



THE ROLE OF TAMILNADU IN INDIAN FREEDOM STRUGGLE

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SYNOPSIS

- Introduction
- Early nationalist stirring in tamil nadu
- Madras Native Association
- Beginning of the Nationalist press:The Hindu and Swadesamitran
- Madras Mahajana Sabha
- Moderate Phase
- Swadeshi Movement
- Response in Tamil nadu
- (A)Swadeshi Steam Navigation Tirunelveli Uprising
- (B)Revolutionary Activities in
- Ashe Murder
- (C)Annie Besant and the home
- Salt March to Vedaranyam
- Martyrdom of Tirupur
- First Congress Ministry
- Vellor Muntiy-1806
- V.O. Chidrambaram Pillai
- Bharthiyar
- Quit India Struggle
- K. Kamaraj
- Conclusion

INTRODUCTION:

Tamil Nadu showed the lead in resisting colonial rule. As early as the late eighteenth century the Palayakarars, resisted the English attempts to establish their political hegemony in

Tamil Nadu. Even after the defeat of the Palayakarars, an uprising was organised by Indian sepoys and officers in Vellore Fort in 1806 that had its echoes in several cantonments in south India. Thanks to the introduction of Western education and eventual emergence of educated Indian middle class, the struggle against the British took the constitutional path. The freedom struggle in Tamil Nadu was unique, because from the beginning it was not only a struggle for independence from the English rule but also a struggle for independence from social disability imposed by the obnoxious caste system. In this lesson we shall study the role played by nationalists wedded to diverse ideologies in Tamil Nadu.

EARLY NATIONALIST STIRRINGS IN TAMIL NADU:

By the middle of the nineteenth century, a group of educated middle class emerged in Madras and began to show interest in public affairs. As in other parts of India, they formed political associations, such as the Madras Native Association and the Madras Mahajana Sabha to articulate their grievances.

MADRAS NATIVE ASSOCIATION:

The **Madras Native Association(MNA)** was the earliest organisation to be founded in south India to articulate the larger public rather than sectarian interests. It was started by Gazulu Lakshmana,Srinivasanar and their associates in 1852 . It consisted primarily of merchants. The objective was to promote the interests of its members and their focus was on reduction in taxation. It also protested the support of the government to Christian missionary activities. It drew the attention of the government to the condition and needs of the people. One of the important contributions of the MNA was its agitation against the torture of the peasants by revenue officials. These efforts led to the establishment of the Torture Commission and the eventual abolition of the Torture Act, which justified the collection of land revenue through torture. However, by 1862, the Madras Native Association had ceased to exist.

BEGINNINGS OF THE NATIONALIST PRESS:THE HINDU AND SWADESAMITRAN:

The appointment of T. Muthuswami as the first Indian Judge of the Madras High court in 1877 created a furore in Madras Presidency. The entire press in Madras criticized the appointment of an Indian as a judge. The press opposed his appointment and the educated youth realized that the press was entirely owned by Europeans. The need for a newspaper to express the Indian perspective was keenly felt. G. Subramaniam , M. Veeraraghavachari and four other friends together started a newspaper The Hindu in 1878. It soon became the vehicle of nationalist propaganda. G. Subramaniam also started a Tamil nationalist periodical

Swadesamitran in 1891 which became a daily in 1899. The founding of The Hindu and Swadesamitran provided encouragement to the starting of other native newspapers such as Indian Patriot, South Indian Mail, Madras Standard, Desabhimani, Vijaya, Suryodayam and India.

MADRAS MAHAJANA SABHA:

Madras Mahajana Sabha (MMS) was the earliest organisation in south India with clear nationalist objectives. It was the training ground for the first generation of nationalist leaders. On 16 May 1884, MMS was started by M. Veeraraghavachari, P. Anandacharlu, P. Rangaiah, and few others. P. Rangaiah became its first president. P. Anandacharlu played an active role as its secretary. The members met periodically, debated public issues in closed meetings, conducted hall meetings and communicated their views to the government. The objective of MMS was to create a consensus among people of different parts of the Presidency on various issues of public interest and to present it to the government. Its demands included the conduct of simultaneous civil services examinations in England and India, the abolition of the Council of India in London, the reduction of taxes and reduction of civil and military expenditure. Many of its demands were adopted later by the Indian National Congress founded in 1885.

