INTRODUCTION

Twentieth century brought India on par with developments that were taking place on the other parts of the world. The dawn of the century also brought with it a new political spirit, which was not confined only to a particular locality or community, but began to spread in leaps and bounds throughout the country. This spirit was fortified and strengthened in its infancy by the appearance by many leaders who died fighting for India. Their noble lives are still followed by many. This spirit filled the hearts of Indian people. Because of the exposure to the outside world Indians understood the western concepts like Liberalism, Constitutionalism, Rationalism so on and began to question to how far these concepts applicable to Indians. The most outstanding effect of the introduction of western culture in India was growth of modern political concepts such as nationalism, nationality, patriotism, and political rights etc., which are easily

1 New India 17-10-16
associated with western countries in modern age\(^2\). The significant effect and enduring result of the British rule in India is the intellectual development of the people on an entirely new line, and the consequent changes in their political, social, religious and economic outlook.

It may be rightly observed that during the period of less than one century of the British paramountacy, India passed from the medieval to the modern age. The introduction of English education opened the flood-gates of the western ideas which almost overwhelmed them at the beginning\(^3\). The movements for social and religious reform, of intellectual assimilation and literary expression, of economic and political change were all manifestations of the transformation which was taking place as a result of ideological and practical thrust of modernism. During the first half of the nineteenth century, when the dawn of modernism was just breaking on the horizon, old India was profoundly disturbed by the prospect, for it looked upon the onset of the Western imperialism as a menace to its age-long culture, its economy, polity and religion. Meanwhile, during the later part of the century, socio-economic developments were on


\(^3\) Ibid. Vol. V, p.127
their way to prepare the ground for the national unity and political integrity. On the other hand, the movements of religious and social reform and of renaissance in literature and art are the manifestations of the rising spirit of nationalism, of the dawn of the new day which promised the end of the era of dependence, slavery, bondage and misery. The spirit of nationalism thus germinated initially on the soil of Bengal, which was the epicenter of all political activity, was fertilized by western education and then spread rapidly to other parts of India and was manifested in formation of associations in various regions. The second half of the nineteenth century was the formative period for the evolution of Indian nationalism and a new India was taking shape and the structure for national unity was being built. The spread of western education also resulted in the growth of Indian intelligentsia who began to demand their share in administration of their own land through elected representative bodies. The gross product of all this political awareness ultimately resulted in the birth of Indian National Congress which championed a National Movement for Indian Independence. The demand of “Home Rule for India” had been put forward by many nationalist leaders of India, ever since India witnessed the growth of Nationalism on its soil. Krishtadas Pal, a veteran politician of Bengal, in a leading article in the
Hindoo Patriot, on the Home Rule for India, he observed; “Our attention should, therefore, be directed for the Home Rule for India. Most of the British colonies have been blessed with constitutional government, but India is the only Dependency which, despite the vastness of its area, its population and interests, is denied the privilege. If taxation and representation go hand in hand in all British colonies, why should this principle be ignored in India? Home Rule for India ought to be our cry, and it ought to be based up on the same constitutional basis that is recognized in the colonies”⁴.

“The Home Rule Movement”, which is the central theme of this research study, is a brief significant interface in the saga of Indian Freedom Movement. The uniqueness of the Home Rule Movement was the adoption of the Irish technique of demanding the participation of local people in the native administration. The goal, the formation and functioning of the Leagues were in accordance with indigenous conditions. This phase was the link between two attractive phases, namely the ‘Vandemataram’ Movement and the Gandhian Phase. Though it is sandwiched by the above dominating phases, it has its own contribution to the ongoing Freedom Movement. In 1904 Bal

