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MALAYALA MANORAMA AND THE SOCIO- POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION OF KERALA

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Introduction

When English education became popular, gradually it became necessary qualification for appointments in the government services. The educated people thought about the social and political matters independently. Their mind set became reasonable. The social barriers were unacceptable to them. Since the beginning of the 19th century the upper stratum of the Christian community had been becoming prominent in the state on account of education and enlightenment. The high castes gradually realized the need for change and were forced to accept new social and economic condition. Hard competition especially from Christians awakened the Hindu communities from lethargy. The Nairs and the Ezhavas were impressed by the economic progress made by the Christian community. Further they realized that the unity and solidarity of the Christian organization was what supplied its rank and file with additional strength. Consequently, they also took to English education, banking, trade and commerce.

Abolition of Socio-Religious Inequalities

Malayala Manorama highlighted the social inequalities and injustices that existed in Kerala a century ago. The life of lower castes was barbaric and in human. In 1888 Shiva Pratishta by SreeNarayanaguru at Aruvipuram, was created a revolution for the upliftment of the downtrodden class in Kerala. Taking the inspiration from this all the castes from Namboothiri to Pulayar came forward by creating new plat forms for social revival. All these events enabled *Malayala Manorama's* company and its newspaper to secure an immortal place in the history of the Renaissance. It played the biggest role in the social scenario as well as in the revival movements before the beginning of the 20th century. When different communities and many castes and sub-

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caste were seen as different the effort of *Malayala Manorama* brought all the religious people under one umbrella. The first issue was published on March 22, 1890. In the first issue of this Varghese Mappila clearly talks about the education of Pulayas in Travancore state.

Even in the beginning of twentieth century, some roads in Travancore were not opened to all castes or communities. The important roads in the state were situated near palaces, while other was either near temples or the residence of high castes. Members of the Legislative council and Sri Mulam Popular Assembly regularly demanded the statutory abolition of untouchability in the state.[1] Dissatisfied with the deliberately passive policy pursued by the government, the low caste people decided to organize a mass struggle to put an end to it. S.N.D.P Yogam took the initiative. Moving beyond reform to struggle for rights and for a higher ritual and economic status the Yogam and similar bodies raised a caste reform movement to a popular struggle to transform power relations in the entire society.[2] The Yogam secretary, T.K. Madhavan met the congress leaders and sought their co-operation and assistance.

The Temple Entry Agitations

The Congress leaders were upraised of the disabilities of the low caste Hindu communities in Kerala. The Kakkinada Congress session in 1923, in which T.K. Madhavan participated, adopted anti-untouchability as the main constructive programme of the year and decided to form and anti- untouchability committee in every village. Subsequently the Kerala Provincial Congress met at Ernakulam on 24th January 1924. It formed an untouchability abolition committee comprising T.K. Madhavan, Karur Nilakandan Namboothiripad, K. Velayudha Menon, T.R. Krishnaswamylyer and K. Kelappan who was its convener. The Committee decided to undertake a propaganda tour in the state.[3] On 29th February, the untouchability Abolition Committee held a public meeting at Vaikom, and it was selected as the centre for inaugurating the programme. The immediate demand was not the right to temple entry, but the right to use the public road around the vaikkom temple where the low caste people were prohibited. In the meeting it was announced that a procession of Pulayas and Ezhavas would start next morning from the Vaikom boat

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jetty, then proceed to the western temple gate and go around the temple walls, worshipping at the gate. But this was postponed and the leaders realized that satyagraha was the only possible course to be adopted at this juncture.

The continuation and spread of these agitations showed the determination of the people to do away with these types of social disabilities. Even though it was in issue between the unapproachable and the government; the congress made it one between the people and the government. Thus, they were able to do some of the left elements among the Ezhavas like T.K. Madhavan arrived at the conclusion that the avarnas could gain temple entry and wipe out the evil of untouchability and unapproachability only aligning with the national movement.

