



Chidambaranathan And His Contributions To Indian Freedom Struggle – An Overview

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Abstract

Freedom movement in India is one of the most popular liberation movements in the world. South India, especially Tamil Nadu played a pivotal role from the very beginning of our freedom struggle. It displayed its strength in almost all aspects of struggle political, social, and cultural. Tens and thousands of freedom fighters made their imprint in the struggle. However, many of these freedom fighters were not adequately and properly depicted by historians in their historical works. In this article, the researcher made an attempt to trace the life and works of Sri Chidambaranathan, who was both a freedom fighter and a social reformer, who lived in Kanyakumari and participated in the great struggle during the 20th century.

Key words: Movement, Struggle, Satyagraha, Nationalism, Suzerainty

INTRODUCTION

Tamil people lived with ambition and influence. Alagumuthu Kone, Virupatchi Gopala Nayak, Rani Velu Nachiyar, Marudhu Brothers and Kattabomman were the pioneers, and to shout heroic slogans against the Britishers efforts to assess their suzerainty in the Tamil Country. They were the pioneer individuals of the Indian freedom struggle. Individuals, i.e., rulers of small samasthans rose in revolt against the Britishers across the Indian subcontinent during the 18th and 19th centuries. During the second half and first half of the 19th and 20th centuries respectively various mass struggles took place under organised group of leaders. The people of India were led by Gandhiji, Bala Gangadhar Tilak, Dadabhai Naoroji Jawaharlal Nehru, and others who fought for freedom. In the Indian struggle, they adopted various strategies like civil disobedience, fasting, non-cooperation, and Satyagraha.

During the freedom struggle, Traitors appeared in India and gave shelter to the people in the neighbouring countries and handed over the country to them indirectly in a gradual way. Those who did not have the heart to live in subjugation could not tolerate it. As a result of this, the Indians were enraged, the Indian freedom Struggle began under various leaders. One among them was Gandhiji. He gave leadership and adopted various strategies to save the country.

Nationalism is something that is learned; it is not something that people are born with. People become aware of their country due to socio-religious, political, economic, and ethnic circumstances. Nationalism and British imperialism coexisted in India. The growth of anti-British sentiment and the emergence of nationalism have been connected to the actions and policies of the government of Britain. Following Gandhiji's admission into the Congress, there was a change in the course of the freedom struggle. With great enthusiasm, embracing Gandhiji's teachings, the South Travancore residents took an active part in the Temple Entry Movement, Non-Cooperation Movement, Quit India Movement, Salt Satyagraha, Individual Satyagraha, and the Civil Disobedience Movement.

During the Gandhian Phase of the Indian Freedom Struggle, peasants, women, students and men of all age groups took part in the Indian freedom struggle. Hence, without the help of them, it wouldn't have been possible for the leaders to achieve Indian freedom. History narrates the role of some of the national leaders and their contribution towards Indian freedom. The role of the supporters of the National leaders are unseen in main historical writings. In this article, an attempt has been made to highlight the role and participation of Chidambaranathan in Indian Freedom Struggle. Chidambaranathan was an influential political figure in Tamil Nadu, India, known for his tenure as a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA). Throughout his political career, he demonstrated unwavering dedication to the development and welfare of his constitution. He took part in the Temple Entry Movement, Ghadhar Movement and Civil Disobedience Movement.

Role of Chidambaranathan in Indian Freedom Struggle

Chidambaranathan was born on 21 September 1914, in Surankudi, Kanyakumari district in Tamil Nadu, India. His primary education was at the school in Koyanvilai and then he completed his school education through SLB High School in Nagercoil and PUC degree at Scott Christian College, Nagercoil then completed B.A. degree at Maharaja College, Trivandrum and B.L. Degree at Law College, Chennai. Professionally he was an advocate at the Court in Nagercoil.