MODERATE PHASE:

Mahajana Sabha led to the formation of an all-India organisation, the Indian National Congress. Leaders from different parts of India attended several meetings before the formation of the Congress. One such meeting was held in December 1884 in Theosophical Society. It was attended by Dadabhai Naoroji, K.T. Telang, Surendranath Banerjee and other prominent leaders apart from G. Subramaniam, Rangaiah, and Anandacharlu from Madras.

The **first session** of the Indian National Congress was held in **1885 at Bombay**. Out of a total of 72 delegates, 22 members were from Madras. G. Subramaniam through his writings advanced the cause of nationalism. He ranks with Naoroji and Gokhale for his contribution to the understanding of the economic exploitation of India by the British.

The **second session** of the Indian National Congress was held in **Calcutta in 1886**, with Dadabhai Naoroji in the Chair.

The **third session** was held at **Makki's Garden**, now known as the Thousand lights, in Madras in 1887 with Badruddin Tyabji as president. Out of the 607, all India delegates of 362 were from Madras Presidency.

SWADESHI MOVEMENT:

The partition of Bengal (1905) led to the Swadeshi Movement and changed the course of the struggle for freedom. In various parts of India, especially Bengal, Punjab and Maharashtra popular leaders emerged. They implemented the programme of the Calcutta Congress which called upon the nation to promote Swadeshi enterprise, boycott foreign goods and promote national education.

RESPONSE IN TAMIL NADU:

V.O.Chidambaranar, V.Chakkaraiyar, Subramania Bharati and Surendranath Arya were some of the prominent leaders in Tamilnadu. Public meetings attended by thousands of people were organised in various parts of Tamilnadu. Tamil was used on the public platform for the first time to mobilise the people. Subaramania Bharati's patriotic songs were especially important in stirring patriotic emotions. Many journals were started to propagate Swadeshi ideals.

Swadesamitran and India were prominent journals. The extremist leader Bipin Chandra Pal toured Madras and delivered lectures which inspired the youth. Students and youth participated widely in the Swadeshi Movement.

(A) SWADESHI STEAM NAVIGATION:

Company One of the most enterprising acts in pursuance of swadeshi was the launching of the Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company at Thoothukudi by V.O. Chidambaranar. He purchased two ships Gallia and Lavo and plied them between Thoothukudi and Colombo.

TIRUNELVELI UPRISING:

V.O.C joined with Subramania Siva in organising the mill workers in Thoothukudi and Tirunelveli. In 1908, he led a strike in the European-owned Coral Mills. It coincided with the release of Bipin Chandra Pal. V.O.C and Subramanya Siva, who organised a public meeting to celebrate the release of Bipin, were arrested. The two leaders were charged with sedition and sentenced to rigorous imprisonment. Initially V.O.C. was given a draconian sentence of two life imprisonments. The news of the arrest sparked riots in Tirunelveli leading to the burning down of the police station, court building and municipal office. It led to the death of four people in police firing. V.O.C. was treated harshly in prison and was made to pull the heavy oil press. To avoid imprisonment Subramania Bharati moved to Pondicherry which was under French rule. Bharati's example was followed by many other nationalists such as Aurobindo Ghosh and V.V.Subramanianar.

(B) REVOLUTIONARY ACTIVITIES IN:

Tamil Nadu Pondicherry provided a safe haven for the revolutionaries. Many of these revolutionaries in Tamil Nadu were introduced and trained in revolutionary activities at India House in London and in Paris. M.P.T. Acharya, V.V. Subramanianar and T.S.S. Rajan were prominent among them. Revolutionary literature was distributed by them in Madras through Pondicherry. Radical papers such as India, Vijaya and Suryodayam came out of Pondicherry.

