CHAPTER SIX
GEORGE JOSEPH AND NATIONAL POLITICS

THE SIMON COMMISSION

The Simon Commission published its reports in June 1930. It welcomed criticisms from all over India. It was really unsatisfactory to the Indians. The report did not contain any provision for providing dominion status or complete independence to Indian people. The existing system of ‘dyarchy’ which came as a result of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms was to be replaced. The Governors of the provinces, who were strictly under the control of the Viceroy's would get more powers which included national defence, internal securities and the issues of the minorities. This seemed really awkward to the Indians. The political leaders realized that Indians were not going to benefit anything from any of these reforms. So they strongly criticized the report of the Simon Commission. National leaders could not find any reform in that report which is favourable to the Indians. The Simon Commission report was completely unsuccessful regarding the future of the Indians. The congress leaders called it as a reactionary one.

An exception in this matter was George Joseph. He could not consider the Simon Commission report as reactionary one. George Joseph put forward various arguments to support his opinion. He made a detailed study of the report. After this he reached a
conclusion that the Simon Commission report was not so harmful to the Indians as expressed by many national leaders. His approach towards this report was entirely different from others. He could find certain points in that report which he thought would be favourable to the present situation in India. He wrote an article in *The Hindu* regarding this report which was titled as ‘Is it Reactionary’?

“…whole of political India publicly professes to be angry with the Simon Report, there is hardly a word of parliamentary criticism that is not applied to it, and a good many words that are distinctly unparliamentary. And right in the middle of it I am ready deliberately to declare after a careful study of the Report that it deserves better deal … That despite all its defects, defects of temper of ignorance, of human all too human prejudices, the proposed constitution is a definite improvement on the existing diarchy in the provinces. Even with reference to the Centre (Central Administration) the liberty to organize a Dominion Army of purely Indian composition, opens out the possibility of making the Government of India responsible to a Federal Assembly in fortnight ago.”

George Joseph provided a detailed explanation of the four important points included in that report. The first point was the provision of non-elected members in the legislature which was considered as reactionary by the national leaders. In George Joseph’s opinion it was not at all reactionary when compared to the current situation in India. Secondly the special powers given to the
provincial Governors have several merits for the present political situation in India. Whether it is a problem related to the issues of the minority or defence or internal security, special powers given to the governor would be able to control the society in a proper way than the existing one. That would provide more safety and security to the society. In George Joseph’s view it could never be called as a reactionary one. The last point mentioned by George Joseph was the emergency powers given to him. He commented that this special power granted to the Governors would save the society from further turmoils.4

But all these arguments put forward by George Joseph was not acceptable to the Congress leaders. Most of them had turned against the new constitution brought by the Simon Commission. George Joseph’s comments on the Simon report did not make any impact on them. He never tried to persuade any one to turn towards his views. He never cared about getting support from others. He always took stern decisions on several issues which he thought right. As time goes by George Joseph became a serious critic of the Congress which made him away from Congress for a long time. Even though he was a dedicated nationalist, some Congress activities irritated him. He never hesitated to throw criticisms on any personality. Such attitude of George Joseph earned him more enemies in congress than friends. It is clear that his relationship with Gandhi also deteriorated due to various incidents. He had left everything behind him his lucrative legal profession and his western
lifestyle for becoming a follower of Gandhi and after that he changed his entire lifestyle and became an inmate in the Sabarmati Ashram.

The Spirit of nationalism entirely changed his life from a western educated criminal lawyer to a complete nationalist. But still he could not provide his ideological support to some decisions taken by Gandhi. The Vaikom Satyagraha episode weakened George Joseph’s national spirit to some extent. Till that time he never paid any attention to Christianity. Religion was not at all any matter to him. After that George Joseph began to think seriously about the condition of Christians in his country, whether their condition is safe in the present situation of India. Such thoughts began to emerge in the mind of George Joseph. Crisis in the Congress regarding the fight between no changers and prochangers also irritated George Joseph. He supported the no changer’s group. He became a pessimist over the future of Congress. Lack of unity was a major threat in the Congress. Apart from that, Muslim League was attacking the congress in various ways. All such circumstances paved the way for a transformation in George Joseph.

In 1929, George Joseph became the candidate for Congress in the Municipal elections in Madurai. But unfortunately he was defeated by his Brahmin opponent. He was in full confidence that he would be elected. But the defeat was a real shock to him. Even the Congress supporters among the Brahmans too voted for the Brahmin
candidate. Caste played a major role in that election. This election led George Joseph into utter desperation. He became aware of the caste rigidity and party disloyalty. After this he began to think seriously about his Christian identity. He feared that being a Christian would be a threat to his active role in national politics. The failure in the Madurai Municipal elections made him to leave Madurai for a while. He received an advice from Rajagopalachari to leave Madurai and shift to Madras for enhancing his legal career. Thus he left Madurai and shifted to Madras. Until 1931, he remained in Madras.

