

THE BACKGROUND

To an outsider, Kerala might appear as the land of Kathakali, Onam, Sankaracharya, boat-races, backwaters, ivory works and intelligent people. On closer acquaintance you gain some awareness about Nayers and Nambudiris, Mappila Muslims and Syrian Christians, the intricacies of the matrilineal joint family, the Guruvayur Sri Krishna Temple, Communism through the ballot box, Sabarimala and Sri Narayana. Everywhere in India, and in many parts of the world, Keralites are known to be smart, hard-working, highly volatile and sociable, and full of adventure. All these qualities come out best when they leave the comfort and security of their own home village and State. You will find them earning their livelihood in all walks of life, but mostly where technical skills and intellectual ability are in demand. They learn languages quickly and mix with different groups of people easily. Irrespective of caste and creed, they come together on various occasions of the year to celebrate Onam, Id or Christmas and then go back to their problems for the rest of the days. Normally they have not one but several Malayalee associations in the same city, all competing heartily for outdoing the other in nurturing their love for Kerala and its culture.

It is often remarked in a lighter vein that Menons, Pillais and Nayers have dominance in the Central services; that the Mappilas of Malabar have invaded and captured the retail markets in big cities like Bombay, Calcutta, Madras and Bangalore and also populated

the deserts of West Asia; that Christians from Travancore have made themselves partners in the affluence of Germany and the United States of America. Besides these, in recent years Ezhavas and Harijans from Kerala have been coming up in professions and literature indicating a social revolution triggered by the Indian renaissance.

As you enter Kerala through the Palghat gap, a 32-kilometre break in the long chain of the Western Ghats which stands as the great cloud-capped sentinel of the West Coast, your eyes feast on the cool-green fields and flowering forests on either side. To the Keralite (or Malayalee) this is reminiscent of the traditional Talappoli welcome, by two rows of girls in shining garments, flowing dark hair and smiling faces lit up with the flame or lamps carried in golden trays. A clearly distinctive feature of human geography is the continuous chain of habitation obliterating the boundaries between village and village. The railway or the road will be seen to cut across innumerable rivers and rivulets with recently constructed bridges. These waters running east-west from the Ghats to the sea, hold in their hearts, deep below the turbulent, laughing surface, the secrets of the land's agricultural wealth, the cleanliness and sprightliness of the people and the problems of political and social organisation.

The traveller will observe that the people of Kerala are neither too tall, nor too short; neither too dark nor too fair—they represent a mixture of many races, except perhaps among the forest tribes. The remote ancestors of Keralites might have arrived at different times from different directions—riding the waves or climbing the ghats—to populate the river valleys full of virgin forests. Gradually, when the forests in the plains receded eastward giving place to paddy

fields, the technically advanced groups of Aryan settlers and their native associates established ascendancy in Kerala. They organised a feudal agrarian society with caste hierarchy and serfdom either putting down the vanquished natives or driving them into the high ranges. However, they welcomed small bands of sea traders—Jews, Greeks, Romans, Syrian Christians, Arab Muslims and modern Europeans—in succession who came in search of pepper and spices and other forms of forest produce. Thus traditional Kerala society preserved its feudal framework for many centuries in spite of superficial political changes because the pattern of agricultural production and maritime trade remained the same. On the one hand the foreign merchants, the retailers of prosperity, were hospitably received, treated on a par with the feudal chieftains and extended religious tolerance. On the other, the earlier tribal settlers were economically exploited and subdued and socially ostracised with elaborate rules of conduct. Thus the history of Kerala is the story of the growth of this complex and sheltered society which is basically Indian but very much open to West Asian influence. We have a unique regional version of Indian society embroidered with patches of multi-coloured semitic society and culture.

It is difficult today to distinguish among the Keralites between a Muslim, Christian or Hindu or among the Hindus themselves, between a Nayar, Nambudiri or Ezhava. Even half a century ago, such differences in faith and status were amply reflected in dress and manners. Native Muslims were close-cropped, bearded and clad in multi-coloured lungis, their women-folk using a *tattam* to cover the face. The Syrian Christians, who claim to be descendants of the disciples of St. Thomas, dressed and moved about almost like Nayers and Chekons, with the crucifix on their chest as the only differentiating mark. Their women wore

dhotis in a special way with fanshaped tresses. Among Hindus, the Namboodiris (Kerala Brahmins) formed the crest of society laying down the rules of behaviour for Kshatriya and Samanta chieftains. Their social life was centered around temples, they formed a leisurly class of landed gentry devoted to scholarship and the arts.

Aristocratic Nayers belonging to big matrilineal joint families—each Taravad house with more than a hundred members—moved about with all pomp and luxury. Poets and artists found patronage in the numerous courts of the chieftains, often fomenting quarrels with one another. The Ezhavas, supposed to be descendants of immigrants from Izham, Ceylon, were out-castes in the caste system; but they too counted among themselves a few landed aristocrats and learned scholars, physicians and fighters though the large majority were toddy tappers by way of profession. The Cherumas and Pulayas were the real outcastes. They were not expected to wear a white dhoti or walk on the public roads. There was an appearance of calm and contentment which proved to be completely deceptive. Everything has now been shattered by the whirlwind of a social revolution, still blowing strong with tremendous force.

The caste system has been undermined by the influence of modern education and political action and above all by the impact of the cheap modern theatre. The old ruling houses have disintegrated and a new rich class of industrialists and whitecollar officials have suddenly appeared on the scene. People have gone out of Kerala in large numbers and come back to their home towns or villages with a lot of money and values other than the traditional ones.

A good part of the land of Kerala is dominated by the slopes of the Western Ghats where the soil is rich and the forests are thick and where the thunderous rain clouds break their fury bringing out their blessings in a variety of hill products. The outside world knows little about the rubber and tea estates nestling in the high ranges. The tribal hunters and food gatherers who fill these forests are scared of the light of civilization. They are not known to their more advanced brothers in the plains, but anthropologists and sociologists from the West and their Indian disciples have studied at least some of their groups like the Todar, Kadar, Kurumbar, etc. This twilight world of the Western Ghats contains elements of the most sophisticated modern life in the bungalows of the estates, enveloped by the most natural and the most primitive groups of the human race.

Out in the plains, the swollen rivers have fertilized the fields. The river banks are dotted with prosperous villages. There may be one or two ancient temples or churches or modern mosques, a high school and a market place. Most of the villages of Kerala were subsisting until recently on traditional agriculture with paddy fields and ploughs, bullock-carts and serfs. They are now being connected with a network of modern roads and rendered noisy with factories. The great houses of the Nayers and the Nambudiris have lost their influence, and now their lands too, thanks to progressive land reform legislation. Here and there one may see the dilapidated old Taravad houses. Most of the younger generations of these Taravads have already escaped into the cities and equipped themselves for white collar jobs with modern education. Free education for backward communities has brought about a social revolution in the villages. Traditional arts and skills have declined, with the sons of artisans and folk dancers opting for English

education and jobs in cities. Cinema houses have sprung up in the rural areas too. Money orders from Singapore and Penang, Dubai and Bahrain have relieved the poverty of the poorest sections in many places. Food crops gradually give place to cash crops.

