress Committee, resulted in a compromise by which TTNC agitation was called off.

The Tamils held a series of protest meetings in a number of places challenging the Malayali domination in the political and official bureaucracy of the Government. The TTNC leaders exhorted the people to revolt against the government and to start no-tax campaign. The Tamil agitation was intensified following the arrest and six weeks. Imprisonment of Nesamony, Chidambara Nadar, Abdul Razzak and other leaders at Munnar when they defied prohibitory orders. An Action Committee was organised under the presidentship of P. Ramaswamy Pillai on 9th July 1954.

The TTNC observed 11 August 1954 as 'Deliverance Day' of Tamils throughout the Tamil areas of Travancore state and a complete hartal was held. In the course of the police firing, five persons lost their lives. As a protest against the decision of the state re-organisation commission to constitute a Kerala state without the five southern taluks, six congress MLA's obtained from voting on the budget demands on 8 March 1955. They demanded an undivided Kerala. They argued that the ministry and the KPCC executives

forfeited the confidence of the people because of their failure to act in accordance with the mandate of the people. As a protest the six MLA's tendered their resignation on 9 March. It led to the resignation of Panampilli on 11 March 1956 and thereby under Article 256 of the Indian Constitution the President of India assumed the powers and functions of the Government of Travancore-Cochin.

The all India situation favoured the formation of linguistic states and this in turn intensified the demand of the TTNC. The developments in Travancore invited the attention of the State Reorganizing Committee. It recommended a transfer of the entire Tamil dominated area of Travancore-Cochin state to the Madras state acting on the recommendations, the five Tamil taluks of Thovalai, Agastheeswaram, Kalkulam, Vilavancode and Shenkotta were transferred into Madras states and Malabar district of the Madras states was united with Travancore Cochin leading to the formation of modern Kerala on 1st November 1956.

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