



Government of Tamilnadu

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Commissioner,

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ROLE OF TAMIL NADU IN FREEDOM STRUGGLE

Introduction:

Tamil Nadu played an important role in the Indian National Movement. Even prior to the Great Revolt of 1857, the rebellion in Panchalam Kuruchi, the 1801 “South Indian Rebellion” of the Marudu brothers and the Vellore Mutiny of 1806 were the early anti-colonial struggles in Tamil Nadu. During the nationalist era Tamil Nadu provided the leaders like G. Subramania Iyer, V.O.C. Chidambaram Pillai, Subramania Bharathi, C. Rajagopalachari and K. Kamaraj to the National Movement.

Besides, the nationalist movement in Tamil Nadu was as active as elsewhere.

1. Madras Native Association

- One of the first attempts to organise and vent the grievances against the British came through the formation of the Madras Native Association (MNA) on 26 February 1852. An association of landed and business classes of the Madras Presidency, they expressed their grievances against the Company's administration in the revenue, education and judicial spheres. Gajula Lakshminarasu, who inspired the foundation of MNA, was a prominent businessman in Madras city.
- The Association presented its grievances before British Parliament when it was discussing the East India Company's rule in India before the passing of the Charter in 1853.
- In a petition submitted in December 1852, the MNA pointed out that the ryotwari and zamindari systems had thrown agricultural classes into deep distress. It urged the revival of the ancient village system to free the peasantry from the oppressive interference of the zamindars and the Company officials.
- The petition also made a complaint about the judicial system which was slow, complicated and imperfect. It pointed out that the appointment of judges without assessing their judicial knowledge and competence in the local languages affected the efficiency of the judiciary. The diversion of state funds to

missionary schools, under the grants-in-aid system, was also objected to in the petition.

- The MNA petition was discussed in the Parliament in March 1853. H. D. Seymour, Chairman of the Indian Reform Society, came to Madras in October 1853. He visited places like Guntur, Cuddalore, Tiruchirappalli, Salem and Tirunelveli. However, as the Charter Act of 1853 allowed British East India Company to continue its rule in India, the MNA organised an agitation for the transfer of British territories in India to the direct control of the Crown.
- MNA sent its second petition to British Parliament, signed by fourteen thousand individuals, pleading the termination of Company rule in India. The life of MNA was short. Lakshminarasu died in 1866 and by 1881, the association ceased to exist. Though the MNA did not achieve much in terms of reforms, it was the beginning of organised effort to articulate Indian opinion.
- In its lifetime, the MNA operated within the boundaries of Madras Presidency. The grievances that the MNA raised through its petitions and the agitations it launched were from the point of view of the elite, particularly the landed gentry of Madras Presidency.
- What was lacking was a national political organization representing every section of the society, an organisation that would raise the grievances and agitate against the colonial power for their redress. The Indian National Congress filled this void.

2. Madras Mahajana Sabha (MMS)

- After the Madras Native Association became defunct there was no such public organisation in the Madras Presidency. As many educated Indians viewed this situation with dismay, the necessity for a political organization was felt and in May 1884 the Madras Mahajana Sabha was organised.
- In the inaugural meeting held on 16 May 1884 the prominent participants were: G. Subramaniam, Viraraghavachari, Ananda Charlu, Rangiah, Balaji Rao and Salem Ramaswamy.
- The Sabha functioned at the office of 'The Hindu', Ellis Road Junction, Mount road. P. Rangaiah Naidu was elected first President of the Sabha. With the

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launch of the Indian National Congress, after the completion of the second provincial conference of Madras Mahajana Sabha, the leaders after attending the first session of the Indian National Congress (INC) in Bombay amalgamated the MMS with the INC.

- Madras Mahajana Sabha was considered to be a unique one that paved the way for our national freedom. The Sabha voiced out the fundamental rights of our countrymen. It had developed very close relationship with the Indian National Congress since 1920 onwards.
- Consequently in 1930, the Sabha organized the Salt Satyagraha movement on April 22nd in Madras George town, Esplanade, the High court and beach areas. The members were attacked savagely by the British Police. As the Sabha insisted on a legal enquiry about the injustice done towards the participants of the Sathyagraha, a three-men commission under the leadership of Justice T. R. Ramachandra Iyer has enquired thirty people and submitted its report to the government.
- When the British Government banned the Congress party, Madras Mahajana Sabha conducted numerous exhibitions to instigate the patriotic feelings in the hearts of our countrymen such as All India Khadi Exhibition and Swadeshi Exhibition.
- In Dec 1895, on his visit to Madras, the Viceroy of India, Lord Elgin refused to receive the welcome address from the Madras Mahajana Sabha, The father of our nation- Mahatma Gandhiji had delivered a speech at the meeting of Mahajana Sabha on Oct 24" 1896. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru also had participated in the golden Jubilee celebrations of the Sabha.