Most of the towns are found in the midst of these villages. In fact, they are overgrown villages which rose into prominence in the headquarters of old chieftains. As the towns retain many of the rural traits and the villages are getting highly urbanised, the distance between the two has been reduced. Perhaps a distinctive feature of Kerala society today both in towns and villages is the coming together of the classes. There are no Zamindars and millionaires and no slum-dwellers either. The social boundaries have almost disappeared with the swelling numbers of the middle classes. Most people can read and write and every tea-shop is full of discussion about the daily news. Rickshaw-pullers are avid filmfans and critics of literature. Even farm-labourers follow the intricacies and intrigues of power politics. These changes are basically the products of the literacy-revolution brought about by the school and library movements which swept across Kerala in the early decades of the present century. They brought in their wake reform movements which permeated the cells of every community, fostered the spirit of democracy and socialism and generated a renaissance in literature.

The prominence and opulence of the middle classes—half educated and highly conscious of their own rights—distinguish Kerala from several other parts of India. In a society where feudal ties have broken up, everyone is a hero upto himself (and a villain to the rest) and outside the film world, hero worship is extremely rare.

The coastal regions are mostly inhabited by fishermen folk. The waves of the Arabian sea which kiss the sands of beach over a long line of about 590 kilometres, have brought much wealth and wisdom to Kerala in the past. They carried at least some of the pre-historic settlers belonging to the proto-Australoid or the Negrito race. They brought Jews and Christians from Syria who established their pockets in harbour towns in the early centuries of the Christian era. There were also the Roman merchants of Greek origin who came in search of pepper. The Arabs also came in large numbers. Judaism, Christianity and Islam are as much part of the Kerala heritage as Jainism, Buddhism and Hinduism. The openness of the sea and the presence of trade winds blowing directly from the Arabian coast to Kerala and back every year suddenly became a source of danger to Kerala's independence with the advent of Vasco da Gama. As a result, the Malabar coast became the training ground of the dominant powers of Europe like the Portuguese, the French, the Dutch and the English before they converted the whole of the continent of Asia into a theatre of war. Exposure to the sea and its influences gave Keralites their acquaintance with several varieties of culture in the ancient world as well as the modern. Perhaps this factor is responsible for a certain trait of adaptability and cosmopolitanism in the personality of Kerala.

The different traits discussed above have been moulded in the course of centuries of conflict and co-operation by means of action and reaction between man and nature. The story of the past is a sealed book out of which scraps of paper have accidentally been exposed. These have to be studied carefully and pieced together for what clues we may get regarding the course of events, the type of personalities and influences which ordered the life-style of this regional society in South India.

PORTUGUESE IMPERIALISM

The arrival of Vasco da Gama at Calicut on 21st May, 1498, marked the beginning of a new epoch in the commercial history of Kerala. It also opened a new chapter in the relations between the different States in Kerala. The relations between the Muslim traders, who had monopolised the foreign trade of the country, and the rulers had been most cordial. Shaykh Zaynuddin, who wrote towards the close of the 15th century, observed: "The Muslims throughout Malabar have no *amir* possessed of power to rule over them. The rulers have respect and regard for the Muslims, because the increase in the number of cities was due to them". (*Tuhfatul-Mujahidin*, p. 51). The Muslims, on their part, refrained interfering in the internal squabbles of these kingdoms so that they did not earn the odium of either section in the quarrel.

The aim of the Portuguese in coming to the east was to secure the spices of the east to the exclusion of all other merchants. The instructions to Cabral, the Captain-General of the second expedition, made this crystal clear. "Besides settling the factories. if the Zamorin would not quickly consent or give sufficient lading to the ships he should make cruel war upon him for his injurious conduct to Vasco da Gama. If the Zamorin consented to the establishment of a factory and trade, the General was secretly to request him not to allow any of the Moors of Mecca to remain or trade in Calicut or any

other harbour in his dominions". (Castenheda, *Discovery and Conquest of India*—Kerr, *Collection of Voyages and Travels*, II, 396).

The attempt made by the Portuguese to monopolise the trade of the country and the claim of sovereignty over the high seas were against the accepted mores of conduct of the Middle Ages. The Portuguese claim of sovereignty over the seas was thus stated by Barros, the official historian of the Portuguese: "Although by common right the seas are common and open to all navigators, yet this law has force only in Europe, among the Christian flock. But with respect to these Moors and Gentiles, who are outside the law of Jesus Christ. (they) cannot be privileged with the benefits of our laws". (Correa, *Three Voyages of Vasco da Gama*, Introduction, p. xxx).

It is no wonder that the overweening ambition of the Portuguese persuaded them to put such questionable principles to practice. To Da Gama's demand to expell all Muslim traders from his kingdom, the Zamorin gave as answer that he could not justly drive out more than four thousand families of them, who were his subjects. Calicut, for centuries, had been a free port. The Portuguese were welcome to trade there as any one else. The Portuguese Captains, who were not satisfied with this policy of the Zamorin, let loose a reign of terror on the coast.

To profit from the peculiar political set-up of innumerable petty principalities that dotted the Kerala coast, the Portuguese attempted to set the weak against the strong and the subordinate chieftains against their sovereigns. It was in pursuance of this policy that the Portuguese supported the Cochin Raja against the Zamorin who claimed sovereign

rights over Cochin. It is related that every new incumbent to the 'sathanam' of the Zamorin used to inaugurate his reign by marching into Cochin and receiving the allegiance of the Cochin Raja afresh. Therefore when the Portuguese landed at Cochin after their quarrel with the Zamorin, the Raja of Cochin welcomed them with open arms. The Raja hoped to throw off the yoke of the Zamorin with Portuguese help. Consequently, the Raja served the Portuguese with a slavish attitude, swallowing all insults and the overbearing conduct of the Portuguese officers. The Portuguese even succeeded in setting such a minor chieftain as the Raja of Tanur against the Zamorin. The Raja expressed his desire to become a Christian and in 1549 he was sent to Goa, where he was admitted to Catholic faith. On his return, he ordered his subjects to turn Christians within twenty days, under pain of expulsion from the kingdom. "It was well perhaps, they did not obey, for his own conversion was not lasting".

