

### 13. Role of Tamil Nadu in the Freedom Movement

Tamil Nadu played a remarkable part in the struggle for freedom in India. The great leaders like Puli Thevar, Kattabomman, Maruthu brothers, Velu Thambi played major role in the revolt. They were all noted for their patriotism, courage, self respect and sacrifice. During the British rule, the great leaders, poets and the social reformers like G. Subramania Iyer, V.O. Chidambaram Pillai, Subramanya Bharathi, C. Rajagopalachari, Periyar E.V. Ramasamy, Thiruppur Kumaran, K. Kamaraj and many others had contributed a lot towards the success of our freedom struggle.

#### Vellore Mutiny (1806)

The British administration prohibited the Hindu soldiers from smearing religious marks on their foreheads and ordered the Muslims to shave their beard and trim their moustache. This created a strong resentment among the soldiers. They were also instigated by the sons of Tipu Sultan, to revolt against the British.

It was on July 9, 1806, one of Tipu Sultan's daughter was to be married in Vellore. The revolting soldiers gathered at the fort under the pretext of attending the wedding. Two hours after the midnight, on July 10, the soldiers surrounded the fort and killed most of the Europeans and unfurled the flag of the Tipu over the fort. Tipu's second son Fateh Hyder was declared as the ruler. However, the British crushed the revolt.

#### Madras Mahajana Sabha

The first organisation in the Madras Presidency to agitate for the rights of people was the **Madras Native**

**Association.** It was established by Harley, Lakshminarasu Chetty and Srinivasa Pillai in 1852. The Association criticized the policies of the East India Company. In 1884, the Madras Native Association was merged with the Madras Mahajana Sabha established by S. Ramaswami Mudhaliar, P. Anandacharlu and P. Rangaiah Naidu. The Sabha functioned at the office of 'The Hindu', Ellis Road Junction, Mount road.

P. Rangaiah Naidu was elected first President of the Sabha. The Sabha adopted a moderate policy in its early days. However, its aims and the objectives were considered seditious. 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.

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 22<sup>nd</sup> 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 Satyagraha, a three-men commission under the leadership of Justice T. R. Ramachandra Iyer has

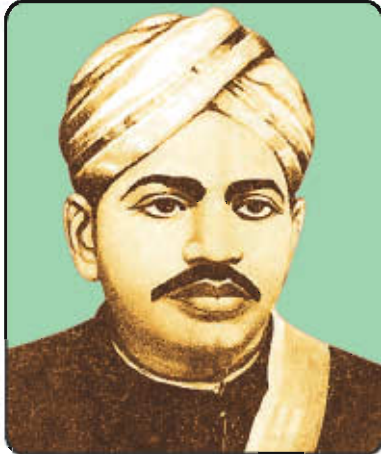
enquired thirty people and submitted its report to the government.

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.

The father of our nation- Mahatma Gandhiji had delivered a speech at the meeting of Mahajana Sabha on Oct 24<sup>th</sup> 1896. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru also had participated in the golden Jubilee celebrations of the Sabha.

### V.O. CHIDAMBARAM PILLAI

V.O Chidambaram Pillai is remembered by the Tamils as **Sekkilutta Semmal, Kappalotiya Tamizhan**. He was born in Ottapidaram on September 5, 1872. He started his career as a lawyer at Tirunelveli.



V.O. Chidambaram Pillai

He encouraged the formation of Trade Guilds and Worker's Association. He was the founder of the **Swadeshi Dharma Sanga Weaving Association** and **Swadeshi Co-operative Stores** at Tuticorin. He formed the **Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company** and ran the service between Tuticorin and

Colombo. The Partition of Bengal in 1905 had drawn him into politics. He organized Coral mill Strike in the town near the sea shore that resulted in the increase of workers' wages and reduction of working hours. In 1907, he attended the Congress sessions held at Surat; where the Congress split into Moderates and Extremists. He followed the militant leader Bala Gangadhar Tilak and preached his philosophy. Charged with sedition, he was sentenced to forty years of imprisonment. His right leg was chained and he was used as a bullock in pulling the oil press (chekku).

### SUBRAMANIYA SIVA

Subramaniya Siva was born in 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 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<sup>rd</sup> July 1925.

### SUBRAMANYA BHARATHIYAR

Subramanya Bharathi was born on Dec. 11, 1882 at Ettayapuram in Tirunelveli District. He worked as Tamil Teacher in 1904 at Madurai. He also served as Assistant Editor of Swadeshimithran in 1904. In 1907 Bharathi participated in the Surat Conference, supported the demand for Swaraj along with Tilak and Aurobindo.

In April 1907, he became the editor of the Tamil weekly '**India**'. At the same time he also edited the English newspaper '**Bala Bharatham**'.



**Subramanya Bharathiyar**

In Madras, in 1908, he organized a huge public meeting to celebrate 'Swaraj Day'. His poems 'Vande Matharam', 'Achamillai, Achamillai', 'Enthaiyum, Thayum' Jaya Bharatham were printed and distributed free to Tamil people.

In 1908, he gave evidence in the case which had been instituted by the British against '**Kappalotiya Thamizhan**', V.O. Chidambaram Pillai. Hence, British ordered to arrest Bharathi. Faced with the prospect of arrest, Bharathi escaped to Pondicherry which was under the French rule. From there he edited and published the dailies, weekly and monthly. But the British banned them in India in 1909.

After the World War I, Bharathi entered British India near Cuddalore in November 1918. He was arrested and released after three weeks in custody. Those were the years of hardship and poverty. Bharathi resumed editorship of Swadeshamithran in Madras. He passed away on September 11, 1921

Today, more than 90 years later, Subramanya Bharathi stands an undying symbol not only of a vibrant Tamil nationalism but also of the unity that is India.

### **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 Thirunelveli. So Vanchinathan wanted to take revenge against the Collector. He secretly went to Maniyachi Railway Station and shot dead Ashe on 17<sup>th</sup> 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**



**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.

### S. 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

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 Kamaraj and named it as Satyamurti Sahar. To honour this great man, the Headquarters 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<sup>th</sup> March 1943.

### C. RAJAGOPALACHARI



C. Rajagopalachari

C. Rajaji was born on December 10<sup>th</sup> 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 Thiruchirapalli 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.

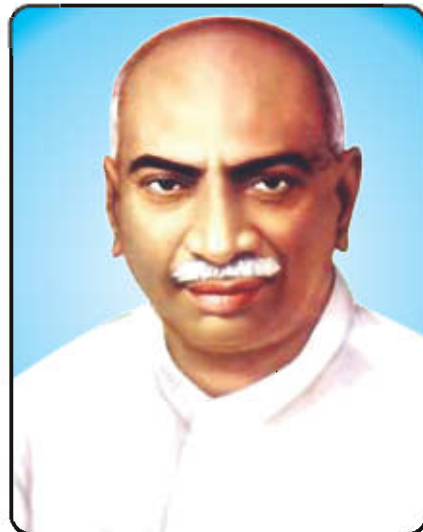
He became the first Indian Governor General of free India. In 1952 he formed the ministry in Tamilnadu. During that time he introduced '**Kula Kalvi Thittam**'. But it was opposed by Kamaraj and Periyar EVR and at last Rajaji resigned from Chief Ministership in 1954. Later he resigned from Congress and 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<sup>th</sup>, 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 Gandhiji 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.



**K. Kamarajar**

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<sup>nd</sup> 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.