CHAPTER - VI

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The growth of primary education in the city of Madras obviously produced an intelligible and indelible impact upon the progress of literacy in the city. Before attempting to trace the literacy rate, it is indeed essential to identify the term ‘literacy’ in the light of the context in which it is used in the present study. The parameter which can be employed to calculate the spread of literacy is indeed very difficult to specify. The literacy rate can be perceived either in terms of attendance in primary schools or in the data furnished in the census records pertaining to the number of literates. Again, the criterion employed to ascertain whether a person could be deemed to be literate or not, did not remain the same. In the Census Report of 1881, those who were under instruction and those who, though not under instruction, were able to read and write were grouped as literates; the persons who were neither under instruction nor able to read or write were classified as illiterates.³ From this, it is evident that those who were able to sign a name or to read a signature were considered as literates. Since 1901, the criterion to be considered as literate was the ability to write a letter to a friend and to read a reply to it.² However, the statistics regarding literates and illiterates furnished in the Census Reports reflected the spread of elementary education in Madras city. Though the Census Returns of 1871 disclosed a backward state of education throughout the Madras Presidency, about 18 per cent of the population in the city were able to read and write, whereas outside the city the proportion fell to 4.7 per cent.³ In 1881, over 21 per cent of the population


of the city of Madras could read and write or were under instruction. 4 In 1909, as result of the role of elementary schools for the spread of education, the proportion of male pupils under instruction in the elementary schools in the city rose to 30.5 per cent. 5 In 1931, the male literacy rate in the Madras city went up to 43.3 per cent. 6 The elementary schools in the city, no doubt, contributed to the literacy growth in the city.

The alumni of the Madras High School rose to respectable positions in the administrative sphere. They constituted what can be rightly termed as administrative elite. Prior to the Wood's Despatch of 1854, the British advocated Filtration theory by means of which only a select section of the native population hailing from families of esteem and wielding position of respect in terms of wealth, social status and caste superiority had been offered the privilege of acquiring higher English education. The Madras High School inaugurated in 1841 vindicates this initial stand of the British Government. At the outset, admission into the High School before its elevation into a collegiate institution was open to a select few, seeking higher education. Those who joined the institution exhibited their latent intellectual acumen and could acquire the education imparted under the fostering care of their masters, the most prominent of whom being Eyre Burton Powell who served as the Head Master of the School and who subsequently became the first Principal when the school was raised to the status of college.

The pupils of the High School who successfully completed their study in the institution were called proficients. A student was declared a proficient


after creditable attainments in the institution. The failure of students in the lower class, the dropouts at the intermediary stage, the high standard of education envisaged in the institution, and the inability to pay the fees collected had greatly diminished the number of proficients compared to the increasing number of students admitted. Hence, it was no wonder that during the period from 1841 to 1855 before the commencement of the college, the Madras High School could produce only thirty six proficients. It was explicitly a very low number compared to the number of students admitted which increased from sixty seven in the beginning to two hundred and twenty one in 1855.7

A critical analysis of the number of proficients in the stipulated period from 1841 to 1855 reveals that out of the total number of thirty six proficients, twenty were Brahmins, twelve non-Brahmin Hindus, three Eurasians and one Indian Christian. This illustrates the preponderance of Brahmin element over the rest of the sections of the society. The opportunity furnished in the Madras High School was utilised to a maximum extent by the Brahmin subcastes namely the Desasthas, Srivaishnavas and Smarthas who continued to dominate the educational sphere during the rest of the nineteenth century, and even beyond when as a result of Wood's Despatch, education became diffused and educational opportunities gradually increased. It is significant to observe, at this juncture, that the Brahmin castes had by this time thoroughly and diligently understood the greatest advantage of Western education which they felt would enable them to maintain social and intellectual superiority. The acquisition of Western education entitled them to vital positions in the administrative set up in the Madras Presidency. It is of equal importance to note, that the parents of the bulk of the number of the proficients had rich administrative experience having either served as Dewans in Princely states or atleast as clerks with low salaries the

Revenue Department of the Presidency. It may also be observed here that most of these proficients were drawn from the city of Madras and its immediate environs.

It is true that the British had their altruistic motive but selfish interest in raising a body of educated and administrative elite to serve them with utmost loyalty, with the ulterior intention of extracting from them a mediative role between the British Government and natives, and of perpetuating their rule with expediency and feasibility in the alien land. However, the reward of entry into public service prompted the natives in the Madras High School to strive for achieving it by sheer dint of their hard labour to become proficients. The British officials at the helm of the administrative hierarchy were impressed by the intellectual calibre and modesty of the proficients, and when their patronage was sought, they readily offered it without much hesitation. G.J. Casamajor, a judge of the Provincial Court of Appeal and Circuit, came forward to finance the education of C.V. Ranganada Sastri, who became the first proficient of the Madras High School; he was subsequently responsible for appointing Sastri as head clerk in the Subordinate Judge’s court at Chittoor. 8 Similarly, Thomas Pycroft, who was the Secretary of the Board of Revenue was much fascinated by the intellectual calibre of V. Rama lyengar, another proficient of the Madras High School and hence was delighted to appoint him as translator in the Mahratta Kacheri of the Board of Revenue. 9 Another proficient, Seshia Sastri had to curry favour from Henry Montgomery who was a member of the Board of Revenue by means of his humble disposition and entreating demeanour, and he had to wait at the gate of Montgomery greeting him with salute whenever he happened to see him for several days until at last he was

8. G. Parameswaran Pillai, Representative Men of Southern India (Madras, 1896), pp.73-79.

appointed as an acting clerk in the Board of Revenue.¹⁰ Thus, intellectual ability and modest behaviour of the proficients went a long way in enticing the British higher officials to offer appointments to them although such offer of appointment was restricted to subordinate ranks alone.