The Portuguese claim of monopoly of trade and their savage cruelty compelled the Zamorin to fight them. The failure of his arms and the economic dislocation caused by Portuguese activities, persuaded the Zamorin to fight them with all the resources at his disposal. His early naval conflicts with Portuguese fleets proved beyond doubt the inferiority of the Malabar fleets in weaponry and tactics; the Zamorin thereupon reorganised his fleet under the able leadership of the Kunhali Marakkars. A large number of small but faster *paraos* (Padav, large boat) were built, which could manoeuvre easily in engagements and move out, in case of reverses, to shallow waters, where pursuit by the bigger Portuguese ships would be impossible. This newly organised fleet under the Marakkars soon became a real threat to Portuguese shipping and trade. To meet their menace, the

Portuguese had to keep regular fleets to convoy their ships. But as the English and Dutch travellers accounts would show even this convoy system did not benefit the Portuguese. Ralph Fitch noted in 1589: "They (the Malabars) range all the coast from Ceylon to Goa, and go by four or five paros or boats together; and have in them fifty or three score men and board presently. They do much harm on that coast and take every year many foists and boats of the Portugals". (Foster, W. *Early Travels in India*, p. 65).

Another move made by the Zamorin to destroy the power of the Portuguese was to attack Cochin, their base of operations, and bring it under control. While the Calicut armies engaged the Cochin armies supported by Portuguese soldiers, Malabar seamen invaded Portuguese possessions on the east coast and in Ceylon, in collaboration with the local rulers. Though these attempts failed to derive the Portuguese out of Cochin, they put the defensive arrangements of the Portuguese out of gear and dislocated their shipping and trade to such a degree that they could not provide enough lading for their annual fleet home.

The Zamorin even attempted to rope in the states bordering the Arabian sea affected by Portuguese activities, in a coalition to fight them. The first attempt in this direction was made by a coalition of Egypt, Gujarat and Calicut. Though the combined fleet won an initial success at Chaul, the coalition disintegrated owing to the defection of the Gujarat fleet. Another attempt to form a confederacy of Turkey, Calicut and Gujarat failed mainly on account of the overbearing conduct of the Turkish commander. A third coalition consisting of the Sultans of Bijapur and Ahmadnager and the Zamorin

succeeded only partly, as the Sultans later raised the siege they had laid against Goa and Chaul. But the Zamorin continued the siege against Caliyam and compelled the Portuguese to evacuate it.

As the activities of the Malabar seamen under the Kunhalis threatened their trade and shipping the Portuguese were forced to seek the aid of their erstwhile enemy, the Zamorin, against them. The Zamorin who had recently been antagonised, joined the Portuguese and after two sieges reduced Kottakkal, their headquarters. The fall of Kottakkal and the death of Kunhali, however, did not avail the Portuguese any respite from fighting, which they hoped for. Malabar seamen began to harass Portuguese shipping and trade with a vengeance. The coming of the Dutch and the English, who were on inimical terms with the Portuguese, provided greater facilities for their work.

DUTCH ATTEMPT TO DOMINATE KERALA

The Dutch, who had come to the East in a spirit of competition with the Portuguese tried from the outset to drive out the Portuguese from the eastern seas and take over their position. Therefore, when the Mutha Thavazhi Prince of Cochin sought their help against the Ilaya Thavazhi Prince and their supporters, the Portuguese, the Dutch immediately agreed to help him. By February, 1663, they had finally overthrown the Portuguese power on the Malabar coast. But the condition of the Cochin King did not improve. It was only a fall from the frying pan into the fire. By the treaty of March, 1663 the King of Cochin recognised and accepted "the Company as his Guardians and Benefactors in consideration of the fact that the Hon'ble Company reinstated him on the musnud after he had been dispossessed of his territory". (*Cochin Treaties, No. C*)

The treaty which the Dutch subsequently concluded with the Rajas of the Malabar coast clearly showed their monopolistic tendencies. The English Factories at Purakkad reported to Surat: "The Dutch by their contract with this King will not suffer any buyers or sellers in any part of his country but themselves." (Foster, W. *English Factories in India 1661-64*, p. 261). Cochin Raja's dependence on the Dutch went to such lengths that the Dutch acquired an effective voice not only in the administration but even in Cochin succession. This interference naturally

brought about opposition* to the Dutch from the Cochin princes and nobles. The opposition reached such grave proportions that the Dutch were forced to seek the aid of the Zamorin.

The continued conflict between the Zamorin and the Cochin Raja soon involved the Dutch also in the fight. In October, 1709, Dutch forces succeeded in capturing Chettuvay, belonging to the Zamorin. The construction of a fort at Chettuvay was resisted by the Zamorin, who captured it in January, 1715. The effect of the loss of Chettuvay was tremendous. Visscher wrote: "The natives thought that we were ruined". (*Letters from Malabar, p. 27*). Two attempts to recover Chettuvay ended in failure upon which a considerable force was sent from Batavia in January 1717. War continued throughout the year and the Dutch occupied the whole of Chettuvay Manappuram. But the peace that was concluded in February, 1718, did not bring any material benefit to the Dutch, except the cession of Chettuvay.

By the second quarter of the eighteenth century the power of the Dutch had diminished so much that local powers began to challenge their supremacy. Their attempt to curb the fast growing power of Travancore by supporting the Quilon and Kayamkulam princes was foiled in the battle of Kulachal (August 1741). More than a signal defeat, it portended the weakening of the Dutch hold on the Kerala coast. With the mounting pressure exerted by the Zamorin and other local rulers, the power of the Dutch declined rapidly and they were compelled to accede to such humiliating terms as were contained in the Treaty of Mavelikkara (1753) with Travancore.

Taking advantage of the Dutch debacle, the Zamorin captured Chettuvay and overran considerable

portions of Cochin territory. The Raja of Cochin, who found that no Dutch help would be forthcoming to drive out the Zamorin, concluded an alliance with Travancore. Similarly during the invasion of Malabar by Haidar Ali, finding the utter helplessness of the Dutch, the Raja of Cochin accepted the supremacy of Mysore by agreeing to pay tribute. During the Mysorean hegemony, the Dutch had lost all control over Cochin affairs. With the withdrawal of the Mysoreans, the Dutch power declined rapidly and made for English supremacy on the Malabar coast.

ESTABLISHMENT OF BRITISH RULE

From the beginning of their arrival on the Malabar coast, the English had to face stiff opposition first from the Portuguese and then from the Dutch, who supplanted them on the Malabar coast. By the second quarter of the seventeenth century, the Dutch opposition to the Portuguese became so strong that the Portuguese tried to conciliate the English by providing them port facilities in the ports under their control. It was in consequence of this arrangement that the English were able to export pepper to England direct from the Malabar ports. It was in July, 1682, that the English obtained from the *Vadakkilamkur* Prince of Kolattunad permission to settle at Tellicherry. In 1694 they also settled at Anjengo in Travancore. It was from these settlements that the English were able to extend their influence over Kerala.

