CHAPTER II

SALT SATYAGRAHA

The year 1930 was an important year in the history of Indian National Movement. For in that year, Gandhiji led the famous Salt Satyagraha from Sabarmathi to Dandi. Following Gandhiji, in Tamil Nadu Rajaji led similar Satyagraha from Tiruchirappalli to Vedaranyam with the assistance of Gandhians like Sardar Vedaratnam Pillai. To understand the course of national movement relating to Salt Satyagraha in 1930 and other events that came after 1930 it is necessary to take note of the political events that occurred a few years prior to 1930. Although the year 1930 witnessed significant events like Salt Satyagraha and also the beginning of Civil Disobedient Movement, the struggle
against British Government entered into a new phase by 1928 itself.

This was the result of the emergence of a left wing within Congress. Although ideology based on socialism began to enter into Indian Politics after great Russian Revolution of 1917, this became more explicit when Union of Soviet Socialist Republics(USSR) had been celebrating its tenth anniversary in the year 1927. Drawn towards these ideals there arose a new section of national leaders among the younger generation of the Congress Party like Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose. It was at this time (1927), as referred in the previous chapter, the appointment of Simon Commission with a complete non-Indian members accentuated the discontentment of all political parties and groups.

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2 Ibid., p.147.

3 A.R. Desai, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, p.357.
In the atmosphere of political discontentment in the country, the All India Congress met at Madras in November 1927. This Congress was a milestone in the history of national movement. It passed a resolution to boycott Simon Commission's visit to the country. Another important resolution that was moved by Jawaharlal Nehru supported by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's group was that of Purna Swaraj or complete independence for India. On the basis of this resolution the session at Madras declared complete independence as the aim of the Congress Party.

On the other hand, the passing of independence resolution at Madras session evoked mixed opinions among the leaders of the Congress Party belonging to older generation. While accepting younger generation's demand for Purna Swaraj, they interpreted it to mean


dominion status within the British Empire. Leaders like Mothilal Nehru strongly advocated dominion status as the goal. Gandhiji described the independence resolution as "hastily conceived and thoughtlessly passed". In the year 1928 August, a conference of all parties met at Lucknow and accepted a draft constitution drawn up by a Committee under the chairmanship of Mothilal Nehru. The Nehru Report provided for a bicameral, sovereign parliament with same autonomous power as enjoyed by the dominion parliament within British empire such as Canada or Australia.

This question was also raised in the Calcutta session of the Congress in December 1928. It became an arena of political battle between the advocates of dominion status and the protagonists of immediate independence. Subhas Chandra Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru led the latter group. Gandhiji attended this Congress.

6 A.R. Desai, Social Background of Indian Nationalism, p. 388.

session. In this atmosphere of tension and uncertainty, Gandhiji reestablished his leadership. He was trying to restrain Jawaharlal Nehru and the young Congressman and to prevent a rift in the party. He mediated between the Nehru's, father and son and between the older generation which wanted a constitutional settlement and the new generation who were impatient for freedom and for a confrontation with the British Raj. Through Gandhiji's intervention a compromise was reached. Accordingly, it was decided, if the British did not grant dominion status to India within one year, the Congress would launch civil disobedience to wrest complete independence from Britain.

To this challenge, the British made no immediate response. But Lord Irwin, the Viceroy was perturbed by the prospect of civil disobedience. On 31st October, two months before the deadline announced in the

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9 They had been alienated by the rejection of separate decto-rates in the Nehru Report, quoted in Percival Spear, The Oxford History of Modern India, 1740-1975, p.351.
Calcutta session, Irwin announced that the "natural issue of India's Constitutional Progress" was dominion status and that a Round Table Conference would be called to discuss the next stage to be taken towards this objective. But the declaration came too late and was too timid to satisfy the Congress. Gandhiji then met the Viceroy in Delhi and asked for an assurance that the Round Table Conference should start its political labours on the basis of the recognition of full dominion status for India. The Viceroy pleaded for his inability to give such assurance. This led to the breakdown of negotiations.

The Congress session met at Lahore in this political atmosphere in December, 1929. It took the momentum decision to reject the Round Table Conference as an unsatisfactory demand for dominion status and to launch Civil Disobedience for complete independence.

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12 B.S.Baliga, Tanjore District Hand Book, p.105. See also, A.R.Desai, Social Background of Indian Nationalism, p.362.
It organised the first independence day celebration on 26th January 1930\textsuperscript{13}. As the Congress working Committee had no programme for Civil Disobedience and the campaign's direction was left in Gandhiji's hands\textsuperscript{14}. On 30th January 1930, Gandhiji published his eleven point demands such as prohibition, the reduction of land revenue to at least 50\%, the abolition of Salt Tax\textsuperscript{15}.

The Congress Committee which met at Sabarmathi in February 1930 invested Gandhiji and those working with him with full authority to lead and direct Civil Disobedience campaign\textsuperscript{16}. Although there were many issues to be fought for, Gandhiji wanted to fight on one clear

\begin{enumerate}
\item[A.R.Desai, Social Background of Indian Nationalism, p.362. See also Sumit Sarkar, Modern India, 1885 - 1947, p.284.]
\item[David Arnold, The Congress in Tamil Nadu, p.114.]
\item[Ishwari Prasad, New History of India, (Allahabad: The Indian Press, 1955), p.444. See also, A.R.Desai, Social Background of Indian Nationalism, p.363.]
\end{enumerate}
issue that would dramatise the exploitive nature of colonial rule and symbolize with the identification of Congress with masses. So he decided to fight on the issue of Salt Tax. In a letter to Lord Irwin on 2nd March 1930, Gandhiji explained that unless eleven demands were met by the government he would launch Salt Satyagraha on 11th March 1930. He further stated that if his movement was not started, violent movements would break out. He also explained that he wanted to conduct the movement without any violence. When the ultimatum was predictably rejected, he decided to launch the Civil Disobedience Movement\(^17\).

Gandhi set out from Sabarmathi Ashramam on March 12 of 1930 at Ahamedabad, with 78 selected Satyagrahis and walked 240 miles to Dandi where he intended to make salt from sea water\(^18\).


Perhaps of all Gandhiji's campaigns, this was the most dramatic and had the greatest emotional impact. Gandhiji and his followers planned to break the salt law. As he walked, villagers flocked to see Gandhiji on his way to break Salt law. Volunteers poured in his ranks. In large towns, a fever of enthusiasm grew among the lower middle classes. Finally on 6th April 1930, Gandhiji was arrested before he could offer Satyagraha and make Salt at Dharasana19.

Demonstrations were organised throughout India against Gandhiji's arrest. In Bombay riots broke out. In North Western Frontier, there had been frequent arisings against British rule. Boycott of British cloth was higher in Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and in Uttar Pradesh the peasants were called upon to withhold all payments of revenue. In Central Provinces Satyagraha was launched against Forest Laws. In Karnataka, a successful no tax campaign was launched20.

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19 Biplan Chandra, India's Struggle for Independence, pp.167 - 170.

With these National developments all over India, Tamil Congressmen were at first out of step. When the Congress working Committee suggested a boycott of legislatures, in July 1929 as a part of Civil Disobedience programme, there were vehement protests from Tamil Nadu Members of Legislative Council (MLC). In anticipation of elections in 1929 or early 1930, Srinivasa Iyengar, Rajagopalachariar and Tamil Congress men of all perceptions were out compaing against the Justice and Independent Parties. Vallabhabhai Patel who attended the provincial Congress at Vedaranyam in August 1929 as said previously, also was dissatisfied with the situation in Tamil Nadu. Tamil Congress Men seemed indifferent to the coming battle which the all India leaders foresaw. Irwin’s announcement was received with enthusiasm by some Congressmen in Tamil Nadu. The decision of the Lahore Congress to withdraw from the legislature was either bitterly resented or defied.