Most of the proficients were appointed in the Revenue or Judicial departments of the Madras Presidency as evidenced by the fact, that out of thirty six proficients, atleast twenty four were employed in these departments. Later, the alumni of the Madras High School had the unique distinction of securing the post of Deputy Collector when it was sanctioned by the Government in 1859. The early list of proficients who were appointed as Deputy Collectors in March 1859 comprised of A. Seshia Sastri (about whom a reference was already made), V. Rama Iyengar, C. Rangacharlu, M. Sadasivam Pillay, A. Ramachandra Rao, T. Durnarayan Mudali, R. Raghunadha Rao, and C. Sama Rao, T. Mathusamy Iyer, P. Varadachari, A. Srinivasa Rao and V. Rajagopalachari who were also the past pupils of the Madras High School, were subsequently appointed to the post of Deputy Collector. In 1863, three of these Deputy Collectors, namely, Rama Iyengar, Seshia Sastri and Rangacharlu were elevated to the rank of First class and were paid a coveted salary of rupees six hundred per month.¹¹

It is evident that the proficients of Madras High School who were offered placement in subordinate posts in the administrative set up in the Madras Presidency were able to impress the British top officials and were able to get promotions to higher ranks owing to their sincerity, and devotion to duty. Some of the alumni of the Madras High School were able to get into exalted posts so for monopolised by the Europeans in the administrative sphere. In


1867, Rama lyengar a distinguished alumnus of the Madras High School had the rare honour of being the first Indian to be appointed as Superintendent of Stamps, a post hitherto solely held by the Europeans and he was paid a handsome salary of rupees one thousand per month.\textsuperscript{12}

Some of the proficients were not complacent with the official post which they were able to secure and aspired to occupy higher positions by joining the judiciary. C.V. Ranganada Sastri, who was the first proficient of the Madras High School, about whom a reference has already been made, was appointed as acting judge of the Court of Small Causes in Madras in 1859. In 1862 he was confirmed in the post which he held till 1880, when he relinquished from service.

Among the proficients, who by virtue of their striking efforts and remarkable competency, rose to the lofty position in the field of judiciary, mention has to be made of T. Muthusamy Iyer. As pointed out earlier, he was one of the Deputy Collectors to be appointed in 1859. However, he evinced unflinching interest in the judiciary and did not bestow aptitude on revenue work. In 1856, he passed the Pleader's Test. He took to legal studies in which he exhibited abiding interest. In 1866 he obtained the Degree of Bachelor of Law. His acquisition of the Degree with distinction as a part-time candidate speaks volumes of his innate capacity in the legal studies. Convinced by the remarkable skill and qualification of Muthusamy Iyer, the authorities were immensely pleased to appoint him as judge of the Court of Small Causes, which post he held first in Madras and subsequently in Madura. He had the singular honour of being appointed as Sub-protem judge of the Madras High Court in July 1878. This post was so far not offered to any Indian and was indeed the monopoly of the British. In recognition of his meritorious service in the field of judiciary, he was confirmed

\textsuperscript{12} G. Parameswaran Pillai, \textit{Representative Indians} (London, 1897), pp.120-22.
at the Bench in 1883. In 1891 he officiated as Chief Justice for a brief period. He died in 1895 while in office. His illustrious career indicates how a proficient of the Madras High School started his career in a subordinate position and rose to heights of eminence in the judicial field.

Apart from serving the administration in the Madras Presidency, some of the proficients of the Madras High School distinguished themselves by occupying key administrative posts in the service of the Indian states. It was T. Madhava Rao who initiated the list of proficients to join the service of the Indian princes. In 1857, he rose to the position of the Dewan of Travancore. He performed his function as Dewan of Travancore State for a fairly long tenure of sixteen years. During that period, he exhibited his skill as an outstanding administrator and the princely state was able to record progress owing to his efficient administration. In 1873, he was made the Dewan of Indore. In 1875, he became the Dewan of Baroda. Some of the other proficients of the Madras High School to occupy the exalted position of Dewan in the Indian States were Seshia Sastri, Rangacharlu and Raghunadha Rao. Seshia Sastri served as the Dewan of Travancore from 1880 to 1887; Rangacharlu held the post of Dewan of Mysore from 1881 to 1883; and Raghunadha Rao occupied the Dewanship of Indore for the first term from 1875 to 1880, and for the second term from 1886 to 1888.

The British Government was immensely pleased with the service rendered by some of the proficients of the Madras High School. As administrative elite, these proficients won the admiration and appreciation of the British. Their unfathomable loyalty, their devotion to duty and the utter efficiency with which they performed their functions induced the British to amply reward them. In sheer recognition of their meritorious service, the British appointed them and utilised their impeccable service as members of the Legislative Councils and commissions and Committees constituted by the Government. Rama Iyengar was appointed as a member of the Madras Legislative Council for a quite long period of twelve years. Seshia Sastri
was nominated as member of this Council for a couple of years from 1878 to 1879. Ranganada Sastri served as a nominated member of the Madras Legislative Council for a period of seven years prior to his demise. Madhava Rao was appointed by the Government to head the Malabar Land Tenure Commission in 1885 when the Commission was entrusted with the task of analysing the imminent causes for the agrarian unrest in Malabar district. In 1891 Muthusamy Iyer was appointed as President of the Malabar Marriage Commission. In 1893 he was made the President of the Hindu Religious Endowment Committee. As a tribute to the excellent service rendered by Madhava Rao, Muthusamy Iyer and Seshia Sastri, they were knighted by the British authorities. Indeed, the proficientes of the Madras High School who constituted the administrative elite played a vital role in the administrative set up of the Madras Presidency and in the administration of the Indian States. No wonder they won recognition and approbation by the British.

