
The Political Awakening and National Struggle in Nellore District

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ABSTRACT

The Indian national movement was undoubtedly one of the biggest mass movements in modern society has ever seen. It was a movement which galvanised millions of people of all classes and ideologies into political action and brought to its knees a mighty colonial empire. Basically nationalism in India arose to meet the challenge of foreign domination. The very existence of a foreign rule helped the growth of national sentiment among the people. There was also a clash between the British interests in India and those of the Indian people. The British had conquered India to promote their own interests and they ruled over her primarily with that object in view. With the passage of time there was a realisation in India and that realization brought bitterness against foreign rule and that was responsible for the growth of the nationalist movement to drive out the foreigners from the country. The intelligentsia in India the peasants, the artisans and the workers all played their part in the freedom struggle.

Keywords: the political awakening and national struggle nationalist movement.

INTRODUCTION

The nationalist movement in India was the outcome of a large number of factors and the most important among them was British imperialism which helped the process of the unification of the country. It was during the British rule that the whole of India was conquered and brought under one sovereign authority. Thus domination by one country over the whole of India enabled the people of India to think and act as one nation. Some scholars are of the opinion that it would be wrong to assume that nationalism in India was solely the contribution of the British. Rather, it was the cumulative result of a number of factors operating simultaneously. It is rightly pointed out by Prof.Sikri "Some of these factors sowed its seed some nurtured its growth some molded its form and some influenced its ideology and technique. Hence the causes responsible for the origin, growth and rapid development of the Indian National Movement were various and manifold".¹ Thus it can be summarised that Freedom movement in India was due to the raise of strong national feelings among the people. The very conditions of the foreign rule helped the growth of national sentiment among the Indian people. It was to a great extent provided the material, moral and intellectual conditions for the growth of national movement in India. Various factors that contributed for the origin and growth of nationalism in India in general and Andhra in particular.

WESTERN EDUCATION

The most important factor which helped to regenerate the country and bring about far reaching changes in the political and social fields in the 20th century was the spread of Western Education. This enabled educated Indians to imbibe the political ideals and the humanitarian and social ideals such a nationalism, democracy, individual liberty etc of the west. There were number of educational centers maintained by both Hindu and Muslim organisaions in the Nellore district. The curriculum was mostly on religion, philosophy and morals. This system continued to be popular in the introduction of western education by the advent of the English East India Company.

Sir Thomas Munro the Governor of Madras Presidency in 1820. Proposed a scheme for starting on Tahasildari School in every taluk and two Collectorate schools in every district, one each for the Hindus and the Muhammadan communities in the Presidency. These schools were open to all. A

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Committee of public instruction was constituted in 1826 to superintend the maintenance of these schools.² After 1826 there was a growing desire among the people to give English education to their children. Not being in a position to arrange for it they looked forward to government for help. With the Dispatch of Sir Charles Wood in 1854 the government took over the responsibility to educate the Indians in schools even in the rural areas. The 1st Director of Public instruction accordingly was Alexander Arbuthnot for the Presidency of Madras. Henry Morris was appointed Inspector of Schools in the Nellore division. The scheme of education, the standard to be maintained and the registers kept and the examinations prepared for were common for the whole of the country. The indigenous character of the schools disappeared with the introduction of an inspectorate. A regular department meant a prescribed syllabus, fixed time-tables and printed books. The first government taluk school was established at Addanki in February 1867. The second school was opened at Kavali a week later. The third school was opened at Devarayapalli on the 1st August of the same year. The fourth such school was opened at Kota and the next month. Schools also came up at Gudur and Brahmanakraka.

The Madras Education Act of 1864 did not deal to any large extent with curriculum, books, or methods which are part of any scheme of education. Under the Act schools were established at Kaligiri, Chinna Amalur, Allur, Varigonda, Rapur, and Kallur. The Tahsildar of the taluk in which the schools were opened invariably to be on the commission for schools in each village. Private effort in the field of education was not totally absent. The Rajah of Venkatagiri established one Anglo-vernacular school at Nayudupeta in 1868 and another at Venkatagiri itself. At Nellore itself there was a large school of the Free Church Mission, receiving grant-in-aid from the government with 200 students on its rolls. As printing came into vogue the oral system was being replaced by individual text-books. Elementary education as a general rule was entrusted to local organisations.³ Private effort in the field of education in the district is noteworthy while the government schools all over the district tried a uniform curriculum and syllabus.

From the dawn of 20th century local bodies as well as private agencies took active interest in the spread of secondary education in the region. The facilities created in many of the mission schools to teach various kinds of handicrafts like mat-weaving, rope making, basket making, sewing to enable the pupils to take to independent profession were continued.⁴ The adult literacy and social education promoted with the aid of the full time workers constituted an important item in the educational programme of several missions. The provincial government followed the guidelines of the government of India and facilities for technical education were provided in the schools in mofusil towns of Madras presidency.⁵

Christian educational institutions helped to bring up generations of students who following the examples of their teachers showed deep concern for service. Most of the leaders who took part in the progressive movements in the region came from mission institutions and were profoundly influenced by the idealism, manner and conduct of the Christian teachers. The social reform activities in relation to women and the untouchables owed much to the influence of missionary teaching and inspirations of missionary work.⁶

In spite of the above mentioned efforts to spread of western education only a small minority could be benefited. But its influence is not to be judged by the number of the educated people. It opened the gates of western ideas. Scientific and rational out look to exercise conservatism and on progressive superstitions. These ideas created a new spirit of revolt against social injustices and paved the way for social reforms.

SOCIAL REFORMS

In the 19th century a number of prominent socio-religious organisations come in to light such as Brahma samaj, Arya samaj and Ramakrishna Mission etc. Socio-religious reform movements which took place in India during the British rule were the expression of the rising national consciousness and spread of the liberal ideas of the west. The first reformist movement was promoted by Brahma samaj founded by Raja Ram Mohan Roy in 1828 at Calcutta. This organisation was given all India form by Kesab Chandra Sen, who strengthened and popularized the institution. He toured the country and established branches of this organisation. The *Veda samaj* was started at Madras in 1864 under the parentage of Brahma Samaj. It stood for reforms as advocated by the parent body. women were encouraged to attend the meeting, but later separate branches of the Brahma Samaj had their weekly meetings with view to restoring ‘Hindu worship to its Pristine Purity’.⁷ The members of the samaj were the pioneers of the social reform movements. They raised their voice in favour of widow

remarriage. Schools for the education of girls were set up by the samaj, eradication of polygamy and *puradha* system received their attention as well.⁸ Kandukuri Veeresalingam was one of the greatest followers and pioneers in the field of social reform. He was an ardent advocate of women’s education. He fought against the system of *devadasi* and corruption among officials.⁹ Veeresalingam’s activities had electrified the social atmosphere and sent a sound and clear message to the masses of Andhra for social reforms. This had a great impact on Nellore district.

Social reform movement gave birth to a number of voluntary and social service organizations, cultural literary associations and *mahila mandali* in the region.¹⁰ The Theosophical society which shifted its activities to Madras in 1882.¹¹ It opened its branches at Nellore, Guntur, Bellary, Adoni, Hyderabad, Gooty, Kurnool, Anantapur, Vijayanagaram, Kakinada, Vijayawada and Machilipatnam. Mrs. Annie Besant who guided the Theosophical society for nearly half a century played a prominent role in Indian politics. Mrs. Besant along with Col.H.S.Olcott traveled extensively in Andhra districts and lectured where ever she went.¹² Mrs. Besant raised her voice against the caste system child marriage and untouchability. Speaking about untouchability she said “you complain and justly of the harsh and rude manners often own to you by your English rulers, but are they one-hundred part as insolent to you as you are insolent at this race whom you in the past have brought under your yoke”¹³ The Theosophical society allowed its members to undertake active interest in social and educational fields apart from the society activities. Influenced by Theosophical society’s principles Sri Bodireddy Rngareddy from Nellore enrolled himself as member of the society and later was made the “fellow of the Theosophical Society” in may 1882. He founded a Sanskrit school at Nellore and patronised it for a period of fifty five years. He was the third in the rank and file of the several patrons of this society in the district. Along with Sri Rangareddy forty other members enrolled themselves in the Theosophical Society in the district. It is not difficult to know with what spirit and interest the members of the society have joined the Theosophical Society. The policies and tenets and principles of the Theosophical society were very attractive to the Hindus, because the same old dharma of the Hinduism was retold in a palatable way and it looked like putting old wine in new bottles. This enrolment of the membership into the Theosophical Society diverted many of the intellectuals from their faith in growing political changes. There is no wonder that the patronage extended to the Theosophical Society by the people of Nellore region as it offered a simple and practicable solutions and spirit. The growing spirit of patriotism in this country was enlarged by this Theosophical movement. The main aim of the Theosophical movement was to point out that all human beings are brothers. It stands for the removal of all restrictions among them, be it social or religious. Its members are bound by a common bond of love.¹⁴ From 1917 the society has supported the Home Rule movement.