Coming back to Madras in 1929 marked George Joseph’s another phase of life. Life in Madras at this time was not favourable for the Joseph family. They were moving through difficult situations in life. Financial burden added more crisis to their daily life. George Joseph could not set up a well known legal career in Madras as he had expected. During this time in Madras, George Joseph became a voracious reader. He spent more time in the Connemera Public Library in Madras and the Literary Society. He would sit there for long hours. This time he became close to different varieties of books. He got deeply interested in biographies of great men, novels, thrilling detective stories, philosophies and various books on theology etc. His taste of books never centered on a particular variety but it was wider. He loved to read short stories and novels. His passion for books started in an early age and it continued till his last breath. Books had a key role in the life of George Joseph. That helped him
to mould a good personality. George Joseph was lucky enough to be close to different varieties of books throughout his life. At his very younger age, his mother introduced him new books. She was responsible for creating such a good quality in her son.

During his London days George Joseph could widen his passion for reading. There also he was able to reach a wide variety of books. He spent his spare time in London in the libraries. It had become a habit of the Indian students studying in London at that time. Whenever he got enough time, George Joseph turned to reading. The prison days in the life of George Joseph provided him good opportunities to read and study various subjects. He never missed a good chance to read good books. He always kept good books close to his heart. At this time in Madras too he showed keen interest in spending his spare time in the libraries. In Madras libraries he met several interesting people. He engaged in intellectual discussions with them for long hours. These discussions took him into more spheres of knowledge which was unknown to him till that time. George Joseph’s personal diary contains some references to the writings of certain famous writers, like Cardinal Newman, Bernard Shaw, P.G Wodehouse, Hilaire Belloc, G.K. Chesterton, and J.B. Priestly. These writers might have made great impressions on George Joseph. His diary also contains references to the biographies of some English politicians and other celebrities.
At this time, the days in Madras never seemed successful to George Joseph and his family. He fell into debts too. Finding it difficult to maintain a good legal career in Madras he decided to go back to Madurai in 1931. After reaching Madurai, George Joseph resumed his legal practice again. In Madurai also George Joseph turned towards his reading habits. He renewed his membership at the Victoria Edward Library in Madurai. That provided him much mental relief. He could spend so much time in that Library. There he found enough time to read newspapers and LawReports. He always loved to read various newspapers.

In his personal diary George Joseph wrote about the subjects included in his discussions. They were ‘the rights and wrongs of religious conversions’ and the ‘place of grihasta ethics in politics.’ He always held a leading role in such discussions. His deep knowledge on variety of books enabled George Joseph to assume a leading role in such discussions and it always attracted him very much. So he always showed a keen interest on such intellectual discussions and as such he had a particular view on each subject. He was always eager to express his views in newspapers and his journalistic career helped him to write various articles on various subjects. His articles appeared mainly in The Hindu. Writing articles in newspapers always amused him. He was always fascinated by politics. Politics always became his favourite subject for writing articles in the newspapers. He wrote about the contemporary issues in Indian politics. Sometimes it included strong criticisms on a
particular person or a political party. He was not at all scared of any party or any person. He always dared to express his strong views in the newspapers.\textsuperscript{12}

George Joseph had written an article in \textit{The Hindu} on Jawaharlal Nehru which was titled as ‘Nehru as President’. Jawaharlal Nehru was elected as the Congress President for the session to be held in Lahore in the year 1929. In the presidential address Nehru spoke about a socialist future for India. “\textit{I must frankly confess that I am a socialist and a republican and I am no believer in kings and princes, or in the orders which produces the modern kings of industry}”. George Joseph could not accept this view showed by Nehru.\textsuperscript{13}

He wrote an article about that “\textit{The suggestion that Pandit Jawaharlal might be elected once again to preside over the next session of the Congress is important and raises an issue of some gravity. Everyone knew that he was a socialist: but that was not the decisive element in the election. The position is now different. The president in his year of office while holding the scales even by virtue of his office has devoted the whole of his time to propaganda in favour of socialism. I do not now desire to go into the question whether other interests have suffered by this pre occupation. I think there was nothing wrong in the President’s preaching the faith that was in him. The re-election of Mr. Nehru will have this grave and inescapable implication that the Congress has gone socialist, and
that the country that Congress speaks for also gone socialist. I do not believe that the implication is true with reference to the Congress or the country.”

George Joseph feared that during his presidency Nehru would give more importance to socialist ideas. Socialism would come above all other issues. In George Joseph’s view that would not benefit our country. The national issues are different and it should be handled in a different way. Socialism could not save the country from its present crisis. George Joseph opinioned that Nehru was a great supporter of the Western left wing politics but it was not applicable in the Indian situation. It is evident from this view of George Joseph that he had ideological differences with Jawaharlal Nehru too in various issues. At that time Nehru was emerging as a rising star of Indian politics with full support from Gandhi. But that did not prevent George Joseph from expressing his views without any hesitation.

George Joseph wrote a letter to Jawaharlal Nehru on 18\textsuperscript{th} July 1936, at the time of the publication of Nehru’s Autobiography.

