

## CONCLUSION

Occasionally, nations and people stand embarrassed at the crossroads of history. In front of such a confused and helpless people, sometimes, a saviour arises. The life of that leader, like a lighthouse enlightens and inspires the people. When India stood embarrassed at such troubled historical crossroads, like a Godsent gift we got Mahatma Gandhi.<sup>1</sup> He had radiated his influence to the far ends of a disunited country and indeed, to every corner of a divided world. He did it not through his writings, few people anywhere had read his books, and his articles, though known abroad and republished widely in India, were not the source of his hold on people. He reached people through direct contact, action, example and loyalty to a few simple, universally flouted principles, non-violence, truth and the exaltation of means above ends.

Gandhi's assassination caused dismay and pain throughout India. It was as though the three bullets that entered his body had pierced the flesh of tens of millions. The nation was baffled, stunned and hurt by the sudden news that this man of peace who loved his enemies and would not have killed an insect had been shot dead by his own countryman and co-religionist.[2]

- 
1. V. Balaram, "Mahatma Gandhi" (M) (Calicut, October 1994), p. 26.
  2. Louis Fischer, The Life of Mahatma Gandhi (Bombay, 1990), p. 9.

Though Mahatma Gandhi left us, the prophetic words of Nehru are becoming a reality day by day. On Gandhi's death on 30 January 1948 Jawaharlal Nehru said:

The light has gone out of our lives and there is darkness everywhere and I do not quite know what to tell you and how to say it. Our beloved leader, Bapu as we call him, the father of our nation, is no more. Perhaps I am wrong to say that. Nevertheless, we will not see him again as we have seen him these many years. We will not run to him for advice and seek solace from him, and that is a terrible blow not to me only but to millions and millions in this country. And it is difficult to soften the blow by any advice that I or anyone else can give you.[3]

The light has gone out, I said, and yet I was wrong. For the light that shone in this country was no ordinary light. The light that has illumined this country for these many years will illumine this country for many more years, and a thousand years later that light will still be seen in this country, and the world will see it and it will give solace to innumerable hearts. For that light represented the living truth, and the eternal man was with us with his eternal truth reminding us of the right path, drawing us from error, taking this ancient country to freedom.[4]

After Independence and Mahatma Gandhi's great martyrdom, India has experienced four and a half decades of political independence. The continuous political experiments of a parliamentary system of democracy have been able to establish, beyond doubt, the basic Indian

---

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

calibre to work a representative political process amongst a people more known for their illiteracy than their political experience. If the compliment for the Constitution goes to the indigenous legal luminaries, the credit for its successful experimentation over the years goes to the ordinary illiterate or, little litterate citizens, whom Gandhi called the 'Daridra Narayana'. Daridra Narayana is one of the millions of the names by which humanity knows God, who is unnameable and unfathomable by human understanding and it means God of the poor, God appearing in the hearts of the poor.<sup>5</sup>

It was the Daridara Narayana or the commoners living in India's interior villages unsheltered, unclothed and often unfed, who proved to the world outside that India is a mature democracy by going through the electoral process about 10 times to decide national mandate.

## General Elections in India

### First General Election 1952

In the general election held in 1952, fifty one parties contested out of which 21 entered the Lok Sabha.

---

5. M. K. Gandhi, India of My Dreams (Ahamedabad, 1947), p. 52.

The Indian National Congress won 364 seats out of 489 elective seats.<sup>6</sup>

### **Second General Election 1957**

At the second general election, the Congress secured 371 out of 494 elective seats in the Lok Sabha.<sup>7</sup>

### **Third General Election 1962**

Out of 494 parliamentary seats, the Congress won 361.<sup>8</sup>

### **Fourth General Election 1967**

At the fourth general election, the performance of the Congress party was comparatively poor. It secured only 283 seats out of 520.<sup>9</sup>

### **Fifth General Election 1971**

This was a mid-term election, the Lok Sabha having been dissolved on 27 December 1971, one year and two

---

6. Manorama Year Book 1995 (Kottayam), p. 608.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

months before the expiry of the full period. The results of the elections were startling. The ruling Congress, under Indira Gandhi, swept the polls with a massive majority of 350 out of 518 elective seats.

On 26 June 1975, the President declared an Emergency. This Emergency was lifted only after the results of the sixth general election were announced, namely on 22 March 1977.

During the Emergency, the term of the Lok Sabha was extended to 6 years by the 42nd amendment. This extension was annulled by the 43rd amendment in 1977 and the old term of 5 years was restored.<sup>10</sup>

#### **Sixth General Election 1977**

The sixth general elections (March 1977) brought the Janata government to power. Janata won more than 296 seats in a total of 542--a clear majority--while the Congress could muster only 153 seats.<sup>11</sup>

#### **Seventh General Election 1980**

The seventh general elections (January 1980) returned Indira Gandhi to power again with a two-thirds majority in

---

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

the Lok Sabha. The Congress(I) won 353 seats in a total of 542.<sup>12</sup>

#### **Eighth General Election 1984**

Polling was held on 24, 27 and 28 December 1984 in 508 constituencies. In a landslide victory the ruling Congress(I) led by Rajiv Gandhi secured 401 seats.<sup>13</sup>

#### **Ninth General Election 1989**

Polling held from November 22 for 523 seats out of the total of 543. For the first time the 18-year-olds were able to exercise their franchise. It resulted in a 'hung' Parliament where Congress(I) emerged as the largest party with 193 seats and Janata Dal as the second largest with 141 seats. For the first time in India, a minority government led by Janata Dal's V. P. Singh supported by BJP from outside was formed.<sup>14</sup>

#### **Tenth General Election 1991**

A mid-term poll for the tenth Lok Sabha was held on 20 May, 15 June 1991. Polling took place in 516 out of