The Theosophical Society grew in size like the Banyan tree at Adayar, Madras. It spread out its branches and planted its aerial roots, widely in the world. At this time the Indian national Congress grew with strength and spread to the wider areas in the country. When Annebesant, the president of Theosophical society joined the congress and propagated the “Home Rule movement” this has sent in waves of vibration in the hearts of the Theosophists of the times. From this it can be inferred that the religious feeling of the people was mixed up with the political propaganda.

RAMAKRISHNA MISSIONARIES

The ideology of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa’s teachings were spread allover India by Swami Vivekananda by establishing Ramakrishna Missions to spread the gospel of Ramakrishna. This mission had many branches in different parts of the country and carried on social service by opening schools, hospitals, dispensaries, orphanages and libraries. These institutions laid emphasis not on personal salutation, but on social good or social service.¹⁵ They aimed at promoting a feeling of fraternity among the people of the locality.

Along with these missionary activities the Library movement too gained currency among the people of Andhra in general and Nellore district in particular. The library movement in Nellore district has developed mostly through the beneficent influence of private enterprise and patronage. Its progress was also connected intimately with the National struggle on the one side and series of adult literacy campaign organized from time to time on the other side.¹⁶ The libraries of Nellore district besides diffusing knowledge set as their goal deepening national spirit of the people against the British rule. The *vandemataram* and *Swadeshi* movement gave an impetus to the growth of reading rooms and libraries.²³ The news papers like *Desabhimani*, *Andhra Patrika*, *Krishna Patrika* and other local vernaculars viz; *Zaminroyt* were widely read by the people.¹⁷ The aim of these centers was to provide

news paper reading so as to encourage reading habit in the public and to awake the people through debates and lectures in public meetings. These activities helped to create awareness in the public on the political and national developments in the country besides helping to inculcate the love for their mother land. For this cause, these centers have established besides night schools for adults and circulating books to women.¹⁸

All these associations and clubs fought for the eradication of social evils. These encouraged and guided the women towards liberty and freedom from their bandages. Apart from these local associations, district social conferences were organized in all the districts for the promotion of the community development which gave the fillip for the social consciousness.

Effects of 1857 Revolution

The significant of the events that marked the subsequent decades with a great bearing on the political history of the region of the defiance of some Madras Sepoy Regiments of the order of the British officers. The raids of the Rohillas and Arabs from the Nizam's territory over parts of the region in 1857 were reported. Except these minor few incidents no major offensive was recorded.

GROWTH OF POLITICAL IDEAS AND ORGANISATIONS

As said the outstanding effect of the introduction of western education in India was the spread of modern political concepts, such as nationalism, nationality, political rights and ideals. The conception of India as one political entity was to be found only in the literary works of past age and still survived in theory but it had not application to actual politics till the sixties or seventies of 19th century.¹⁹ Neither the chiefs nor the common man had any sense of nationality or a feeling of nationalism, because there was no India, therefore properly speaking there was no foreigner and people of India entertained no hostile feelings merely as foreigners. The British established their complete political authority in India. The first modern idea of nationalism had its birth in Bengal. The fact that it generated in the soil of Bengal, fertilized by western education and theme spread rapidly to other parts of India.²⁰

In the 19th century various political, cultural and literary associations were formed in madras presidency. One of the earliest of them was Madras Native Association. Another association called the Madras Mahajana Sabha was established. The main aim of these organisations was to represent to the government problems faced by the people and to emphasise the need for reforms in judiciary and legislative councils. In the pursuit of its objectives, these associations continued to hold periodical conferences in different parts of the presidency. About sixty branch associations were affiliated to the 'sabha'. These were Guntur, Bapatla, Bezawada, Machilipatnam, Kakinada, Nellore, Gooty, Bellary, Cuddapah and Berhampuram.²¹

The growth of nationalism in the presidency was aided by revivalist movement. Western education led Indian to an assessment of their ancient civilization western science and philosophy promoted them to concentrate upon social and religious movements such Brahma Samaj, Ramakrishna Mission, Theosophical society and Arya samaj in the Madras presidency. These movements aimed at social reforms, women's rights, campaign against child marriages and crusade against social inequality. They emphasised and fought for the principal of Individual liberty and social equality and stood for nationalism.²²

The second half of the 19th century witnessed the flowering of political consciousness and the growth of an organized national movement in India in December 1885. The National Congress was born and under its leadership India waged a prolonged and courageous struggle for independence from the foreign rule. The partition of Bengal in 1905 had its echo in Nellore district.

Vandemataram Movement

The significant cause for the spirit of *Vandemataram* movement was the reactionary policy of the Governor General Lord Curzon. In spite of the accumulating causes of despondency and irritation, the Congress remained Co-operative. However the unpopular policies of Lord Curzon completed the breach between the Government and Congress and strengthened the hands of the extremists. He was an imperialist par excellence and had no sympathy with the aspirations of the natives. Several of the Acts passed by Lord Curzon proved to be extremely unpopular.

Lord Curzon passed the infamous Calcutta Corporation Act in 1899, which reduced the number of the elected members by half. The measure was opposed by the Indian community of Calcutta but of no avail. A controversial Official Secret Act was passed with widening definition of the term sedition to

cover even civil matter and news paper criticism in 1904, empowering the government with more powers. These steps were condemned by the entire press and protests from all quarters poured in, the Viceroy was implacable. The Indian Universities Act which was passed by Curzon was supposed to reform the educational system, but in practice it brought university education under greater official control. The Indian public protested against the measure, attacking it as a political blow deliberately aimed against the Indian intelligentsia. Lord Curzon instead of pacifying his critics embittered the educated Indian further by speaking of the deceit and the vile of the East and denying that there was such a thing as an Indian nation.

Lord Curzon made partition of Bengal in 1905 on the plea of administrative convenience, but his real intention was to disband Hindu-Muslim from national spirit. The Indians interpreted the act as continuations of the British policy of ‘divide *et imperia*’. The people of Bengal considered the partition a subtle attack on the growing solidarity of the Bengali intelligentsia. It would divide the Bengali speaking people into two provinces, whereby they would form a minority in both the newly created provinces. Besides, in East Bengal the Muslims who were at that time more loyal to the British would be in majority and this would drive a wedge between the Hindus and Muslims in Bengal. To the Indian, therefore, Lord Curzon’s act of partition seemed to be a master-plan to destroy nascent nationalism in Bengal. But it paved the way for a more extensive and intensive agitation. It roused fierce spirit of resistance among the Indians and gave a new turn to the national movement. Bala Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra pal, Lala Lajpat Rai and Aurobindo Gosh began to develop a new spirit of opposition to the British. They advocated militant nationalism. Tilak stimulated national spirit in Maharashtra by celebrating the annual Ganesh cultural festival and starting historic festival of Shivaji who was hero of Maharashtra. Bipin Chandra Pal used Durga festival in Bengal to incite the people. They were within the ranks of the Congress and became then opponents of the political philosophy of the moderates. They were labeled as extremists. The spirit of unrest and discontent voiced by Tilak soon spread to the other parts of the country including Nellore district. The objectives of the extremists were to boycott British goods and replace them with *Swadeshi* articles which can be termed the beginning of the *swadeshi* movement. In the educational sphere boycott meant withdrawal of students from government and government aided institutions and impart national education by establishment of national schools and colleges which would teach them how to serve the country. The boycott of courts and the setting up of national arbitration courts, the boycott of administrative officers by the staff and the social boycott of those who refused to be non co-operative with government also formed part of the plan of action drawn up by the leaders of North India.

