



TNPSC GROUP IIA MAIN 2024

ROLE OF TAMILNADU IN FREEDOM STRUGGLE

THE POLIGAR REBELLION, 1799

The Poligar Rebellion was spearheaded by Jagavira Pandya Kattabomman, Poligar of Panchalamkurichi. Kattabomman was a conscientious, god-fearing, law-abiding subject with a strong sense of duty, dignity and discipline. Stung by the harshness, rashness and ruthlessness of collector Jackson, he had a hiccup at an interview with the collector at Ramanathapuram on 19 Sep, 1797 and escaped with his brother Oomathurai and his minister Sivasubramania Pillai. Encouraged and supported by Maruthu Pandyan of Sivaganga, Kattabomman extended his help to the latter to rise against the British. The Madras Council viewed his move as a challenge to its authority. Once instruction from Governor General Lord Wellesley, Major Banmerman mounted an assault on Panchalamkurichi Fort on 5 Sep., pursued the rebel and betrayed by the Poligar of Pudukkottai, Kattabomman was captured, tried, and hanged to death at Kayattar on 17 Oct. 1799.

SOUTH INDIAN REBELLION, 1800 - 1801

Learning a lesson from the fall of Kattabomman, the rebel leaders of Sivaganga, Dindigal, Coimbatore, Malabar, Mysore, and Maharashtra formed a Coalition, conspired, hatched out a plan of action and rose in rebellion against the British rule and regime under the leadership of Maruthu Pandyan of Sivaganga. This South Indian Rebelhon is claimed to be the First War of Indian independence.

VELLORE REBELLION, 1806

Undaunted by the suppression of the South Indian Rebellion, the rebels had shifted their theatre of revolt to Vellore. They regrouped themselves in strength, established contact

with the disgruntled sepoys, conspired against the English and on 13 July 1806 revolted against the Company rule. Though the Vellore Rebellion was repressed, it is regarded as a rehearsal on a small scale to the major rebellion of 1857", which is considered to be the Second War of Indian Independence.

PRE-CONGRESS POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS

Madras Native Association (1852), the Theosophical Society (1882) and the Madras Mahajana Sabha (1884). Besides these major political formations, the Muslims of Madras established the Madras branch of the Central National Mohammedan Association of Bengal (1883). Similarly the Madras Christians formed the National Church with a view to assert their identity, free from the control of the European Missions.

FIRST CONGRESS SESSION, 1885

Of the total 72 delegates 21 delegates were from the Madras Presidency; of the 21 representative 16 were from the Madras Mahajana Sabha.

THIRD CONGRESS SESSION AT MADRAS, 1887

Madras had the honour of organizing the third session of the congress in 1887. It was held at Makkis Garden, now known as the thousand lights. 607 delegates attended the session. Badruddin Tyabji presided over the meeting.

THE MADRAS MODERATES

The followers of Gopala Krishna Gokhale were known as the Congress Moderates. V.S. Srinivasa Sastri, P.S. Sivasamy Iyer, V.Krishnaswamy Iyer, T.R.Venktrama Sastri, G.A. Natesan, author of 'Indian Review', T.M.Madhava Rao, S.Subramania Iyer, C.Vijayaragavachari, S.A.Swaminatha Iyer were the distinguished Moderates of Madras.

THE MADRAS EXTREMISTS

The supporters of Bal Gangadhar Tilak were considered as Extremists. Selam Vijayaragavachari, C.Rajagopalachari, T.M.Nair, S.Kasthuriranga Iyengar, A.Ramaswamy Iyengar, T.Rangachari were the well known Tilakites, V.O.Chidambaram Pillai was called Tilak of Tamil Nadu. Mandayam Srinivachari, Surendranth Ethiraj, Triplicane Krishnamachari, Sarkarai Chettiar, and Subramania Siva were the other distinguished extremists.

SWADESHI MOVEMENT 1905 - 07

The fire of Swadeshi Movement, started in Bengal, soon spread to Tamil Nadu. Swadeshism captured the imagination of the Tamil extremists. They encouraged boycott of foreign cloth and products and supported swadeshi goods. The Industrial Association established warehouses to store and sell swadeshi products. The Swadeshi League carried the message of Swadeshism to the masses. The Balabharath Association arranged popular discussion and debate in support of the mass movement. Similarly, Swadeshivastu Pracharini Sabha popularized the sale of locally made goods. A national fund was raised in support of the movement.' Subramania Bharati's patriotic songs fanned the fire of Swadeshi nationalism and his articles in 'India' demonstrated that the Swadeshi Movement had struck deep roots in Tamil Nadu, particularly in Tirunelveli District.* More important, the launching of Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company by V.O.Chidambaram Pillai in 1906 challenged the maritime might of the British imperialism and the Company "marked the Most spectacular development in the history of the movement".'