⁴ Home Rule Scrap Files, T.S. Library, Adyar, Madras
Gangadhar Tilak claimed *Swaraj* as a birthright at the start of the Swadeshi movement, but he did not define it as “complete independence from the British” till much later. Other leaders who were close to him like Lala Lajpat Rai and Bipin Chandra Pal also did not visualize a total break with the British Empire until 1927. The Swaraj Party of Motilal Nehru and C. R. Das was clear that their Party prescribed Dominion Status for India within the British Commonwealth of Nations. But there were leaders like Subhas Chandra Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru who chafed at this limited outlook from the Madras session of the Indian National Congress of 1927 onwards. The Indian National Congress was not very clear about its ultimate political goal during its early formative decades. It was only at Lahore Session of 1929 that the resolution of *Purna Swaraj* was adopted by the INC\(^5\). By 1915 the political situation in country was rather depressing. The Moderates who dominated the Congress since the *Surat Split* in 1907 were content with petty concessions granted by the government from time to time. They did not press any demand for the real constitutional changes which would provide the real political powers to the Indians. The Extremist Movement, after the withdrawal of the partition of Bengal in 1911, remained silent due to the lack of an effective

organization on all India bases. The people who were inspired by the national spirit ignited by the ‘Vandemataram Movement’, in fact were left without a properly organized political activity. The gap between ‘Swadesi Movement’ of the Extremists between 1905 and 1911 and the ‘Non-co-operation Movement’ of Mahatma Gandhi which was launched in 1920 was most appropriately filled in by the Home Rule Movement. The First World War produced a new stir in Indian political arena. Annie Besant, who devoted her energies to theosophical activities, now turned her devotion to politics. People like Tilak and Lajpat Rai were also actively involved in this Movement. But Annie Besant with all her rich experience as Home Ruler in England and her popularity as a Theosophist dominated the political arena during this period. Her activities shaped the future National Movement by providing several microscopic network of political units in the form of Home Rule Leagues spread all over the Presidency including remote villages. The branches of the Home Rule Leagues also sprang up at sensitive areas in other Presidencies also. During the later course of the National Movement the same method of local political committees in every nook and corner of the country came into the Indian political life. The very nature of the Indian politics had been transformed into an unprecedented agitation involving all kinds
of people including masses, providing a broad basis with deep rooted national and religious sentiments to the Indian struggle for freedom. Though there is an element of exaggeration of the statement made by Sarojini Naidu that “had there been no Mrs. Besant, there would have been no Gandhi”, there is certainly an element of truth in it.

The government of India distrusted Mrs. Besant and considered her activities are dangerous to the continuance of the British Rule in India. They thought she was arousing agitation which might lead to disturbances, culminating in bloodshed. The government tried its best to eliminate Mrs. Besant from Indian scene. To suppress her agitation which was engulfing the whole nation like wild fire, she was interned at Ootacamund along with her associates Wadia and Arundale. The great concern aroused by her internment in Indian and abroad compelled the government to release her after three months. The peak of her agitation culminated in the announcement of a new policy by the Secretary of State for India, Mr. Montague in 1917, which laid down that Indian association with administration would be increased and necessary steps, for the ‘gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India within the British Empire’, would be taken up. Montagu visited
India in order to consult the Viceroy and to give a hearing to all the interest concern for the self-government in India and to give effect to the policy which was announced. With proclamation of the new policy, followed by the end of the First World War, it appeared that the government was in no mood to be influenced by public opinion and the emergence of Gandhi as a national leader with his new techniques of mass mobilization and bringing large number of people into the National Movement gradually diluted in the Home Rule Movement and the movement came to an end.

There is a surge of academic and political interest in the Home Rule Movement in India partly because of an official thrust in Maharashtra to identify the heritage of Sivaji, Savarkar and Tilak, as Tilak initiated the Home Rule Movement in Maratha region before it was officially inaugurated by Mrs. Besant. Besides, there is also a strong urge for research in regional studies. Though Mrs. Besant, with her Irish background associated with the demand for Home Rule from its early days, has been marginalized by a section of Indian leaders on Brahmin and Non-Brahmin conflict, the school of Nationalist Historians of India, did not deny the pioneering role of Annie Besant and of the Home Rule movement in the opening decades of the 20th century. As no substantial research work is carried out at micro
levels, the present comprehensive dissertation is presented with detailed study. In this present research project a humble attempt is made from a different perspective to uncover an essential but hither to neglected dimension in national movement in modern History of Andhra. The study is intended to illuminate the salient features the course and the outcome of the Home Rule Movement in the Presidency of Madras with special reference to Andhra region.

