G. Ramachandran had a distinguished political career. For him politics was not a tool for self-glorification but a means to serve the people. From the very outset, G. Ramachandran, as a young boy, was keen on developing personal contacts with the national leaders of the time. He had cultivated intimate relationship with leaders like Rajendra Prasad, Jawaharlal Nehru, Rajagopalachari, Vallabhbhai Patel and others. Viswabharati and Sabarmati played a dominant role in shaping the political career of G. Ramachandran. The experiences, opportunities and discussions, in these two institutions, helped him a lot to learn more and drew him closer to the Freedom Movement and to the Gandhian Constructive works. He was more interested in constructive work than in the din and tumult of power politics. As Gandhi himself had stated, "my real politics was constructive work"; so too was his.

4.1 G. Ramachandran’s Participation in Freedom Movement as a Student

The influence of Mahatma Gandhi on G Ramachandran can be traced from very early days. It was in response to Mahatma Gandhi’s call to students in the Non-Co-operation movement that G. Ramachandran left school at Trivandrum in 1920. He was the hero of the students. He participated in the
drive for collection of the Tilak Swaraj Fund in Nagercoil and Trivandrum. He first donated his wristwatch and pair of dark glasses for Swaraj Fund to Sri. A.K Pillai who appealed for donations in cash and kind for the Tilak Swaraj Fund. As a student G. Ramachandran collected Rs 350 for the Tilak Swaraj fund. A.K Pillai was one of the secretaries of the Travancore Congress Committee. G. Ramachandran made acquaintance with Dr. M.E Naidu and learned more about the Congress and Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian Freedom Movement. Dr. M. E Naidu was his first political Guru.

When he was in his third year in Visvabharati, his professor C. F Andrews was summoned by Maulana Mohammed Ali to take care of Mahatma Gandhi during the famous 21 days fast at Dilkush in Delhi. Along with his professor, G. Ramachandran went to Delhi to meet Mahatma Gandhi and to assist him.

After graduating from Visvabharati he joined in Sabarmati Ashram. In Sabarmati Aharam, he was enchanted by the Gandhian ideals of Satyagraha and non-violence. After completing education in Sabarmati, he went to Gandhi Ashram, Tiruchengode, where he witnessed untouchability in its gruesome form. For removing the evil from the society he initiated the Anti-untouchability Movement, under the Harijan Sevak Sangh.
4.2 G. Ramachandran’s Participation in Salt Satyagraha

While Mahatma Gandhi was preparing to start his second great Non-Violent Revolution, the Salt Satyagraha in 1930, G. Ramachandran was very much stirred by the decision of Mahatma Gandhi. He requested Mahatma Gandhi to let him join his march. But Mahatma Gandhi advised him to get in touch with Rajagopalachari, in the struggle in Tamilnadu. On 12 March, 1930 Mahatma Gandhi started his historic March from Sabarmati to Dandi, a sea-coast in Gujarat. He was accompanied by 72 followers. He travelled on foot about 240 miles and moved from village to village, generating patriotic sentiment among the people. On 5th April he arrived at Dandi and decided to violate the Salt law the next day.

In the meantime, C. Rajagopalachari announced his intention to march with a hundred volunteers from Tiruchirappalli to Vedaranyam on the Tanjore sea-coast, and violate the Salt law, after Mahatma Gandhi had done the same in Dandi. G. Ramachandran was one of the volunteers in the first batch of satyagrahis. C. Rajagopalachari started his march from Thiruchirappalli. The March was through Tanjore district and the collector Mr. Thorne issued a proclamation, not to co-operate with Rajagopalachari. This declaration was rejected by the people and thousands voluntarily joined Rajagopalachari. When the March reached at Vedaranyam, he received a royal welcome from villagers, running to several thousands. Sardar Vedaratnam Pillai welcomed
Rajagopalachari. The next day, on 6th April 1930, Rajagopalachari and his followers violated the Salt law and were immediately arrested and taken away to an unknown destination. K. Santhanam was appointed as the second camp leader and he too was arrested. The Satyagrahis then selected Subramanian as their leader.

4.3 G. Ramachandran’s First Taste of Prison

After the arrest of Subramanian, G. Ramachandran was elected as the fourth central-camp leader. The Satyagrahis, under the leadership of G. Ramachandran, brought to the camp a big quantity of Salt and decided to auction it at a chain of meetings in Vedaranyam. The police raided the camp and arrested all the Volunteers. G. Ramachandran was sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for one year. There was a fine of Rs/500-or three months in default. At first he was taken to the District jail of Guddalore, but later on moved to the Vellore central prison. Here in the Prison he learnt tailoring.

The British Government in India came to terms with Mahatma Gandhi and signed an agreement- Gandhi- Irvin pact- in 1931. In this agreement the British decided to abrogate the old tax law and released all political prisoners. G. Ramachandran’s active participation in the Salt Satyagraha movement sowed the seeds of non-violence in his mind and it helped him in his future career. He was again sent to prison for Mahatma Gandhi’s call for civil disobedience. He was sent to Thiruchirapalli Jail. By these experiences G. Ramachandran learnt
that non-violence was the better solvent and the only solvent for most of the problem in life. He said that he had become fearless and more determined in standing up behind his great leader. For the memorial of Vadaranyam Salt Satyagraha, he was honored by the President of India in April 28, 1988.