SUPPRESSION OF THE SWADESHI MOVEMENT, 1911

The Swadeshi movement spread like wild fire in southern Tamil Nadu. Sensing the danger of the movement going out of control, the Government decided to stem the tide.

Swadeshi goods were raided. Meetings and demonstrations were prohibited. Newspapers were proscribed.

ASSASSINATION OF ASHE, 1911

Collector, Vanchinathan on 17 June 1911 shot at and killed R.W.Ashe, who was traveling with his wife from Tiruvelveli to Kodaikkanal, at Maniachi station.

HOME RULE AGITATION, 1916

Madras was the home of Home Rule agitation. At a time when the Congress was extending support to the war efforts of the British Government, Annie Besant, the Irish firebrand lady, started on 3 sep. 1916 a Home Rule League in Gokhale Hall, Madras, demanding a free Indian nation within the British Empire.

Her Home Rule League expanded its activities through its branches at different parts of the presidency. It's first conference was held in Cuddalore under the Presidentship of V.P.Madhava Rao. Similar conferences were held at many other districts. Meetings and

discussions were organized. The League's powerful newspaper New India effectively propagated the objectives of the League among the educated. Political propaganda pamphlets were widely circulated. By conducting Home Rule classes, organizing Boy Scouts and Volunteer Troops and converting the Theosophical Society itself into a political organization, Dr. Besant brought into the agitational politics of Madras hundreds of teachers, students, government servants and intellectuals. The Theosophical Lodges set up in the districts "served as centres of political agitation". Thousands of Home Rule Pledges were signed by those who were inspired by the League. The 'red hot agitation' for self-government soon "began to spread like wild fire from district to district".

On 24 July 1916 students staged a massive demonstration in front of the Egmore railway station protesting against exclusive reservation being made in the compartments for Europeans. There was a scuffle between students and Europeans at the Fort railway station. Rattled by the rapid development of the Home Rule agitation. Governor Lord Pentland banned the participation of students in the political activities of the League. Besant was asked to pay deposits for the journals she was editing. She was incarcerated in the Nilgiri prison. Government action had intensified the agitation. Thiru.V.Kalyanasundara Mudaliar resigned his job as Tamil Lecturer in the Wesley College, Madras and plunged into the agitation. The Workers in the Harvy Mills, Madurai, went on strike. Foreign goods were boycotted.

As the movement spread fast from Madras to moffusil areas the Government released Besant from the Nilgiri prison. On her return to Madras, she was given rousing reception en route. C.Rajagopalachari with large gathering extended a warm welcome to Besant, the Heroine of the Home Rule Agitation, at Salem railway station. Besant became so popular she was elected Congress President in 1917. In a way, Home Rule Agitation was responsible for the E.S.Montague's 20 Aug 1917 Declaration.

MONTAGUE'S VISIT TO MADRAS, 1917

Montague's Declaration promised the increasing association of Indians in every branch of administration.

ROWLATT SATYAGRAHA, 1919

Rowlatt Satyagraha had its genesis in Tamil Nadu. On 17 March 1919, Gandhi visited Tamil Nadu and stayed at the residence of Karthuri Ranga Iyyangar to devise the way to oppose the draconian Bills. Satyagraha Sabha was formed with Gandhi as its President.*" Rowlatt Act was proclaimed when Gandhi was touring Tamil Nadu. He announced that national hartal against the Rowlatt Bills will be observed on 30 March 1919 and then postponed the date to 6 April.

On 6 April 1919 anti - Rowlatt Day was observed in Tamil Nadu.

KHILAFAT AGITATION, 1919 - 1920

Tamil Nadu did not lag behind in extending its enthusiastic support to the Khilafat agitation. C.Rajagopalachari earned the esteem of the Muslims by his active involvement in the agitation. In the provincial Congress Conference he moved a resolution demanding the release of Ali Brothers who had courted arrest for spear-heading the Khilafat Movement. He also mobilized the support of the Hindus to observe the Khilafat Day on 17 Oct. 1919. Khilafat Committees were formed through out Tamil Nadu.

