

COLONIALISM AND NATIONALISM IN MODERN INDIA

Subject Code: 18KP3H09

FIRST WORLD WAR: HOME RULE MOVEMENT (1914-1918)

FIRST WORLD WAR Support to War

The First World War broke out in August September 1914 Indians orted the British Government in the hour of inal Sir Satvandra Sinha. President of the Madras Congress Session (1914). expressed a feeling of

found pride that India stood shoulder to shoulder with the British. A solution of unswerving allegiance to the British was passed. Tilak elsewhere exhorted every Indian, 'to support and assist His majesty's Government to the best of his ability': M.K.Gandhi, who was in London, extended his full sympathy and support to the British Government. "If we could improve our status through the help and cooperation of the British," he said. "It was also our duty to win their help by standing them in their hour of need 17.1.2 Impact of the War

The impact of the First World War on India was incalculable. Immediate Indian response to the war was overwhelmingly generous. More than a million and a quarter man were deployed to different theatres of war: India here the entire cost of their maintenance abroad. The war loans alone amounted to nearly 140 millions of rupees. An annual subscription of 30.000.000 was made to the British Government. The British Prime Minister Asquith was so impressed by India's involvement in the war that he exhorted: "We all alike are subjects of the king Emperor and are joint and equal custodian of our common interests and fortunes". The Under Secretary of State for India, Charles Roberts hoped that the common endeavors of these days would enable India to realize that she was occupying and was destined to occupy a place in our future Empire..."

The War generated enormous enthusiasm in the country. The recruiting campaign and the war propaganda instilled in the people of India a sense of adventure. The war created a feeling of self-confidence and self-respect among

Tilak's Home Rule League

Though Annie Besant mooted the idea of a Home Rule League, Tilak started it first. On his release from the Mandalay jail on 16 June 1914, Tilak, a much mellowed man, was keen on rejoining the Congress. But his well-meant overtures were spurned by the obdurate Moderates. Finally, he was readmitted to Congress in 1915, thanks to Besant's intervention. Both tried their best to reactivate the Congress but failed. Tilak, therefore, started his Indian Home Rule League at the Bombay Provincial Conference held at Belgaum on 23rd April 1916, with head quarters at Poona. 'Securing Swaraj for India' was the objective of Tilak's League.

With renewed vigour Tilak campaigned for the cause of the Home Rule. He toured extensively and popularized the demand of Swaraj or complete independence. He also linked the demand for Home Rule with the formation of linguistic states and education through one's mother tongue. He supported the non-Brahmin demand for representation and the abolition of

untouchability. Above all, Tilak based his demand for Swaraj on strictly secular basis. Tilak became immensely popular.

Rattled by the popularity of Tilak's Home Rule League, the British Government decided to destroy it. On 23 July 1916, the government issued notice for good behaviour and security of Rs.60,000! Tilak was defended by no less a lawyer than Mohammed Ali Jinnah!! Though the case was lost in the Magistrate's Court, Tilak was exonerated by the High Court in November, 1916. Strengthened by the Court verdict Tilak intensified his campaign for Swaraj.

Home Rule Agitation

As Tilak was popular in the North, Annie Besant was prominent in the South. She visited a number of places and enlisted popular support for the Home Rule agitation. By mid 1917 about fifty branches of the Home Rule League were started in the Andhra area alone. Even the Moderates lent support to the Home Rule Campaign! The mofussile areas of the Presidency were drawn into campaign through the distribution of vernacular leaflets and illustrated postcards.' The Home Rule Campaign gave tremendous impetus to the growing consciousness of the Telugu-speaking people and helped the cause of the demand for a separate Andhra Province.

The impact of the Home Rule agitation on the Madras students was tremendous. On 24th July, 1916, the students occupied a compartment reserved for Europeans at the Egmore station. Three days later anti-reservation agitation led to a clash between the students and Europeans at the Fort Station, Madras. In many parts of the Madras Presidency, the students fearlessly and freely disobeyed Government orders and restrictions. The Government of Lord Pentland in Madras was alarmed. In short, Annie Besant enlivened the politics of the Presidency.

Home Rule Movement, 1916-1917

LUCKNOW PACT 1916 Lucknow Congress

The Congress session which met at Lucknow in December 1916 was yet another important milestone in the history of the Indian freedom struggle. It was presided over by Babu Ambika Charan Mazumdar. 230 delegates, besides a large number of visitors, attended the session. It witnessed consolidation of all the main forces of nationalism. The Lucknow Congress was unique in three respects, viz., 1) the reunion of the two wings of the Congress; 2) the formation of the scheme of self-government; and 3) the fraternization of the Hindus and Muslims.

Rare Reunion

B.G.Tilak and a vast majority of his supporters flooded the Congress at Lucknow. The two wings of the Congress reunited after the Surat Split in 1907. "It was truly an enlivening spectacle to see Tilak and Khaparde sitting side by side with Dr.Rash Behari Ghosh and Surendranath Banerjee. Mrs.Besant was there with her two-co-adjutors Arundale and Wadia with the banner of Home Rule in their hands. Amongst the Muslims were men like Raja of Muhamadabad, Mazar-ul-Hag, A.Rasul and Jinnah. Gandhi and Polak were there too²⁰. It was

a rare spectacle of reunion not only of the Moderates and Extremists but also of the fraternization of the Hindus and Muslims.

Scheme of Self-Government

The Lucknow Congress session was notable for the formulation of a scheme of Self-Government. The resolution exhorted the Emperor to issue a proclamation announcing the British policy to confer Self Government of India at an early date. It also claimed that in reconstruction of the Empire, India should be lifted from the position of a dependency to that of an equal partner in the Empire with the Self-Governing Dominions.

Congress-League Scheme: The Lucknow Pact, 1916

The solid achievement of the Lucknow Congress was the completion of the Congress-League Scheme of Reforms or the Lucknow Pact. The preliminaries of the Pact were gone through at joint conferences of the Muslim League and the Congress at Allahabad in April 1916 and in Calcutta in the following November. The main features of the Congress-League Scheme were as follows: India should be raised to the status of a self-governing state of the Empire; the number of members elected on the basis of a broad franchise should

JALLIANWALA BAGH MASSACRE, 1919

Sunday, 13th April 1919, was Baisaki Day, sacred to the Sikhs. Pilgrims thronged Amritsar to take sacred bath in the 'pool of immortality and to worship in the Golden Temple. Added to this was the announcement of a public meeting at Jallianwala Bagh on the same day at 4-30 pm to condole the bereaved families and to denounce the police atrocities. Bagh means garden, though there was no garden there at that time! Brigadier General Reginald Dyer, who took charge on 11h promulgated Sec. 144 of the ICP and banned all processions in the city. But the ban was not widely announced. About 20,000 had assembled at the rectangular, high walled enclosure in the Jallianwalah Bagh in defiance of Dyer's proclamation. Dyer led his column to the Bagh. Two armed cars remained in support of his soldiers to fire of bullets continued. He ordered them to cease and the British soldiers certain about the death of 41 boys and a seven official sources. The

the street outside as the entrance was too narrow. Dyer ordered . open fire on the startled crowd. For ten minutes the shower of bullets continued. When the soldiers had expended their ammunition Dyer ordered fire and withdraw. Dyer's men-a mixed crowd of Indian and Nana had fired 1,650 rounds into the crowd! Till date none is certain of the toll. The slaughter at Jallianwalla Bagh left 337 men, 41 boys weeks old baby dead and 1,500 wounded according to official sources. Governor-General Michael O'Dyer in his telegram to the Secretary on 22 December admitted that firing might have caused 400 to 500 deaths. The unofficial figures placed the dead at 1,200. Many died of their wounds since all medical aid was cut off.

MARTIAL LAW MEASURES

to the Secretary of State

Closely following the Jallianwalla carnage, martial law was imposed in the Amritsar and Lahore districts on 15th April and it remained in force till 9th June. A clampdown on all

news was imposed. In Amritsar people were required to salute every English officer. Those who failed to salute were flogged. The railways were closed to the people. Lawyers were made to work like coolies. Students were forced to march past a Union Jack and salute it. The Hindus and the Muslims were hand-cuffed in pairs. Most inhuman was Dyer's Crawling Order. Dyer ordered a Whipping Triangle to be created in the middle of the lane where Miss. Sherwood was attacked, posted pickets at each end and issued instructions that anyone who wished to pass along the lane would have to do so on all fours! The six youths who were arrested on suspicion of having been involved in the attack of Miss. Sherwood were taken to the Crawling Lane and given 30 strokes each. There were 225 cases of public flogging. 12

In Lahore, public flogging was commonplace. As the floggings were administered Europeans often urged the wielders of the cane to strike harder! Occupants of the premises were ordered to protect the Martial Law notices pasted on the walls. When such a notice was found torn from the wall of a college, the staff including the Principal were arrested and taken to the Fort where they were kept for three days in military custody. Students who ordered to report themselves four times a day to the military authorities. Motor cars, motor cycles and electrical goods were commandeered for the use of British officers and soldiers.