“On your socialism, there is one question I should like to ask you. Why do you stop with it, why don’t you go to the next stop, Fascism and be done with it. Of course, fascism is a reaction against socialism, just as socialism is a reaction against capitalism. I shall put it in Hegelian terms: Capitalism is the thesis, socialism is the
antithesis and fascism is the synthesis. This is how the world movement is working itself out; here in India, the word will be nationalism, the only difference I can see. If you are not killed yourself with your over work or are not hanged in the interval, you will end as Mussolini or Hitler, not as a Lenin: and on the whole I prefer you to be a Mussolini, though I do not hide myself from the fear that, it may be a Hitler. And I very much fear that you are an imperialist. I confess myself one – only it is Empire that I want India to establish beyond her borders.”

However it seems that George Joseph had a somewhat sympathy towards fascism. He found fascism as a better solution for the problems that arose in Germany after the first world war. In his view only fascism can resist the faster growth of communism in Europe. His wide reading enabled George Joseph to be more familiar with fascism and its various ideologies. A note in his personal diary shows his deep influence by the fascist ideologies. It was a note on Italy’s invasion in Ethiopia. “Ziauddin heard the sensational news that Addis Ababa had fallen and that the Emperor of Ethiopia had been captured sounds too good to be true 14.’

He wrote it on 27th January 1936. It seemed that fascism was one of Joseph’s blind spots. He always kept a unique thinking and a separate view regarding a particular issue or ideology. He was not ready to accept anything without conducting a serious analysis. George Joseph always showed enough courage to speak out what
is in his mind. But this character of George Joseph was not always acceptable to others. He was never afraid of any person or any organization. He was not a dependent person. George Joseph’s relationship with Gandhi was the best example of that. Though there were ideological differences between both but they always kept mutual love throughout their life. George Joseph’s distance some times worried Gandhi. It is evident from short messages and letters between them. In one letter Gandhi wrote as “O George Joseph, why have you forsaken me”.

George Joseph was a straight forward person. This quality of George Joseph caused him to have disagreements with several personalities in India particularly within Congress and within the freedom struggle.¹⁵

GEORGE JOSEPH’S FAMILY AND FRIENDS

As a father of four children Moncy, Molly, Maya and Babu, George Joseph was a dedicated father. He was a lovable husband too. George Joseph would be always there for providing encouragement to his children for their studies and other activities. He never tried to impose his set of beliefs on his children. He was always remembered by his daughter Maya Thomas as a soft father. He was never be so harsh to his children. Most of the time his house was filled with relatives and cousins. He was a favourite among his relatives. Even distant relatives had become regular
guests. George Joseph and Susanna always showed a better hospitality to each and everyone who came to their home. George Joseph was not a strict father even in the studies of his children. He never scolded his children even if they failed in the examination. Instead of that he would always treat it as a joke. In his opinion examinations could not make a true evaluation of a student's ability. So one could not predict a bad future for a student, if he badly performed in an examination. He always tried to promote reading habits among his children.

He would always say that “If you can look on books as companions to cherish, you will never be lonely. You will walk with the great you have not had the good fortune to see or know. You will get to the heart of ideas which have shaped the world.” Books had been always a part of George Joseph’s life. This had helped him to take serious decisions in various issues. He wished that his children too should develop such quality in their life. He always tried to introduce new books to his children so that they could enhance their area of study.

George Joseph had given full encouragement for the new attempts taken by his children. He wrote a short play for his daughter Molly. It was so amusing, Mahatma Gandhi and Socrates were the main characters in that play. George Joseph played the role of these two characters and Susannah became the wife of these two characters.
George Joseph advised his children that they should not accept any opinion or suggestion given by others without a critical thinking. He told that before going to acknowledge something, one should seriously think about that. Critical thinking is essential in one’s life. When his daughter Maya told him about a speech given by Dr. Stanley Jones, the evangelist preacher about the importance of speaking truth, even if it meant losing one’s life. George Joseph was not ready to accept it. He said “Up to an extent, Yes. But if you say a harmless lie to save another discouragement, pain and distress, do you think it will be wrong? Before you accept another man’s opinion, however great or saintly he may be, think and then decide.”

George Joseph always kept a sense of humour in every matter. He loved to make company with youngsters. He liked to have discussions on various subjects with them. He would join with them in the evenings and talked about his passions for various fields like politics, art, music, painting, books and many other things. George Joseph shared his various experiences in different fields of life and also he shared with them his knowledge over numerous subjects which he acquired through intense reading. The youth too loved to make company with George Joseph. He was always ready to give them company if they wish to go for any dance performances or musical functions. If any one had any passion for arts or paintings, George Joseph would always give them much encouragement. Making company with the younger sections in the
society always made George Joseph so happy. That gave him much energy and enthusiasm. The discussions enabled him to refresh his deep knowledge in various subjects. His knowledge scattered on various fields. His strong love for art and paintings enabled him to achieve indepth knowledge in those subjects. He always held discourses on paintings of various countries, whether it was on cane paintings, or the paintings of the European Renaissance period, complications in the Rajput or Mugal painting.