From the beginning of their trading activities in India, the English had strictly kept themselves aloof from interfering in local quarrels. This was mainly in deference to the advice tendered by Sir Thomas Roe, the English Ambassador to the court of the Mughal Emperor, Jahangir. "A warr and trafique", he wrote, 'are incompatible. . . . It is the begging of the Portugall. It hath beene also the error of the Dutch, who seek plantation heere by the sword." (Foster W. (E.d); *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe to India*. Pp. 304-4). But very soon the Company had to make radical changes in their views, as they realised that only if "the Kings will get the full power in their hands that then the Company will enjoy a free and full

trade, provided they duly pay their customs and Annual presents". (*Letters to Tellicherry*, Vol. I. p. 24). Therefore, the Company decided "in spite of money expenses, to put down the enemies and subject the country to the King" (Logan, W. *Treaties c.*, Pt. I. No. XII). This momentous declaration, though made in connection with the troubled affairs in Travancore, had equal relevance to a Malabar kingdom where local chieftains were defying authority.

Another fact of British imperialism that began to show itself clearly by this time, was the assistance provided by the Company to local powers to fight their common enemies, without getting themselves involved in direct fighting. Thus the company assisted both Martanda Varma, King of Travancore, and the Zamorin, in their quarrel with the Dutch and other local powers. It was mainly with the assistance provided by the English, that both were enabled to continue the fight with the Dutch for a long time. Though the Zamorin was finally worsted and had to retire from the contest, Martanda Varma not only defeated the Dutch but also exposed their military weakness. The Dutch Factories at Cochin reported to Batavia in October, 1741, that the King of Travancore and the Company's rivals had assiduously spread throughout Malabar the news of the Company's troubles in Java so much so that the native chiefs thought the time had come "to shake off the Company's heavy yoke and drive (them) from the coast" (Dutch MSS., Vol. 335, F. 148).

Soon after, a golden opportunity was provided by the Mysorean invasion of Malabar to set the grip of the Company on the local rajās and chieftains. Both Haidar and Tipu had realised the nature of British imperialism and had been trying to thwart their attempts to control South Indian politics. The

English had by this time succeeded in establishing their hold over the Carnatic by supporting Muhammad Ali against Chanda Sahib. The attempt of Haidar and Tipu, by conquering Canara and Malabar and trying to subjugate Cochin and Travancore, was to cover both flanks of the Carnatic and thus squeeze the English eventually out of South India. The English, who had realised this serious threat to their security, took early steps to canvass support from local rulers, and make alliances with a view to containing the expansion of Mysore and if possible overthrow the power of Haidar and Tipu. As early as February, 1768, the Tellicherry Factories had advised their commandant stationed at Onore: ". . . From Mostyn's advices the Morattas Affairs are so circumstanced as will not permit them to interfere. This, added to our Forces upon the other Coast having gained some considerable advantages over the Enemy, seems to render the present juncture as favourable as could be wished for effectively distressing Hyder Ally's affairs upon this coast, with which view we have determined on detaching you, with as considerable a military and marine force as can possibly be spared to attack his fleet and possessions and by every means in your power to harass and distress his affairs". (Tellicherry Factory Records—Malabar Expedition Against Hyder Ali, Vol. 2600, F.2).

The Treaty of Mangalore (1784) terminating the Second Anglo-Mysore War, was not at all pleasing to the Company's authorities, especially the Tellicherry Factories. They had addressed the English Commissioners during the negotiations for peace to secure the independence of the Malabar Rajas and Chieftains "in as much as the welfare of the Company's settlement and their Chinese investments, depended upon the degree of independence which might be secured for these chieftains". Further, as early as August 1782, while the war was in progress, the Resident at Tellicherry

had proposed to take the Rajas of Kottayam and Kattattanad and the Iruvalinad Nambiyars under the protection of the Company on payment of annual tribute, but the proposal was turned down by the Bombay Government. All these attempts clearly showed that the aim of the Company was to gain political control over the rich pepper-producing district in Malabar.

In order to "harass and distress his affairs", the English Factories at Tellicherry assisted the rebellious chieftains and rulers of Malabar with cash and military stores. Tipu complained that the Factories gave shelter to the rebels in their territory and "by your advice they go out at night and rob in the Circar's district."

The circumstances which prompted Tipu to break with Travancore was not only her alliance with the English, but also the refuge she granted to the rebels of Malabar in her territory. During the Second Anglo-Mysore War, Travancore not only gave free passage to English troops through her country, but also provided a contingent of Travancore troops to assist in the military operations. Regarding this affair Van Angelbeck, the Dutch Commander at Cochin, wrote to the Raja of Cochin: It is understood that the Senior Raja of Travancore is inclined to send his own men, along with the English soldiers who arrived from Tinnevely, to the north and to reinstate the chiefs of the Zamorin's country. We believe that he will not do so. If the chiefs to the Zamorin's country are assisted, it is certain that he and his subjects will suffer greatly through the hostility of Nawab Haidar Ali to the Trippappur Svarupam. Even for his alliance with the English, the Nawab is greatly incensed at the Raja". (Cochin Archives, Miscellaneous Correspondence, List XII, No. 17).

In addition to the help rendered to the English in the war, Travancore acted as a haven of refuge to the rebel Rajas and Chiefs of Malabar, who when they found their position too hot in Malabar escaped to Travancore. When the Mysore army concentrations were withdrawn, these Rajas and Chiefs returned to their ancient dominions and created fresh trouble. From the time of Haider it was a standing complaint that the King of Travancore was harbouring rebels against the Mysore Government. Tipu often made the same complaint, and on his complaint the Government of Madras warned the Raja as late as April, 1788, "not to give assistance or encouragement to any of the poligars or others on the Malabar coast with whom Tipu may have many disputes". (Mily Coun. Corr. Vol. 37, No. 36). In spite of his warning, Travancore used to give shelter to the rebel chiefs of Malabar. It is no wonder therefore that Tipu concluded that the King of Travancore was "the cause of giving much trouble to the Circar".

Another complaint of Tipu was that the Raja of Travancore had purchased the two Dutch forts of Kodungallur and Ayakkota, which really belonged to the Cochin Raja, who was a tributary of Mysore. Tipu's demand to return the forts to the Dutch was not acceded to by the King of Travancore, in spite of the refusal of the Madras Governor to approve the purchase.