Studies on regional developments with in India’s National Movement have become necessary for assessing the strengths of the federal structure of the Indian polity. The growth of political ideologies during the national struggle in various phases and movements are also a contributing factor in formation of Indian constitution. Annie Besant, the chief architect of the Home Rule Movement in India, started working for “obtaining self-government within the British Commonwealth” and made Home Rule Leagues for which units were established in various parts of India. On 3rd September 1916, the Home Rule League took the shape as a political organization. Annie Besant who was well known in the circles of radical thinkers and politicians like Bernard Shaw, W.T. Stead, A.P. Sinnet, Charles Bradlaugh and the Tade Unionists, joined the Theosophical Society in 1888 in England. The next five years she spent in study and teaching.
She visited the U.S.A. in 1893 and attended the Parliament of Religions at Chicago, as the representative of the Theosophical Society. Then she decided to settle in India as a Theosophist, because India and Indians came nearer to her than her own fellow countrymen. She declared: “In heart I am one with you and to you by my past I belong.”

In November 1983 she landed at Tuticorin and from that moment she took India by storm, receiving attention and applause wherever she went. By her dynamic personality and extraordinary eloquence she soon drew to the Society many educated Indians who accepted her as their teacher and guide. Some called her an Avatar, an incarnation of God. She infused great vigor in the activities of the Society. She toured throughout India giving lectures in defense of traditional Hinduism, founding educational centers, propagating her Theosophical views through numerous books and pamphlets, and developing the doctrines of the Society. Many educated middle class Hindus were attracted to the Society. Some were carried away by the spectacle of an eminent white woman discoursing eloquently on Hinduism and justifying what Christian missionaries and European writers had denounced as superstition or perversity. Many intellectuals found genuine satisfaction in the universalism which Theosophy taught. For it

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held that all religions were true and all men brothers. In an atmosphere surcharged with proud assertions of the white man’s racial superiority and nauseating denunciations of Hindu religion, the praise bestowed by a renowned European like Mrs. Annie Besant and her associates, was bound to evoke a favourable response. Her statement, “the India to which I belong in faith and heart is ….. a civilization in which spiritual knowledge was accounted highest title of honour and in which the people reverenced and sought after spiritual truth ….. the India I would give my life to help in building is an India learned in the ancient philosophy, pulsing with ancient religion – an India to which all other lands should look for spiritual life,” went straight to the heart of the educated people. The Society opened schools for boys, for women, for the depressed classes and also participated in Boy Scout organization. The Society opposed child marriages, advocated abolition of caste, and the uplift of the outcastes and amelioration of the condition of widows. It denounced race and colour prejudices. As early as 1903, Mrs. Besant avowed her political faith in these words: “India must be governed on the basis of Indian feelings, Indian traditions, Indian thought and Indian ideas.”

8 Geoffrey West, opct. p. 221
The contribution of Mrs. Annie Besant to Indian national movement is undisputedly remarkable and it paved the way for furthering the Struggle for the liberation of the country with a broad base readily prepared for the future leaders to continue the struggle. This thesis seeks to present the detailed study of the genesis, the spread of the Movement and its various aspects in the Madras Presidency with special reference to the Andhra region.

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The First World War between 1914-1918, brought in subtle changes in political dimensions in India. Public reactions to World War I in India are manifested in the demand for Home Rule for India by Mrs. Besant which is the genesis of the Home Rule Movement in India. Evaluation of the lasting contribution of the Home Rule Movement to the constitutional, political and social life of the country is made in this study. In 1904 Bal Gangadhar Tilak claimed Swaraj as the birth-right at the start of the Swadeshi movement but he did not define it as “complete
independence from the British” till much later. The other close colleagues of Tilak like Lala Lajpat Rai and Bipin Chandra Pal also did not visualize a total break with the British Empire until 1927. The Swaraj Party of Motilal Nehru and C.R. Das was very clear that their party prescribed Dominion Status for India within the British Commonwealth but there were other Congress leaders like Subhas Chandra Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru who chafed at this limited outlook from the Madras session of the Indian National Congress held in 1927 onwards.


9 Bipan Chandra, “India’s struggle for Independence”, New Delhi, 1987, p. 124
Nationalism and British Democracy”, details a graphic description of heroic struggle put forth by the people of Ireland for attaining Home Rule for Ireland. Some of the biographers detailed the biological sketch of the Mrs. Annie Besant as a Theosophist but not as a Home Ruler and a political activist in India. Other than this no substantial research was carried on the aspect of Home Rule Movement in the Madras Presidency with special reference to Andhra. Hence the present dissertation is intended to make a thorough study regarding the various aspects of the Home Rule agitation such as establishment various Home Rule Leagues with a special reference to Andhra region and of the Madras Presidency, the leaders, the people, the student participation, regular meetings and resolution passed and various other political and non-political dimensions of the Home Rule Movement are also thoroughly studied.