4.4 G. Ramachandran’s Participation in Temple Entry Movement

In 1934, he was appointed the provincial Secretary of the Harijan Sevak Sangh in Kerala. A meeting of the Harijans was held at Chengannur under the presidentship of G. Ramachandran on November 3, 1935. In this meeting, resolutions requesting government to throw open government temples and public institutions to all classes of Hindus alike, were passed. The government decided to throw open all public roads, public tanks, public wells etc. to all communities.

He played a great role in the Temple Entry Proclamation in 1936. The Harijan Sevak Sangh organized an All India Temple Entry Conference at Trivandrum on 9th and 10th May 1936. The conference urged upon the Government to open all state controlled temples to Harijans and decided to send a deputation to wait upon Maharaja Sri Chithira Thirunal(1931-1948) and to present a memorial on 3rd November the deputation which consisted of M.Govindan, K. G. Kunjikrishna Pillai, K. P. Nilakantapillai, V. Atchutchan and G. Ramachandran waited upon the Diwan, C.P.Ramaswamy Aiyar and submitted a memorial. signed by 50,522 people of the high caste, praying...
temple entry for the Harijans\textsuperscript{19}. Advised by the Diwan and following the example of Cochin the Maharaja issued the Temple Entry Proclamation on 12 November 1936 \textsuperscript{20}. This progressive reform, throwing open all temples to the Harijans and backward classes was widely welcomed. It brought about a healthy change in the religious and the social life of a large section of the people. It was a great event in G. Ramachandran's life. As Secretary of Harijan Sevak Sangh G. Ramachandran was transferred to Madurai to take leadership of the Temple Entry Movement. He stayed in the house of Sri Krishna Swamy Bharati who was one of the freedom fighters and also a leading lawyer in Madurai. G. Ramachandran organized various meetings about the Temple Entry Movement, and helped to take the Harijans into Meenakshamman Temple\textsuperscript{21}.

4.5 G. Ramachandran and Travancore State Congress

Considering the appeal of the Indian National congress in October 1937 the Congress minded people of Travancore organized a committee at Trivandrum called the Travancore Provincial Congress Committee\textsuperscript{22}. Pattom A. Thanu Pillai, M.R. Madhava Warrier, K.T. Thomas, E.V. Krishna Pillai, G. Ramachandran, Chenganacherry K. Parameswaran Pillai, V. Atchutha Menon and G. Sreedhar were some of its prominent members. Under the auspices of Travancore Provincial Congress committee, a political Conference was convened at Trivandrum on 27 November 1937. Presided over by Pattabhi Sitaramayya, a prominent Congress leader, the Conference adopted a
manifesto outlining the party programmes in Travancore. It asserted that its objectives were the creation of a Responsible Government on the basis of fully elected popular legislature and the formation of a Kerala Province consisting of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar. "The cry for a share in all branches of administration had transformed into a cry for responsible government".

The Congress working Committee that met at Wardha on 6th February 1938 adopted a moderately worded resolution declaring its general policy of non-intervention in the internal political struggle in native states. The 51st Annual session of the Congress at Haripura, Gujarat on 19 February ratified this resolution. The Haripura decision therefore caused frustration to the political leaders of Travancore. Despite this, it cannot be denied that the resolution amounted to an exhortation to the people of the state to form independent political parties for carrying on the struggle. Yet in response to the Haripura resolution, they dissolved the provincial Congress committee and decided to form a party of their own. This Haripura resolution called forth strong criticism from the states people's organizations, which felt they were being abandoned. But there was wisdom in this policy, and none saw it more clearly than Mahatma Gandhi, or foresaw more clearly what would be the result. His comments to G. Ramachandran were set out in 'Harijan' of 5th March 1938.
"The state resolution", he said "is a call to the states people not to go to sleep but to start work in right earnest. We want the states people to carry on ceaseless work in the states, but not in the name of the congress...let them work with moral support of the congress but avoid the congress name." "The real job", he concluded, "is to build up your own organizations. You may continue to be members of the Congress, attend it and keep in touch with it. But your real work will lie in the states".28

Everywhere organizations sprang up, but they were called 'Praja Mandals' (Peoples' Unions) and not Congress bodies. The states leaders made their pilgrimage to Mahatma Gandhi's ashram at Wardha to consult him and for the most part, took his advice. G. Ramachandran reminded the people of Kerala about the existence of Congress. He was described as the 'Khaddar' clad. G. Ramachandran, dashing on his bicycle from meeting to meeting or leaping into buses to remote parts of Kerala, to remind the people of the existence of Congress29. At a meeting of prominent workers held at Trivandrum, an influential committee of about 50 members was constituted to revive the Congress movement in the state. The president was Changanacherry Parameswaranpillai and the secretaries were G. Ramachandran and G.Sreedhar30. In 1937 a group of intellectuals, mostly young, had founded the Young Kerala Society, in order to study and pronounce on social and political questions. Theoretically non political, it had many Congressmen in it.
Changanacherry K. Parameswaranpillai was its President and G. Ramachandran was its secretary. In March 1938 it issued a statement on the political situation in Travancore, which welcomed the emergence of the state congress.