Western education helped the students and the educated elite to gather together to discuss topical issues of varied nature. Such discussions, debates and deliberations did help to exchange ideas on wide ranging topics which in turn produced impact on the society and politics of the contemporary period. An organization which first emerged as a literary society and then was destined to play a vital role in the city of Madras was the Triplicane Literary Society. It was founded as a forum for lectures and discussions among the younger sections of the Western educated class in Madras City.¹³

It is not ascertained when exactly the Triplicane Literary Society came into existence. It is presumed that it grew out of the Triplicane Native Literary

Society which was started in 1868. The location of Triplicane Literary Society had its own immense significance. It was situated in Triplicane which was a congested area in the city. It was predominantly a Muslim area; but it had a sizeable Hindu population inhabiting the region around a famous Hindu shrine, known as Sri Parthasarathy temple. Since the Presidency College and the Senate building of the University of Madras were located along the Triplicane beach, college students and graduates began to reside in Triplicane. G. Subramania Iyer and Viraraghava Chari were among the graduates who settled there. The Triplicane Literary Society was reorganised on an efficient basis in 1874 by the educated elite. It maintained a library containing an anthology of books. Newspapers and periodicals were obtained for the use of the members who numbered around seventy in 1879. The members of the society consisted of graduates in different faculties and officials in the service of the Madras Government. It was indeed a society of young intellectuals, who were influenced by Western political thought. They were able to express their views in The Hindu.

The literary character of the Triplicane Literary Society was slowly given up after 1880 and the Society was transformed into a sort of a voluntary organisation. Raghunadha Rao, Anandacharlu, G. Subramania Iyer and Viraraghava Chari, who were holding key positions in the Society were some of the educated elite of the city who were responsible for this transformation. The Society began to send petitions and memorandum to the Government suggesting the right policies which could be pursued by the Government. In November 1881, while presenting an address of welcome to Grand Duff, the then Governor of Madras, the Society made a plea to the Government for the reduction of land assessment, encouragement of agricultural education, separation of revenue from judicial functions, and improvement


of the management of religious endowments by fresh legislation. Soon the Triplicane Literary Society began to indulge in fearless criticism of the Government and emphasized restriction on the power of the bureaucracy.

The Society at the same time did not hesitate to give expression to its sentiment of appreciation of the Governmental measures when it felt that such a measure was ostensibly intended to augment the welfare of the natives. This attitude of the Society was apparent when it organised a demonstration in the city of Madras in 1883 to celebrate the first anniversary of the passing of Ripon's Resolution on Local Self-Government. G. Subramania Iyer, Anandacharlu, Salem Ramasamy Mudaliar and Viraraghava Chari were among the educated elite to take a leading part in this demonstration held in Madras.

G. Subramania Iyer, who was the principal speaker on the occasion overwhelmingly eulogised the Scheme of Local Self-Government envisaged in Ripon's Resolution of 1882 and pointed out the immense benefit, which the natives would derive out of it. He further remarked that the implementation and extension of the Scheme would serve as a definite means of political education and would enable the local government to function on the basis of public opinion.

In short, the Triplicane Literary Society helped as a vulnerable instrument to disseminate liberal western ideas which the educated elite in the metropolitan city of Madras had imbibed.

English education was just beginning to make its appeal to the best Indian minds, and through that channel the nascent European philosophy

17. R. Suntharalingam, op.cit., p.186.
of democracy was to exercise a powerful influence in India. Leading European thinkers then had an exaggerated respect for the virtues of representative Government and right from the start of their new political consciousness, Indian students were to assume the universal validity of the principles of parliamentary Government. Burke, Macaulay and John Bright were to be the political oracles of Indian politicians for several decades, while Paine and Mazzini provided the emotional stimulus for the nationalist movement which throughout the second half of the nineteenth century was at work only amongst the urban intelligentsia in India.  

It is an incontrovertible fact that English education had conferred signal benefits on India. It had broken the mental isolation of India and brought it into contact with Western ideas. As a result of English education, Western ideas gained entry into India and led to the rise of Indian national movement. Colleges and Schools became nurseries of nationalism and students were involved with a spirit of nationalism.

The educated elite in the city of Madras, like the elite who acquired Western education in the rest of the country associated themselves with the freedom struggle from the initial phase of the movement. The acquisition of Western knowledge through the medium of English language enabled the educated elite to have access to the books containing the speeches of political thinkers like Locke and Burke. They were profoundly influenced by the Western political thought. They became aware of the democratic concepts which instilled in them the spirit of nationalism and induced them to strive for obtaining political freedom from the alien British rule.


The Western educated elite emerging from the schools and colleges in the city in general, and those who took to legal studies in Madras in particular identified themselves with the freedom movement ever since its inception. They played a contributory role in the formation of the Madras Mahajana Sabha, which can rightly be regarded as the precursor of the Indian National Congress. Some of the leading figures who were responsible for the establishment of the Madras Mahajana Sabha which came into existence in 1884, were G. Subramania Iyer, Viraraghavachari, Anandacharlu, Rangiah Naidu, Balaji Rao, and Salem Ramaswamy Mudaliar.\(^21\) Among these men, both G. Subramania Iyer and Viraraghavachari acquired their B.A. Degree from the Presidency College, Madras in 1877, and played a vital role in the founding of *The Hindu* on 20 September 1878.\(^22\) Anandacharlu who hailed from a Brahmin family in Chittoor in North Arcot District had his education in Madras and obtained his B.L. Degree in 1869. He developed sound legal practice in the city of Madras.\(^23\) Rangiah Naidu, about whom a reference was already made, secured proficient's certificate in 1851 from the Madras High School. He subsequently qualified for Pleader's Test in 1856 and started practising as a lawyer in the Madras High Court. S. Balaji Rao, another veteran leader associated with the genesis of the Madras Mahajana Sabha, though a native of Tanjore, had his legal studies in Madras and secured B.L. Degree in 1869, and took up thriving legal practice in the city of Madras.\(^24\) Salem Ramaswamy Mudaliar (1852-1892) who hailed from Tanjore, secured his B.L. Degree in 1875 after undergoing his legal studies in the city. Serving first in the judicial service for some years, he was able to build up his


own legal practice in Madras city and became lawyer of outstanding calibre in the Madras High Court.25

