CONCLUSION
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The study of Mrs. Annie Besant covered in this thesis brings to light very clearly that without the participation of women, the Indian struggle for freedom would have lacked its full vigour. The preceding chapters have given a vivid description of the role she played in religious, theosophical, social and political aspects in the Indian scenario. Some of the leaders like Mahatma Gandhi have paid glowing tributes to this woman and her contributions to India’s Freedom Struggle. Therefore the study of this thesis, I hope will be a tribute to the immense work that this woman accomplished. I am sure that the study about this Grand old lady will definitely serve as repository not only to historians, teachers, students and administrators but also to the masses. Her sacrifices will definitely form a golden page of Indian History.

The lives of all great personalities have been incredible. Mrs. Annie Besant was the British clergyman’s wife, an attractive, beautiful, unhappy girl struggling fearlessly against her first timid doubts and finally became a world figure and a leader of the India National Movement. She poured new zest into every day life and culture into all the races and countries of the world. Education, social reform, labour and radical movements, political evolution of the dependent people into statehood and nationhood and self -
respect, a close organisation of waving nations into mutual understanding and sympathy and a co-operative global order... were the results of Mrs. Annie Besant's dynamic drive and foresight. The whole period of her career was marked by great interest in self-discipline and religious matters.

It is true to say that Mrs. Annie Besant prepared well considered programmes for education of untouchables and for helping panchamas in cleanliness and habits and educating them in trade and the like. She drew authoritative statements from Hindu scriptures and emphasised the existence of 'One life' in all asserting that live is divine. She had such a powerful and compelling vision of the country and she plunged into action with full heart and did her best in the entire field she touched. Her personality was evolved and dynamic, she could impress the obstinate opposer quoting from the books she would consider sacred and in disputable. She was enthusiastic to win all to her side through right means. She pointed towards the light at the appointed time and if for any reason one refused to see that light and remain in ones own darkness she did not pick up a quarrel with one.

She perceived the social evils that subjected India to humiliation and suggested a methodical way of reformation for restoring the past glory. Mrs. Annie Besant did her best to bring in a new awakening and outlook. Work for the downtrodden and the weaker sections had been a passion with
her even in England. Considering the higher proportions of the needed work in India at that time, her spirit expanded beyond all possibilities and the result was her multifaceted contribution. It is rarely there appears among mankind a soul of the quality of Mrs. Annie Besant, a quality with a simile of a diamond.\(^1\) A diamond is the hardest mineral that we have; it can be cut only with diamond edged tools and ground with dust of its own substance. Another characteristic of a diamond is that it has many facets and a polished diamond gives out colour after colour as it is turned to the light, for the colours of the solar spectrum are reflected through its many facets. In the same way, a "Diamond Soul" is unbreakable, has the quality of incredible resistance and therefore a very great capacity for work in many aspects of activity. It is all these quality the many faceted aspects of Mrs. Annie Besant's life and work. This is a rapid description of this diamond soul flashing out brilliant colours. May we all some day acquire something of that diamond soul's quality of brilliance and resistance which was the very nature of Mrs. Annie Besant \(^2\)

**HER GREATNESS**

There was a sense that in her dwelt a greatness which could not be measured in terms of the standards by which ordinary greatness is measured.

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1. *Besant's Diary of Principal events (1847 – 1933)*, p.20,
She belonged to a far-off. Her eyes appeared as the eyes of a seer who knew that it was not given to ordinary mortals to know. Her life was lived at a great distance from the lives that the rest of the world lived, even though she was so much nearer to the world than almost all others ... She drew her inspirations and her plans from sources other than those from which inspiration and purpose come to the ordinary individual. She was clearly one of those rare fire-pillars of life, as Carlyle calls who belong to the Everest ranges of humanity. Her beginning, her ways and her ends were other than those either of crowds or of leaders of crowds. Yet, as has already been pointed out, she was at home in crowds and was a leader of crowds who could play upon their feelings, emotions, their very minds as a great artist will play upon his chosen instrument but always for their good and the greater glory of the God within them.....

Mrs. Annie Besant will best be remembered as a warrior; statesman and as the true founder of India's freedom. But she was also a very great teacher with an unexampled power to stir her pupils to climb to the noblest heights it was in them to reach. To teach a subject may in fact be difficult, but many can compass it. To set fire a soul requires an already flaming nature. Such was the nature of Mrs. Annie Besant for the flames of her soul
ascended into very heavens, to make this place of glory visible to those still bound to earth.\(^3\)

One of her biographers has described her as a "passionate pilgrim"; whatever the path she took, she trod it as a pilgrim with all the favour of a dedicated spirit pressing ever onward to its goal. She was the blazing sword in the hand of Her Master (God) she is pure as Dawn. She burns because she enlightens. Her path was always straight and direct.

**THE SAGA OF DEDICATION**

The work of Mrs. Annie Besant for India was a saga of complete dedication to the past, present and future. She was totally immersed in the rich Indian heritage of culture and spirituality. Her awareness of the problems of the present was based on a practical and broadminded approach. She was a pioneer in the struggle for India's political freedom, one among a galaxy of worthy men and women whom we honour with gratitude.

She was one of the torch bearers who paid the bitter penalties of the pioneer in the women's cause, but she was remarkable as she was able to espouse and champion the cause of India as her own. She was honoured throughout and beloved of many, yet it would profit us to recall the struggle and vicissitudes of the life of this great soul.