On 20 April 1920, Khilafat Conference was held at Madras under the Presidentship of Maulana Shaukat Ali. C. Rajagopalachari, Kasthuri Ranga Iyengar and T.Prakasam addressed the well-attended conference. Another such conference was held at Erode which was presided over by Ali Brothers. Gandhi toured Tamil Nadu in August 1920 seeking support to the Khilafat Movement. Vaniyambadi served as the nerve-centre of the agitation. Khilafat agitation was a conspicuous success though the Justice Party and the Liberal Party had not supported it.

NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT, 1920-1922

Non - Cooperation movement gained momentum in Tamil Nadu under the dynamic leadership of C. Rajagopalachari. It turned to be a mass movement. People of Tamil Nadu hoisted national flag, installed photos of national leaders, organized meetings, demonstrations and hartals. Several leaders like Madurai advocate George Joseph, S.Srinivasa Iyengar, N.S. Varadachari, S.Ramanathan and V.O. Chidambaram renounced their titles or resigned their posts and joined the Movement. By the end of 1920 Tamil Nadu Congressmen boycotted the legislature and the election. The workers of the Buckingham Mills struck work (27 June 1921). Toddy shops were boycotted. The visit of S.Satyamurthy to several places including Rajapalayam roused the patriotic feelings of the people. LP.Arangasamy Raja laid a firm foundation to the historic Khadhi Movement in the town. Anti-liquor agitation was intensified by leaders like V.GVellingiri Gounder, N.S.Ramaswami Iyengar and E.V.Ramasamy Naicker. When the Prince of Wales, the Duke of Connaught, visited Madras he was boycotted though he was given a rousing reception by the Justicites. There was spontaneous emotional upsurge in Tamil Nadu when Gandhi was arrested on 18 March 1922.

THE SWARAJISTS, 1923

When the Swaraj Party was launched by Pro-change leaders like C.R.Das and Motilal Nehru on 1 Jan. 1923, like minded Congressmen Kasthuri Ranga Iyengar, Srinivasa Iyengar, Vararajulu Naidu, Vijayaragavacharai, A.Rengasamy Iyengar joined the new party. In the election held on 13 Nov. 1923 for Central Legislature, Swarajists A.Ranga Sarny Iyengar, R.K.Shanmugam Chetty, N.Srinivasa Iyengar were elected from Tamil

Nadu. Though the Swarajists won 41 seats in the election held for the Madras Legislature they were requested to form the ministry. They instead effectively non-cooperated with the Legislature led by S.Satyamurthy, the silver-tongue orator. The Tamil Nadu Swarajist legislators offered uncompromising obstruction to all government sponsored laws. He strongly supported the motion of no- confidence moved by C.R. Reddy against the ruling Justice Party. By their consistent legislature conduct, the Madras Swarajists rose up to the expectations of the Swaraj Party.

NEILL STATUE SATYAGRAHA, 1927

James Neill had served as the General of the Madras Regiment. He ruthlessly suppressed the Rebellion of 1857. Neill wrought inhuman vengeance on those whom he regarded as guilty; they were either humiliated or executed. When the British Government installed Neill's statue at a central place in Madras in honour of his services to the Empire, the people of Tamil Nadu rose in revolt against the symbol of shame. A Satyagraha Committee was constituted under the presidentship of Nellai N.Somavajulu. It was decided to remove the statue. Madurai Srinivasanatha Iyengar and his wife Padmasani Ammal, R.Chidambaram Bharati, Dr.P.Varadarajulu, lent enthusiastic support to the satyagraha. On 11 August 1927 the satyagrahis under the leadership of Subbarayalu Naidu and Muhammad Salia damaged the statue. They were arrested and sentenced to 6 months rigorous imprisonment. Nellai Somavajulu, Gudiatham Swaminatha Mudaliar, Panruttu S.A.Devanayaga Ayya, who were Satyagraha Generals in turn, were arrested and sentenced. The Neill statue satyagraha started in August continued till December 1927 and during this period volunteers from several districts came to the city and participated in the agitation.

BOYCOTT OF SIMON COMMISSION, 1929-1930

The Congress at its annual session at Madras in 1927 resolved to boycott the all-White Simon Commission. When the Commission visited Madras on Feb. 1929, it was greeted with black - flag demonstrations. The boycott of the Commission turned into a mass movement. Behind the facade of official welcome, the Congressmen organized a massive mass agitation which resulted in police firing killing three people. T.Prakasam, Muthuranga Mudaliar and M.Bakthavasthalam were subjected to brutal lathi charge. Protest demonstrations were held against unprovoked attack on unarmed agitators. The Simon Commission and the Justice Party were condemned in the Marina meeting. Ranganatha Mudaliar and Arokyasamy Mudaliar resigned from the Justice Ministry in protest against Dr.P.Subbarayan who participated in the official reception given to the Simon Commission. Despite official support to the Commission, the boycott of Simon Commission in Tamil Nadu was a significant success.

