Chapter III

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The Lahore Congress of 1929 had authorized the Working Committee to launch a programme of civil disobedience including non-payment of taxes. It had also called upon all members of legislatures to resign their seats. In mid-February, 1930, the Working Committee, meeting at Sabarmati Ashram, invested Gandhiji with full powers to launch the Civil Disobedience Movement at a time and place of his choice. The acknowledged expert on mass struggle was already ‘desperately in search of an effective formula.’¹ His ultimatum of 31 January to Lord Irwin, stating the minimum demands in the form of 11 points, had been ignored, and there was now only one way out: civil disobedience.

By the end of February, the formula began to emerge as Gandhiji began to talk about salt:

There is no article like salt outside water by taxing which the State can reach even the starving millions, the sick, the maimed and the utterly helpless. The tax constitutes therefore the most inhuman poll tax the ingenuity of man can devise.²

² S. Gopal, “Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography”, Vol.1, Ch.10.
On 2 March, he addressed his historic letter to the Viceroy in which he explained at great length why he regarded British rule as a curse. He said that the British rule had impoverished the dumb millions by a system of progressive exploitation. It had reduced the people politically to serfdom. It had sapped the foundations of our culture. It had degraded the people spiritually.³

He then informed the Viceroy of his plan of action. He believed that every true Satyagrahi would accompany him when he started his ‘padayatra’. He said:

...on the 11th day of this month, I shall proceed with such co-workers of the Ashram as I can take, to disregard the provisions of the salt laws... It is, I know, open to you to frustrate my design by arresting me. I hope that there will be tens of thousands ready, in a disciplined manner, to take up the work after me, and, in the act of disobeying the Salt Act to lay themselves open to the penalties of a law that should never have disfigured the Statute-book.⁴

**Dandi March**

The plan was brilliantly conceived though few realized its significance when it was first announced. Gandhiji, along with a band of

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4 D. A. Low (Ed.), “Congress and the Raj”.
seventy-eight members of the Sabarmati Ashram, among whom were men belonging to almost every region and religion of India, was to march from his headquarters in Ahmedabad through the villages of Gujarat for 240 miles. On reaching the coast at Dandi, he would break the salt laws by collecting salt from the beach. The deceptively innocuous move was to prove devastatingly effective.

Even before the march began, thousands began to throng the Sabarmati Ashram in anticipation of the dramatic events that lay ahead. Gandhiji painstakingly explained his plans, gave directions for future action, impressed on the people the necessity for non-violence, and prepared them for the Government's response. Gandhiji instructed volunteers that civil disobedience of salt laws should be started, wherever possible. Liquor and foreign cloth shops could be picketed. They could refuse to pay taxes if they had the requisite strength.

The lawyers could give up practice. The public could boycott the courts by refraining from litigation. Government servants could resign their posts. Mahatma told the people, "I prescribe only one condition, viz., let our pledge of truth and non-violence as the only means for the attainment of swaraj be faithfully kept."\(^5\)

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\(^5\) David Hardiman, "Peasant Nationalists of Gujarat: Kheda District 1917-34", Ch.9.
Explaining the power of civil disobedience, he said:

Supposing ten persons from each of the 700,000 villages in India come forward to manufacture salt and to disobey the Salt Act, what do you think this Government can do? Even the worst autocrat you can imagine would not dare to blow regiments of peaceful civil resisters out of a cannon's mouth. If only you will bestir yourselves just a little, I assure you we should be able to tire this Government out in a very short time.⁶

He also explained how non-violence enabled the widest participation of the people, and put the Government in an unenviable quandary. To a crowd who came to the ashram on 10th March, he said:

Though the battle is to begin in a couple of days, how is it that you can come here quite fearlessly? I do not think anyone of you would be here if you had to face rifle-shots or bombs. But you have no fear of rifle-shots or bombs? Why? Supposing I had announced that I was going to launch a violent campaign (not necessarily with men armed with rifles, but even with sticks or stones), do you think the Government would have left me free until now? Can you show me an example in history (be it in England, America or Russia) where the State has tolerated

violent defiance of authority for a single day? But here you know that the Government is puzzled and perplexed.\footnote{Tanika Sarkar, “The First Phase of Civil Disobedience in Bengal, 1930-31”, in the Indian Historical Review, New Delhi, July 1977, Vol. IV, No.1}

