

Press And Nationalism In Tamilnadu

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Abstract: *Tamil Nadu, a significant part of the erstwhile British presidency of Madras, had generally been a politically backyard throughout the nineteenth century in contrast to Bengal and Bombay presidencies. Only in the twentieth century did this region experience significant political change of local and national importance. Scholars in the recent past have studied some aspects of this change and have thrown new light on the role of personalities, castes and political parties. But the role of the press of this region in this context has not received sufficient coverage so far. The sources for the present study include original newspapers, records of the Government of Madras and those of the Government of India, memories and biographies of journalist, private papers and personal interviews. Most of the newspapers have been examined in original. For a few papers, for which only stray issues are available the Native Newspaper Reports of the Government of Madras have been consulted.*

Keyword: *Press, Nationalism, Freedom Fighters, Journalist, Press Regulation Act.*

1. INTRODUCTION

There was a change in the functions of press In 1813 the Religions Trust Society in the end of 18th century S.A. Humphreys an unlicensed settler published, the Indian Herald on April 2, 1795 at Fort St. George without the permission of the government. In which he had accused the government. The paper also expressed its observation on the probability of a marriage between the Prince of Wales and the Princess of Brunswick. This was viewed as character assassination. Lord Hobart, the then Governor of Madras arrested Humphreys. But he mysteriously escaped from the custody on April 19, 1795¹. Censorship was established in 1799 over the newspapers that were published in the country. It was laid down that the names of the editors and proprietor should be published in the newspaper². Thomas Munroe, the then Governor of Madras was commissioned to report on the freedom of press in India in 1820. He also finally warned the court of Directors that the press of uncontrolled would be dangerous in the highest degree to the existence of British power in this country³. His recommendations were accepted and placed new regulations before the Supreme Court in March 1823. These regulations provided that no press was to be established nor was any paper or book to be printed without obtaining a license for that purpose from the government. They should be submitted to the government for inspection. It got the authority to stop the circulation of any books and papers⁴. In 1813 the Religions Trust Society published the first Tamil monthly magazine, Tamil Patrika which enjoyed the support of the government. But it ceased to exist from 1833 due to the lack of patronage among the people. 'Madras Spectator' was established in 1836 by D.Ochterlong and published every Wednesday and Saturday. It was really a

spectator press. It was eventually swallowed by the 'Madras Times' in turn it was taken over by 'The Mail'⁵. In 1844 Gazulu Lakhmananrasu Chetty, a Telugu Merchant launched 'The Crescent' a newspaper to defend the rights and the privileges of the Hindu. It fought for the abolition of commercial, concession granted to the East India Company.

The Madras Times (1860) and the Madras Mail (1867) were started with the object of criticizing the economic exploitation and social discrimination of Indians⁶. In 1867 provisions of the Act XI of 1835 were reenacted. In 1870, the well known section 124 A was inserted as the Indian Penal Code. It imposed fine and imprisonment of the press owner if it writes things objectionable. After 1858 the press which were owned and edited by the Indians was increased. Most of the press published their edition in English. All of them played important role in the political education of the people and helped in the growth of patriotic and National sentiments⁷. 'Native Public Opinion' established by three leaders namely T. Madhav Rao, the then Dewan of Travancore, Indore and Baroda, R. Raghunath Rao, the then Reverence Minister of Indore and Ranganath Mudaliar, a Professor of Presidency College. Another paper was 'Madrass' started by A. Ramachandra Iyer. It was followed by 'Madras Standard', an Anglo-Indian paper founded in 1877 and later it was Indianised by G. Parameswaran Pillai⁸. Press in Madras took a sudden lee forward with the arrival of G. Subramania Iyer (1855-1916) into the public life of Madras at the close of 1870's. He along with M. Veera Raghavachari and four other law students publishing. 'The Hindu' a weekly in English on September 20th 1878. The other causes for the starting of the Hindu were the absence of political association or a newspaper in Madras to protest against the Government vehemently⁹