POORNA SWARAJ DAY, 1930

On 26 Jan. 1930 Purna Swaraj Day was observed in every city, town and village. C.Rajagopalachari and Madurai A.Vaidyanatha Iyer actively participated in the celebration. National Flag was hoisted at Madras.

SALT SATYAGRAHA, 1930

C.Rajagopalachari, the President of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee, was nominated by the Congress High Command to lead the salt satyagraha in the Presidency. He shifted the Congress Head Quarters from Madras to Trichi, which served as the center of Civil Disobedience Movement. He went to Madurai to seek the support of N.M.R. Subbaraman, president of Madurai District Congress Committee and A.Vaidyanatha Iyer, local leading lawyer. At the residence of Ayer the final decision was taken to stage the Trichi - Vedaranyam salt march similar to that of Dandi March.

On 13 March 1930, the day after Gandhi commenced his Dandi March, a mammoth public meeting was held at Trichi. Then the Trichy T.S.S. Rajan and Vedaranyam Sardar Vedarathnam Pillai were responsible for fixing the starting place and closing point of the March. Both of them extended their untinted support to the satyagraha. Then the salt march started from Trichi to Vedaranyam via Tanjavur, Kumbakonam, Mannargudi and Tiruthuraipundi. C.Rajagopalachari led the first batch of 98 volunteers. The patriots with the national flag in their hands marched in rows of two chanting Bharati's songs and a song specially composed by Namakkal V.Ramalingam Pillai for the occasion. Despite the warning given by A.J.Dham, the District Collector of Tanjavore, the villagers extended hospitality and welcome to the satyagrahis en route. After 16 days of March they reached Vedaranyam on 26 April 1930. Thousands of people who had already gathered there greeted them with thunderous cheers. Next day, the volunteers observed fast and prayed. On 30 April 1930 C.Rajagopalachari with 16 chosen satyagrahis defied the salt law and collected salt at Agasthian Palli. They were arrested and sentenced them to 6 month imprisonment in Trichi jail. After their arrest, S.Satyamurthi led the satyagraha. He and K.Santhanam, Mattaparai Venkatrama Iyer, K.Subramania Iyer, G.Ramachandran led the satyagraha and courted arrest. Vedaranyam Salt Satyagraha lasted for one and a half months.

Parallel to the Vedaranyam Salt March, Andra Kesari T.Prakasam, on 13 April 1930, led a Salt March to Tilakar Ghat, Triplicane, Madras, defied Salt Law, distributed 'Liberty Salt' and courted arrest. Sankara Iyer and Munusamy Mudaliar produced salt at Solengapuram and Madras. Salt satyagraha was staged in Madurai, Tuticorin, Cuddalore, Erode, Tirunelveli and Trichy, and thousands of volunteers were arrested. The satyagraha rekindled patriotic feelings among the people.

As the salt satyagraha was gaining ground the provincial administration unleashed repressive measures. On 11 March 1930 police opened fire at the meeting of workers at Choolai, Madras. The volunteers who picketed the toddy shops at Madurai (17 July) and satyagrahis at Madurai (6 Aug.) were subjected to police shooting, killing many people. On 11 Jan. 1932, the police resorted to lathi charge to disperse a procession in which Tirupur Kumaran was brutally attacked and he died on the spot holding the national flag high and singing patriotic song. Police entered the Madurai College Hostel and lathi charged the inmates. The Congress meeting held at Town Hall Maidan, Coimbatore, was disrupted by police action. The Valpari meeting was banned. The police brutality was widely condemned.

INDIVIDUAL SATYAGRAHA, 1940 - 41

Disappointed with the August Offer of Lord Linlithgow (8 Aug. 1940) Gandhi preferred Individual Satyagraha instead of Mass Disobedience Movement to demonstrate the national disapproval in view of war situation. At the national level, Acharya Vinoba Bhave was chosen by Gandhi as the first Satyagrahi. In Tamil Nadu, Dr.T.S.S.Rajan was the first individual satyagrahi to court arrest. K.Kamaraj assumed charge of the Tamil Nadu Congress, toured across the Presidency, prepared a list of satyagrahis to lead the movement in turn. He was arrested at Goodur railway station on his way to meet Gandhi to get his approval of the official list he had prepared and lodged in Vellore jail. Large number of influential persons from several districts actively involved themselves in the individual satyagraha.

QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT, 1942

Following the failure of the Cripps Mission, Gandhi came out with his clarion call Mantra of 'Do or Die'. The Government arrested the top leaders of the Congress and on 9th Aug. 1942 Gandhi and other leading lights were arrested in a single sweep and shifted to unknown destination. In Tamil Nadu, K.Kamaraj, Vellore V.M.Ubayadulla, Thiruvannamali N. Annamalai, C.N.Muthuranga Mudaliar, M.Baktavatsalam, S.Satyamurthy were arrested when they were returning to Madras after attending the Bombay meeting and sent to Vellore jail.

The unexpected arrest of the national leaders provoked spontaneous protests across the country. In Madras total hartal was observed. The workers of the Buckinham and Carnatic Mills, the Madras Port Trust, the Madras Corporation and the Tramway struck work. Shops were closed. Educational institutions did not function. Police resorted to lathi charge and firing, in which 9 died and several wounded.

The Quit India Movement spread fast like wild fire to the districts. In the North and South Arcot Districts the agitators went berserk and cut off telegraph and telephone lines, burnt government properties, and derailed goods train. The students of Annamalai University

plunged in the agitation. Tanjore district witnessed several attempts at sabotage and surreptitious activities. Widespread violence broke out in the Combatore district. Singanallur Mill Workers defied law and went on a procession. The Sulure aerodrome was burnt and about 200 tanks were damaged. About 30 agitators died in the police firing. In a neighboring village all males were arrested and confined in a small place.

Total hartal was observed in the Madurai district. At several places young agitators came into clash with the police. A.Vaidyanatha Iyer, B.Chidambara Bharati, K.Rajaram Naidu and others were arrested for making inflammatory speeches. There was confrontation between the public and the police at the Jhansi Rani Park resulting in firing. Post office was burnt. Circle Inspector Visvanathan was subjected to acid bomb attack. Since the situation went out of control, curfew was clamped and the district handed over to the army.

In the Virudunagar district Rajapalayam played a conspicuous role in the Quit India movement. On 9 Aug. 1942 the youth of the town organized a serpentine procession led by P.S.Vasanthan. The town police station was attacked. The statue of George V near the police station was smashed into smithereens. The procession was lathi charged and the leaders arrested. Then the agitators assembled at the Golden Jubilee Hall, condemned the arrest of their leaders and chalked out further course of action. Women of the town joined the agitation in strength.

Protest meetings were held at Sattur taluk. Hartal and picketing was observed in Arupukottai taluk. During the second week of August the movement was intensified in many districts, resulting in violent activities in most parts of Tamil Nadu. Conspiracy cases had been hoisted on Congress leaders and awarded varied degree of sentences. Tamil Nadu agitators demonstrated by example that they would not desist from violent and destructive activities in order to attain freedom to their country.

IMPACT OF INA TRIALS, 1945 - 1946

The INA Trials and RIN revolt made a tremendous impact on Tamil Nadu. There were demonstrations and agitation in Madras, Trichy and other towns demanding the release of Rashid Ali, an INA officer who was awarded seven year sentence (1945) Madras city was in the grip of violent protest when the ratings of the Royal Indian Navy (RIN) went on strike (18 Feb. 1946). Women participation in the agitation was conspicuous. P.Jeevanandam, M.Kalyannasundaram, S.Krishnesamy Iyengar and M.P. Srinivasan, student leader, addressed a well-attended meeting at Tilagar Ghat, Triplicane, Madras.

INDEPENDENT INDIA, 1947

Tamilnadu celebrated Indian Independence with joy and happiness.

Subramaniya Bharathiyar (1882 - 1921)

C. Subramaniya Bharathiyar was a poet, freedom fighter and social reformer from Tamil Nadu. He was known as Mahakavi Bharathiyar and the laudatory epithet Mahakavi means a great poet. He is considered as one of India's greatest poets. His songs on nationalism and freedom of India helped to rally the masses to support the Indian Independence Movement in Tamil Nadu.

Bharathi: A poet and a Nationalist

"We may have thousand of
sects; that, however, does not
justify a foreign invasion."