The Madras Mahajana Sabha came into existence with two primeval objectives. In the first instance, it was intended to enlighten the British Government in India, regarding the growing public opinion and to highlight the needs of the people and remedial measures to the Government. The second objective was to find out means calculated to improve the lot of the people.26

All the six founder leaders of the Madras Mahajana Sabha mentioned earlier held responsible office in the organization in the initial phase of its existence. Rangiah Naidu had the unique honour of being selected as the first President of the Madras Mahajana Sabha, which post he adorned till his demise in 1902. By dint of devoted service to the organization, Baji Rao was elevated to the position of one of its Vice-Presidents. Anandacharlu and Viraraghava Chari served the organization in their capacity as its Joint Presidents. G. Subramania Iyer and Salem Ramaswamy Mudaliar were elected to a select committee constituted from among the members of the Mahajana Sabha with obligation to discharge certain specific works in the organization.27 Thus, by holding distinct positions of responsibility, all of them contributed their mite in the growth of the Madras Mahajana Sabha.

While analysing the emergence of nationalism as an indelible and indeed sordid and impeccable impact of the diffusion of education, it is of paramount importance to study the part played by the Madras educated

25. G. Parameswaran Pillai, Representative Men of South India, pp.167-79.


elite in the history of the Indian National Congress, which carried on a relentless struggle against the alien British rule in India.

Some of the members of the Madras Mahajana Sabha who were sent as delegates to represent the city of Madras in the first session of the Indian National Congress held at Bombay in December 1885, were G. Subramania Iyer, Rangiah Naidu, Anandacharlu, Viraraghava Chari and S. Subramania Iyer. It may be noted here, that S. Subramania Iyer won his B.L. Degree in 1868 and was practicing as a lawyer in the Madras High Court. All these delegates played an important role in the deliberations of the session and contributed to its success.

The students in the educational institutions in the city of Madras as elsewhere in the Madras Presidency participated in the freedom movement with zeal, zest and above all with a grim resolve to free the Country from alien rule. Their participation was voluntary, spontaneous, large-scale, active and decisive in every phase of the national movement. They did not want to be passive idle spectators watching the political developments happening in India. Patriotic fervour dominated their activities when they involved themselves in the national movement. They did not bother about the stress and storm, and trouble and turmoil with which they were confronted, in the course of their involvement in the freedom movement.

The students in Madras were drawn into the arena of freedom struggle when Gandhiji made a clarion call to different sections of the Indian population to join the movement against the British, when he launched the famous Non-Cooperation Movement in 1920. As a part of the programme in this movement, Gandhiji appealed to the students to boycott schools and colleges. Responding to the call of Gandhiji, students in different parts of

India gradually began to associate themselves to boycott the educational institutions in which they were prosecuting their studies.

Gandhiji's call to students of schools and colleges to boycott educational institutions as a part of the Non-Cooperation programme evoked a positive responsive in the city. Consequently, some of the students of the Pachaiyappa's College, Presidency College and Madrasa-i-Azam gave up their studies. They were indeed thoroughly convinced with the political ideology and aspirations of Mahatma Gandhi and were willing to sacrifice their studies to achieve the political emancipation of India.

The Non-Cooperation Movement was gaining momentum in the city. Five hundred students belonging to the Hindu High School at Madras resorted to strike urging the institution not to accept any grant from the Government. As a result of the strike, five students of the institution were expelled. The students of Royapuram Medical School also indulged in strike. Their strike was subsequently given up in view of the arrest of some of the recalcitrant students. As the Non-Cooperation Movement was making headway in the city, Gandhiji suspended the movement on 4 February 1922 in view of the violent turn it assumed as a result of the Chauri Chaura incident.

The next event which dragged the students of the schools and colleges in Madras City into the national movement was the visit of the Simon Commission. When the Commission arrived at Bombay on 3 February 1928,


30. *Fortnightly Report for the second half of February 1921*.

31. At Chauri Chaura in the United Provinces, an infuriated mob set fire to a police station. In that incident, twenty two police men were burnt alive.
a hartal was observed in Madras and the students of the educational institutions in the city went on strike. They also carried on black flag demonstration and exhibited their protest by shouting slogans “Simon Go Back”, when the Commission paid its visit to the city on 26 February 1928.32

The next phase of the freedom struggle was the Civil Disobedience Movement which was inaugurated by Gandhiji with his famous Dandi March on 12 March 1930 protesting against the salt tax imposed by the British.33 As the movement began to spread to different parts of the country, the students in the city of Madras also participated in the movement which assumed the nature of an intense agitation against the British Government. They indulged in picketing and agitational activities. To deal with the situation, the city police commissioner issued order prohibiting meetings and processions.34

The city students were so much imbued with patriotic fervour and nationalist zeal that one of them, M. Gopalakrishanan, who studied in the VI Form ‘E’ Section in the Pachaiyappa’s College - School wrote an article on nationalism in the school magazine. In that article, he stressed the significance of the freedom struggle in India and exhorted the people in general and students in particular to participate in the encounter against the British with the sole objective of attainment of freedom. He also made a


33. Gandhiji spearheaded the movement known as the Dandi March in which he led a group of congress workers from Sabarmati Ashram to Dandi for the purpose of preparing salt, protesting against the salt tax and defying the Salt Laws.

34. *Fortnightly Report for the first half of August 1930.*
plea to the students to sacrifice everything for the sake of the liberation of their country from the alien rule.  