Khilafat Conference

The first All-India Khilafat Conference was held in Lucknow on 21 September 1919. It was attended by about 400 delegates from all over India. The Ali Brothers Mohammad Ali and Shaukat Ali and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad were the leaders of the agitation. Gandhi wholeheartedly supported the Khilafat movement because he saw in it a Godsent opportunity to promote the Hindu-Muslim unity. He considered Hindu-Muslim unity a pre-condition for attaining Swaraj. The conference decided to hold an all-India Khilafat day on 17 October 1919. The Khilafat leaders and Gandhi toured over India, address many meetings and appealed to the people to observe the Khilafat Day.

Khilafat Day

As announced, the Khilafat day was observed on 17 October 1919. To ensure its peaceful and voluntary character Dr. Ansari had issued statements, The Muslims were to observe fasting and prayer. Hartal was to be organized only if proper arrangements were made to ensure its non-violent nature. Similar statements were issued by Gandhi to Hindus. Hasrat Mohani called for complete hartal and "monster meetings of protest". Accordingly, special prayers were offered by Bombay Muslims. Gandhi joined the Bombay Khilafat leaders in addressing public meetings. The Lucknow Pact of 1916 was reiterated. In Madras there was a mass meeting of over 20,000 Muslims and Hindus on the beach. In Calcutta and in other Muslim-majority towns and villages mass meetings were held. In Delhi a mammoth meeting of 50,000 strong was addressed by Dr. Ansari, Mafti Kafayatualla, Swami Sharadhananda and Asaf Ali. In Sindh, local religious leaders were active in organizing protest meetings as predominant in villages. "Though the participation in the Khilafat Day was pred Muslims, it was a huge success".?

Plan of Action

The Second All-India Khilafat Conference met in Delhi November 1919 to decide on a plan of action. The momentous meeting for a Muslim boycott of the peace celebrations planned by the Government for December, to withdraw co-operation from the Government and to progressive boycott of European goods. The Conference also a delegation to go to England to represent the Muslim cause before the Government. Gandhi was unanimously elected President of the session. Swamy Shradhanand, Malavia and Nehru were present. In his speech Gandhi made it clear that the Hindus were one with the Muslims in the Movement because the Muslim cause was just.

National Solidarity

Delhi on 23-24 meetings called Government for and to institute a also appointed a before the British of the second day. In his speech in the Khilafat The Congress, the Muslim League, the All-India Khilafat Com and the Jamiat met in Amritsar in December 1919, to demonstrate found sense of national solidarity. Motilal Nehru presided over the meeting. He expressed his full solidarity with the Muslims on the issue. The Muslim League talked more but transacted little business. Khilafat Committee resolved to send delegations to England, America, Constantinople and to start a Khilafat Fund with a target of one million, and to broaden the organization.

Khilafat Delegation

Khilafat Committee demonstrate their new of the Congress on the Khilafat little business. The U.S.A. and one million rupees Ali Brothers evinced interest on the Khilafat delegation. The Khilafat deputation led by Dr. Ansari met the Viceroy on 9 January 1920 and sought permission to send a delegation to England and Europe. With his permission Ali Brothers and others reached England at the end of February 1920. In March they discussed the Khilafat issue with H.A.L. Fisher, Montague's deputy at the India House. Then they met Lloyd George on 17 March. The delegations then proceeded to Paris, interviewed officials, addressed public gatherings and met Muslim delegates to the Peace Conference. Then they went to Rome and had an audience with the Pope. But the terms of the Treaty of Sevres, published in May 1920 and later signed by the Turks on 20 August delivered a deadly blow to the Khilafat delegation. It returned to India empty handed.

NON-CO-OPERATION MOVEMENT

The Congress resolution on Non-Cooperation, passed by the Calcutta Special Congress and ratified at the Nagpur Congress session, was the virtual endorsement of Gandhi's Manifesto of 10 March 1920. It consisted of two parts: a boycott no-tax campaign, and the encouragement of industry and the promotion of industry in India were parts, one negative and the other positive. The negative part of councils, courts, colleges, police and armed forces and no-tax. The positive part consisted of the adoption of Swadeshi, encourage hand spinning and weaving, removal of untouchability and the promotion of Hindu-Muslim unity.

Boycott of Councils

According to Gandhi, Legislative Councils as existed in India impure and unclean and the very touch of them was pollution. Hence the Co-operators were asked to Boycott the

polluted councils. The beginning the Non-Co-operation Movement coincided with the elections to the legislatures in November 1920. Everywhere Congress candidates under almost intolerable pressure withdrew from the elections. The Congress and Khilafat leaders mounted a concerted drive to get voters to stay away from the polls. The campaign was decisive in the Punjab, Bombay, Bihar, the U.P. and CP. Every conceivable attempt was made by the Congressmen to throw contempt upon the elections. In a few places the ballot boxes were literally empty.¹⁰ The boycott of elections was a great success. "The boycott of the Councils by Congress legislators was complete".

Boycott of Courts

Gandhi was opposed to law courts of British origin for they were quagmires and relics of British imperialism. ¹² Gandhi hoped that the resignation of lawyers from the courts and the simultaneous setting up of the Panchayat Courts would deal a death blow to one of the imperial edifices of the British rule in India. Responding to the call of Gandhi, hundreds of lawyers suspended their practice and worked for the success of the Non-Cooperation Movement." At Madras, lawyers gave up practice and dedicated themselves to the cause of the country's freedom. It was these non-cooperating lawyers who were most active in carrying on propaganda in favour of non-cooperation and in leading the movement". ¹⁴ Distinguished lawyers like C.R.Das, Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru, Rajendra Prasad, Sardar Patel, Lajpat Raj, C.Rajagopalachari and T.Prakasam gave up their lucrative legal practice. Their resignation gave a good boost to the Non-Cooperation campaign. Seth Jamnalal Bajaj created a fund to help the non-cooperating lawyers for financial support. Law suits began to be settled in the Panchayat Courts. The Government income from stamps sharply fell

Boycott of Foreign Cloth

Foreign cloth was considered unholy and the very touch of it a pollution. A call was given and a date was set for the boycott and burning of foreign cloth. Gandhi himself participated in one such bonfire held in Bombay in July 1921. In Allahabad, local cloth merchants had been persuaded by Jawaharlal Nehru and his friends to take a pledge not to buy foreign cloth. An association of merchants called 'Vyapari Mandal' was formed to ensure that the boycott was successfully observed. In Bengal and the C.P. shops selling foreign cloth were picketed by the Congress and Khilafat volunteers. At Madras, the non-cooperators picked shops. In several places in the Presidency, the merchants cooperated with the picketers and resolved not to deal in foreign cloth.¹⁶ ng hall.

SUSPENSION OF THE MOVEMENT

Chauri-Chaura Violence

Cha

violence all over the outbursts in different parts attacked the police stations

The Chauri-Chaura incident came in the wake of a number of acts of violence all over the country. There was in 1921 as many as sixty violent acts in different parts of India. On 5th February 1922 an angry mob attacked the police station at Chauri-Chaura in Gorakhpur district in the United Provinces and

set it on fire. The immediate provocation for this act of violence was the wanton abuse of the peaceful demonstrations by the police. In retaliation an infuriated mob pushed 21 constables and one Sub Inspector into a police station and set it ablaze. All the twenty two policemen perished in the flames. This was the second great act of violence after the Bombay riots and the two incidents had taken place within the brief span of less than four months". 34 th

Suspension

Gandhi was deeply disturbed at the turn of violent events. The non violent non-cooperation movement was degenerating into violent outbursts. Gandhi realized that the people were not yet prepared for a non-violent struggle. The mass had received little training to carry on themselves.³⁵ Many leaders were in prison. Gandhi wanted to prevent further bloodshed and loss of life. He "rightly felt that this would provide an opportunity to the Government for terrorist reprisals" ³⁶ Gandhi, therefore, called a meeting of those members of the Congress Working Committee who were outside jail at Bardoli and decided to suspend the Non-Cooperation Movement (12th February, 1922).

SIMON COMMISSION, 1927-1930

Independence for us means complete freedom from British domination and British imperialism... India could never be an equal member of the Commonwealth unless imperialism and all that it implies is discarded.