George Joseph attained much attraction through his wide knowledge in each subject. He acquired much information in the paintings of Raja Ravi Varma too. Maya Thomas recollected her memory of her father. She wrote “If I can spot out a Da Vinci or a Raphael or Rubens or a Ravi Varma, if I can recognize a miniature painting when I see one, if I can identify orient or the Great Bear or the Dole Star, it is all thanks to father. If I revere Thyagaraja or Dikshitar or Syama Sastri, if I have a nodding acquaintance with Beethoven and Mozart, it is again thanks to my father. If I grew to love books, it was owing to his encouragement to glimpse at the great men whose ideas dominated the world at different times in the history of mankind.”

This shows George Joseph’s deep knowledge in different fields and how much he had influenced his daughter to acquire much information in various fields of life. It is clear that George Joseph’s dedication and hard work and also his thirst to find out new
horizons of knowledge made him a fine personality. George Joseph was a great fan of Charlie Chaplin.

POTHAN JOSEPH

During the early years of his life George Joseph was a responsible son. He was the eldest son of a large family. At that time the eldest son in a family always possessed more responsibility than others. He always played the role of the father. It was his responsibility to take care of his siblings. George Joseph always kept that promise through out his life. There was an age gap between him and his siblings. So the younger ones treated him with much respect. Though George Joseph had left his successful profession to be a part of the Indian national movement, he always tried to retain contact with his family members. His father was not at all happy over the decision taken by George Joseph. He had put much hope on him. He sent George Joseph to Britain for higher studies in a high expectation that he would look after the family. But George Joseph could not make his father’s dream a reality. This caused to make his father angry on him throughout his life. But George Joseph was a lovable person to all members in his family. He had put much influence upon his siblings, especially on his brother Pothan Joseph. He later became a prominent Indian Journalist. He edited more newspapers and journals than any other editor in the world of his time. Pothan Joseph was five years younger than George Joseph.
Pothan Joseph was introduced to the World of Literature through his brother George Joseph. He taught him about the importance of world classics. And also talked about famous writers like Shakespeare and Homer, Valmiki and Kalidasa. George Joseph always advised his brother to learn and recite famous passages from literature.

It was George Joseph’s influence which turned Pothan Joseph towards the field of journalism. He developed a spirit of political and philosophical ideology through George Joseph. GJ assisted him to develop a habit of thinking and analysing. For whatever achievements he acquired in life, Pothan Joseph was indebted to his elder brother. He always kept full admiration for George Joseph. Pothan Joseph would always tell to his children about his love and respect for his brother. He would tell them “when you walked with him, you felt the presence of greatness.” George Joseph would advise Pothan Joseph about the need to develop a good character. For attaining a fine personality one should not allow themselves to grow pride and vanity in their mind. This idea was also imparted by George Joseph to his brother. But George Joseph did not influence his brother about the spirit of nationalism. Pothan Joseph did not enter into the freedom struggle. He turned his concentration towards journalism. Later in his life Pothan Joseph became anti-nationalist and anti-Congress. Pothan Joseph edited various newspapers throughout his life. He edited the Bombay
"Chronicle. It was Benjamin G. Horniman, who invited Pothan Joseph to hold a position in his Bombay Chronicle. Horniman was one of the famous editors of the pre-Independence India. He owned the famous nationalist newspaper the Bombay Chronicle, which acted as the mouth piece of western India."

It was in 1920s that Pothan Joseph started writing a daily article called ‘over a cup of tea’. This article became famous all over India. He did not mention his name in that but every one knew the person behind this interesting series. This made Pothan Joseph so famous not only in India but in other parts of the world also. Famous national leaders like Gandhi and Rajagopalachari read this with much interest. Even Viceroy was a regular reader of this article. This article appeared on every day in the newspaper. So people waited eagerly to read this. In his ‘over a cup of tea’ Pothan Joseph used much humour sense to criticize the government or whatever he thought as too odd to the present situation. He was not afraid of any person or any organization. He was not part of any beliefs or principles which enabled him to write freely. There was always a sense of humour in his writings. Other famous newspapers edited by Pothan Joseph were the Hindustan Times, the Dawn (owned by Muhammed Ali Jinnah), the Indian Express, the Deccan Herald and a number of journals and dailies like the Voice of India, the Indian Daily Telegraph, the Indian Daily Mail etc.

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Pothan Joseph’s ‘over a cup of tea’ was always attached with a cartoon by Shanker. It was Pothan Joseph who introduced Shanker and his famous cartoons to the world. He became famous in the field of Indian cartoon journalism. Throughout his life Shanker always dedicated his full respect and devotion to Pothan Joseph.

