

tion. The action of the Government was viewed with disfavour by the majority of the people. The Indian press in general condemned the action of the Travancore Government. It may be noted in this connection that Ramakrishna Pillai lived the rest of his life as a political exile in Malabar, and died at Cannanore on April 26, 1916 after a long illness.¹

It was also during the reign of Sri Mulam Thirunal that the activities of the Indian National Congress found their echoes in Trivandrum and other parts of Kerala. The Civil Disobedience Movement which was started in British India by Mahatma Gandhi in 1919 had its reactions in Trivandrum. A Congress Committee was formed in Trivandrum on the initiative of such leaders as A. K. Pillai and V. Achyutha Menon and processions and meetings were regularly held. Boycott of British goods was also organised by the youth and the student population of Trivandrum. The Vaikom Satyagraha which was started in 1924 under the auspices of the Kerala Congress to secure admission to members of the backward communities to the approach roads adjacent to the temple had its reactions in Trivandrum as well. In the meantime, the right of all Hindus to enter temples was also pressed with vigour and the movement in favour of temple entry was gathering momentum during this period. Another notable event of the period was the students' agitation in Trivandrum, and other parts of Travancore as a protest against the increase in students' fees by the administration of Dewan Raghavaiah in 1922. The agitation was put down by the police with an iron hand, and there were protests all over the State against the high handedness of the police. Sri Mulam Thirunal passed away in 1924 after a long and eventful reign of 39 years.

Regency of Sethu Lakshmi Bai.

At the time of the demise of Sri Mulam Thirunal His Highness Sri Chitra Thirunal, the heir-apparent was only 12 years of age. His Highness was formally installed in September 1924, but Her Highness the Senior Maharani Sethu

1. The mortal remains of the great patriot were brought to Trivandrum after the establishment of responsible Government in Travancore in 1948. A bust of Ramakrishna Pillai has been erected by a grateful public on the spot where the press from which the '*Swadeshbhimani*' used to be published, was located. This was formally unveiled by President Dr. Rajendra Prasad during his visit to Trivandrum in connection with the celebration of the centenary of India's freedom struggle in August, 1957.

Lakshmi Bai acted as Regent during the period of His Highness' minority (1924-1931). Several important schemes calculated to advance the prosperity of the people were implemented during the period of the Regency. A law was passed in 1925 fostering and developing local self-Government in rural areas. The construction of several important public works was an important feature of the administration. In 1928 arrangements were made for the acquisition of lands for the Chackai-Thampanoor Railway extension, the Trivandrum Water Works and the Trivandrum Electric Supply Scheme. The College for Women at Trivandrum was raised to the first grade. Several reforms of a social and quasi-religious character which were introduced during this period have given Sethu Lakshmi Bai an honoured place among the social reformers of Kerala. The caste Hindus who took active part in the Vaikom Satyagrah organised a jatha from Vaikom to Trivandrum under the leadership of Mannath Padmanabhan to lay the demand of the Satyagrahis before the Regent. Public opinion in the State was so favourable that Government had at last to throw open the approach roads adjacent to the Vaikom temple to the "Avarnas". The primitive custom of animal sacrifice in the temples under the control of the Devaswom Department was stopped during the Regency of Sethu Lakshmi Bai and the practice was discouraged in the private and grant-in-aid *Devaswoms* also. The *Devadasi* or *Kudikkari* system which was in vogue in some of the temples in South Travancore was abolished in 1930.¹ The work in connection with the supply of electric power to Trivandrum was completed and the town was lighted in March 1929. The Trivandrum water supply scheme was started and the telephone system in the capital was thrown open to the use of the public.

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1. Under the *Devadasi* or *Kudikkari* system girls were admitted within the fold of the temples after they had gone through certain formalities and a *thali* was tied round their neck in the presence of the deity. A sustenance allowance was given to them as symbolical of their dependence on the temple. The *Devadasis* had to perform certain services in the temple such as singing and dancing. They had to do some menial duties as well. They had also to attend to the reception of the members of the royal family when they visited the temples. The system had its own evils. The dedication of girls as temple *dasis* came to be regarded as unsuited to modern conditions and hence the system was completely discontinued by the Government in 1930.