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21 Fortnightly Report, (confidential), first half of March, 1929.

22 David Arnold, The Congress in Tamil Nadu, pp.115-118. See also, The Hindu, 29, March 1930.
Fine Congressmen like A. Rangasami Iyengar obediently resigned his seat in the Assembly, he was of the opinion that Civil Disobedience would be neither popular nor widespread.

Difference of opinion within the members of Tamil Nadu Congress rose high. Srinivasa Iyengar resigned as Tamil Nadu Congress Committee President in September 1929 and withdrew from the Congress altogether after the Lahore Session. His successor C.N. Muthuranga Mudaliar resigned in March 1930, having struggled half-heartedly to resist the boycott of Madras Legislature of which he had been a member. Under the circumstances, Rajagopalachariar was the obvious replacement and hence he returned to head the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee since April 1930.

23 Saroja Sundararajan, March to freedom in Madras presidency, p. 467. See also extracts from The Mail, 1930 - 1931, Madras, p. 176.

Rajaji after becoming the president of Tamil Nadu Congress felt that Salt Satyagraha should not be confined to North India alone and it should be conducted in South India also. Unlike, the leaders in Andhra who organised dashes to nearest salt creeks and beaches with little thought as to how the struggle would develop, Rajaji planned his programme without any haste or violence. His concern was more with initiating Gandhiji's dramatic march than violating salt laws 25.

To make his programme successful, he took more than a month for preparations. He, as president of the Tamil Nadu Congress moved its head quarters from Madras to Trichirapalli in March 1930. Because he considered Trichirappalli as the suitable place for launching the programme of Civil Disobedience Movement 26.


26 "under secretary safe file" no.687,dt. 31, may 1930.TNA, see also Bahirathan, *Maraikkattil Oru Manikkam*, p.44.
T.S.S. Rajan a popular doctor in Trichirappalli town and a sincere follower of Rajaji was made as secretary of Tamil Nadu Congress Committee. A working Committee was also formed consisting of six members and Vedaratnam Pillai was one of the Members of working Committee.

Rajaji then convened the Tamil Nadu Provincial Congress Committee at Vellore under his Presidency on 3rd April 1930. The Congress leaders such as Salem Vijayaragavachariar, Varadharajulu and T.S.S Rajan participated in the conference. It was in this Congress Vedaratnam Pillai not only participated but played a greater role especially when there came a question of selecting the venue for Salt Satyagraha.

Generally, the Salt Satyagraha would have been held at Tuticorin and others suggested Adirampatinam as venue. It was at this time, Vedaratham Pillai sugested that Salt Satyagraha should

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28 Ibid., p.260. see also, B.S.Baliga, Tanjore District Hand Book, p.106.
be launched in Vedaranyam and he would make all necessary arrangements for the success of the programme. This drew the attention of all Congressmen attending the conference. Rajaji was much pleased with the suggestion of Vedaratnam Pillai and appreciated his enthusiasm. Finally the Congress at Vellore decided to launch the Salt Satyagraha at Vedaranyam.

At this time, J.A. Thorne was the Collector of Tanjore district. He did not expect that Vedaranyam would be chosen as the battle-field by the Tamil Nadu Congress. He was of the opinion the relations between the officials and the people were quite amicable. He also wondered, why this small unimportant and one of small towns situated on the coast in a sandy and unproductive region was chosen for this programme. Later, he himself revised his opinion and felt that the

29 Sudandira Sangu, 24, December 1931, Tamil Monthly Journal.
30 Saroja Sundararajan, March to Freedom in Madras Presidency, p.467.
place was chosen for the following reasons. First, it was the scene of Tamil Nadu Congress Conference in 1929 organised by Vedaratnam Pillai and was conducted under the presidency of the National leader Sardar Vallabhabhai Patel\textsuperscript{32}. Secondly, it was favourably situated near Agasthiampalli Salt factory and there were salt swamps also. Thirdly, it was a place of pilgrimage. Fourthly, above all, it was the home of a popular and active Congress worker Vedaratnam Pillai\textsuperscript{33}.

Vedaratnam Pillai's next role was to help Rajaji in the preparations of Salt Satyagraha. His help to Rajaji was to obtain donations from the people of his area. Rajaji too felt that the success of the programme needed financial aid from the public. For this, he made a tour to some of the places in Tanjore district. In this Vedaratnam Pillai accompanied Rajaji. They visited Tiruvadi, Tanjore, Mannargudi and other places. At the

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., p.156.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., See also, The Hindu, 11, April 1930.
sametime they explained to the people about the significance of Salt Satyagraha programme. They also instructed the volunteers to adhere to stick non-violence and prepared to march in batches to break salt law\(^34\).

The route chosen for Satyagraha was from Trichirappalli to Veedaranyam. In this route, they had to march through the places of Grand Anaicut, Tiruvadi, Tanjore, Kumbakonam, Mannargudi, Thiruthuraipoondi and finally to Vedaranyam\(^35\). Rajaji also received a number of applications for participating in his Salt Satyagraha from various parts of Tamil Nadu. He scrutinised the applications thoroughly and selected 300 persons at first and then on further scrutiny he selected 100 persons. There were representations from the city of Bombay too. The number of Persons selected from different districts of Tamil Nadu and other places are given below.

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\(^{34}\) The Civil Disobedience Movement File, p.156. (TNA).

\(^{35}\) Ibid., See also, The Hindu, 1, May 1930.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Name of the Place</th>
<th>No. of Persons</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Tiruchengode</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Madurai</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Tanjore</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Trichirappalli</td>
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<td>Bombay (Tamilian)</td>
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<td>6.</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>Ramnad</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>Madras</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>Tirunelveli</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>North Arcot</td>
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Including Rajaji and Vedaratnam Pillai there were 100 in all. Although Rajaji was the leader of the campaign, he selected Vedaratnam Pillai as his lieutenant for launching Salt Satyagraha.  

MAP SHOWING VEDARANYAM SALT SATYAGRAHA MARCH FROM TIRUCHI TO AGASTHYAMPALLI (150 MILES)

QUOTED IN POORNACHANDRAN S M.Phil., UNPUBLISHED
They decided to start their march on 13th April 1930, the auspicious day of Tamil New year. It was decided that in every morning and evening about five miles to be covered. Propaganda was to be carried on along the route and special attention was to be paid on Adhi Dravidas who were to be wooed by volunteers who would clean their cheris (residing place) for them. Vedaranyam was to be reached on the morning of 28th April 1930.37

After the route was chalked out from Trichirappalli to Vedaranyam. Vedaratnam Pillai was entrusted with the task of making preparations for food and shelter to the volunteers on the entire route. He visited almost all the places on the route before and requested them to extend warm welcome, hospitality to the volunteers. He also instructed the people of the villages on the route that there should not be any discrimination on the basis of religion or caste. He met all the sections of the people with the inclusion of Muslims and Adhi Dravidias and made adequate arrangements to welcome the volunteers.38

37 The Civil Disobedience Movement File, p.158. (TNA).
38 Bahirathan, Maraikkattil Oru Manikkam, p.54.
In spite of the efforts made by Vedaratnam Pillai, in matters of hospitality the Satyagrahis had experienced some difficulties on their route. This was mainly because of the drastic action taken by J.A. Thorne the Collector of Tanjore district on the Satyagrahis. He wanted to suppress the movement even at its beginning. He planned to arrest Rajaji at Grand Anaicut on his entering the Tanjore district. But he received specific instructions from the Madras Government not to arrest Rajaji at that stage\(^39\). But he issued circulars to the Sub-Divisional Magistrates and the District Superintendent of Police indicating the manner in which the march should be treated.