And as Gandhiji began his march, staff in hand, at the head of his dedicated band, there was something in the image that deeply stirred the imagination of the people. News of his progress, of his speeches, of the teeming crowds that greeted and followed the marchers, of the long road lovingly strewn with leaves and festooned with banners and flags, of men and women quietly paying their homage by spinning yarn on their 

\textit{charkas} as Gandhiji passed, of the 300 village officials in Gujarat who resigned their posts in answer to his appeal, was carried day after day by newspapers to readers across the country and broadcast live by thousands of Congress workers to eager listeners. By the time Gandhiji reached Dandi, he had a whole nation, aroused and expectant, waiting restlessly for the final signal. On 6 April 1930, by picking up a handful of salt, Gandhiji inaugurated the Civil Disobedience Movement, a movement that was to remain unsurpassed in the history of the Indian national movement for the country-wide mass participation it unleashed.

\textbf{Civil Disobedience Movement in Tamil Nadu}

Civil Disobedience Movement had a great impact in all the districts of Tamil Nadu. Before the \textit{Dandi} march of Mahatma, the enthusiasm was created. After the \textit{Dandi} march, the movement intensified. In the North
Arcot District, the Civil Disobedience Movement developed in three stages. The first stage from January to April 1930 consisted in meetings, demonstrations and processions and the sending of volunteers to do satyagraha outside the district. “Independence Day” was celebrated by meetings and procession in Vellore and Gudiyattam and they provoke very much enthusiasm. In the end of February and beginning of March meetings were held in Vellore and Arni and on the 28th of February two political prisoners who had been released from jail were presented with an address and taken in procession in Arni. In the second half of March meetings were held at Wallajah, Gudiyattam, Arni and Pernamallur (Wandiwash taluk) to enlist volunteers for the civil disobedience campaign. Sixty two persons were said to be ready to go from Gudiyattam to take part in the salt satyagraha in Tanjore to be held on April 5th. Only a few of these actually went there. The Swaraj flag was hoisted on the fort maidan in Vellore on March 30th.\(^8\)

The South Arcot district witnessed Civil Disobedience Movement from the 26th January 1930 when it was decided by the Congress executive to organize mass demonstrations on that day and call it “Independence Day”. The immunity given to the seditious resolutions of the Lahore Congress encouraged the Congress agitators and meetings were held in Cuddalore, Panruti and Chidambaram. In Cuddalore, it was organized by the Congress secretaries Kumaraaswami Pillai and Sudarsanam Nayudu,

both of whom were concerned in non-cooperation troubles in 1921. In Panruti it was held under the auspices of Ratnam Pillai, who later on was elected President of the South Arcot District Congress Committee when P. Srinivasa Ayyangar, ex MLC, resigned as he anticipated trouble. In Chidambaram it was led by the famous non-cooperation agitator Nainappa Pillai. Leaflets containing the Tamil translations of the seditious declaration of independence were sent to these places from the Madras Congress office and some were printed locally. These were openly distributed to the audience. Pro-British citizens of position and influence did not participate in the proceedings in any of these places. In Chidambaram, Nainappa Pillai went to the Annamalai University and procured some students and staged a procession. There was no further activity till the end of March but there was an obvious simmering of unrest in the press. In March Gandhiji decided to break the Salt laws. On the 9th April Nainappa Pillai decided to break Salt laws at Kille in Chidambaram taluk. Then he changed his mind and decided to join C. Rajagopalachari in his Vedaranniyam campaign.^^^  

A proposal to make salt at Rameswaram, a well-known place of pilgrimage was started in Ramnad shortly after Gandhiji’s arrest. However, some leaders had not sanctioned the scheme. About the middle of May N.S. Ramaswami Ayyar came from the Trichinopoly district to infuse some life into the cause, and by the 26th May preparations were completed, and

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five makers operated on the morning of the 28th. They were at once arrested and convicted. On the 29th five more were taken. On the same day Mr. N. S. Ramaswami was charged and convicted. On the 30th nine volunteers were taken.\textsuperscript{10}

**Vedaranyam March**

The civil-disobedience campaign was very intensive in the Tiruchirappalli and Thanjavur districts. The movement may be divided into three parts:

1. The period of preparation;
2. The march of the volunteers from Trichinopoly to Vedaranniyam - April 13th to April 28th; and
3. The Vedaranniyam period.