PARTITION OF BENGAL

Although the emergence of 'Swadesamitran' in 1881 marks beginning of Tamil political press, the period 1905-39 is given a close focus in this study owing to its significance in the course of journalism in Tamilnadu against the backdrop of the struggle for freedom. At its beginning the movement under Tilak's leadership turned militant with swadeshi as its symbol, boycott as its weapon and swaraj as its goal. In the struggle for Indian Independence, Tamilnadu played a conspicuous role. It participated with varying degrees of success at all the stages of the movement. During the Swadeshi movement a number of public meetings were held to spread swadeshimism at important towns where bonfires of foreign clothes were made. Funds were collected to encourage indigenous manufacture. Shops were opened to sell Indian goods. An ambitious effort was made to compete with British shipping between Tuticorin and Colombo. Also, a clear leaning towards extremism was manifest in the attitude of the people. A good number of delegates from Tamilnadu attended the surat session of the congress in 1907 in support of Tilak. Extremism gained greater momentum in Tamilnadu after this historic session. A serious riot occurred at Trinelvely on the occasion of the celebration of Bipin Chandra Pal's release in 1908. Even after severe reprisals, political activities were secretly carried on at Pondicherry and Trinelvely district leading to the murder of a British Magistrate¹⁰.

GANDHIAN ERA, on the constructive side of the Freedom Movement, Tamilnadu achieved impressive result in Khadar work. These leaders and associations employed traditional and modern media to reach the people. Besides the Tamil press, newspapers in English like the Hindu, the New India, the Swarajya and the Indian Express, books and pamphlets published by G.A. Natesan, S. Ganesan, M.S. Subramania Iyer, and Dhunskodi, public speeches by Subramania Bharathi, Panditha Asalmbikai, Sudhananda Bharathi, Ramalingam Pillar, ballads of R.B.S. Mani, Baskara Doss and Veluchami Kaviruyar, dramas and novels of Saminatha Sharma, Venkataramani, and Kalki Krishnamoorthy, and the stage

plays enacted by T.P. krishnasamy Pavalar and Viswantha Doss-all formed these media which kindled the flames of nationalism and intensified at various times the struggle for freedom.

During phase of Swadeshi movement 1905-08 Tamilandu was without the Swadesamitran of G.Suburamania Iyer, the father of public opinion in Madras and the India of the great poet Subramania Bharathi, the Home Rule Movement (1916-18) and the Rowlatt Satyagraha (1919) without the Desabhaktan of the renowned Tamil Scholar Thiru.Vika, the Swarajist phase without the Kudi Arasu of E.V.R. and the Tamilnadu of Varadarajalu Naidu, the civil disobedience Movement (1930-33) without the 'Twin Thunders' the Sutandira Sangu and the Gandhi, and the election campaign (1934, 1937) without the Dinamani of T.S. Chokkalingam, the doyen of Tamil Journalism.¹¹

The Madras Mail absorbed the Madras Times in October 1920. The latter's editor R.W. Brock launched his own Daily Express on March 9, 1921 in which features and columns of popular interest dominated. The partition of Bengal was affected at a time when India's political climate was changing. Among these, the educated middle class national and international events had caused a perceptible change of outlook. The administrative measures of Viceroy, Lord Curzon further aggravated the bitterness and resentment of the people against the British. A provincial agitation, backed up by a programme of Swadeshi and boycott of foreign goods, now developed into a national movement with the ultimate goal of Swaraj or self-rule. When the Extremist movement began, the only potential newspaper in Tamil was the 'Swadesamitran'. The first one, linking point calemerare on the coromandal coast of India with Jaffna in Northern Ceylon was planned by one Appadurai Pillai and Somasundaram Mudaliar of Vadapthimangalam in Tanjore district. The other one, linking Tuticorin with Colombo was promoted by V.O. Chidambaram Pillai. (April 11, 1906) the later materialized and received much support from the Swadesamitran.