Subramaniya Siva

Subramaniya Siva was born Vathalagundu in Dindugal district. He was a freedom fighter and a creative writer. He was arrested many times between 1908 and 1922 for his anti-imperialist activities. While serving his last prison term, he was affected by leprosy and was ordered to be shifted to Salem jail.

When Siva was unable to walk due to the severity of disease, the British Government enacted a law for Siva, stating that leprosy patient should not travel by rail. As a result

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of this, Subramaniya Siva travelled the whole length of Madras province on foot though his whole body was covered with sores. Then he eventually died of the disease on 23" July 1925.

Vanchinathan

Vanchinathan was under the service of the State of Travancore. The activities of the extremists greatly alarmed the British. The collector, Ashe, shot down and killed four persons in Tirunelveli. So Vanchinathan wanted to take revenge against the Collector.

He secretly went to Maniyachi Railway Station and shot dead Ashe on 17 June 1911, and he himself committed suicide. A letter was found in his pocket describing that the act of murder of collector Ashe was the first rehearsal to assassinate King George V who was expected to Madras.

Thiruppur Kumaran

Tiruppur Kumaran was born on 1904, In Chennimalai, Erode District in Tamilnadu. He was a great revolutionary. He participated in the march against the ban on the national flag and he died from injuries sustained from a police assault. Kumaran died holding the flag of the Indian Nationalists. Kumaran is revered as a martyr in Tamil Nadu, as is known by the epithet Kodi Kaththa Kumaran. The government has erected his statue in a park near the railway station in Tiruppur.

Satyamurti

- Satyamurti was a politician and patriot. He was the political mentor of K.Kamaraj. Rajagopalachari nominated Satyamurti to succeed him as the President of the Indian National Congress in Tamil Nadu in 1930. He served as Mayor of Madras in 1939, leading a campaign to restore public education, improved water supply and improve the life of the citizens.
- S.Satyamurti was born in Tirumayyam, Madras presidency on August 19,1887. He started practising as an advocate prior to his initiation in the National Movement. He plunged into politics at an early age and eventually emerging as one of the foremost leaders of the Indian National Congress.



- In 1919, the Congress selected him as its representative to the Joint parliamentary committee to protest the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms and the Rowlatt Act.
- When Satyamurti became the Mayor of Madras in 1939, the city was in the grip of an acute water scarcity and It was left to him to Impress upon the British Governor for building Reservoir in Poondi about 50 Kms west of the city to augment the water supply position. The reservoir was commissioned by Kamra and named it as Satyamurti Sahar. To honour this great man, the Head Quarters of the Tamilnadu Congress Committee was named after him as, Satyamurti Bhavan.
- He participated in the Swadeshi Movement and Quit India Movement and imprisoned for several times. He was a highly regarded politician of rare abilities, who had dedicated his life to bring freedom and justice to the people. He passed away on 28" March 1943.

3. C. Rajogopalachari

- C. Rajaji was born on December 10th 1878 at Thorappalli. He became a lawyer at Salem in 1898. Rajagopalachari joined the Indian National Congress and participated in the Calcutta session in 1906. He became the staunch follower of Gandhiji. He participated in the Surat session in 1907.
- In 1930, he broke the salt laws at Vedaranyam. He started his March to Vedaranyam from Tiruchirappalli with hundreds of volunteers to break salt laws. He won the 1937 Provincial elections and became the Chief Minister of Madras Presidency. During his administration he introduced Prohibition, passed several laws to uplift Adi Dravidar and other depressed classes. He also made Hindi as compulsory subject but it was opposed by Periyar EVR. He resigned his Chief Ministership in 1939 in protest against the use of Indian men and materials in the second world war by the British Government without their consent.
- He became the first Indian Governor General of free India. In 1952 he formed the ministry In Tamilnadu. During that time he Introduced Kula Kalvi Thittam'. But it was opposed by Kamaraj and Periyar EVR and at last Rajaji resigned from Chief Ministership in 1954.