The Nellore District of Andhra Pradesh figures quite prominently in the contribution it made to the liberation of our country from the British rule. The earliest signs of national awakening can be seen in the district from the last quarter of the 19th century. Delegates from Nellore attended the sessions of the Indian national Congress. There are many factors responsible for the growth of political consciousness in Nellore District. The elite and the people in general from Nellore District displayed signs of political awareness from the beginning of ‘Vandemataram’ movement. The partition of Bengal in 1905 gave a sharp edge to this national awareness all over the country and this was very much reflected in this district.

By 1905 Andhra put on a new political look. A new spirit overtook the people.²³ They ceased to be afraid of the government. They realized that unity and sense of sacrifice would help them to teach a lesson to the British colonialists. The rise of extremism in the ranks of Indian National Congress and the partition of Bengal in 1905. Fanned the flames of nationalism in Andhra. The external factor that stimulated the Indian nationalist spirit was the resounding victory scored by Japan over Russia in the Russo-Japanese war of 1905. By this, the Indians gained confidence that some day they would free India from the British yoke. In Nellore district the victory of Japan created great interest and excitement. Adipudi Somanatha Rao, a well known social reformer of the day wrote the *History of Japan* in Telugu and dedicated it to the Raja of Munagala. Sriram Veerabramham, wrote a drama in Telugu called *Japaneeyamu*. The Raja of Munagala was so impressed with it and named his sons Togo and Nogi after the Japanese commanders of Army and Navy.²⁴ The partition of Bengal in 1905 left a profound influence and far reaching impact not only on the public life of Bengal and of North India but also had an impact over south especially Nellore district. The teachings of the nationalist leaders carried on to Nellore through north Coastal Andhra. The people of Nellore district too responded to the early phase of ‘Vandemataram’ movement spontaneously and carried out holding of public meetings in various places. The resolutions were passed urging the people to patronize

indigenous goods and excluded foreign goods from use.²⁵ Public protests and meetings were held at several places and passed resolutions condemning the attitude of British and partition of Bengal. It was also resolved to boycott foreign goods and encourage *swadeshi* goods. People resolved to open shops in the towns of Nellore district for promotion of *swadeshi* goods. They tried to obtain Japanese looms in order to teach Japanese methods of weaving to the native weavers with the fly shuttle to introduce this method gradually throughout the country.

The people of Nellore district along with other regions in the Madras Presidency reacted to ‘Vandemataram’ movement spontaneously and organized a *swadeshi* campaign inside the district. Places like Nellore, Kavali, Kovur, Gudur, Atmakur, Kandukur, Kanigiri, Darsi and Buchchireddypalem were centers of such activity and several important persons went round the district organizing meetings at which passionate pleas were made for the boycott of foreign goods, particularly British. A notable feature of the *swadeshi* movement in the district was the manifestation of hostility among the local people towards the alien rule. The Vandemataram movement in this district was also the result of a spirit of revolt against the foreign rule. Leaflets containing ‘Vandemataram’ slogans were sent to some schools in the district.²⁶

Even before Bipin Chandra pal undertook his tour in 1907, the people of Andhra responded to some extent to the Vandemataram movement. Nyapti Subba Rao Pantulu and C.Y.Chintamani addressed meetings in Nellore.²⁷ In these meetings Chintamani addressed the gathering and clearly stated how India lagged behind other countries in education and industries. He asked the people to resolve to use only *swadeshi* goods only.²⁸ Vennelakanti Gopala Rao and K.Narayanacharyulu of Nellore town went to Marmagoa to learn handicrafts at Abba Saheb Ramachandra. Many people at Nellore used to read the daily ‘Vandemataram’ of Aurobindo Ghosh. Boddula Nanayya Naidu opened a *swadeshi* shop and a printing press named ‘*swadeshi* printing press’ at Nellore. Mungamuri Viswanatha Rao opened another *swadeshi* shop called ‘Hanuman Stores’ at Nellore.²⁹

Bipin Chandra Pal was invited to Nellore by Ponaka Pattabhi Rami Reddy and lodged at the house of Sri. K.V.Ragahavacharyulu. Pal addressed a meeting in Nellore presided over by the raising lawyer Madabhushi Narasimhacharyulu. Sri.O.Venkata Subbaiah, Nellore District Congress Committee President, Sri.T.Rami Reddy and Sri.V.Raghavaiah, Secretaries of Nellore District Congress Committee began to propagate the boycott of foreign goods and the use of *swadeshi* goods. As early as 1904. Sri.O.Venkata Subbaiah introduced a resolution in a meeting in the Adayar Tehosophical Society to the effect that the native rulers and Zamindars too shall use *swadeshi* goods. O.Varadaiah opened on *swadeshi* stores in Kavali and sold *Khaddar* umbrellas and hand made foot wear. In Potlapaudi, Nellore Venkatrama Naidu and Ponaka Kanakamma opened handlooms and promoted weaving industries in the rural areas. Amancherla Audinaryana arranged for *Charakas* and looms in several houses and sold the *khaddar* thus produced.³⁰

Sri.O.Venkata Subbaiah started a night school ‘Vivekananda Vidyalaya’ at Kavali and provided vocational training to the students in addition to the common syllabus. He started one ‘Bhajana Samajam’ at Kavali and used to go through the streets every Sunday with his troupe with musical instruments to spread the spirit of ‘Vandemataram’ movement and *swadeshi*. Meetings were held where pledges were taken to eschew foreign goods and use indigenous ones, and to support national education.³¹

There were sporadic incidents like shouting ‘*Vandemataram*’ at English officers working in Nellore town and other places.³² Sri.V.Raghavaiah was warned by the police for writing on the street walls ‘Vandemataram-Manade rajyam’. Sri.V.Raghavaiah and two other students got the Vandemataram pamphlets printed in Telugu, distributed and sent them to other places by post under the supervision of Sri.Chaturvedula Venkata Krishnaiah, who organised secret meetings during nights in the town to escape police detection. During the same time Savarkar’s book ‘War of Independence’ was translated into Telugu at Madras and was brought and sold in Nellore District. The money thus collected was sent to the freedom fighters at Pondicherry. Sri.V.Raghavaiah started the boycott of foreign cloth movement in Nellore and motivated the student community of Venkatagiri Rajha’s High School. Later he was attracted towards the ‘terrorist movement’ by Sri. V.O.Chidambaram Pillai, V.V.S. Iyer and Aurobind Ghosh, whom he visited very often at their Pondicherry residences from Madras. During one of such visits he was arrested at Pondicherry and was released after he executed a bond. As a precaution, his finger prints were taken by the Pondicherry police. He met Aurobind Ghosh at his Pondicherry exile and had discussed the feasibility of starting revolutionary movement in Nellore. He

brought to 6 pistols and ammunition to Nellore to furtherance the revolutionary movement. There were several of his friends who subscribed to the idea of starting terrorist activities in Nellore district. But the movement lacked the popular support. Hence it failed to take off in the district.³³

The Nellore district conference that was held on 20th of December, 1913 at Gudur approved unanimously the *swadeshi* movement and exhorted the people of Nellore district to purchase indigenous goods only in preference to European goods. The conference in its another resolution requested the government to open a weaving school at Kovur.³⁴ Thus the boycott of foreign goods and promotion of indigenous goods through *swadeshi* movement are component parts of the ‘Vandemataram’ movement had a special significance in Nellore district. This movement paved the way for the future growth of the non-cooperation movement started by Mahatma Gandhi during the national struggle.