(a) The volunteers should not be interfered with so long as they behaved in an orderly manner.

(b) The provisions of section 157 were to be made generally known to subordinate officials and the public along the route in order that persons likely to welcome the volunteers should receive a warning that such hospitality would amount to criminal offences and would be punished\(^40\).

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\(^39\) USSF NO : 699/D, dt. 8, June 1930, TNA. See also The Civil Disobedience Movement File, p.159. (TNA).

\(^40\) Ibid., p.160.
He also wrote to the Presidents of the District Boards and four Taluk Boards and to the Chairman of Tanjore, Kumbakonam and Mannargudi Municipal Councils and the Chatram Departments about the circular issued to the officials and asked them to see that no place or premises under their immediate control were put at the disposal of the party and to assist in dissuading the public from any encouragement to the party. On 19th April he distributed printed Tamil notices along the route of the marchers. The following was the text of the circular issued by the District Collector.41

"It is understood that a batch of people intend to start from Trichnopoly on 13th instant to reach Vedaranyam via Tanjore to Mannargudi with a view to commit offences under the Madras Salt Act under Section 141 of Indian Penal Code. This assembly will constitute an unlawful assembly who ever harbours or assembles in any house or premises in his occupation or charge or under his

41 USSF NO: 661, dt. 9, April 1939 (TNA).
control any person who have been hired or otherwise engaged for joining an unlawful assembly, knowing that such persons have been so engaged of members of such an assembly, will be liable to be punished with imprisonment for a term of six months and more"\(^42\).

"The gathering includes men belonging to other districts with their object, which is to violate the law. There is no reason why persons from other districts should come to this district, break the law and cause trouble to the people of this district. Therefore, it is the duty of everyone to discourage their band and withhold money, supplies and other help. Whoever acts in their manner in contravention of the provisions of the section 157 of Indian Penal Code will be prosecuted"\(^43\).

\(^{42}\) Ibid.,

\(^{43}\) Ibid.,

U.S.S.F No. 699-F (Madras), September 1930, p.96.

See also, *The Hindu*, 11, April 1930.
Really this circular had created some threats on some of the well wishers of Vedaratnam Pillai. They feared that if Vedaratnam Pillai had taken part in the movement, then he would be deprived of his salt fields. They also advised him to transfer his salt fields to someone else. But Vedaratnam Pillai was not afraid of this circular and he did not mind for losing his property for a good cause.

At the same time these circulars could not minimise the spirit of Satyagrahis too. As they started their march from the house of T.S.S. Rajan with the spirit inculcated by Gandhi they were ready to face any difficulty and they did not mind the repressive activities of the government officials like J.A. Thorn the Collector of Tanjore district. On their enroute they were marching by singing the song of Namakkal Kavignar V. Ramalingam Pillai. The song was also composed by him for the occasion.

The song, highlights the non-violent struggle thus:
"Here comes a war without blood, without Sword All those who believe in the eternity, truth Join"\textsuperscript{44}.

Even before the start of Satyagraha march, Vedaratnam Pillai under the advice of Rajaji took up the responsibility of dividing the members into different committees by assigning appropriate duties such as rural service, liaison service, maintenance of cooperation and unity between the leadership and members of Satyagraha volunteers\textsuperscript{45}. Hence, there was perfect discipline among the Satyagrahis. Even Thorn, the Collector of Tanjore district himself remarked that there was excellent discipline among the Satyagrahis. They themselves were obedient to the control of leadership and they were in no way unruly\textsuperscript{46}.

\textsuperscript{44} Namakkal Ramalingam Pillai Songs, quoted in Saroja Sundararajan \textit{March to freedom in Madras Presidency}, p.468.

\textsuperscript{45} Bahirathan, \textit{Maraikkattil Oru Manikkam}, p.45.

\textsuperscript{46} The Civil Disobedience Movement File, p.163.
At the same time, one can not deny the fact that the provisions of section 157 issued by the collector had its effect. In many places, the chatrams and chawadis were closed to them. At Koviladi, as the chatram was closed, they were accommodated in the riverbed\(^7\). At Thirukkattupalli, they were accommodated in a temple. At Sattanur, they slept at the outdoors of a chatram. At Kumbakonam, a shed was arranged for their accommodation. Yet, there was enthusiasm among the people in every village. Everywhere they were given a warm welcome. In some places they were received with "aarathi"\(^8\) (the ancient Tamil custom of receiving the dignitaries normally done by the ladies). Public meetings were also arranged in several places. At Tiruvadi, about 1000 persons attended and in Tanjore, about 5000 persons attended the public meeting. At Kumbakonam, the Satyagrahis were received by about 1000

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\(^7\) S.F. No. 687 (Madras), 31, May 1930, p.84. See also Extracts from The Mail, 1901-1947, 15, March 1930.

\(^8\) Bahirathan, Maraikkattil Oru Manikkam, p.45. See also, Native Newspaper Report, 1930, p.704.
persons. At Mannargudi, arrangements were made by the Municipal Council to give a welcome address to the Satyagrahis. Somehow this was prevented.

In this, a special mention had to be made on the role played by Vedaratnam Pillai in the areas of Thiruthuraipoondi. For J.A. Thorn and his officials were very strict in enforcing the provisions of section 157, which prohibited any help to the volunteers. On 25th April 1930, the Satyagrahis arrived at Tiruthuraipoondi. There was a chatram by name Thenpathy Ramachandra Naidu Choultry. The managing trustee of this chatram was very close to Vedaratnam Pillai. The authorities were ready to arrest anybody who dared to provide food and shelter to the volunteers. Ramachandra Naidu intended to give

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50 S.F. No : 687, pp.85, 101-102. See also, Interview with Khakhaji Ramasamy Iyer, Freedom fighter, Mannargudi, 10, October 1993.

Satyagrahis accommodation in his chatram (rest house). But the Collector sent word to Ramachandra Naidu and advised him not to provide accommodation to the Satyagrahis in the Chatram. He also warned him that he would be arrested if he provided the Chatram for the Satyagrahis\(^5^2\). Ramachandra Naidu became hesitant. At this time Vedaratnam Pillai approached him and told that the volunteers were at his mercy. This had the desired effect on Ramachandra Naidu. He provided the volunteers not only the Chatram for stay but also served food for the volunteers\(^5^3\). The next day Ramachandra Naidu was arrested by the police.

The news of the arrest spread quickly. At Ayakkaranbulam and Thagatur the next camp nobody came forward to receive the volunteers as they were afraid of government's action. The police did not allow anybody other than the volunteers to walk on the road\(^5^4\). But the police was not able to defeat the discreate
ways of Vedaratnam Pillai who went into the village of Thagattur in advance, convinced the people, urged them to provide food to the volunteers without the knowledge of the police. He devised a novel plan of issuing code chits through urchins to the volunteers for getting their food and water at places secretly mentioned in the chits where they could find meals and water in plenty. They did this, when the police was at a distance and taking rest. After having made all these arrangements secretly Vedaratnam Pillai slipped from that area and went to the next place to arrange food to the volunteers\textsuperscript{55}.