Jawaharlal Nehru

THE COMMISSION

The contention of Gandhi and the Congress that Swaraj had to be for outside the Councils proved to be right. The Swarajists who strived to push phase of Swaraj by wrecking the Councils from within realized that they were wrong. With a view to reunite the factions within the Congress and to pre-empt a scheme of Swaraj an All-Parties Conference was convened in Bombay in November 1924 at the instance of Gandhi. But nothing came out of it." J.Nehr S.C.Bose, S.Srinivasa Iyengar, B.Sambamurthy and S.Satyamurthy favoured complete independence.² S.Satyamurthy appealed to S.Srinivasa Iyenger President elect of the Congress (1926) to lead the country on the path of Civil Disobedience upon the issue of complete independence for India. The Gauhati Congress prohibited Congressmen from accepting office until a satisfactory response was made by the Government to the national demand of Swaraj. The British reaction to the national demand was the announcement of the appointment of the Simon Commission.

Compelling Circumstances

There were certain compelling circumstances for the hasty announcement of the Royal Commission, better known as the Simon Commission (1927). According to the Act of 1919 a Statutory Commission was due in 1929 to review the political situation in India. But the announcement of the Commission was made a couple of years earlier because: First, the Swarajist activities in India had created an awareness in the British Parliament to react favourable to Indian aspirations; Secondly, there was mounting pressure within the Congress

in favour of Indian independence. The youthful socialist oriented leaders in the Congress like J.Nehru and S.C.Bose thought that only complete independence would fully restore India's sense of national pride and set a clear goal for which nationalists could fight for; session, said that "no self-respecting Indian can ever admit the claim of Great Britain to be sole judge to measure the time of India's political advance. The Madras Congress passed the memorable resolution to boycott the Commission at every stage and in every form. In particular the resolution called upon the people of India and the non-official members of the Indian legislatures 1) to organize mass demonstrations during the visit of the Commission; 2) to organize public opinion in favour of the boycott of the Commission; and 3) not to give evidence before the Commission nor cooperate with it in any manner. The Congress also declared its objective as "complete National Independence",

The Muslim League was not unanimous in its condemnation of the Simon Commission. Jinnah and other prominent leaders of the League declared at its annual session at Calcutta in December 1927 that the statutory Commission was quite "unacceptable to the people of India". They declared that the Muslims had "nothing to do with the Commission at any stage and in any form".? On the other hand Sir Mohammad Shafi, an influential Muslim of the Punjab, organized a separate session of the League at Lahore and adopted a resolution in favour of cooperation with the Commission. The Liberal Federation led by Tej Bahadur Sabur, the Industrial and Commercial Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha also supported the boycott of the Commission. 23.1.4 Boycott of the Commission

When the Simon Commission landed in Bombay on 3rd February 1928, it was greeted with black flags and showered with the slogans "Simon Go Back". An All-India hartal was observed on the day of the arrival of the Commission. In the Madras city riots broke out. The boycott demonstrations were marked by disorderly scenes in different parts of the city. The police opened fire injuring a number of people. One was killed on the spot and two died later. When the police prevented T.Prakasam, who went to see the dead body laid before the Madras High Court buildings, he boldly bared open his chest to the British bayonets. This act of his bravery won for him the title of Andhra Kesar. Gagging order were issued prohibiting meetings, demonstrations and propaganda for hartal.

Report of the Commission

The Simon Commission published its report in May 1930 in two volumes. The first volume contained a survey of matters which the Commission deemed necessary. The second volume discussed the general principles of the proposals. The Principal recommendations of the Commission may be summarized as follows: 1) Dyarchy should be replaced by Provincial Autonomy. The Ministers were to be given maximum freedom to run the administration subject to the overriding powers of the Governor and the Governor-General. 2) The Central Government should be reconstituted on federal principle, embracing not only British India but the Princely States as well. 3) Provincial Legislatures should be enlarged, abolishing the official block and giving the Muslims special and adequate representation. 4) The Governor-General and the Governors were to be armed with "full and ample powers to ensure a

thoroughly efficient administrative system and to safeguard the interests of the minorities".

- 5) The High Courts were to be under the administrative control of the Government of India.
- 6) The provision of appointing a Statutory Commission to review the constitutional progress every ten years should be dropped and the new Constitution should be made flexible enough to admit changes wherever necessary.

NEHRU REPORT, 1928 The Challenge

The Motilal Nehru Report (1928) was the Indian response to challenge thrown by Lord Birkenhead, the Secretary of State for India, to Indian statesmanship. He thought that Indians were incapable of conceiving a credible scheme of constitutional reform, running democratic institutions and that the Hindus and Muslims would never agree on a common governmental system for India. He also believed that once the British leave India, "it will be submerged by the same anarchical and murderous disturbances as in the days of Clive" 17 On 26th November 1927, while speaking in the House of Lords on the appointment of the Simon Commission, Birkenhead remarked that during the last three years he had twice invited Indian leaders to produce "an agreed constitution" and that the offer was still open.18 This was a serious reflection on the competence of Indians as a whole. "...these words were regarded by the Indian leaders as a challenge from the Government to produce a constitution which might gain the approval of all interests in India. The Nehru Report was the reply to the arrogant challenge".19

Salient Features of Nehru Report

The following were the salient features of the Nehru Report: 1) Dominion Status was accepted as the immediate goal and Purna Swaraj as the ultimate aim; 2) A federal set up of Government was envisaged in which the princes would enjoy as much autonomy as was safely possible; 3) The idea of separate communal electorate was rejected and instead the system of joint electorate with reservation of seats was favoured. Seats would be reserved for Muslims at the Centre and in provinces in which they were in a minority; 4) A separate province of Sind was to be created and North West Frontier Province was to be treated equally with other provinces. Thus, Bengal, Punjab, Sind and NWFP would become Muslim majority provinces; 5) Nineteen Fundamental Rights were to be included in the Constitution; 6) The Central Legislature was to be bicameral. The lower chamber consisting of 500 members was to be constituted on the basis of adult suffrage and direct election. Different provinces were to be represented on it on population basis. The Upper Chamber was to contain 200 members to be elected by provincial legislative councils by the method of proportional representation; 7) The British Crown would exercise his powers through the Viceroy with a Prime Minister and six ministers. They should act in accordance with the constitution and parliamentary laws; 8) The Supreme Court of India would be the final arbiter of justice and that no appeal should be preferred to the Privy Council; 9) Indian States should function under the ambit of Indian Parliament and in case of a conflict between a State and the Parliament the Supreme Court would resolve the conflict; 10) A Defence Committee would look after the defence of the country.

Let us be true to our creed and firm in our determination. Satyagraha in its active application may meet with temporary setbacks but it knows no defeat. It is itself a great victory.

A FIGHT TO THE FINISH

The political climate in the country was conducive for launching the Civil Disobedience Movement. The Lahore session of the Congress, presided over by Jawaharlal Nehru, declared complete independence for India as its goal. The national leaders lost hope in the Labour Government in London that any reasonable response would be made to the Indian demand. People resented the repressive policy of the Government. The peasants and workers were reeling under the soaring prices of essential commodities. "In that situation even without Gandhi's instructions, it was quite possible for the peasants to launch a no-tax campaign".¹ The Labour movement was becoming more militant. The youth were getting restless and becoming more violent. Gandhi was 'furiously thinking about what was to be done. As decided at the Lahore session of the Congress Gandhi declared 26th January as Independence Day. It was widely celebrated throughout the country. Greatly encouraged by the response to his call, Gandhi published his 11 point demand (31 January) which had an appeal for every section of the people. But the Viceroy made no response to Gandhi's ultimatum. On the contrary his Government intensified repressive activities. Gandhi decided to fight to the finish.

SALT SATYAGRAHA

The Congress Working Committee that met at Sabarmati from 16th February 1930 vested Gandhi with full powers to start the Civil Disobedience Movement. Gandhi found that the time was ripe and the iron was hot. He announced his decision to open his campaign by opposing the Salt Tax. "The salt laws were to be broken", Gandhi's choice of Salt Tax for his attack was ingenious. Gandhi decided to disobey the Act for it was the most ubiquitous and the most iniquitous of all laws.

The iron was hot. He used the Salt Act! "The

to be broken"³ Gandhi's choice

to disobey the Salt laws of all laws in India.

.

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT,

1930-1934

Let us be true to our creed and firm in our determination. Satyagraha in its active application may meet with temporary setbacks but it knows no defeat. It is itself a great victory.

- Babu Rajendra Prasad.