Pothan Joseph’s was entirely a different personality from his elder brother. He always loved to lead a luxurious life. He spent money lavishly. He was never attached to any kind of ideologies. Though he became one of the famous journalists of his time, Pothan Joseph did not earn much in his life. That made him to fall into debts in his later years. A habit of drinking alcohol kept by Pothan Joseph, involved huge expenditure. This was just against the beliefs and ideologies of George Joseph. However Pothan Joseph started writing his daily commentary ‘over a cup of tea’. It was considered as the heyday of the ‘Hindustan Times’. Pothan Joseph had thirty five years long journalistic career. He was treated as one among the triumvirates in the Indian journalistic world. Others were Chalpathi Rao and Frank Moraes. These three personalities belonged to pre-Independence era and the life of Pothan Joseph was compared to the life of the famous Newyork based journalist William Shaun. There were similarities between their lives. Both had dedicated their lives for journalism but always avoided by others. Every time they were denied of the respect and affection of others. They failed to attain the reputation and position, deserved by them. Pothan Joseph was a good writer too.
GANDHIJI, NEHRUS, RAJAJI AND BHARATHI

Throughout his life George Joseph was lucky enough to have meeting with various personalities. Some of them had made much influence upon the life of George Joseph. Some persons became so close to his heart. His participation in Indian freedom movement enabled him to have contacts with certain personalities. Various persons touched his heart throughout his political career. It was Gandhi’s call which changed George Joseph’s entire life, which turned a western educated lawyer to a dedicated freedom fighter. Through Gandhi and Motilal Nehru, George Joseph attained a chance to edit two famous national dailies of the time, viz Young India and the Independent. It was a fine opportunity to prove his ability as a good editor. He used these newspapers as a weapon to criticize the activities of the British Government. That had led him many times towards imprisonment. But such punishment never weakened George Joseph. He kept writing articles in various newspapers throughout his life.

C. Rajagopalachari was an ever friend of George Joseph. He always received advices from him in crucial situations. Rajaji was so close to his family too. There were frequent correspondence between both GJ and Rajagopalachari and C R had made frequent visits to George Joseph’s house. Rajaji was always impressed by the fine personality of George Joseph. It was Rajagopalachari who advised George Joseph to leave Madurai and to resume practice in
Madras after George Joseph’s defeat in the Municipal elections held in Madurai in 1929.27

Another person George Joseph closely related to was Subrahmanya Bharati. He was born at Ettayapuram in the Tirunelveli District of Tamilnadu. Subrahmanya Bharathi was considered as the poetical expression of the Indian national movement. He was a famous poet in Tamilnadu. He wrote nationalistic songs in Tamil. His songs were so simple and lucid even common man could easily understand his poems. He wanted to create national spirit among the people through his poems. He was a Brahmin by birth.28 But he strongly believed in the spirit of equality. He had a great sympathy towards the lower caste people. He protested against the brahmanical dominance. Bharathi published his collection of patriotic songs for the first time in December 1907. His book was entitled as “Vandemataram Swadesa Geethangal” (Songs on Swadeshi). His songs contained strong criticisms of the British Government. His songs bore the spirit of nationalism and unity. Through his songs Subrahmanya Bharathi urged his people to fight ferociously against the British Government.29

Subrahmanya Bharathi edited Tamil journals in Madras during the years 1904 to 1908. He was given the title of ‘Bharati’ at a gathering of the poets. In his last years of life Subrahmanya Bharathi moved through very hardships of life30. He was affected by bad
heal. In the year 1908 he reached Pondicherry as a refugee and from there he went to Madras. There he died at the early age of thirty nine in the year 1921.

During his last years Bharathi used to visit George Joseph in Madurai. He would lie down on the verandah of George Joseph’s house. Both George Joseph and Susanna had a great affection to him. Susanna treated him as a member of their family. Susanna remembered one incident. Once Bharathi was lying on their verandah. Suddenly he woke up and then shouted “Kottada Kai Kottada” and then started to sing as he composed the famous song ‘Viduthalai’. George Joseph had greatly impressed by the patriotism of Subrahmanya Bharathi. Though only for a short time, he had become so close to Bharathi.31

**SADANAND, KAMARAJ AND NAIDU**

S. Sadanand was a person closely associated to George Joseph’s heart. Sadanand considered himself as the ‘adopted son’ of George Joseph. He met George Joseph at a time when he was editing the *Independent*. Sadanand stayed with George Joseph family in Allahabad. Susanna too had a great affection for Sadanand. When George Joseph was in Lucknow Jail, Sadanand would accompany her to meet her husband. He was just like a son for Susanna. Later Sadanand became the brave editor of the Free Press Group of Newspapers.
Kamaraj was another person related to George Joseph's life. In his early years of political life Kamaraj was greatly influenced by George Joseph. He was born in a Nadar family at Virudanagar in the Madras province. He had not received good education. At his younger years Kamaraj tried to attend Congress processions. He loved to listen to the speeches made by Congress leaders like George Joseph and Varadarajulu Naidu. For a short period Kamaraj entered into the Vaikom satyagraha. At that time satyagraha was led by George Joseph. During George Joseph's stay in Madurai, Kamaraj stayed with Joseph family occasionally. Later Kamaraj was arrested in the Virudanagar conspiracy case. He was accused of making bombs in Virudanagar. At this time George Joseph became his counsel for that case. George Joseph could defend him successfully in the trial and he was released. After George Joseph's death Kamaraj would meet Susanna whenever she came to Madurai.32

George Joseph had maintained a good relationship with Varadarajulu Naidu. They had worked together for the cause of the mill workers of Madurai in 1918. From that day onwards both had a good companionship together. Both were members of the Congress. Varadarajulu Naidu was an active Congress worker. But after several years he too resigned from the Congress. In the year 1936 both GJ and Varadarajulu rejoined the Congress party. George Joseph always tried to make contacts with Varadarajulu Naidu. In
certain cases George Joseph received advises from Varadarajulu Naidu and both always kept great admiration for each other. 