The other source material for this research is primarily works of Mrs. Annie Besant who was a prolific writer, a gifted orator and bold journalist. During her life time as a revolutionary, as a Theosophist, as a Feminist and as a Home Ruler, she produced several works of great eminence which are very useful for historical research. The volumes entitled “The Besant Spirit”, vols. I to V give a lot of information regarding the political ideology of Mrs. Besant with a special reference to
Indian context. For the biographical sketch and for her early formative years, Annie Besant’s “Autobiography”, provides a detailed account of her personnel life. Apart from her Autobiography there are several Biographies of Mrs. Besant written by people like C.P.Ramaswami Aiyar, Sri Prakash, William T.Stead, Geoffrey West and others are also consulted for the study. A large number of Autobiographies and Biographies in English, Telugu, Tamil and Malayalam provide lot of information for the purpose of the study. “History of Indian National Congress”, vol.1, written by B.Pattabhi Sitaramayya, “A Centenary History of Indian National Congress”, vol. 1, written by A.N.Ray, “Encyclopedia of Indian National Congress”, edited by A.M.Zaidi are also consulted. “The Hundred years of Hindu”, published in 1978 in connection with its centenary celebrations, written by Rangasami Parthasarathi is also taken into account. “Freedom Struggle and Dravidian Movement”, by P.Rama Murthy, “Political and Social Conflict in South India”, by Eugene F.Ireshick, “State Politics in India”, by Iqbal Narain are also taken into account. “The Freedom Struggle in Andhra Pradesh”, by M.Venkatarangaiya is consulted. Native Newspaper Reports, Fortnightly Reports, “New India”, “The Common weal”(these two papers, the former, a daily and the later, a weekly, were started by Mrs.
Besant “to press forward the coming changes in India and to claim steadily India’s place in the Empire”\(^{10}\) History of Freedom Movement files in A.P.State Archives, Hyderabad, Home Rule files in Theosophical Society Archives Madras, Confidential Reports, Police Reports, and Gazetteers and so on are also taken into consideration for preparation of this thesis.

*New India*, founded by Annie Besant, was essentially a propagandist paper dedicated to the cause of Home Rule for India. But at least till 1919 columns were open even to bitter opponents of the Movement. It carried an abundance of letters to the editor from readers all over India. Many of the editorials of *New India* were presented over the signature of the editor, Annie Besant. Even the articles of George Arundale and B.P. Wadia who were in Editorial Board are equally indispensable.

The pride of place among primary sources goes to newspapers and journals, most of which are available in English but of which an impressive volume belongs to Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam. *The Hindu and Madras Mail* are indispensable for any study of the first few decades of the twentieth century in South India. *The Indian Review* published by G.A. Natesan from

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\(^{10}\) Confidential Reports, September 1916, Nos. 652-55, T.N. Archieves, Madras
Madras was a monthly in English, which put across the views of the Moderates in a Congress. Another journal published in English at Madras was *Justice* which was a propagandist publication of the Justice Party, bitterly ranged against Annie Besant and her Home Rule Movement. *Indian Patriot* which was started by C. Karunakara Menon, who was formerly on the staff of *The Hindu*, had a pronounced nationalist zeal; attacked Annie Besant for causing discontent and division in the Congress ascertained that ‘she had absolutely no claim upon us, no right to expect us to follow her…. She came into our politics only yesterday’\(^{11}\).

The Library of the Theosophical Society at Adyar, which is a well organized institution, has clippings from *Justice* and *Non-Brahmin* and several other journals as a set of “Home Rule Scrap Books” and “Madras Native Newspaper Reports” which contained worthwhile material for the purpose of this research study. The Tamil Nadu Archives at Egmore, Chennai, The Library of the University of Madras at Chennai and Andhra Pradesh State Archives at Hyderabad preserved original Documents that provided primary source material including a collection of old copies of various news papers, which are fairly well preserved, for preparation of this thesis.