A FIGHT TO THE FINISH

The political climate in the country was conducive for launching the Civil Disobedience Movement. The Lahore session of the Congress, presided over by Jawaharlal Nehru, declared complete independence for India as its goal. The national leaders lost hope in the Labour Government in London that any reasonable response would be made to the Indian demand. People resented the repressive policy of the Government. The peasants and workers were reeling under the soaring prices of essential commodities. "In that situation even without Gandhi's instructions, it was quite possible for the peasants to launch a no-tax campaign"! The Labour movement was becoming more militant. The youth were getting restless and becoming more violent. Gandhi was 'furiously thinking about what was to be done. As decided at the Lahore session of the Congress Gandhi declared 26th January as Independence Day. It was widely celebrated throughout the country. Greatly encouraged by the response to his call, Gandhi published his 11 point demand? (31 January) which had an appeal for every section of the people. But the Viceroy made no response to Gandhi's ultimatum. On the contrary his Government intensified repressive activities. Gandhi decided to fight to the finish.

SALT SATYAGRAHA

The Congress Working Committee that met at Sabarmati from 14" 10 16th February 1930 vested Gandhi with full powers to start the Civil Disobedience Movement. Gandhi found that the time was ripe and the iron was hot. announced his decision to open his campaign by opposing the Salt Act! salt Tax was to be attacked, the salt laws were to be broken". Gandhi's che of Salt Tax for his attack was ingenious. Gandhi decided to disobey the Act for it was the most ubiquitous and the most iniquitous of all laws in

The poorest peasant therefore, declared th

then the Civil Di

seriously. Perhaps Martin Luther's of

bast peasants suffered the most by the incidence of the Salt Tax, Gandhi.

declared that he would defy the obnoxious salt law himself first and Civil Disobedience would follow. None seemed to have taken Gandhi's proposed Salt Satyagraha ly. Perhaps the Viceroy, like Pope who contemptuously disposed off

Luther's 95 Theses, considered Gandhi's threat as 'a storm in a tea , Government ridiculed Salt Satyagraha as the 'Kindergarten stage of olution' and laughed away the idea that "the King-Emperor could be unseated hoiling sea-water in a kettle"." High Government circles at Delhi viewed it the fancy of a crank"Even Congress leaders doubted the credibility of the sampaign. To many salt did not seem fit into a freedom struggle. To Motilal Nehru it appeared to be irrelevant and like fasting and charka another of the "Mahatma's hobby-horses". 24.2.1 Dandi March

But Gandhi stuck to his gun. As already announced, on 12 March 1930 Gandhi and his 78 chosen disciples commenced their historic Dandi March, with a solemn vow to break the Salt Law. Dandi was 385 K.M. away from Sabarmati. When the Salt March began Jawaharlal Nehru

said: "Today the pilgrim marches onward on his long trek... The fire of a great resolve is in him... And none that passes him can escape the spell and men of common clay feel the spark of life"? It was a March of Revolt. Gandhi's army of Satyagrahis had no weapons. Their martial band was a tambura and their martial music was devotional. Gandhi walked from village to village. All along the route he was greeted and garlanded. While he was walking from place to place he was giving his message and explaining his mission. On a wayside meeting Gandhi said: "Sedition has become my religion. Ours is a non-violent battle. We are not out to kill anybody but it is our Dharma to see that the curse of this Government is blotted out".⁹ As Gandhi marched on, the crowd of marchers swelled. The local administration started crumbling. Nearly 400 village officials resigned their posts to register their support to Gandhi's struggle for freedom.

Dandi March lasted for 24 days. Gandhi reached Dandi on the morning of 9 April 1930. Soon after prayers Gandhi and Satyagrahis broke the Salt law by picking up salt lying on the sea-shore. Immediately after Gandhi issued a Statement: "This war against the Salt Tax should be continued during the National week, that is, upto the 13th April. Those who are not engaged in this sacred work should themselves do vigorous propaganda for the boycott of foreign cloth and the use of Khaddar".¹⁰ Dandi March was not a mere march of 78 satyagrahis; it was symbolical of the revolt of thirty-one crores of Indians against the authority of the British.

SUL

243 ROUND TABLE CONFERENCES 243.1 First Round Table Conference, 1930-31

In the midst of the Civil Disobedience movement the First Round Table Conference was held in London from 12th November 1930 to 19th January 1931. Gandhi was in jail and other Congress leaders refused to attend the conference. However, 89 delegates representing British India, Princely States and the British political parties participated in the Conference. The Conference was presided over by the Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald. In the opening session he moved some constitutional proposals as the basis for discussion. His proposals included 1) the idea of an All-India Federation. 2) the principle of making the federal executive responsible to the federal legislature; and 3) the reconstitution of provincial governments on the basis of full responsibility. There was unanimous agreement on the issue of federation. This was no mean achievement. However, the communal problem proved to be a Gordian Knot and there was

Alexander to cut it. Hence, the 89 'distinguished statesmen' deliberated hout deciding on anything. In the absence of the Congress participation the

Round Table Conference proved to be an exercise in futility.

SECOND ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE, 1931

Future Structure

The Second Round Table Conference opened on 7th September 1931. Gandhi reached London on 12th September, five days behind the schedule. In all, 107 delegates attended the Conference. The future constitutional structure and the representation of minorities were the

two important issues discussed by the delegates. However, the main preoccupation of the Conference was the settlement of the communal question. The Conference inevitably got bogged down over the issue of communal safeguards. The British argued that minorities should have their interests protected before self-government could be contemplated. Gandhi, on the other hand, contended that the communal problem could not be solved unless the British withdrew from India. The Conference inevitably got bogged down over the issue of communal safeguards. The British argued that all minorities should have their interests protected before self-government could be contemplated. Gandhi, on the other hand, contended that the communal problem could not be solved unless the British withdrew from India.

THIRD ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE, 1932

As the Indian leaders were preoccupied with finding out an agreed solution to the communal complication, the British Government called for the Third Round Table Conference. It lasted from 17th November to 24 December 1932. Only 46 delegates who were loyal to the Government were invited this time. Those members who were considered to be unaccommodating were excluded. Even Srinivasa Sastri was not invited! Congress could not participate since it was embroiled in the lingering Civil Disobedience Movement. Discussions were based on the reports of sub-committees appointed during the second conference. In effect the Conference focused its attention on 1) safeguards; 2) the terms under which Indian States were to join the federation; and 3) the distribution of Residuary Powers. The Principles agreed upon in the three Conferences were embodied in a White Paper presented at the British Parliament in March 1933. It formed the basis for the Government of India Act of 1935.

SUSPENSION OF THE MOVEMENT, 1934

Despite vigorous repression, the Civil Disobedience Movement lingered on. The anniversary of the re-starting of the movement was celebrated on 3 January 1933. Meetings were held amidst lathi charges and arrests. The Calcutta session of the Congress held on 31st March was brutally dispersed by the police. Gandhi commenced his 21st day purification fast on 8th May. The Government released him on the same day. Soon after his release Gandhi suspended the movement for six weeks because "owing to repression, those who conducted the movement resorted to secret ways which he deprecated". After the successful completion of the 21st day fast Gandhi extended the suspension of the movement by another six weeks with a view to enable leaders to meet at Poona and have consultations with him. They met on 12th July 1933. They resolved to take resort to Individual Civil Disobedience instead of mass Civil Disobedience. Following the arrest of Gandhi on 1st August thousands of individual satyagrahis courted arrest all over the country from August 1933 to March 1934. Satyagrahis were lathi-charged, prisoners were ill-treated, demonstrators were arrested, released and rearrested at short intervals. As a result, individual Satyagraha lost its vigour. Finally, the Congress suspended the Civil Disobedience Movement with effect from 20th May 1934.

As the intelligentsia among Congressmen were drifting away from Gandhi and were convinced that his methods would not lead them to the goal of complete independence, Gandhi decided to leave the Congress. He felt that "he was a hindrance to the natural growth of the Congress, and that instead of remaining the most democratic organization, it was dominated by his personality.

CRIPP'S PROPOSALS

The much awaited Sir Stafford Cripps reached New Delhi on 24th March 1942. Cripps was a member of the War Cabinet and was held in high esteem both in Britain and in India. The Cabinet Scheme which he brought with him was kept secret and the Cabinet proposals were made public on 30th March 1942. The Cripps' proposals in fine, were:

1) India would be granted full Dominion Status with the right to secede from the British Commonwealth of Nations. 2) A Constituent Assembly would be set up immediately after the war to

draft a Constitution for India.