---

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

543 constituencies; election in 5 constituencies was cancelled. The result again led to a 'hung' parliament with the Congress securing 224 seats, BJP 119 seats and Janata Dal 53 seats. And once again a minority government was formed by P. V. Narasimha Rao of the Congress party.<sup>15</sup>

An analysis of general elections in India will prove that it was a basic Gandhi current that always ultimately clinched the electoral fate of political shades everytime. The people rather blindly reposed their confidence in the Congress and in Nehru so long as Jawaharlal Nehru decided the destiny of the Congress as the natural heir to the Gandhian flag. Mahatma Gandhi pictured Nehru as the jewel of India and declared that the future of India would be safe in the hands of Nehru. Thus Nehru was taken by the people of India as Gandhi's political successor believing that he will retain a Gandhian spirit in politics and the government of the country. As a politician of the first order, Nehru was surprisingly successful in retaining the people's confidence in him. Nehru made his place so effectively entrenched in the hearts of the ordinary Indian that minor deviations from the Gandhi line on his part was generously pardoned by the people. Whatever ideological cleavages that Nehru might have had with

---

15. Ibid.

Gandhi, his personal loyalty to his mentor made up for his lapses in the eyes of the common man to justify his emotional political attachment to Gandhi. Being free from personal corruption it was rather very effortless for Nehru to get his mandate renewed by the Indian Masses in every electoral battle, so long as he was alive.

When Nehru died in office and Lal Bahadur Shastri was made to succeed him, the people found the Gandhi-Nehru tradition safe in his humble hands. Shastri too was highly successful to keep for himself an image of a national hero totally committed to those causes which Gandhi held so dear to his heart. In the political vacuum created by the unexpected demise of Shastri in Tashkent, the party bosses in the Congress made a gamble by opting for Indira Gandhi for the mantle of leadership, hopefully imagining that she could be the best vote catcher for the Congress in the given situation.

Though most of Indira Gandhi's policies had no connection at all with any Gandhi line, she was unbelievably wise and practical in making the people believe that she was the one and the only true guardian of the Gandhian values and traditions. The unreserved support and blessings she had from leaders of Vinoba Bhave's stature even during the days of Emergency helped



her enjoy an image of a true Gandhi heir in the Indian mind. But in the post-Emergency period she had a loss of face when the media uncovered stories of Emergency excesses which made most of the people shocked so much that it all happened under her nose. Indira Gandhi had to pay in the 1977 elections a heavy political price for her Emergency games.

The Janata party under Jayaprakash Narayan, Morarji Desai, Kripalani and others could walk into victory in the 1977 elections because these leaders were considered by the people as true inheritors of the Gandhi tradition. When the top leaders of the Janata government quarelled with one another in the most un-Gandhian way the ordinary voter rose to the occasion in the 1980 elections and threw the Janata unfit into political wilderness and had shown an astute political skill and a brave political will to bring Indira Gandhi back to the saddle.

Though Rajiv Gadhi was a high-tech Prime Minister he too wisely kept his rapport with people with necessary political intuition, catching the imagination of the common man. He was, in the early days of his political office a hero for both the young and the old and in spite of the charges levelled against him, Rajiv still kept

himself dear to the ordinary folk. The introduction of Panchayat Raj system aiming at decentralisation was a humble attempt to realise the Gandhian dream of village swaraj. To Mahatma Gandhi, independence must begin at the bottom.

Thus every village will be a Republic or Panchayat having full powers. It follows, therefore, that every village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing its affairs even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world. It will be trained, prepared to perish in the attempt to defend itself against any onslaught from without. Thus, ultimately, it is the individual who is the unit. This does not exclude dependence on and willing help from neighbours or from the world. It will be free and voluntary play of natural forces. Such a society is necessarily highly cultured in which every man and woman knows what he or she wants, and, what is more, knows that no one should want anything that others cannot have with equal labour.[16]

To Mahatma Gandhi the word swaraj is a sacred word, a vedic word meaning self-rule and self-restraint and not freedom from all restraint which 'independence' often means.

By swaraj I mean the government of India by the consent of the people as ascertained by the largest number of the adult population, male or female, native born or

---

16. Shriman Narayan (ed.), The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi Vol. VI (Ahamedabad, 1968), p. 451.

domiciled, who have contributed by manual labour to the service of the state and who have taken the trouble of having their names registered as voters.<sup>17</sup>

Rajiv Gandhi's assassination gave, indeed, a rude shock to the people as most of them were hoping a political comeback for him in the elections.

The two Prime Ministers who came to power but failed to survive--V. P. Singh and Chandrasekhar--had also the political acumen to make a considerable section of the Indian people believe that they also were genuinely connected with the Gandhi tradition of political values and culture.

Even when Narasimha Rao government follows a policy of liberalisation and global economic reforms, the Congress still tries to give an appearance that basically and fundamentally it keeps its loyalty to the Gandhi school. The people have, it seems, somehow a feeling that whatever be the shortcomings and failings, the Congress, in spite of it, represents the Gandhi tradition in India's national life. It is true that the Congress administration since Nehru to Rao has had a very consistent policy of gradually deviating from the Gandhi

---

17. R. K. Prabhu and U. R. Rao (eds.), The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi (Ahamedabad, 1992), p. 317.

frame of values finding that policy politically more expedient for their political and electoral interests, yet they very carefully tried to keep a Gandhian ideological outfit for the Congress to preserve and protect the emotional loyalty of the people to the Congress and the causes it supposedly was upholding. Normally people in India vote for the Congress in elections more for emotional reasons than for on the basis of any manifestos.

The basis for popular emotional involvement in the politics of the Congress is largely because of an inherent and traditional love and respect that the people of India from the Himalayas to the Cape and from Maharashtra to Assam keep in their heart of hearts for Gandhi and his political school. This factor of reality is the best proof that one could find in the Indian political situation that the Gandhi factor remains still undeniably relevant, even after nearly half a century of India's politics of independence.