Formation of the Travancore State Congress

The annual sessions of the Indian National Congress from 1920 onwards vociferously demanded that responsible governments be set up in all the native states. During the period, the Congress party did not spend all its time and energy in confrontations and clashes with the colonial powers. Instead, they were actively involved in creative and progressive social movements. The Congress fought for freedom in areas directly ruled by the British and in the native states ruled by the local kings, it gave importance to establishing responsible governments. The Haripura Congress session held in February 1938, with Subhash Chandra Bose as its President decided that the activities of the party in the native states must be organized under special committees.[4] On the basis of this decision, a meeting was convened in Trivandrum on 23 February and on 25 February 1938, a committee of the Travancore State Congress with Pattam A. Thanupillai as president was officially formed.[5]

Responsible Government becomes a Reality in Travancore

As a result of increasing political pressure, the ruler of Travancore finally signed the pact to join the Indian Union on 13 August 1947 just two days before India attained freedom.[6] A new era began with C. P Ramaswamy Iyer resigning from the post of Dewan on 19 August 1947 and thus ending his reign of terror and malicious policies. The State Congress abandoned all its protest movements at once and P G Narayanan Unnithan took charge as acting Dewan and the government formally invited all State Congress leaders for talks and negotiations. It led to the restoration of *Malayala*

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Manorama and the ban was lifted. Once again *Malayala Manorama* resumed its publication with added determination.

Formation of modern Kerala

The formation of modern Kerala was the outcome of a series of socio-political, cultural, linguistic, ethnic, geographical and administrative factors. It was rather a spontaneous and natural manifestation of people's will to associate themselves in the name of their mother-tongue, Malayalam and common culture. Among the different factors and agencies that worked behind this, the media played the most decisive role in the genesis and growth of the unification process of Kerala. As a part of the linguistic states movement which was gathering momentum all over India, the Malayalees in general nurtured the hope of a future United Kerala in the southern part of the country. They thought that the formation of a United Kerala comprising of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar-was highly essential for the all-round development of the Malayalees. Thus, considering the composite nature of Indian culture and nationalism, the Indian National Congress accepted language as a basic factor in the formation of states.

Conclusion

The Commission reported in favour of a United Kerala State comprising all the Malayalee dominated areas. The main addition to the new state of Kerala, as envisaged by the States Re-organization Commission was the geographically contiguous district of Malabar. But Malabar, which was a part of the Madras state till 31 October 1956, was not so much industrially advanced as her neighbour, Coimbatore district[7] or Travancore-Cochin state. So the addition of Malabar to this state, it was felt by all, would jeopardize the existing standard of development of Travancore-Cochin state[8] But taking into account the cultural and linguistic affinity and geographical contiguity, Malabar was added to Kerala.[9] The Laccadive Islands already formed part of the Malabar district which was ceded to the proposed Kerala State.[10] The Kazargod Taluk of south Kanara also formed a geographically contiguous area in which Malayalam language was largely spoken.

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Endnotes

1. *The Hindu,* February 13, 1954.
2. *Malayala Manorama,*February 24, 1954.
3. File No.D.Dis.7724, 1954, C.S., dated 18-4-1956.
4. FileNo.D.Dis.33340,1956, C.S., dated 11-4-1957, dated 25-5-1954, Directorate of State Archives, Trivandrum.
5. The States Re-organization Act of 1956, Central Act'37 of 1956.
6. *Proceedings of the Travancore-Cochin Legislative Assembly, Second Assembly'1954,* Official
7. Report, Vol.XI, Supplement, Part I, [1]File No. D.Dis.412, 1954, C.S., dated 16-1-1954, Resolution No.53/69/53-Public, Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, New-Delhi-2, December29, 8.1953. *Malabar Herald,*October 30, 1934; July 6, 1940.
8. *Sahodharan*, February – March, 1920
9. *Samadarsi*, July 1918*;* April 23,1921; January 22, 1922.

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