3) The Constitution as framed by the Constituent Assembly would be

implemented on the following conditions; a) the Indian Provinces and States were free to adhere to the new constitution or not; b) the non acceding Province or State would have the freedom to prepare a separate constitution of its own and would enjoy the same full status as that of the Indian Union; and c) a treaty covering all matters arising out of the complete transfer of responsibility of India, such as the protection of racial and religious minorities would be negotiated between His Majesty's Government and the Constituent Assembly.

the August 1940 While the August s of drafting a new

Government firmly

Merits

The Cripp's Proposals were a definite advance over the August Offer. First, they were more positive, precise and purposeful. While the Offer invited Indians only to discuss principles and methods of drafting constitution, the Cripp's proposals offered a definite plan for establish: Constituent Assembly after the war. Secondly the British Government committed itself to the grant of Dominion Status to India. Thirdly, the fre to secede from the British Commonwealth was conceded. Fourthly. Ind were entrusted with the responsibility of drafting the new constitution. Fifth the minority communities like the Muslim League was assured of separate stati Sixthly, greater amount of trust was placed on Indians in the formation of the government. In short, the British Government conceded the basic demands of the Congress and the Muslim League. 26.5.2 Demerits

Gandhi characterized the Cripps Proposals as 'a post-dated cheque on a fast crashing bank'¹⁹ because the Mission was sent to India under the stresses of war circumstances. The Cripps Mission looked more like a counter-move against Japan than recognition of Indian claims. The proposals set no definite date for the transfer of power. No provision was made for any

national or responsible government during the interim period. The Provinces under the existing narrow franchise, communal reservation and separate electorates were expected to elect members to the Constituent Assembly. In that case, the provincial defects were found to be carried over to the constitution making body. The position of the Indian States was not well defined. Nor was a procedure laid down for the provinces whereby they could decide whether to accede to the Union or not. No serious thought was given to the status of the Sikhs in the Punjab. The sweeping powers of the Viceroy were left untouched. The Defence Department was kept away from Indians. The terms of the treaty to be concluded between the British Government and the Constituent Assembly were left sweetly vague. In effect, the Cripp's Proposals were a bundle of contradictions.

V.O.Chidambaram

That man was none other than Valiappan Olaganathan Chidambaram Pillai, or more popularly known as V.O.C. He was also called as Kapalottiya Tamizhan(The Tamil Helsman), one of the foremost freedom fighters of Tamil Nadu. It was ironical that the man who had to continuously pester Gandhi with letters for an amount of Rs 347, had launched India's first indigenous shipping service, was a succesful businessman once.

Ottapidaram is a small town in Tuticorin district, famous for it's Amman temple, and the fort of the legendary Tamil warrior Veera Pandya Kattabomman just 3 km away at Panchalankurichi. It was here on September 5, 1872 that V.O.Chidambaram Pillai was born to Olaganerohathan Pillai and Paramayee Annal. He grew up learning about Shiva from his grandmother, and the Ramayana from his grandfather. Another teacher of his Subramanya Pillai, taught him on the Mahabharat. Like any other child of his age, he loved playing games in the outdoor like goli, kabbadi, silambattam and was equally good at chess.

At the age of 14 he went to Thoothukudi to continue his studies at the Caldwell High School and later at Hindu College High School in Tirunelveli. He worked as a clerk for some time, before his father sent him to Trichy to study law. He passed his law exam in 1894 and returned to Ottapidaram the next year to practice as a pleader. He was influenced by the ideology of Swami Vivekananda to do something for India, and at Ramakrishna Math, met the great poet Bharatiyar, who became his very close friend.

Plunging into the freedom struggle, VOC became one of Tilak's ardent followers, influenced by his ideology. Along with Subramanya Siva and Bharatiyar, he emerged as one of the prominent faces of the freedom movement in Madras Presidency. Following the partition of Bengal in 1905, he joined the Indian National Congress, and was part of the extremist faction headed by the Lal, Bal, Pal trio. A succesful entrepreneur he set up many institutions like the Yuvanesh Prachar Sabha, Desibhamana Sangam, Madras Anglo Industrial Society Ltd. His biggest achievement though would be setting up India's first ever indigenous shipping service.

Those days the British had a monopoly over the shipping services, specifically the British India Steam Navigation Company, that ran all the services from India. He started India's first ever swadeshi shipping company in 1906, to break the stranglehold of the British on India's shipping sector. With a capital of 10 lakh rupees, VOC registered the Swadeshi Shipping in October 1906, the director was Pandi Thurai Thevar, an influential Zamindar of the area and founder of Madurai Tamil Sangam. The company initially did not have any ships of its own, and had to take them on lease from Shawline Steamers. When British India Steam pressurized Shawline to cancel the lease, VOC realized the need of having their own fleet.

Travelling across India, he raised money for the ships, by selling the company's shares. "I will come back with ships, else I will perish in the sea" he swore and finally managed to purchase SS Gallia and later the SS Lavo both from France. British India Steam tried to undercut his firm, by offering fares of Rs 1 per head, however VOC struck back by offering fare of 50p (8 Annas). The British tried to buy his company out, however he flatly refused the deal, and soon the first ever Indian shipping service commenced between Tuticorin and Colombo.

When workers at the Coral Mill in Thoothukudi struck work on February 23, 1908, VOC gave a speech in their support along with Subramanya Siva, and also led the strike in demanding higher wages, better working conditions. The management finally agreed to the demands, and Aurobindo praised both Chidambaram and Shiva in his Vande Mataram daily. By now the British were concerned about VOC's growing popularity, and a British official Winch asked him to give assurance that he would not take part in any political revolt. When VOC refused, he was arrested with Shiva on March 12, 1908 and placed in detention.

Thirunelveli erupted in protest against VOC's arrest, with schools, shops and colleges shut down, while a massive strike was observed in Thoothukudi. Four people were killed in police firing, and rallies were taken out denouncing VOC's arrest. Charged with sedition, he was confined in the Central Prison at Coimbatore from July 1908 to December 1910. The judgement was widely denounced, with even the British media claiming it was unjust. On subsequent appeal, the sentence was commuted to 4 years in prison and 6 years in exile.

Interned in Coimbatore and later Kannanur, VOC was not treated as a political prisoner, rather he was treated as a convict, and made to do hard labor. Yoked to oil press in place of bullocks, he was made to work in the hot sun, beaten up. The hard labor and the torture he suffered in prison, took a toll on his health.

Released on December 1912, VOC's life however was totally ruined. His shipping company was liquidated by the British, who also acquired his shipping fleet. His law licence was stripped from him, and he was not permitted to return to Tirunelveli. Almost in penury, he moved to Chennai with his wife and two young sons, where he ran a small provisions store just to survive. It was around that time he had that long winded exchange with Gandhiji regarding the money that was a dire necessity for him.

Resigning from the Congress in 1920, over ideological differences with Gandhiji, he put in more time in writing and establishing labor unions. With meager income, he petitioned the court to give him permission to practice law again, which was finally granted. He once again began his law practice at Kovilpatti in 1927, and also rejoined the Congress at Salem. However once again he quit the party disillusioned by their approach. He moved back to Thoothukudi in 1932, where he spent the rest of his time in writing, which included a commentary on the Thirukural and Tolkapiyam. Another well known book of his was Meyyaram, where he laid down the conduct of a righteous life and his own autobiography too.

Finally on November 18, 1936, V.O.Chidambaram Pillai passed away in relative obscurity. The man who defied the British, launched India's first shipping service was no more. However he lives on in the hearts of Tamil people as Kapalottiya Thamizan and Chekkiluththa Chemmal- the great man who pulled the oil press for the sake of his people. The Tuticorin Port has been named in his honor, while his statues are there in Chennai, Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi. Freedom fighter, thinker, nationalist, writer, entrepreneur V.O.Chidambaram Pillai was indeed one of the great leaders of the Independence movement.

Subramaniya Siva

Subramaniya Siva is most well known as the first person to be imprisoned in the erstwhile Madras region by the British rulers over sedition charges. But the Tamil nationalist fought another lesser-known battle in his lifetime — the Tanittamil literary movement.

“Let your tongue speak Tamil only. Let the quill you hold write Tamil only. Let your heart speak Tamil only. Let Dame Tamil with her Grace protect you,” wrote Siva in the November 1915 issue of Gnanabhanu, a monthly he edited and published. In his book Vitutalaipporil Tamil Valarnta Varalaru (History of development of Tamil in the freedom struggle), M.P. Sivagnanam gave an insight into Siva's deep seated love for Tamil, as described by Karthigesu Sivathamby in the journal Social Scientist.

‘Pure Tamil’

Started by Maraimalai Adigal, the Tanittamil (‘pure Tamil’) literary movement intended to rid the Tamil language of non-Tamil words, especially Sanskrit. The extreme nationalist movement propagated by Subramaniya Siva was the most significant of all Tamil revivalist movements organised by nationalists, wrote Sivathamby.