Significantly, a new age in Tamil literature began with Subramaniya Bharathi. Most part of his compositions are classifiable as short lyrical outpourings on patriotic, devotional and mystic themes. Bharathi was essentially a lyrical poet. "Kannan Pattu" "Nilavum Vanminum Katrum" "Panchali Sabatham" "Kuyil Pattu" are examples of Bharathi's great poetic output. Bharathi is considered as a national poet due to his number of poems of the patriotic flavour through which he exhorted the people to join the independence struggle and work vigorously for the liberation of the country. Instead of merely being proud of his country he also outlined his vision for a free India. He published the sensational "Sudesa Geethangal" in 1908.

Bharathi as a Journalist

Many years of Bharathi's life were spent in the field of journalism, Bharathi, as a young man began his career as a journalist and as a sub-editor in "Swadesamitran" in November 1904.

"India" saw the light of the day in May, 1906. It declared as its motto the three slogans of the French Revolution, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. It blazed a new trail in Tamil Journalism. In order to proclaim its revolutionary ardour, Bharathi had the weekly printed in red paper.

"India" was the first paper in Tamil Nadu to publish political cartoons. He also edited and published 'Vijaya', a Tamil daily "Bala Bharatha" an English monthly, and 'Suryothayam' a local weekly of Pondicherry.

It is not surprising therefore that soon a warrant was waiting at the door of the "India" office for the arrest of the editor of the magazine. It was because of this worsening

situation in 1908 that Bharathi decided to go away to Pondicherry, a French territory at that time, and continue to publish the “India” magazine. Bharathi resided in Pondicherry for sometime to escape the wrath of the British imperialists.

During his exile, Bharathi had the opportunity to mingle with many leaders of the militant wing of the independence movement such as Aurobindo, Lajpat Rai and V.V.Subramaniam who had also sought asylum in the French ruled Pondicherry. The most profitable years of Bharathi’s life were the ten years he spent in Pondicherry. From Pondicherry, he guided the Tamil youth of Madras to tread in the path of nationalism. This increased the anger of the British towards Bharathi’s writings as they felt that it was his writings that induce and influence the patriotic spirit of the Tamil youth.

Bharathi met Mahatma Gandhi in 1919 in Rajaji’s home at Madras. Bharathi entered British India near Cuddalore in November 1918 and was promptly arrested.

Even in prison, he spent his time in writing poems on freedom, nationalism and country’s welfare. In his early days of youth he had good relations with Nationalist Tamil Leaders like V.O.Chidambaram, Subramanya Siva, Mandayam Thirumalachariar and Srinivasachari. Along with these leaders he used to discuss the problems facing the country due to British rule. Bharathi used to attend the Annual sessions of Indian National Congress and discuss national issues with extremist Indian National Leaders like Bipin Chandra Pal, B.G. Tilak and V.V.Subramaniam.

His participation and activities in Benaras Session (1905) and Surat Session (1907) of the Indian National Congress impressed many national leaders about his patriotic fervour. Bharathi had maintained good relations with some of the national leaders and shared his thoughts and views on the nation and offered his suggestions to strengthen the nationalist movement. Undoubtedly, his wise suggestions and steadfast support to the cause of nationalism rejuvenated many national leaders.

Thus Bharathi played a pivotal role in the freedom of India. Bharathiyar as a social reformer Bharathi was also against caste system. He declared that there were only two castesmen and women and nothing more than that. Above all, he himself had removed his sacred thread. He had also adorned many scheduled caste people with sacred thread.

He used to take tea sold in shops run by Muslims. He along with his family members attended church on all festival occasions. He advocated temple entry of Dalits. For all his reforms, he had to face opposition from his neighbours. But Bharathi was very clear that unless Indians unite as children of Mother India, they could not achieve freedom. He believed in women’s rights, gender equality and women emancipation. He opposed child marriage, dowry system and supported widow remarriage.

Bharathiyar – A Visionary

Bharathi as a poet, journalist, freedom fighter and social reformer had made a great impact not only on the Tamil society but also on the entire human society. He followed what all he preached and it is here that his greatness is manifested.

His prophecy during the colonial period about the independence of India came true after two and half decades after his demise. His vision about a glorious India has been taking a shape in the post-Independence era. Bharathi did not live for himself but for the people and nation. That is why he is respectfully called as Bharathiyar. Even today, after many decades, Subramaniya Bharathiyar stands as an undying symbol of Indian freedom and vibrant Tamil nationalism.

V.O. Chidambaram Pillai – (1872-1935)

V.O. Chidambaram Pillai, reverently remembered by the Tamils as Sekkilutta Semmal, Kapplottiya Tamilan played a leading part in popularizing the cult of patriotism.

He made the Congress movement broad based by following the foot steps of Tilak.