At the commencement of the Second World War, anti-war propaganda was carried on in the city of Madras as in the rest of the Country. Pamphlets and leaflets were distributed to generate patriotic fervour. S.V.K. Prasad who was a B.A.(Hons) student of the Presidency College was found in possession of seventeen copies of the printed leaflet entitled "Students Pledge of the Independence Day" and two letters. One of the letters was written by D.A. Raju. In that letter, the author was in favour of a revolt of the people against the British rule. The pamphlet and the letters were seized by the police.

Tirumal Rao who was a final year student in the Stanley Medical College was also actively involved in the activity of distributing pamphlets against the British. He was also found in possession of four copies of a pamphlet entitled "Students' Independence Day Pledge". These pamphlets were seized by the police. Both these students were prosecuted by the Commissioner of Police, alleging involvement in anti-national activities.

A demonstration of about four hundred students belonging to the Engineering College, the Loyola College, the Madras Christian College, the Pachaiyappa's College, the Madras Medical College, the Stanley Medical College and the Presidency College, was held in Madras on 16 November 1940. The students first assembled at Napier Park. Then, they went on a procession to the beach where a public meeting was organized. The students

36. G.O.No. 1352, Public (General), Department, 10 July 1940.
37. ibid.
who spoke on the occasion condemned the repressive measures adopted by the British to contain the freedom movement and vociferously voiced their resentment of the Governmental policy. They also appealed to the people to wholeheartedly oppose the British rule.38

The students of the city colleges had to court arrest for their participation in the freedom struggle. Achuthan of Law College, Ganesan of Presidency College, Latif Afghani of Madras Christian College and Akbari of Engineering College were arrested and held under detention. At a public meeting organized by the Madras Students’ Organisation on Triplicane beach on 26 January 1941, their arrest was condemned.39 The use of Defence of India Rules to arrest students on political grounds was criticised tooth and nail.

Students in Madras city played a conspicuous role in the Quit India Movement.40 Their participation was zealous and indeed overwhelming. Hundreds of students of schools and colleges in the city including the lady students of the Queen Mary’s College observed hartals, led out processions and shouted Quit India slogans until they were dispersed by the police. Students of the Loyola College, the Madras Christian College and the Engineering College, played an equally prominent part in the Quit India

38. G.O. No.5035, Public (General) Department. 20 November 1940.


40. The All India Congress Committee passed the famous Quit India Resolution at its historic session in Bombay on 8 August 1942. Gandhiji was the veritable author of the resolution. The resolution vociferously demanded that the British should end their rule in India, instantaneously. Gandhiji declared in unequivocal terms, “we shall either free India or die in the attempt”. Consequent upon the arrest of Gandhiji and other national leaders on 9 August 1942, the entire country was plunged in a massive upheaval.
Movement; they resorted to strikes, obstructed electric trains and encountered lathi charges and imprisonment.\textsuperscript{41}

Students of the Loyola college had to suffer on account of their participation in the Quit India Movement. A dozen students of that college were issued transfer certificates on the reopening date in July 1943 as a punishment for their participation in the movement. The action taken against the students of the Loyola college was deplored by the press.\textsuperscript{42}

Thus, the students of the schools and colleges in the city of Madras, like those of their fraternity in the rest of the country, engaged themselves in the freedom struggle, and exhibited their grim determination to expel the British from the Indian soil.

Those who took to legal studies in the city of Madras were able to comprehend the intricacies of law. As mentioned earlier, even in 1861-62 when the law classes were conducted in the Presidency college, the curriculum for the B.L. Degree examination consisted of the Law of Evidence (Norton), the Law of Contracts and Torts, Equity Jurisprudence as treated in Smith's Manual, the Principles of Hindu and Mohamedan Law, the Indian Penal Code and the Codes of Civil and Criminal Procedure, then enacted.\textsuperscript{43} The students could understand the implication of the law of equity which formed the basis for the English common law. They were also enlightened on the various aspects of Hindu and Mohamedan Laws. They acquired abundant knowledge of the evolution of the Indian Penal Code and were

\textsuperscript{41} B.S. Baliga, \textit{op. cit.}, p.21.

\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Indian Express}, 4 July 1943.

well-versed with all the provisions of the code. They were also taught legal procedure adopted in the Civil and Criminal Courts. After the Madras Law College began to function separately from 1891, the syllabus for the B.L. Degree was revamped in 1897-98 to suit the requirements in the law courts. As the syllabus was updated, the Law graduates from the Madras Law College were thoroughly conversant with the theory and practice of law. Consequently when they began their legal profession they were able to get clients. Though may could not be accommodated in the judicial department of the Government, the legal profession became lucrative as they became lawyers. The study of the Western legal system served as an eye opener to those who resorted to legal profession to be aware of the need for asserting the rights of the Indians. They naturally involved themselves in the freedom struggle and played a dominant role in the national movement. It was no wonder that many lawyers who emerged from the Madras Law College were willing to give up their lucrative practice to join the freedom struggle.

Many lawyers who had earlier studied law in Madras city plunged into the national movement by associating themselves with the Indian National Congress in the different phases of the movement. Imbued with patriotic fervour, some of them prepared to sacrifice their lucrative legal practice with the view to gain political freedom for India.