Failing to accommodate the differences with the Raja of Travancore peacefully, Tipu marched his troops to the neighbourhood of the Travancore Lines. It was hoped that Mysore troop concentration on his frontiers might induce the Raja to accommodate his differences with the Sultan. But instead it caused skirmishes on the frontier, which inevitably led to a fullscale war (April, 1790). By the time the news of the

invasion of Travancore reached the Governor-General, he had succeeded in organising a coalition of the Marathas and the Nizam against Tipu. He therefore immediately declared war on Tipu. The declaration was well-timed. As Lord Cornwallis, the Governor General wrote to Gen. Meadows, the new Governor of Madras "At present we have every prospect of aid from the country powers, while he (Tipu) can expect no assistance from France." Further to the organisation of the coalition, the Governor-General had advised the Bombay Government to encourage the Malabar Chieftains to rebel against Tipu and promise them support in the undertaking. "In order to secure a willing obedience from the Malabar Chiefs", Lord Cornwallis wrote, "we should be contented with their paying a moderate tribute, provided that they would give the Company advantageous privileges for carrying on a commerce in the valuable possession of their country". (NA., Pol., Proc., Cons.,4)

But even before these instructions were received, the Chief of Tellicherry, *suo motu*, had granted *Cowls* (agreements) to the Malabar Rajas and Chiefs, guaranteeing to "assist and protect", them, if they "enter heartily into the war against Tipu Sultan and act vigorously against him". The English forces, with the support of native troops supplied by the Rajas and Chiefs had, in the meantime attacked Mysorean strongholds and captured them. By the Treaty of Seringapatam (18th March, 1792), which concluded the Third Anglo-Mysore War, all the possessions of Tipu in Malabar passed under the rule of the Company.

BRITISH SUPREMACY OVER—KERALA

On the cession of Malabar to the British, the Governments of Bengal and Bombay appointed a Joint Commission, "to inspect into the state and condition of the Province of Malabar" and to devise a system for its future government. But the Commission was specially asked to lose no time in coming to an agreement with all the chiefs for some specific revenue to be paid for the coming year. In pursuance of these instructions the Joint Commissioners made a detailed enquiry into the form and nature of the government that existed in the different territories of Malabar previous to their cession to the Company. At the same time the Commissioners also entered into agreements with the local chieftains for the collection of revenue and administration of justice within their territories. But soon these arrangements broke down due to several reasons. Firstly, the Rajas and chiefs, who were restored to their ancient dominions could not be prevented from fleecing the peasants and oppressing the Mappilas on the ground that they had supported the Mysorean conquerors. This policy naturally created serious disturbances in the country, which in many cases necessitated the requisition of English troops to quell them. These continuous disturbances coupled with the failure of the Rajas and chiefs to remit the revenue collections in time, persuaded the Company's government to take over the administration of the different territories into their own hands, after paying *Malikhana* to them. Thus by 1802, the whole of the Malabar Province came under the direct control of the Company.

But this change-over did not take place without vehement opposition from the Chieftains and the people in general. Of the several rebellions that broke out during this period, the Pazhassi Rebellion was the most serious and it so strained the resources of the Government that they had to seek the assistance of the 'Iron Duke', Athur Wellesley, for devising measures to quell the rebellion.

The Pazhassi Rebellion was so called as the prime mover in the rebellion was Kerala Varma, popularly known as Pazhassi Raja. He belonged to the Padinjare Kovilakam branch of Kottayam royal family, which had its headquarters at Pazhassi. He was one of the very few Princes of Malabar who had refused to flee during the Mysorean occupation of Malabar. From his mountain fastness in the Kottayam country, he continued to oppose the Mysorean administration. He also provided assistance to the Tellicherry Factory with men and materials when the Factory was attacked. But when permanent arrangements were made in 1793 by the Joint Commissioner for the collection of revenue, the settlement of the Kottayam country was made with Vira Varma, the Raja of Kurumbranad. Kerala Varma felt that his prior services to the Company were forgotten and he was left in the lurch by the Company's officers. Thereupon he turned a rebel and created such a havoc in the country that the Company authorities were hard put to meet the situation. The hilly nature of the country and the strong support which he received from the Kurichiyar and other hill-tribes, prevented any effective action from being taken to curb the rebellion. The rebellion was so successful that Jonathan Duncan, Governor of Bombay, was compelled to admit "the great evil in this unhappy contest arises principally out of the Pyche Raja's extraordinary success which renders it dangerous to the Company's

interest and disgraceful to our national character to yield too far in concession to this chiefly insurgent, till at least we shall have vindicated the credit of our arms by showing him that he cannot expect to continue successfully to contend against us (Government Committee Diaries, Vol. 2136, p. 599).

But English arms failing to inflict such a defeat on the Pazhassi Raja, the Company's authorities agreed to restore the treasure captured from the Pazhassi palace by the English forces, and to bestow a pension of 8000 rupees on him, "I have proceeded in this painful and melancholy duty" Duncan observed "in the idea that the troops have unfortunately occasioned considerable loss and serious provocation to the Pyche Raja by the plunder of his mansion. . . . Every means has therefore been taken to redress his grievances by the full and complete return of his property". (Ibid., Vol. 2142, pp.2711-12). Peace was thus restored for the time being, with the Pazhassi Raja on his part keeping the peace in the country-side.

But soon after, trouble out again on the cession of Wayanad to Malabar after the conclusion of the Fourth Anglo-Mysore War (1799). The English took direct control of the administration of the Kottayam and Wayanad districts. The Pazhassi Raja also laid claim to the district of Wayanad on the ground that it has been granted to him by Tipu and he persisted in keeping possession of it. But the Supreme Government issued orders to punish the Raja for his intransigence. Arthur Wellesley was deputed to Malabar as Commander of the English forces. Col. Wellesley had realised the seriousness of the rising in Malabar even before his arrival in the country, for he wrote from Seringapatam to Lieut. Col. Bowels, the Officer-Commanding in Malabar in February 1800: "From the experience which the officers of the Bombay establishment have of the species of warfare of this man (the

Pazhassi Raja) and of the Nairs in general, you will doubtless be of opinion that as large a detachment should be formed in Malabar as can be spared". (*Supplementary Despatches & Memoranda of Field Marshal Arthur, Duke of Wellington, Vo. I, p.447*).

Even the minute plan of operations devised by Arthur Wellesley did not bring an early end to the rebellion. But the plan put into operation by him gradually began to yield results. By clearing the jungles, by forbidding merchants to sell articles to strangers, and by preventing supplies from reaching the rebels, the Company's authorities were able to break the back of the rebellion. By the end of 1801, Col. Stevenson reported that the rebellion was "at a very low ebb". With the assistance of corps of Kolkar (police) recruited and trained, Baber, the Sub-Collector of North Malabar, was able to give the chase to the Pazhassi Raja and his followers from place to place. Towards the close of December 1805 Baber's Kolkar came upon a party of rebels on the banks of the 'Mawilla Todda' in Wayanad. Immediately they were attacked and several of the rebels fell, the rest having fled. It was only learnt later that the Pazhassi Raja was amongst the first who had fallen.