Many regard the application of the Gandhian principles in the political and social set-up of India as the only panacea of the social and political problems of the country.

Gandhi's thought was India's most enlightened and modernizing gift to the world. The application of Gandhian principles was the only panacea for the problems created by violence throughout the world. Unshakeable faith in God, earnestness

uncompromising insistence on truth and nonviolence, utter fearlessness and profound love for human beings made him an eminent leader, as well as friend, philosopher and guide to millions of people throughout the world.[18]

No doubt, India has achieved notable results in various sectors of development, but we have not been able to solve our basic problems of hunger, poverty and unemployment. Mahatma Gandhi was convinced that our ultimate progress in solving these problems would be in exact proportion to the purity of our means. The most daunting enemies of the country are poverty, idleness, intolerance and ecological disaster. While waging a war on these evils the accent should be on the principles of self-respect, self-reliance and swadesi espoused by Gandhi.[19]

The impact of Gandhism is also revealed when some national leaders of Gandhian identity pass away. Even when they might have been subjected to severe and uncharitable criticism while alive for their policies, the entire media absolve him of all political sins accused, for the single reason he retained a Gandhian halo. People have a strange and irresistible admiration for the politics and philosophy Gandhi represented and no part of the country could escape this reality. It is here that Kerala also falls in line to prove in its own humble way that the importance of the Gandhi impact goes uncontested in the politics of the most literate state in the country.

---

18. The Hindu, 8 August 1994.

19. Ibid.

In the first decade of independence people could not dare believe any shade of corruption for the leaders of the Congress who were honoured with the task of running the government. It gave the people a rude shock when there were allegations of corruption against some of the top political personalities in Kerala in the early spell of independence. E. John Philipose, a minister in the Congress government of Parur T. K. Narayana Pillai not only did resign from the government but took Anne Mascrine, a colleague of him in the Cabinet to task for making an allegation of corruption against him, by filing a defamation case against her in the Madras High Court. It was a very natural reaction for a leader of the Gandhi School who considered his integrity and reputation more important than anything in this world. The fact that he chose to file the case in a court outside the state only added to his political credibility. The case was decided in his favour as the verdict compelled Anne Mascrine to pay a compensation to John Philipose.

One of the reasons for the loss of face for the Congress in the early years of independence was, certainly, the charges of corruption hurled against its leaders in the government, often by those within the party than those in the opposition. People often looked

helplessly and with unbelievable shock at the fall of many a hero on allegations of corruption, forcing a number of them to take the exit door and leave politics.

However, after a while the attitude of the people seemed to have changed apparently making them more mellowed in their attitude towards the charges of corruption levelled against public men. Still in their dreams they desired for leaders free of personal political sins since the honesty and integrity of the Gandhi brand had gone so deep into their hearts. This helped the people at large to have a reverence for leaders of character in spite of the stories the other way round about those at the helm.

The ideological dilution effected by almost every political party--of all shades of right and left--and the devaluation in the standards of behaviour of political workers at all levels--national, state and local--provokes people often to draw a comparison of the old Gandhi line with the new style of politics and politicians and the consequent political culture in the contemporary Indian society.

It was said of Gandhi that he advised Nehru and Patel that whenever they were in doubt think of the poorest of the poor in India--the Daridranarayana--and have a

decision. That decision would be right. However, it was widely felt that in the post-independence India it was the poorest of the poor who was totally ignored and contemptuously dismissed. Decisions were being made in Delhi and the 'Soul of India' as Gandhi called them--the Indian villages--had hardly been taken into confidence or consideration. The very decision making process became an urban affair, for all practical purposes, and the rural India had no say at all in the shaping of political or administrative policies. This was very true with the Kerala situation also as every government, Congress led or left dominated, had paid only little care for the "poorest of the poor" when policies were formulated. The differences in the style or in the functioning of the governments were too found of not much of a difference. And even if there was any difference between the Right and the Left governments, that was only a difference in degree rather than in kind when came to political or administrative details.

The governments under Pattom Thanu Pillai and Parur T. K. Narayana Pillai in Travancore and those under Panampally Govinda Menon or E. Ikkanda Warriar in Cochin or those governments in Travancore-Cochin after



integration of the two states in 1949, namely those under T. K. Narayana Pillai, C. Kesavan, A. J. John, Pattom Thanu Pillai and Panampally Govinda Menon or the governments which decided the destinies after the formation of the new state of Kerala in 1956, the governments led by EMS Namboodiripad, Pattom Thanu Pillai, R. Sankar, C. Achutha Menon, K. Karunakaran, A. K. Antony, P. K. Vasudevan Nair, C. H. Mohammad Koya and E. K. Nayanar--EMS, Achutha Menon, Karunakaran, Nayanar and Antony did lead the government more than once by turn--people could not feel much of a decisive difference in the content of administration in spite of the apparently contradicting political stance they cared to adopt while engaged in electoral battles. However, people found some difference, to their consolation, in the personal style of behaviour of some of the leaders of the government and a handful of ministers who tried to be true to the Gandhian political culture of honesty and personal integrity, simplicity and a captivating straight forwardness. Among this category Achutha Menon, Nayanar, Vasudevan Nair and Antony needs special mention. People never doubted their integrity and honesty even while they found some of the policies of these leaders while in power not that much to be acceptable with any enthusiasm or jubilation

whatsoever, still everyone convincingly conceded the honesty and integrity of such leaders in Kerala's politics and administration. The very fact that the common man admires such leaders of quality and character is a positive indication that the impact of Gandhism has not completely disappeared from Kerala's political culture.