Vedaranniyam march of Rajaji was considered as the second important march, the first being *Dandi* march, to break salt laws. Vedaranniyam was chosen as the battle-field by the Tamil Nadu Congress Organisation. It is a small, unimportant and out of the way town situated on the coast in a sandy and unproductive region, but seems to have been chosen for the following reasons:--

1) It was the scene of the Tamil Nadu Congress Conference in 1929 at which Vallabhai Patel presided;

\textsuperscript{10} Report of H. S. Shield, District Magistrate, dated 2nd January 1931.
2) It was favourably situated for a salt campaign, in that it was near the Agastyampalli Salt Factory and the big swamp which from May onwards was covered with salt;

3) It was the home of Vedaratnam Pillai, an active Congress worker; and

4) It was something of a place of pilgrimage and therefore the march to it could be given a colour of devotion.

The first period that of preparation was the later half of March and the first fortnight of April. At the end of March C. Rajagopalachari of Salem, who was the leader of the campaign, issued an appeal for funds and announced the general lines of the campaign, i.e., the enlistment of volunteers pledged to non-violence, who were prepared to march in batches to Vedaranniyam in order to break the Salt Law. All the forces of the Tamil Nadu outside Madras City were thus concentrated on the Tanjore district. During the period meetings were held in various parts of the district, and Rajagopalachari himself did a tour and addressed meetings at Tiruvadi, Tanjore, Mayavaram and other places. 

The organisation was centralized at Trichinopoly. Rajagopalachari was elected President of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee, and Dr. T.S.S.Rajan (a well-known Trichinopoly Doctor, Ayyangar by caste), Secretary. The working committee contained six other members, including Pantulu Ayyar and Swaminatha Chetti and Mrs. Lakshmipathi.

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12 Wife of a Madras Doctor, the organiser of the Madras League of Youth.
The route chosen was from Trichinopoly to Tanjore by way of the Grand Anicut and Tiruvadi; from Kumbakonam to Mannargudi; and so to Vedaranniyam through Tiruturaipundi. The district route to Tanjore from Trichinopoly lies through Sengipatti and Vallam, but this was presumably discarded as being inhospitable and also to allow of Tiruvadi being visited.

From Tanjore a detour was arranged so as to include Kumbakonam, from which town warm support was expected. The start was to be from Trichinopoly on the early morning of 13th April, about five miles were to be covered every morning and five every evening, propaganda was to be carried on along the route and special attention was to be paid to Adi-Dravidas, who were to be wooed by parties who would sweep their cheris for them. Vedaranniyam was to be reached on the morning of the 28th. The 'first batch' of volunteers was 50 in number.

Rajaji’s call to dalits

Rajagopalachari’s name was a household word, as that of an Ayyangar who worked for ‘untouchables’, a fanatical opponent of the Excise Policy of Government, a devoted adherent of Gandhiji, and sharing his reputation both for saintliness and for implacability. Rajaji gave a call to Dalits to participate in the struggle. He asked other caste people to respect the dalit sentiments and insisted them to do away with

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13 The home of Pantulu Ayyar and stronghold of Ayyangars.
14 Doubly auspicious as being Tamil New Year’s day and ‘Jallianwala Bagh Day’.
untouchability. Rajaji firmly believed that the cooperation of all the communities, especially dalits, should be availed. Dalits responded in large number and participated the salt Satyagraha. Though his first party was to consist of only fifty men, reliable reports were received of hundreds of volunteers being enlisted, not only from the Madras Presidency, but from distant places like Rangoon and Bombay, and there seemed no reason why a succession of waves should not be poured into the district. Though non-violence was apparently to be apprehended from the volunteers, the effect of the march in inciting disaffection was incalculable; if this resulted in a great number of volunteers offering themselves from the district to break the State Law, the situation would become uncontrollable. There were half a dozen salt factories along the coastline of the district and though law-breaking at Vedaranniyam might be kept in hand if the number of offenders was not too great, it would be quite impossible to police every place if satyagraha were offered simultaneously in them all. In addition to ‘salt satyagraha’ there was talk of breaking the forest law in the Point Calimere reserve near Vedaranniyam. The picketing of liquor shops and a boycott of foreign cloth were also mentioned.\(^\text{16}\)

A first batch of 50 volunteers would proceed from Trichinopoly by road on the 13th April for Vedaranniyam via. Thanjavur, Kumbakonam, Mannargudi and Tiruturaipundi doing 10 miles a day. The government considered this ‘body’ as an unlawful assembly and further thought of

\(^{16}\) Ibid.
arresting Sri Rajagopalachari's 50 volunteers. Meetings were held along the line of the intended march - Tirukattupalli, Tiruvadi, Thanjavur, Papanasam, Kumbakonam, Mannarguid and Vedaranniam. The object was to stir-up enthusiasm, raise funds and enroll volunteers. Rajagopalachari himself addressed meetings at Tiruvadi and Thanjavur.  