The next and the last place that the Satyagrahis had to reach was Vedaranyam. The officials had camped at Vedaranyam before the arrival of Satyagrahis. Collector Thorn gave strict instructions to the officials to put an effective check to the march of Satyagrahis and thus preventing them from entering the salt beds. In the midst of police restrictions, Vedaratnam Pillai carried on his work with missionary

\textsuperscript{55} History of Freedom Movement File, No : 101, p.29. (TNA).
zeal. Even before the arrival of police at Vedaranyam, to accommodate the Satyagrahis he destroyed the tobacco crop, which was mature for harvest in his three acres of land and erected a huge thatched shed on this land\textsuperscript{56}. On the evening of 28\textsuperscript{th} April 1930, the Satyagrahi's arrived at Vedaranyam. A 21 gun shot salute was given as a welcome to volunteers. A public meeting was arranged. Vedaratnam Pillai presided over the meeting\textsuperscript{57}. Rajaji gave a speech in the meeting. Neither he nor his followers were interfered with\textsuperscript{58}. Then Rajaji, Vedaratnam Pillai and other organisers were taken into procession through the main streets of Vedaranyam town\textsuperscript{59}.

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\textsuperscript{56} Bahirathan, \textit{Maraikkattil Oru Manikkam}, p.50. See also, History of Freedom Movement File, No : 101, p.29. (TNA).

\textsuperscript{57} The Civil Disobedience Movement File, p.163. See also, G.O. No: 2299, Law Department (General) 28, May 1930. (TNA).

\textsuperscript{58} The Civil Disobedience Movement File, p.163. See also, S.Natarajan \textit{Sundardira Sinthanaigal}, (Tamil) Madras: Vanathi publications, 1972, p.130.

\textsuperscript{59} Bahirathan, \textit{Maraikkattil Oru Manikkam}, p.55.
The volunteers spent their night in the camp. The camp was protected in great vigilance. There was no activity on the next day of 29th April 1930. That day was kept by the Satyagrahis as a day of fasting and prayer. Rajaji fixed at 3 am of early morning of 30 April, 1930 for the collection of salt from the sea. Accordingly, on the morning of that day, Rajaji led a contingent of volunteers and went to Agasthiampalli salt swamp half a mile away from Vedaranyam secretly without the notice of the police and collected salt. The police arrested Rajaji and tried immediately and sentenced him to a fine of Rs.200 and imprisonment for six months. He was sent at once to Trichirappalli prison.

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After Rajaji's leadership, K. Santhanam, a member of his ashram at Tiruchengodu had to take the lead for the Satyagraha. For the next few days, Satyagrahis went to swamp and collected salt. On 3rd May 1930, the volunteers were allowed to collect as much as they wished. Then a surprise raid was made. A vigorous tussle took place between the police and the volunteers. In this tussle Mrs. Rukmani Lakshmipathi (who later 1937, Rajaji Cabinet in Madras Presidency Deputy Speaker of Assembly) was also involved. Half a dozen of volunteers fainted. Santhanam was arrested and sentenced to six months simple imprisonment in addition to a fine of Rs.200.  

On 5th May 1930, the Satyagraha was led by the local organiser Vedaratnam Pillai. On that day fifty more volunteers arrived from Madura. As usual Vedaratnam Pillai collected Salt from the sea. He was arrested by the police and as in the case of others he was also sentenced to six months imprisonment and a fine of Rs.200. 

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63 Government Order No. 2093, (Madras), 12, May 1930. See also The Civil Disobedience Movement File, 1930-31, p.164. (TNA).

64 USSF No: 699/D, 8, June 1930. (TNA).
In this case, Vedaratnam Pillai refused to pay the fine and the imprisonment also extended. He also faced many difficulties at the hands of the officials. All his salt swamps were confiscated by the officials. His property was seized and auctioned.

After this, a Deputy Collector met Appakutti Pillai, the father of Vedaratnam Pillai to urge his son to tender apology for his deeds. He also promised that the confiscated property would be restored to the family if Vedaratnam Pillai rendered his apology. But Vedartnam Pillai's father did not lose heart and replied that he preferred the imprisonment of his son than his surrender to the Britishraj. But the properties were restored to Vedaratnam Pillai's family after a few days of Gandhi-Irwin Pact.

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65 G.O. No: 2299, Law Dept, (General) 25, May 1930. See also, Civil Disobedience Movement File, p.3 and David Arnold, The Congress in Tamil Nadu, pp.121-122.


67 Bahirathan, Maraikkattil Oru Manikkam, p.62.

Following the arrest of Vedaratnam Pillai, there were some tension at Vedaranyam. The Satyagrahis aroused local sympathy and local support. Volunteers from the neighbour hood joined the Satyagrahis. There was an attempt to boycott the officials who were camping at Vedaranyam and Agastiyam Palli. On 6th May the Sub-Divisional Magistrate published a notice under section 144 forbidding the public to attend the Satyagraha meetings. There were also lathi charges on the those who defied the order. Afterwards a few of the volunteers at Vedaranyam were arrested. At Tanjore, Venkatakrishna Pillai was arrested and sentenced to a year's vigours imprisonment. But the embargo against the arrest of rank and file was still maintained by government, and therefore it was not within the power of the Collector to arrest the whole Vedaranyam party. However, the situation was rather embrassing. A large number of police and salt officers were immobilized and

69 The Civil Disobedience Movement File, pp.164-165. (TNA).

as the satyagrahis now proposed to form three or four
camps in the neighbourhoods, the work of keeping them
under control had became more difficult for the police.\footnote{Ibid., p.165.}

On 14th May, 1930, Mrs. Lakshmipathi was arrested. On 21st May, M.V. Swaminatha Chetty of Shiyali was
arrested at Kumbakonam and sentenced to 18 months
rigourous imprisonment. T.S.S.Rajan who had kept away
from Vedaranyam for some time appeared on the morning
of 29th May 1930. He was arrested and was putup for
trail on 31st May. He was sentenced to one year's
imprisonment. After this, the camp at Vedaranyam
dismantled in a few days.\footnote{Ibid., p.165. See also Madras Native Newspaper (TNA) Report, 1930 and Sudandira Sangu, p.705.}

Apart from Salt Sathyagraha at Vedaranyam,
simultaneously as there had been large scale picketings
in many of the places. The Congress in Tamil Nadu
organised picketings of foreign cloth and against toddy
shops during the months from May to August 1930. On
July 7th, six Congress agitators were arrested which led
a large crowd to sack liquor shops. In Coimbatore and Salem, many of the picketeers were arrested. In the ports of Madras and Tuticorin, many unemployed handloom weavers were taken by police during the month of August. In Madurai, the discontentment of the poor was channelled into the mainstream of Civil Disobedient Movement by the middle class young activists like N.M.R. Subbaraman.

In the district of Tanjore Vedaratnam Pillai and his brother Somasundaram were running a textile shop at the west street of Vedaranyam and sold foreign cloths to the public as well as to the retail shop owners in the neighbouring village. In pursuance of Civil Disobedience Movement, they abandoned the business of textiles and closed the shop. As a result they had to incur a great financial loss of rupees. 20,000/-.