There is no denying of the fact that the relevance and influence of Gandhi and the values he tried to uphold remain timeless in its scope and dimension. The impact may not be apparently demonstrative but the spark remains hidden in the hearts of the people so that whenever they find someone truly committed to the Gandhian values appearing at the helm of politics or government, they welcome him or her with unreserved enthusiasm. The latest events in Kerala politics, landing A. K. Antony in the Chief Ministerial chair provide a point to ponder in this direction. How the common people welcomed his homecoming into the central stage of state politics and the convincing majority he managed in the Tirurangadi election for his entry into the legislature should serve as an eye opener for a student of political science. An analysis of the voting pattern in the Tirurangadi by-election and the majority that A. K. Antony secured may prove this.

### Voting Pattern in Tirurangadi Constituency (1995)

---

Total votes	1,53,564
Votes polled	1,16,432
A. K. Antony (UDF)	49,622
N. A. Kareem (LDF independent)	27,353
Abdul Majeed Pandalam (PDP)	15,613
Abdul Majeed Haji (INL)	9,098
K. Janachandran Master (BJP)	10,037
Abdul Azees (Independent)	143
Alavi Kakkaadan (Samajvadi Party)	160
A. P. Ibrahimkutty (Independent)	289
Ali Kallikanti (Independent)	131
E. T. Kurian Elavumkal (Independent)	137
A. V. K. Moosadh (Independent)	99
G. Gopinathan (Independent)	862
N. Chandrasekharan Pillai (Independent)	66
Devassy Chovalloor (Independent)	196
Peethambharan (Independent)	167
Vazhayil Beeran Master (Independent)	540
Valiyapeedikakal Mubharak (Independent)	167
K. Mohammad (Janatha Party)	181
Alathunkal Mouideen (Independent)	66
A. V. Mohan Kumar (Independent)	229
Thoppil Rajappan (Independent)	332
Vadi Hareendran (Independent)	127
Invalid	817

---

Source: The Deepika, 31 May 1985.

The convincing majority that Antony managed in the Tirurangadi election 1995 was a positive lesson in politics, as far as Kerala was concerned, that in a totally Muslim dominated constituency from where no non-Muslim ever contested seriously in any election so far. Antony romped home so convincingly proves the point that people still have a mind for a candidate identified with value based politics, especially when he retained a Gandhian image too. Commenting on the majority that Antony secured in this by-election 'The Deepika' in its editorial stated that it is the love and trust of the people on Antony that did reflect in this majority.

"When observed closely and intensely", observed Sukumar Azhikode in one of the articles he wrote in the 'Mathrubhumi', Mahatma Gandhi Supplement (Malayalam), "I find the hearts of the Indians still beating with Gandhi. Any attempt to malign the Mahatma is genuinely considered by them as an attempt to malign the nation as such. People also believe that he integrated his thoughts, words and actions to an extent humanly possible. Hence people's faith in him. When politicians get deeply dipped in corruption people look at them with hate and contempt. Whenever there is any occasion that people go the un-Gandhian way under any constraint of a situation, after a moment they feel intensely remorseful and sorrowful, pained and ashamed". It is this fact that

reasonably and logically testifies to the Gandhian impact which still survives in the contemporary society and politics in Kerala also.

It is often easily said that the Gandhi impact is only minimal in Kerala's politics. It may be true perhaps, that most of the politicians in the state show only scant respect for Gandhian values in their personal life and style. But at the same time most of them have a feeling of fear how people would react if they do not behave like Gandhi admirers. It may be for this reason that many of the leaders swear by Gandhi in place and out of place in their anxiety to identify themselves with the Gandhian values and, if possible, to gain a Gandhian image for themselves in public. In a way the anxiety of these politicians is another proof that Gandhi and Gandhism has gone deep into the hearts of the people and they will not normally forgive anyone in politics who goes unloyal to the Mahatma's stipulations, regarding the values to be preserved in politics.

The impact of Gandhism in the policy front too, it has to be conceded, was minimal in the post-independence period. The major priorities in the Gandhi Agenda had been Decentralisation of Power, Khadi, Prohibition and the upliftment of Harijans. Gandhi also wished to have land reforms effected as part of his wider scheme of the "Rule of the Villager".

Though the leaders in politics and administration were swearing by Gandhi and his dreams, the fact was that his followers neither in Delhi nor in the states ever made a serious and totally committed endeavour to translate the Gandhi Agenda into a political or administrative reality. Yet they always cared to renew their faith in Gandhi and his ideology at least four times a year--on independence day, Republic day, Gandhi Jayanthi and on 30 January, the day of the martyrdom of Mahatma Gandhi.

Regarding Prohibition, most of the Congress leaders themselves did not have much of a faith in its practicability. And more than that once in power, most of them were more attracted by the excise revenue going to the state coffers on account of the sale of liquor. Though some leaders like Morarji Desai did demonstrate an unflinching faith in the policy of Prohibition, even in Gujarat, the birth state of Mahatma Gandhi legal ban on drinks was given a go-by. In some states partial Prohibition was made a policy but that was also proved a farce than any effective administrative effort to eradicate a social evil. In Kerala the left parties and their United Front took an open stand against Prohibition from the very beginning but the Congress and the UDF had always preferred to take an open stance in favour of

Prohibition by swearing that they will implement it in a phased manner but never showing any sincere enthusiasm for keeping that promise while in the saddle.

In the field of Khadi and village industries, the efforts of the governments--Right or Left--had been to make them too, just another department of administration without viewing it different as a priority, at least as a sign of homage to the Mahatma. The vast amount of money spent on Khadi and village industries have not made any substantial difference in the living standards of the villager or the Khadi weaver. Instead, the profit seems going to the middle men still, a situation which Gandhi would have resisted by galvanising his entire energy and effort. The tragedy seems to be that there was no clear, consistent policy on the part of the government nor any vision to effect a change in the fortune of the poor villager to whom Gandhi recommended Khadi not only as a sign and symbol of nationalism but also as a reasonable and dignified means of livelihood.