HOME RULE MOVEMENT IN NELLORE DISTRICT

The Minto-Morley reforms of 1909 proved to be unsatisfactory in their actual working. Indian National Congress under the domination of the moderates was demanding for constitutional changes. The power of autocracy contemned unabated behind the enlarged Legislative councils. The dangers inherent in the separate electorates granted to the Muslims by 1909 Act also became evident. But when the First World War broke out in 1914 the Indian rallied round the British for their victory. At this juncture Tilak and Annie Besant started Home Rule league i.e. on 28th April 1916. Bala Gangadhar Tilak established the Home Rule League and defined its objectives as attaining self-government within the British Empire. Annie Besant an Irish lady the President of the Theosophical Society formed another Home Rule League in Madras on 1st September 1916 and started a daily ‘New India’ later a weekly ‘*The Common Wheel*’. According to Dr.Pattabhi Seetaramaiah Annie Besant was the first to popularize the cry of Home Rule and she carried on a raging tearing propaganda. However, there was a clear understanding between Tilak and Besant that the two leagues should co-ordinate their efforts and work in close co-operation. Commenting on the format of two Home Rule leagues, he wrote in his History of the Congress. Here was India then in 1916 a nation whose cause went unheeded by the British and whose leader remained yet to be found. It was at such a juncture that Mrs.Besant stepped into the trench. She jumped from religion to politics from theosophy to home Rule.³⁵

Tilak’s campaign for Home Rule had its imprint on Nellore district of Madras Presidency. The followers of Tilak toured by giving lectures on Home Rule and collected money two boxes full; through public contributions for the national Fund.³⁶ The Home Rule movement of Mrs.Besant became very popular in Madras presidency. To popularise the movement in Andhra district a separate branch of the league was formed. The Theosophical society had several branches through Andhra and though there was no official relation between the society and home rule league the fact that Mrs. Besant happened to be the president of both resulted in many theosophist becoming members of the league.³⁷ Meetings were held and resolutions were passed urging the British parliament to transfer power to India with a reasonable time.³⁸ Leaders of the league carried on propaganda by demanding self government through stirring speeches and pamphlets in order to enlighten the public and seek their support.³⁹

In 1916, the Home Rule movement was started by Bala Gangadhar Tilak and Annie Besant demanding more powers and autonomy to Indians. This phase of national struggle filled the vacuum caused by the abolition of partition of Bengal by the government. The Home Rule movement between 1916 and 1918 electrified the political atmosphere in Nellore district in particular and Madras Presidency in general. The Home Rule movement gave an impetus to the political activity in Nellore District. Several branches of the League were started in this district and ‘New India’, and then a widely circulated and read English Daily published from Madras was a source of inspiration to the intellectuals of the district.⁴⁰ Sri.Ranganatha Mudaliyar was deputed to Nellore to co-ordinate the movement between different organizations and enlist more members to the movement by Mrs. Besant. His visit to Nellore was successful and the movement was carried in a disciplined manner. Mrs. Besant also undertook a tour of Andhra during 1916. She declared in one of her speeches that India would get Home rule for it was hers birth right.⁴¹ She gave the same message in all most all the towns of in the region⁴². Her tour and the eloquent addresses strengthened the Home Rule movement and remind one of the tours undertaken by Bipin Chandra pal in 1907. It produced a similar effect on the political life of the people. Home rule became a central topic of discussion at various district conferences. Speakers reminded that the primary need of hour was to educate people regarding Home

Rule so that the agitation in the region may have the weight of a strong and influential public opinion behind.⁴³ To suppress the growing popularity of the Home Rule movement the Madras Government resorted to various measures of repression. It issued circular prohibiting students from attending political meetings. On 16th of June 1917 the Madras Government issued an order forbidding Besant and two of her colleagues B.P.Wadia the associate editor of News India and George S.Arundel from participating in politics and interned them at Ooty.⁴⁴ These efforts of British caused great indignation rather than cripple the Home Rule activities as expected by the British Government. The arrest of Besant infuriated the public. Protest meetings were held in Andhra condemning the action of the government in many towns. The vernacular press protested strongly the action of the British initiated against Annie Besant. Emotions ran high every where and protest processions were held length and breadth of Andhra. The government while continuing the policy of repression tried to weaken the movement by the policy of divide and rule. . A Home Rule League branch was started in Kavali in 1916 and another in 1917 in Nellore town.⁴⁵ Within one month the membership swelled to 100. At places like Nellore and Gudur, the members of the Theosophical Societies joined the League and helped to intensify the agitation.⁴⁶ In spite of the pressure from Police youth joined the Home Rule movement and participated in the national struggle.⁴⁷

Celebration of the Jayantis (birthday celebrations) of leaders, became regular feature in which the government policies were criticized. Boycott of foreign cloth and promoting indigenous goods became an important feature of the programmes held during this period. Sri.Komanduri Kumara Swami and Abdul Rahaman, the Nellore Taluk Board President addressed many a meeting and advised the people not to touch the foreign cloth as if it was a red hot iron bar.⁴⁸ Protest meetings were held all over the district when the Madras Government issued orders forbidding Besant and two of her colleagues, B.P.Wadia and George, S.Arundel from participation and promoting Home Rule movement and interned them at Ooty.⁴⁹

The leaders of the movement in Nellore district collected 32,000 signatures to be submitted to Montague along with a memorandum with regard to constitutional reforms. When the Montague-Chelmsford report disappointed the nationalists, resolutions were passed opposing the report at meetings held in Nellore and other places in the district.⁵⁰ Sri.O.Venkatasubbaiah attended the Congress Committee meeting in Bombay in 1918 in which he supported the amendment moved by Sri.Bala Gangadhara Tilak that India would help the British in its efforts during First World War, if Home Rule for was conceded.⁵¹

With the conclusion of the First World War, the phase of Home Rule movement in the Indian Freedom struggle came to an end. One of the achievements of the Home Rule agitation in India was that it gave a mass base to the political struggle in India.⁵² It can be said that the Vandemataram movement was the movement promoted and propagated by the elite, whereas the Home Rule movement promoted by Besant and Bala Gangadhara Tilak was India's first attempt at mass based agitation.⁵³ The sad demise of Bala Gangadhara Tilak, on 1st August 1920, brought curtains down on Indian National Congress which witnessed hectic and extremist political activity. A new era was dawned on the political scene of Indian National struggle for independence with the entrance of Mahatma Gandhi.

POLITICAL AWARENESS AND ACTIVITY IN NELLORE DISTRICT

The people of Nellore in general and the elite in particular were aware of the on goings of the political developments in the country in the post 1857 revolution scenario. The Nellore District Congress Committee was formed in 1908 with T.V.Venkatarama Ayyar as President and Amancherla Subbu Krishna Rao as the Secretary. The district was regularly deputing its representatives to all the Indian National Congress sessions where they were held except to 1 foundation session in Bombay in 1885.⁵⁴ The elite and the people evinced keen interest in the work and progress of the Indian National Congress. The growing enthusiasm among the intelligentsia encouraged them in convening of conferences at the district level. The first Nellore District Conference was convened in 1909 in Nellore town. Diwan Bahadur Kanchi Krishna Swami who was the President of the Madras Congress Reception Committee was chosen as the President of the district conference,⁵⁵ and Sri.T.V.Venkatarama Ayyar was the President of the Reception Committee.157 delegates from the district attended the conference. The correspondents of leading news papers namely 'The Hindu', 'The Madras Times', 'The Indian Patriot' 'The Mail' and 'Krishna Patrika' The conference discussed in length several local and national issues and passed resolutions. The first conference was successful and created confidence among the elite and people alike.

The second Nellore District Conference was held in 1910 in Nellore, and Sri.Nyapati Subbarao Pantulu presided over the conference. It was attended by political elite namely Desabhkata Konda Venkatappayya, and Habibullah Saheb, Municipal Chairman of Rajahmundry and a host of others from distant places. The second conference was moderate in its tone like the first conference. However it had to pass a resolution unanimously, introduced by Sri.O.Venkatasubbaiah regarding ‘*swadeshi*’ after a long and lengthy discussion.