Chidambaranathan was inspired by the Indian Independence Movement and the socio – political dynamics of Tamil Nadu. Hence, he involved in local politics. He joined the Indian National Congress (INC), which was at the forefront of the freedom struggle, advocating for India's independence from British Colonial Rule. Chidambaranathan actively participated in the Indian freedom movement, supporting key campaigns and movements of Mahatma Gandhi such as the Non-Cooperation Movement, the Civil Disobedience Movement, and the Quit India Movement. His involvement in these movements demonstrated his commitment to the cause of independence and earned him recognition as a dedicated freedom fighter.

Chidambaranathan Nadar was a staunch follower of Gandhian ideas and principles. This article enlightens the role of Chidambaranathan in Indian Freedom Struggle. He took part in the Temple Entry Movement, Ghadhar Movement, Civil Disobedience Movement in Nagercoil region, and Quit India Movement in Travancore. He followed the principles of Gandhi, especially non-violence. He played his role in Youth Congress.

Temple Entry Movement

The impact of European culture on the development of Kerala's history became apparent at the start of the 19th century. Kerala society was profoundly influenced by the European concepts of individualism, humanism, and rationalism. The work of European missionaries, who introduced rational, popular, and secular ideas, was the most significant source of this cultural influence. The people from lower castes had the chance to learn English. Motivated and inspired by international missionaries, they started to question the medieval feudal society's social constraints. As a result, the Temple Entry Proclamation in 1936, by Sree Chithira Thirunal Balarama Varma, the King of Travancore, allowed Hindus from lower castes to enter state-owned temples.

The Temple Entry Movement in India was a significant social and political campaign aimed at ensuring that all Hindus, regardless of their caste, had the right to enter and worship in temples. This movement was particularly strong in Kerala and Tamil Nadu regions with a history of rigid caste-based discrimination. Traditionally, temples in India were often inaccessible to lower castes, particularly Dalits, who were considered "untouchables" and were barred from entering places of worship.

The Temple Entry Movement was a part of the broader social reform effort in India during the early 20th century. It aimed to challenge the prevailing caste system and promote social equality. He was instrumental in organizing and leading protests and agitations aimed at allowing "Untouchables" to all temples. He worked closely with other prominent leaders of the time, who involved in the Temple Entry Movement, including figures from the Indian National Congress and the Dravidian Movement. This collaboration was crucial in creating a unified front against caste-based discrimination. Through speeches, public meetings, and rallies, Chidambaranathan raised awareness about the injustice faced by the "Untouchables" and the need for temple entry reforms.

"All India Harijan Sevak Sangh Vice-President Rameshwari Nehru presided over a temple entry conference that A. Vaidyanatha Iyer and N. M. R. Subbaraman organized in Madurai." As a result, A. Vaidyanatha Iyer led the creation of a Temple-Entry Propaganda Committee in Madurai. The Committee was determined to work towards the mission of temple entry.

Participation of Chidambaranathan in Temple Entry Movement

During his college days, Chidambaranathan was completely involved in the temple entry campaign in line with Periyar's theory that all are equal. He struggled to enter the temple during his college days and was attacked by his high caste college friends, while entering the temple. As a boy he was pardoned and sent

home by beating him. Hence, at the age of seventeen he had the idea of involving in social and political activities of the country without any plan.

One of the most notable Temple Entry Movements was the Vaikom Satyagraha (1924-1925) in Kerala and the subsequent struggle in Tamil Nadu. The Vaikom Satyagraha, which took place from the town of Vaikom in Kerala, was a pivotal movement aimed at ending the practice of untouchability and allowing lower-caste individuals to use public roads leading to the Vaikom Mahadeva Temple.

Contribution of Chidambaranathan to Ghadhar Movement

The Ghadhar Movement was founded by Indian immigrants in the United States of America. It was a political revolution. The formation of the Ghadhar Party was greatly aided by Sikhs. Prominent figures such as Sohan Singh, Kartar Singh, Abdul Mohamed Barakatullah, and Rash Behari Bose laid the groundwork for the establishment of an Indian political organization in the US and Canada. The Ghadhar Movement and its impact was a significant turning point in the history of the Indian Liberation Movement.