HOME RULE MOVEMENT

The Swadesamitran continued a vigorous campaign of swadesi and boycott throughout 1907 and 1908. By publishing detailed reports and fervent appeals, it secured the sympathy and cooperation of the people for the successful working of the Swadeshi shipping against British shipping, between Tuticorin and Colombo. The aspirations and legitimate share of other communities of political and social advancement they visualized a Home Rule. The probable expansion of franchise based on property and educational qualifications, it was presumed by the non-Brahman elite, the Sat Sudhras, that Home Rule would give the Brahmans an edge over other communities. they dreaded such a consequence in 1916. In 1916 Annie Besant and Tilak opened a new chapter in the history of India's freedom struggle. At the Lucknow session of the congress held at the end of the year. The main battle war fought in Madras where Mrs. Besant's eloquence an zeal attracted thousands to the movement. The agitation reached a fever pitch in the early months of 1917. The Madras Moderates were the principal aids of the Annie Besant in the cause of Home Role. In this changed condition, the Tamil press had to play a new role in the conflict of energizing identities. The contesting forces of nationalism and communalism called into existence at least three important Tamil Newspaper namely the Prapanchamitran, the Dravidan and the Desabhaktan. Publication of newspapers and journals was a difficult undertaking in those days. Thiru Vi.Ka. by then had taken an active role in the provincial politics. He had become one of the secretaries of the Madras presidency association. He resigned his teaching job in November, and on December 7, 1917, the Desabhaktan (Patriot) began as a daily under his editorship.

Against Rowlatt, the leader of these nationalists S. Kasturiranga Iyengar, as the president of the Anti-Rowlatt committee of Madras, invited Gandhi to Madras for mobilizing

public support for the Satyagraha pledge. Gandhi came to Madras on March 17, 1919 and addressed a public meeting the next day at the Triplicane beach. The grand success of Rowlatt Satyagraha in Madras was not without its consequences on the press. The Hindu, the Swadesamitran and the Hindunesan were penalized for their participation. The Hindunesan edited by L. Ananda Iyer had published on March 12, 1919 a Satyagraha message of S. Subramania Iyer, an elder congress man. The printing press of the Swadesamitran turned out two leaflets, namely the 'Satyagraha Day' in English and the 'Satyagraha Upavasadhnam' in Tamil.

NON CO-OPERATION MOVEMENT

The main and the defiant aspects of the Non cooperation programme were the boycott of law courts, educational institutions and elections to the new legislative councils In Madras, the launching of Non Cooperation Movement caused a split among the Extremists or the Nationalists. The nationalist under Kasturiranga Iyengar had ousted Annie Besant from leadership and had also ousted the Moderates from the Madras provincial congress committee.¹² The Nationalists were now divided into two groups. Kasturiranga Iyengar, A. Rangasami Iyengar. S. Satyamurthy and few others agreed with the principle behind non cooperation but disagreed in its details The group led by C. Rajagopalachari which included S. Ramanathan, S.N. Varadachari, G.V. Kirupanidhi and few others accepted Gandhi's plan as it was. The Gandhians under the leadership of Rajagopalachari contributed much in securing the approval of the congress for non cooperation at Calcutta. Thus the leading Tamil daily 'Swadesamitran' and two other long standing papers namely, the 'Hindunesan' and the 'Lokopakari' turned against non cooperation.

In these circumstances, the Desabhaktan of Thiru. Vi.Ka and Varadarajulu Naidu commenced publication of a weekly newspaper at Salem and named it as 'Tamilnadu', Just when the congress high command was about to restructure the provincial congress committees on linguistic basis, the Tamilnadu was the first important newspaper to be published from a mofussil town and was also the first newspaper that adopted a popular and easy literary style in Tamil Journalism.¹³ The third and a new entrant in the camp of the Non-cooperation press was the Navasakthi of Thiru. Vi.Ka. The Navasakthi was the first and one of the best voices of Gandhi in the Tamil region. Thiruru. Vi.Ka. who was also as the editor of Desabhaktan had made an indelible mark in the history of Tamil Journalism.¹⁴ Thus three journalists, Thiru Ka. V.V.S. Iyer and P. Varadarajul Naidu, by lending support to non co-operation through their papers Navasakthi, Desabhaktan and the Tamilnadu respectively, effected the transition of the Tamil press from the era of Tilak to the era of Gandhi. Sandanand was the son of a Tamil Journalsit C.V. Swaminatha Iyer. He served the 'Reuters' before he took part in the Non cooperation Movement. Having observed that the foreign based and government blessed news agencies were giving inadequate and slanted coverage to the struggle for freedom. Sadananda who planned in 1923 and founded two years later an independent national news agency, Free Press News Agency.