In the area of Land Reforms too the 'Gandhi effect' remained very dormant all these years in most of the states. But here, Kerala can have a better claim but the credit for it goes more to the Left parties than to the Congress, it seems. Though Pattom Thanu Pillai initiated

some measures in this direction while leading a minority PSP government in 1954, a serious attempt with determination was made by the first Communist government of EMS Namboodiripad. The credit for Land Reforms is to be shared by K. R. Gouri who was the Revenue Minister in the first EMS government and P. T. Chacko, who made a Herculean effort to have positive Land Legislation while being Minister in the Congress--PSP coalition government under Thanu Pillai. But it may not be true to say that these Land Reforms were consequent to the Gandhi impact but it was more owing to the special political constraints and electoral pressures in Kerala, a state which always had shown a pioneering mind in progressive legislation.

As for the cause of decentralisation of power Gandhi had always insisted that it must form the basis of India's new democracy. Gandhi was convinced that unless power goes to the villager democracy or freedom will have no practical meaning. But the experience in free India was that those in Delhi or state capitals never wanted a genuine sharing of political power and those who guided the destinies in Delhi or states could take the ordinary villager into confidence in the decision making process. Kerala also remained no exception in this, but some efforts were there to have a meagre defence to justify Kerala's commitment to the cause of popular participation in administration.



No doubt, credit goes to Kerala for having first established a legislative chamber (in Travancore by the then native ruler Sree Moolam Thirunal Ramavarma Maharaja in 1888). It was, indeed, a drastic and very revolutionary step then, marking the historic beginning of the growth of popular participation in the legislative and administrative horizons in Kerala. Cochin had to wait for thirty seven years more to have a Legislative Assembly established in proper legal and constitutional shape. The people of Malabar had their direct share of involvement in the legislative process along with the constitutional reforms in the British Indian Provinces.

Demand for Justice and more share of participation in the administrative machinery and process was being felt in Kerala with irresistible intensity from the last phase of the previous century. The Malayalee Memorial (1891) presented to the Maharaja of Travancore signed by 10,028 citizens of the state demanding jobs for Malayalees in Travancore Civil Service. This was, perhaps, a remarkable step on the part of the people in their longdrawn fight for responsible government in the region which ultimately materialised only when the British left India for good in 1947.

The freedom struggle under three different outfits in the three regions--the State Congress in Travancore, the Praja Mandal in Cochin, and the Indian National Congress in Malabar--hastened the process of an awakening in Kerala, leading to a higher conscientisation of the rights of the people to have a decisive say in the political and administrative process.

Since independence, there was naturally a speeding up in the range of political participation of the people, demonstrating a new enthusiasm in the democratic experiment which came handy to them as an aftermath of their newly won freedom in the country. The system of local administration in Kerala had been patterned in such a way to have Municipal Corporations in cities, Municipal Councils in urban townships and Panchayat Samithies in rural villages. Though there had been academic debates in government circles regarding the desirability of implementing the Balwantrai Mehta Committee's recommendations on rural government and local administration, paving the way for greater decentralisation, no government seems serious in taking a keen interest in the restructuring of the pattern of local administration, none of the political parties nor their coalitions ever had on genuine enthusiasm in divesting the government secretariat of its power for the sake of making

the administrative process more participatory by ensuring a more effective involvement of the people in decision making. But every political shade cared to pretend that they all remain committed to transfer power from the state secretariat to the grass root level. Panchayat Raj system and the theory of greater popular participation in administration remained, for all practical purposes, just a slogan to be complimented in all solemnity and sanctity on the eve of elections and also on the Gandhi Jayanthi day. It must be conceded that credit should go to the CPM led Left Democratic Front coalition government of 1987-91 under E. K. Nayanar since a leap forward was made in the direction of democratic decentralisation during the LDF tenure. In fact, the first attempt to have District Councils in Kerala was made during the reign of the first elected Communist government under EMS Namboodiripad. But it was when P. K. Vasudevan Nair led a CPI headed government in 1979 that a legislation was passed to implement the system of District Councils but before any concrete step could be taken, there was a change of government and subsequently the proposal was again put on cold storage. It was the Nayanar government which brushed it up again and decided to hold elections to the District Councils.

The Councils were formed on the basis of the structural frame of the revenue districts. Though originally the law contained provisions for a three-tier system--District, Taluk, and Village Councils (panchayats)--the government decided to give a go-by to the Taluk level councils thus making the scheme a two-tier one for all practical purposes. One member was to represent approximately 50,000 people elected directly by them on universal franchise. The minimum number required for a District Council was twenty and maximum number stipulated was forty. In the 14 districts altogether there were 474 divisions.

Trivandrum, Quilon, Ernakulam, Trichur, Palghat, Malappuram, and Calicut Districts (40 seats), Cannanore (39 seats), Alleppey (38 seats), Kottayam (34 seats), Pathanamthitta (23 seats), Idukki, Wayanad and Kasargode (20 seats). In each district 30 per cent seats were to be reserved for women, 10 per cent Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, one seat in every district was to be reserved for a woman Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes candidate. Employees of the Central or state governments, local bodies and universities were not eligible to contest.

The term of office was 5 years. The president of the District Council was to be the executive head. Standing

Committee Chairmen were practically ministers of the District Councils. There were six standing committees--general, finance, development, welfare, education and public works. The District Collectors were made ex-officio Secretaries of the Council. He was to the Council what the Chief Secretary was to the Cabinet. In 18 government departments, offices and institutions at the district level and below were to be transferred to the charge of the District Council. It included offices in the departments of Agriculture, Health, Public Works, Education, Irrigation, Dairy Development, Animal Husbandry, Social Welfare, Planning, Urban Development and so on.