ASHE MURDER:

In 1904 Nilakanta Brahmachari and others started Bharata Matha Society, a secret society. The objective was to kill British officials and thereby kindle patriotic fervour among the people. Vanchinathan of Senkottai, was influenced by this organisation. On 17 June 1911 he shot dead Robert W.D'E. Ashe, Collector of Tirunelveli in Maniyachi Junction. After this he shot himself.

(C) ANNIE BESANT AND THE HOME:

Rule Movement While the extremists and revolutionaries were suppressed with an iron hand, the moderates hoped for some constitutional reforms. However, they were disappointed with the Minto-Morley reforms as it did not provide for responsible government. Thus when the national movement was in its ebb, Annie Besant, an Irish lady and leader of the Theosophical Society, proposed the HomeRule Movement on the model of Irish Home Rule League. She started Home Rule League in 1916 and carried forward the demand for home rule all over India. G.S. Arundale, B.P. Wadia and C.P. Ramaswamy assisted her in this campaign. They demanded home rule with only a nominal allegiance to British Crown. She started the newspapers New India and

Commonweal to carry forward her agenda. She remarked, *"Better bullock carts and freedom than a train deluxe with subjection"*. Under the Press Act of 1910 Annie Besant was asked to pay hefty amount as security. She wrote two books, How India wrought for Freedom and India: A Nation and a pamphlet on self-government.

SALT MARCH TO VEDARANYAM:

The **Vedaranyam March** (also called the **Vedaranyam Satyagraha**) was a framework of the nonviolent Civil disobedience movement in British India. Modeled on the lines of Dandi March, which was led by Mahatma Gandhi on the western coast of India the month before, it was organised to protest the salt tax imposed by the British Raj in the colonial India.

C.Rajagopalachari, a close associate of Gandhi, led the march which had close to 150 volunteers, most of whom belonged to the Indian National Congress. It began at

Trichinopoly (now Tiruchirappalli) on 13 April 1930 and proceeded for about 150 mi (240 km) towards the east before culminating at Vedaranyam, a small coastal town in the then [Tanjore District](#). By collecting salt directly from the sea the marchers broke the salt law. As a part of the march, Rajagopalachari created awareness among the people by highlighting the importance of Khadi as well as social issues like Caste Discrimination. The campaign came to an end on 28 April 1930 when the participants were arrested by the Colonial Police Force. Its leader Rajagopalachari was imprisoned for six months. The march along with the ones at Dandi and Dharasana drew worldwide attention to the Indian Independence Movement.

MARTYRDOM OF TIRUPUR:

OKSR Kumaraswamy Mudaliar who was a famous freedom fighter in Tamil Nadu and he was born on 04-10-1904 in the small town named as Chennimalai in Tirupur District of Tamil Nadu. He was popularly known as Tirupur Kumaran. He involved himself in the Indian freedom movement in his young age and he participated in many struggles in the Indian freedom movement.

Tirupur Kumaran had played a major vital role in the Indian freedom movement. He started "Desa Bandhu Youth Association" by grouping the youths and young persons from Tamil Nadu to struggle against the British government to get freedom. Many persons got inspired and involved in the freedom struggle with Tirupur Kumaran. He conducted many protest marches against the British government in many places of Tamil Nadu. He got more inspiration from the father of our Nation Mahatma Gandhi. He followed the procedures and methods which were suggested by Gandhiji in the Indian freedom movement. Tirupur Kumaran had also participated in Congress movement from the Tirupur's contribution.

The Tamil Nadu people are always remembering the contribution of Tirupur Kumaran for the freedom of India by conducting various functions and programmes by the name of Tirupur Kumaran. A memorial statue for Tirupur Kumaran was erected in the park which is very near to Tirupur Railway station. There is a street by his name which is called as "Kumaran Salai". There is also a college in his name in Tirupur and it is called as "Tirupur Kumaran College". The Government of India had released a commemorative stamp in his name on October 2004 during the 100th birth anniversary of Tirupur Kumaran. Get to know more about Freedom fighters from Tamil Nadu here!