Some of the prominent lawyers who played a leading role in the freedom movement were V. Krishnaswamy Iyer (1863-1911), K. Santhanam, Chakravarti Rajagopalachari (1879-1972), C.P. Ramaswami Iyer (1879-1966), S. Satyamurthy (1887-1943), C. Vijayaraghavachariar (1852-1944), Nyapiti Subba Rao Pantulu (1858-1941), and Seshadri Srinivasa Iyengar (1874-1941). Born in 1863 at Tiruvadamaruthur in Tanjore district, V. Krishnaswamy Iyer joined the Presidency College, Madras in 1879. He graduated in 1882. He studied law and secured his B.L. Degree in 1884 and started practising law. He began to involve in the Congress movement. He
actively participated in the Congress sessions held in 1889, 1890, 1894 and 1898. In 1903, he served as the Chairman of the Reception Committee in the Madras Session of the All India Congress Committee. He was an ardent advocate of moderate nationalism. At the Surat Congress of 1907, he spoke on the side of the moderates.⁴⁴

K. Santhanam, hailing from Tanjore district, had his collegiate education at Presidency College, Madras. In 1917 he joined the Madras Law College, and in 1919 he was enrolled as an Advocate of the Madras High Court. Responding to the call of Mahatma Gandhi, he gave up legal practice, joined the Non-Co-operation Movement and courted arrest in 1920. On account of his active role in the national movement, he suffered imprisonment for five times in two decades.⁴⁵

Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, a renowned freedom fighter and statesman, hailed from Salem district. He graduated at the age of eighteen from the Presidency College, Madras. He studied law for two years and began to practice as a lawyer. He voraciously read the classical and modern writings in English language. He was immensely influenced by Thoreau’s essay on the duty of Civil Disobedience and hence was drawn into the Non-Co-operation Movement launched by Gandhiji. He plunged into the freedom struggle with tremendous zeal and enthusiasm. He won reputation as a mighty freedom fighter when he led the Salt Satyagraha March to Vedaranyam in 1930. He is considered as one of the outstanding leaders of the freedom movement.

C.P. Ramaswami Iyer, who was born on 12 November 1879 at Wandiwash in North Arcot District had his education at Wesley High School,


Madras, and then at Presidency College. After getting his B.A. degree, he graduated in Law from the Madras Law College. As a student he had a flair for reading English books and read extensively in English literature. This influenced his thinking and profoundly enriched his knowledge. He distinguished himself as an advocate. He played a significant role in the Home Rule Movement and the Congress organization. He served as General Secretary of the Congress during 1917-18. He resigned from the Congress when the Congress refused to carry out the Act of 1919.  

A doyen among freedom fighters, S. Satyamurthy (1887-1943) was born with a silver tongue on 19 August 1887 at Thirumayam in the then Pudukkottah State. He studied in Madras Christian College and Law College, Madras. He was able to take up legal practice in the metropolitan city. Endowed with wonderful eloquence, both in English and Tamil, he ably carried on the publicity work of the Congress. His speeches both in the Madras Legislative Council and on the public platform vindicated the policy of the Congress. They were elegant and impressive and were marked by his extraordinary calibre to marshall his ideas. He played a vital role in the Satyagraha Movement and subsequently in the Quit India Movement. He suffered the pangs of imprisonment in 1932, 1937, 1940 and 1942. He enthusiastically participated in the deliberations of the Indian Legislative Assembly at Delhi, of which he was elected a member in 1935. His mastery over the alien language was indeed a boon for him to impress the audience in the Legislatures. He can be rightly regarded as the publicist of the Indian National Congress.  

Salem C. Vijayaraghavachariar joined the Madras Pachaiyappa's High School in 1868. He matriculated in 1870. He graduated in 1875 from the


47. *ibid.*, pp.85-86.
Madras Presidency College. He appeared for the Law examination privately and started his legal practice in 1881. He earned renown as an advocate in Salem. Ever since the inception of the Indian National Congress in 1885, he identified himself with the organization and played a significant role in the freedom movement. He was a pioneering leader of Indian Nationalism.

Nyapati Subba Rao Pantulu who was born in Nellore, studied in the Madras Christian College and obtained his B.A. Degree in 1876. He joined the Madras Law College and secured his B.L. Degree in 1879. He was involved in the national movement ever since the genesis of the Indian National Congress. He participated in the annual sessions of the Congress and served the organization as its secretary in 1914.

Seshadri Srinivasa Iyengar a native of Ramanathapuram district, secured his B.A. Degree from the Presidency College, Madras. Subsequently, he acquired his B.L. Degree from the Law College, Madras in 1897. He began to practice law in the Madras High Court in 1898. By sheer dint of his unfailing memory, profound knowledge of law and laudable powers of advocacy, he was able to make a mark as a reputed lawyer. He extensively read classics on jurisprudence and constitutional law, and was hence able to exhibit his remarkable skill in legal profession. He relinquished his profitable legal practice and joined the national movement in 1920, and actively involved himself in the Congress organization. Besides holding responsible positions in the Congress, he also presided over the Guwahati session of the Congress in December 1926. In short, his participation in the freedom movement speaks volumes of his interest in the political emancipation of India from the British rule.


A few, who had the benefit of acquisition of Western education and of studying law in the city of Madras, associated themselves with *The Hindu* which emerged as the mouth piece of Indian Nationalism, and served the nationalistic cause. S. Kasturi Ranga Iyengar (1859-1923), A. Rangaswami Iyengar (1877-1934) and Kasturi Srinivasa Iyengar (1887-1959) belonged to this select category of illustrious men. S. Kasturi Ranga Iyengar started his career as a lawyer and then turned to journalism. He joined the Presidency College, Madras, where he took his Arts Degree in 1879. After graduating in Law, he started his legal practice in Coimbatore.

In 1894, he transferred his practice to Madras. He plunged into politics and it became his dominant activity. He was one of the founder members of the Madras Mahajana Sabha. He joined the Indian National Congress and became the Secretary of the Reception Committee of the Congress session held in Madras in 1898 and 1903. He had already developed contacts with *The Hindu* by contributing to it on legal topics and became its Legal Adviser in 1895. Unmindful of the financial straits of *The Hindu*, Kasturiranga Iyengar purchased *The Hindu* in March 1905; his partners were Sankaran Nair and T. Rangachari.51 By turning to journalism, he endeavoured to foster the newspaper. After a few months, his partners withdrew and he became the sole proprietor in which capacity he played a significant role in managing and developing *The Hindu* to be the leading national newspaper spreading the gospel of Indian Nationalism to the English educated masses.