In the evening, on 6th April 1930, there was a public meeting, under the auspices of the Tiruchirappalli Taluk Congress Committee, in the Town Hall square, Tiruchirappalli Fort. People responded in large number. Many agricultural labourers, mostly dalits participated in the meeting. Dr. Rajan of Cantonment, Secretary of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee spoke in the meeting. He said that poor people were groaning under the burden of heavy taxation by Government, that it was why Gandhiji started Salt-Satyagraha to break salt laws, that in the event of the iniquitous salt tax not being abolished as a result of this campaign. Other measures would be resorted to, that a batch of Satyagraha his under the leadership of Rajagopalachari would start on 13th April 1930 for the purpose of breaking salt laws at Vedaranyam that youths should join in large numbers the movement as volunteers to break salt laws and that others who could not join must render all possible help and assistance by contributing money for the success of the cause. This was his exhortation.

On 9th and 10th April 1930, similar meetings at Srirangam and Gandhi Chowk, Tiruchirappalli were held and Dr. Rajan addressed the audience on the same lines.

From 9th to 12 April 1930, the Satyagrahis noted in the margin and others numbering about 100 arrived at Tiruchirappalli. They were received by Dr. Rajan and harboured in his residence at Cantonment. Dr. Rajan also erected pandals within the premises of his bungalow, for the accommodation and made arrangements for their boarding. The avowed object of the Satyagrahis was to start in a procession under the leadership of Rajagopalachari on 13th April 1930 and proceed to Vedaranyam, on foot to break the salt laws there, visiting villages and holding meetings and enlisting the sympathy of the masses along the villages enroute.  

On April 13th, the march began from Trichinopoly. The party contained 99 members instead of 50 as at first intended. Of these only 5 belonged to Tanjore district. Madura district contributed 24, Tinnevelly 15, Madras 13, Ramnad 12 and 9 came from Bombay. The names of 523 persons altogether had been registered as Tamil Nadu volunteers.

Dalit colony people welcomed the procession with hilarity and laughter. They were ready to relieve their thirst and hunger. Rajaji became emotional at the sight their gesture of goodwill and national fervor. He arranged a special meeting. He applauded them for their generous offer of

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18 S. F. No.687, dated 31st May, 1930.
buttermilk, water and food. He told them the water and the food they had offered gave them strength to their soul and body. Though many rich landlords in that area shuddered out of the Collector's order kept themselves away the poor peasant Dalit's enthusiasm, firmness and gaiety gave moral strength to freedom fighters.

Rajaji mentioned the Dalits as symbols of sacrifice. He told that social differences on the basis of caste should not be an impediment for achieving the cherished goal of freedom. He wanted all to forge unity without any caste difference to achieve freedom.

**Imprisonment of Dalit Leaders**

As Rajaji's call created enthusiasm among Dalits, they participated in large number and courted arrest. Muthaih was a prominent Dalit participant. He was born in 1900 Pallatheru, Thiruchedur, Tirunelveli district. He took part in the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930-1932. He was arrested and sentenced under Sec.3 of Act XXII of 1922 and kept in Vellore Jail for six months during 1930 to 1931. This punishment could not suppress his spirit. After his release he again involved in the civil disobedience activities. He was again arrested and sentence for six months during 1933.

Chelliah Moopan alias Easikki Muthu Moopan, son of Thangamuthu Moopan was born in 1903 at Raddipuram in Tirunelveli district. 20 He took

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part in the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1932 and was arrested and sentenced under Sec. IPC-143 and under Sec.17(1) Criminal Law Amendment Act. He was kept in central jail, Tiruchirappalli for one year during 1931 to 1932.

Karupayyan, son of Adigesappan was born at Thiruthuraipoondi, Thanjavur district in 1908.21 He also took part in Civil Disobedience Movement in 1932 and arrested and sentenced to six months in 1932 under Sec. IPC-143 and kept in Tiruchirappalli Central Jail.