Baber was so touched by the gallantry of the Raja that he arranged customary honours to be performed at his funeral. In communicating the death of the Raja he wrote: "Thus terminated the career of a man who has been enabled to persevere in hostilities against the Company for near nine years during which many thousand valuable lives had been sacrificed and sums of money, beyond all calculation, expended. But it will not be necessary for me to enlarge to you, who are so well acquainted with this Chieftain's history, on the leading features of so extraordinary and singular a character. The records of India and England will

convey to posterity a just idea of him". (Malabar Collectorate Records, Inward Register, Public Dept. Vol. 2172, Ff. 25-26).

Thus came to an end the Pazhassi Rebellion, one of the most serious outbreaks against the British in South India, which caused incalculable misery and suffering to the people and cost an enormous amount to the Company's treasury.

During the Mysorean invasions, apart from the State of war created by them, important political developments had taken place in Cochin and Travancore. While Dutch influence in the politics of these two States declined at this time, British influence increased correspondingly. These two States began to depend increasingly on British help as a support against the Mysorean threat. As soon as Tipu withdrew from Travancore and Cochin to meet the allied invasion of his own country, the Cochin Raja openly threw off his allegiance to Mysore and joined the English side (September, 1790). By this treaty, in return for a graduated tribute, the Company agreed to assist him to recover possession of the territories wrested by Tipu Sultan.

During the examination of the Cochin Raja's claim of sovereignty over certain territories, the Commission constituted for this purpose found that his claim over certain territories could not be substantiated. Hence such claims were dismissed by the Commissioners. The whole process of enquiry was delayed by the procrastinating tactics adopted by the Raja of Cochin.

As regards Travancore, the Company's officers claimed that the Third Anglo-Mysore War was undertaken in defence of Travancore and therefore the Raja should meet the entire expenditure of the war. He

was asked to pay either four-fifths of the revenue of the State or if it was agreeable, one half of the revenues, provided he met the expenses of the British contingent. The Raja raised loans and collected unusual taxes, and paid 14 lakhs of rupees. He now appeared to the Governor-General and impressed upon him the iniquity of demanding from Travancore the entire expense of the war. Upon a full consideration of the question, Sir John Shore, the Governor-General, agreed to withdraw the additional demand for money from Travancore, but at the same time insisted on the conclusion of a new treaty. The new treaty, concluded on 17th November 1795, practically reduced Travancore from the position of friend and ally of the English East India Company to that of a protected ally. The Raja was also forced to entertain a subsidiary force far beyond his capacity to subsidise. To make matters worse, the Company now claimed a monopoly in the pepper trade of the country. Pepper was the main export item of Travancore, on which her economic prosperity rested. The situation in Travancore, after the declaration of the pepper monopoly was thus described in a letter which the Portuguese Governor-General at Goa wrote home: "The English make a monopoly (of pepper) from Mount Deli to Cape Comorin, wishing to claim for themselves in the first place all the produce from which the King (of Travancore), derives any profit. The said English fearing that they will not get from the said King as large a quantity as they desire, have provided themselves with certain light war vessels which go round the ports of this kingdom every day in order to terrorise over the said King so that they alone and no other nation can obtain pepper" (Quoted by Holden Furber, *John Company at Work*, pp. 27-48).

The natural outcome of all these developments was to drag Travancore into the vortex of a financial

crisis. The King was forced to raise loans from bankers and merchants. He even took a loan of six lakhs of rupees from the Bombay Government. He imposed monopolies and transit duties, which adversely affected the commercial prosperity of the kingdom. To make matters worse there was a fall in the production of pepper. The unscrupulous merchants exploited the monopolies to their advantage, which inexorably led to financial bankruptcy of the state. Subsidy and loan repayments fell into arrears. The financial embarrassment that Rama Varma (1758-98) faced during his last days was thus described by Sir T. Madhava Rao: "Even extraordinary taxation failed to yield adequate means to answer the incessant call for funds. The Maharaja felt that he could not, without exciting dangerous discontent among his subjects, increase their burdens, and saw no alternative but that of raising loans. Funds were indeed thus obtained to meet the pressing exigencies of the State, but the obligations incurred inevitably led to difficulties of the gravest character, difficulties which embittered the closing years of the Maharaja and culminated in a perilous crisis in the reign of his successor". (*Tiruvitamkur Caritram Malayalam* p. 284).

The Company's authorities did not show the least consideration for the distress of the Travancore King, which was mainly of their own making. They insistently demanded the clearing of the arrears of tribute and the delivery of the stipulated quantity of pepper. The new Maharaja was in a quandary. He could neither increase the already high rate of taxes without seriously endangering his own position, nor displease the Company's authorities by failing to pay up the arrears. Velu Thampi, the newly appointed Dalava, tried his utmost to reduce expenditure and increase the revenues of the State. By a judicious use of support to the Resident, Col. Macaulay, and firmness

in his dealings with corrupt and inefficient officers, Velu Thampi was able not only to tone up the administration of the State but also secure approbation of the Company's Government. The attempt of the Dalava to abolish the field allowances paid to the State troops in times of peace, led to a revolt of the Travancore troops. Though the insurrection was brought to an end by the exertions of the native troops alone, the Company's authorities were visibly shaken. Though by this time a major portion of South India had come under the control of the Company they were not yet sure of their ground. Therefore when the news of the insurrection reached Fort William, Lord Wellesley immediately asked the Madras Government to insist on a modification of the treaty of 1795, so that British forces could be used to aid the Raja in quelling internal commotions as well. At the same time the Madras Government decided to increase the subsidy. The Dalava tried his best to get the amount of the subsidy reduced and the King was bitterly hostile to the very question of revision of the treaty.

Finally the treaty of Perpetual Friendship and Alliance was signed on 12th January, 1805. Two of the most important clauses of the agreement were: (1) If the subsidy fell into arrears, the Governor-General-in-Council was permitted to take over the administration of such part or parts of the Raja's territories as would "discharge the subsidy amount", and (2) the Raja agreed to abide by the advice of the Company's officers for the bettering and improvement of the administration. (Aitchison, C.U. *A Collection of Treaties, R c.*, Vol. X, pp. 135-39).

The apprehensions created by the treaty and the insistence of the Resident, bordering on coercion, to clear the arrears of tribute, set even trusted friends of the Company, like the Dalava, into thinking that

the Company was not at all considerate to the well-being of the State and its people. The haughtiness and intemperate language of the Resident estranged the Dalava from him. The Dalava began to concert measures for an open rebellion against the British in defence of the King and the country.

Velu Thampi secretly began to recruit soldiers and collect arms. There was whole-hearted support from all sections of the population for this move. The Paliyatt Achan, the premier nobleman of Cochin, had been on inimical terms with the Resident, and he also agreed to join Velu Thampi in this contemplated insurrection.

