CHAPTER-III
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HOME RULE MOVEMENT

Mrs. Annie Besant played a prominent role in the freedom struggle of India. A dedicated political leader as she was, she was elected as the Congress President in 1917. She spent her whole life for the socio-economic upliftment of the sub continent.

She was possessed with a great oratory skill needed for a politician. Her brilliance for superb oratory was a glaring phenomenon during her popular gestures in numerous public speeches by which her audience were spell-bound by her fine and remarkable peroration. Her strength lay in her matchless voice and none could match the range of the resonance of her voice.¹ She was an extraordinary lecturer, considered by ‘Bernard Shaw’ as the most brilliant orator of the century. He also remarked Mrs. Annie Besant as woman of swift decision. She sampled many movements and societies before she entered into a movement with a bound and was preaching the new faith before the astonished spectators had the least suspicion that the old one was shaken.

Greatly influenced by the philosophy of radicalism advocated by Roberts of Manchester and her contacts with free thinkers and socialists like

¹ S.R. Bakshi, Annie Besant Founder of Home Rule Movement, New Delhi, 1997, p.3.
George Bernard Shaw and Charles Bradlaugh, she defied British system of Government in India, glorified Indian culture and heritage, demanded Self-Government for India and criticised the violent means advocated by the extremists. Her speeches and writings had the glaring elements of force, strength, determination and fearlessness.  

The foundation of the Home Rule Movement was a romantic political saga of her career in the long-drawn struggle for India’s Independence. Along with Bal Gangadhar Tilak she impressed the masses of India about the ideology of Home Rule which she propagated through her speeches and writings. Mrs. Annie Besants work in the political field was directed to our becoming a truly free people managing our own affairs in our own way, and utilizing our own resources for our own well being, unhampered and undisturbed by others.

To propagate the principles and ideology of the Home Rule Movement, the method used by her was a novel one. It was mainly through the media of discussions amongst various groups, organisations, a series of lectures in district headquarters, launching of fund-raising campaigns amongst the rich philanthropists and common people, publication of literature books, newspapers, and pamphlets with main emphasis on Swarajya, conduct of personal tours to various regions of India, by seeking

2. Ibid., p.5.
the support and sympathy of university – authorities, teachers and students and last but not the least, to send deputations to England in order to Mobilize British Public opinion.\(^3\)

**POLITICS AND THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY**

Time and again Madame Blavatsky and Col. Olcott from the beginning of the Theosophical Society had expressed that it had nothing to do with politics. Madame Blavatsky had repeatedly said that Theosophical Society had not and must not have any part in politics. It has to do with assimilation of wisdom by the individual through the development of understanding and right feeling for each other against the background of common origin and essential unity. Madame Blavatsky was very careful not to criticize, the British Government in India, on contrary she often praised it. When they came to India the British Government suspected them as Russian agents and it seemed to have supposed them that they might meddle with politics in India. Madame Blavatsky and Col. Olcott were followed by police shadow and as such they thought that the official surveillance was preventing the public from taking active interest in their work. So Col. Olcott wrote a letter to the Government, that the society had no interest in or disposition to meddle with politics in India. When this assurance was given by Col. Olcott, the Under Secretary to the Government of India replied that

the Government of India had no desire to subject them to any inconvenience during their stay in the country, so long as the members of the Society confined themselves to the prosecution of philosophical and scientific studies wholly unconnected with politics. This was the condition when Theosophical Society was in its early days of existence.

The Indian National Congress came into being in 1885. The genesis of Indian National Congress can be traced in the annual convention of Theosophical Society held at Adyar in 1884. In this convention few popular theosophists like, K.T. Telang, Dadabhai Naoroji, Surendranath Banerji, S. Subramania Iyer and other took part and had decided to form an Association to begin National Movement for saving the motherland. This meeting had culminate into the formation of Indian National Congress. A.O. Hume the founder of Indian National Congress was a Theosophist and he belongs to Simla Lodge of Theosophical Society. Every year the Congress met at different capitals and passed many resolutions which expressed their grievances. The Congress took to constitutional method to mirror its views. Finding no positive response from the Government, a group in the Congress wanted to use pressure to get their demands conceded. The group known as the radicals was led by Bal Gangadhar Tilak. The radicals advocated boycott of foreign goods and wanted the masses to go in for Swadeshi

As a result of this the boycott of foreign goods and Swadeshi Movement took a serious dimension. It is relevant to point out here that the concept of Swadeshi itself was first preached by HSC. He conducted an industrial exhibition in Bombay at an early convention of the Theosophical Society, where he gathered together Indian products, and placed them in a house to popularize Swadeshi. Mrs. Annie Besant from her early years had taken a pledge that she should never destroy the beauty and the variety of the products of cottage industries, the skill of deft self-taught fingers of the poor, which even today the pride of the land. She herself was a great patron of these in her own person as proved by the "Saris" she wore and the shawls she used, for she stood fervently for Swadeshi in the true sense of the world\textsuperscript{5}.

It was Mrs. Annie Besant who turned the Theosophical Movement to the tunes of times to witness a major political movement in India, the Home Rule Movement. By entering the politics she gave a different meaning to Theosophy.

\textsuperscript{5} Ibid., p.42.
PREPARATION OF BASE FOR THE HOME RULE MOVEMENT:
COMMENCEMENT OF THE HOME RULE MOVEMENT

Mrs. Annie Besant, an Irish born lover of India was the prophetess of the Indian HRM. Besides being a Theosophist, educationist and social reformer, she was also an Indian independent leader who inspired and guided the movement for the liberation of India in its earlier stages. But in the beginning of her Theosophical work in India she had no interest in politics. She had declined to enter politics in 1894. She wrote to Amirta Bazaar Patrika when she was asked to take interest in the Indian affairs that “My own work has always been educational and the generating of enthusiasm for great principles. I have been a pioneer and not a politician” and also “the whole of my life and of my energies are given to the Theosophical Society, because the Society is intended to work in all nations for realization of spiritual ideal, for the sake of this it deliberately eschews all politics, embraces men of all parties, welcomes men of all faiths, declines to ostracize any man, any party, or any faith. I may not mingle in a political fray which would make one temporary party regard me with enmity...The politician must every be at war, my mission is one of peace. Therefore I enter not the political field ...I write this explanation of my absolute refusal

to have anything to do with politics...”  

Again in 1895, she had told that the work of the Theosophist was not to convert the country, not to take part in its special political movements. During this period it also appears that she had no interest in the Indian National Congress, for she had said that “Of late years there had arisen a common interest, but it was local and largely a class interest, on that was Western and not Eastern in its origin, and had no tradition of the past behind it, its way methods, hopes and use were Western, it dealt with Western Government, and had no root in the life of India. This was a bond of Union amongst the educated classes, but it did not touch the masses of the people, and did not appeal to anything which moved them to the core, it was not likely to be more than a temporary movement adapted to meet a temporary difficulty”. But contrary to her earlier views she entered the political field in India and entered the Indian National Congress.

Mrs. Annie Besant’s entry into politics was a big jump that took every one by surprise, because first she worked for the religious revivalism in India and then suddenly she drifted towards politics. It appears her entry into politics is a gradual process of development. Mrs. Annie Besant had said that “Those who have studied the history of political movement of Shivaji, know that a religious movement in Maharastra preceded it, and led

7. Annie Besant, I have been a pioneer, not a politician (Besant declines to enter politics in 1894) Reproduced from the supplement of the Theosophist, March 1894, PXX, p.157.
8. Theosophic Thinker, January 5, 1895, p.5.
to the great wave of Hindu power for which bid fair for a while to re-establish a mighty Hindu Empire on the wreck of the Mughal dominion. In truth any movement to be strong in India must rest on religious basis, and so interwoven with religion is the very fibre of the Indian heart, that it only throbs with full response when the religious note has been struck which calls out its sympathetic vibration”. Again Swami Vivekananda had also said that “the bond of unity in India, as in other countries of Asia is not language or race, but religion. Understanding the situation in India, she gave priority to spiritual regeneration of the country. It was only in 1894 she expressed her interest in Indian National Congress. In 1894 when Mrs. Besant was asked whether she had any interest in the Indian Congress Movement, she said that “I am interested in it, but did not attend the Congress at Allahabad, as the Theosophical Congress at Madras took place at the same time” and she also said that “the Congress movement was a useful one, and it was derived from the Theosophical Movement. Of course with the Congress material objects aimed at, Theosophy was concerned with spiritual growth. The last must have the first place”. So she first took the work of revival of spiritualism in India. To her Theosophy is identical with Hinduism, which had much in common and Hindu scriptures contained the fullest presentment of Theosophy as such she took the work of revival of Hinduism. She firmly believed that without a wide spread religious faith; a truly national education

and an enlightened society, there could be no "Safe political uplift". So she worked for the religious revival and education in the beginning. She threw herself into the defence of Hinduism and worked for its revival and the effect expected by her through Theosophical teachings was first a revival of Hinduism. She said "Make no mistakes, without Hinduism, India has no future". She thought that strengthening of the spiritual side would strengthen national feeling, help to bind various peoples of India together in opposition to the tendency of disintegration. She insisted on the establishment of schools and colleges and where religious education was to be imparted. She said "Education in which religion shall form an integral part of curriculum that is what India is demanding today and what many are struggling to gain". With this objective in mind she was instrumental in the establishment of Central Hindu College in Benaras.