Born on 4 October 1884 to a Brahmin Iyer family in Vathalagundu near Dindugal in the district of Madurai, Siva believed that language is the soul of a community, and “if the Tamil language is destroyed, the greatness of Tamils will be lost”. Such was his passion for pure Tamil that he wrote an advertisement which was published in Gnanabhanu as such:

'Five rupees' — "Can you write pure Tamil? If so, rush in. A lover of Tamil has come forward to offer five rupees (as a prize) for anyone who writes, not less than eight pages on the history of St. Tiruvalluvar in our Gnanabhanu, which uses only pure Tamil words with no mixtures of words from other languages like Sanskrit."

Freedom struggle

Subramaniya Siva was one of the greatest nationalists of the Tilak era. Within the Congress movement, Siva was able to bring forth Tamil nationalists who supported the use of 'pure Tamil' words.

In 1906, Siva found himself to be inspired by the speech of Sri Thakurkhan of the Arya Samaj in Trivandrum. He persuaded many young men like himself to join the freedom movement, by establishing 'Dharma Paribalana Samaj'. This led to the activist's first brush with authority, with the British Indian government sentencing him to six years of severe imprisonment in 1908.

But Gnanabhanu helped him keep the freedom struggle alive while in prison. Siva even helped staged labour agitations in then Calcutta, Madras, Tuticorin and Tirunelveli. In conjunction with the freedom struggle was Tanittamil Iyakkam, which is best understood as a cultural expression of a political movement.

In his prolific writings, Siva fashioned that genuine Tamil revival had to coincide with an "all-India perspective". Congress also proved its commitment to the revival of national languages in 1915 at a reception held in Mayuram (now Mayiladuthurai) when Mahatma Gandhi responded to a welcome address presented in English: "Nationalism cannot be developed by killing our national languages and using English in their place."

Siva's campaign for the Tanittamil literary movement put Tamil language at the forefront, politically. It brought out simmering tensions of a community that desired to direct matters politically, but was denied it on the grounds of language. His writings inspired generations by granting the language its independence, and by virtue of that, its sweetness.

The writer was diagnosed with leprosy while he was serving one of his many prison terms. Despite his many illnesses, he continued to fight for India's independence.

In 1921, he planned on constructing a temple for 'Bharat Mata' and laid the foundation stone in Papparpatti two years later. However, Subramaniya Siva succumbed to leprosy and breathed his last on 23 July 1925. To commemorate his contribution to the freedom struggle, former Tamil Nadu chief minister J. Jayalalithaa inaugurated his memorial in Papparpatti in 2012.

Subramaniya Bharathi

11th September marked the death anniversary of Subramaniya Bharathiyar, a poet, freedom fighter and social reformer from Tamil Nadu.

Key Points:

Early life- Subramaniya Bharathiyar was born on 11th December 1882, in a village called Ettayapuram in Tirunelveli District in Tamil Nadu and his childhood name was Subbiah.

His contribution and works- He is considered as one of India's greatest poets and was known as Mahakavi Bharathiyar.

His songs on nationalism and freedom of India helped to rally the masses to support the Indian Independence Movement in Tamil Nadu.

Few of his poems are: "Kannan Pattu, Nilavum Vanminum Katrum, Panchali Sabatam and Kuyil Pattu". He published the sensational "Sudesa Geethangal" in 1908.

He necessarily employed prose to communicate, and his writings in Swadesamitran and India made an important contribution to Tamil political vocabulary.

He attended the annual sessions of Indian National Congress and discussed national issues with extremist leaders like Bipin Chandra Pal, B.G. Tilak and V.V.S. Iyer.

His participation and activities in Benaras Session (1905) and Surat Session (1907) of the Indian National Congress impressed many national leaders for his patriotic fervour.

As a social reformer- He was also against the caste system. He declared that there were only two castes-men and women and nothing more than that. Above all, he himself had removed his 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.

He believed in women's rights, gender equality and women emancipation. He opposed child marriage, dowry and supported widow remarriage.

Subramania Bharathi believed in justice and equality above everything else. He once said, "If even one single man suffers from starvation, we will destroy the entire world." This sums up his vision towards alleviating human suffering and furthering empowerment"

He died on 11th September 1921. 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. H

He is a symbol of patriotism, social reform, poetic genius and indomitable spirit of freedom and fearlessness. His thoughts and works continue to motivate us all.

Vanchinathan

Indian historians have always had selective memory. To them, the four cities of Shahjahanabad(Delhi), Mumbaai(Mumbai), Mahishur(Mysore) and Kalikata(Kolkata) form the boundaries of the country. Many a men have lost their place in Indian history due to this geopolitical blindness. One such man is Vanchinathan.

Personal life:

Vanchinathan was born into a Brahmin family in 1886 in the southernmost corner of the country. Sengottai, the town in which he was born, literally means 'Red fort' in English, but this one is not celebrated as the other one in the northern corner of the country. As a child, it is said, Vanchinathan was polite and unassuming, almost shy. He also seems to have been studious, graduating with a B.A. from Moolam Thirunal Maharaja College in Thiruvananthapuram and a M.A from Baroda university. While he was in college, he married Ponnammal with whom he fathered a daughter. After college, he was offered a clerkship in Travancore forest department which he happily took.

VOC, the inspiration:

It was in Travancore where he was leading a happy family life, Vanchinathan came to know about V.O.Chidambaram Pillai, who was fighting the British for the rights of the oppressed. In 1906, V.O.C launched the Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company, India's first shipping enterprise which operated two steamships between Tuticorin and Colombo thus putting a full-stop to British monopoly in shipping in the region. A year or so later, with the help of Coral mill workers, VOC staged a Strike against the management firm A&F Harvey which was paying very low wages to its labourers. These works of VOC inspired the young man who turned into a serious follower and made the dreams of the freedom fighter his own.

On March 12, 1908, V.O. Chidambaram Pillai was arrested for sedition and locked up in Palayamkottai. This stirred the emotions of freedom fighters in Tirunelveli and Tuticorin. Both the towns saw unprecedented agitations which was quelled with the help of a massive police force. A couple of months later, the court imposed two life sentences of 40 years each on VOC. VOC was sent to Coimbatore central prison where he spent the next two years. In 1911, Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company bankrupted and British took possession of the two steamships.

The Ashe murder:

Between 1906 and 1908, when the two navigation companies were pitted against each other in a fierce battle, Ashe was posted in Tirunelveli/Tuticorin either in the capacity of a collector or as a district magistrate. It is said that Ashe did everything in his power to kill Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company. He also fully backed A&F Harvey throughout the protest. It is also said that Ashe issued a shoot at sight order during the agitations that followed VOC's arrest. These must be the reasons, Ashe was targeted, if he was the one targeted at all (It was the collector of Tirunelveli Mr. Winch - and not Robert Ashe - who ordered the arrest of VOC in 1908. Some claim if Vanchinathan wanted to avenge VOC's arrest, it must have been by killing Mr. Winch who was directly responsible).

The mastermind behind the assassination was Nilakanta Bramhachari who went around the Madras presidency in 1910 recruiting cadres and hatching plots against the British. In this venture, he was accompanied by Shankar Krishna Aiyar, Vanchinathan's brother-in-law, who introduced the men to each other. This was when Vanchinathan was initiated into militant struggle for freedom. Along with a few other men, Nilakanta Bramhachari, Vaanchinathan and Shankar Krishna Aiyar found an organisation called Bharatha Matha Sangam which plots the assassination of influential British men.

The preparation for the murder began in early January 1911 when Vanchinathan took a three month break from his job and visited VVS Aiyar in Pondicherry. VVS Aiyar who was allegedly involved in many other conspiracies against the British trained Vanchinathan in firing a revolver among other things. It is said that Vanchinathan confessed to VVS Aiyar his plans to assassinate Ashe for his role in the arrest of VOC and the agitations that followed (could not be verified). A couple of months later, Vanchinathan's infant daughter died whose funeral he did not attend and Ashe was promoted as the acting collector of Tirunelveli.

The stage was set. The date was decided - June 11, 1911. It was to coincide with the coronation of George V. For some reason, there was no attempt on that day. The second one was planned for June 17, 1911.