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- Later he resigned from Congress and founded Swatandra party in 1959, Rajaji wrote many books. He wrote Sakkravarthi Thirumagal, Vyassar Virundu and commentaries on Gita and Upanisad. In 1955, he was awarded 'Bharat Ratna'. He died on Dec. 25, 1972. He was often referred as 'Chanakya' for his diplomatic skills.

K.Kamaraj

- Kamaraj was born on July 15",1903 at Virudupatti now known as Virudhunagar. He was one of the greatest freedom fighters of Tamil Nadu. He entered into the freedom movement of India by taking part in Vaikam Sathyagraha in 1924. He enrolled himself as a full time worker of the Congress party in 1929.
- When Gandhi announced Salt Sathyagraha he participated in the Vedaranyam march along with C.Rajagopalachari in 1930. He was arrested and imprisoned for two years in Alipore jail. As a result of Gandhi-Irwin Pact of 1931 he was released.
- In 1940, he went to Wardha to meet Gandhiji to get approval for the list of Sathyagrahis. But he was arrested and sent to Vellore jail. Because of his active participation in Quit India Movement in 1942 he was arrested and sentenced to three years in the Amaravathi prison. He hoisted the Indian National flag in Satyamurti's house in 1947.
- He served as the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu for nine years and introduced various welfare measures like opening of new schools, free education, mid-day meals scheme, construction of dams and canals to improve agriculture, and launching of new industries in Tamil Nadu.
- He played a significant role in the National politics also. He was called as 'King Maker, as he made Lal Bahadur Sastri as the Prime Minister of India in 1964 and Mrs. Indira Gandhi in 1966 after the death of Sastri.
- He died on October 2, 1975. Kamaraj was famous for his policy known as "K" Plan. He was affectionately called by the people as 'Perum Thalaivar' means Great Leader. Thus, Tamil Nadu played a vital role in the freedom struggle of our Country.

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E.V.Ramasamy Periyar

- E.V.Ramasamy Periyar was the greatest social reformers of Tamil Nadu. He was the first leader, the country had ever seen to inculcate self respect, rationalism, women liberation and social equality in the minds of the people.
- E.V. Ramasamy was born on September 17, 1879 in Erode in a very rich Hindu family. He got married at 13th year and renounced his life in his 19th year. By wearing saintly dress, he went to many holy places. He went to Kasi where he noticed that the Brahmins ill treated the Non-Brahmins. He condemned it and returned to Tamilnadu. He joined the Congress in 1919 to realize his ideas. He was elected as the Secretary of Madras State Congress Committee in 1921 and its President in 1923.
- He Joined the non-cooperation movement. He led the famous Vaikam Sathya Graha in 1924, where the people of downtrodden community were prohibited to enter into the Temple. Finally, the Travancore government relaxed such segregation and allowed the people to enter into the temple. Hence Periyar was given the title of “Vaikam Hero”.
- Periyar visited a school on Gurukulam style run at Sheramandevi out of Congress funds. He noticed the segregation of Non-Brahmin students from the Brahmins by providing drinking water and food in separate places. He protested against this antisocial practice and resigned the Secretaryship of Madras State Congress.
- He moved a resolution for reservation in government services for non-brahmins in the state Congress conference held at Kanchipuram. But this was not allowed. So Periyar left the Conference and started Self Respect Movement in 1925 to spread and execute his ideas and policies.

Aims

- The self respect movement condemned and fought against Brahmin domination over other castes, society, politics and religion.
- It fought to abolish traditionalism and superstitions

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- It advocated women education, " widow remarriage, intercaste marriages and opposed child marriage

Achievements

- Periyar criticized the meaningless ideas, superstitious beliefs and unbelievable puranic stories in the public meetings. He spread self respect principles through Kudiarasu, " Puratchi, Viduthalai. He also published some books against social evils.
- He visited many European countries and studied their way of life. He realized that poverty was the cause for the social evils. After his return, he propagated 14 points of the Socialists Manifesto. The Justice Party accepted the same and tried to propagate it.
- In order to check the growing population and to keep good health, he suggested the family planning. He also encouraged Tamil Script reform and suggested to adopt Roman Script to ensure easy learning. He was given the title of Periyar" by Ladies Conference held at Madras.
- In 1937 election, the Justice Party was defeated and its decline became Inevitable. At Salem conference of 1944, the name of Justice Party was changed as Dravidar Kazhagam'. Periyar's ambitions were fulfilled by DMK and AIADMK.