The insurrection, though a formidable one, was shortlived on account of the defection of the Paliyatt Achan and the large contingents the Company's authorities were able to deploy in Travancore. Though Velu Thampi had attempted to bring about an anti-British alliance of an all India character he did not succeed in the attempt. In his letter to the Zamorin Velu Thampi wrote: "If all now rise, and unanimously act with one mind, there will be no need for continuing allegiance to the Europeans". (Secret Sundries, Vol. 6659, FF. 324-5) "Chimerical as the scheme may now appear, it was not entirely impracticable. The Marathas were still smarting under their recent discomfiture and had not yet been reconciled to their subordinate status. There was no lack of disaffection among the Moplas and Nayars and France was at open war with Britain. A Maratha-Malabar combination backed by France might very well succeed where Travacore and Cochin failed". (S. N. Sen, A. Note on Velu Thampi's Rebellion, *IHRC*, Proc. Vol. XIX, P. 173).

On 1st Makaram, 984 M.E. (16th January 1809 A.D.), Velu Thampi issued a proclamation at Kundara, calling upon the people to rise *en masse* in defence of

the King, their country, and their religion. The people rose against the British and in many places British troops were put in imminent peril. But as British contingents began to converge on Travancore from different directions, the rebels lost heart and the revolt began to peter out. The Raja, who was anxious about the safety of his throne, wrote to the Resident requesting for the cessation of hostilities. On March 2nd, 1809, peace was concluded. Velu Thampi was searched out and when troops surrounded the Mannadi temple, where he had hidden himself, he committed suicide.

On the suppression of the rebellion, the Madras Government considered it necessary to make arrangements "to prevent the authority and resources of the country from being employed in designs hostile to the British interests, and which shall be conducive to the advancement of the prosperity and welfare of both the States". (C. U. Aitchison, *op. cit.*, Vol. X pp. 161-62.) A new treaty was imposed upon Travancore (6th January, 1809), with the same clauses as were found in the treaty of 1805.

The natural consequences of fighting with the British and losing the fight overtook Cochin and Travancore. No visible changes took place in the political set-up, but British control over these States increased in inverse proportion to the decrease in the power of the King.

The history of early resistance against the British would be incomplete without a reference to the revolt of the Kurichiyas of Wayanad in 1812. It was a unique almost pathetic, instance of a revolt which has not been honoured even with a footnote in standard accounts of the freedom movement in Kerala. The details of the uprising lie buried in archival records hitherto untapped by historians. The Kurichiyas and

Kurúmbars were a fairly numerous tribal folk inhabiting the mountains of Wayanad. Strongly wedded to ancestral customs and loyalties, the placidity of their tribal life was rudely disturbed by the British acquisition of Wayanad. Led by their chieftain Thalakkal Chandu they constituted the main prop of Pazhassi Raja's militia at the time of the revolt and earned for him many victories in his guerilla war against the British. In consequence, after the suppression of the Pazhassi insurrection, the British brought Wayanad under their strict surveillance which subjected Kurichiyas to untold abuses and misery. Many of them were seized, reduced to slavery and made to serve officials and Englishmen. But what brought havoc to their simple, rustic life was the new revenue settlement made by the principal Collector of Malabar, Thomas Warden. It was not the enhanced rate of revenue, heavy and arbitrary though it was, which caused the discontent of the Kurichiyas, but the mode of its collection: they were to pay the revenue in cash rather than in the traditional mode of kind. Defaulters were cruelly treated—properties seized, tenants forcibly evicted from lands, personal effects distrained, privacy of houses molested; and the like. In fact, it was not the revenue or its strict collection, but the arbitrariness of the rack-renting revenue officials that drove the tribals from destitution and desperation to mad fury.

The rebellion broke out apparently suddenly on 25, March 1812. It speaks much for the unity of the tribals that they kept all their preparations a closely guarded secret until the rebellion began under the leadership of their chieftain Rama Namby. It is true that some disaffected Nayers and Tiyyas, mostly employed in the revenue and police establishments, knew about the preparatory work, but they too out of hatred towards British kept in hidden and later acutally

gave the leadership to the tribals hoping to create a general uprising against the company administration. Kurichiya priests declared the rebellion to be sanctified by the blessings of tribal gods. A number of Kurichiyas had been in the employ of the Company as *Kolkars* (policemen), but when the rebellion started all, except four, left the service and joined their kinsmen. Thus, on the whole, the rebellion had the characteristics of a mass uprising, through restricted to one locality.

Within a few days the rebellion spread in the whole of Wayanad. The Kurichiyas took possession of all important passes leading to Wayanad and cut supplies and reinforcements to the ambushed British troops in the valley. Armed Kurichiya bands roamed about the region and occasionally descended to the plains, terrorising those inhabitants who did not actively support them. For a few days at least British administration ceased to function in the Wayanad area. The magnitude of the insurrection is revealed by the fact that Thomas Baber, Sub-Collector of the division had to frantically requisition troops from Malabar, Canara and Mysore as the local British regiment was insufficient to deal with the uprising.

Despite the serious proportions of the rebellion, tribal heroism with tribal weapons was powerless before the sophisticated military machine of the English Company. Early in April, British troops from Mysore and Cannanore moved into the jungles from different directions, combed out the guerilla bands and suppressed them. Terror-stricken groups voluntarily surrendered, pledged fealty and betrayed the hide-outs of others. By the beginning of May, 1812, the revolt was completely crushed and quiet returned to Wayanad. It must be said to the credit of the British that subsequently they did not adopt a cruel and vindictive attitude towards the tribals. Instead, they became

aware of the need for lessening the rigours of the revenue administration that occasioned such uprisings.

Thus, by 1812, British control was effectively established over all the three regions of Kerala Malabar, Cochin and Travancore.

THE LAST PHASE

The history of the last phase of the freedom movement, comprising the eight or nine years to independence, though most important, is perhaps the most difficult to relate. The events and happenings, the forces and tendencies of the period, are well within the living memory of those who are in the middle age and above. History is the memory of experience and since the experiences of the individuals and groups are varied, opinions and ideas are liable to vary. Agreements may be found, but conflicts, too, are there. Until the passions and prejudices are over, and details and documents are made available for analysis, the academic historian must be content to relate only the major outlines.

In Malabar, as mentioned earlier, the last phase opened with the emergence of a powerful left wing that captured the leadership of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee and adopted a radical position at variance with the national policy of the Indian National Congress. The rift came into the open with the outbreak of the Second World War, the resignation of the Congress Ministries in the provinces and the starting of individual satyagraha. The left-wing formed a more intense mass struggle against British imperialism. Thus, contrary to the directive of the Congress, the left dominated K. P. C. C. observed an anti-imperialist day on September 15, 1940. This led to violent clashes between the police and the demonstrators in several places, especially Tellicherry, Morazha and

Kayyur. The K.P.C.C. was therefore suspended and the leftists under the leadership of E. M. S. Nambudiripad, P. Krishna Pillai and A. K. Gopalan, met in secret conclave at Pinarayi, and thus in December 1939, was born the Communist Party. Having left the Congress and in order to strengthen its forces for the impending struggle against British imperialism, they turned to intensive organisational work among peasants, agricultural workers, industrial labour and students.