The third conference was convened in Kavali in 1911 under the presidentship of Sri L.A.Govinda Raghava Ayyar discussed several local and National including the problem of women and their education. Sri.Kasavaraju Narasinga Rao was the president of the Reception committee.⁵⁶ The fourth conference of the Nellore District Congress Committee was held in Nellore in 1912 and was presided over by Sri.B.Annaswamy Ayyar which discussed the local issues related to promotion and popularizing education among women, promotion of irrigation facilities and the language to be used in text books of the primary education. Such conferences were convened every year and they brought different people together for the discussion of local as well as national issues. But the tenth conference that met in 1920 under the presidentship of Parti Narayana pantulu at Sangam village of Nellore district witnessed a sharp clash between the moderates and the extremists. However the differences were ironed out and resolutions were passed. These conferences were quite useful in focusing the attention of people on several problems of the day faced by the people under the British administration.

Smt.Ponaka Kanakamma, her husband Ponaka Pattabhi Rami Reddy, Nellore Venkatrama Naidu, Pelleti Audinaryana Reddy, Gandavarapu Hanuma Reddy and others started ‘*Sujana Ranjani Samajam*’ to educate the people for self reliance and motivate them to take part in the national struggle. Sri.V.Raghavaiah, Chaturvedula krishnaiah and the Paturi couple had connections with the ‘samajam’.⁵⁷ The activities of ‘*Sujanaranjani Samajam*’ extended to the fields of literature, library movement and public welfare. Celebrities and elite like Sri.Ayyaradevara Kaleswararao, Sri.B.Narasimha Sastry, Sri.Mutnuri Krishnarao, Sri Ayyanki Venkata Ramanaih, Sri.Kasinathuni Nageswara Rao and others visited the ‘samajam’ and took part in its activities on several occasions.⁵⁸

A branch of ‘Servants of Indian Society’ of Gopala Krishna Ghokale was established at Nellore by the elite of the district. Sri.V.S.Srinivasa Sastry who became the president of the main society after the death of Gokhale too hailed from Nellore town. The members of this society in educating the public about the maladies in the administration. Social problems like untouchability, widow remarriages, child marriages and woman education etc were discussed. They succeeded in creating social and political awareness among the masses of the district.

Thus social and political consciousness was created among the people of Nellore district. Mahatma Gandhi emerged on the national political scene in 1919, after the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. Soon after he blew the conch of non-violence, non-cooperation against alien rule, the people of Nellore district responded overwhelmingly to his clarion call and extended whole hearted support to his political and social programmes.

It is well known that the Freedom movement passed through several stages between 1920 and 1947, i.e. the Non-Cooperation movement during 1920-1922, the stage of Salt satyagraha between 1930 and 1934 and the Quit India movement in 1942. In each one of these phases the people of the Nellore district displayed enthusiasm, and sacrifice for the cause of the country. In the first stage, they started District Association to carry on locally the struggle outlined by the Indian national Congress. The first Congress Committee for the district level for Nellore district was constituted in the house of village karanam of Nagulavelatur of Atmakur taluk. Oruganti Venkatasubbaiah and Chundi Venkata Krishnaiah sresti were elected as its President and Vice-President. Vennelakanti Raghavaiah and Tikkavarapu Ramireddy were the Secretaries of the first Nellore District Congress Committee. The Taluk Congress Committees were too formed at Gudur and Kavali.⁵⁹ Thus the district and Taluk Congress Committees gave a concrete shape to the aspirations of the people in the District.

NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT IN NELLORE DISTRICT

In September 1920, at the Special Session of the Congress held at Calcutta, Gandhiji’s resolution advocating non-violent non-cooperative movement against the British government was accepted. The programme of non-cooperation among other items included were the renunciation of all governmental titles, the boycott of Legislatures, Law Courts and Government schools and colleges.⁶⁰ As a result many withdrew their candidatures to the legislatures and other elected bodies. Sri.Vissa Rajagopal, a

lawyer in Nellore withdrew his candidature to the legislature.⁶¹ Allareddy Subbaramireddy too withdrew his candidature from the contest to the Legislative council.⁶² Gandhiji toured the Nellore district in 1921 and addressed mammoth rallies and preached non-violence and inspired the people to extend their support to the struggle. He advised the people to participate in non-cooperation movement against the British government. Lawyers from Nellore, people from affluent families and traders contributed money to Tilak Swarj fund.⁶³

Adhering to the Gandhian ideals and non-violent ideology during the non-cooperation movement the people and leaders were confined to the boycott of foreign cloth, boycott of *abkari* sales, propagation of khaddar, establishment of National schools, boycott of Law courts, Government offices, Educational institutions, surrender of titles, and boycott of elections. The people paid great attention to the constructive programme of Gandhi and national schools were established in Nellore town.⁶⁴ People who were inspired by the advice of Gandhiji evinced much interest in the propagation of Hindi, khaddar, and removal of untouchability.

In the villages wherever the meetings were held, at the end of every meeting a bonfire of foreign cloth became a ritual and people threw their mill cloth into the fire. In one such meeting Sri O.Venkateswara sarma was attested and imprisoned for six months for the bonfire of foreign cloth at Thipparjau satram.⁶⁵ Prominent leaders of Nellore like Rallapalli Rama Subbaiah and Konaduri Parthasarathy Iyengar used to collect foreign clothes from the houses in the town and make a bonfire of them while singing the song “*sima guddalunte*” written and composed by Parthasarathy Iyengar himself. Sri.O.Venkatasubbaiah took an oath to boycott foreign cloth and to use khaddar and adhered to it.

On account of the strenuous efforts of prominent congress workers and leaders of the district the abkari sales were stopped and the programme of boycotting ‘*kallu*’ (*liquor extracted from tender palmyra trees*) became a successful agitation. The success of boycotting ‘*kallu*’ was to be given to the district of Nellore.⁶⁶ This attracted the attention of the whole country and received deserving praise in the hands of Mahatma Gandhi.⁶⁷ In Gudur, Sri.D.Seshureddy propagated boycott of liquor through public “*dandora*”. Sri.B.Seshureddy, P.Balasaraswathamma, Vemuriakshamaiah, P.Kanakamma, Mannepalli Hanumantharao, and R.Ramasubbaiah spread no efforts and worked hard in mobilizing the people for picketing of liquor shops in Kota, Sydapuram, Rapur and Gudur. In Sullurpeta, Baddepudi Pedapitchireddy and Perareddy picketed liquor shops and got Palmyra tree cut secretly.⁶⁸

Sri T.Ramireddy and B.Cjhandrasekharareddy were responsible and successive in dissuading the people from their community in participating in auctions for the toddy contracts. The Nellore district Congress Committee organized a district wide propaganda which was accompanied by a rigorous picketing before the liquor shops and the *abakri* sales. From two lakhs of rupees and odd the abkari revenue fell to two hundred and Nellore received tributes from Mahatma Gandhi and Pussy Poot Johnson of United States of America.⁶⁹

Propagation of Khaddar

Sankarlal Banker, the President of All India khaddar Board visited Viranakanapur and Kandukur in Nellore district and after examining the khaddar manufacture in these places, called the Nellore district as ‘Manchester of India’⁷⁰ Mahalakshamma, Mangalamba, Venkata Suibbaiah, Navuluru Surhamanyam sold *khaddar* dhotis and sarees. N.Subrahmanyam was sent to Baroda to learn dyeing of clothes.⁷¹ P.Kanakamma and .T.Suydarsanamma who never stepped outside their homes went round the streets of Nellore hawking khaddar.⁷² Sri.Duvvuri Ramireddy wrote and composed a song in telugu language (*proddu podupu chukka podichindi Ratnamma*) for the propagation of khaddar.Maitreyi the daughter of Sri.O.Venkatasubbaiah was an expert in spinning and won one of the two first prizes-a gold medal in the All India Swadesi Exhibition at Nellore.⁷³ Smt. P.Balasaraswathamma was appointed as district convenor for propagating khaddar and spinning by the Nellore district Congress Committee.⁷⁴