Mari Pallan, son of Karuppan was born on 1903. He took part in Civil Disobedience Movement in 1931. He was arrested and sentenced to one year during 1931 to 1932, under Sec. IPC-123 and kept in Central Jail in Coimbatore. His native place was Coimbatore district.22

Namasivaya Moopan was a son of Muthaya Moopan. He was born in 1885 in Madurai District. He took part in the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930 and was arrested and sentenced for five months under Sec. IPC-188. He was kept in central jail at Tiruchirappalli.

Manikka Kudumban, son of Soma Kudumban was born in Punaivayal in 1907. He took part in the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1932. He was arrested and sentenced for six months under the Sec. IPC-188 and kept in central jail in Tiruchirappalli.

21 Ibid., pp.56-57.
Sankaralinga Kudumban was a son of Raghu Kudumban. He was born in 1904 at Srivilliputhur. He took part in the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930 and was arrested and sentenced to one year under the Sec. IPC-126. He was kept in central jail in Madurai.23

Ilango Seraman from Rasipuram born on 15th April 1914 was a literate and he joined the freedom movement in 1932 and took part in the boycott of foreign cloths. He was arrested and sentenced to six months imprisonment and he was kept in Bombay and Rasipuram jails.24

Irula Mottayan, born in 1893, in Salem district took part in the Salt Satyagraha movement in 1930. So he was arrested and sentenced to one year under the Section 123 Cr. PC and he was kept in Vellore Central Jail.25

Irula Perumal also from Salem district born in 1904 took part in the Salt Satyagraha Movement in 1930. He was arrested and sentenced to one year during 1929-30, under the Sec. 123 Cr. PC and he was kept in Vellore Central Jail.26

Munusamy Manikam, a native of Gandhi Ashramam, Thirchenkodu, Salem District took part in the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1933. He

25 Ibid., pp. 310-311.
26 Ibid., pp. 311-312.
was sentenced for one year imprisonment in 1933 and was kept in Madras and Bellary jails for three months.\textsuperscript{27}

Solaimalai, son of Solai Samban, born in 1901, joined the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1932. He took part in Foreign Cloth Boycott in 1932 and he was courted imprisonment and was kept in Alipuram jail for six months. He was from Dindigul, Madurai District.\textsuperscript{28}

Duraisamy Moopan, son of Arunachala Moopan was born in 1910. He participated in Civil Disobedience Movement in 1932. He was arrested and sentenced for six months under Sec.17(1) of Criminal Law Amendment Act and was kept in Cuddalore Central Jail and Tiruchirappalli Central Jail.

Ramasamy Moopan was son of Karuppana Moopan. He was from Kallakuruchi, South Arcot district.\textsuperscript{29} He took part in Civil Disobedience Movement.

He was arrested and sentenced to six months under the Sec.17(1) of Criminal Law Amendment Act and was kept in Cuddalore Central Jail and Tiruchirappalli Central Jail for six months.

**Temperance Movement**

Movements for the prohibition of liquor was also initiated by Indian National Congress, side by side with the Civil Disobedience Movement.


\textsuperscript{29} District Magistrate Report on Civil Indian Service Non-obedience Movement 1930 to 1931.
Indian National Congress, which was started in 1885, not only worked for political freedom, but also indulged in various social reforms. By 1900, a greater tempo was given to the temperance reforms by the Indian Nation Congress. It viewed with great concern the growing consumption of liquors and urged the Government to pass acts to curb the consumption.\(^\text{30}\) In the following years wherever the congress bodies met to demand political reforms, they began to demand temperance reforms as well.\(^\text{31}\)

Side by side with its non-cooperation and civil disobedience movement, the congress also indulged in anti-drunk propaganda. It also resorted to direct action. The credit of launching, for the first time, a nation wide agitation against the drink evil in India was organized by the Congress Party, under the inspiring leadership of Gandhiji, Rajaji and a host of lesser luminaries, of the Congress party rapidly came into the time light and carried on temperance propaganda all over the country and did vigorous campaign against the drink.\(^\text{32}\) Congress volunteers picketed liquor shops during the non-cooperation period and the successive years.\(^\text{33}\) However, the liquor shop picketings were very strong during the Civil Disobedience Movement period.