The great and famous freedom fighter of Tamil Nadu, Tirupur Kumaran died on 11th January, 1932. His death was very cruel that the Police assaulted him during the protest against

the British colonial government. He was so patriotic that he died by holding the National flag of India which was banned by the British government. He is also called as "**Kodi Kaththa Kumaran**" due to this incident.

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FIRST CONGRESS MINISTRY:

'Rajaji' and **'Rajagopalachari'** redirect here. For other uses, see *Rajaji and Rajagopalachari*. In this South Indian name, the surname is Chakravarti.

Chakravarti Rajagopalachari (9 December 1878 – 25 December 1972), popularly known as **Rajaji** or *C.R.*, also known as **Mootharignar Rajaji** (Rajaji, the Scholar Emeritus), was an Indian statesman, writer, lawyer, and independence activist. Rajagopalachari was the last Governor General of India, as India became a republic in 1950. He was also the first Indian-born governor-general, as all previous holders of the post were British nationals. He also served as leader of the Indian National Congress, Premier of the Madras Presidency, Governor of West Bengal, Minister for Home Affairs of the Indian Union and Chief Minister of Madras state. Rajagopalachari founded the Swatantra Party and was one of the first recipients of India's highest civilian award, the Bharat Ratna. He vehemently opposed the use of nuclear weapons and was a proponent of world peace and disarmament. During his lifetime, he also acquired the nickname 'Mango of Salem'.

VELLOR MUNTIIY – 1806

The British administration prohibited the Hindu soldiers from smearing religious marks on their forehead and ordered the Muslims to shave their beard and trim their moustache which created a strong resentment among the soldiers. On July 9, 1806, one of Tipu's daughters was to be married at Vellore. The revolting soldiers gathered at the fort under the pretext of attending the wedding. On the midnight of July 10, the soldiers surrounded the fort and killed most of the Europeans and unfurled the flag of Tipu over the fort. However, the British crushed the revolt in no time.

V.O.CHIDAMBARAM PILLAI:

Valliyappan Olaganathan Chidambaram Pillai (5 September 1872 - 18 November 1936) was born into a Royal Family of Tuticorin. He is popularly known by his initials, V.O.C. and is also known as **Kappalottiya Tamizhan** or "the Tamil Helmsman". He was a Tamil Indian freedom fighter and former leader of the Indian National Congress. Founder of Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company in 1906 to compete against the monopoly of the British Indian Steam Navigation (BISNC). He launched the first indigenous Indian shipping service between Tuticorin (India) and Colombo (Sri Lanka) with the Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company (SSNC), competing against British ships. Tuticorin Port Trust, one of India's thirteen major ports, is named after him. At one time a member of the Indian National Congress, he was later charged with sedition by the British government and sentenced to life imprisonment, and his barrister license was revoked.

BHARATHIYAR:

Subramania Bharati is the greatest Tamil poet of the twentieth century. His name shines in the annals of Indian history as an ardent patriot. Subramania Bharati was born on December 11, 1882, in a middle class family in Ettayapuram, Tamil Nadu. His father was Chinnaswami Iyer and mother Lakshmiammal. His father wanted him to be a mathematical wizard. But he could not make the boy learn mathematics. Instead, Subbiah loved language, literature and poetry.

Once eleven year old Subbiah was invited to the court of the rajah of Ettayapuram to recite his poems. The noted poets gathered at the court were amazed at his recitation. They gave him the title of 'Bharati', which is the name of Saraswati, the goddess of learning and speech. Thus he came to be known as Subramania Bharati.

Subbiah was married when he was just fourteen. His bride was seven years old Chellammal. But the matrimonial tie did not extinguish his hunger for knowledge. When he was sixteen, he left for Banaras. His four-year stay brought a great change in his personality. The seed of patriotism were sowed deep in his mind. His poems were on the lips of the listeners. Spreading like wildfire, the songs soon went to the heart of every individual.

Those who are wealthy, give sacks of gold.

Those who do not have much, give small coins.

Those who do not have even that, express your

good wishes. Those who are manly, lend your effort.