In pursuance of the constructive programme of the Congress, the National School named ‘Tilak Jateeya Vidyalaya’ was declared opened by Mahatma Gandhiji in Nellore town on April 1921.⁷⁵ Spinning,weaving, and Hindi were taught in this school along with other subjects and Telugu. It became the centre of the new movement of national activity at Stonehousepeta of Nellore town.⁷⁶ Meetings were organized in this school and *nagara sankirtana* started from there every day and congress members were enlisted with the school and made it the Suburban Congress Office.⁷⁷

Smt.P.Kanakamma started Kasturi Devi Gairls' school for propagation of women education in Nellore town where Sri.Ramasubbaiah taught until 1932. The school was inaugurated in 1923 by Andhra kesari and was intended to house the poor and destitute women and teach them artisan work as a means of livelihood. O.Venkata Subbaiah organized another national school at Nagulavelatur in Atamkur taluk.⁷⁸ Karanam Peddanaidu established a panchayat court and a a national school in Nagulavellatur.⁷⁹ Thus the establishment of these national schools created interest in the minds of the people of Nellore district for national education.

The Pallipadu ashram was started on the banks of river Penna to spread the constructive programmes of Mahatma Gandhiji. It was opened by Gandhiji on 7th April 1921.⁸⁰ It was the first sayagraha ashram in the coastal district of Andhra and soon it became epic centre for propagation of Ghandhi ideology besides removal of untouchability, cottage industries and khaddar.⁸¹

The boycott of Law Courts, Government offices, and Educational institutions became a part of the non-cooperation movement in the Nellore district. Sri.Vissa Rajagopalarao, bGadepalli padmanabhaiah and Amancherla Krishnarao gave up their legal practice as mark of protest in Nellore. Number of lawyers and their assistants and government servants too suspended work.⁸² Amancherla Ramarao resigned to the post of revenue inspector.⁸³ O.Venkateswarl, B.Seshureddy, M.Gopalarao leading lawyers abstained from courts and boycotted the courts presided over by the English judges. Sri.Bezawada Gopalareddy gave up his studies in Venkatagiri Rajha's High School and joined in National College, Machilipatnam in response to the Nagpur Congress resolution.⁸⁴ Sri.Alladi Krishna swami Ayyar, a native of Nellore, then a leading lawyer in Madras High Court refused to receive the title 'Sir' conferred on him the British Government in reorganization of his services to the legal profession.It is one way of opposing the British government and its policies.⁸⁵

As resolved in the Andhra provincial Congress Committee, of November 1921,the nellore district Congress Committee too resolved to boycott the visit of Prince of Wales to Madras Presidency in 1921.⁸⁶ Sri.O.Venkatasubbaiah addressed meetings in Venkatagiri zamindari on the occasion of Prince of Wale's visit and inspired the people to take active part in the programme.⁸⁷ Mannepalli Ramakrishnarao, Vissa Rajagopalarao, Gadepalli Padmanabhaiah, Bezawada Sundararamiredi, Pulugundal Venkata Krishnaiah, Desabhatla Rangaiah of Kavali attended the Ahmedabad Congress Session as delegated from Nellore district. After their return, they toured the entire district and spread the messages of Gandhi and others through out the district. Their tour electrified the political atmosphere and people were inspired to take part in the national struggle. The Andhra Mahila congress sabha was inaugurated in Nellore with a view to encourage women for active participation in political movements. Sri.Guntur Vekata Subbaiah, a school teacher in Nellore town and Chejerla Lakshmi Narasimham a student of Medical school, Visakhapatnam, were penalised under Section 180 Criminal Procedure Code for wearing Gandhi caps. Lakshmi Narasimham was expelled from Medical School.⁸⁸ Sri.Kuruganti Raghavareddy and congress volunteers organized processions and bhajans in Harijanawada to spread the message of Gandhiji and remove untouchability.⁸⁹ Sri.Oruganti Venkateswarasarma, a teacher resigned to his post and took up the task of teaching Hindi and propagating the spirit of non-cooperation movement in the villages. He voluntarily extended his services as teacher in Tilak National School, Nellore to teach Hindi language.⁹⁰

THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT FROM 1923 TO 1929 IN NELLORE DISTRICT

The national movement combined with social reforms brought a change in the outlook of the people in Nellore district. It strengthened the social bonds and brought them together irrespective of caste, community, region and language. As the days passed it further strengthened the movement in all the regions of the district.

In 1922 a group had formed around Motilal Nehru and C. R. Das that wished to enter the government's legislative councils and wreck them front within. They were opposed by the `no-changers` who insisted that the 1920 programme, which called for the boycott of council elections, should not be altered. At the Gaya congress in December 1922, matters came to a head. The `no-changers` prevailed, but early the next year the `pro-changers` formed their own party. This party was at first known as the congress-Khilafat Swaraj party and later simply the *swarajya or swaraj* party.The new councils were inaugurated in 1921. The non-congress parties which had entered them had not been successful in influencing government policy. And eventually diarchy proved to be a failure. Provincial minister could not act effectively even in `transferred` subjects because the new safeguards made the governors more autocratic even than before. Only the Mont ford reform showed

that the British were still unwilling to form responsible government. C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru decided that the way to combat this situation was to enter the provincial legislative councils. Central legislative assembly carries out a policy of `uniform, continuous and consistent obstruction, with a view to make government through the assembly and councils impossible would force the British to grant real reforms. Although they had little time for campaigning, the swarajists did well in the elections. They became the largest party in the central assembly and the dominant party in two provinces. For the next few years *swarajist* politicians obstructed official business in the assembly and the councils as well. But there were positive gains too. In 1925 the swarajist leader Vithalbai J. Patel was elected president of the central legislative assembly. C.R. Das, who had refused to form a ministry in Bengal, was elected mayor of Calcutta. The tragic death of C. R. Das in 1925 removed a great patriot from the scene at a critical moment. The swaraj party, which had already begun to break up into actions, disintegrated quickly. As usual, the people of discord were religion. Communal-minded Muslims isolated themselves, while the so-called responsivists began to co-operate with the government with a desire to safeguard Hindu interests. By March end the swarajists day in the sun had ended. Block in their attempt to effect change, they walked out of the legislative assembly. It has become a history in and out of India..

The formation of ‘*swaraj*’ party at national level had its reflections in Nellore district too. A meeting of the Andhra provincial Swarajaya party was held at Nellore on 17th of December 1925 under the chairmanship of Ponaka Govindareddy of Nellore. Madabhushi Narasimhacahri, K.V.Raghavachari, Vavilakolanu narasingarao, and Ponaka Pattabhirami Reddy, (Secretary of Dicstrict Congress Committee,) Tumati Mallareddy and some other prominent intelligentsia from the district attended the meeting joined the ‘Swarajya’ party.⁹¹ C.R.Das undertook a tour of Andhra and addressed public meetings in Chittoor, Tirupati and Nellore in the month of June, 1923. In 1923 a batch of five volunteers were deputed from Nellore to take part in Nagapur flag Satyagraha and they courted imprisonment. Venati Venkatareddy and Polapudi Venkatappayya were sent to Nagapur from Gudur division. Somapudi Padmanabhaiah and N.Naganarayadu were also sent from Nellore.⁹²

When there was slump in the political activity between 1923 and 1929, the people of Nellore district embarked upon considerable constructive programme of Gandhiji. The Nellore District Congress Committee that met on February, 19, 1923 decided to form one committee to collect Tilak Swaraj Fund strengthen the movement and to establish one school for giving training in spinning and weaving. It was also decided to send Navuluru Subrahmanyam and Kasavaraju Narasingarao to Machilipatman to learn dyeing for six months.⁹³ It was also resolved to concentrate its attention on the propagation of khaddar, removal of untouchability and Hindu-Muslim unity.⁹⁴

Boycott of Simon Commission in Nellore

The Government of India Act 1919 had introduced the system of diarchy to govern the provinces of British India. However, the Indian public demanded for revision of the difficult diarchy form of government. Moreover the Government of India Act 1919 itself stated that a commission would be appointed after ten years to investigate the progress of the governance scheme and suggest new steps for reform. In the late 1920, the Conservative government, which was in power in Britain feared imminent electoral defeat at the hands of the Labour Party. They also feared the effects of the consequent transference of control of India to such an inexperienced body. Hence, in November of 1927, Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin appointed seven MPs (including Chairman Simon) a committee to examine the demands of Indians. The Simon Commission was entrusted with the charge to look into the state of Indian constitutional affairs. The growth of the education and the development of the representative institution in British India were the significant responsibilities vested with the Simon commission. The Simon commission was to give report as to whether or what extent the principle of responsible government could be established in India. The Simon commission was also asked to enquire the fact that how far it was desirable to establish Second Chambers of the local legislature. During the enquiry, the Simon commission did not however take into accounts the relation of the British Government with the Indian states.