C.N.Annadurai

- C.N.Annadurai, who was affectionally called as 'Peraringnar Anna' by the people of Tamil Nadu was born on 15th September, 1909 at Kancheepuram. He had his MA, in the Pachaiyappa's College, Madras. He was the founder of the "Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam".
- Anna's Inception into politics was through the Justice Party. The desire to work for social cause made him to Join the Justice Party. Anna chose the Justice party to work for the establishment of a casteless and classless society.
- Anna was a good orator. He was recognised as one of the foremost speakers of those days. When Anna joined the Justice Party he had the privilege of working under the leadership of Periyar E.V. Ramasamy. The party provided the right

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platform for him and so he joined the self respect movement which was started for the elimination of social inequalities.

- In the anti-Hindi conference organized by Periyar at Kanjeevaram Anna quoted that Hindi could never take the place of Tamil and make any road in well settled Tamil culture.
- In the Salem Conference of 1944, Anna brought a resolution for changing the name of Justice Party as Dravidar Kazhagam and became very close to Periyar. The marriage of Periyar with Maniammai in 1947 gave severe blow to the party men.
- A new party called Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam was formed on 17th September 1949. Anna explained in his speech the purpose would and principles of the Party. He became the General Secretary of the Party.
- In the election of 1967, his Party got victory and Anna became the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu in 1967. He introduced the scheme of 1kg rice for Re.1. Due to financial strain he was not able to promulgate this system all over Tamil Nadu. He also introduced Tamil Language Development Scheme.
- In 1967, Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu announced, the first day of Chittirai as Tamil New Year day. Government under the leadership of Anna changed the official name of the state from 'Madras' to 'Tamil Nadu' or 'Tamil Nadu'.
- On 16th April In the Secretariat in Fort St. George, the Chief Minister Anna ceremoniously switched on neon light in the form of State Emblem-a Temple Gopuram, above the words 'Tamil Nadu' or 'Tamil Nadu'.
- At the same day he announced that the national motto 'Satyameva Jayate' henceforth appear as 'Vaimaye Vallum' and that Sanskrit forms of address Sri/Srimathi/Kumari would replace the Tamil forms of Thiru/Thirumathi/Selvi. He was conferred Doctorate by Annamalai University in 1968. He passed away on 3rd February 1969.

Contribution of Women Leaders for Social Reformation:

1. Reformation refers to eradication of some evil social practices which are deep rooted in the society for centuries. These practices are of great hindrance to the development of the country.

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2. To achieve the above not only men but also women have contributed a lot. Among the women reformers some of them are worth mentioning.

Dr.Muthulakshmi Reddy

- Tamil Nadu was the forerunner in the transformation of society. In the great cultured heritage of Tamil Nadu there are some black spots often found and removed. One such a black spot was Devadasi system. One of the important leaders who fought vigorously against this system was Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy.
- Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy was born on 30th July, 1886 In Pudukkottai. She was the first woman in India to get a degree in medicine. In 1923 her sister died of cancer. On that day she took a vow to eradicate cancer. So she started Cancer Relief Hospital in 1949. The Cancer Institute at Adyar was started due to her good efforts. Our first Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru laid the foundation for that Institute.
- She was not only interested in medicine but also in politics and social reforms. She dedicated herself to the cause of removing the cruel practice Devadasi system from Tamil Nadu. She was personally praised by Gandhiji for her active propaganda against Devadasi system.
- Appreciating her role in the agitation against Devadasi system she was nominated to the Tamil Nadu Legislative Council in 1929. She was Vehemently supported in her efforts by Thiru.V.Kalyana Sundaranar and Periyar. As a result the Justice party Government enacted a law abolishing Devadasi System.
- In 1930, she organized All India Women Conference at Pune. She was the President of Indian Women Association from 1933 to 1947. She also started Avvai llam an orphanage at Santhome in Madras (Now at Adyar). Dr. Muthulakshmi through her dedicated and untiring work proved the world, hard work never fails. She passed away in 1968 at the age of 82.