The Dravidian of the Justice Party and the Kudi Arasu of E.V. Ramasami Naicker accused the Tamilnadu as attempting to appease the Brahmans and to prostrate before the Swadesamitran with business motives. The Kudi Arasu questioned in what way the non-Brahmans would be benefited, if the Tamilnadu was to follows the policy of the Swadesamitran which had always opposed non-Brahman advancement. The Kudi Arasu gave a call to the non-Brahman leaders belonging to all political parties to discuss this demand at Kanchipuram where the Tamilnadu Provincial political conference was scheduled to meet on November, 21, 1925. The Kudi Arasu condemned social segregation and protested against

allocation of rooms exclusive to the Brahmans at public countries and railway stations. It incited the untouchables to rise against Hindu caste system and to establish their rights. In addition to propaganda through the Kudi Arasu, E.V. Ramasami Naicker undertook tours in the districts during November – December 1926, and organized the self-respect movement.

COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE AND CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT

Ganesan in association with and on instruction from Rajagopalachari set out to popularize the Congress resolution on Complete Independence and Civil Disobedience'. When the congress committees all over India celebrated January 26, 1930 as the 'Independence Day', Ganesan and his friend K. Sadagopan brought to the public meeting held at the Madras beach, for free distribution, tow thousand copies of Tamil pamphlet bearing the title. 'Sutandira Sangu' (Clarion of Independence). The rush to grab a copy of the pamphlet was so much that they stopped free distribution and fixed a meager quarter Anna as its price. Ganesan and his colleagues continued to publish a series of pamphlets of the same name for few more weeks. On February 12, 1930. the pamphlets blossomed into a registered biweekly newspaper, the Sutandira Sangu. Since regularization, one Subramaniam, a sub-editor in Prakasam's Tamil weekly Swarajya was made its editor.¹⁵ the very first issue of the Sutandira Sangu dated January 26. 1930 breathed revolutionary favor.

The Government of India which realized the need to secure the cooperation of the congress for the next round of talks in London lifted the ban on the congress working committee and released Gandhi and other congress leaders. After much delay and anxiety the peace negotiation ended in the Gandhi-Irwin Pact on March 5, 1931. At the end of March 1931, the congress met at Karachi, ratified the pact and appointed Gandhi as its delegate for the second Round Table conference.¹⁶ The Swadesamitran and the Tamilandu played a peculiar role the total effect of which was adverse to congress cause in Tamilnadu. Both the dailies strongly objected to the vindictive attitude of the Government. At the same time they criticized the congress leaders for stipulating conditions for calling off the movement. In urging the congress leaders to sue for peace they gave an impression to the people that the congress plunged into a vain struggle unmindful of consequences and that nothing short of an immediate suspension of Civil Disobedience would alone bring about peace. The first paper that marked the end of Civil Disobedience was the Jayabharathi (Victorious India). Its founder S. Venkataraman, a Brahman youth from Trichinopoly district, was a paid manager of the Madras Mahajana Sabha and the Tamilnadu Congress Committee. He took part in Vedaranyasam Salt Satyagraha and suffered imprisonment

The second feature of the journalism that marked the end of civil disobedience was the blending of literary and nationalistic fervor. Its chief exponent was the Manikodi. It was jointly founded by three great journalists, namely Va.Ra., T.S. Chokkalingam and K. Srinivasan¹⁷ The third trend of the Tamil press during the political lull was the rise of comic journalism. Though journals of that sort existed before, it was the Anandavikatan of 1930's which first explored and succeeded in discussing and depicting Indian Political, social and cultural developments in a style that was humorous and thought-provoking. In October 1932, Sadanand acquired the Indian express a small English paper started month earlier in Madras by Varadarajulu Naidu. (Gandhi, October 26, 1932) the Indian Express was published by K. Santhanam and S.V. Swamy on behalf of Sadanand as its editor and publisher respectively and also in the capacity of the directors of the Free Press (Madras) limited.¹⁸ In 1942 Act the time of Quit India Movement at Dina Thandhi. 'This news paper against II World War for having include India Army in support of England.

2. CONCLUSION

Nationalism began to spread in the last half of the 18th century. Many organs like educated youth, social reformers, neglected and unemployed section of the society, politically avenged rulers and zamindars and press played vital role in this task. Among them, press had played a pivot role in kindling the nationalism. They developed nationalism slowly and effectively in Madras. These need to the formation of many organizations including Indian National Congress and finally resulted in the freedom struggle.

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