\(^3\) G.S. Arundale, *Home Rule for India*, Madras, 1916, p.11
We may hold widely divergent views in regard to many of her activities. Even in her political work in India, she was suspected as an extremist by some and others have held that she was moderate in her outlook. She was neither a moderate nor an extremist, but a radical, a bridge between the two. Like a believer in a radical change of constitutional nature, she proposed and indeed forcefully about the widespread governmental changes and reforms at the earliest. She termed moderates as “yesterdays” and extremists as “tomorrows”. She may be called a moderate extremist. Whatever be our own individual points of view, we must pay our tribute to this woman who considered no price too high, no sacrifice too great, in furtherance of her belief. Her whole life was a struggle and no one can refute her sincerity or the strength of her convictions.

Paying tributes to Mrs. Annie Besant, Mr. Sarojini Naidu had said, “Had there been no Annie-Besant there would have been no Mahatma Gandhi”. Mrs. Annie Besant will be remembered as the harbinger of new awakening and outlook to the downtrodden Indians”. She left her comfortable environs of English society and dedicated her life to the service of India and its people.

The activities of Mrs. Annie Besant was not limited to the shores of this country alone. She found encouraging support from Indians all over the
world, she had served India for 23 years\textsuperscript{4} In Madras, men like Subramanya Ayyar and Justice Sadasiva Ayyar accepted her leadership in the TS. While in the political field Govindaraghava Ayyar, C.P. Ramaswami Ayyar and T. Raghavacharia all prominent men were her regular associates.\textsuperscript{5} Though she had many opponents, she was able to swim in the troubled waters very carefully and very swiftly.\textsuperscript{6} Deteriorations in health did not affect her faith in India and its destiny; nor its sour her temper of lesson her serenity or modify her magnificent loyalties to the persons and causes that she deeply loved. Despite her health, she continued her work.

In 1924, she attended the Golden Jubilee Celebration of her public activities, in Queens Hall, London. It was also celebrated in Bombay as well as in Madras.\textsuperscript{7} Mrs. Annie Besant addressed the gathering, which consisted of persons like Ramsay Mac Donald, Lord Haldare, Philip Snowden and Mrs. Patheic Lawrence.\textsuperscript{8} Mrs. Rukmani Devi had said that she not only fought for the soul of India and also she had made all Indians understand and love India more.\textsuperscript{9}

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\textsuperscript{4} New India, December 12, 1916. \\
\textsuperscript{5} Home Rule file No.5, May 15, 1916 p.10 \\
\textsuperscript{6} Besant file, Vol. VII, Annexure No.4496, October 15, 1915, p.29 \\
\textsuperscript{7} Besant's Centenary Issue, p.116. \\
\textsuperscript{8} Besant's Centenary Issue p.117. \\
\textsuperscript{9} A.B. Warrior, A Woman World Honoured, Madras, 1971, p.3.
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In July 1928, Mrs. Annie Besant was re-elected as the president of the TS which had 45,000 active members. In August 1929, she inaugurated the 4th Theosophical World Congress at Chicago. It was in this year that she lastly visited Benaras, England, Europe and also presided over the 10th Theosophical Congress at Geneva.

It is curious that her dream has ultimately been realised in almost every particular. A constitution of her own making, membership of a multi-racial commonwealth entirely through her uninhibited choice and freedom achieved through negotiations with Britain - those hopes to which Mrs. Annie Besant dedicated her life were fulfilled after the World War-II. The constituent assembly which was set up at the end of the World War-II functioned almost entirely on the basis of the principles for which Mrs. Annie Besant sought acceptance throughout her life. But Mrs. Annie Besant did not live to see the fruits of her work and she rapidly lost her health from 1931 onwards. She was suffering from a serious nervous breakdown, and that her health and strength had become greatly impaired since her internment. In August 1931, Mrs. Annie Besant celebrated the Blavatsky Centenary at Adyar. She resolved to make Adyar a flaming centre and she delivered her last address at Adyar. In 1932, she celebrated the Olcott

10. New India, October 1, 1917, p.4.
11. Ibid., p.7
13. A.B. Warrior, op.cit., p.3
Centenary at Adyar. Her continuous work had a toiling effect on her health and so her end came on 1933.\textsuperscript{14}

In simple words “She tried to follow Truth”. Her whole life was a striking vindication of this determination. In the name of the Truth, she search for, perhaps we could consider the need of delving more deeply into that love. Though she herself is not in the flesh before us, her spirit still hovers over us; that we can dare to forget the lessons that she has taught only at our peril, and that the future will be made safe and strong if we abide by the ideals that she made her own, and carry on steadily and steadfastly the work that she has left behind. On many aspects, her visionary statements have become true, especially with respect to Indian politics, so deep was her knowledge of the great laws of the universe and how they operate. As Gandhi remarked that as long as India lives, the memory of the magnificent services rendered by Mrs. Annie Besant will also live. She endeared herself to India and dedicated her service to India.\textsuperscript{15} Though she was born in England, she can claim rebirth on Indian soil, because Indian soil became her thinking, her living and her aspiration were Indian in character.

If today we are a free people politically and have also shed many of the shackles that bound our bodies and minds and souls socially and

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\item[14.] \textit{Home Rule File No.5}, p.17.
\item[15.] J.N. Vajpeyi, \textit{The Extremist Movement in India}, Delhi, 1967, p.147.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
spiritually, if men and women in our land are working in close co-operation in many fields of national endeavour, if there is a consciousness of human dignity among the humblest and the evil aspect of caste are being thrown aside, if we are proud of our religion, our culture and heritage, much credit for this consummation must go to Mrs. Annie Besant. In fact, her name will be inscribed in golden letters in History as one of the Architects of India's Deliverance from a foreign yoke\textsuperscript{16}. There is no such clearly discernible connection between the part played by Mrs. Annie Besant in various public movements in her own country and her subsequent career in India, unless we look closer when perhaps, we might be able to identify her underlying unity of aim and purpose that is the realization of truth.