David Arnold, The Congress in Tamil Nadu, pp.127-128.
On seeing the Salt Satyagrahas, picketing of foreign clothes and toddy shops and other programmes of Civil Disobedience all over India, in almost all places, the British Government took severe measures against picketing. It issued a number of ordinances under press ordinance, 67 newspapers and 55 printing presses had been closed. The number of political prisoners swelled to 90000 during this period. It released Gandhiji and other members in January 1931 after the Gandhi-Irwin Pact was concluded. Under the terms of the Pact, the government agreed to stop repression and release political prisoners excluding those convicted of violent offences. Gandhiji on his side, consented to withdraw Civil Disobedience Movement and stood for the participation of the Congress in the Round Table Conference which would discuss scheme for a constitution of India, of which "Federalism is an essential part". Gandhiji soon after sailed for England and attended the Second Round Table Conference. Gandhiji, after his return to India in December 1931,

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74 A.R. Desai, Social Background of Indian Nationalism, p.365 and Sumit Sarkar, Modern India, 1885-1947, p.310.
asked Lord Wellington the new Viceroy for an interview to discuss matters. The latter however declined. The Congress however decided to revive the Civil Disobedience movement when the negotiations between the Congress and the government finally broke down. Gandhiji and Vallabhabhai Patel were arrested at daybreak on 4th January 1932. The Government issued a number of ordinances. There were violences and riots in many places. The Congress Organisation was banned. Practically all Congress leaders were arrested.

In Tamil Nadu before the revival of Civil Disobedience Movement, just a few days before the arrest of Gandhiji on 4th January 1931, there existed no cordial relationship between the policemen and the Congressmen of Tamil Nadu. This was evident from some of the

75 Sumit Sarkar, Modern India, p.310.
76 David Arnold, The Congress in Tamil Nadu, p.136.
77 Ibid.,
incidents that had taken place in Thirunelveli District in which Vedaratnam Pillai and other Congressmen were intimidated by the police unnecessarily. On 19th December, 1931, the Tamil Nadu provincial council of agriculturists and labourers arranged for a function at Tirunelveli to honour Vedaratnam Pillai for his remarkable services during Salt Satyagraha movement at Vedaranyam. The function was inaugurated by A.Vaidhyanatha Iyer of Madurai and the meeting was presided over by Kovai Ayyamuthu. Many Congressmen in the meeting lauded his services. The title Sardar (meaning Iron man in Hindi) was conferred on him in this function. From then onwards, he was called as Sardar Vedaratnam Pillai.

Afterwards, Kovai Ayyamuthu Pillai and Vedaratnam Pillai made a wide tour of the Thirunelveli District. They also attended many meetings and spread the ideals of Congress movement. At the public meeting of

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Sattankulam on 21\textsuperscript{st} December 1931, Vedaratnam Pillai explained the role played by the local people of Vedaranyam and their help to the Salt Satyagraha. In the course of his speech he told an incident at the time of Salt Satyagraha in Vedaranyam in which a barber took a vow not to shave the policemen whom he considered as an agent of the British Raj. When he refused to offer a shave one policemen who came to his shop, as a customer he was taken to task by the policeman. He also told another incident in which a Desikar was punished by the police for using derogative words against the British Government. Vedaratnam Pillai narrated these incidents in order to kindle a spirit of nationalism among the people. It was at this time, the Sub-Magistrate of Sathankulam was passing through that place. He happened to hear the speech of Vedaratnam Pillai. He felt that his speech had hurted the British Government as well as the officials. The Sub-Magistrate then sent the Sub-Inspector and instructed him to arrest Kovai Ayyamuthu and Vedaratnam Pillai for their inflammatory speeches at the meeting. They were also arrested by the police and later they were released on bail\textsuperscript{79}.

\textsuperscript{79}Bahirathan, \textit{Maraikkattil Oru Manikkam}, pp.100-103.
It is said that there were incidents of conflict between the police and the Congressmen at some places. About 404 Congressmen were arrested and convicted in January 1932 in Tamil Nadu. In Madras City during the months of January and February 1932, small bands of picketeers were posted to attract crowds and to provoke police aggression. On 25th January 1932, when Mrs. Rukmani Lakshmipathi was distributing leaflets advocating boycott of foreign goods the police anticipating violence arrested about 200 persons. No wonder, this kind of conflict between the government and Congress continued at the time of the revival of Civil Disobedience Movement.

It was at this time, Vedaratnam Pillai was selected as the leader of Tanjore district to propagate the importance of Civil Disobedience Movement among the people. He issued pamphlets to every taluk of the district. The distribution of pamphlets led to the arrest of Vedaratnam Pillai. Such pamphlet did not carry any harsh words against the authorities on the

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other hand they infused words the spirit of nationalism. For instance the following is the content of one such pamphlet⁸¹.

"My mother country is God to me; the physique I possess is the result of eating the grains produced by her and hence I shall sacrifice my body and mind for the welfare of Bharat Matha; I shall sacrifice everything in the service of my country; I shall make my family join me wholeheartedly in the noble cause of service to the nation; I shall consider all men as brothers; I shall see that my countrymen do not consume toddy and liquor; I shall lead a simple life and use "Swadeshi" goods; I shall put on Khadi dress regularly and exhort others to do the same. I shall chant "Vande Mataram" throughout my life and strive to get freedom for my mother country".

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⁸¹ T. Krishnamoorthi, Sardar Vedaratnam Pillai Avargalin Valkkai Varalaru, p.32.
Despite the contents of the pamphlets the police determined to take action against Vedaratnam Pillai at any cost. He was arrested and sentenced to six months's imprisonment. First he was sent to Madurai Jail where he acquainted with Duraisamy Pillai. Then he was transferred to Vellore Jail\textsuperscript{82}. Although incidents of this type happened in many places of Tamil Nadu, when compared to North India, Civil Disobedience Movement was less intensive in Tamil Nadu. According to David Arnold\textsuperscript{83}, this was mainly because a section of the Congressmen in Tamil Nadu believed in constitutional fight against British raj than direct action.

The result was that Tamil Nadu Congress could not maintain its defiance of the Raj for long. The weight of the repression was too great and Congressmen began to doubt the value of trying to continue their campaign against such odds. By April 1932, the Civil Disobedience Movement had disintegrated, the only activities were

\textsuperscript{82} Bahirathan, \textit{Maraikkattil Oru Manikkam}, p.77.

\textsuperscript{83} David Arnold, \textit{The Congress in Tamil Nadu}, p.128.
occasional conferences secretly held in fields or temples, the circulation of cyclostyled leaflets and the news sheets and minor instance of incendiarism\(^\text{84}\).

As long as Rajaji was the President of Tamil Nadu Congress he continued upto 1933\(^\text{85}\) he was the link between Gandhian high command and Tamil Nadu Congress, other leaders were inevitably junior partners. It was during the period, the Congress in Tamil Nadu for some time worked for Constructive programmes like Harijan uplift etc. Previously in the Madras Province, the Justice Party had championed the cause of untouchables. From 1932 onwards, the Congress established a claim to have advanced their interests\(^\text{86}\).

\[\text{84} \quad \text{David Arnold, The Congress in Tamil Nadu, pp.130-131, 136-137.} \]

\[\text{85} \quad \text{Ibid., p.137.} \]

\[\text{86} \quad \text{Chokkalingam and K. Kamaraj, pp. 12-13, Almanack and Directory of Madras and Southern India, 1932, (Madras, 1932), pp.309-310, quoted in David Arnold, The Congress in Tamil Nadu, p.144.} \]
In the district of Tanjore, Vedaratnam Pillai took up the cause of Harijan uplift. At Vedaranyam, itself he started a Harijan welfare Association. Vedaratnam used to take along with him 50 or 100 workers belonging to his Association and visit the harijan cheries and cleaned their streets every month. He taught them to help their streets and their areas clean. At times he used to organise common dining with them along with the members of this association. The members belonged to higher castes also joined in this common dining. He worked for the uplift of the Harijans in six ways (1) Temple Entry, (2) Cleaning their areas, (3) common dining, (4) allotting of house pattas, (5) services in elections, (6) Educational uplift. As regards his services to Harijans, more details are given in the subsequent chapter.