— [Subramanya Bharathi](#)

QUIT INDIA STRUGGLE:

The **Quit India Movement**, also known as the **August Movement**, was a movement launched at the Bombay session of the [All India Congress Committee](#) by Mahatma Gandhi on 8 August 1942, during World War II, demanding an end to British rule in India

After the failure of the Cripps Mission to secure Indian support for the British war effort, Gandhi made a call to Do or Die in his Quit India speech delivered in Bombay on 8 August 1942 at the Gowalia Tank Maidan. The All-India Congress Committee launched a mass protest demanding what Gandhi called "An Orderly British Withdrawal" from India. Even though it was at war, the British were prepared to act. Almost the entire leadership of the Indian National Congress was

imprisoned without trial within hours of Gandhi's speech. Most spent the rest of the war in prison and out of contact with the masses. The British had the support of the Viceroy's Council (which had a majority of Indians), of the All-Indian Muslim League, the Mahasabha, the princely states, the Indian Imperial Police, the British Indian Army, and the Indian Civil Service. Many Indian businessmen profiting from heavy wartime spending did not support the Quit India Movement. Many students paid more attention to Subhas Chandra Bose, who was in exile and supporting the Axis Powers. The only outside support came from the Americans, as President [Franklin D. Roosevelt](#) pressured Prime Minister Winston Churchill to give in to some of the Indian demands. The Quit India campaign was effectively crushed. The British refused to grant immediate independence, saying it could happen only after the war had ended.

K.KAMARAJ:

Kumaraswamy Kamaraj, (born July 15, 1903, Virudunagar, India—died October 2, 1975, Madras [now Chennai]), Indian independence activist and statesman who rose from humble beginnings to become a legislator in the Madras Presidency (an administrative unit of British India that encompassed much of southern India), chief minister (head of government) of the successor Madras state in independent India (now largely occupied by Tamil Nadu state and also including portions of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala states), and president of the Indian National Congress (Congress Party).

Kamaraj was born in what is now southern Tamil Nadu to a family of the Nadar (next-to-lowest) caste. His father, a Coconut merchant, died when Kamaraj was a young boy. When he

was 12 years old, he dropped out of school and began working in a cloth shop. He soon found himself drawn to the Indian independence movement against British rule and began attending public meetings held by local Congress Party leaders and later volunteering in various capacities (e.g., organizing fund-raising rallies for the party in his home district).

Kamaraj joined the party at age 17, just as the [non-cooperation Movement](#) (1920–22) led by Mohandas K.Gandhi was getting under way, and became a full-time worker for the independence cause. His participation in the Salt March act of Civil Disobedience (Satyagraha) in 1930 earned him a sentence of two years in prison (he was released in 1931 as part of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact agreement). He would be imprisoned several more times by the British, notably in 1942–45 for his prominent role in the Congress Party's large-scale Quit India campaign against British rule. He used his time in prison to give himself the education he had not received as a child.

Kamaraj was elected to the Madras Presidency legislature in 1937 and again in 1946. In 1936 he had been named general secretary of the Madras branch of the Congress Party, and in 1940 he became its president. In 1947 he was elevated to the Working Committee of the national party, and he remained associated with that group until 1969. He was also a member of the Constituent Assembly that in 1946 drafted the constitution for soon-to-be independent India. In 1951 Kamaraj contested and won a seat in the elections to the first Lok Sabha (lower chamber of the Indian parliament).

CONCLUSION:

Contributions of Madras Native Association, Madras Mahajana Sabha and the nationalist press to the growth of nationalism in Tamil Nadu are discussed. Swadeshi phase of the Indian National Movement in Tamil Nadu, with focus on role played by V.O.C., Subramania Siva, Subramania Bharathi, is detailed. Non-cooperation Movement, E.V.R.'s differences with the Congress, the birth of Swaraj Party at the national level and the Self-Respect Movement in the Tamil region are examined. Tamil Nadu's participation in the Civil Disobedience Movement organised to protest the disappointment over Simon Commission and the Round Table Conferences are dealt with. The elections under Government of India Act, 1935 and the formation of first Congress Ministry in Madras under Rajaji are outlined.