On 16th February 1938 the leaders of Travancore held a preliminary meeting at Trivandrum. It decided to organize a political party for the protection of the interests of minorities and for the establishment of responsible government in the state. There followed another meeting on 23rd February presided over by C.V Kunjuraman, a popular Izhava leader and it decided to create a new political organization called the Travancore State Congress.

The Travancore State Congress had some aims and objectives. The primary aim was the attainment of responsible government. The prominent leaders of the Travancore State Congress were A. Thanu Pillai, T.M. Varghese, C. Kesavan, K.T. Thomas, E. John Philipose, A. J. John etc.

G. Ramachandran hesitated to join the struggle for responsible Government led by Travancore State Congress in its initial period because he waited to see if the new state Congress was as non-communal as it claimed to be. Communalism played a dominant role in the state politics. All organizations like Malayali Memorial, Ilava memorial and the Abstention Movement were formed on communal basis. The Abstention movement taught a lesson that communal rivalry would weaken their cause and strengthen the
authority of the Diwan, they felt it not prudent to quarrel indefinitely for a handful Government office or representation in the legislature.\textsuperscript{36}

There are different views about the organization of the state congress. Nilkan Perumal, a pro-government political worker of Madras, wrote: ‘the communal minded Joint Political Congress was rebaptised as the nationalistic State Congress, its plank and programme became responsible government.\textsuperscript{37}’ EM.S. Namboodiripad, a Communist leader of Malabar, contented that, ‘a federation of the Ilava, Muslim, and Christian Communities subsequently transformed itself into the State congress.\textsuperscript{38}’ The ‘Prakasam’, a Cochin weekly, characterized its advent as ‘a result of the awakening to a sense of liberty in the world particularly in India.\textsuperscript{39}’ G. Ramachandran soon became satisfied that State Congress was truly non-communal in its aims and actions and joined it in May 1938.\textsuperscript{40} He flung himself into local politics and became a great orator and writer for the state congress.

The organization of the state congress marked a turning point in the history of the struggle for responsible government. By tradition the inhabitants evinced an abiding loyalty to the Maharaja and the ruling house. In their attempt to secure public support, state congress professed loyalty to the Maharaja,\textsuperscript{41} but with a view to undermine the autocratic system they made the Diwan the target of attack. No doubt, this attitude of the party presented a formidable challenge to the basic conception of the princely administration. In
consequence, the government considered the state congress as a ‘disloyal and subversive’ organization and left no stone unturned in its efforts to suppress it. Its measures towards this end included the organization of loyalist’s parties, utilization of the services of communal and religious bodies and employment of repressive measures.

The congress won the support of labor. The students were solid for the congress. Malayalis scattered all over India and beyond, were thrilled with the new developments, and branches of the Travancore state congress were established in Madras, Bombay, Delhi and Calcutta and even in Colombo.

The Diwan was also building up his own party. He formed the Travancore National Congress. For its president he found a man of different stamp, Mannathu Padmanabhapillai, president of the Nair Service Society. Mannathu Padmanabhapillai readily accepted the president ship when Sir C.P suggested his name. The Travancore National Congress sent a delegation to meet Mahatma Gandhi; it found G. Ramachandran and John Philipose already there. This is an evidence which shows G. Ramachandran’s close relationship with Mahatma Gandhi and he worked as a connecting link between State Congress and Mahatma Gandhi.

The immediate task before the leaders since the formation of the state congress was the extension and consolidation of its activities. In order to check the propaganda work of the state congress the District Magistrate of
Trivandrum banned the meetings and procession within the District for two months from 7th March, on the plea that they would lead to breach of peace.

The ban on congress meetings had been lifted, but the congress members were subjected to personal harassment and many meetings were broken up by rowdy trouble-makers. A congress meeting held on June 25th at Chenganoor, in central Travancore where congress was the strongest, proved the climax of the campaign and led to a sharp exchange between Sir C.P and Mahatma Gandhi. G. Ramachandran, Mahatma Gandhi's close disciple gave a full account of this event and published it in 'The Hindu'. He explained, a number of the leaders went there to address an open-air meeting, and found a huge crowd already assembled at the bus station, and the police already beating up people along the road to the meeting place. The leaders were determined to hold the meeting, but when they got to the meeting place the platform was already occupied by rowdies who attacked them. That young aristocrat, John Philipose was beaten with a slipper and almost lost self-control; but he submitted himself to the beating. The leaders appealed to the crowd to remain peaceful; but the police, who had made no attempt to protect the speakers, charged the crowd with 'lathis' and did considerable damage. At this the crowd lost patience and began to pelt the police with stones and chased them down the road to the police station. The leaders linked arms across the road to stop the crowd harassing the police and urged the crowd to disperse. But after they
themselves had gone back to Trivandrum the police renewed their lathicharges and inflicted damage on some of the crowd.

