

## THE EARLY RESISTANCE MOVEMENTS IN KERALA

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### ABSTRACT

*The European Powers began to active India from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards and it was primarily due to commercial consideration.The British rule in India adversely affected different spheres of Indian people.Initially there was no resistance when the were just traders.It was through very long process that trading turned to ruling.When actual ruling was happening, effects were being felt almost all over India.*

### Keywords:

### Introduction

The British rule in India adversely affected different strata of Indian population both the rich and the poor.This led to widespread discontent among the Indian .The adverse impact of the British rule on the political,economic and social sphers resulted in sharp reaction of the Indian people against the foreigners.This led to a series of anti-British movements throughout the country.

### Objective of the study

The principal objective of the study is to analyse and explore the early resistance movements in Kerala.

### New words

Punarri, Pattam, Native Raja, Cotiote Raja, Pych Raja, Dalawa, Kurichiyas, KurumasDiwan, Resident

### Methodology

The methodology followed is qualitative and argumentative in nature. This article prepared on the basis of both archival and secondary sources is written as per the method of scientific historical research. The methodology followed is descriptive and argumentative.

The Attingal Rebellion of 1721 was the earliest resistance movements started in Kerala against the British overlordship. In 1695,the Rani of Attingal given permission to the British to erect a factory at Anjengo. It was not liked by the people of the locality who attacked the factory in 1697.The main reason behind the protest was that the trade monopoly enjoyed by the Britishers adversely affected the local traders. Again a violent revolt was started at Anjengo in 1721 which resulted in the murder of 133 British nationals while thousands of British soldiers were killed in the revolt. The attack lasted for 6months.The Britishers was forced to conclude a treaty with the Rani of Attingal in 1723.The Anjengo revolt was significant in the sense that it was the first organised revolt started by the people of Kerala against the overlordship of the British. Since it was armed struggle it can be attributed as a militant uprising in extremist lines.

### Consolidation of British Power in Malabar

The expansion and consolidation of British power in Malabar in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century was not a pre-planned one but devted based on the utilisation of favourable circumstances. Being a commercial enterprise,the aim of English East India Company in this period was to make it a gainful endeavour and to take advantage of the colonies for the benefit of its shareholders. However,even during the initial phase the activities of the company were not confined to trade but also to expand its power through war and deplomacy. The absence of a competent centralised political authority in Malabar proved to be a blessing in disguise to the British.

The English East India Company gained an upper handover their counter parts in the trade and adopted multifaceted strategies to gain the over-lordship of the company,through a number of treaties,administrative restructuring generous financial assistance,military support,mediation and creative conflicts which paved the way for the emergence of new socio-political and cultural patterns in the subjugated regions.

The English East India Company made negotiations and agreements with the native Rajas Of Malabar on the eve of the three Mysore war.Though these agreements the company got additional privileges On

revenue collection as well as commercial privileges. Though these treaties the malabar kingdoms agreed to provide the coveted goods like pepper and cardamom to the foreign power.

Revolt of Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja also referred to as Cotiote Rajah and PychRajah, one of the earliest freedom fighter of India, much before the 1857 mutiny. He was also called Lion of Kerala, one of the fiercest warriors ever encountered on the battle field. The heroic resistance of Pazhassi Rajah was one among the most notable early resistance movements of malabar against the British Colonialism. Pazhassi Rajah a member of the western branch of the Kottayam royal family. He has whole heartedly assisted the British in their war against the Mysore Sulthans like HyderAli and Tippu Sulthan. It was on the basis of an agreement that the Britishers will give back the Kottayam to the Rajah of Kottayam that he agreed to help the British in their war against the Mysorean Power.

Kerala Varma one of the younger princes of the western branch of the Kottayam family was a man of indomitable courage and strong determination. During the period of Mysorean occupation, he remained in Kottayam and continued to resist the invaders while senior members of the family took refuge in Travancore. It may be recalled that Robert Taylor, the chief of Telicherry had granted a cool [deed] to him promising to treat him as an ally and to "render him independent of Tipu Sultan". After the defeat of Tipu Sultan by the British through the fourth Anglo-Mysore war Pazhassi expected a fair treatment from the side of the British and expected that he could get back his lost territories. But after the treaty of Srinagapatam, the company claimed sovereignty over Malabar. In 1792 the East India Company declared that all the local rulers and people of Malabar will be under the control of the officials of English East India Company. This declaration was quite oppressive as far as the local rulers who are possessing self esteem. This was also the violation of the earlier contract concluded between Pazhassi and the British. The Britishers further declared a major enhancement of the land revenue. This enhancement and the betrayal of gentleman agreement created resentment in the minds of the heroic personalities like Pazhassi Raja of Kottayam royal family. This created a long lasting war between Pazhassi and the company.