With the fervour of crusaders the spokesmen of the Congress party attacked the drink problem in all its aspects, moral, social and economic.

\(^\text{31}\) B.S.Baliga, op. cit., p 5.
\(^\text{32}\) Ibid., p 17.
They propagated about the evils of drink, which was eating into the very vitals of society and was not sanctioned by any religion or law of our country, nor was it sanctioned by public opinion. In fact all enlightened public opinion all over the world was against it. It was ruining the happiness of homes, destroying the peace and quiet of towns and villages and increasing the incidence of grave crime. They also preached about the evil of drink which undermining the health of millions and reducing the output alike in mills, factories and fields. It was indeed sapping the strength of the nation in every way and making it impossible to raise the general standard of living. It was for reasons such as these that Gandhiji made the eradication of drink evil a primary plank in the congress programme.\(^34\)

Mahatma’s call had great impact on the people. During the Civil Disobedience period the people picketed the toddy shops. They also obstructed the Government while auction was conducted for the toddy shops.\(^35\)

Rajaji undertook the anti-drink campaign vigorously. His Ashram at Tiruchengode was a new centre for prohibition work. He traveled by bullock-cart to the village, where majority of the dalit people were living, and made speeches about prohibition and distributed pamphlets.\(^36\)

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\(^{34}\) B.S.Baliga, Compendium on Temperance and Prohibition in Madras, 1960, p 17.

\(^{35}\) NNPR, ‘Navayuga’, Mangalore, 16\(^{th}\) July 1931.

Rajaji propagated the evils of drink with all his might through his well-known pamphlets 'Indian Prohibition Manual' in English and 'Oru-Kattuppadu' in Tamil. Encouraged by Rajaji, in Tamil Nadu, during the civil disobedience agitations the Congress workers everywhere resorted on a large scale to the social boycott of drinking classes, to the cutting of spathes of coconut trees and to the picketing of liquor shops and liquor shop sales. These agitations had great impact. The effects of these agitations were by no means small. Thus in one single year, in 1931-32, the excise revenues of this state suffered a loss about a crore of rupees.

Several local bodies pressed for local option. The legislative council became a constant scene of attacks on excise policy. Discussions on that policy were held, questions were asked, resolutions were moved and bills were introduced with a view to securing local option or prohibition. One of the Independent Party Ministers went to the extent of framing a Prohibition Bill and embarrassing not a little the reserved half of the Government. Under all these storm and stress, the government was compelled to continue the existing temperance measures and to try new methods.

Dalit participants in the Toddy Shop Picketings

Dalits were severely affected by the liquor. Poor agricultural labourers and Mill workers spent their income to this evil and left their

37 B.S.Baliga, op. cit., p 17.
38 D.N.Strathie, "Excise and Temperance in Madras", Madras, 1922, p 60.
families in perpetual poverty. Rajaji advised these dalit communities the necessity of doing away with liquor. His advice created awakening among them.

Due to the call of Rajaji, dalits took part in large number in the temperance movement. They participated in the picketings of liquor shops, arranged by the Congress. Many were arrested, tried and punished. Marimuthu Kudumpan from Kuppam Palayam, Coimbatore district joined the freedom movement in 1930 and took part in Toddy Shop picketing campaign in 1931. He was sentenced for imprisonment and kept in Coimbatore jail for one year and two months.40

Palanisamy, son of Karuppusamy Pannadi Kallimadai from Singanallur, Coimbatore district, joined the freedom movement in the thirtieths and took part in the Toddy Shop Picketing Movement at Singanallur. He was imprisoned for two years and six months and spent the term in Coimbatore and Alipuram jails.41

Muniyappan, son of Chola Pannadi was from Pallapalayam, Coimbatore district. He joined the freedom movement and he took part in Toddy Shop Picketing. He was imprisoned and was kept in Pollachi, Udumalaipet, Coimbatore and Alipuram jails for seven years. He headed the Congress Committee as its Vice-President.

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40 Civil Disobedience File, Secret File No.687, dated 31st May 1930.
41 Ibid.
Marimuthu, son of Kali Kudumban from Muthunayakanpatti in Palani Taluk, Madurai District was another important leader who played a prominent role in the freedom movement. He joined the movement in 1926 and took part in the Toddy Shop Picketing in 1930. He court arrest and was put in jail for two years and spent the term in Coimbatore Central Jail.\(^{42}\)

Shanmugam, son of Subban was from Singanallur, Coimbatore district. He joined the civil disobedience movement in its late phase in 1935. He took part in Picketing Toddy Shop and was arrested. He was sentenced under Sec. IPC-149 for three and half years and spent the term in Alipuram jail.