Dr.S.Dharmambal

- Many people became famous not because of wealth, power, education and status but because of their dedication. One such a reformer who proved that service to the people could be done through humanity and goodwill was Dr.S.Dharmambal. She

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had the instinct of social service, she studied Siddha medicine and started a hospital in Chennai. Later she entered into the public service. Dr. Dharmambal was born at Karun thattankudi near Thanjavur.

- As she was very much influenced by the ideas of Periyar, she showed great interest in implementing widow remarriage, intercaste marriage and women education. She had also great interest in the development of Tamil literature and Tamil music. She participated in the Hindi agitation programme and went to Jail many times.
- Till 1940 the Tamil teachers had no due recognition in the society. They were not paid equal salary like other teachers. So she started an agitation called Elavu Varam. As a result the Educational Minister Thiru. Avinasilingam Chettiar announced equal pay to Tamil teachers like other teachers.
- To make the students improve their knowledge in Tamil and to score good marks in Tamil "Chennai Manavar Mandram" was established. She was the President of this association for more than 10 years. Appreciating her service to Tamil language and literature she was conferred the title "Veera Tamilannai". She gave the title "Periyar" to EV. Ramasamy Naicker and "Ealisai" to M. K. Thiyagarajar Bagavathar. The great woman who sacrificed and dedicated her whole life for the Tamil people, Tamil language and Tamil literature died in 1959 at the age of 69.

Moovalur Ramamirdham

- Most of the women revolutionaries of the early twentieth century dedicated themselves to the cause of freedom of our nation. Only a few revolutionaries alone fought for the causes of both freedom and social reforms.
- Among them Moovalur Ramamirdham Ammaiyar was most important. She was born in 1883 in Thiruvavur but was brought up in Moovalur, a village near Mayiladuturai. Hence she was commonly known as Moovalur Ramamirdham Ammaiyar.
- She belonged to Isai Vellalar caste. In olden days girls belonging to this particular caste were sacrificed to temples to do service to God. Later they were ill-treated and humiliated by the landlords and zamindars in the name of caste.

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- On seeing this atrocities and cruelties, Moovalur Ramamirdham decided to fight for their emancipation. She travelled all over the country and spoke about the miseries of her own girls and won the support of many leaders.
 - She Joined the Indian National Party and organized the conference of Isai Vellalar at Mayiladudurai in 1925. This conference was attended by many great leaders like Thiru Vi.Ka. Periyar, S. Ramanathan and Mayuramani Chinnaiah Pillai who raised slogans against the cruel practice of Devadhasis. As a result the Government passed "Dr. Muthu lakshmi Devadasi Abolition Act".
 - Along with the social work she actively involved in the National Movement. She inspired women to take part in the National movement on a large scale. With the continuous moral support by Rajaj, Periyar and Thiru.Vi.Ka, she brought awareness against Devadasi system and national awakening among the people of Tamilnadu especially on women.
 - In her memory, the Government of TamilNadu has instituted the Moovalur Ramamirtham Ammal Ninaivu Marriage Assistance scheme" a social welfare scheme to provide financial assistance to poor women. After seeing her dream became true. She passed away on 27th June 1962.
 - The tradition bound Tamil society was still clinging to the old values. The widows were still forbidden from participating in auspicious and social functions, inspite of the fact that the Widow Remarriage Act was passed in 1856.
 - The forward and progressive social policies adopted by the Justice Party and the Self Respect Movement in the 20th century supported by legislative measures, led to the acceptance of the widow remarriage concept in Tamil Nadu. The abolition of sati and the acceptance of an widow remarriage and the steps to prevent child marriages were note worthy landmarks in the history of Tamil Nadu.
 - Caste inequality was another significant short coming of the Tamil Society. Temple Entry Movement could be cited as a suitable illustration. Temples were once the monopoly of the upper caste where as the low caste people were denied the right to enter the temple.
 - Many social reformers like E.V.Ramasamy, Dr.Muthulakshmi Reddy, Vallalar, Bharathi, Bharathidasan, Moovalur Ramamirthammal, Dr.S. Dharmambal fought

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for the eradication of these social evils. Thus women also contributed a lot for the social transformation in Tamil Nadu History will not forget their selfless service.

Swadeshi Campaign in Tamil Nadu

Swadeshi movement in Tamil Nadu, notably in Tirunelveli district, generated a lot of attention and support. While the Swadeshi movement in Tamil Nadu had an all India flavour, with collective anger against the British rule remaining the common thread, it was also underpinned by Tamil - pride and consciousness. There was a deep divide in the Tamilnadu congress between the moderates and the extremists.