G. Ramachandran concluded his account of these happening with the statement: “The problem now facing us in Travancore is far more fundamental than political reform. The question is whether peaceful citizens are to be persecuted for the exercise of fundamental civil rights by organized hooliganism.”

Mahatma Gandhi telegraphed the Diwan to protest: “Hope the State will recognize altered times and full play expression public opinion”. The Diwan telegraphed back: “Greatly regret you should have arrived at conclusion without reference to other side stop sorry G. Ramachandran’s statement ignores injuries sustained by Hindu Loyalist League stop your assertion no provocation not accurate stop Travancore Government have no desire to interface with legitimate political activities.” This event also shows G. Ramachandran worked as a connecting link between state congress and Mahatma Gandhi.

Not only were peaceful meetings broken up but individual state congress members were attacked. In order to protest the physical assault on K. P. Nilakantapillai, one of the general secretaries of the state congress a public meeting was organized. Judge Changanacherry Parameswaranpillai led a procession from the congress office to the great square outside the new
Railway Station. G. Ramachandran was the chief speaker, and the meeting passed a resolution protesting against the failure of the government to secure adequate protection to peaceful citizens. On 25th February 1938 the working committee of the state congress met at Trivandrum. It took an important decision to prepare a memorial against the Dewan’s administration and present it to the Maharaja. The ‘memorial’ was duly signed by all the members of the working committee. To substantiate their ‘prayers’ the committee prepared a memorandum and submitted it along with the memorial. By these the state congress demanded the termination of the services of C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyer and holding of an enquiry into his administrative acts, appointments and financial transactions. On May 30th these documents were sent to the private secretary to the Maharaja for presentation to His Highness. But as the Maharaja and the Diwan remained totally unacknowledged, the working committee decided to publish them in book form. This book, printed in Cochin State, appeared at the end of June under the title ‘Travancore Today’. The Diwan tried to persuade the signatories to withdraw the memorandum. The memorandum remained a subject of fierce debate. G. Ramachandran would not touch it. Messrs Patel, C. R. Pattabhi Sitaramayya and G. Ramachandran ... requested Mahatma Gandhi to insist state congress people for the withdrawal of the Memorandum and Mahatma
Gandhi told them that his personal view was to withdraw the memo "So as to resume correspondence towards an easy and tangible solution".

Repression, launched by the government convinced the congress leaders of the imperative need for taking positive action. G. Ramachandran seriously pointed out that the Travancore State Congress was now forced into a position to fight "Or permit the steady destruction of its organization" under the adroit handling of the Diwan.

4.6 G. Ramachandran’s Participation in State Congress Civil Disobedience Movement

A series of unfavorable developments led the Travancore State Congress to launch civil disobedience movement in Travancore. The emergence of loyalist parties with the moral backing of the Government caused concern in the Congress circles. In several places the people, especially the students condemned the leaders of loyalist parties as ‘anti-national and opportunists’. When the third session of the assembly opened on 11th July 1938, a crowd collected in front of the college, hooted and jeered at the National Congress leaders, when they passed by. Provoked at this, S. Krishna Iyer, leader of the National Congress Party in the Sri Mulam Assembly, moved a resolution seeking protection to the members and urging the house to take necessary steps for bringing the culprits to book. The Diwan Sir C. P. Ramay Swamy Iyer assured the House of protection to the members. The resolution
was put to vote and carried. In the evening, the police made a lathy-charge causing serious injury to more than twenty students. On 17th July, 1938, the District Magistrate of Trivandrum extended the ban order for two months and prohibited seven prominent working committee members Pattom Thanupillai, T.M. Vargese, K.P. Nilakantapillai, V.K. Velayudhan, K.T. Thomas, P.K. Kunju and G. Ramachandran from attending public meeting during the period. The State Congress considered the ban as a "serious abrogation of the civil liberties of the people." On 18 July, Pattom. A. Thanupillai moved for discussion an adjournment motion on the incident in the Assembly, but it was disallowed by the Diwan.

In the midst of problems, a Congress delegation consisting of G. Ramachandran and E. J. Philipose went to Wardha, seeking Mahatma Gandhi's advice. He advised the party to observe strict non-violence and discipline and sent Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur, a well-known social worker to explore the possibility of effecting a compromise between the authorities and the state congress. The intervention of Mahatma Gandhi in Travancore affairs followed the personal invitation by G. Ramachandran to intercede and bring about a negotiation. Raj Kumari was in Trivandrum from August 18th to 25th and she saw the Diwan at once and several times later, she visited the Maharani. She saw both the state congress leaders and the leaders of the National congress; she had personal talks with her old friend G. Ramachandran and her
new friend Pattom Thanupillai. She wrote a very long "aide memoire" for Mahatma Gandhi and also took him a letter from Pattom setting out the state congress point of view. The attempt of Sri. Rajkumari was a failure and she left disheartened to report her failure to Mahatma Gandhi.