It is pertinent point to mention here that Indians had to look upon a foreign teacher for instruction in their own religion. This doesn't mean that the Indians had no Hindu preachers at all. But most of them belong to religious sects and their teachers are generally regarded as sectarian and as such when a women like Mrs. Annie Besant, who had been known to have studied all forms of western religious faith and who was perfectly familiar with western science and philosophy devotes herself to a close study of Hinduism, and then came forward to accept it as her ideal of life, the

11. Ibid., p.91.
announcement at once arrests attention, and Hindus make so much of Mrs. Besant and anxiously flock her lectures. The said "But there is a danger a very real and pressing danger—that India may lose her Religion, that Hinduism may go down in the struggle between old and the New. And if the Hindus do not maintain Hinduism, who shall save it? If India's own children do not cling to her faith, who shall guard it? India alone can save India, and India and Hinduism are one". Thus kindled the spirit of religion in the minds of people.

Mrs. Annie Besant grew popular in India with her work for Hinduism that to Srimat Paramahamsa Parivrajakacharya Subramaniya Abhinava Sachinanda Swami, the Head of the Sivaganga Mutt, a branch of the well known Sringeri Mutt of Sri Sankaracharya, Mrs. Annie Besant was the ideal of a Hindu reformer.12 A Pandit by name Gangadhara Shastri exclaimed Mrs. Annie Besant as, "The all white 'Saraswathi', which is one of the designations of the cultural Goddess." She had become one with the Indian people in their thoughts and feelings through her religious work. Though Mrs. Annie Besant's religion was Theosophy, which embraces all creeds alike, she desired to Indianise herself in ways of living and appearance as much as possible, so as to get into touch with the heart of the Indian people.13 The National Movement in India had been definitely inspired by

12. The Theosophic Thinker, February 17, 1894, p. 51.
the religious work of Mrs. Annie Besant. It had foster unity among the people.

The religious work of Mrs. Annie Besant was condemned by Valentine Chirol, as helping Nationalism\(^{14}\)-as indeed it did, for all great National Movements in India are rooted in religion. It was true that the ruling class had taken alarm at the Hindu revival. It appears that the Hindu revival was considered by the ruling British as a species of a political danger though how they jumped to such a conclusion is not known. The doubts proved to be truth when Mrs. Annie Besant jumped into the politics.

**ANNIE BESANT'S ENTRY IN TO POLITICS**

Mrs. Annie Besant’s political career was that of a practical mystic of a unique type. Though Mrs. Annie Besant started her political work in 1913, she shooked the people of India out of their historic slumber, slowly and gradually and the climax started only at later periods. Mrs. Annie Besant had been watching the grievances of Indians from the very beginning and had sympathy with them and as theosophist, establishing herself through her work and by winning the confidence of the people and finding the problems of Indians as genuine, she entered the National Movement. Even before she worked for India’s freedom, while in England, Mrs. Annie Besant had used her pen effectively for the condemnation of the British Rule in

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14. Mrs. Annie Besant, *"Time had Come"* (Dr. Besant Enters Politics in 1914) reproduced from Mrs. Annie Besant’s Autobiography, 1939, p.564.

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India. Even before she worked for India's freedom, while in England, Mrs. Annie Besant had used her pen effectively for the condemnation of the British Rule in India.

Mrs. Annie Besant’s earliest interest in the welfare of Indians can be traced from the pamphlet written in 1879, and it bears the title “The Story of Afghanistan: or Why the Tory Government gags the Indian Press. A Plea for the weak against the strong” As such it appears that she had some interest on the welfare of Indians, even before her entry into the Theosophical Movement. When Mrs. Annie Besant came to India, she was moved by the grinding poverty and the appalling ignorance of the Indians. She entertained the firm view that it was not charity that India wanted, but Justice. To achieve this, she first roused Indian feelings and pride by describing India’s past glory. She worked for social reform but had to confront many difficulties to carry out her programmes of action. These things convinced her that no effective could be done without political change. As a result, she advocated the establishment of Home Rule as a palliative in her articles entitled Theosophy and Politics published in New India.

15. B.Shiva Rao, India’s Freedom Movement Some Notable Figures, New Delhi, 1972, p. 38.
16. Ibid., p. 38.
POLITICS AND THEOSOPHY

During the Home rule for India Campaign conducted by Mrs. Besant some of the members in the Theosophical circles criticized her for involving herself in politics. The Theosophist considered that the participation of Annie Besant in Indian National Movement will identify the society with it and also that it will lead members of Theosophical Society in other nations to regard it with bad feeling. There were some either openly or privately objected to what they considered the identification of the Society with the political issue indirectly in her person. But she said that her work for the Indians was not as President of the Society but in her private capacity as a Theosophist.

There is no scheme as far as the duty of a member of the Theosophical Society with regard to the politics of the nation to which a Theosophist belongs, it is vague and indeterminate. The Theosophist had great differences of opinions as regards the political action. But it is clear that a member of Theosophical Society is as free to form his political opinions as a member of any other organization. Only the Society, as a Society, can take no corporate part in any special line of political activity, in the narrow sense of word, for, containing members of all shades of political thought, the Society as a whole cannot be committed to any special or particular line-conservative, radical, liberal, monarchical, republican,
Socialist. It is not those sub division with which the society is concerned. In politics, the members of the Theosophical Society may or may not mix. If they do mix in them, they must do so as individual men and women and not as members of the Society.\(^1^8\) Under such circumstance a Theosophist can take his own decision.

Mrs. Annie Besant maintained her right to work for the cause in which she believed with the same freedom that any other member of the Theosophical Society could enjoy. Her standpoint is that political work is just as much Theosophical work as any other kind of work. She said “In older days, Theosophy seems to have included much more, including the much objected politics. Of course, my own stand point is that political work is just as much Theosophical work as any other kind of work called Theosophical-say the reading of a theosophical book. Perhaps it is more so. But we must not associate the Theosophical Society, a whole, with any particular line of activity that we take up. It is my duty very specially to do political work connected with India, because I have been told to do that work, but I should be acting wrongly if, while I am doing political work, I should try to induce the Theosophical Society to join any particular political party or any particular line of political activity.\(^1^9\) She asserted that it was in

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her individual capacity as a Theosophist she entered politics. Thus she gave a new meaning to Theosophy that it is in no way different from politics. According to her Theosophical goal can even be attained by political work.

Her ideas about politics can be gleaned from her writings related to Indian politics. (See Appendix-II-pertaining to Indian Politics). Again various reasons can be pointed out for her sudden drift from social and spiritual work to politics. They are as under:

WHY SHE ENTERED POLITICS

- To her Theosophical friends, she explained that a member of Theosophical hierarchy, the Rishi Agasthya, had directed her to work for Self Government in order to protect the Empire.
- She wanted to win over the youth of India from turning to violence and terrorism. The failure of Moderates to face up to the repression after 1908 and the suppression of the extremists and also the rise of terrorist groups like Anushilan, Ghadar, etc. showed that there could be a violent explosion even during the war. Mrs. Besant firmly believed that violent methods would embitter the relations between India and Britain.  

Being a Theosophist she did not like this to be happening.

• She had a firm faith that educated Indians were ready to govern their country and that led her to seek for them a substantial advance towards self-government instead of what Morley-Minto Reforms had provided.  

• Being a commanding personality she had her own views about politics and Theosophy and she is her own mentor in the absence of HSC and HPB.

• Her experience in Theosophical Movement in India had given her the confidence that she could win over the Indians. She wanted to threw the whole of her influence in India, built up by her twenty years of religious, educational, and gradual social reform into the politics for the benefit of Indians.

• Another reason which she was not so open was that she had personal ambition she had always came into movement with a bound through out her career and many.

Towards the end of 1913, Mrs. Besant definitely began to work in the political field. In October and November, 1913, she delivered series of stirring addresses, on social and political reform, which bore the general title of Wake up India. She said “I knew the time had come for letting my tongue speak freely that which had been burning in my heart and to which

all led up-the freedom of motherland, and dignity of Indian Nation self ruled. To have a share in the winning of that freedom, a share however small-what ever gift could come into the hands which fold themselves in the cry of homage: (Vande Madaram).\textsuperscript{22} She founded also a weekly, the Commonweal, and definitely entered the political field in India, as long ago she had entered the social and religious fields. She became a delegate of Indian National Congress in December 1914.

In the initial stage, starting the Movement and assimilating the people proved a tough task for Mrs. Annie Besant. No doubt, a large and influential section of the public greatly favoured it. But Mrs. Annie Besant was keen to have her ideal accepted by the congress. She was most desirous to have her ideal propaganda work undertaken directly by the Congress or under its authority. When Mrs. Annie Besant propounded the scheme of Home Rule at a private meeting with some leaders at Bombay in September 1915, none but Jinnah and Petit reached it with favour\textsuperscript{23}.

When the establishment of the HRL and its operation were discussed, the Congress Executive Committee failed to make their final decision before the dead line set by them, Mrs. Annie Besant made the HRL as her

\textsuperscript{23} Rajkumar, \textit{Annie Besant Rise to Power in Indian Politics} (1914-1917), New Delhi, 1981, p.108.

Jinnah : A lawyer, founder of Pakistan.
Petit : A leading representative community in India.

\textit{Home Rule League - HRL}
independent organisation. Hence the first meeting was held on 3rd September 1916. Mrs. Annie Besant was made its first president, G.S.Arundale its Organizing Secretary, C.P.Ramaswamy Aiyar and K.T.Telang were General Secretaries and B.P.Wadia the Treasurer.24 The functions of the league were conducted by these four officials from its headquarters at Adyar. It was at this time, in order to spread the message of the HRM, Mrs. Annie Besant started the two papers. ‘The New India’, a “Daily” and the ‘Commonweal’, a “weekly”. These papers made many to join the HRL25. The HRL branches were quickly found at Adyar, Kumbakonam, Madanapalli, Madurai, Calicut, Ahamedabad, Allahabad, Benaras, Bombay and Cawnpore.26

INDIAN PRESS AND HRM

Thiru.S.Kasturi Ranga Aiyangar, the founder, editor of THE HINDU did a lot for the cause of the Home Rule Movement.27

The Commonweal, a weekly edited by Mrs. Annie Besant advocated Federation of Nations, a dominant political ideology of Mrs. Annie Besant.28 Her daily paper New India clearly articulated “the ideal of Self – Government for India along colonial lines. . . under the educative guidance

27. B.N.Chopra, et.al., History of South India, Delhi, 1979, p.256.

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and control of British Statesmanship until colonial autonomy is obtained.29 Through these two papers, she popularized the most cherished principle of fraternity. She laid stress on "obliteration of racial privileges and promotion of co-operation in all ways and means.