A. Rangaswami Iyengar was a lawyer turned journalist. He had a brilliant academic career and obtained his Law Degree in the Madras Law College. in 1902 he set up legal practice in Tanjore.52 Soon he chose the career of a journalist. He began to assist his uncle, S.Kasturi Ranga Iyengar as


Assistant Editor and also Manager of *The Hindu*. Subsequently he became the printer and publisher of the paper in October 1907 and retained that post till he left *The Hindu* temporarily in 1915 when his request for partnership of the concern was not conceded.\(^{(53)}\) In partnership with S. Rangaswami and C.R. Srinivasan, he was able to acquire *Swadesamitran*, a leading Tamil daily and became the editor of the same.\(^{(54)}\) As the editor, he contributed to the phenomenal growth of the *Swadesamitran* as an outstanding Tamil daily serving the nationalistic cause. He joined the national movement. He came back to *The Hindu* as editor in January 1928. He attended the Second Round Table Congress held in London in 1931 as a delegate, acting as the political secretary and constitutional adviser to Gandhiji. As a constitutional expert and a journalist, he indeed, promoted the cause of nationalism.

Kasturi Srinivasan Iyengar, an illustrious son of S. Kasturi Ranga Iyengar studied in The Hindu High School in Triplicane. He graduated from the Presidency College, Madras in 1908. Though he joined the Madras Law College in the same year, he studied Law only for one year. He was not a success as a Law student. So, his father took him on the staff of *The Hindu*. He learnt the art of management of the newspaper. He served as printer and publisher of *The Hindu*. When his father passed away in 1923, the task of carrying on the management of the paper fell on the shoulders of Kasturi Srinivasa Iyengar and his brother Gopalan. Srinivasa Iyengar served as editor of *The Hindu* for some time in addition to his other responsibilities of its management. On the death of A. Rangaswami Iyengar in 1934, he assumed the office of Managing Editor.\(^{(55)}\) He was largely responsible for the rapid growth of the newspaper and for transforming it into one of

\(^{(53)}\) Rangaswami Parthasarathy (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.184.

\(^{(54)}\) *ibid.*, p.389.

\(^{(55)}\) *ibid.*, pp.742-43.
international repute. He took active interest in the freedom movement and as editor abundantly helped the cause of nationalism by giving publicity to the policies and programmes of the Congress in *The Hindu*. His contribution to nationalism as a journalist was indeed substantial.

The acquisition of Western education did produce a palpable change in the minds of the early beneficiaries in the Madras High School. They felt essentially that their country could not prosper owing to some existing defects in the social behaviour and prevalent customs in their society. Even during the period of their studies in the Madras High School, they were able to comprehend the impact of Western education which they felt was bound to transform the Indian society into one of prosperity, by making them aware of some social evils which infested the society, and which proved to be an impediment to progress or prosperity. In 1845, T. Madhava Rao, a distinguished student of the Madras High School wrote an essay in which he mentioned categorically that the acquisition of Western knowledge would certainly enable India to attain prosperity similar to that of the West.56

The two social evils which the recipients of Western education in Madras had to combat with, were child marriage and opposition towards widow marriage. The early administrative elite had been thoroughly convinced with the utter folly of child marriage which paved the way for enforced widowhood. As they were crusading against this evil, they had to encounter stern opposition of the Hindu religious orthodoxy. Obviously it was left to some of the protagonists of widow marriage and of abolition of child marriage to explain to the orthodoxy, that the institution of child marriage and forced widowhood did not have sanction in the Hindu holy scriptures, and hence while being influenced by the Western ideals, the beneficiaries of western education were not running counter to the established traditions, but were

only putting the society on the right path of progress by eliminating the defects in the existing society.

An organization known as the Veda Samaj was established in 1864 in Madras, owing to the tireless efforts of Law students who graduated from the Madras University. The primary objects of the association were to have faith in Hindu religion, to foster female education and widow marriage and to condemn child marriage and caste prejudices.\(^{57}\) In several respects the new organization which emanated in Madras bore close semblance to the Brahmo Samaj. Though this organization did not produce an indelible impact on the society, it only indicated the pioneering attempt initiated by the Western educated elite in Madras to fight against the social evils, and to work in the direction of social reform.

The Veda Samaj, though not a dominant organization, could serve to create a sense of awareness regarding the need to put an end to the evil practice of infant marriage. Among the early zealous champions of the abolition of child marriage, the name of C.V. Ranganada Sastri deserves a special mention here. As pointed out earlier, he was an outstanding alumnus of the Madras High School. He played a significant role in the realm of agitation against infant marriage by associating himself with the Veda Samaj and taking up the mantle of leadership of the Samaj. He wrote a letter to a local newspaper Madras Times in which he not only expressed his desire to carry on agitation against child marriage but also stated in emphatic and categorical terms, that the institution of child marriage was indeed opposed to common sense. He explicitly stated that he had the ardent support of Hindu scholars in the matter of the agitation against child marriage. He also declared that by getting the help of C. Ananda Rama Sastri, a renowned Sanskrit Scholar, he was prepared to have a discussion on the subject in

57. Athenaeum and Daily News (Madras), 17 May 1864.
the presence of Sankaracharya, the High Priest of Madras. However, Ranganada Sastri was able to comprehend the overwhelming resentment exhibited by the Brahmin orthodoxy, and hence the agitation against infant marriage was suspended of course temporarily. It is significant to note here that the *Veda Sameaj* was reorganised and came to be called as the *Brahmo Sameaj of South India* in 1871.