On 22 August 1938, the working committee decided to launch the Civil Disobedience agitation from 26th August. The Government took effective measures to face the situation. It directed the district Magistrate to take strong action in the case of state leaders like G. Ramachandran. The Working Committee decided to begin the agitation by disobeying the ban orders at selected places. It constituted a Propaganda Committee under the leadership of G. Ramachandran, K. P. Nilakanta Pillai and C. Kesavan to do propaganda work in the areas south of Trivandrum, south of Quilon and north of Quilon respectively.

On August 29th a meeting was held on Trivandrum beach; but when the speakers were arrested, the police began to hustle the crowd which became restive and stoned the police and burned the District Superintendent’s car. Worse was to happen at Neyyatinkara where a large crowd, demonstrating against the arrest of a local leader, got out of hand, shut the local police up in their police station and took to burning state transport buses. G. Ramachandran, whose family home was in Neyyatinkara, rushed down to control the mob and got some buses safely through. A platoon of the State
Forces under Colonel Watkis also went down to rescue the police and restore order. The crowd proved uncontrollable and attacked the platoon with big stones till nearly all were injured. Colonel Watkis ordered the troops to fire, five were killed and the crowd melted away. G. Ramachandran was arrested that night for fomenting a riot.

Rioting and shooting occurred in half a dozen other places and altogether some twenty persons were killed and 120 injured. One police constable was among the killed. The students, both college students and school children, kept up the agitation on their own account. ‘Jatas’ or demonstration marches also came from outside to support the congress. Editors were warned of serious consequences if they published anything unfavorable to the Government, and a number of papers had their licenses cancelled and their presses attached.

4.7 Memorial Controversy and G. Ramachandran

The incidents connected with first civil disobedience movement in Travancore indicated the steady transformation of the movement from non-violence to violent struggle. Radicals began to gain control of the situation. G. Ramachandran requested Mahatma Gandhi to insist State Congress people for the withdrawal of the memorandum and Mahatma Gandhi told him that his personal view was to withdraw the ‘memo’ so as to resume correspondence towards an easy and ‘tangible’ solution. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and C.R.
Pattabhi Sitaramayya also requested Mahatma Gandhi to insist State Congress leaders for the withdrawal of the memorandum. In this G. Ramachandran’s action in sending a note to Mahatma Gandhi without the knowledge of the working committee of the State Congress, exasperated them not a little and there was even a move to ask him to resign. On 12th November a State Congress delegation consisting of Pattom A. Thanupillai, T.M. Varghese, V. K. Velayudhan, P.K. Kungu, P.J. Sebastian, M. N. Parameswaran Pillai and G. Ramachandran went to Wardha and apprised Mahatma Gandhi of the political situation in the state. In order to prepare the ground for his intervention, Mahatma Gandhi insisted upon the withdrawal of the memorial. After their return from Wardha on 23rd November, the leaders referred the memorial issue to working committee meeting. The discussion brought the controversy within the party. A section of the members led by A. Thanupillai and G. Ramachandran, Pro-Gandhians insisted up on unconditional withdrawal. But another section under T.M. Varghese opposed it strongly. It seemed that the party would split over this issue. At the same time Government decided to take stern measures to suppress the movement.

Mahatma Gandhi again appealed to the imprisoned leaders to withdraw the Memorandum, but received the reply: “The working Committee feels that the Divan’s continuance in office is detrimental to the people’s interest. The withdrawal of the Memorandum may unmeritely discredit the state congress...
and cause an irretrievable set back to the movement”. By this time Mahatma Gandhi had been led to believe that they were “without the ability to prove the charges” and that it was therefore their clear duty to withdraw them.81.

The repressive policy of the Government and the shattered health of the imprisoned leaders like N.K. Padmanabha Pillai, R. Vasudevan Pillai and A.J. John necessitated a reconsideration of their policy.82. The State Congress convened a meeting at the central prison Trivandrum on 23 December and passed a resolution withdrawing the personal allegations against the Diwan contained in the memorial in obedience to Mahatma Gandhi’s advice.83. After the withdrawal, the Government relaxed its policy towards the political prisoners and after a show of trial, released all the signatories on 6 January 1939.84.

The withdrawal of the memorandum clearly signified the passing of the movement from the hands of the State leadership to that of the British Indian leaders, and that it was to sub serve the Indian National Congress interest.85. The withdrawal of the Memorial created adverse effects on the State Congress. When they took this decision, the leaders expected some kind of constitutional reforms and changed the attitude of the Government.86. But contrary to their hopes, no step was taken to grant administrative or political reforms. Added to this, the Government adopted measures with a view to weaken their hold over the people.87. On 22 October, one hundred and eighty eight political prisoners
were released. 88 At a public meeting in Trivandrum, on 24 October, presided by
A. Thanupillai, the civil disobedience programme was suspended temporarily
on grounds of release of the prisoners 89. With the suspension of the civil
disobedience movement the leaders appealed to the people to prepare for a
direct action.