The Ghadhar Movement was not particularly connected to Tamil Nadu, even though it had a big influence on the independence movement. Tamil Nadu has a history of anti-colonial movements and struggles against British rule, in which figures such as Subramania Bharathi and V.O. Chidambaram Pillai played significant roles.

Movements like Justice Party, which sought social justice and political representation for non-Brahmins, or the significance of figures like C. Rajagopalachari and Periyar E. V. Ramasamy in the political climate of the region during the colonial era showed the Tamil Nadu's anti-colonial history. Chidambaranathan, a significant figure in Tamil Nadu's socio-political landscape, was deeply influenced by Mahatma Gandhi's principles and the Gandhian movements. His involvement in the Gandhian movement reflected his commitment to non-violence, social justice, and the struggle for Indian independence.

Chidambaranathan and the Influence of Gandhian Ideals

Chidambaranathan embraced Gandhi's principle of non-violence (ahimsa) as a fundamental tenet of his activism. He believed in achieving social and political change through peaceful means, rejecting violent methods. Inspired by Gandhi's emphasis on social justice, Chidambaranathan actively worked towards the upliftment of marginalized communities. He advocated for the eradication of untouchability and caste discrimination, aligning with Gandhi's efforts to promote social equality.

Active Participation in Movements

Non-Cooperation Movement

Chidambaranathan participated in the Non-Cooperation Movement in Kanyakumari district, which Gandhi launched in 1920 to resist British rule through non-violent means. By boycotting British goods, institutions, and honors, he demonstrated his commitment to the movement's objectives. His involvement included organizing protests, mobilizing public support, and encouraging non-compliance with colonial authorities.

Civil Disobedience Movement

During the Civil Disobedience Movement (1930-1934), Chidambaranathan engaged in acts of civil disobedience, such as participating in the Salt Satyagraha, etc. This movement aimed to break British laws non-violently, challenging the legitimacy of colonial rule. Chidambaranathan's efforts in Tamil Nadu contributed to the widespread impact of the movement, reinforcing the national struggle for independence.

Advocacy for Khadi and Swadeshi

Echoing Gandhi's promotion of Khadi (hand-spun cloth) and Swadeshi (self-reliance), Chidambaranathan advocated for the use of indigenous products and the revival of traditional crafts. He encouraged people to boycott British textiles and support local industries, aiming to weaken the economic foundation of colonial rule. Chidambaranathan's involvement in the Gandhian movement left a lasting legacy in Tamil Nadu. His efforts to promote social reforms and the challenge of caste-based discrimination contributed to the broader transformation of Indian society. As a dedicated freedom fighter, Chidambaranathan's contributions were integral to India's journey towards independence. His adherence to Gandhian principles and active participation in key movements played a significant role in the eventual success of the freedom struggle.

Role of Chidambaranathan in Salt Satyagraha

Gandhi first attempted Satyagraha on what could be considered a mass scale in Champaran, India, following his return from South Africa in 1914. The Salt Satyagraha, also known as the Salt March or Dandi March, was a pivotal campaign in the Indian independence movement led by Mahatma Gandhi in 1930. Chidambaranathan played a major role in the freedom struggle at the age of 17. He was a student at that time. At that time when Salt Satyagraha was taking place across India. Knowing the importance of the Salt Satyagraha, Chidambaranathan participated in Indian freedom struggle at his tender age. The first experience, he got in the Salt Satyagraha of Civil Disobedience Movement in Nagercoil, i.e., in Travancore Princely State.

Chidambaranathan's involvement in this historic movement underscores his dedication to the struggle for Indian independence and his alignment with Gandhian principles. The Salt Satyagraha was launched to protest the British monopoly on salt production and sales. The British imposed a tax on salt, which was a vital commodity for the Indian population, particularly the poor. Gandhi led a 240-mile march from Sabarmati Ashram to the coastal village of Dandi, where he produced salt from seawater, symbolically breaking the British salt laws. This act sparked widespread non-violent protests across India. Chidambaranathan emerged as a leader in Kanya kumari during the Salt Satyagraha. He organized and led local protests, encouraging people to produce salt in defiance of British laws. His leadership was crucial in mobilizing mass participation in the movement in Tamil Nadu, demonstrating the nationwide impact of the Salt Satyagraha. Chidambaranathan played a significant role in raising awareness about the injustice of the salt tax and the broader implications of British colonial rule. He engaged with the local population through speeches, public meetings, and pamphleteering.