Communication with the head quarters were carried on, either through individuals who were active or through the daily "New India" where in a page was devoted to "Home Rule News and Advice". The league preached everywhere Swadeshi, boycott of foreign goods, temperance, national education, labour welfare and responsible Government. Gana Banu published by Subramania Siva propagated the values of the HRM.30

FIRST WORLD WAR

The World War I which broke out in 1914, exercised a tremendous influence on the Indian politics. India's participation in the war was no nominal affair, not a mere gesture. The outbreak of the 1st world war in 1914 brought about a drastic change in the whole context of the Indian problem. She extended her support to England for she felt that England had entered the war for the sake of liberty. She believed that England could not fight for safeguarding certain principles in Europe and deny them in India31.

India sent thousands of soldiers and supplied millions of Rupees to help England to fight her enemies. The Indian political parties gave their full co-operation to the British. Mr. Asquith, the then Prime Minister of England declared in the light of these events that the future of Indian question would be viewed from a different angle. The Indians dissatisfied as the British did not fulfill the promise that they had made during the war. This popular discontentment resulted in the formation of many movements.

At this point of time, Indian politics was mainly organised and dominated by such politicians, who were mostly western educated. The political scene was controlled by the moderate politicians, who adhered to constitutional methods. The British Government therefore favoured them. On the other hand, the extremists who believed in militancy were under severe government repression. Political activities were conferred to few regions. But Mrs. Annie Besant who was much influenced by Gladstonian liberalism, writings of John Stuart Mill and above all, the basic trends of democracy, was neither a moderate nor an extremist. She was an individualist in politics and expressed dissatisfaction with the routine work, like the political activities of the Indian National Congress. She wished to have a quick result oriented political activities which induced her to launch the HRM. Besides, she launched a few subordinate organisations like “Sons of India”, “Brothers of service”, and “Young Men Indian Association”
inorder to implement her political, Social and cultural programme in an effective way.32

She thought that the time was ripe for India to demand Self-Government. She wanted India to claim it as a matter of right and not as reward for the help rendered to England during the War. She wanted India to be a sovereign nation within her own borders, yet remain as an integral part of the British Empire33. She argued that the need for Home Rule was felt because the British administration was indifferent to the aspiration of the Indians and such an attitude on the part of the British made the Indians demand Self-Government.

Undoubtedly, Mrs. Annie Besant emerged on the political scene of India at a time when the Raj was deeply involved in the global war and she was able to arouse the aspirations of the people towards a decision which promised them a new hope, with new political ideas and ways of life. During this time the people of India became well aware of the fact that there was no one to push forward their constitutional demands hither to put forward in the annual session of the Indian National Congress. Politics appeared to be inert and colourless and a stronger grip with a dynamic personality, who could launch an agitation with the support of the people or

In 1915, active as a Home Rule Leader
The 'New India' on her lap symbolizes the new resurgent India of her undimmed vision (1917).
could negotiate with the British bureaucracy, was the need of the hour. This is to some extent, was provided both by Tilak and Mrs. Annie Besant\textsuperscript{34}. Thus the year 1916, commenced with numerous significant development which had deep linkage with the existing politics of the time. The country, indeed, looked poorer with the untimely demise of Gopala Krishna Gokhale and Pherozshah Mehta; Bal Gangadhar Tilak as yet no place in the Congress had to wait with party. He made himself deeply involved in the Home Rule activities. The same kind of efforts was made by no less a leader than Mrs. Annie Besant.

**LAUNCHING THE HOME RULE LEAGUE**

The emergence of Mrs. Annie Besant on the political scene of India was a significant phenomenon at that point of time the country stood in need of a leader who should give a practical lead to the nation.\textsuperscript{35} There was a sudden and unexpected death of prominent leaders in India. Gandhi had just arrived in India and it took him sometime before he could introduce himself well to the Indian masses after the Lucknow session of the Indian National Congress in 1916.

The first meeting of the HRM of Mrs. Annie Besant was held in Madras on September 3, 1915 (ie) even before she starts her HRL. As many


as 500 persons enrolled as members of the league. She started her political campaign by giving a political lecture in Madurai in the year 1915.

In the initial stage, starting the Movement and assimilating the people proved a tough task for Mrs. Annie Besant. No doubt, a large and influential section of the public greatly favoured it. But Mrs. Annie Besant was keen to have her ideal accepted by the congress. She was most desirous to have her ideal propaganda work undertaken directly by the Congress or under its authority. When Mrs. Annie Besant propounded the scheme of Home Rule at a, private meeting with some leaders at Bombay in September 1915, none but Jinnah and Petit reached it with favour.

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Due to the untiring efforts of Mrs. Annie Besant and other leaders like G.S. Arundale, B.P. Wadia and Subramania Iyer, the HRM became a trend in the political arena of all the places. The Theosophical lodges did substantial work by propagating the ideas of the Movements.

The HRL opened its office on October 6, 1916, at No. 10, Esplanade, Madras. A shop for the Home Rule Literature, books, pamphlets, pictures, photograph etc was also opened in the same place.

THEOSOPHICAL LODGES AND HOME RULE MOVEMENT

During the Home Rule Movement many of the Theosophical lodges were converted into cells for the propaganda of Home Rule Movement. Mrs. Annie Besant went on tours to many places, number of times and delivered a

42. G.O.No.842, Public (Confidential), September 15, 1918.
43. New India, November 16, 1916.
number of speeches on Home Rule Movement. She frequently visited to Madurai Theosophical lodge* which she converted into HR lodge. This lodge was the first lodge to be converted into a Home Rule organization. At that time of all the provinces of India, it appears that the Theosophical Movement had taken firm root in Madras Presidency. There were 161 lodges in Madras Presidency, whereas Bombay Presidency and Calcutta Presidency had only 28 lodges each. However, Mrs. Annie Besant had a supportive base in the presidencies in the form of Theosophical lodges. What may be number of lodges in the presidencies they had definitely supported the Home Rule Movement in one way or other. Pertinent point to mention here is that the Madras Presidency was vibrant of Home Rule Campaign with its massive supportive base created by the Theosophical lodges.

Prior to the launching of Home Rule Movement by Mrs. Annie Besant, Bal Gangadhar Tilak had started the HRM at Poona in April 1916. At this time Mrs. Annie Besant felt that the price of India’s loyalty was India’s freedom. She conducted propaganda in favour of Self-Government in India. She was confident of India’s capacity for immediate Self-Government. With this strong conviction she formed the HRL on 3rd

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44. Fortnightly Reports, (Confidential) Dated April 18, 1915.
*The Madurai Theosophical lodge is located at present in the West Perumal Maistry Street, Madurai Town, Madurai-1.
45. Fortnightly Reports, February 16, 1918.
September 1916 to agitate for the cause of Indian Self Government\textsuperscript{46}. Within a year, the league had 63 branches in Tamilnadu, nearly half of these in the Madras presidency\textsuperscript{47}.

At this time, Mrs. Annie Besant also saw the advantage of coming to an agreement with Tilak. They also had two organisations the HRL of Tilak and that of her own. This was unpalatable to all people who were of moderate views. But there was a general impression that Tilak would not work with anybody peacefully unless he was the master and that it was his personal ambition that wrecked the Congress itself, leave alone his political career. It was at this time that Mrs. Annie Besant declared that the league would be an auxiliary of the congress\textsuperscript{48}. She also asserted that India should be the mistress in her own household and Home Rule was necessary for the youth, women and for the economic freedom of the country\textsuperscript{49}.

She planned to form a Home Rule League with 2 sections – India and English. Dadabhai Naoroji agreed to be the General President, William Wedderburn leaded the English Section and S. Subramaniya Iyer, the Indian section. Wedderburn favoured his idea of the league and so did other

\textsuperscript{46} Jagadish Sharan Sharma, \textit{India since the advent of the British} (ed.), New Delhi, 1970, p.170.
\textsuperscript{47} David Arnold, \textit{The Congress in Tamilnadu}, Delhi, 1977, p.22.
\textsuperscript{48} Saroja Sundararajan, \textit{op.cit}, p.99
statesman in England with whom Mrs. Annie Besant had been corresponding for\textsuperscript{50}.

This period (1914-1918), is a great significance, in the history of the national struggle for it was the first time that a woman, Mrs. Annie Besant, led the national Movement and she wrenched Indian politics out of its automatic and placid theorizing made it a living and vital issue before the country and the whole Empire.\textsuperscript{51}

This period also witnessed the birth of few major National Events (ie) Reunion of the moderates and extremists, Indian National Congress in 1916, and alliance between the Muslim League and the Congress, the out come of which was the Congress League Scheme (Lucknow pact, 1916) and above all the inauguration of The Home Rule League and the Home Rule agitation which shook the nation from the deep slumber and increased the Tempo of National life.\textsuperscript{52}

Mrs. Annie Besant firmly believed that the level of physical, emotional, intellectual and moral condition of the masses should be raised to build a national edifice. She pointed out that the duty of every Indian was to remember that no one but she alone could render much of the service that

\textsuperscript{51} Prakash Chandra, \textit{Women in Indian Freedom Struggle}, Delhi, 1985, p.111.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid, p.114.
India demanded. She never endorsed the western democracies for she felt that they were to be taken as warnings rather than as examples. She also referred that the economic condition of India which was deplorable and contended that economic independence alone would lead to Political Freedom.