Though the District Council was given wide ranging powers on the transferred subjects, the state government retained with it the prerogative of cancelling any decision taken by the Councils provided the councils were given a hearing before the government took such a decision. The government was even given the power to dissolve a District Council if it contravened any provisions of the Law or had gone beyond its prescribed jurisdiction, after seeking an explanation from the council concerned and making an enquiry into the matter as per provisions.

The District Council experiment in Kerala ultimately proved itself a victim of the confrontational politics in the state between the Congress(I) led United Democratic Front and the CPM led Left Democratic Front. The experiment had an untimely end and the councils were so shortlived to leave any indelible imprint in the story of Democratic Decentralisation in Kerala, the acknowledgedly most literate state in the country. The demise of the District Council experiment had practically gone unlamented because even while it was functioning under the LDF, it could not make much of an impression as an effective political or administrative device capable of working any wonder in the path of democratic decentralisation or in the art and science of participatory politics, yet, it was, indeed, a positive step and a necessary experiment--political and administrative--in the right Gandhian direction of democratic decentralisation, however, shortlived the experiment might have been.

From the experience of the past four and a half decades of post-independence politics in Kerala, it becomes unequivocally clear that people believe a qualitative change in politics is possible only when leaders of true Gandhian leanings come to decide the destiny at the top. They have their own records of experience that when leaders of that category who feel

emotionally and ideologically committed to the Gandhi School can deliver the goods to them than those who are otherwise. It is owing to this reason that even people who are not Gandhians by themselves too prefer to see Gandhi loyalists coming to the top political offices. People at large feel the best guarantee for good government and value based politics is to have politicians and leaders of Gandhian commitment and loyalty to be at the top in both party and administrative hierarchies.

This general belief of the people, their desire for that type of a situation in the government and politics of the state and their conviction of qualitative improvement in politics owing to a Gandhian presence all carry conviction with a student of politics that the impact of Gandhism in the post-independence politics of Kerala is more a reality and hence the best testimony too for the unquestionable relevance of Mahatma Gandhi and his political presence in the public life of the country.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Chander, Jose, ed., Dynamics of State Politics in Kerala (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1986).
- Chaudhary, Guru Prasad, Relevance of Gandhism (New Delhi: Capital Publishing House, 1985).
- Cousins, Noman, ed., Profiles of Gandhi (New Delhi: Indian Book Company, 1969).
- Devadoss, T. S., Mahatma Gandhi (Madras: University of Madras, 1983).
- Desai, Mahadev H., Day-to-Day with Gandhi Vol. I (Varanasi: Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, 1968).
- , Day-to-Day with Gandhi Vol. II (Varanasi: Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, 1968).
- , Day-to-Day with Gandhi Vol. III (Varanasi: Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, 1968).
- , Day-to-Day with Gandhi Vol. IV (Varanasi: Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, 1968).
- , Day-to-Day with Gandhi Vol. V (Varanasi: Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, 1968).
- , Day-to-Day with Gandhi Vol. VI (Varanasi: Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, 1968).
- , Day-to-Day with Gandhi Vol. VII (Varanasi: Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, 1968).



- , Day-to-Day with Gandhi Vol.VIII (Varanasi: Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, 1968).
- , Day-to-Day with Gandhi Vol. IX (Varanasi: Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, 1968).
- Eapen, K. V., A Study of Kerala History (Kottayam: Kollett Publications, 1986).
- Fischer, Louis, The Life of Mahatma Gandhi (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1990).
- Gandhi, M. K., An Autobiography (Ahamedabad: Navjivan Publishing House, 1927).
- , India of My Dreams (Ahamedabad: Navjivan Publishing House, 1947).
- Iyer, Raghavan N., The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1973).
- Jacob, P. A., "A Critical Study of the Gandhian Movement in Kerala: With Special Reference to Gandhi Peace Foundation", Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Annamala University, 1993.
- Johari, J. C., Comparative Politics (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1972).
- John, K. C., The Melting Pot (Trivandrum: Prasanti Printers, 1975).
- Joseph, Edamaruk, Kerala Samskaram (M) (Kottayam: Vidhyarthi Mithram Book Depot, 1971).
- Krishnan, Gopala P. K., Keralathinte Samskarika Charitram (M) (Trivandrum: State Institute of Languages, 1991).

---, The National Question in Kerala (Bombay: People's Publishing House Ltd., 1952).

---, Kerala: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow (Calcutta: National Book Agency, 1967).

Narayan, Shriman, ed., The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi Vol. I (Ahamedabad: Navjivan Publishing House, 1968).

---, The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi Vol. II (Ahamedabad: Navjivan Publishing House, 1968).

---, The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi Vol. III (Ahamedabad: Navjivan Publishing House, 1968).

---, The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi Vol. IV (Ahamedabad: Navjivan Publishing House, 1968).

---, The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi Vol. V (Ahamedabad: Navjivan Publishing House, 1968).

---, The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi Vol. VI (Ahamedabad: Navjivan Publishing House, 1968).

Panickar, K. M., A History of Kerala (Annamalainagar, 1960).

Philip, Cherian, Kaal Noottandu (M) (Kottayam: National Book Stall, 1984).

Pillai, Narayana C., Thiruvathancore Swathantriya Samara Charithram (M) (Trivandrum: Forward Publications, 1972).

Potti, Ramachandran D., A Brief History of G. P. F. Centre Cochin (Cochin: G. P. F. Centre, 1991).

Prakasam, R., C. Kesavan (M) (Trivandrum: Government of Kerala, Department of Cultural Publications, 1990).

Prabhu, R. K. and Rao, U. R., eds., The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi (Ahamedabad: Navjivan Publishing House, 1992).

Ravindran, T. K., Vaikom Satyagraha and Gandhi (Trichur: Sri Narayana Institute of Social and Cultural Development, 1975).

Roy, Ramashray, ed., Contemporary Crisis and Gandhi (New Delhi: Discovery Publishing House, 1986).

Sastri, Nilakanta K. A., A History of South India (Madras: Oxford University, 1958).