The Simon Commission created extreme dissatisfaction throughout the whole India. This was so because no Indian Members were included in the Commission. The Simon Commission was an all-White Composition. Lords Birkenhead justified the exclusion of the Indians members from the Simon Commission. He opined that since the Commission was composed by the Parliament, it was necessary that the members of the Commission should be from the parliament.

The Simon Commission created enough disaffection all over the country and everywhere it was hailed with black flags. A general *hartal* was observed throughout the Country on the day the commission landed in India. In such circumstance, the Central Assembly was invited to form a joint Committee to co-operate with the commission. But however it refused to do so. As a whole, Simon Commission in India was a complete failure.

The Nellore District Congress Committee which met on 29th November, 1928 condoled the death of Lala Lajapat Rai. Black flag demonstrations were held in the streets of Nellore town in which students and prominent people of Nellore participated. Further, the Nellore District Congress Committee decided to set up a social service organization in the name of Lala Lajapat Rai.⁹⁵ The District Congress Committee observed *hartal* against the Simon Commission and held protest meetings with black flags.

Mahatma Gandhi toured Nellore district from May 10th to 14th of 1929.⁹⁶ His tour to Buchchireddipalem, Rajupalem, Parlapalli, Vidavalur and Vutukur and addressed public meetings. He asked the people to prepare for the final struggle with the British and urged them to boycott the foreign goods and promote indigenous goods. During these meetings funds were raised for the *khaddar* movement.⁹⁷ During this visit Gandhiji laid foundation for the building of Kasturi Devi Vidyalayam in Nellore and lauded the efforts of Ponaka Kanakamma, the founder of the institution, for her services to the destitute women and women education. The tour of Gandhiji to Nellore district in 1929 prepared the people of Nellore District to participate in the Civil Disobedience movement of 1930 to 1933. His tour raised the spirit of women and from then onwards women from Nellore district stood in forefront. They came forward to contribute liberally ornaments and cash towards *khaddar* fund. Though there was not much political activity in Nellore district during the period 1923-1929, the people of Nellore district actively engaged themselves in promoting the ideals of Gandhiji and in his constructive work. It can be said that Gandhiji's visit to Nellore in 1929 strengthened the national struggle in the district.

Salt Satyagraha and Civil Disobedience Movement in Nellore District

The *salt satyagraha* opened a new chapter in the history of the freedom movement struggle. Gandhiji wanted to violate the salt law by manufacturing salt by and for themselves. As per the programme and directions of the Congress Party and Gandhiji it was decided by the District Congress Committee to make the *salt satyagraha* successful in Nellore district. Accordingly volunteers were selected who assembled in Nellore on 22nd 1930 and plans were drawn to start *salt satyagraha* from Pallipadu where Gandhiji Ashram was founded. It became centre of training camp for *satyagrahi* volunteers. Sri.O.Venkatasubbaiah was appointed dictator of the Nellore district to coordinate the movement. He was given war council consisting of Bezawada Gopalareddy, Venuriu lakshmaiah and L.Subbaramireddy.⁹⁸ Volunteers toured the district and educated the people about the importance of observing Salt Satyagraha envisaged Gandhiji. As per the directions of the committee the volunteers violated the Salt Law by manufacturing Salt at Mypadu beach. Ponaka Kanakamma and Oruganti Mahalakshamma were in the forefront in the movement. The salt laws were violated at several places in Nellore district.

Many village officers submitted their resignations as a mark of protest against Gandhiji's arrest and the policy of repression pursued by the government. The village 'karanam' i.e. village revenue officers, of Kotapolur, Manne Muttur, Nadnlavari Kandriga and Yellayapalem tendered their resignations. The village servants, i.e. 'vettis' too resigned as a mark of protest.⁹⁹ The peasants of Alaganipadu of Gudur taluk resolved not to pay land tax as mark of protest against Gandhiji's arrest. Thus the no-cooperation movement took a deep rooted one thus effecting the collection of taxes in the district.¹⁰⁰ As the movement gained momentum the government resorted to repressive measures and began arresting the prominent leaders and others who were on the forefront of the movement. *Salt satyagrahis* were arrested, the salt pans were destroyed and the police made all efforts in preventing the *satyagrahis* from participating in the movement. O.Venkatasubbaiah, Khasa Subbarao and sixteen other *satyagrahis* were arrested on 20th May 1930.¹⁰¹ The government cracked down on the press too. It issued notice under the press ordinance to Paturi Subbramaiah, the editor of Simhapuri press.¹⁰²

In the midst of government's repression and police actions for violating salt laws, the *satyagrahis* of Nellore district did not lose heart and sight from constructive programme envisaged by Gandhiji. They successfully propagated the ideals of non-cooperation and boycott of foreign goods. In the year 1933 Gandhiji toured the Nellore district to collect funds for Harijan welfare. His tour started from Bitragunta and wound up at Venkatagiri. The people of Nellore district contributed the highest

amount for his Harijan Welfare Fund among all the districts in Andhra.¹⁰³ The Gandhi-Irwin pact was concluded on 5th March 1931 which is a landmark in the history of national struggle. The news of Gandhi-Irwin pact sent waves of joy in the district and meetings were held throughout the district to celebrate the event.

REPRESSIVE MEASURES OF THE GOVERNMENT

The government promulgated a number of ordinances to contain and counteract the activities of the *satyagrahis* and congress party cadre. By invoking the provisions of Unlawful association Ordinance the government resorted to mass arrests of the people whenever meetings were held. The Nellore District Congress Committee was banned and ashrams were declared as unlawful associations. On 17th November 1932 the police raided the Gandhi Ashram at Pallipadu and confiscated papers, flags and other material.¹⁰⁴ Show cause notices were issued by the District Magistrate to several prominent citizens namely V.Raghavaiah, O.Venkatasubbaiah, K.Parthasarathi Iyyengar and a host of others of Nellore district for their participation in the national struggle. The District Magistrate issued notices to the heads of printing presses and the Editors of local vernacular news papers for publishing news and pamphlets against the government and threatened to confiscate and seal their offices if they did not stop publishing incriminating material.¹⁰⁵ Sri.M.Hanumantharao, editor of the famous Nellore “Wall Journal” who regularly presented news on the wall of ‘Tipparajuvari Satram’ was arrested for his writing that “forty thousand people were in jails and that every body should boycott foreign cloth”.