E.V.R.

The relationship between George Joseph and E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker (Periyar) was also to be mentioned. E.V.Ramaswamy Naicker was born in 1879 at Erode, Tamilnadu. His family was so rich and orthodox. E.V.R started his political career at an early age. He joined the Indian National Congress and actively participated in the Vaikom Satyagraha. At the beginning of the 20th century non-brahmins began to agitate for more opportunities in Governmental posts and also in other institutions. The South Indian People’s Association was formed by Dr. T.M. Nair and Mr. P.Tyagaraja Chetty to promote the non-brahmins. The South Indian Liberal Federation was also formed which aimed to promote the political interests of the non-brahmins. In 1925 E.V Ramaswamy Naicker left Congress following an issue related to communal representation. In the same year he started the ‘Self Respect Movement’ through which he wanted to reform the society. He strongly protested against the caste system. He wanted to eradicate that social evil from the society. He was furious over the dominance of Brahmins in all spheres of life in South India.
In 1924 Ramaswamy Naicker got involved in the Vaikom Satyagraha, which was fought for the removal of untouchability. Ramaswamy Naicker entered into the satyagraha with full spirit and he was jailed twice. After releasing from the prison he was advised to leave Vaikom. During the term of his second imprisonment he was shifted to the prison in Madras. After Vaikom Satyagraha his supporters started calling him as ‘Vaikom Hero’.36

Later in the year 1938, E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker was elected as the president of the Justice Party. This party was later known as Dravida Kazhagam. In 1948, this party was divided and a new party was formed. It was called Dravida Munnetta Kazhagam (DMK). Ramaswami Naicker died in 1973 after half a century old crusade for social and political rights.37

There was no close friendship between George Joseph and E.V. Ramaswami Naicker. Even though he had admired Naicker's sincerity and dedication in various issues, he could not accept Naicker's stand in certain issues. George Joseph was unhappy over the extra emphasis given to E.V. Ramaswami Naicker in the Vaikom Satyagraha by his supporters. Though Naicker had not played a key role in the satyagraha he was given the title ‘Vaikom hero’. This was disliked by George Joseph. Ramaswamy Naicker gave more importance to the issue of the uplift of the non-Brahmins and other caste related issues than freedom movement. In George Joseph’s
opinion freedom from the British Government should be treated as the prime issue than other social issues.

Mahadev Desai, who was the Secretary of Gandhi was a good friend of George Joseph. Both were together in Lucknow Jail. George Joseph always admired Mahadev Desai’s love and dedication to Gandhiji.

Another person, with whom George Joseph had a good friendship was the Jesuit priest, Father Gathier, who was a Professor in Philosophy in the Shembagannur Jesuit Seminary. Whenever he got a chance, George Joseph tried to visit him. When George Joseph became the counsel of Maharaja of Nabha, who was in exile in Kodaikkanal, he made occasional visits. On his way to Kodaikkanal George Joseph would drop at the seminary to meet Father Gathier. Both had discussions on various topics for long hours.38

It is clear that George Joseph had a list of friends from various fields. Some of them had made deep influence upon the life of George Joseph. Even after the death of George Joseph most of his friends tried to keep their love and affection with George Joseph’s family. George Joseph’s sincere love and affection always made him so close to many persons. George Joseph was ever ready to provide any help and his full support to anyone in need. For
many he was a father figure or a guru and for some others he was a good brother or friend.

George Joseph condemned any kind of orthodox beliefs. He severely criticized some odd practices taking place in the Indian society of his time. He was unhappy over some customs against women. He always stood for the freedom of women. He criticized the view that women are inferior to men. For him both were equal. George Joseph held the view that women should be treated with much respect. He believed that education is a good solution for the problems of women in Indian society. Then only they would become aware of their rights and the cruelties now facing them. He demanded more educational institutions for them. He believed that only through reforming women, the society could be saved from its social inequalities.