---, The Pandyan Kingdom (London, 1929).

Sarma, D. S., The Father of the Nation (Madras: B. G. Paul and Co., 1956).

Singh, Sukhbir, A History of Political Thought (Meerut: Rastogi and Company, 1980).

Sinha, M. P., ed., Contemporary Relevance of Gandhi (Bombay: Nachiketa Publications Ltd., 1970).

Sundram, I., Gandhian Thought and Philosophy (Delhi: Malhotra Brothers Pvt. Ltd., 1979).

Thomas, Cyriac, "The Church and Politics in Kerala 1947-1972", Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Kerala, Trivandrum, 1977.

Articles from Seminars, Souvenir, Periodicals, Journals and Official Publications of Voluntary Organisations, Parties, Government, etc.

A Brief History of Trivandrum G. P. F. Centre (Trivandrum: G. P. F. Centre, 1991).

"Annual Report 1969-70" (Trivandrum: G. P. F. Centre, 1970).

At the Feet of Mahatma Gandhi (Trivandrum: Kerala Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, 1987).

Azhikode, Sukumar, Mahatma Gandhi Supplement (M) (Calicut: Mathrubhumi Publications, October 1994).

Gandhi, M. K., "Young India", 27 November 1924.

---, "Young India", 18 June 1925.

---, "Harijan", 20 February 1937.

Gandhi Peace Foundation: Constitution and Objectives (New Delhi: G. P. F., 1971).

"In Memory of Mahatma Gandhi: 27 Years of Gandhi Smarak Nidhi" (New Delhi: Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, 1976).

Menon, Kesava K. P., Mahatma Gandhi Supplement (M) (Calicut: Mathrubhumi Publications, October 1994).

"Minutes of the First Meeting of the Advisory Committee of G. P. F. Trivandrum Centre, 18 March 1982.

Nair, Ramachandran P., Kerala Sarvodaya Sangam Pinnitta Kaal Noottandu (M) (Trivandrum: K. S. S. Silver Jubilee Souvenir, 1987).

Namboodiripad, EMS, "Bashaposhini" (M), October-November 1994.

Pillai, Kumara G., Mahatma Gandhi Supplement (M) (Calicut: Mathrubhumi Publications, October 1994).

---, "Bashaposhini" (M), October-November 1994.

Pillai, Janardhanan K., By Looking Back 25 Years of Gandhi Smarak Nidhi (Trivandrum: Kerala Gandhi Smarak Nidhi Silver Jubilee Souvenir, 1977).

Poduval, Raghava A. V., The Kerala Sarvodaya Sangh: A Bird's Eye View of Its Working (Trivandrum: K. S. S. Silver Jubilee Souvenir, 1987).

"Prohibition Committee Report, December 1968" (Cochin: Kerala Prohibition Council).

Rananganam, "Indian Swathantriya Rajatha Jubilee Souvenir" (M) (Kozhikode: Swathantriya Samara Sainika Sangham Malabar Committee, 1972).

#### Other Publications

Manorama Year Book 1985 (Kottayam)

Manorama Year Book 1994 (M) (Kottayam)

Manorama Year Book 1995 (Kottayam)

**Newspapers, Periodicals and Journals**

Deepika (Kottayam)

Indian Express (Cochin)

Malayala Manorama (Kottayam)

Mathrubhumi (Calicut)

The Hindu (Coimbatore)

Frontline (Madras)

The Week (Ernakulam)

India Today (New Delhi)

Sunday (Bombay)

Bashaposhini (M) (Kottayam)

Kalakaumidi (M) (Trivandrum)

Mathrubhumi (M) (Calicut)

Keralasabdam (M) (Quilon)

Chinta Weekly (M) (Trivandrum)

## Persons Interviewed

Shri. K. P. Madhavan Nair (Freedom fighter)

Shri. A. P. Udayabhanu (Freedom fighter)

Shri. K. E. Maramen (Freedom fighter)

Shri. R. M. Manakkalath (Freedom fighter)

Shri. D. C. Kizhakkemuri (Freedom fighter)

Dr. Sukumar Azhikode (Chairman, National Book Trust,  
New Delhi)

Prof. G. Kumara Pillai (President, Kerala Prohibition  
Council)

Acharaya K. K. Chandy (Founder, Christhavashram)

Prof. K. M. Chandy (Ex-Governor)

Shri. M. M. Jacob (Ex-minister, Government of India)

Shri. E. K. Nayanar (Ex-Chief Minister, Government of  
Kerala)

Shri. K. M. Mani (Minister, Government of Kerala)

Shri. P. J. Joseph (Ex-minister, Government of Kerala)

Shri. K. M. Mathew (Chief Editor, Malayala Manorama)

Dr. A. T. Devasia (Ex-Vice Chancellor, Mahatma Gandhi  
University, Kottayam)

Dr. Cyriac Thomas (Founder General Secretary, Kerala  
Prohibition Council)

Fr. George D. Vellapally (Founder Member Nava Bharatha  
Vedi)

Shri. M. Krishnan Nair (Former Secretary, Dhakshina  
Bharatha Hindi Prachar Sabha)

## APPENDIX

### The important dates and events of Mahatma Gandhi's life

- 1869 October 2: Born at Porbandar, Kathiawar, India, son of Karamchand and Putlibai Gandhi.
- 1883: Married Kasturba.
- 1888: Sailed from Bombay for England to study law.
- 1891 Summer: Returned to India after being called to the Bar. Began to practise law in Bombay and Rajkot.
- 1893 April: Sailed for South Africa to become lawyer for an Indian firm. Found himself subjected to colour discrimination.,
- 1894 May: Organised the Natal Indian Congress.
- 1899: Organised Indian Ambulance Corps for the British in the Boer war.
- 1901: With the family embarked for India.
- 1901-02: Travelled extensively in India, attended Indian National Congress meeting in Calcutta and opened law office in Bombay.
- 1902: Returned to South Africa at the request of the Indian community.
- 1904: Established the weekly journal 'Indian Opinion', Organised Phoenix Farm near Durban.