Like Vedaratnam Pillai in Tanjore District, Vaidhyanatha Ayyar in Madurai District and T.S. Avinasilingam Chettiar in Coimbatore and others

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87 The Hindu, 20, June 1933, quoted in David Arnold, The Congress in Tamil Nadu, p.146.
followed Gandhi's constructive programmes. Gandhi himself in his tour to Tamil Nadu in 1933-34 collected Rs.10,000 for the Harijan movement mostly of which was spent on wells, roads and water supply etc. The Harijan movement also opened up a new front in Tamil Nadu against the government at a time when Civil Disobedience Movement had died out. The government also feared that the Congressmen would make political capital from the Harijan issue. Movements like this served to keep the Congress active in Tamil Nadu during this period.

With the publication of white paper on the proposed Indian Constitution in March 1933, the general character of future Provincial and Central Governments was made known. Agitation was no longer likely to affect the of the proposed Government of India Act. Since 1933, in Tamil Nadu, Rangasami Ayyangar took up the initiative in proping the abandonment of Civil Disobedience and


the substitution of constitutional work as Congress programme. He also argued that Civil Disobedience, although it had produced unexpectedly strong wave of nationalist feeling, had been beaten to a standstill by government repression. He further argued that the new constitution would offer Provincial Congressmen their demands for nearly 20 years and it was through them that the party's practical ambitions could be fulfilled.

There was also a general consensus in the Tamil Nadu Congress in mid 1930's that this was the only course possible. At the all India level, although Gandhiji said that he was unable to participate in a parliamentary programme, most of his associates were enthusiastic that it should be adopted as the Congress programme. The all India Congress which met at Patna in

92 *The Hindu*, 7, April 1933, quoted in David Arnold, *The Congress in Tamil Nadu*, p.149.
mid May 1933 approved the abandonment of Civil Disobedience and the adoption of a constitutional programme to be carried out by the Congress through its Parliamentary Board. The first task was to elect candidates and organise the campaigns for election to the central Assembly scheduled for November 1934. In contrast with Gandhiji's negative attitude towards reorientation of Congress strategy, Rajaji rapidly established himself as one of the leading spokesman for the new policy. As early as February 1933, he had remarked that Congress leaders were not like religious fanatics who would for ever stick to a particular policy, adding that if it were proved that the boycott of federal assembly and the provincial councils under the future constitution would result in irreparable harm to the country, the Congress would not boycott legislatures. With Civil Disobedience abandoned, Rajaji's regional base was strengthened.

The result was that the Congress which had been boycotting the entry of legislature after the Montague

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Chelmsford Reforms, now decided to enter into legislature after the abandonment of Civil Disobedience Movement in 1934. In the interim period from 1920 to early 1930's, both the provincial legislature and the ministry under dynarcy were dominated by the Justice Party or by independents like P. Subbarao. It is also true that a section of the Congress known as Swarajists who had succeeded from the All India Congress on the question of entry into legislature stood in the elections and won some seats in the provincial legislature against the Justice Party candidates. But they could not form ministries. Now the situations had been changed in Tamil Nadu. The Congress Party under the leadership of Rajaji gained some popularity as a result of Satyagrahas and other programmes of Civil Disobedience Movement. Besides, it took up the constructive programmes like Harijan movement. All these had naturally given a weight to the Congress Party.

It was in this atmosphere as per the decision of Patna Congress of 1933 the Tamil Nadu Congress Party decided to participate in the coming elections. In responding to Patna Congress decision, the ban on
Congress organisations had been lifted. The first round was the elections to the Central Legislative Assembly in November 1934. Congress candidates for the seven Assembly constituencies covering Tamil Nadu were chosen in July and August 1934 on the basis of recommendations by local party workers and sympathisers. Rajan was the candidate for Tanjore and Trichirappalli Constituency.

The year 1934 was the first occasion on which the Congress could devote all its attention and resources to the Assembly contests. It was also the first opportunity to use strength of the party organisation and the public sympathy built up during the Civil Disobedience Movement. Its propaganda exploited the discontentment of businessmeen and merchants affected by the depression. In the district of Tanjore, it was Vedaratnam Pillai who took up the responsibility of supporting the election campaign of Rajan. Already he

94 David Arnold, The Congress in Tamil Nadu, p.149.

95 The Hindu, 15, February 1933, quoted in David Arnold, The Congress in Tamil Nadu, p.149.
had earned popularity among the masses of Tanjore by helping Rajaji in conducting the famous Vedaranyam Salt Satyagraha successfully in a non-violent way in the midst of police intimidations. It was this popularity that had drawn some of Justice Party stalwarts in this district like Nadimuthu Pillai into the Congress fold. In the Election Campaign for the candidate of Rajan, Vedartnam Pillai toured all the rural and urban places of Tanjore district. Based on the general lines of the All India Congress Election propaganda, he applied his election speeches on the above lines to his own region. A government report gives the text of one his speeches that he made on the occasion:  

"After its services for fifty years, the Congress had now undertakeen the work of entering legislature you know that efforts are being made for nurturing the representatives of the Congress To the legislature. It had now

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96 The Hindu, 21, July 15, 29, August 5, October 1934, quoted in David Arnold, The Congress in Tamil Nadu, p. 160.
become necessary for the Congress to solicit your votes in return for the service it has rendered all these years. The reply that you are going to give is yet to be known. Our district has lent support to Swarajya Party, which was working on behalf of the Congress. Our district has made Swarajya Party succeed in the matter of entry into the legislature. There has again arisen a period of trial for the Tanjore district which was such a part. The Congress Parliamentary Board has chosen Rajan in this "District" as our representative for the legislative assembly. At the time, when the members of Swaraj Party entered the legislature, the Congress boycott ed the legislature. Congressmen said that no one should enter the legislature. Rajan indeed belonged to the group. Today they themselves have realised the necessity for entering the legislature and agreed to put him up as a candidate. The Congress has begun to participate in election work to strive for it.
Of course, everybody knows what every Congressman should do. You should give your votes to Congressmen and make them succeed". 

Thanks to the efforts taken by Congressmen like Vedaratnam Pillai, Rajan had won in Tanjore - Trichirappalli constituency. On the whole the Congress won all the seven seats in Tamil Nadu and captured 80 percent of the poll. Although they had succeeded they had to meet so many difficulties in their election campaign.

They also learnt a lesson from the experience of 1934 Assembly elections in which local government presidents and chairman had used their influence to favour Justice Party candidates. This was mainly because of the Congress that had not participated in local governments. Except in mid 1920's when the Swarajists attempted to win control of Madras Corporation and other municipal councils, the Tamil Nadu Congress had not made systematic efforts to capture Local Board

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G.O. No. 545, Public Dept (Confidencial) 3, April 1935. (TNA).
Government. Rajaji opposed the involvement of Congressmen in local governments. In May 1935, Satyamoorthi succeeded Rajaji as President of Tamil Nadu Congress. During his Presidentship, a group of Congressmen like K. Kamaraj expressed their views in the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee to participate in local government bodies. In May 1935, Satyamurthi announced the formation of Tamil Nadu Civil Board to select party candidates for local elections. In this, the Tamil Nadu Congress had a programme to work for the removal of corruption, the promotion of Swadeshi goods, the improvement of local education and medical facilities, the extension of water supplies and roads and the voting of addresses to nationalist leaders.