V.O.C. was born at Ettayapuram on 5th September 1872. He studied law and practiced in his village.

Later he encouraged the formation of Trade Guilds and workers association.

He was the founder of Swadesi Dharma Sanga Weaving Association at Tuticorin and Swadesi Co-operative stores.

He utilized the Swadesi Shipping Corporation as not only a trading company, but also a weapon for driving the British with their bags and baggages”

Subramaniya Siva and V.O.C. tried their level best to collapse the motive of the British.

Swaraj was their motto V.O.C's attempt to set sail the ships against the Government's regulations was successful.

Shares were sold out in large scale V.O.C. leased one ship and purchased another from France and set them on sail from Tuticorin to Ceylon in 1909.

V.O.C. and Siva were active and led the Quit India Movement. Strikes, piketing were in full swing in Tamil Nadu.

Municipal buildings were burnt. Collector Ashe went to the spot. He fired at the mob and four were killed.

Siva and V.O.C. were arrested and imprisoned. On further appeal it was reduced to six years V.O.C. was given Ragi.

He was used as bullock in pulling the Oil Press (chekku). His right leg was chained, Further the Swadesi shipping Corporation was liquidated and the ships were sold out.

Singara Velar (1860-1946)

Labour organizations emerged to protect the rights of working class. These organizations were headed by Thiru.V.Kalyanasundaranar and D.Varadharajalu in the Madras presidency. It was Singaravelar who took major efforts in the emergence of labour organizations in Madras presidency.

He participated in the Congress Committee (1922) meeting as a representative of Tamilnadu, there also he explained the following demands and sought support from Congress members.

- ✓ Indian freedom includes economic freedom of workers and farmers.
- ✓ The welfare of farmers and labourers should also be the motto of Congress party.
- ✓ Farmers and labourers must be included in the Indian national movement.
- ✓ Congress leaders should help to raise masses from different organization.

In consequent with this, in 1922, Indian National Congress, passed a resolution to raise people from various organizations. A six member committee was constituted, in which M. Singaravelar was appointed as a member. In addition to this, he also fought for the protection of labour rights. He emphasized this demand by writing in all popular dailies. As an outcome, labour protective law was passed in 1926, in India. Moreover, he advised for speaking in vernacular languages. Only then, he believed that the ideas will reach all the people. So, that leaders and people can maintain good relations.

He is also determined to speak in Tamil, when speaking about the issues of Tamilnadu people. In 1918, a resolution regarding this was passed during Chennai Presidency Association Conference. Singaravelar and Periyar were the dignitaries in this conference. Singaravelar's Impact on Self-Respect and Communist Movements: When Periyar resigned from Congress Party citing the existence of Brahmin and Non-Brahmin divide and discrimination in the party, Singaravelar supported the

action of Periyar. After visiting USSR, Periyar was influenced by the Communist ideals. He changed the name of self-respect movement to Self-Respect Social Justice Party. Singaravelar made his contribution in framing the policies and principles of the movement. He also wrote extensively in Periyar's Republic magazine against

superstitious beliefs. These writings were simple and can be understood easily. Singaravelar has a deep faith in the philosophy of Communism.

He urged the Congress party to support labour organizations. In the name of Madras Socialists, he telegraphed Congress High Command. In all the Congress Committee meetings he argued as a Communist representative. In 1923, it was he, who organized the first May Day celebrations in Chennai. In the same day, he announced the formation of labour-farmer political party. The demands of his new political party are

- ✓ Eight hours work
- ✓ Right to form union
- ✓ Right to strike as a last resort to pressure labour demands.
- ✓ Three level committees for reviewing the demands.
- ✓ Minimum wages
- ✓ Shelter with basic amenities
- ✓ Medical and life Insurance
- ✓ Provident fund facility
- ✓ Earned leave
- ✓ Free Medical assistance
- ✓ Maternity leave
- ✓ Put an end to contract basis

For Farmers

- ✓ Free water for agriculture
- ✓ Abolition of Zamindari system

For People

- ✓ Voting rights for all
- ✓ Right to contest in elections for poor, labour and farmer communities.

First socialist conference was headed by Singaravelar in 1925, in Kanpur. He spoke about socialism without violence. Also, he resolved for adopting Communism according to Indian circumstances. A socialist should play a role by being in the member of Congress Party, he advised. Eventually, Socialist block was formed inside the Congress Party.