**1906 September:** First 'satyagraha' campaign in protest against proposed Asiatic ordinance directed against Indian immigrants in Transvaal.

**1907 June:** Organised 'satyagraha' against compulsory registration of Asiatics (The Black Act).

**1908 January:** Stood trial for instigating 'satyagraha' and was sentenced to two months imprisonment in Johannesburg jail (his first imprisonment). Summoned to consult General Smuts at Pretoria; compromise reached; was released from jail.

**1908 February:** Attacked and wounded by Indian extremist for settlement with Smuts.

**1908 August:** After Smuts broke agreement, second 'satyagraha' campaign began with bonfire of registration certificates.

**1909 February:** Sentenced to three months imprisonment in Volksrust and Pretoria jails.

**1909 June:** Sailed for England to present Indians' case.

**1910 May:** Established Tolstoy Farm near Johannesburg.

**1913 September:** Helped campaign against nullification of marriages not celebrated according to Christian rites. Third 'satyagraha' campaign. Led 2,000 Indian miners from New Castle across Transvaal border.

**1913 November:** Arrested for third time in four days.

- 1913 December:** Released unconditionally in expectation of a compromise.
- 1914 July:** Returned to India, leaving South Africa for ever.
- 1915 May:** Established Satyagraha Ashram near Ahmedabad.
- 1917:** Moved Ashram to new site on Sabarmati River. Led successful 'satyagraha' campaign for rights of peasants on indigo plantations in Champaran. Defied order to leave area in April, was arrested at Motihari and tried, but case was withdrawn.
- 1918 February:** Led strike of millworkers at Ahmedabad. Millowners agreed to arbitration after his three-day fast (his first fast in India).
- 1918 March:** Led 'satyagraha' for peasants in Kheda.
- 1918 April:** Organised nationwide hartal--suspension of activity for a day against the Rowlatt Bills. Fasted at Sabarmati for three days in penitence for violence and suspended 'satyagraha' campaign which he called a 'Himalayan miscalculation' because people were not disciplined enough. Became Editor of English weekly 'Young India' and Gujarati weekly 'Navajivan'.
- 1920 April:** Elected president of All India Home Rule League. Successfully urged resolutions for a 'satyagraha' campaign of non-cooperation.

- 1921: Resolved to wear only a loin cloth to propagate homespun cotton and to signify his identification with the people. Mass civil disobedience, thousands went to jail. Gandhi invested with 'sole executive authority' on behalf of Indian Congress.
- 1922: Suspended mass disobedience because of violence at Chdwri Chawra and undertook five-day fast of penance at Bardoli. Arrested at Sabarmati on charge of sedition for articles in 'Young India'. Pleaded guilty in a famous statement at the 'great trial' in Ahmedabad before Judge Broomfield. Sentenced to six years' imprisonment in Yervada jail.
- 1929: Arrested for burning foreign cloth in Calcutta and fined one rupee.
- 1929 December: Congress session at Lahore voted for complete independence and a boycott of the legislature. January 26 proposed as Independence day. Third all-India 'satyagraha' campaign.
- 1930 March 12: Set out from Sabarmati with 79 volunteers on historic Salt March 200 miles to sea at Dandi.
- 1930 April 6: Broke salt law by picking a handful of salt up at seashore. Arrested by armed policemen at Karadi and imprisoned in Yervada jail without trial. One hundred thousand persons arrested.
- 1931 January: Released unconditionally with 30 other Congress leaders.

- 1931 March: Gandhi-Irwin (Viceroy) Pact signed, which ended civil disobedience.
- 1931 August: Sailed from Bombay for the Second Round Table Conference in London.
- 1931 December: Returned to India. Authorised by Congress to renew 'satyagraha' campaign (fourth nation-wide effort).
- 1932 January: Arrested in Bombay with Sardar Patel and detained without trial at Yervada prison.
- 1932 September 20: Began 'fast unto death' while in prison in protest against British action giving separate electorate to untouchables.
- 1932 September 26: Concluded "fast" in the presence of Rabindranath Tagore after the British accepted 'Yervada Pact'.
- 1933: Began weekly publication of 'Harijan' in place of 'Young India'.
- 1933 July: Disbanded Sabarmati Ashram which then became centre for removal of untouchability.
- 1933 November: Began ten-month tour of India to help end untouchability.
- 1934 October: Launched All India Village Industries Association.
- 1940 October: Launched limited, individual civil disobedience campaign against Britian's refusal to allow Indians to express their opinions regarding

World War II. 23,000 persons imprisoned within a year.

- 1942: Met with Sir Stafford Cripps in New Delhi but called his proposals 'a postdated cheque'; these were ultimately rejected by the Congress. Congress passed 'Quit India Resolution' (8 August)--the final nation-wide 'satyagraha campaign' with Gandhi as the leader. Arrested with other Congress leaders and Kasturba and imprisoned in Aga Khan Palace, near Poona.
- 1943 February 10: Began fast at Aga Khan Palace to end deadlock between Viceroy and Indian leaders. .
- 1944 February 22: Kasturba died in detention at Aga Khan Palace at the age of 74.
- 1944 May 6: After decline in health, was released unconditionally from detention (this was his last imprisonment; he had spent 2,338 days in jail during his life-time).
- 1946: Began four-month tour of 49 villages in East Bengal to quell communal rioting over Muslim representation in provisional government.
- 1947: Toured Bihar to lessen Hindu-Muslim tensions. Began conferences in New Delhi with Lord Mountbatten and Jinnah.
- 1947 May: Opposed Congress decision to accept division of country into India and Pakistan. Fasted and prayed to combat riots in Calcutta as India was partitioned