In the campaign for Local Board seats, the Congress had a striking success in some contests. In Madurai for example the Congress men won 21 out of 30 seats in the

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98 The Hindu, 14, November 12, 15, 16, 19 November 1934, quoted in David Arnold, The Congress in Tamil Nadu, p.162.

99 The Hindu, 8, January 1935, quoted in David Arnold, The Congress in Tamil Nadu, p.163.
Madurai Municipal Councils. In November 1935, the Congress won 31 seats of the 52 seats in Tirunelveli District Board elections. In the Madras City Corporation elections held in October 1936, the Congress won 27 of the 40 seats for the general constituencies. In Ramnad the Congress faced stiffer opposition. In these elections some notable and important Congressmen had also won\textsuperscript{100}. In Madurai, N.M.R. Subbaraman a popular Congress leader was elected as Chairman. In the district of Tanjore, the popular leader Vedaratnam Pillai stood for the election of Vedaranyam town panchayat. As he had earned high respect and regard not only from the people of this locality and other areas of the Tanjore district, it became easy for him to be elected as President of Vedaranyam town panchayat. He served in this post for 19 months till the time of 1937 Assembly elections\textsuperscript{101}.

\textsuperscript{100} David Arnold, \textit{The Congress in Tamil Nadu}, p.164.

\textsuperscript{101} \textit{The Hindu}, 27 to 31, September, October 1936.
In the meantime, the Federal Constitution for India was passed in Parliament. This favoured Provincial Autonomy which was to be put into operation in the year 1937. The Congress at its Lucknow Session in April 1936 decided to participate in the elections which were to be held in 1937 under the new constitution. The election manifesto of the Congress embodied demands for civil liberties and equal rights for citizens. It also declared uniform system of land revenue, reduction of agricultural debts, proper standard of living for workers and so on\textsuperscript{102}.

The provincial legislature was divided into upper and lower houses known as Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly. For the Council, there was a high property qualification. Voters were ryots or inamdars, paying a rent by over Rs.300 and estate holders. But the broader Assembly franchise gave vote to a large section of ryots, traders, wealthier urban workers, inamdars, Ryotwari tenants, occupancy ryots and owners of rural property with a rentable value of

\textsuperscript{102} T.M. Satchit, Who's who in Tamil Nadu, p.279.
Rs.50 or urban property with a value of not less than Rs.100 etc. Franchise provisions varied from one province to another and in the Madras Province, those who could prove themselves literates were entitled to vote whereas in other provinces a specific level of formal education was required.

The regional Congress campaign began as early as July 1936 with formation of tour committees. The names of most of the selected candidates were published in mid December with the approval of Central Congress Parliamentary Committee. In Tamil Nadu, Vedaratnam Pillai was selected as one of the candidates for the Mannargudi constituency in Tanjore district for the Legislative Assembly of the Madras Province. Initially he had no idea of contesting for the legislative assembly seat. But the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee was particular in selecting Vedaratnam Pillai from Mannargudi, Thiruthuraipoondi constituency in recognition of his valuable services during Vedaranyam.

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Salt Satyagraha. Further, the Congress Party also knew well that his popularity had increased considerably after the Civil Disobedience Movement thus the Congress Party anticipated a victory in this constituency. It was at this time Vallabhbhai Patel had came to South India for organisational activities of the Congress Party on the eve of elections. He convinced Vedaratnam Pillai and the latter agreed to contest from Mannargudi, Thiruthuraipoondi Constituency in which one seat is general and the other is reserved. For the reserved seat Kulandaivelu Nainar contested. The other contestants in this constituency were Thiyagu Vaikaran from Justice Party for the reserved seat; Kalyanasundara Mudaliyar from Democratic Party and some Independents. In this constituencies both Vedaratnam Pillai and Kulandaivelu Nainar were declared as elected.  

As in the case of Mannargudi - Thiruthuraipoondi Constituency as in majority of the constituencies in Tamil Nadu, the Congress had won a massive victory.

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It had the largest majority and the largest popular vote of the Congress in any of India's provinces\textsuperscript{106}.

In March 1937, the All India Congress Committee decided that the Congress should accept offices in the provinces where it commanded a majority in the legislature\textsuperscript{107}. In Madras, Rajaji was elected as the leader of the Congress Legislative Party. At this time, Lord Erskine was the Governor of Madras Province. Rajaji's Ministry was formed in April 1937. He as head of the Provincial Ministry was officially known as Prime Minister or Premier of Madras Province. The other ministers under Rajaji were T. Prakasam, T. S. S. Rajan, Hasan, Subbarayan, Ramanathan and others. The Ministry continued up to October 1939. During its two years of rule, the Congress Government introduced many noteworthy reforms like total prohibition and temple entry movement of the Harijans\textsuperscript{108}.

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\textsuperscript{107} David Arnold, The Congress in Tamil Nadu, p.174.
\textsuperscript{108} A.R. Desai, Social Background of Indian Nationalism, p.374.
\end{flushright}
In March 1939, followers of Mahatma Gandhi including Vedaratnam Pillai under the leadership of Rajaji participated in the Conference which was held in Madhya Pradesh at Thinpuri. In that conference a resolution was brought against Subash Chandra Bose by the United Province Prime Minister Pandit Govind Vallabhandh. In support of this resolution Rajaji said, "Accepting Subash Chandra Bose's leadership is as good as travelling in a wrecked boat". Despite Vedaratnam Pillai's faith in Subash Chandra Bose he had to obey the All India Congress Committee and Rajaji.

The Second World War began on 1, September 1939, the British Government without consulting Indian leaders involved India in the war. So the All India Congress Committee met at Wardha, in 1939, during August 18-22, to study thoroughly the report of Viceroy and took some important decisions. Subsequently, the

Somale, Thamil Natil oru Sardar, p.120, See also Direct interview, V. Appakutti Pillai.


Congress Ministries in 8 states wanted to ender their resignation immediately. According to the above decision the Ministry led by Rajaji also resigned\textsuperscript{112}. To support Rajaji's decision Vedaratnam Pillai also resigned his membership of the Legislative Assembly\textsuperscript{113}. Before this decision was taken Rajaji had brought some resolutions on October 26, 1939 in the Assembly. The resolutions expressed the disapproval of the action of the British Government for involving India in the war.

Vedaratnam Pillai gave his full co-operation to Rajaji. When these resolutions were introduced in the Assembly A.T. Panneer Selvam (one of the leaders of the Justice Party) opposed them but the resolutions were passed by 153 Votes. Vedaratnam Pillai supported the resolutions. He was a strong nationalist throughout.

\textsuperscript{112} CWMG, Vol. LXXII, Appendix VIII, p.475, quoted Saroja Sundararajan, \textit{March to Freedom in Madras Presidency}.

Whenever controversies arose on national issues, he kept silent without affecting the national interest\(^{114}\).

He never hesitated to resign his post if it was for the good of the country. He did so when Rajaji collected resignation letters from all Congress Party members as soon as his Ministry came to power in 1937\(^{115}\).

The difference of opinion between Rajaji and Sathyamoorthi made them two poles in Tamil Nadu politics in 1940. On 15th February 1940, at Thiyagarayanagar in Madras, Tamil Nadu Congress Committee gathered under the leadership of O.P. Ramasamy Reddiar who was then President of Madras Provincial Congress Committee. From all over the districts 203, delegates participated in the meeting Vedaratnam Pillai also was one of them\(^{116}\).

\(^{114}\) Direct interview V.Appakutti Pillai. 23 November, 1992, Vedaranyam.