Chidambaranathan provided support for those arrested during the protests. His legal interventions were crucial in protecting the rights of activists and ensuring that the movement maintained its non-violent character. Chidambaranathan worked closely with other leaders of the Indian National Congress and local freedom fighters, fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose. His collaboration with prominent leaders helped coordinate efforts across regions, amplifying the impact of the Salt Satyagraha. Chidambaranathan's involvement in the Salt Satyagraha strengthened the broader Indian independence movement. His leadership and activism in Tamil Nadu contributed to the nationwide momentum against British rule. Widespread participation in civil disobedience during the Salt Satyagraha highlighted to resolve to achieve independence through non-violent means.

Chidambaranathan played a significant role in the Salt Satyagraha, demonstrating his leadership, dedication to non-violence, and commitment to the Indian independence movement. His efforts in Tamil Nadu were instrumental in mobilizing mass support and challenging British colonial rule through civil disobedience.

Quit India Movement

At the All-India Congress Committee (AICC) meeting in Bombay on 8th August 1942, Mahatma Gandhi introduced the Quit India Movement Resolution. This Movement also referred to as the Bharat Chhodo Andolan, involved widespread acts of civil disobedience across the nation. The father of the country gave a speech at the movement's inception amid a "do or die" atmosphere circumstances. He insisted that the British should leave India right away or face severe repercussions. As a component of this movement, a call for widespread agitation was followed by nationwide violence. Leaders of the Indian National Congress were then taken into by the Britishers custody. Support the liberation fighters who unquestionably gave their lives to defend the nation and its citizens.

The main reason for the Quit India Movement to begin was that because the British were planning to drag the country into World War II without consent to fight on behalf of the United Kingdom (UK). During

that time, more than 87,000 Indian soldiers were martyred in World War II including people from Pakistan, Nepal, and Bangladesh. Also, the Cripps Mission which was led by Sir Stafford Cripps, a member of the War Cabinet in March 1942, made an attempt to secure India's co-operation in World War II. Following this, Cripps was sent to India to discuss and support the British Government's Draft Declaration with Indian leaders. Moreover, the declaration also granted India Dominion Status after the war. To which, Congress denied discussing any terms unless given total freedom. After the meeting with Indian leaders, the sentiment of anti-British and full-independence gained popularity across India and its people. Also, during that time, the economy of India was in a bad state. Revolutionary protests were already taking place by renowned leaders in different parts of the country, after which it simply got channelised with the Quit India Movement that had a huge impact on all.

Contributions of Tamil Nadu to Indian Freedom

The Quit India Movement in Madras (now Chennai), Tamil Nadu, started on 11th August 1942, with students of some schools and colleges observing a hartal (stoppage of work). This led to clashes with the police, and their arrests marked the beginning of the involvement of students in the movement. On 12th August 1942, the hartal and strike continued, with the students of Loyola and Pachaiyappa's colleges attacking and damaging public property. The students at Madras Law College were arrested on 14th August for writing slogans in support of the Quit India Movement on the walls of building, which further strengthened the movement. Students from various colleges in Madras, including Loyola, Pachaiyappa's, Queen Mary's, and Women's Christian College, joined the agitation on 27th August. They abstained from attending classes, thereby prioritizing the freedom of the nation over their personal goals. The strike of students from Madras City Colleges on 31st August forced the British administration to reconsider their views regarding the Quit India Movement. Despite the arrests and hardships, they faced, the students remained committed to their cause and continued participating in the movement with unwavering perseverance. They disrupted the communication and transport systems by cutting telegraph wires, many post boxes went missing, and derailing trains, causing severe problems for the British administration. Thus, the involvement and sacrifice of students from Chennai remain a remarkable chapter in the history of India's fight for freedom.