**OBJECTS OF HOME RULE LEAGUE**

The motto of the HRL was loyalty and devotion to the British Empire, and death or victory in earning Home Rule for India. Mrs. Annie Besant clearly outlined the objects of the league. First to secure Self-Government for India through law abiding and constitutional activities being the best way of political evolution. Secondly to maintain connection with Great Britain by becoming a free nation with the British Empire under the Imperial Crown of his majesty the king Emperor George V and his successor. Thirdly to support and strengthen the National Congress which had been laboured for thirty years and lay the foundation of Indian Self-Government and lastly to carry on continuous educative propaganda on the necessity of Home Rule for India.

55. *New India*, November 21, 1916.
The object of the Home Rule League, its definition and aims were clearly explained to the people thus: The Home Rule had been established to carry out the following objects. To secure Home Rule for India through all law-abiding and constitutional activity: to maintain the connection with Great Britain by becoming a free nation within the British Empire, under the Imperial crown of His Majety, the King Emperor, George V and his successors; to support and strengthen the National Congress which had laboured for thirty years to lay the foundations of Indian Self-Government and to carry on a continuous educative propaganda on the necessity of Home Rule for India. In fact, Home Rule means the Government of the people and by the people\textsuperscript{58}.

Mrs. Annie Besant felt that the people of India are ignorant and that country lacked homogeneity. She thought that the HRL, its action, movements will naturally bridge their differences\textsuperscript{59}.

**MEANING**

She briefly explained the meaning and definition of the HRM to the Indians. Home Rule means the education of the people, free and compulsory for every child. The co-operation of all to ensure a happy and prosperous life for every citizen of the state. It also meant that every grown up person


\textsuperscript{59} *Modern Review*, June 1917, p.508.
shall have a share in choosing the person who shall represent him in the village panchayat. White and coloured people will be equal before the law. It also meant that Indians will manage their own affairs, but foreign and international affairs like peace and war will be managed by a council of common wealth, to which India will send her own men like the other free nations belonging to it. It also means Home Defence.

The Tamil expression “Suyatchi” means “One’s own rule,” or Self-Government. But it has been rendered as Home Rule in this translation as it is generally used by the Tamil press and as a leaflet purports to be a compilation of matter that has already appeared in newspapers⁶⁰. Mrs. Annie Besant used the words Home Rule instead of Self-Government. First it is shorter, Self – Government is four syllables and Home Rule only two. For a popular cry a short name is better than a long one⁶¹. She also explains thus: you will be men, not serfs; citizens, not dependents.

The Congress men and Mrs. Annie Besant aspired for Self-Government because they want a nation and secure a place in the comity of nations so that, all may fulfill the high destinies assigned to them in the providence of God. We aspire to Self – Government for the highest end of life, for the moral elevation and the uplifting of the character of our people.

Self-Government was enriched in the banner of HRM. Mrs. Annie Besant put three reasons for this demand.

i. Practical Reason, namely the need for legislation on certain vital points.

ii. Economic condition of the country.

iii. The historical justification for the granting of Self-Government to India.

She also insisted that if England can pass a Home Rule Bill for Ireland in the middle of the 1st World War, she also has a Home Rule Bill for India. India has a right for Home Rule if she is to be asked to fight for the Empire. Home Defence and Home Rule are one and the same. She also cried that some conditions are no doubt necessary for the advent of Home Rule (ie) India is becoming a Nation. Those who desire freedom in Ireland and in England must not neglect it in India. By her inspiring eloquence and by her brochures and pamphlets she made the country from one end to the other wing with cry of Home Rule.

She also quoted the following lines for the Home Rule of India

"India has taken a new Birth;

The Heavens above, the sea, the earth

64. New India, January 4, 1915.
Have changed for aye, the darkness dies,

Light has illumined all men's eyes,

Since Armageddon's day"65.

Supporting the sayings of Mrs. Annie Besant, Swami Vivekananda have remarked thus:

"India is no longer on her knees for boons

She is on her feet for Right."

Thus the cry of the Home Rule spread to the remotest corners of the land and HRLs were established all over the country. HRM in a way was the product of the war itself which by widening the mental horizons of Indians and by raising their new hopes, aspirations and courage made the organisation of this movement possible.

Mrs. Annie Besant said that she desired Home Rule for India because she loved India and Indians as she loved no other country. She felt that a nation is once resolute to be free, there is no power on earth, nor in Heaven, that can keep her back from freedom66. Mrs. Annie Besant further stated that India must have Home Rule for two reasons, one essential, and one vital. She inculcated this idea amongst the people that persons who desired Home Rule should pray for it every day and Noon. Infact the idea of

gaining Home Rule by efforts of united will power was suggested by her. Numbers of leaflets were printed at the Vasanta press Madras. The corners of leaflet contains:

"Thoughts are things; Thought is the heart of action,
What we think that we become,
Strong thoughts Means resolute actions"\(^{67}\).

Mrs. Annie Besant made it clear that Home Rule was the birth right of the people of India and they were not prepared to take it as a reward for the services to the British Empire and their loyalty to the British Crown. She emphatically said that, "India asked for freedom before the war, India asked for it after the war, but not as a reward, but as a right she ask for it"\(^{68}\).

The HRL which was formed in September 1916, was utilized as on instrument to undertake common work by those who believed in a constitutional agitation for the grant of Self-Government\(^{69}\).

She also contended that Home Rule was the National Religion, common to all the patriots, a duty to God, to the mother land and to the Empire\(^{70}\). S.Satyamurthy, a Contemporary of Mrs. Annie Besant pointed out in one of his lectures that the Indians always had Home Rule as their

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\(^{67}\) Saroja Sundararajan, \textit{op.cit}, p.97.
\(^{68}\) H.H.Dodwell, \textit{The Cambridge shorter History of India}, Delhi, 1919, p.746.
\(^{70}\) \textit{New India}, October 5, 1916.
ideal and Mrs. Annie Besant made it a popular reality. Supporting these views A.O. Hume had written a patriotic poem which had much impact in India.  

'Sons of Ind. Why ye sit idle  
Wait ye for some Deva's aid?  
Buckle to, be up and doing:  
Nations by themselves are made.  
What avail your wealth, your learning  
Empty titles, sordid trade?  
True Self - Rule, were worth them all:  
Nations by themselves are made.  
Sons of Ind. be up and doing  
Let your course by none be strayed  
Lo; the Dawn is in the East:  
By themselves are Nations made.  

- A.O. Hume.

Dadabhai Naoroji a prominent leader known for moderate political philosophy contended that Self-Government was the only remedy for all "Indian Wrongs and Needs".  

This movement brought to Mrs. Annie Besant immense popularity and fame and elevated her to the position of an important national leader in the country. Even her worst detractors marveled at her steadfast devotion 

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72. R.P. Masani, Dadabhai Naoroji, New Delhi, 1975, p. 139.
and struggle to achieve freedom for India. The manifesto of the HRL started its object to be “strong, steady and sustained agitation”.73

HRL’s membership was open to all men and women over 18 years of age who endorsed the objects of the league and were willing to abide by the same. School students were not admitted as members, but undergraduates were taken as associates. Gana Banu published by Subramania Siva propagated the values of the HRM.74 Mrs. Annie Besant herself went on tours to many places, number of times and delivered a number of speeches on Home Rule Movement.

The HRL members wore a badge. The badge was a silver chain having a pendent with red and green ribbon.75 The chain stood for a union of prayer for undying love of liberty and willingness to make sacrifice for its sake. The members were pledged by vow to carry on any two of the following specific forms of activities.76

Such as a monthly subscription of 4 annas (ie) in 1916, spreading the vow of Swedeshi, giving of weekly Home Rule lectures, securing of atleast one member for a week, inducing of House holders to fly Home Rule Flags, composition of and popularization of National Flags and the organization of

processions on National Days. It was Mrs. Annie Besant who with earnest efforts wrote the poem regarding the Freedom Movement through the HRL and made it published in a pamphlet.\textsuperscript{77}

"Keep the Flag of Freedom Flying
Through the troubled Night.
Round the crimson banner Rally,
Children of the light.

Boldly follow where she beckons,
Bravely play your part;
Goddess of your worship is she,
Monarch of your heart.

Keep the Flag of Freedom Flying
To your latest breath
If you cannot win Her living,
Conquer her by Death.

By Mrs. Besant.

Impressed by her efforts many people joined the HRL. It has been pointed out that even Jawaharlal Nehru joined it.\textsuperscript{78} The Home Rule campaign which had been approved by the congress and the Muslim League

\textsuperscript{77} Besant Spirit Series, Vol. III, p.4.
\textsuperscript{78} B.R. Nanda, Indian Woman, New Delhi, 1970, p.6.
had a vigorous effect under the leadership of Mrs. Annie Besant. The arguments which she employed in pleading her cause were published in her paper New India. She also wanted to captivate the mass for her arguments, including the college students. In order to kindle the students, she used the following pamphlets as a means of propaganda.