In that meeting Rajaji nominated his close associate and also an member of Legislative Assembly C.P. Subbiah for the post of Tamil Nadu Congress Committee President on the otherhand S.Sathiyamoorthi nominated K. Kamaraj. Thus began a political struggle between Sathiyamoorthi and Rajaji. In support of Rajaji C.N. Muthuranga Mudaliar, O.P. Ramasamy Reddiar and some other popular leaders worked. Sathiyamoorthi who was popular among the party workers worked for K. Kamaraj's success. In the end K.Kamaraj won with 103 votes but C.P. Subbiah got 100 votes only. So, K. Kamaraj became the leader of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee. K.Kamaraj's political guru, S.Sathiyamoorthi, became secretary of Tamil Nadu Congress Committee. Only three votes made a big change in Tamil Nadu politics. Madras District Congress Committee secretary M.P.Sivagnanam, who supported Rajaji always, gave full co-operation to K. Kamaraj. In the above election Vedaratnam Pillai

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neither supported nor opposed Rajaji, he kept silent\textsuperscript{119}. K. Kamaraj who entered successfully into Tamil Nadu politics made a great change till his death. But the group politics in Congress Party continues till now. If Vedaratnam Pillai had given his support to Rajaji he would have been distanced from the central All India Congress Committee, if he had rendered his support to Sathiyamoorthi he would have been placed in the opposite camp of his guru Rajaji. So his role was neutral in the Congress Party election\textsuperscript{120}. That means he was expert in maintaining the friendship without losing his principles. The era of K. Kamaraj started after 1940, but slowly Rajaji kept himself away from some top level leaders and some regional leaders.

In April 1940, at the Muslim League Conference approved the resolution for separate Pakistan\textsuperscript{121}. In the same year on 8, August Periyar E.V. Ramasamy Naicker convened the 15th State Conference of Justice Party in

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid.,

\textsuperscript{120} Direct interview, V. Appakutti Pillai. 23 November 1992, Vedaranyam.

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid.,
Tiruvarur and approved the resolution for separate Dravidan Country\textsuperscript{122}. They said that the separate Dravidian Country should be created under the supervision of Ministers of British India\textsuperscript{123}.

In Lahore conference M.A. Jinnah declared the following decisions that majority of Muslim areas should be made separate constituencies if it is possible, should be declared as autonomous states, in the North West and East regions of India. This demand of Muslim League was protested by most of the Congress leaders. Rajaji pointed out "leaving the Muslim League as a friend of British Government will be dangerous to the Congress Party".

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\textsuperscript{123} Robert Hadgrave, \textit{The essays on the political Sociology of South India}, Madras, p.161.
In the Tirunelveli district Congress Conference which was held in Ambasamudram on 9, June 1940 Rajaji recommended a national government in which all parties would take part. This recommendation of Rajaji was not accepted by Mahatma Gandhi But the friendship remained as it had been. The Congress Committee which met at Wardha presided over by Mahatma Gandhi on 17 June 1940, studied Rajaji's recommendations carefully and rejected them. So the gap between Rajaji and Congress leaders became wider than before. After the failure of Crips Mission Indian leaders thought British would support the Muslim Leagues demand. So Rajaji said the Muslim demand should be accepted by Congress at least in principle.

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125 Direct Interview V.Appakutti Pillai, 23 November 1992, Vedaranyam. See also Bhakirathan, *Maraikkattil Oru Manikkam*, p.89.


127 *The Hindu*, 24 March 1942.
On 29 April 1942, All India Congress Committee was convened in Allahabad under the Presidency of Moulana Abul Kalam Azad. Before Rajaji participated in the Allahabad Congress, he convened the Tamil Nadu Legislative Members Conference. On 23 April 1942, at Thiagaraya Nagar in Madras. In this meeting Vedaratnam Pillai, T. Prakasam, K. Kamaraj and leaders from Andhra, Karnataka, Kerala participated. Rajaji said "accepting Muslims demand at least in principle will be helpful to make the relationship smooth between Congress and the Muslim League. We better divide our country instead of our freedom being postponed by conducting a debate on a controversial issue of unity of Hindu - Muslim\textsuperscript{128}. In the Allahabad All India Congress Meeting Rajaji proposed the above resolutions but Committee rejected them. Rajaji sent the resolutions in the name of K. Santhanam Iyengar (who later became a Deputy Railway Minister of

\textsuperscript{128} The Hindu, 25 April 1942. See also V.S.Srinivasa Sastrī to Rajaji August 1942, Rajaji Papers, quoted S.S.R., p.594.

India) then Rajaji resigned from all his posts\textsuperscript{129}. When Rajaji's proposal came to be voted in the Allahabad meeting Rajaji got 15 votes but 120 votes were polled against him. A new resolution for united India was brought by Jagath Narayana Lal, and Committee suggested no force should be motivated against Indian unity\textsuperscript{130}.

Vedaratnam Pillai in the critical situation said "I respect and obey the All India Congress Committee"\textsuperscript{131}. When Rajaji was returning from Allahabad he said to the press that if the All India Congress Committee did not accept his proposal Madras State should be separated from India\textsuperscript{132}. This speech of Rajaji made the other Congress volunteers angry. All the

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{130} The Hindu, 3 May 1942, and P.G. Sundararajan, \textit{The life of S.Sathyamurthi}, p.185. See also Saroja Sundararajan, \textit{March to Freedom in Madras Presidency}, p.595.


\textsuperscript{132} P.G. Soundararajan, \textit{The Life of S. Sathyamoorthi}, p.185.
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important leaders accused Rajaji as a "traitor" "Janab Rajaji". When Rajaji got strong opposition from all sides Vedaratnam Pillai said whether accepting his idea or opposing it is our option, but nobody has any right to suspect his faith to our nation. When Rajaji travelled all over Tamil Nadu for gathering support the representative of South Indian Chamber of Commerce and the member of legislative Assembly T.T.Krishnamachariyar, gave full support to Rajaji. Communist Party's also supported him. During his travel black flags were shown and people threw chappals at Rajaji and criticised him as a mercenary and asked him to go back.

134 Bhakirathan, Maraikkatil Oru Manikkam, p.72.
136 Ibid.,
In 1942, Vedaratnam Pillai without participating in the Quit India Movement due to the differences of opinion with some leaders he kept himself aloof. Vedaratnam Pillai neither spoke against the Congress Party nor violated its rules. Though Rajaji and Vedaratnam Pillai politically had many differences, they did not speak against each other.

When T. Prakasam became Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu during 1946 - 52, Vedaratnam Pillai was member of legislative Assembly. Rajaji became the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu in 1952, but his close loyalist Vedaratnam Pillai kept himself away from the party. He did not contest in the election. He was looking after the Kasturba Gandhi Kanya Gurukulam which was started in 1946, in his own place. Since he was a close friend of Rajaji he was sidelined so he did not contest in the election in 1952. When Rajaji began to implement the Kulakalvi Thittam, (an educational system means a student had to study in the school for half-a-day only

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138 Direct interview P. Venkatesan, Former Member of Legislative Assembly, Radhanarasimapuram, 27, March 1995.
and do the profession of his father for the rest of the day) it was totally opposed all over Tamil Nadu under the leadership of E.V. Ramasamy. So Rajaji resigned. At once K. Kamaraj was made the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu in 1954. K.Kamaraj cancelled the Kulakalvi Thittam. Subsequently Rajaji cameout of the party and started a Swathantra Party. Till his death he did not return to Congress Party.

K. Kamaraj made sincere efforts and brought Vedaratnam Pillai back to politics and selected him as a candidate for the General election of 1957. Vedaratnam Pillai won the election but he never spoke against Rajaji.