On that day, Ashe with his wife Mary left Tirunelveli for Kodaikanal in a train to visit his children. Vanchinathan and three others from Bharatha Matha sangam boarded the same train at Tirunelveli. At 9.30 A.M. the train reached Maniyachi. As soon as the train came to a halt, Vanchinathan boarded the first class in which Ashe and his wife were travelling. He shot Ashe with his browning, jumped out of the train and ran into the platform lavatory. There, he shot himself to death. By the time police arrived, both Ashe and Vanchinathan were dead. The police discovered a letter in Vanchinathan's pocket signed "R. Vanchi Aiyar, Sengottai". It read:

"The mlechas of England having captured our country, tread over the sanathana dharma of the Hindus and destroy them. Every Indian is trying to drive out the English and get swarajyam and restore sanathana dharma. Our Raman, Sivaji, Krishnan, Guru Govindan, Arjuna ruled our land protecting all dharmas and in this land they are making arrangements to crown George V, a mlecha, and one who eats the flesh of cows. Three thousand Madrasedes have taken a vow to kill George V as soon as he lands in our country. In order to make others know our intention, I who am the least in the company, have done this deed this day. This is what everyone in Hindustan should consider it as his duty."

Rajaji

We take you through the life of a freedom fighter-turned politician Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, whose ways and means are followed even today, though the outcome may not be to his liking.

Early Life

Chakravarti Rajagopalachari fondly known as 'Rajaji' was born to Chakravarti Venkatarya Iyengar, December 10, 1878 into a devout Iyengar family of Thorapalli in the Madras Presidency.

A weak and sickly child, Rajaji was a constant worry to his parents who feared that he might not live long. He was admitted to a village school in Thorapalli and at the age of five he moved with his family to Hosur where Rajaji enrolled at Hosur Government School. He passed his matriculation examinations in 1891 and graduated in arts from Central College, Bangalore in 1894. Rajaji also studied law at the Presidency College, Madras, from where he graduated in 1897.

Independence Movement Rajaji's interest in public affairs and politics began when he commenced his legal practice in Salem in 1900. Inspired by independence activist Bal Gangadhar Tilak, in the early 1900s, he later became a member of the Salem municipality in 1911.

In 1917, Rajaji was elected Chairman of the municipality and served from 1917 to 1919 during which time he was responsible for the election of the first Dalit member of the Salem municipality. Rajaji joined the Indian National Congress and participated as a delegate in the 1906 Calcutta session and the 1907 Surat session.

In 1917, he defended independence activist P. Varadarajulu Naidu against charges of sedition and two years later participated in the agitations against the Rowlatt Act.

Rajaji was a close friend of the founder of Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company V.O. Chidambaram Pillai as well as greatly admired by independence activists Annie Besant and C. Vijayaraghavachariar.

After Mahatma Gandhi joined the Indian independence movement in 1919, Rajaji became one of his followers. He participated in the Non-Cooperation movement and gave up his law practice. In 1921, he was elected to the Congress Working Committee and served as the General Secretary of the party before making his first major breakthrough as a leader during the 1922 Indian National Congress session at Gaya when he strongly opposed collaboration with the colonial administration and participation in the diarchial legislatures established by the Government of India Act 1919. While Gandhi was in prison, Rajaji led the group of "No-Changers", individuals against contesting elections for the Imperial Legislative Council and other provincial legislative councils, in opposition to the "Pro-changers" who advocated council entry.

When the Indian National Congress split in 1923, Rajaji was a member of the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee. He was also involved in the Vaikom Satyagraha movement against untouchability during 1924–25.

In the early 1930s, Rajaji emerged as one of the major leaders of the Tamil Nadu Congress. When Mahatma Gandhi organized the Dandi march in 1930, Rajaji broke the salt laws at Vedaranyam near Nagapattinam along with independence activist Sardar Vedaratnam and was afterwards imprisoned by the British.

Following enactment of the Government of India Act in 1935, Rajaji was instrumental in getting the Indian National Congress to participate in the 1937 general elections.

Madras Presidency The Indian National Congress first came to power in the Madras Presidency following the 1937 election and except for a six year period when Madras was under the Governor's direct rule, ruled the Presidency until India became independent on August 15, 1947. Rajaji was the first premier of the Madras Presidency from the Congress party.

He issued the Temple Entry Authorization and Indemnity Act 1939, under which restrictions were removed on Dalits and Shanars entering Hindu temples. In the same year, the

Meenakshi temple at Madurai also opened to the Dalits and Shanars. Rajaji also issued the Agricultural Debt Relief Act in March 1938 to ease the burden of debt on the province's peasant population.

He also introduced prohibition, along with a sales tax to compensate for the loss of government revenue that resulted from the ban on alcohol. As a result of the revenue decline resulting from prohibition the Provincial Government shut down hundreds of government-run primary schools, a decision that Rajaji's political opponents alleged deprived many low-caste and Dalit students of their education. His opponents also attributed casteist motives to his government's implementation of Gandhi's Nai Talim scheme into the education system.

Rajaji's tenure as chief minister is largely remembered for the compulsory introduction of Hindi in educational institutions, which made him highly unpopular. This measure sparked off widespread anti-Hindi protests, which led to violence in some places and the jailing of over 1,200 men, women and children who took part in the unrest.

Despite its numerous shortcomings, Madras under Rajaji was still considered by political historians as the best administered province in British India.

Second World War At the outbreak of the Second World War Rajaji immediately resigned as Premier in protest at the declaration of war by the Viceroy of India. Rajaji was arrested in December 1940 and sentenced to one-year in prison. However, subsequently, Rajaji differed in opposition to the British war effort. He also opposed the Quit India Movement and instead advocated dialogue with the British. He reasoned that passivity and neutrality would be harmful to India's interests at a time when the country was threatened with invasion. He also advocated dialogue with the Muslim League, which was demanding the partition of India. He subsequently resigned from the party and the assembly following differences over resolutions passed by the Madras Congress legislative party and disagreements with the leader of the Madras provincial Congress K. Kamaraj.

During the last years of the war, Rajaji was instrumental in initiating negotiations between Gandhi and Jinnah. In 1944, he proposed a solution to the Indian Constitutional tangle. In the same year, he proposed an "absolute majority" threshold of 55 per cent when deciding whether a district should become part of India or Pakistan, triggering a huge controversy among nationalists.

Congress Party general secretary Rahul Gandhi(Right): Premier Rajagopalachari at a rally in Ootacamund, 1939.

Governor of West Bengal When India attained independence on August 15, 1947, the British province of Bengal was divided into two, with West Bengal becoming part of India and East Bengal part of Pakistan. Supported by Jawaharlal Nehru, Rajaji was appointed first governor of West Bengal.

Disliked by Bengalis for his criticism of Bengali revolutionary Subhash Chandra Bose during the 1938 Tripuri Congress session Rajaji's appointment was unsuccessfully opposed by

Subhash's brother Sarat Chandra Bose. During his tenure as governor, Rajaji's priorities were to deal with refugees and to bring peace and stability in the aftermath of the Calcutta riots. He declared his commitment to neutrality and justice at a meeting of Muslim businessmen: "Whatever may be my defects or lapses, let me assure you that I shall never disfigure my life with any deliberate acts of injustice to any community whatsoever." Rajaji was also strongly opposed to proposals to include areas from Bihar and Orissa as part of the province of West Bengal. Despite the general attitude of the Bengalis, Rajaji was highly regarded and respected by Chief Minister Prafulla Chandra Ghosh and the state cabinet.

Governor-General of India From November 10, 1947 to November 24, 1947, Rajaji served as acting Governor-General of India in the absence of the Governor-General Lord Mountbatten, who was on leave in England to attend the marriage of Princess Elizabeth to Mountbatten's nephew Prince Philip. Rajaji led a very simple life in the viceregal palace, washing his own clothes and polishing his own shoes.

Impressed with his abilities, Mountbatten made Rajaji his second choice to succeed him after Vallabhbhai Patel, when he was to leave India in June 1948. Rajaji was eventually chosen as the Governor-General when Nehru disagreed with Mountbatten's first choice, as did Patel himself.

He was initially hesitant but accepted when Nehru wrote to him, "I hope you will not disappoint us. We want you to help us in many ways. The burden on some of us is more than we can carry."

Rajaji then served as Governor-General of India from June 1948 until January 26, 1950, and was not only the last Governor-General of India, but the only Indian national ever to hold the office.

In Nehru's Cabinet At Nehru's invitation, in 1950 Rajaji joined the Union Cabinet as minister without portfolio where he served as a buffer between Nehru and Home Minister Sardar Patel and on occasion offered to mediate between the two. Following Patel's death, Rajaji was finally made home affairs minister and went on to serve for nearly 10 months. As had his predecessor, he warned Nehru about the expansionist designs of China and expressed regret over the Tibet problem.

He also expressed concern over demands for new linguistically-based states, arguing that they would generate differences amongst the people.

By the end of 1951, the differences between Nehru and Rajaji came to the fore. While Nehru perceived the Hindu Mahasabha to be the greatest threat to the nascent republic, Rajaji held the opinion that the Communists posed the greatest danger. He also adamantly opposed Nehru's decision to commute the death sentences passed on those involved in the Telengana uprising and his strong pro-Soviet leanings. Tired of being persistently overruled by Nehru with regard to critical decisions, Rajaji submitted his resignation on the "grounds of ill-health" and returned to Madras.