George Joseph disfavoured various restrictions put on the Indian marriages, especially child marriages. He strongly believed in the freedom of an individual to choose his life partner. Parents should not compel the children to marry according to their wish. He supported the idea of mixed marriages. It was the right of the youngsters to choose their life partners. He always welcomed love marriages. George Joseph and Susanna had supported the marriage between Gandhi's son Devdas and Rajagopalachari's daughter Lekshmi. Both wanted to get married. Both Gandhi and Rajagopalachari were not much satisfied with the decision taken by
their children. George Joseph did not like the stand taken by both leaders.\textsuperscript{40}

Another incident that took place during this time was the engagement of G.S Arundale to Rukmini Devi. Arundale was an Englishman and he was 40 years old. Rukmini Devi belonged to Brahmin community and she was only 16 years old. She was a well known dancer. It became a sensational news at that time, because such a marriage was unthinkable for Brahmins. At this time George Joseph sent a letter to the editor of the \textit{Hindu} as a reply to a controversial article appeared on the \textit{Hindu} regarding this issue on 3\textsuperscript{rd} March 1920. He wrote thus “\textit{will you permit me to raise a note of protest against your editorial concerning Arundale’s engagement. I do not understand the point of your objection. Why on earth should not Arundale or anybody else have the liberty to offer honourable marriage to a young Brahmin lady. For the life of me, I cannot realize the thing that is worrying you. Is it because Arundale is an Englishman and the young lady a Brahmin. Indians have married the English, and I know that many such marriages have been successful. Or is it that Arundale is 40 and the young lady 16? There is disparity in age no doubt but South Indian society which tolerates marriages between old widowers of 60 and children of 12, need not venture to throw a stone. But if it is political capital you are trying to make out of it, I respectfully suggest you are hitting below the belt}”\textsuperscript{41}.
This marriage was a controversial issue of that time. But both got married in April 1920. George Joseph had a different and humanitarian attitude towards various issues. When his cousin was married to a lady from lower strata of the society, everyone in the family treated them with harsh mentality. But George Joseph never showed any difference in his behaviour but he treated that girl with much respect and affection.\textsuperscript{42}

Another incident which happened in George Joseph’s life was his conversion towards Catholicism. In his early years of life George Joseph never developed a habit of going to the church regularly. He never believed in any religions of the world. Religion never seemed so important in his life. Family prayers had not been a regular practice in Joseph’s family. A change happened only when he was in Sabarmati ashram where he would participate in the morning prayers. A reading from all scriptures included in that prayer. That attracted George Joseph very much. They continued this practice of offering prayers to a Supreme God even after coming back to Madurai. This prayer was finished with a final chant to the Almighty, in which all were committed to the mercy of God.\textsuperscript{43}

It was astonishing that what made George Joseph for such a conversion. Different experiences in life at various occasions might have influenced George Joseph for such a change. It was his experience in Vaikom Satyagraha that made George Joseph to think about his religious identity. There Gandhi had advised him to let the
Hindus fight for the removal of untouchability in their religion. This must have wounded him severly. Till that time he was not concerned about his religious identity. From that time he started thinking that his religious identity would be a threat to his active role in national politics. George Joseph was the first Christian to be involved actively in the freedom struggle.44 His strong spirit of freedom drove him away from his hometown towards north to fight for his own country. Nothing could stop him from that. He left his sophisticated life for becoming a satyagrahi in the freedom movement. In such a manner, religion never occupied a crucial place in the life of George Joseph. His Christianity never blocked him from entering the national movement. But in course of time he turned away from the old aspects. He moved close to his religion.

George Joseph’s friendship with Mar Ivanios, a Syrian Orthodox Archbishop might have been the prime cause for his conversion to Catholicism. In 1931, Mar Ivanios made an attempt to make a unity in the church. As a part of that, he accepted the authority of the Pope as the head of all Christian churches. George Joseph joined with the group led by Mar Ivanios. Mar Ivanios put much influence upon George Joseph for his conversion towards Catholicism. George Joseph’s deep knowledge in philosophy enabled him to develop a special attitude in his mind.45 He was an ever time seeker of truth and God. Some of his diary notes in 1936 contained some references about the importance he had given to
meditation, surrender of self to God, and the necessity to remove the pride and other spiritual lapses from the mind.

His philosophical studies made him to be so close to some of the famous philosophers of the world like Descartes, Spinoza, Kant, Schopenhauver and Hegel. George Joseph also became interested in church history. He read the works of St.Augustine and Thomas Acquinas. All these had made great impact on his thinking. Buddhism also became one of his favourite subjects of study. He was attracted to Buddha’s teachings. George Joseph became so fascinated over the philosophical aspects of Buddhism, and its chief principle “desire is the cause of all miseries”. It was a real truth about one’s life. Buddha’s teachings also gave a solution to all problems in life through his noble eight fold path (Ashtangamarga). It was a better way to reach Moksha (salvation). George Joseph gave the name Maya (illusion) to his daughter. Maya was Buddha’s mother.46

Saint Theresa of Lisieux became Joseph’s favourite saint. She was known as the ‘Little Flower’. He loved the simplicity and dedication of this saint. She remained as an unknown nun throughout her life. She had devoted her entire life to God. George Joseph kept a full admiration for this saint.