4.8 G. Ramachandran’s Participation in State Congress Direct Action

The Government considered the release of the political prisoners as a
concession granted to the agitators. The Travancore State Congress however,
was not prepared to accept anything less than responsible Government.
Dissatisfied at the Government’s attitude, the radicals, particularly the leaders
of the Youth League, demanded purposeful action. Therefore, the released
leaders were confronted with the serious problem of placing a definite
agitational programme before the public. On 17 January 1939 the State
Congress declared its intention to launch direct action in six weeks unless
negotiations were opened by the Government on the proposal put forward by
it 90. These proposals stipulated, among other conditions, a general amnesty,
and the repeal of Criminal Amendment Regulation, recognition of the State
Congress for negotiations, restoration of licenses to news papers, and
withdrawal of prosecution against labor strikers 91. When the committee
considered the issue of fixing the date for direct action, young members like G
Ramachandran, E.J. Philipose and P.J. Sebastian insisted on immediate commencement\(^9\). Direct action includes:

1. Holding of meetings, conferences, processions and volunteer rallies in defiance of prohibitory orders;

2. Open distribution of prohibited literature;

3. Picketing of liquor shops and withdrawal of deposits from the postal savings bank;

4. Offering Satyagraha before the palace;

5. And non-payment of taxes and dues to Government.

There followed a heated discussion. The State Congress decided to renew the agitation with effect from 25 March 1939\(^9\). The administration on the other hand, armed itself with powers to suppress the threatened agitation. G. Ramachandran wrote in ‘Harijan’, “The present policy of the Government seems to be to avoid a frontal fight and all sensation in their policy of repression. Arrest was made without fuss and in case almost unnoticed”. Some three months after the “act of gracious clemency” there were, according to state congress calculation, some three hundred political prisoners in jail\(^9\).

The AISPC, realizing the difficulties under which the Travancore State Congress labored, passed a resolution on Travancore, drafted by Jawaharlal Nehru himself which proclaimed that the state was justified in starting the
Satyagraha. Mahatma Gandhi first advised the postponement of the date of ultimatum.

In 1939, to co-ordinate their work effectively, the State Congress divided the State into nine zones under the control of nine leaders. G. Ramachandran was given the charge of Trivandrum. Under his leadership, the Neyyatinkara Taluk played a great role in the struggle for responsible Government. Of the Neyyatinkara riots, the resident writes: “The Divan has definite evidence of the connection between the state congress leaders and those of the mob”. G. Ramachandran, “whose niece is betrothed to Mahatma Gandhi’s grandson” (and who spent the day in state transport buses to get them safely past the mob), “cannot be absolved from responsibility for what occurred on that day”. Neyyatinkara Taluk was then known as the Bardoli in Kerala. A Taluk confederation meeting was held in Neyyatinkara Taluk bank hall, on 17 January 1938 under the leadership of Changanasseri K. Parameshwara Pillai. Actually it had been organized by G. Ramachandran.

At that time, Ramachandran published a magazine called 'NavaKeralam'. He wrote stirring articles against Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer and his despotic rule. Provoked by this article the Government ordered the arrest of G. Ramachandran.

On 6th and 7th March, 1939 the working committee met at Trivandrum and appointed a council of action consisting of seven members with Pattom A.
Thanupillai as president and G. Ramachandran as convener. The committee formed a shadow cabinet to guide the agitation from outside. The Government arrested all members of the council. G. Ramachandran and Thanupillai were arrested at Kottayam on 18 March 1939. Mahatma Gandhi condemned the arrests and at the same time on 20 March advised the leaders to drop all plans to direct action. Taking advantages of the suggestion given by Mahatma Gandhi, leaders of lesser note convened a meeting at Alwaye on 22nd March 1939 and decided to call off the proposed direct action. Soon after the suspension of direct action the Government ordered the release of all the members of council of action.

With the suspension of direct action the gulf between the Youth League and State Congress became wider. It badly affected the morale of the State Congress. There followed a period of lull in political activity for eight years till 1946. In the mean time several top-ranking leaders left the party and demoralization crept into its rank and file.