Life and Services

Since his childhood Singaravelar did not believe in the Varna System and superstitious belief. As a result of this, he established Buddhist Association and propagated against Varna System and superstitious beliefs during 1880 itself. Born in a rich family and well versed with law, he served as a member in Chennai Municipality and also in health

sector. Due to the endemic diseases in the downtrodden areas, he gave priority to health and education. He also fought for rights of labourers. Based on this, he played active role in Congress Party. Later, he joined in Periyar's Self - Respect movement. Though he entered into politics after he crossed the age of 50, he actively propagated and wrote about communist ideas for more than thirty years. He was fondly remembered and called as the first communist of south India.

Periyar (1879-1973)

Introduction

Periyar fought against superstitious beliefs, enslavement of women and social backwardness which existed in Tamilnadu from time immemorial based on his wisdom and self-respect throughout his life. It is because of this, he is fondly called as 'Thanthai Periyar'. Various scholars on Social Justice say that the Dravidian ideology enunciated by Periyar on cultural lines shines all around our country.

Periyar was attracted towards Gandhi's entry into politics and hence joined congress and became actively participating in freedom movement and social reforms. During that period in 1920's Congress was dominated by upper class people. But Periyar took Congress to the down trodden and successfully organized temple entry movements as a true Congress man. Periyar was very much disgruntled by the practice of Varnashrama in Congress party and left it. He joined Justice party and formed the self respect movement later. After this, the contributions and activities of Periyar became inseparable from the politics of India and Tamilnadu in particular.

Nationalism as exploitation

There are people who may not bother about Indians, Tamilians and the self-respect of the people. They deceive people to believe in nation and nationalism for their own welfare and betterment. If self-respect is submerged in the name of nation and nationalism that will be the crime against India, stated Periyar.

Nationalism is an unreal feeling. Since National feeling is nothing but a conspiracy framed by rich and power-centered, people who deceive the other people by controlling the negative emotions. It is a false assumption, propagated by these upper rich communities in order to curtail the rights of the poor community.

Nationalism has become a buzz word of addictiveness and emotionalist for the people, he exclaimed.

India – A Land of Diversities

English language is the main base for the familiarly among these different nations in India. If British Empire and its language is relieved from India, Hindi may become the national language. Instead of calling India as a nation, Dravida Nadu, Andhra, Bengal can be separately called as nations respectively. For instance, Dravidian nation had its culture, language, civilization and rule for thousands of years on accordance with historical facts. Undoubtedly it is known to all the people.

“Dravidian Nationalism” proposed by Periyar was to a large extent against religious dominations.

On Language

Each and everyone have their own rights to protect their languages. These rights can be protected and provided under Dravida, Socialist Republic Rule. No language can be enforced.

Language should not be misused as weapon for separatism.

Casteless Society

Periyar’s protests and speeches always centre around, “Tamilnadu for Tamils and Dravidian nation for Dravidians.” His ideologies include Common plan, common work plan, Islamic conversion, separate Dravidian nation for which he fought against the dominant communities.

His argument was that the dominant communities misused Tamil, Tamil nationalism, Tamil race for sustaining the power in Tamilnadu. It is with the help of Tamil leaders, they injected Tamil nationalism in the minds of the people for holding the power for a long time he said. Consequently, Periyar put an end to the demand of separate Tamilnadu and upheld the ideal of casteless society.

Thus, casteless society has become the top most priority for Periyar. Other ideals like separate Dravidian nation, abounding dominant communities, distortion of capitalist class became secondary priorities for Periyar. This may be the only ambition and goals for Dravida Kazhagam, claimed Periyar. “The caste feeling, thus divided the Dravidian race and Dravidians became slaves for Aryans” stated Periyar in his writings published in the 1950’s in Tamilnadu.

Subramaniya Siva

Early life

Subramaniya Siva was born in Vatlagundu near Dindigul in erstwhile Madurai district of Madras presidency.

In 1908, he was arrested by the British and was the first political prisoner in Madras jail.

While serving a prison term, he was afflicted by leprosy and was shifted to Salem jail.

Since leprosy was regarded as a contagious disease, the British authorities forbade him to travel by rail after his release and hence he was forced to travel on foot.

He continued to fight for independence and was incarcerated many times until 1922. He eventually succumbed to leprosy on 23 July 1925.

He was the author of the journal Jnanabhanu and books Ramanuja Vijayam and Madhva Vijayam.

Thiagi Sivam was a spotless patriot and politician. He had love for Sanskrit and a decent amount of knowledge of the language. Regarding the whole Bharat as his mother, he had even tried to build a temple at Pappalapatti for that Mother.