While these developments were taking place in Malabar, the struggle for responsible government had begun in Cochin and Travancore. Comparatively, the struggle in Cochin was far less in intensity than that in Travancore. This was because the ruler of Cochin adopted on the whole a lenient policy of political concessions which averted violent clashes. Thus in June 1938, a dyarchical form of government was established, allowing popular ministers to control some departments. The system did not work well and the Cochin Praja Mandalam, founded in 1941, began to agitate for full responsibility in government.

In Travancore, with the formation of the State Congress and its decision to launch direct action, the struggle for responsible government assumed the character of a mass movement. The Congress, from the beginning, was bitterly critical of the Dewan, C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer, and in a memorial submitted to the Maharaja they levelled a series of charges against him and asked for his dismissal. The infuriated Dewan adopted repressive measures and banned the State Congress, and the Youth League. The Congress therefore, launched the civil disobedience movement which led to several clashes between the people and the police in several places. The rising tempo of the movement forced the Government to lift the ban, but the Dewan refused to open negotiations

until the charges were withdrawn. Gandhiji intervened and the charges were withdrawn. But that created a split in the Congress. The members of the Youth League left the State Congress to form the Communist Party. As in Malabar, the Communist Party strengthened its base by intensive work among peasants and workers.

This was the situation when the Quit India Movement began in 1942. It generated considerable enthusiasm, especially among the students. But on the whole it did not lead to violent repercussions as in other parts of India. This was because most of the Congress leaders were behind bars and the Communist Party was opposed to it. Nevertheless, there were disturbances in many places involving disruption of communications, burning of offices, etc. The Kizhariyur (Malabar) bomb case was the only major episode of violence.

The end of the Quit India Movement saw Malabar returning to elections and constitutional government. Freedom and independence saw Malabar as a district of Madras province. In Cochin dyarchy was finally abolished and on the eve of Independence the Dewanship ended and a popular ministry under Panampilly Govinda Menon was sworn into power.

Travancore, however, was not destined to have a peaceful transition to freedom and democracy. In October 1946, she had to face one of the most violent upheavals in her recent history. Known as the Punnapra-Vayalar revolt, it developed as a reaction to the constitutional scheme proposed by the Dewan, C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer, early in January, 1946. The scheme provided for adult franchise but retained the dewanship as well as an irremovable executive. The

State Congress rejected the scheme. The Communists not only rejected the scheme but decided to launch a violent struggle in order "to throw the American model into the Arabian sea" and bring an end to the oppressive rule of the Dewan. It may be remembered that the Communist Party had been building up its strength among the kisans and labourers, and the spiralling prices, unemployment and famine in the wake of the Second World War afforded it a peculiarly favourable climate for the expansion of its activities. The coastal taluks of Alleppey and Shertallai were, in particular, strongholds of the Party with its numerous unions covering the fishermen, coir workers, toddy-tappers, boat crew and agricultural labourers. While Latin Catholic fishermen of Punnapra, in Alleppey, were at the mercy of the usurious money-lender, the Ezhavas of the village of Vayalar, in Shertallai, were the tenants of a few landlord families who persistently kept the agricultural wages miserably low. Poverty, squalor and disease stalked the land while famine accounted for a heavy human toll (21,000 according to an estimate of the Servants of India Society which conducted relief operations).

It was on this extremely receptive ground that the rudiments of class war and surplus value were broadcast by the workers of the Communist Party. Regular study classes were held and prominent leaders of the party used to participate in them. By the middle of 1946 there were many camps of the workers in the area. Volunteers from the working class were recruited and training given to them in a military style by some ex-servicemen. This increased the tension in the area and there were reports of landlord-tenant clashes. When intelligence reports reached the Government, not merely police but the military was also deployed. This only worsened the situation. In the midst of this came the call for a general strike by the

All Travancore Trade Union Congress on October 20, 1946. It is stated that the Dewan sent some agents to discuss the matter with the leaders and to dissuade them from the proposed strike. But these were of no avail as the Party was unflinching in its stance. Consequently, martial law was declared in the area and the Dewan himself assumed the functions of the commander-in-chief. The impassioned workers and volunteers preferred confrontation—stones, bamboo spikes, areca spears and swords confronting machine guns. What followed, from 24 to 27 October, was a tale of heroism and tragedy. The toll, in terms of human lives, has not been reckoned and perhaps will never be known. For months to come Punnapra-Vayalar had the appearance of a ghastly grave—of men as well as aspirations.

The story of this misfired revolt has never been told completely. Like many other events in Kerala history its details and nature could be unravelled only by the future. As it is, opinions are sharply divided over causes and failure. It is for the future historian to find out where the truth lies.

The suppression of the revolt did not mean the end of difficulties for the Dewan. There was a decided change in the attitude of the people who regarded his continuance in office as productive of more evils. Things reached a political crisis again when the British announced their intention to leave India. Dewan announced, in what was in fact the height of unwisdom on his part, that Travancore would remain an independent state on the lapse of British paramountcy. This triggered a fierce controversy both inside and outside the State and the Dewan, to suppress dissent, unleashed the forces of repression. In the midst of repression and confusion, an unsuccessful attempt was made on his life on July 25, 1947. The Dewan

made his exit from the State and with it the dream of an independent Travancore. When freedom came, Travancore was part of the Indian Union and steps were taken to instal the first popular ministry under Pattom A. Thanu Pillai.

BIRTH OF NEW KERALA

With the attainment of independence and freedom under responsible government, the movement for a united-*Aikya*-Kerala attained a fresh momentum. In pursuance of an inspiring appeal from the Maharaja of Cochin, an Aikya-Kerala conference had already met at Trichur in April, 1947. Under the leadership of Kelappan and K. P. Kesava Menon a standing council was formed for follow-up action. In 1949 conventions were held in Alwaye and Palghat to press for the formation of the Kerala State.

The first step in this direction was taken on July 1, 1949, when following the national policy of integration initiated by Sardar Vallabhai Patel, the states of Cochin and Travancore were merged into Travancore-Cochin under a Rajpramukh.

In the meantime the idea of reorganising the Indian states on a linguistic basis was actively engaging the attention of the national leadership of the Congress and the Central Government. The final step was taken with the appointment of the States Reorganisation Commission. On the basis of the report of the Commission it was decided to add the Malabar district and the Kasargod taluk of South Kanara district to Travancore-Cochin and to separate the Tamil-speaking southern region of old Travancore from Travancore-Cochin for inclusion in Madras state. On November 1, 1956, the new State of Kerala was formally inaugurated amidst universal rejoicing. The Land of Parasurama thus regained its identity within the unity of the Land of Bharata.