Congress Party general secretary Rahul Gandhi(Right): A postage stamp to commemorate C. Rajagopalachari.

Madras State In the 1952 Madras elections, the Indian National Congress was reduced to a minority in the state assembly with a coalition led by the Communist Party of India winning most of the seats.

Though he did not participate, Madras governor Sri Prakasa appointed Rajaji chief minister after nominating him to the Madras Legislative Council without consulting either Prime Minister Nehru or the ministers in the Madras state cabinet.

Rajaji was then able to prove that he had a majority in the assembly by luring MLAs from opposition parties to join the Indian National Congress. Nehru was furious and wrote to Rajaji saying, "the one thing we must avoid giving is the impression that we stick to office and we want to keep others out at all costs." Rajaji, however, refused to contest a by-election and remained an unelected member of the legislative council.

During Rajaji's tenure as chief minister, a powerful movement for a separate Andhra State, comprising the Telugu-speaking districts of the Madras State, gained a foothold.

On October 19, 1952, an Indian independence activist and social worker from Madras, Potti Sriramulu embarked on a hunger strike reiterating the demands of the separatists and calling for the inclusion of Madras city within the proposed state. Rajaji remained unmoved by Sriramulu's action and refused to intervene. After fasting for days, Sriramulu eventually died on December 15, 1952, triggering riots in Madras city and the Telugu-speaking districts of the state.

Initially, both Rajaji and Prime Minister Nehru were against the creation of linguistically demarcated states but as the law and order situation in the state deteriorated, both were forced to accept the demands.

Andhra State was created on October 1, 1953 from the Telugu-speaking districts of Madras, with its capital at Kurnool.

In 1952 Rajaji put an end to sugar rationing and followed up by abolishing control over food supplies. He also introduced measures to regulate the running of universities in the state.

In 1953, he introduced a new education scheme known as the "Modified System of Elementary Education", which reduced schooling for elementary school students to three hours per day. The plan came in for sharp criticism and evoked strong protests from the Dravidian parties.

The rising unpopularity of his government forced K. Kamaraj to withdraw his support for Rajaji and in 1954, he resigned as president of the Madras Legislature Congress Party.

Literary Pursuits Following his resignation as chief minister, Rajaji took a temporary break from active politics and instead devoted his time to literary pursuits. He wrote a Tamil re-telling of the Sanskrit epic Ramayana. The episodes were later published as Chakravarthi Thirumagan, a book which won Rajaji the 1958 Sahitya Academy award in Tamil language.

On Republic Day 1955, Rajaji was honored with India's highest civilian award, the Bharat Ratna.

Rajaji was the founder of the Salem Literary Society and regularly participated in its meetings. In 1922, he published Siraiyil Tavam (Meditation in Jail), a day-to-day account of his first imprisonment by the British from December 21, 1921 to March 20, 1922.

Rajaji started the Tamil Scientific Terms Society in 1916, a group that coined new words in Tamil for terms connected to botany, chemistry, physics, astronomy and mathematics. At about the same time, he called for Tamil to be introduced as the medium of instruction in schools.

He was also one of the founders of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, an organization dedicated to the promotion of education and Indian culture.

In 1959 the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan published his book: 'Hinduism: Doctrine and Way of Life.'

Legacy In 1954, during U.S. Vice President Richard Nixon's nineteen country Asia tour, he was lectured by Rajaji on the consuming emotional quality of nuclear weapons. The pair discussed spiritual life, particularly reincarnation and predestination. Nixon wrote three pages of notes recording Rajaji's words, claiming in his memoirs thirty-six years later that the afternoon "had such a dramatic effect on me that I used many of his thoughts in my speeches over the next several years."

While on a tour to the United States as a member of the Gandhi Peace Foundation delegation, in September 1962, Rajaji visited President John F. Kennedy at the White House. Rajaji warned Kennedy of the dangers of embarking on an arms race, even one which the U.S. could win. At the end of the meeting Kennedy remarked "This meeting had the most civilizing influence on me. Seldom have I heard a case presented with such precision, clarity and elegance of language. Rajaji's condition deteriorated in the following years. In his last year, he frequently lost consciousness and he died on December 25, 1972 at the age of 94. On his death, condolences poured in from all corners of the country.

Richard Casey, Governor of Bengal from 1944 to 1946, regarded Rajaji as the wisest man in India. The best possible tribute to Rajaji was from Mahatma Gandhi who referred to him as the “keeper of my conscience.”

Theerer Sathyamorthy

Sathyamurthy (August 19, 1887 – March 28, 1943) was a politician from the Indian National Congress and an Indian freedom fighter. He was a prominent leader of the Indian National Congress until his demise on March 28, 1943.

Sathyamurthy Life

Chellachamy was born on August 19, 1880 in the district of Madurai. He graduated from the prestigious Madras Christian College and later went on to do law and started practicing as an advocate prior to his initiation in the national movement. Sathyamurthy plunged into politics at an early age winning college elections and eventually emerging as one of the foremost leaders of the Indian National Congress and a doyen of the freedom movement.

In 1919, when the Congress decided to send its representative to the Joint Parliamentary Committee (of the UK) to protest the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms and the Rowlatt Act, thirty-two year old Sathyamurthy was chosen as a delegate. When Sathyamurthy was in U.K., he functioned as the London Correspondent of The Hindu, in place of the actual Correspondent who had taken 10-days leave.

Later in his life, he was elected mayor of Madras and served in his capacity as an able administrator from 1939 to 1940. He also served as a member of the Legislature. He was arrested in 1930 while trying to hoist the Indian national flag atop Parthasarathy Temple in Madras. He was also actively involved in the Swadeshi movement and was arrested in 1942 for performing ‘Individual satyagraha’ at the height of the Quit India Movement. He was deported to Amravathi Jail in Nagpur and was hurt in the spinal cord during the journey. He succumbed to his injuries at General Hospital, Chennai on March 28, 1943.

The Hindu dedicated a whole column to Sathyamurthy under the caption ‘Tribune of the people’. It said “He was a born freedom-fighter, a leadmine fighter as the Scots say to whom the fight was the thing.”

Sathyamurthy Legacy

Sathyamurthy was one of the early leaders of the Indian National Congress in Tamil Nadu before the rise of Rajagopalachari and Kamaraj. His name is barely remembered today and is largely forgotten amidst a host of prominent personages.

But the few who cherish his memory continue to credit him with popularizing the Congress and Gandhian ideals in Tamil Nadu. The Tamil Nadu state headquarters of the Indian National Congress has been named.

Kamaraj

Kamaraj (1903 - 1975) a veteran leader and a freedom fighter of Tamilnadu. He joined the movement initiated by Mahatma Gandhi. He observed all possible movement against the British rulers and opposed the British ruling in each and every walks of life. He did aware of the people of Tamilnadu against the British ruling for which he also got imprisonment for several years.

Family background of Kamarajar

Over 3 centuries, the British ruled India as a bounce back, people of India get against the British ruling. Following this violence broke out in many places. As an effect of the freedom struggle, many freedom fighters from Tamilnadu contributed in the Indian freedom struggle. Kamaraj is one of the freedom fighters of Tamilnadu. He was born on 15th of July, 1903 in the place called virudunagar in Tamilnadu. His father Kumaraswamy and mother Sivakami Ammal. They belong to Nadar family. His father was a coconut traders. His school days are not so effective as he was a below average student. After the death of his father, poverty and economic problems increased to unmanageable level. So, he could not continue his education beyond class VI and became a drop out.

Kamaraj as a freedom fighters

Unlike his studies, his interest was towards arranging political meeting, speaking on political meeting and fight against the social evils which was prevailing then in our society. He was very much attracted towards Gandhi policy of truth, peace and non -violence. He accepted satyamurthi as his guru and a political leader. He was arrested many times and put behind the bars. He participated in the satyagraha initiated by the C Rajagopalachari in Tamilnadu.

The march was up to Vedaranyam during 1930. This is to mark the Satyagraha of Gandhi who took his march from sabarmati ashram to Dandi on the same date. He spent few years in Alipore jail and Vellore jail over booking baseless charge on Kamaraj. When Gandhi announced the quite India movement during 1942 kamaraj spreaded the message to each and every corner of Tamilnadu to make the people aware of the freedom struggle. Only because of this act he was arrested and put in in the jail for three years. On the leadership of Kamaraj and Satyamurthi the congress flourished in Tamilnadu on the basis of their popularity Kamaraj became the chief minister of Tamilnadu On April 13, 1954.