Quit India Movement in Travancore

In August 1942, when the Indian National Congress started the Quit India Movement, the important leaders of the State Congress were in jail. However, the All-Travancore State Congress Committee met at Trivandrum passed a resolution declaring its determination to fight shoulder with the Indian National Congress in the struggle for India's Freedom with effect from 26th August 1942. After the resolution had been passed in Wardha, Gandhiji addressed the assembled delegates, within hours after the All India. Congress Committee was over on 8th of night August, Gandhiji and all the members of the Congress Working Committee were arrested and hustled away from Bombay in a special train. Gandhiji was detained at the Agakhan Palace in Poona, the other leaders were sent to Ahmed Nagar Fort.

Students Participation in Quit India Movement

On 12th August 1942, the students of the University College, Trivandrum, boycotted from the educational institutions as a mark of protest against the arrest of the Indian National Congress leaders throughout India. They Organized meetings, processions, strikes, demonstrations and wore black badges. On 20th October 1942, the students of I.T.I., Nagercoil conducted a procession. On that day the students of the Scott Christian College, Sethu Lakshmi Bai High School and Carmel School organized a large procession and condemned the arrest of the Congress leaders and the British Imperialism. The national leaders wanted to publicize among the people the atrocities committed by Sir. C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer during 1942 agitation. Revolutionary pamphlets and copies of the book entitled "India Ravaged" were circulated in the Nagercoil area through some of the Congress leaders especially P.S. Mony. P.S. Mony also published a weekly entitled "Ahimsa Puratchi," with the support of S.Sivan Pillai and T.M. Sundaram. P.S. Mony condemned the British Imperialism vigorously and also the puppet government of Diwan Sir. C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer. The publication of the weekly was considered as a real booster to the participants of the movement. The British Government tried their best to find out the author as well as the printing place. But all their efforts were in vain. But due to the advice of comrade Jeevanandham, P.S. Mony stopped publishing the paper. All these activities created sentiments of nationalism in the minds of the people. Despite such difficulties the freedom fighters of South Travancore played an active role in the Quit India Movement. This was greatly facilitated by its proximity to Tamil Nadu where the Congress strongly entrenched.

Participation of Chidambaranathan

People conversed about the Quit India Movement while meeting other men. In Nagarcoil young men gathered and discussed about it. Those who were arrested freed after filing an appeal with the Travancore High Court challenging their sentence. Various strategies adopted by the national leaders against the British to achieve freedom. Prominent one among them was Chidambaranathan. Chidambaranathan's dedication and leadership during the Quit India Movement served as an inspiration for future generations of activists and leaders. His commitment to the principles of non-violence and civil disobedience set a precedent for future struggles for justice and human rights. His legacy continues to be a source of inspiration for those advocating for social and political change through peaceful means.

Conclusion

There are many unsung heroes of freedom struggle in India. A few leaders were glorified by the people of India and Tamil Nadu during the difficult path of the freedom struggle. Numerous personalities contributed their entire lives to the movement and in one way or the other affected the Indian freedom struggle. However, their sacrifices are partially or completely neglected by society and history. Minister Chidambaranathan was one among them. He was a strong and courageous man in his principles, despite suffering from rheumatism. He was instrumental in saving many lives. He dedicated his life for the cause of the nation. He lost his entire wealth. At the end of life, he was penniless. Kamarajar, who had a keen interest in education, visited him when he was ill. During his stay at Thiruvananthapuram Hospital, only his wife was by his side and it went unnoticed. When one holds a position and wealth, people gather around and no one will notice when those

are absent. There are good people in this world who do not forget what they have done. According to the belief that if a good person arises, the rain falls for everyone, his cousin Iswaran, who was present at all his times, was the one who benefitted from his assistance. Hailing from Chittoor, near Santapuram, the noble leader Chidambaranathan, who selflessly worked for the welfare of the village and for the others, gained a place in the hearts of the people. He died on 17 th December, 1969. For his valuable service to the benefits of people of Kanyakumari district, his name was given to the Nagercoil Park.

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