\(^{11}\) Indian Patriot, Madras, May 30, 1916
Another centre in Chennai which offers some primary data which is useful for the preparation of this thesis is the Sri C.P.Ramaswamy Aiyer Foundation in Mylapore. C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer was a Joint Secretary of the Home Rule League along with Jawaharlal Nehru and his letters to Annie Besant and various other office bearers do help in throwing light on many aspects of the organizational and functional aspects of the League. Much later, Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyer became the Diwan of Travancore State and occupied high office of importance in the Government of India. In later part of his life he became the admirer of the British rule in India and after this turn of his attitude he became unpopular and marginalized by most of the modern historians of India

Newspapers in English, Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam indeed to be consulted to gather the full impact of the Home Rule Movement in Madras Presidency. Among the Tamil Newspapers the ‘Swadesamitran’, Navasakthi, Desabhaktan and the Dravidian, provides valuable information for consultation. The Telugu Newspapers like ‘The Andhra Patrika, Krishna Patrika, and Desabhimani’ are useful for the purpose of the study. The Madras Mail, which ceased publication sometime in 1965 was very largely the mouthpiece of the British commercial
interests and reflected an intense hostility to the Home Rule Movement and to Annie Besant was also consulted to reflect the other side of the movement and the personality of Mrs. Besant. Another journal published in English at Madras was *Justice* which was a propagandist publication of the Justice Party, bitterly attacked Annie Besant and her Home Rule agitation. Non-Brahmin was another English journal that needs to be referred at this juncture, which also carried on a tirade against Annie Besant.

This dissertation is intended to study in detail and analyze the contribution of the Home Rule League as a mass movement that supported the Indian national struggle for independence during the crucial intermittent phase between the Moderate-Extremist rift, in its own way and the personal commitment and contribution of Annie Besant towards the same cause.

This thesis is divided into seven chapters.

1. The First Chapter is introduction dealing with the importance of the topic, its relevancy in the appropriate time-frame, bibliographical survey and cauterization.
2. In the Second Chapter, origin and growth of Madras Presidency including its geographical divisions, linguistic regions and consolidation of colonial power and so on are discussed.

3. The Third Chapter describes political training received by the people of Presidency in general and by the Andhras in particular and their preparedness in undertaking the Home Rule Movement.

4. The Fourth Chapter details the actual Home Rule activity in the Presidency, including a detailed study in Andhra region with emphasis on events, leaders and places and the life and personality formation of Mrs. Annie Besant, the chief architect of the Home Rule Movement in India.

5. The Fifth Chapter deals with the results of the Home Rule Movement, both positive and negative.

6. The Sixth Chapter is a study regarding the establishment of other organizations by Mrs. Besant, such as Y.M.I.A., Order of the Sons and Daughters of India, Women’s India Association, Boy Scout Movement, National Education which served as auxiliaries to the Home Rule League in furtherance of the movement.
7. The Seventh Chapter records the conclusion part of the dissertation. The novel agitation methods and the techniques that were put to use by Mrs. Besant in pursuit of her demand for Home Rule for India and over all spectrum of the Home Rule phase in India are summed up briefly in this chapter.

**Methodology**

This Research is basically an empirical study and hence Doctrinal Research Methodology is employed for conducting the study. All through the study objectivity of theme is maintained. The study is completely historical based on objective facts. For this study both primary and secondary sources have been consulted. The first and the foremost place among primary sources goes to news papers and journals, most of which are available in English and also in South Indian vernaculars. *New India, the Commonweal, the Hindu* and *Madras Mail* are indispensable for this study. *New India*, founded by Annie Besant herself, was basically a propagandist paper devoted to the cause of Home Rule for India. This paper even published opinions of the bitter opponents of the Movement, and remained impartial, at least till 1919. All the issues of this Paper and several other primary sources are preserved intact by the Theosophical Society Library, Research Center and Archives in Adyar. The Library also has clippings
from *Justice, Non-Brahmin, Madras Mail, the Hindu*, and from several other journals and magazines as a set of “Home Rule Scrap Books” and “Madras Native News Paper Reports”, which offer a treasure of information. As far as the secondary sources are concerned books authored by well reputed historians, Biographies and Autobiographies of the later day’s leaders of the Indian National Movement are also consulted.