1. Development of Vernacular Oratory

- Initially, the movement was more of a reaction to the partition of Bengal and regular meetings were held to protest the partition. The speakers, in such meetings, spoke mostly in the vernacular language to an audience that included students, lawyers, and labourers at that time. The shift from English oratory to vernacular oratory was a significant development of this time, which had a huge impact on the mass politics in Tamil Nadu.
- Swadeshi meetings at the Marina beach in Madras were a regular sight. The Moore Market complex in Madras was another venue utilized for such gatherings. During the period (1905- 1907) there are police reports calling students dangerous and their activities as seditious. Europeans in public places were greeted by the students with shouts of Vande Mataram. In 1907, Bipin Chandra Pal came to Madras and his speeches on the Madras Beach electrified the audience and won new converts to the nationalist cause.
- The visit had a profound impact all over Tamil Nadu. The public speeches in the Tamil language created an audience which was absent during the formative years of the political activities in Tamil Nadu.

2. V.O.C. and Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company (SSNC)

- The Swadeshi movement in Tamil Nadu came to national attention in 1906 when V.O.Chidambaram mooted the idea of launching a swadeshi shipping venture in opposition to the monopoly of the British in navigation through the coast.

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- In 1906, V.O.C. registered a joint stock company called The Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company (SSNC) with a capital of Rs 10 Lakh, divided into 40,000 shares of Rs. 25 each. Shares were open only to Indians, Ceylonese and other Asian nationals. V.O.C. purchased two steamships, S.S. Gallia and S.S. Lawoe. When in the other parts of India, the response to Swadeshi was limited to symbolic gestures of making candles and bangles, the idea of forging a Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company was really spectacular. V.O.C invoked the rich history of the region and the maritime glory of India's past and used it as a reference point to galvanize the public opinion in favour of a Swadeshi venture in the sea.
 - The initiative of V.O.C. was lauded by the national leaders. Lokmanya Tilak wrote about the success of the Swadeshi Navigation Company in his papers *Kesari* and *Mahratta*. Aurobindo Ghose also lauded the Swadeshi efforts and helped to promote the sale of shares of the company.
 - The major shareholders included Pandithurai Thevar and Haji Fakir Mohamed. The initial response of the British administration was to ignore the Swadeshi company. As patronage for Swadeshi Company increased, the European officials exhibited blatant bias and racial partiality against the Swadeshi steamship.

3. The Coral Mill Strike

- After attending the session of the Indian National Congress at Surat, V.O.C. on his return decided to work on building a political organisation. While looking for an able orator, he came across Subramania Siva, a swadeshi preacher. From February to March 1907, both the leaders addressed meetings almost on a daily basis at the beach in Tuticorin, educating the people about swadeshi and the boycott campaign.
- The meetings were attended by thousands of people. These public gatherings were closely monitored by the administration. In 1908, the abject working and living conditions of the Coral Mill workers attracted the attention of V.O.C and Siva. In the next few days, both the leaders addressed the mill workers.

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- In March 1908, the workers of the Coral Cotton Mills, inspired by the address went on strike. It was one of the earliest organized labour agitations in India. The strike of the mill workers was fully backed by the nationalist newspapers. The mill owners, however, did not budge and was supported by the government which had decided to suppress the strike.
 - To further increase the pressure on the workers, the leaders were prohibited from holding any meetings in Tuticorin. Finally, the mill owners decided to negotiate with the workers and concede their demands.
 - This victory of the workers generated excitement among the militants in Bengal and it was hailed by the newspapers in Bengal. For instance, Aurobindo Ghosh's *Bande Matram* hailed the strike as "forging a bond between educated class and the masses, which is the first great step towards swaraj.... Every victory of Indian labour is a victory for the nation...."