Civil disobedience activities had declined during 1934. Early in the fortnight there was a certain amount of khaddar propaganda in Madura where sales of khaddar were said to have been decreasing. Khaddar propaganda work was also carried on in Madras in connection with ‘National Week’. The announcement that Gandhiji had recommended the suspension of the Civil Disobedience movement was welcomed by all except the left wing of the Congress party whose comments appear to be restrained by the fact that they were a very small minority. At a meeting held under the auspices of the Madras Youth Congress, S. Satyamurti, as President, canvassed support for his party and regretted that Government had not after Gandhi’s announcement taken prompt steps to remove the ban

\(^{42}\) Sub-magistrate letter to the joint magistrate of Madurai District, dated 31st May 1930.
on Congress organisations and to release all civil disobedience prisoners. Efforts were being made by some of the prominent Congress leaders to form a provincial branch of the All-India Swadeshi Sangh in Madras city to carry on propaganda in favour of swadeshi.\footnote{Fortnightly Report for the First Half of April, 1934, p. 1.}

**Communal Award and Poona Fact**

While the Civil Disobedience Movement was on the progress, the British resorted to the diplomacy of 'divide and rube'. As dalits were cooperating to the programmes of Mahatma Gandhi, Ramsay Macdonald, the British Prime Minister, announced the 'Communal Award', the aim of which was to divide the 'harijans' from caste Hindus.

The scope of the Award was confined to allocating seats to various communities in the provincial legislatures only. It said nothing about the seats in the central legislature. The award accepted the demand of the Muslims, Sikhs, Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians and women for separate electorate. Harijans were recognised as a minority. Separate seats were allotted to them. They exercised two votes each, one in the general constituency and the other in special constituencies. This was deliberately done to alienate Harijans from the Hindus.\footnote{R. C. Agarwal, *op. cit.*, p. 225.} The award was a great shock to Gandhiji. His heart bled and revolted at the sight of Harijans gradually drifting away from the Hindu community. He communicated to Macdonald
that he would begin his fast to death if the decision was not reversed. Hence on 20th September 1932 Mahatma began his historic fast.45

Many dalit leaders misunderstood the genuineness of Mahatma’s fast. Dr. Ambedkar called it Mahatma’s political stunt. In Tamil Nadu also many dalit leaders and organisations criticised Mahatma, when he announced his fast. Many dalits in Tamil Nadu considered that the communal award was a privilege bestowed on them by the government.46 Even great leaders of depressed classes like Swami Sahajananda and Srinivasan had the same thought of Dr. Ambedkar. They did not like joint electorates for depressed classes.47 The general opinion of the Harijans in Tamil Nadu was for separate electorates.48

Very soon the leaders realised the evils of separate electorates. The friendship prevailed among the caste Hindus and harijans soon came to an end. Untouchability became more acute. Dalits were not allowed to enter into the temples.49 The dalit leaders divided on the question of separate electorates and Mahatma’s fast and many started realizing the genuine intention of Mahatma Gandhi. They tried to make a settlement between Mahatma, Ambedkar, M.C.Raja and other depressed class leaders. On the

46 Letter of Tirunelveli District Collector to Mr. Bracken, Chief Secretary to Government, dated 18th September 1932.
47 Letter of District Magistrate of South Arcot District to Mr. Bracken, dated 19th September 1932.
48 Report of Commissioner of Police, Madras to Bracken, 19th September 1932.
49 Letter of Ooty District Collector to Mr. Bracken, dated 19th September 1932.
fifth day of the fast the leaders agreed on a formula. This settlement, which is known as Poona Pact reserved as many as 148 seats to depressed classes, instead of the 71 seats allotted by the Award.

The following is the text of the agreement arrived at between the leaders acting on behalf of the depressed classes and the rest of the Hindu community regarding the representation of the depressed classes in the legislatures, and certain other matters affecting their welfare.

1. There shall be seats reserved for the depressed classes out of the general electorates seats in the Provincial Legislatures as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Madras</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombay with Sind</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar and Orissa</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Provinces</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengal</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Provinces</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>148</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These figures were based on the total strength of the Provincial Councils, announced in the Prime Minister’s decision.