1. India a Nation
2. India and the Empire
3. Self – Government for India
4. The Political Outlook
5. Separation of Judicial and Executive Functions
6. The Future of Young India
7. East and West in India
8. The Indian Council
9. Under the Congress Flag
10. Home Rule (a series of articles from New India)

Mrs. Annie Besant once remarked that she was old but she believed that she shall see India with Home Rule before her death. She visited many parts of India to give propaganda about the HRM and those were referred to in police reports as “Triumphant Tours.” Mrs. Annie Besant at this time

80. Home Department, (Political) File No.50, September 1917.
was only supported by Subramaniya Aiyer, and he himself boldly declared the British Government as illegal and was prepared to suffer any punishment that would be meted out to him for that offence. B.C.Pal, the Bengal Radical took an active part in the HRM.82

Mrs. Annie Besant reacting to the response from the public to her HRM, wrote in New India that the time is ripe for Home Rule and the Future alone could judge the Home Rule Members.83 She wanted the members to continue their efforts with determination and confidence, unmindful of the difficulties that may beset their path.84 She also insisted that the leaguers should circulate Home Rule pamphlets and place them in local clubs, associations and reading rooms. She further stated that lectures in the vernacular should be delivered showing why India demands Home Rule and how she would be benefited. Every member was also forced to study Mrs. Annie Besant’s Book “How India Wrought for Freedom”, her papers ‘New India’ and the ‘Commonweal’ for acquiring further knowledge on Home Rule.85 Her extensive propaganda tour and her meetings all over the country highlighted the efficacy of the movement.86 The Theosophical lodges served

82. Annie Besant, Home Rule and the Empire, p.60.
84. Swadesamitran, June 6, 1917, MNNPR, p.1700.
85. New India, November 16, 1916.
86. Fortnightly Report (Confidential), August 17, 1917.
as the centre of agitation for Home Rule and in many places thereby giving impression that the Theosophists and Home Rulers are one and the same.87

Dadabai Naoroji reported to have said, “We do not ask any favours, we want only justice”. The whole matter can be comprised in one word, “Self – Government or “Swaraj” like that of the “United Kingdom” or the “Colonies”. For India there can be no national greatness, strength and hope except by the right political principles of the Self–Government.88 Rabindranath Tagore had also sympathised with the HRM.89

GOVERNMENT’S REACTION

In order to stem the tide of the HRM, the Government of Madras debarred the Government pleaders and public servants from taking part in Political Movements.90 Action was taken against Mrs. Annie Besant’s writings in New India under the Press Act of 1910, under subsection (1) of section 3 of the Press Act of 1910,* she was required to deposit security to such an amount not exceeding Rs.2000/- as the magistrate may think of fit to require.91 She was called upon to deposit a security of Rs.2000/- within 14

87. *Fortnightly Report (Confidential), September 17, 1917.
88. *Indian Review, December 1921, p.738,
90. *G.O.No.2536, (Judicial Department), December 4, 1917.
91. *Home Rule File No.6 (Judicial Department), October 8, 1915 Annexure No.4496, p.78.

* Press Act of 1910: This Act declared that the local government can demand at the time of registration a security of not less than Rs.500/- and not more than Rs.2000/- from the keeper of a printing press or publisher of a newspaper.
days. She paid the same in person. But strong protests were made by her supporters all over the country. There were meetings condemning the Madras Government and fund raising campaigns began in Besant’s favour all over India. In the midst of all these troubles, she continued the efforts with redoubled vigour. S.Subramaniya Aiyer, a person of great legal and a prominent Home Rulers, characterised the application of the press Act to New India as a deliberative act to stifle the voice of the HRM. The Government’s Act created an impression on the public mind that it was to undermine the influence of an English Woman of magnetic personality and generous instincts, who by her HRM had given a powerful stimulus to the cause of Swaraj for India.92

The leading newspapers of Madras published innumerable letters condemning the Government’s action. The various prohibitory orders only serve to increase the circulation of “New India” which was replete with spicy news. Editors of five Madras Newspapers* who were members of the Madras Branch of the Press Association moved the Secretary of the Press Association of India, Bombay to take necessary steps in this matter.93

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1. Kasturi Ranga Iyyengar - THE HINDU
2. C.Karunakara Menon - THE INDIAN PATRIOT

92. Saroja Sundararajan, op.cit.,p.103.  
On August 25, 1916, an exasperated Madras Government declared the security deposited by Mrs. Annie Besant in her capacity as “Keeper of New India” printing works forfeited and ordered the deposit of a fresh security of Rs.10,000/- with the District Magistrate of Chingleput. The highhanded action of the Madras Government was vehemently criticized all over India both in the public and in the press. Madan Mohan Malaviya, Sapru, Sinha and others spoke indignantly against the forfeiture of the first security and the imposition of a fresh one on Mrs. Annie Besant. Anyway she was managed to pay the second security of Rs.10,000/- under protest on September 1916, by collecting funds from members and sympathisers in India.94 Then on February 6, 1917, Mrs. Annie Besant filed a petition in the High Court of Madras challenging the order of the Madras Government in declaring her previous deposit forfeited. The Government moved the advocate general S.Srinivasa Iyengar to convince the court that its action was based entirely on the persistent hostile campaign against the British Government through the Press and not against her free discussions of political problems like the grant of Home Rule for India.95

95. Selection from Confidential Government records, TSA, Madras.
In Response to Mrs. Annie Besant’s application for appeal, a Special Bench of the High Court was constituted to hear her petition on March 16, 1917. The Bench adjudged that there was no provision in the Press Act itself which would empower them to quash the Government order. Mrs. Annie Besant’s petition of permission to appeal to the Privy Council was dismissed. But the HRM was the least affected by any of the restraints. On the other hand, it was gaining its intensity, with the prominent citizens of Madras like V.S.Srinivasa Satree, T.V.Seshagiri Iyer and G.A.Natesan throwing in their lot with Besant. Institutions like the Young Men’s Indian Association, the Ramakrishna Mission and the Madras Mahajana Sabha also supported her.

The students were also enthused and their aid and sympathy enlisted. A.Rangasamy Iyengar Editor of Swadesamitran and nephew of Kasturi Ranga Iyengar translated into Tamil Besant’s “How India Wrought for Freedom”. The HRM captured the imagination of the younger generation which had come under Besant’s powerful spell. HR Meetings condemned the actions of the Britishers and they stood as one to secure for India liberation from the “BRITISH YOKE”, organised “HOME RULE” classes and formed “Boy Scouts” and volunteers troops for them. Since all great national movements in India were rooted in religion, argued Mrs.Annie

96. Ibid.,
97. Saroja Sundararajan op.cit.,p.110.
Besant that the Indian HRM could not be an exception to this Rule. In fine, Mrs. Annie Besant easily succeeded in her effort to seek for Home Rule an emotional youth support.

Mrs. Annie Besant’s action in paying the security was generally endorsed as the total disappearance of New India would have been a grave loss to the journalistic world and to Indian public life.

**HOME RULE PRAYER**

The HRL also had Home Rule prayer which was started by Mrs. Annie Besant.

Who pants and struggles to be free,
Who strives for other's liberty,
Who, failing, still works patiently.

He truly prays
Who, loving all, dare non despise,
But with the worst can sympathize,
Who for a truth a martyr dies.

He truly prays
Who, when a truth to him is known,

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98. G.O No.744 Public (Confidential) June 7, 1917, & Fortnightly Reports (Confidential) June 18, & July 25, 1917.
100. *Speeches and writings of Mrs. Besant*, p.1.
Embraces it through smile or frown,
Who dare to hold it, though alone.

He truly prays
In musing strength must come to dare,
Petitions are but empty air,
Brave action is the only prayer,
Thus learn to pray.

by – Mrs. Besant.

She enlisted on the people to pray to the Lord to open the eye of Mercy on the people of India, to free them from the servitude. She wanted the members of the HRL to follow the rules and regulations without any denotation. The HRL branches were those who strove hard to spread the message of the HRM.101 She also insisted the people “to wear the Home Rule colour Red and Green on all occasions and to be proud of them.”

The HRL celebrated the Home Rule Festival with great enthusiasm on June 16, 1917.102 The British Government did not like the attitude of the leaders and they began to warn them.

101. New India, October 11, 1917, p.3.
INTERNMENT OF MRS. BESANT

Lord Pentland (1916 – 191) the Governor of Madras had said that if the Home Rule leaders persisted in demanding only Home Rule, and nothing but Home Rule, a situation with dangerous possibilities might develop. Responsibility for such a situation would be entirely theirs. He made it clear that they should not entertain and encourage false hopes. Lord Pentland said openly that Mrs. Besant must cease all her Home Rule activity and even offered her facilities for leaving for England and staying there as long as the war lasted. When the warning of Lord Pentland and his request went unheard by the Home Rule Leaders, the internment order was passed on June 7, 1917.103 But with this order, the HRM grew popular. Mrs. Annie Besant and her colleagues in the political and journalistic world G.S.Arundale and B.P.Wadia were interned by the Governor Lord Pentland in exercise of section 3 of defence of India Rules 1915.104 The order said that there was reasonable ground for believing that Mrs. Annie Besant and her colleagues had acted and is about them to act in a manner prejudicial to the public safety. The orders also forbade them to make speeches, attend meetings and publish or procure the publication of any writing or speech composed by them but to remain in confined to the hills of Ootacamund, was the area the internees chose out of the six suggested by the

All the three were authorised to live together in the same place of internment, under police control and censorship. Later the Government though wanted to intern them in three different places, they could not implement it. Lord Pentland prosecuted not only Mrs. Besant and her close associates but also her staff and their relatives.

It was at this stage Jinnah joined the Movement. Mrs. Annie Besant on hearing the order stated “To surrender liberty and (lose) touch with those I love is to me worse than death. But to live free and with them, a coward and dishonoured, a traitor to Dharma and to India, would be hell”. Hence on June 16, 1917, (ie) the day Besant was silenced and interned for doing the educative propaganda about the Congress League Scheme. Many protest meetings were held against the orders of internment in the districts like Madras, Cangeevaram, North Arcot, Bellary, South Camara, Anantapur, Coimbatore, Godavari and Karnool. The people thought of starting passive resistance to press their demand. The internment order was instrumental in strengthening the freedom movement not only in India but abroad.