In the initial days of the battle Pazhassi had a clear domination. As a last resort, the British brought Arthur Wellesley, who would later beat Napoleon in the battle of Waterloo, to Malabar. It had a desired effect as Pazhassi suffered huge losses. He had to retreat to dense forest. Thomas Harvey, the newly appointed sub collector of Thalassery, devised the final attack against Pazhassi. He declared awards to those who gave him information on Pazhassi. With the help of three traitors, the British forces surrounded the set up of Pazhassi and fought him. There are different opinions about the death of Pazhassi. Some historians say he committed suicide, swallowing his ring while others say that the British shot him to death. The corpse, Pazhassi was brought to Mananthavadi and cremated with official honours, under the supervision of Babar. He said Pazhassi was an incredible and honourable person.

### **Rebellion of the Kurichiyas**

The Kurichiya Revolt of 1812 is one of the most important anti-colonial struggles that the tribal people of Kerala have accomplished. The Kurichiyas before they migrated to Wayanad, were part and parcel of the rest of the Kerala people and their social organisations even after their migration continued in many features the same as that rest of the Keralites. Wayanad is an area of which has got the largest concentration of tribes in Kerala.

The Pazhassi revolt was suppressed by the British in 1805. Due to the incessant exploitation from the British the Kurichiyas and Kurumas of Wayanad started revolt against the British in 1812. After the death of Pazhassi Rajah land and properties of Kurichiya fighters who had supported him, were confiscated and it came under the control of the company. The Kurichiyas and the Kurumas become landless and their right to conduct *Punnari* agriculture by clearing the forest was suspended large amount of taxes also accelerated their burden. William Logan observes that the collection of land tax in cash and inappropriate tax collection in the name of *Pattam* were the chief reasons of Kurichiya Revolt of 1812. It proved to be one of the important agrarian revolts in Kerala. The revolt was the natural culmination of the Pazhassi revolt and this is the historical learning of the Kurichiya revolt. At last the Kurichiya revolt was completely suppressed by the British army.

### **VeluThampi Dalawa and the Early Resistance in Extremist Lines**

Velu Thampi Dalawa was the Dalawa or Prime Minister of the Indian kingdom of Travancore between 1802 and 1809 during the reign of His Highness Maharajah Bala Rama Varma Kulasekhara Perumal. His revolt against the British encroachment over the naive sovereignty was a saga in the history early resistance movements in Kerala. He fought against the British in association with Paliyath Achan of Cochin who was also an arch enemy of Britishers in Kerala. Like Kerala Varma Pazhassi Rajah, the native

rulers of Travancore and Cochin were in close friendship with English East India Company. They supported the British during the period of Anglo Mysore war. While a treaty of alliance was signed by the ruler of Travancore in 1795, a similar treaty of alliance was concluded between the Cochin King and the British in 1800 according to which the signatory kings of native kingdoms accepted the overlordship of the British.

After the defeat of Tipu Sultan, English East India Company came into a perfect understanding with Travancore. A formal treaty was concluded between Travancore and the English East India Company in 1795 according to which the Raja accepted the British Supremacy and the company agreed to help the state in the event of external aggression. The treaty also provided for sending a Resident in the court of Travancore representing the English East India Company. During the period of Balarama Varma, a treaty was concluded with the company in 1805, which permitted the British to interfere in the internal affairs of Travancore in the event of internal strife or rebellion. The Raja also undertook to abide whatever advice the company might choose to give him in regard to internal administration of the state. After this treaty Travancore became a virtual subsidiary ally of the British thus the British had to apply many tactics and many tricks to control many native states in India. In actual practice, the British Resident became more powerful than the native ruler.

Velu Thampi had a previous experience of starting a struggle against the nepotism and corruption of the officials of the state before he became the Dalawa of the state of Travancore. After the signing of the treaty of alliance of 1805, Macaulay the Resident of Travancore began to interfere in the internal affairs of the state. Some of the orders issued by the Diwan were cancelled by the Resident. Moreover, the Resident ordered to pay the arrears without any delay and this created sudden provocation to Velu Thampi. It was in this time that the Resident gave asylum to one of the enemies of Paliath Achan. This could not be tolerated by Velu Thampi. He requested the help of the French to oust the British from Kerala but it was not materialised. Later the combined forces of Travancore and Cochin attacked the British Resident at Cochin in December 1808 but he secretly escaped. The rebels attacked the prison and freed the political prisoners. But when once again they tried to attack Cochin, they received a fatal defeat. Velu Thampi was forced to retreat and he made the famous proclamation at Kundra requesting the support of the people in the war against the foreign enemy. The proclamation was issued on 11 January 1809 in the aftermath of the battle, Velu Thampi fled from Trivandrum and committed suicide in the Mannadi Temple. The British severed his head from his body and exhibited it in different places.

## Conclusion

Thus the early resistance movements in Kerala led to the other resistance movements all over the country. It lasted in the freedom of our nation.

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