4. Subramania Bharati: Poet and Nationalist

- The growth of newspapers, both in English and Tamil language, aided the swadeshi movement in Tamil Nadu. G. Subramaniam was one of the first among the leaders to use newspapers to spread the nationalist message across a larger audience.
- Subramaniam, along with five others, founded *The Hindu* (in English) and *Swadesamitran* (which was the first ever Tamil daily). In 1906 a book was published by Subramaniam to condemn the British actions during the Congress Conference in Barsal.
- *Swadesamitran* extensively reported nationalist activities, particularly the news regarding V.O.C. and his speeches in Tuticorin. Subramania Bharati became the subeditor of *Swadesamitran* around the time (1904) when Indian nationalism was looking for a fresh direction. Bharati was also editing *Chakravartini*, a Tamil monthly devoted to the cause of Indian women.
- Two events had a significant impact on Subramania Bharati. A meeting in 1905 with Sister Nivedita, an Irish woman and a disciple of Vivekananda, whom he referred to as Gurumani (teacher), greatly inspired his nationalist ideals.

- The churning within the Congress on the nature of engagement with the British rule was also a contributory factor. As discussed earlier in this lesson, the militants ridiculed the mendicancy of the moderates who wanted to follow the constitutional methods. Bharati had little doubt, in his mind, that the British rule had to be challenged with a fresh approach and methods applied by the militant nationalists appealed to him more.
- For instance, his fascination with Tilak grew after the Surat session of the Congress in 1907. He translated into Tamil Tilak's *Tenets of the New Party* and a booklet on the Madras militants' trip to the Surat Congress in 1907. Bharati edited a Tamil weekly *India*, which became the voice of the radicals.

5. Arrest and imprisonment of V.O.C. and Subramania Siva

- On March 9, 1907, Bipin Chandra Pal was released from prison after serving a six month jail sentence. The swadeshi leaders in Tamil Nadu planned to celebrate the day of his release as 'Swarajya Day' in Tirunelveli.
- The local administration refused permission. V.O.C., Subramania Siva and Padmanabha Iyengar defied the ban and went ahead.
- They were arrested on March 12, 1908, on charges of sedition. The local public, angered over the arrest of the prominent swadeshi leaders, reacted violently. Shops were closed in a general show of defiance. The municipality building and the police station in Tirunelveli were set on fire.
- More importantly, the mill workers came out in large numbers to protest the arrest of swadeshi leaders. After a few incidents of confrontation with the protesting crowd, the police open fired, and four people were killed.
- On 7 July 1908, V.O.C. and Subramania Siva were found guilty and imprisoned on charges of sedition. Siva was awarded a sentence of 10 years of transportation for his seditious speech whereas V.O.C. got a life term (20 years) for abetting him. V.O.C. was given another life sentence for his own seditious speech.
- This draconian sentence reveals how seriously the Tirunelveli agitation was viewed by the government. In the aftermath of this incident, the repression of the British administration was not limited to the arrest of a few leaders. In fact,

people who had actively participated in the protest were also punished and a punitive tax was imposed on the people of Tirunelveli and Tuticorin.

6. Ashe Murder

- Repression of the Swadeshi efforts in Tuticorin and the subsequent arrest and humiliation of the swadeshi leaders generated anger among the youth. A plan was hatched to avenge the Tirunelveli event. A sustained campaign in the newspapers about the repressive measures of the British administration also played a decisive role in building people's anger against the administration.
- In June 1911, the collector of Tirunelveli, Robert Ashe, was shot dead at Maniyachi Railway station by Vanchinathan. Born in the Travancore state in 1880, he was employed as a forest guard at Punalur in the then Travancore state. He was one of the members of a radical group called Bharata Mata Association.
- The aim of the association was to kill the European officers and inspire Indians to revolt, which they believed would eventually lead to Swaraj. Vanchinathan was trained in the use of a revolver, as part of the mission, by V.V. Subramanianar in Pondicherry.
- After shooting Ashe at the Maniyachi Junction, Vanchinathan shot himself with the same pistol. A letter was found in his pocket which helps to understand the strands of inspiration for the revolutionaries like Vanchinathan.

The aftermath of the Assassination

- During the course of the trial, the British government was able to establish that V.V.S and other political exiles in Pondicherry were in close and active association with the accused in the Ashe murder conspiracy. The colonial administration grew more suspicious with the Pondicherry groups and their activities. Such an atmosphere further scuttled the possibility of nationalistic propaganda and their activities in Tamil Nadu.
- As a fall-out of the repressive measure taken by the colonial government, the nationalist movement in Tamil Nadu entered a period of lull and some sort of revival happened only with the Home Rule Movement in 1916.

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Questions:

1. Write a note on Madras Mahajana Sabha.
2. What are the Achievements made by E.V.R?
3. Mention the services of Tamilnadu Freedom Fighters.