* the Nilgiris, Coimbatore, Bellary, the Palani Hills, the Shervoroy Hills and Vizahapatanam.

106. New India, June 13, 1917.


All India Congress Committee and the council of the Muslim League held sessions on July 28, 1917 and passed all resolutions condemning the attitude of the Government. Subramanya Aiyer, a former High Court Judge challenged Lord Pentland to proceed against him and hundreds like him who demanded Home Rule. The followers of Subramanya Aiyer were prosecuted for demanding Home Rule. President Wilson of America to whom a stirring letter was addressed by Sir. Subramanya Aiyer indicated to the British Government, his sympathy with the Indian Movement.

Mrs. Annie Besant who anticipated these internment orders, had made all the necessary arrangements for carrying her work in her absence. K.T. Telang took over “New India” and Ranga Raddi assumed charge of the “Commonweal”. K.T. Telang made it clear that he would maintain the policy of ‘New India’ unchanged.

Mrs. Annie Besant though she was interned, addressed an open letter to the people asking them to keep the Home Rule Flag flying under any circumstances. She also wrote that she goes into enforced silence and imprisonment because she loves India. She also insisted that she still believe that she shall win India Home Rule before she dies. But at that time England under the eyes of Europe and America, dramatically releases the

110. Saroja Sundararajan, op. cit., p.110.
Irish prisoners, many of them who were held for armed rebellion on the very same day (June 16, 1917) History will note the contrast between profession and practice.

It was at this time Lord Pentland wrote all his doings to Austin Chamberlain, Secretary of State for India, by starting that Mrs. Annie Besant and her colleagues had been engaged in a dangerous political agitation which might become disastrous to India. The Secretary of State Chamberlain, a conservative nerveless politician stated that though he was not consulted about the internment, he approved the action of the Madras Government. He also replied in the House of Commons, that the doings of Mrs. Annie Besant was not merely mischievous, but was carried on “improper methods.”

Mr. Chamberlain further grossly misrepresented Mrs. Annie Besant by misreading a telegram of the Government of India. The Government of Madras in its order of July 3, 1917, informed the three internees of its decision to relax the orders issued against them by permitting the publication of purely Theosophical or religious writings or speeches. Whereas Mrs. Annie Besant wrote that “The T.S. has in this struggle allied itself in “ENTENTE CORDIAL” with the National Congress, the Muslim League and the HRL in one solid body, united in resistance to autocracy and in

111. Public Department, G.O.No.917, October 5, 1918.
defence of the liberty of the people. But Chamberlain misinformed the
House of Commons that Mrs. Annie Besant had sent a violently worded
reply to the Madras Government refusing its offer to permit her to carry on
her Theosophical work on condition that she abstained from political
agitation. But Mrs. Annie Besant immediately wired the Prime Minister
charging Chamberlain with making false statements and demanding
immediate publication of her letter unmutilated in the interests of Justice.112

This very last act of Chamberlain as Secretary of State for India
justified the tradition of “Know Nothingness” which had been built round
him.113 Hence Mrs. Annie Besant’s internment became the talk of all
freedom loving people. Angry meetings were organised all over India
against this “unconstitutional act of aggression upon Indian constitutional
agitation as typified on Mrs. Annie Besant”. Bomanji, a well known Parse
Contractor of Bombay and life member of the HRL donated Rs.1,00,000/- to
enable the league to resist the attacks on the aims and objects of the league.

Hence the arrest of Mrs. Annie Besant instead of retarding the HRM
led to its intensification. To disseminate the ideals of the movement, Home
Rule stamps were sold at one pie each. The stamp had the portrait of
Mrs. Annie Besant encircled by a scroll “For God, Crown and Country,
interned on June 16, 1917.” The word country appeared in large letters

113. Amrita Bazaar Patrika, July 18, 1917.
above her head. On the three sides of the stamp, the words Home Rule appeared in nearly five languages. The nationalist press also rose to the occasion and castigated the action of the Government. It also appealed to the masses to observe the following:

1. To Join the HRL
2. Sacrifice for the cause of the Country
3. Encourage National Schools
4. Use only Swedeshi articles
5. Use soul force in all acts
6. Strengthen the National Spirit
7. Remove all differences in Society
8. Raise the depressed classes.
9. Let women also take the vow to do good to the Country.
10. Honour the Mother Tongue.
11. Follow the leader (ie) Mrs. Annie Besant with obedience
12. Chant the Swaraj Hymn.

A National fund was instituted by S. Subramaniya Aiyer in aid of Mrs. Annie Besants’ HRL and contributions poured in. As an expression of sympathy subscriptions were collected. A Public Meeting was held in

Madras on August 9, 1917, to chalk out a programme of the HRL in the absence of Mrs. Annie Besant and also they welcome three* recruits from Bombay.117

The supporters of Mrs. Besant observed August 16, 1917 as “Internment Day” in Madras as well as in all the districts. Women were also mobilized to the Home Rule Agitation – The Government of Madras directed the District Magistrates to discourage holding of public meetings by Home Rulers. In ERODE action was initiated against S.S.Venkataramana Aiyer, a Vakil and the President of the HRL for hoisting the Home Rule Flag at this time. It did arose the spirit of the propagandists of the Movement.

Gandhiji paid the highest tribute to Mrs. Annie Besant when he said that she had brought the Home Rule within the consciousness of every Indian village, let alone towns and cities within a short time. On July 7, he addressed a letter to the Viceroy stating that the “internment” is a big blunder.... to withdraw the orders of internment and to declare that the country has the right to carry on any propaganda that is not subversive of the British Constitution and is totally free from violence. Gandhiji’s plan was that if his solemn advice went unheeded and Mrs. Annie Besant and

117. Fortnightly Report, (Confidential), November 2, 1917.

* K.R.Deobanker, B.Shiva Rao and Mrs.Sivakami Ammal, A student of the Bombay Medical College.
Company were not set at liberty before 31st July, passive resistance should begin. He took violent actions and speeches in such a way that it gave the appearance as if the whole of India was on the brink of a revolution.\textsuperscript{118}

Even Jinnah, worked hard for Mrs. Annie Besant’s release. He was also accompanied by the Rajah of Mahmudabad. It is palapably evident that Jinnah and the Raja of Mahmudabad were anxious to have the monopoly of credit in the release of Mrs. Annie Besant. Mrs. Annie Besant at this time (September 7, 1917) lodged a petition to the King in Council questioning the validity of the Defence of India Act. When her petition was referred to Montagu, he dismissed her contention about the Jurisdiction of the High Court of Madras, she could apply to Privy Council.\textsuperscript{119} The public was agitating over the poor health of Mrs. Annie Besant she was seventy then and her health was adversely affected by the climate of Ootacamund and by the interruption of her usual habits of life. G.S. Arundale who was much perturbed about her failing health said that for Mrs. Annie Besant internment was an illness threatening her very life. During her internment personalities like C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyar and Pattabi Sitaramaya frequently visited her for instructions and inspirations. Erelong, she got a flag bearing the Home Rule colours erected at “Gulistan” (the College built by Col. Olcott) at

\textsuperscript{118} The Madras Mail, July 8, 1917.
\textsuperscript{119} Home Rule File (Political) December 1917, No. 334.
Ootacamund. This was followed by the formation of a local branch of the HRL at Ootacamund.\textsuperscript{120} 

With her health failing miserably on the hills, she selected her residence be shifted to Coimbatore. Very soon, she made the entire district of Coimbatore, a special centre of special Home Rule activity. The Home Rule Flag was hoisted on her residence soon after her arrival.\textsuperscript{121} But that was pulled down by the orders of District Magistrates, and thus aggravated the public resentment against the Government.

As the Madras Government could not cope with the masses, Lord Pentland urged the Viceroy to consider the immediate deportation of Mrs. Annie Besant to England. He also ascertained that, no doubt this will cause some public clamour but it would be short lived, he contended.\textsuperscript{122}

Special mention deserves to be made of the crucial role of S. Subramania Ayer who gave up his knighthood as a protest against the internment. He devised a novel plan to whip up public interest in America towards the Indian situation. He took the extreme step of sending a letter to President Woodrow Wilson of U.S.A requesting him to intervene and persuade the British Government to grant Home Rule for India. His stirring letter did contribute to the discontent in America with British Statesmanship.

\textsuperscript{120} Secret File No. 3 on Home Rule p.2. 
\textsuperscript{121} Fortnightly Report, (Confidential), August 17, 1917. 
\textsuperscript{122} Fortnightly Report, (Confidential), September 3, 1917.
as was evident from Wilson's sympathy with the Indian Nationalist Movement. The Government of Madras ordered the release of Mrs. Annie Besant and others on September 7, 1917.

The three internees were of course released on September 17, at 11 A.M. The Government of Madras on the recommendation of the Government of India cancelled the restrictions imposed on Mrs. Annie Besant and her colleagues. Mrs. Annie Besant was given an ostentatious welcome on her arrival with her co-workers at the Madras Central Station on September 21, three months after leaving it. THE HINDU writes that it was a spontaneous and whole hearted welcome given to the venerable lady who has given of her best of the national cause by the leaders as well as the masses of the people. The magnificent reception was one which kings might will envy and it shows the political consciousness of the people and their deep sense of gratitude which is bred of National service rendered to them.