The western educated elite took up the cause of widow remarriage. As a sequel to child marriage, many married girls at their infant stage became widows. Perceiving the pathetic plight of such child widows, an organization known as the Madras Hindu Marriage Association was founded in the city of Madras in April 1874 with the object of encouraging the marriage of Hindu widows to the possible extent. Certain extracts from the Shastras which approved widow remarriage were published by the Association. Rama Iyengar and Muthusamy Iyer who were the proficients of the Madras High School were elected to the Managing Committee of the Association. This Association could neither enlist support nor make progress and did not last long.

Raghunadha Rao, a distinguished alumnus of the Madras High School began to champion the cause of Hindu widow marriage when he returned to Madras in 1875, after serving as Dewan of Indore. In 1882, he inaugurated an association known as the Hindu Women’s Remarriage Association. The rules of this Association specifically stated that widow marriage with Vedic


61. *Athenaeum and Daily News*, 3 June, 1874
marital rites was permissible provided the widow was a virgin. The Association came forward to advocate and encourage, celebrate and pay for the marriage of girls who were or who might be widowed before the consummation of marriage with their husbands, and to receive them and their supporters into society.

Raghunadha Rao served the Association as its President and under his leadership, the Association was able to make progress. In June 1883, the Association successfully conducted its first marriage, which ended in a procession through Mylapore. It continued to serve the cause of widow marriage atleast to a limited extent.

Female education was slowly given thrust in the society. As mentioned earlier, there was progress in the education of girls at the primary level in Madras city owing to the cumulative efforts of the Corporation, the Government, Christian missions and non-Christian private agencies. As a result of these efforts, female literacy rate in the city exhibited a gradually increasing trend. In 1881 the female literacy rate in Madras was 7.48 per cent. In 1891, the per centage of female literates in the city was 9.02, showing a very marginal increase of 1.64 per cent. Within another four decades, the per centage of female literacy rose to seventeen in 1931. The increase in the rate of female literacy was achieved against heavy


64. *Madras Times*, 11 June 1883.


obstacles and impediments. Parents were unwilling to send their female children to schools, since it was felt that there was no need to educate them. The prevalence of purdah system was another obstacle. The need for trained lady teachers and lack of conveyance facilities to girls to attend schools were other early difficulties which stood in the way of primary education of girls in the city. However, these difficulties were overcome to some extent by the facilities offered by the Corporation of Madras, as indicated earlier. Indeed, primary education of female children helped to eradicate female illiteracy and to shed ignorance among female population.

Female education at secondary and collegiate levels was also fostered in the city of Madras by both Government and private agencies, as elucidated earlier.68

The doors of professional institutions were thrown open to women enabling them to acquire professional education. As pointed out earlier, three female students who sought admission in the Madras Medical College were admitted for the first time during the academic year 1874-75.69 Admission was given to women students in the College of Engineering in Guindy since 1940-41.70 The acquisition of professional education was indeed a great boon to women to play a vital role in the society.

As a result of female education, women were gradually able to come out of a condition of inferiority to men and seclusion within the four walls of the house. They began to participate in the political activities involving themselves in

68. Supra, Chapters III and IV.


the freedom movement. Rukmani Lakshimipathy (1891-1951) and Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddi were two such women who had their education in the Madras city to join the freedom struggle and contribute towards the political emancipation of India from the British rule.

Rukmani Lakshimipathi who passed her Intermediate course in Women’s Christian College, Nungambakkam, in April 1912 and graduated from Presidency College, Madras, became a member of the Indian National Congress in 1924. She participated in the Salt Satyagraha in 1931 and courted imprisonment for a year. In 1940 she took part in the Individual Satyagraha Movement and was arrested and imprisoned for one year. As Vice President of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee, she played a significant role in the national movement in Tamil Nadu.

Muthulakshmi Reddi was the first girl student to join the M.B.C.M. course in 1907 in the Madras Medical College with a state scholarship. She did her house surgency during 1912-13. She associated herself with the freedom movement and participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement.

The Western educated women in the city took to social work and served for the uplift of women. Sister Subalakshmi (1886-1969) was one such lady to take up the cause of welfare of women. She married at the age of eleven and lost her husband a few weeks later. She studied in the Presidency College and graduated in 1911. She was the first Hindu women and that too a widow, to pass the B.A. Degree examination. She passed her

L.T. examination. As she herself had become a child widow, she developed her prime concern for widows and ventured in all earnestness to alleviate the sufferings of women in general and widows in particular. She joined with Mrs. Drysolate, the then Deputy Director of Public Instruction, Madras to establish Widows' Home for Young Brahmin Widows in Egmore in 1913.

Besides being women freedom fighters, Rukmani Lakshmipathy and Muthulakshmi Reddi came forward to render valuable service for the uplift of women in the society. A prominent protagonist of the emancipation of women in the society, Muthulakshmi Reddi's deep concern for the destitute girls and widows prompted her to establish an organization known as *Avvai Home* at Adyar intended to help poor girls and orphans on non-communal and non-caste basis.\(^75\) She ably championed the cause of women and their welfare by associating herself with association such as *Sarda Home*, *Women's Home of Service* and the *Indian Ladies Samaj for the Protestion of Minor Girls*.\(^76\) Both Rukmani Lakshmipathy and Muthulakshmi Reddi actively associated themselves with the Women Indian Association which clamoured for the rights of women in the society, and played a vital role in the enactment of the Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929.

It is therefore evident that educational progress in the city of Madras from 1854 to 1947 enhanced the literacy growth, and induced the students and Western educated elite to play a significant role in the freedom movement. It also prompted the recipients of Western education in the city to oppose the pernicious social evils of child marriage, and the consequent forced widowhood, and to pass legislation forbidding child marriage and permitting widow marriage. The Western educated women in the city took up the cause of uplift of women and amelioration of the suffering of widows and destitutes.