On 6 September 1939 the State Congress in a resolution proposed the reactivisation of the Congress on moderate lines. Mahatma Gandhi advised the leaders to open direct negotiations with the Government. Mahatma Gandhi stressed upon the indefinite suspension of civil disobedience movement, opening honorable negotiation with the authorities, avoiding any anxiety about ‘Satyagrahis’ in prison, lowering the pitch of immediate demand, in order to
quicken the progress towards the final goal, and as a test, the fulfilment of the Constructive Programme by the mass as a condition precedent to civil disobedience. The moderate section led by Thanupillai and G. Ramachandran was inclined to agree with directions of Mahatma Gandhi, but the radicals considered it as a retrogression and climb down. In July 1939 State Congress entered into peace-talks with the Government, but it failed. Soon after, it again started an agitation. In the mean time G. Ramachandran and other leaders mounted on a vigorous propaganda from outside the state. Under the provisions of the Defense of India Act, the Government arrested and imprisoned the successive state Congress presidents and numerous workers. In October, G. Ramachandran presided over a meeting of the Working Committee in Ernakulam and expressed his concern with the starving and unemployed in the Shertallai area. It was decided to disband the Congress workers training camp in Cochin State, and to send the workers back to Travancore to carry on the Constructive Programme in order to relieve distress. Early in December 1940 G. Ramachandran, the fourteenth President of the State Congress interviewed the Diwan at Madras for a settlement, as a result of which besides releasing all the prisoners, the latter announced his decision not to arrest the leaders residing outside the State on return to Travancore. In view of this all leaders decided to return to the State and thus ended the State Congress agitation started in November 1939.
Between 1939 and 1944 the Travancore State Congress lost much of its prestige. Several top-ranking leaders like V.K. Velayudhan, P.K. Kunju, P.J. Sebastian, R. Sankar left the party. Government offered high posts to them. By this time, the Youth League broke away its relations with the State Congress and organized them into a radical section. The radicals corresponded with Subhash Chandra Bose to secure his guidance for organizing a left-wing group. They denounced the policy of Mahatma Gandhi and declared that 'his leadership would not fetch responsible Government'. The leftist movement was strengthened by the famine due to the Second World War.

In August 1942 the State Congress found an opportunity to revive the organization when Mahatma Gandhi organized the Quit India Movement. On 2 April, 1942 the Standing Committee of the All India State's People's Conference met in New Delhi and examined the proposals of Cripps on the future Constitution of India and the possibility of establishing a National Government in India. It passed a resolution exhorting them to celebrate 19 April 1942 as an All India People's day. The State Congress decided to celebrate it by holding meetings and demonstrations in the State. In Trivandrum, the District Magistrate banned these celebrations. Pattom A. Thanupillai and G. Ramachandran violated the ban order and were imprisoned on 20 April. 1942. With the arrest of other leaders the movement fizzled out.
The State Congress in struggle for responsible Government ended in victory; the Maharaja Sri Chitra Tirunal issued a royal proclamation on 4th September, 1947 granting full responsible Government in Travancore. Till Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Ayer left the state he upheld the monarchical setup. According to him, it provided administrative stability and continuity of National life and the ruler could be above party politics. He maintained that the economic prosperity and administrative efficiency of a country could be preserved only by such a set-up. In his attempt to uphold the concept of monarchy he declared Travancore as an Independent State. However, the Movement under the State Congress resorted to a process of continuous agitation since 1938 against this attitude of the government and the Diwan.

After the attainment of responsible government, elections were held to the Legislative Assembly. The State Congress secured the majority of seats in the Assembly. On 20 March, 1948, the newly elected Representative Body held its first meeting at the Legislative Chamber at Trivandrum with P.G. Narayanan Unnithan, as Chairman. After taking oath, the members elected A.J. John as the president of the Representative Body. Subsequently, in accordance with their resolution the Maharaja promulgated the Travancore Interim Constitution Act VI of 1948 entrusting the administration with a council of ministers. The Act declared the Representative active Body as the Legislative Assembly and made the Council of Ministers responsible to it.
On 24 March, 1948 P.G. Narayanan Unnithan retired from office and a Council of Ministers with Pattom A. Thanupillai as Prime Minister and T.M. Varghese and C. Kesavan as ministers assumed office. In 1948 Pattom A, Thanupillai expanded his Ministry and tipped G. Ramachandran, A. Achutan, K.M. Kora and P.S. Nataraja Pillai to his ministry. G. Ramachandran took charge of office on 13 July, 1948. He was given the Portfolio of Excise, Prohibition, Rural Development and Public Health. As Minister, he led a simple life. The last file he signed was the sanction of the Medical College at Trivandrum. Owing to inner conflict and the imperious nature of Pattom A. Thanupillai, the Ministry could not continue. Pattom A. Thanupillai resigned on 22 October, 1948. Though G. Ramachandran was in the ministry of Pattom Thanupillai for only a brief while, some of the bold decisions he took as a Minister are being remembered by many even today. When the Ministry resigned he continued his activities in Gandhigram.

G. Ramachandran served a term as a member of the Rajya Sabha from 1964 to 1970. He was nominated as a Rajya Sabha member in 1964. He was the second person who was nominated to the Rajya Sabha from Kerala. Jawaharlal Nehru listened with considerable interest to his speeches in the Rajya Sabha, especially on education. In Rajya Sabha he made some comments in the Budget Session about Adult Education, Rural
Industrialization and Economic Development. He also discussed the topic of political instability with the leaders of the Rajya Sabha.

4.9 Conclusion

The influence of Mahatma Gandhi on G. Ramachandran can be traced to very early days. So he plunged himself into politics right from his early days. He responded to Mahatma Gandhi's non-co-operation movement and participated in Salt Satyagraha, Civil Disobedience and Quit India Movement under the leadership of Travancore State Congress. He held many posts like that of General Secretary of the State Congress. He played a vital role in the Temple Entry Movement. His part in the formation of Travancore State Congress and its activities are memorable. Several times he was punished and imprisoned. He fought against the Diwan rule and stood for a Responsible Government in Travancore. For this venture he followed the Gandhian dictum, 'non-violence'. He was a true Gandhian in all its respects.