When Mrs. Annie Besant arrived in Madras on September 20th, her journey from the Railway Station to the Theosophical Headquarters in Adyar was made in a four wheeled landau drawn by a pair of white horses. A silk canopy obtained from one of the temples was held over Mrs. Annie

125. *Home Rule File (6) Political.*
Besant by two students wearing Home Rule badges. The procession was proceeded by a number of bhajana parties shouting hymn and in the rear followed a large train of carriages. . . . . At some of the bazaars on route, coconuts were broken in honour of Mrs. Annie Besant, the kernel being distributed among the poor. Near Mylapore, Subramanya Ayer joined the procession, which on reaching the temple square was met by a large group of people, singing Vedic hymns.127

Wherever she went, she was lifted high above the chanting crowds, garlanded and adored. It seemed that she had the National Movement at her heart. Her popularity swept her into the Presidentship of the National Congress Session scheduled for Calcutta in December 1917. This was the apogee of her orbit in Indian space. Messages conveying their gratitude for ordering the release of the "TRIO" were sent by many organisations to the Secretary of State. According to the European Community as well as the loyalists, the release by the Imperial Government, of a woman who assailed the British in India as a whole, smirched the reputation of the entire British population in India, and the manner in which she released was announced and carried out was most hurtful to the prestige of the Governor and his colleagues who were directly responsible for the maintenance of peace in the presidency.128

127. The Madras Mail, September 21, 1917.  
128. The Madras Mail, September 19, 1917.
Though after the releasing order, Lord Pentland continued to be hostile towards Mrs. Annie Besant. But Montague was enormously enamoured of Mrs. Annie Besant, her appearance, her way of dress, her department and above all her "Silvery Quite Voice".\textsuperscript{129}

With all the furs and furore over her unconditional release Mrs. Annie Besant emerged out of the place of internment as a "Veritable National Hero". And the climax of her triumph came hardly after three months after her internment. The HRM petered out after Montagu's announcement on August 1917, since he made his historic declaration promising Self-Government in stages.\textsuperscript{130} Then Mrs. Annie Besant was elected to the presidency of the India National Congress that met at Calcutta in December 1917. That was the finest hour of her life when she "Thundered from her presidential chair that India shall soon be seen, proud and self-reliant, strong and free, the radiant splendour of Asia, the light blessings of the world. The President of the Congress for 1918 seemed destined to bosom out into a "Tribune of the people for all time".\textsuperscript{131} G.S. Arundale had resigned the Organsing Secretariatship of the HRL and the Hon'ble K.V.Rangaswami Ayyengar has been appointed in his place.\textsuperscript{132}

\textsuperscript{129} New India, September 10, 1917.
\textsuperscript{130} Besant File, Enclosure No.3598 W-1, September 18, 1917.
\textsuperscript{131} The Hindu, March 17, 1919.
\textsuperscript{132} Police Commission Reports, June 14, 1917.
Thus by analyzing Mrs. Annie Besant’s role in Freedom Movement, one can assess the fact that she gave a new dimension to the freedom struggle. Her work in the political field was directed to our becoming a truly free people, managing our own affairs in our own way and utilizing our own resources for our own well being, unhampered and undisturbed by others. She formulated a coherency to the movement and succeeded to a great extent in her endeavour. Of course, though British Government interned her and her colleagues, it had only tremendous impact on the political atmosphere and not detonation. Because of her earnest efforts and timely intervention into the freedom movement, resulted in the Declaration of Lord Montagu on August 30, 1917, which asserted that the goal of the Britishers was the establishment of responsible Government in India. Finding the movement producing fruitful results, the cry of Home Rule became more effective in 1917.

IMPORTANCE OF HOME RULE MOVEMENT

If we go for a deep study of Mrs. Annie Besant’s activities, her writings and her speeches, it would reveal the fact that her perception of Indian problems and her solutions are identical with that of Gandhi and other freedom fighters. The entrance of Mrs. Annie Besant in the political arena of Indian Freedom Movement opened a new era. Of course, she captivated and articulated the idea of HRM. Many provinces in the Madras Presidency
came under the cry of her HRM. She restored unity in the ranks and files of the Indian National Congress. She becomes a red rag to the British Bull.133 As a result of her ceaseless efforts, a strong public opinion was generated which in turn led to political mobilisation. She influenced students, advocates, workers, government servants and also endeavoured to weld together the Hindus and Muslims. Thus it is no exaggeration to call Mrs. Annie Besant as the fore runner of Gandhi.

Mrs. Annie Besant enriched the national life in countless ways. She totally identified herself with Indian self-rule and established the HRL. It is generally believed that it was after Gandhiji that Congress had changed in to people’s movement from being a mere elitist platform. But the change had in fact started with Mrs. Annie Besant. Gandhiji himself said “Mrs. Annie Besant’s Brilliant Home Rule agitation had certainly touched the peasant.”134 Of course she being elected as the President of the Indian National Congress made her appearance as a National Idol. It was she who drafted the importance of democratic principles an independent judiciary and the establishment and the proper functioning of local self governing bodies. It was she who made even many Englishmen to desire Home Rule for

133. Besant File, No.3598 W-1, September 18, 1917.
134. M.K.Gandhi, Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule, Ahamedabad, 1938, p.23.
India. 135 Gandhi have also stated that congress have the foretaste of Home Rule. 136

Not wanting to become a politician, she organised the HRM and was elected as the president of the Indian National Congress, inspiring Indians with a dynamic vision of India's future. Her deep and prophetic insight advised Indian activities to stand by the constitutional method for effecting political reforms, openly challenging the policies of Mahatma Gandhi, although having for him a profound regard. 137

These years are of far greater importance in the History of Women's Movement. It was due to the lead given by Mrs. Annie Besant that an organised movement for the emancipation of women and to put forward the demand for political rights for women came to be established. Her leadership gave strength and encouragement. HRM of Mrs. Annie Besant had inspired the women of the land to participate in the national life of the country. Mrs. Annie Besant had made women to join the national movement in increased numbers.

Mrs. Annie Besant prepared the ground for the Gandhian Freedom Movement in which women have played a prominent part. Mrs. Annie

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135. Ibid.
137. The Theosophist, p.11.
Besant appeared in the political vacuum of India's critical scene and gave a new orientation to the Freedom Struggle in India.

The political consciousness reached its zenith with the rise of the HRM. The post World War I period may be rightly called the formative epoch of Indian Nationalism, for during this period, the people organised themselves to voice forth their grievances against the policies of the British administration, the base for which was formed by Mrs. Annie Besant.

The climax of Mrs. Annie Besant's political career begins in 1917. Mrs. Annie Besant soon lost her popularity in the political sphere. In the Congress sphere of activities she lost her ground because of the lack of the knowledge of speaking Hindustani. During her political campaign in North India she used to spoke in English and it appears that the audience became weary of Mrs. Annie Besant not because that they were indifferent or disrespectful to her but because they could not follow her speech, interesting and able though it was. Barring the Madras presidency, everywhere else the majority of the delegates of National Congress had always been able to understand more Hindi than English. However the powerful opposition to Mrs. Annie Besant was the nascent Non-Brahmin Movement.

138 S.Z. Niazudeen, op.cit., p.44.
GROWTH OF NON-BRAHMIN MOVEMENT AND OPPOSITION
TO MRS. ANNIE BESANT

The growth of Non-Brahmin Movement was a most important political scenario of the First World War period. Her many of critics particularly those in the Justice Party in Madras Presidency and Anglo-Indian hack writers of the Madras Main and Statesman of Calcutta had made insulting remarks about her during this period. The political approach of Mrs. Annie Besant and Non-Brahmin Movement was different. The growth of Non-Brahmin Movement in Madras Presidency had a say in the political debacle of Mrs. Annie Besant.

In Indian History, the term Renaissance is used to denote the intellectual reawakening and development of the people and the consequent changes in their political, social, religious and economic outlook which occurred in the 19th century mainly as a result of British Rule.\footnote{K. Nambi Arooran, *Tamil Renaissance and Dravidian Nationalism 1905 – 1944*, Madurai, 1980, p.7} The progress of the spread of modern knowledge, scientific and liberal ideas, introduction of the Rule of Law, an intellectual awakening, religious reformation, an awareness of the need to obtain social justice and an urge to enjoy equal human rights was realized. To uphold social justice through independence and freedom to various sections of the people in political,
administrative and educational spheres many steps and measures were the need of the hour.

The Theosophical Society had a great role in religious, social, economic and political awakening of Indians along with other organisations. The result of this was marked by a growing interest of Indians towards politics in the beginning of the 20th century. All the people irrespective of caste, creed and religion began to realize their plight under alien rule. They also found that socio-religious and cultural inequalities have been existing. People understand that a particular group of people had attained primacy in intellectual pursuits and that enabled them to get easily an unduly privileged position in socio-economic and political spheres and in keeping the other groups backward and suppressed.140

In Madras Presidency the Brahmins constituted only 3% of the population but they monopolised the whole of educational, political and administrative opportunities and the status of other communities was that of backwardness. So as a result of this disparity the communal bitterness became inevitable. The reason for getting at this knowledge was the idea given by a council member of the Madras Governor’s Executive Council in 1913. He was none other than Sir Alexander Cardew. He gave his evidence


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before the Public Service Commission in 1913, in a detailed manner, the relative position of the Brahmins and Non-Brahmins.¹⁴¹

Sir. Alexander Cardew was not the champion of the Non-Brahmin interest. But it was he who gave a detailed report to show how the Brahmins of the districts had come to occupy more than 90% of positions in public services in different fields. Thus both educational advance and a consciousness of this advance were essential ingredients in the growth of Non-Brahmin political awareness.¹⁴²

The educated Non-Brahmins began to question the inferior position assigned to the Dravidian Civilization in history. Most of the Non-Brahmins who hailed from the land owning and merchant castes began to aspire to political power and official influence commensurate with their wealth and status in society.¹⁴³ The Non-Brahmin Hindus had lost their ground over the years 1896-1912, while the Brahmins had considerably improved their position. The Brahmins were very vociferous in condemning the move to render justice to all communities, as they were aware of the fact that once justice is conceded it will lead to the serious loss of their monopoly in the long run. If the Brahmins had justly agreed to co-operate with the British in establishing communal justice, there would not have been any other

¹⁴³ K. Nambi Arooran, *op.cit.*, p.36.
movement in the country. The unyielding and uncompromising attitude of
the Brahmins in rendering justice to other communities had resulted in
launching a strong organization to champion the cause of the majority
people, the native Dravidians.144

For the purpose of voicing their grievances collectively a group of
Non-Brahmins started an association called The Madras United League in
Madras city in 1912.145 This league was primarily meant for the government
employees and the members were mostly from the Revenue Board office
and the Public Works Department. However other interested Non-Brahmins
were also allowed to join the league and the Secretary C. Natesa Mudaliar,
himself was a private doctor, and it was during his period, the membership
of the league rose to three hundred.146

At the first anniversary of the Madras United League, a resolution
was introduced to change the name of the league on the ground that it was
not indicative of the constituents of the organization or its objectives.
Though few suggested that it could be called as Non-Brahmin Association,
finally it was called by the name “Dravidian Association”. Then the Madras
United League was changed into the Madras Dravidian Association.