When Gandhi began fast deprecating the communal award on September 20th, 1932, and was arrested, Iska Ramaiah Naidu of Gudur undertook a sympathetic fast for 132 hours and personally to express his support to the movement.¹⁰⁶ Gandhiji was released from the prison on May 8th, 1933 and on the same day he declared the suspension of the Civil Disobedience movement owing to violent incidents in the country. Thus the struggle for *poorna swaraj* that was started in the first week of January 1930 was terminated in the third week of May 1934 before its goal was achieved. During this period several revolutionary societies came into forefront to hasten the attainment of freedom from the British yoke. One of such revolutionary associations was founded by Prativadi Bhayankarachari in the Godavari district.Sri.O.Ramachandraiah from Nellore was a confidant of Bhayankarachari who was arrested in the famous “Kakinada conspiracy case”. Sri.Bhayankarachari was imprisoned and sentenced for life and sent to Andaman jail whereas Sri.O.Ramachandraiah was sent to borstal School, since he was a minor. Later on the appeal filed by his friends, his sentence was reduced to six months simple imprisonment. Another such revolutionary association was founded in Nellore district ‘Nellore Labour Protection League’ on July 1st 1935 under the leadership of Chundi Jagannadham,Ravi Adisheshaiah, Basvareddy Sankarayya, Khandavalli Krishna Rao,and Pusapati Narasimha Raju.On July 28th of 1935 the very same revolutionaries who were attracted towards Communist philosophy founded Press Workers Union to protect the rights of workers. By 1936 these people became members of the Communist Party of India and not only actively participated in ongoing National movement but also took Communist ideology to all corners of the district. Organised training camps and trained youth to take up the task of revolutionary path.

Meanwhile the Congress party celebrated Golden Jubilee celebrations throughout the country. The Congress Jubilee celebrations in the district were celebrated and observed with zest and fervor. On December 25th 1935, Bezawada Gopala Reddy addressed a public meeting at Buchchirdipalem. He exhorted the people to enlist their support to Congress and emancipate the country.¹⁰⁷ Leading local news paper ‘Zamin Ryot’ wrote editorial praising the Congress organization.¹⁰⁸

1937 Elections and Interim Ministry

After the third Round table conference was unsuccessful, the British Government established a Joint Select Committee with the task of formulating new Act for India. The Committee consisted of sixteen members from the House of Commons and House of Lords, twenty representatives for British India and seven members from the small princely states of India. The president of the committee was Lord Linlithgow. The Committee worked for after a year and a half and finally came out with a draft bill on February 5, 1935. The Bill was discussed for a period of forty-three days in the House of Commons and for thirteen days in the House of Lords. The bill was finally signed by King of England in July 1935 and was enacted as Government of India Act of 1935. British rulers promised a Federation of India, comprising both provinces and states. The act provisioned for not to go into operation until a specified number of rulers of states had signed ‘Instruments of Accession’. Since, this did not take place, the central Government continued to function accordingly the Act of 1919 and only the part of 1935 Act went into operation. The Head of the central administration was the Governor General and

he had immense powers of concerning administration, finance and legislation. Without the permission of the Governor General, no finance bill could be placed in the Central Legislature. The Federal Legislature consisted of two houses- the Upper House or Council of State and Lower House or Federal Assembly. The council of State consisted of two hundred and sixty members. Out of these members hundred and twenty five were to be nominated by the rulers of princely states. The Federal Assembly included three hundred and seventy five members. The Central Legislature possessed the right of pass any bill but the bill needed the approval of the governor General before it could be applied as a law. The Governor General had the power to build ordinances. Few advisors were nominated to help the Secretary of State for India in the place of the Indian Council, which was abolished. The Secretary of State was hindered from interfering in matters that the Governor dealt with, with the help of Indian ministers. The provinces were given autonomy with respect to subjects delegated to them. Diarchy, which had been established in the provinces by the Act of 1919, was to be established at the Center. However it came to an end in the provinces. Separate electorates were continued as before. One-third Muslim representation in the Central Legislature was guaranteed. Autonomous provincial governments in 11 provinces, under ministries responsible to legislatures, would be setup. According to the provisions of the Act of 1935 elections were conducted to the provincial legislatures in 1937. The Congress party contested the elections.¹⁰⁹ Justice party too contested the elections. The elections to the two houses were held between 15th and 20th of February 1937 and the Congress party emerged victorious. When C.Rajagopalachari, the Congress Legislature party leader, refused to form the ministry as a part of the congress party's programme to stall the activities of government, the Governor of Madras Presidency proposed to form an interim ministry with K.V.Reddinaidu, the leader of the justice party as the Chief Minister. The action of the Governor was regarded as unconstitutional by the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee. It met on March 29th and urged the people to observe *hartal* on 1st April to mark their protest against the unconstitutional act of the Governor of Madras Presidency.¹¹⁰ In accordance to appeal and instruction of the Congress party *hartal* was observed throughout the district. Many leaders were arrested in this *hartal*.

The Governor invited C.Rajagopalachari to form the ministry on July 14th of 1937. C.Rajagopalachari took oath as Chief Minister of Madras Presidency on the same day and Tanguturi Prakasam pantulu, V.V.Giri and B.Gopalareddy were included in the ministry. Thus Nellore district got a lion's share in the government. B.Gopalareddy was given the portfolio of local administration. July 14 of 1937 was observed throughout Andhra as a day of rejoicing.¹¹¹

World War II and the Individual Satyagrah

The second world war broke out in September 1939. The Viceroy Lord Linlithgow announced that India was too at war with axis powers. The action of the Viceroy was resented by the Indian. Gandhiji was once again chosen to lead the country by the Congress party. When his negotiations with the British government failed for granting *sampurna swaraj*, he launched the individual *satyagraha*. The Congress Working Committee met on October 22nd and 23rd of 1939 called upon the Congress ministers to tender their resignation against the attitude of the British government. In pursuance of the instructions and directions of the Congress Party the Congress Ministry in Madras Presidency resigned on October 29th, 1939 creating a vacuum in the government.¹¹² In the month of October, 1940 the individual *satyagraha* was started and continued till the end of 1941. During this period many prominent *satyagrahis* like V.Rahavaiah, B.Gopalareddy, K.Shanmugam, B.Lakshmikanthamma, wife of B.Goapalareddy and K.L.Narayanarao were arrested under the Defense of India act. The *satyagrahis*, E.Narasareddy, Amara Sivaiah, Yaganti Ramalingam and Appakayala Viswanadham who marched to Delhi by walk visited many places on their way as a part of propagating the ideals of individual *satyagraha* by singing national songs and raising anti war slogans.¹¹³

Quit India Movement and the August Revolt

The British government sent Sir Stafford Cripps in March, 1942 for negotiation with the leaders of the national struggle, who promised Dominion status to India immediately after the war ended. This proposal of Cripps was not acceptable to Indians and the Congress party. The Congress Working Committee that met in July 1942 resolved unanimously demanding total independence to India and asked the British to Quit India and handover the reins to Indians. It was with this slogan 'do or die' on their lips that the freedom fighters went into battle in August 1942. In Andhra, the Provincial Congress Committee issued a circular popularly known as the 'Kurnool Circular' which was drafted by Kala Venkatarao on 29th July, 1942. According to this circular, the movement was to be carried in six stages. All sections of the people were urged to join the struggle. In the morning of August 28th of

1942 students of the Kavali District Board High school attempted to set fire to the Head Master's room. Some military equipment was damaged near Nellore, Duggarajapatnam and Naidupeta.¹¹⁴ At several places of Nellore district public property was damaged. On September 16th, 1942 some villagers of Allur tried to burn the records and a portion of the Police station.¹¹⁵

Thus the August revolt was not only confined to the urban areas but also spread to the rural areas of the Nellore district. The rural areas were considerably excited and the railway stations and the Government offices became the targets of mob fury at many places. The students played a prominent part in the Quit India movement. O.Venkatasubbaiah, M.Hanumantharao, editor of Subodhini and secretary of District Congress Committee and M.Gopalarao President of District Congress Committee were arrested in 1942 under the provisions of Defense of India Act. On account of several restrictions and regulations imposed by the government on the press, the local vernacular papers like 'Zamin Ryot' and 'Simhapuri Patrika' were forced to suspend their publications in Nellore.¹¹⁶

Mountbatten Plan and the Dawn of Independence

Lord Mountbatten assumed charge of the office of Viceroy on March 24, 1947. The British Parliament passed the Indian Independence Act on 15th July, 1947 and on 15th August India became independent. That day was a day of rejoicing for the people of Nellore district who contributed substantially to the freedom movement and to the administration of Madras Presidency.

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