2. Election to these seats shall be by joint electorates subject, however, to the following procedure: All the members of the depressed classes registered in the general electoral roll in a constituency will form an electoral college, which will elect a panel of four candidates belonging
to the depressed classes for each of such reserved seats, by the method of the single vote; the four persons getting the highest number of votes in such primary election, shall be candidates for election by the general electorate.

3. Representation of the depressed classes in the Central Legislature shall likewise be on the principle of joint electorates and reserved seats by the method of primary election in the manner provided for in Clause two above, for their representation in the Provincial Legislature.

4. In the Central Legislature, eighteen per cent of the seats allotted to the general electorate for British India in the said legislature shall be reserved for the Depressed Classes.

5. The system of primary election to a panel of candidates for election to the Central and Provincial Legislatures, as hereinbefore mentioned, shall come to an end after the first ten years, unless terminated sooner by mutual agreement under the provision of Clause six below.

6. The system of representation of the depressed classes by reserved seats in the Provincial and Central Legislatures as provided for in Clauses 1 and 4 shall continue until determined by mutual agreement between the communities concerned in the settlement.

7. Franchise for the Central and Provincial Legislatures for the depressed classes shall be as indicated in the Lothian Committee Report.

8. There shall be no disabilities attaching to any one on the ground of his being a member of the depressed classes in regard to any elections to local bodies or appointment to the Public Services. Every endeavour
shall be made to secure fair representation of the depressed classes in these respects, subject to such educational qualifications as many be laid down for appointment to the Public Services.

9. In every province out of the educational grant, an adequate sum shall be earmarked for providing educational facilities to the members of the depressed classes.

All these leaders present in Poona, including Pandit Malaviya, Dr. Ambedkar, Dr. Solanki, Rao Bahadur Sreenivasan, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Mr. Jayakar, Rao Bahadur M. C. Raja, Mr. P. Baloo, Mr. Rajboj and Mr. Sivraj had signed the agreement. Thus the Poona Pact had solved the problem for the time being.⁵⁰

**Impact of the Movement on the Dalits**

Mahatma Gandhi’s support to dalits, the Caste Hindu cooperation and the awakening created among the dalits helped them to fight for their legal rights. They convened many conferences and demanded their socio-political rights.⁵¹

The civil disobedience movement and the events that followed had a great impact on dalits. Dalits developed a confidence on Mahatma Gandhi and other leaders. Many prominent dalit leaders emerged during this time. P. Kakkan (1909-1981) came to prominence during this time. He actively

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⁵⁰ Text of Agreement, Associated Press of India, Poona, dated 24th September
involved in the constructive programmes of Congress. This great dalit leader was supported by caste Hindu Congressites. Vaidyanatha Aiyer, N. M. R. Subbaraman and L. Krishnasamy Bharathi supported him. K. Kamaraj, one of the greatest leader of Congress supported him whole heartedly.\(^\text{52}\)

Rangarajan, son-in-law of Kakkan explains about the impact of the movement on dalits:

My uncle said that Civil Disobedience had a great impact on the dalits. Congress leaders of Tamil Nadu carried out the constructive programmes of Mahatma Gandhi, in this state. The leaders were particular that dalits' support should be obtained to make the movement successful. My uncle was encouraged to start night schools to awaken dalits. He started many schools and instructed them the need of joining the programmes of Congress. My uncle also fought for the rights of dalits to use common wells, as well as their entry into temples. All these agitations were successful, because Congress had done away the caste barriers.\(^\text{53}\)

The events that took place after the civil disobedience movement led to the enactment of the Government of India Act of 1935.

\(^{52}\) T. Stalin Gunasekharan, “Viduthalai Velviyil Tamilaham” (Tamil), Nivedida Pathipagam, Erode, 2000, pp. 269-270.

\(^{53}\) Interview with Rangarajan, son-in-law of Kakkan, dated 20th November 2003.
Indians were given more share in the administration. In Tamil Nadu many dalits entered the councils and assembly. Many dalits were appointed as ministers. Rao Bahadur Munisamy Pillai was appointed a cabinet minister in the Rajaji Ministry in 1938. Many other leaders like U. M. Jaganathan, B. Parameswarn, N. Sivaraj and others came into prominence during this time. No doubt, this movement brought many dalits into the forefront of the society.

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