145. P. Rangaswami Naidu, The Origin of the Justice party, Justice party Golden Jubilee
Souvenir, Madras, 1968, p.257
146. Ibid., p.258.
This association held regular meetings which provided an opportunity for many Non-Brahmins to meet and discuss their problems. Literary meetings were also arranged under its auspices. It brought the young graduates of the community in one platform and introduced them to the elite of the Non-Brahmins and such occasions were said to have ‘infused the spirit of healthy revolt against the Brahmins and the spirit of self respect in them.\textsuperscript{147}

At this time there emerged three types of caste groups, the first being Brahmins topping the list, the second a large number of Dravidian Castes (Non-Brahmin Castes) while the third one yet another large number of untouchables who were termed as depressed classes. In all these 3 broad steps of the social ladder, there were a number of castes and sub-castes. Politically, educationally and from the points of view of public services, one group of people were by far better than the other two groups. The nucleus of the birth of the Justice party rests in the above fact. The Nayars of Malabar, the Kammas and Reddis of Andhra and the Pillais and Mudaliars of all the districts began to realize the sorry plight of the majority group in the field of education and public services. From among many people emerged new elite of highly educated and politically articulate leaders. The most outstanding were P.Theagaraya Chetti, a flourishing industrialist and T.M.Nair, a popular physician both belonging to Madras city. It was mainly due to the

\textsuperscript{147} K.M. Balasubramaniam, \textit{South Indian Celebrities}, Madras, 1934, p.49
ceaseless toil of these leaders that the Dravidian (Non – Brahmin) movement took roots in the Presidency.

The Non-Brahmin leaders claimed that their movement was organised as a vindication of self respect. The important feature was that the various castes should have equal opportunity to share the responsibilities. Since this was not the condition prevailing in India at that time, this movement was a necessary step taken. The object of this movement was that it was not a negative one; it bears no antagonism to any group or unit in India it is a movement for self-expression.148 So when a conference was held on November 20, 1916, they resolved to form the South Indian people’s Association (SIPA) it was a joint stock company with the sole aim of improving the lot of the Dravidians in the presidency. It gave birth to the South Indian liberal federation which turned into the Justice Party. P.Theagaraya Chetti was unanimously elected as its secretary.149 Endowed with a capital of one lakh rupees, the Federation purchased a printing press and released on February 26, 1917, a first issue of the official newspaper, “JUSTICE’, edited by T.M. Nair. It was soon followed by a Tamil daily “DRAVIDAN” edited by N. Bhaktavatsalam Pillai and later by a Telegu daily “ANDHRA PRAKASINI” edited by A.C. Parthasarathi Naidu. These

148. Ibid., p.63
149. C.S. Srinivasachari, History of the city of Madras, Madras, 1939, p.16
papers were to voice the grievances of the Non-Brahmins.\textsuperscript{150} These papers aimed at improving the conditions of the majority of Dravidians in the presidency both in the fields of Education and Public Services.\textsuperscript{151}

On December 19, 1916, a Non-Brahmana Manifesto' was issued under the signature of P. Theagaraya Chetti, Surveying the condition of the Non-Brahmin Community and pointing out the directions for advancement. This manifesto which may be treated as the ‘Magna-Ca\textsuperscript{152} It stated that though the Non-Brahmins Comprised the bulk of tax payers, land holders, zamindars and agriculturists, they remained practically without any political influence. Public bodies and Public services were monopolised by certain group of people (Brahmins) who had been using official position and political influence to their own advantage. The manifesto voiced alarm at the growing Home Rule Agitation, which they considered a movement launched by upper circles in the society. Though Constitutional change was deprecated the manifesto favoured “progressive political development of a well defined policy of trust in the people, qualified by prudence and of timely and liberal concessions in the wake of proud fitness”. “We are”, the manifesto proclaimed, “deeply devoted and loyally attached to British

\textsuperscript{150} S. Gopalakrishnan, \textit{op.cit.}, p.64
\textsuperscript{151} G.T. Boag, \textit{The Madras Presidency (1881 – 1931)}, p.3
\textsuperscript{152} S. Gopalakrishnan, \textit{op.cit.}, p.64
In course of time more prominent people joined the party and strengthened the same. Some of them were R.K. Shanmugam Chetti, Mohammed Usman, Panneer Selvam, Patro, Muthiah Mudaliar, P.T. Rajan, Muthiah Chettiar and E.V. Ramasamy Naicker. The landed aristocrats of the Madras presidency like the Rajas of Bobbili, Venkatagiri, Chellapalli and Ramnad also became the pillars of the Justice Party.

The newspapers and the propagation of the eminent people became the propaganda machines of the Justice Party. The very name of the party suggested that it stood for justice in the country. It viewed seriously the relative position of the Brahmins in the Presidency as quite dangerous to the proper growth of the whole community and thus decided to fight tooth and nail, the monopoly of the Brahmins in this part of the country. The political situation that prevailed on the whole country during the period was conducive for the growth of the Justice Party. As it was fortunate for the Justice Party that E.V.R. joined the party and none could deny that he became the gun of the party.

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153. Ibid., p.16.
154. S. Muthusamy Pillai, Neethi Katchivalaralu, (Tamil), nd., p.64
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The results of the Non-Brahmin Movement were quite constructive, explosive and also destructive. It was constructive in the sense it awakened the majority of Non-Brahmins to their sorry plight. Thus it made them all to come together, irrespective of caste differences among them to find out a solution for their problems. It was explosive in the sense; it began as a political force, cutting at the very root of Brahminical domination, by way of a long drawn protest. The result of such explosions is to be found even today. In that sense, it was indeed a revolution against the orthodox ideals, which paved the way for the real democracy. It was destructive in the sense; it marked the beginning of the end of the Brahminical domination in the presidency in the fields of education and public services. It destroyed the exclusive privileges enjoyed by a microscopic minority of a people in every field. In 1919 the constitutional acknowledgement of the necessity to protect the Non-Brahmin majority in Madras was the first political victory for the

156. Ibid.
Justice Party and this helped the party to contest the elections and run the diarchic government in Madras Presidency successfully.\textsuperscript{157}

However there was a fundamental difference between the approach of Mrs. Annie Besant and that of the Non-Brahmin leaders to the question of Indian freedom. To Mrs. Annie Besant Self-Government was the need of the hour and she was convinced that India was ripe for it. The Non-Brahmin leaders, on the other hand, pointed out that large sections of the people were not yet prepared to undertake political responsibility.\textsuperscript{158} She criticized severely the anti Home Rule policy pursued by the Non-Brahmin leaders. As the organsier of the HRM, she could not tolerate opposition to her movement from Indians themselves. She wrote that in the event of India being granted Home Rule, it mattered little whether Brahmins or Non-Brahmins or Muslims were most powerful, for after all, "we are children of one mother". However, astuteness and statesmanship required that she make an effort to draw atleast a couple of Non-Brahmin leaders to her side. But the result was not fruitful.

Another aspect to be noted is that Mrs. Annie Besant had a faith in the Hindu principle of Karma and as such she was also a believer in caste system though in its pure form that it should rest on duty or Karma of men.

\textsuperscript{157} K. Veeramani, \textit{op.cit.}, p.24
\textsuperscript{158} S. Gopalakrishnan, \textit{op.cit.}, p.66
But this created a doubt in the minds of Non Brahmin leaders, who outrightly opposed the caste system in its very form.

The Non-Brahmins under the head of Justice Party was suspicious of the final outcome of the Home Rule Movement. To them the Home Rule Movement would further the cause of the Brahmins who were already advanced and were represented in services. To the leaders of the Non-Brahmin movement the Congress and the Theosophical circles were dominated by the Brahmins.

Again in the Congress sphere of activities she did not support the Non-Cooperation stand taken by it. She always aimed in Co-operating with the Government and in 1919 she resigned from the Congress even before the launching of Non-Co-operation Movement. So some of the Congress leaders consider her principles as Eurocentric because she stood for dominion status, which the Indian leadership opposed.

Though she resigned from the Congress the period of Mrs. Annie Besant in the sphere of politics that began in 1914 saw the beginning of new nationalism and set the pattern for final struggle. The selfless patriotism, indomitable courage and fierce determination of Annie Besant had opened a new chapter in the history of Freedom Movement in India. Mrs. Annie Besant brought new ideas, new talented, new resources, an altogether new
method of organization and new outlook in the field of Congress. She was already a great world character and had millions of follower in the east and west, in new hemisphere as well as the old. No wonder then that, with this mighty following and with her inexhaustible energy she gave a new life to the Indian politics.