G. Ramachandran hesitated to join in the struggle for Responsible Government led by Travancore State Congress in its initial stage because he waited to see if the new State Congress was as non-communal as it claimed to be.

He was not at all a biased or royalist politician because he sincerely participated in the struggle for Responsible Government in Travancore. On the other hand Diwan Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyyer was a Royalist. He took many
measures to safeguard the interest of monarchy. According to him, monarchical setup provided administrative stability and continuity of national life and the ruler could be above party politics. He maintained that the economic prosperity and administrative efficiency of a country could be preserved only by such setup. In his attempt to uphold the concept of monarchy he declared Travancore as an Independent State. G. Ramachandran, on the other hand criticized the oppressive policy taken by the Diwan and sternly worked for a Responsible Government in Travancore.

G. Ramachandran was the connecting link between Mahatma Gandhi and Travancore State Congress. Several times he met Mahatma Gandhi at Wardha in order to convey details of the truthful activities of the Travancore State Congress and he returned to Kerala with Mahatma Gandhi's valuable advice. Once Mahatma Gandhi remarked, "I believe every word of what Sri Ramachandran says".

G. Ramachandran was not at all an opportunist. Once, Travancore State Congress faced a severe crisis. The crisis is known as Memorial Controversy. By considering the appeal of G. Ramachandran and others, Mahatma Gandhi advised the State Congress leaders to withdraw the Memorandum and the personal allegations against Diwan. While one section of the State Congress opposed the advice of Mahatma Gandhi and left the Party, G. Ramachandran and Pattom A. Thanupillai sternly supported the decision of Mahatma Gandhi. Another similar situation occurred when Mahatma Gandhi advised the
suspension of direct action against the Government. Here also G. Ramachandran sided with Travancore State Congress. These events provided an opportunity to Mahatma Gandhi to involve himself in the internal politics of Travancore. Mahatma Gandhi frequently reminded the State Congress leaders about Satyagraha with non-violence and the validity of Constructive Programme. Mahatma Gandhi’s involvement in the internal Politics of Travancore was a blessing. G. Ramachandran was a strong follower of the Gandhian Constructive Programme and Mahatma Gandhi advised the State Congress leaders to impart his Constructive Programme to the people of Kerala before going into direct action. G. Ramachandran strengthened the State Congress through the Constructive Programme. His meritorious service as a minister in Pattom A. Thanupillai’s cabinet and as a member of RajyaSabha is remarkable.

In fact he was an honest politician with devotion in mind and dedication in service. As G. Ramachandran was a true follower of Mahatma Gandhi, his role in Politics was highly useful to the humanity as a whole, particularly to the down-trodden. His talks, debates and discussions in Legislature and Parliament were not only intelligent but also intelligible to others. As a minister he believed in deeds rather than in words. He was an ideal example to the future politicians. He believed in Parliamentary democracy of the Sarvodaya type which means that all-round revolution should be achieved by consent and not coercion.
NOTES


10. *Ibid*


30. Ibid., p.120.

31. Ibid., p.134.

32. Ibid.


44. Ibid, p.135.


49. *Ibid.*, pp. 139-140.


52. State Congress memorial, 30 May 1938, submitted to the Maharaja of Travancore. D. Dis. 308/1948/C.S.

53. State Congress Memorandum, 30 May 1938, submitted to the Maharaja of Travancore D. Dis. 306/1948/C.S.


67. C.S. to Govt., Trivandrum, 22 August 1938, Confidential Memorandum to District Magistrate. D. Dis. 1169/1944/C.S.

68. Commissioner of Police, Trivandrum, 23 August 1938, Letter No.228 to the Diwan of Travancore D.Dis. 362/1948/C.S.


Secretariat. See also  *Harijan*, 17 September 1938, Vol. 6 (1938-39), p.382.


82. I.G of Police, Trivandrum, 22 December 1938, secret report to the C. S to the Government., Trivandrum. D. Dis. 3414/ 1944/ C. S.


86. *The Hindu*, 22 December 1938, p.11.


91. Statement issued by the Working Committee of Travancore State Congress.


92. G. of Police. Trivandrum. 1 March 1939, report to C. S to Govt.

Trivandrum. D. Dist 4164/ 1944/ C. S.

93. G. of Police. Trivandrum. 7 March 1939, report to C. S to Govt.

Trivandrum. D. Dist 3359/ 1944/C.S.


95. AISPC to Pattom Thanupillai. 22 February 1939, File.11, p.53, *Pattom Thanupillai papers*, NMMI.


99. C. Narayananpillai, *op. cit.*. p.751


108. *Circular to District Magistrate*, D. Dis. 824/1945/C.S.


117. *Kaumudi*, 31 May 1939, p.3.

118. *Malayala Rajyam*, 21 April, 1942.


124. Interview with Sr. Mythili, Orootookala, 30 May 2002.


129. Dr. N. Radhakrishnan, *A Humanistic Approach to Indian Education*, *Gandhigram*, p. VI.