George Joseph had disagreement with Gandhi on the question of proselytisation made by foreign missionaries in India. Gandhi could not accept the proselytisation work of the missionaries
in the name of humanitarian work. In 1937 a manifesto was issued by fourteen Indian Christians including George Joseph which was lifted as ‘Our duty to the depressed and backward classes’, which aimed to preach Christianity among the depressed classes in India. If they wish they would be converted to Christianity. This manifesto too was opposed by Gandhi. 47

George Joseph condemned the idea of Ramarajyam introduced by Gandhi. He feared that it would make a threat to the unity of India. George Joseph advocated for more participation of Christians in national politics. For George Joseph, nationalism never meant to be attached with any particular religion or caste. In nationalist politics overemphasis should not be given to any religion. George Joseph wrote. “It is not as if Christians are against nationalism. But they want to be certain that Nationalism is not made synonymous with Hinduism or Ramarajyam or with Islam or the Khilafat. The only nationalism which can be recognized as legitimate is that which embraces and makes room for all the three social cultures that are associated with Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. Christianity stands for certain values which are currently accepted. For instance there is evangelization: there are the hospitals and schools and churches maintained by Christians, foreign and indigenous. We do not want them to be wiped out because they are essential to Christian culture and the practice of Christianity. If Nationalism means that they are to be wiped out or their full functioning interfered with, we say that such nationalism is
illegitimate and will have to be resisted. And in a question of this sort of the full doctrine of majority government has no application. You cannot say for example that the Hindus being in majority, it will be open to them or to Mr. Gandhi to say there will be no Christian conversion.”

GJ AS A CHRISTIAN

During these days George Joseph actively participated in various meetings and campaigns aimed to promote the interests of the Indian Christians. During the years from 1931 to 1935, George Joseph spent most of his time for the activities related to safeguard the interests of Christians. The 13th session of the All Kerala Catholic Congress held in 1932, was presided over by George Joseph. This session of the Catholic Congress had concentrated on various aspects to increase the present condition of Christians in Kerala. Appeals were sent to authorities for getting more representations in national politics, educational field and to the recruitment in the army and police. During these years George Joseph had less participation in politics. He had deviated from his all active political activities and looked more into his religion. It was a total change for George Joseph.

Giving more importance to his religion brought some kind of communal colour into George Joseph’s attitude. But moving close to religion gave him peace of mind. He became more close to God.
It was evident from a prayer written by George Joseph as a message in a Christmas card in 1937. It was a famous prayer of St. Ignatius. “Take, O Lord, and receive my entire liberty, my memory, my understanding and all my love. All I have and possess is thine. Thou gavest it to me. To thee I return it, Grant me only the love of Thee and Thy grace, and I shall be sufficiently rich.”

JUSTICE PARTY

In his political career, George Joseph had joined the Justice party for a short while. George Joseph was interested in non-brahmin movement that had taken shape in Tamilnadu. The formation of the Justice party was a result of the Dravidian movement which had emerged in Tamilnadu as a reaction against the domination of the Brahmins in the Congress. The Brahmins were only a lower percentage of the population. But they occupied all top posts in the Congress. The non-Brahmins feared that when India becomes a free nation, the political power would be in the hands of the Brahmins. They would put their domination everywhere. However the non-Brahmin community in the Madras province started thinking of a new organization to fight against the growing influence of the Brahmins in the Congress. It was as a result of this plan that the Justice Party was formed. The Justice party was mainly aimed to look after the interests of the non-Brahmins.
Under the influence of some of his friends, George Joseph joined the Justice Party. After his defeat in the Madurai Municipal elections held in 1929, George Joseph became disappointed. His religious identity played a key role for the defeat of George Joseph in the elections. By that time the Justice Party had created a pro-Congress attitude, because the anti-Congress attitude of the Justice Party failed to attain the support of the younger sections in the society. So the party members changed their strategy towards a pro-Congress approach so that they could welcome more persons into this party who had nationalism in their blood. George Joseph came in this category.\textsuperscript{52} The years followed by the defeat in Municipal elections in Madurai (1929) was not favourable for George Joseph. Varadarajulu and some other friends persuaded George Joseph to join the Justice Party. It was mainly due to the advice of Rajagopalachari, George Joseph left Madurai and moved to Madras. There he joined the Justice Party. This period provided George Joseph another new experience in his political career. At this time he became so close to two personalities\textsuperscript{53}. They were Varadarajulu Naidu and P.T. Rajan. Varadarajulu was his earlier friend. P.T. Rajan was a dedicated Justice party leader and he had once become a Minister on behalf of the Justice party. George Joseph kept his friendship with him, until he left the Justice Party.

George Joseph could not continue in the Justice Party for a long time. Some aspects of this party were not liked by George Joseph. So he left the party and returned back to Congress. George
Joseph had an everlasting attachment with the Congress party. Though he had left the party for some time, George Joseph kept a special relationship with the party. His life was more connected to the Congress party. Most of his friends were from this party. So he could not break away from the congress for a long time. Some ideological differences with the party never took away his true love and dedication for the Congress party.

His western education played a major role in moulding a fine personality in George Joseph. At that time most of the Congress members were western educated ones. To George Joseph, western education opened the door of wide knowledge. He became familiar to western ideologies. George Joseph was an ever time seeker of knowledge. He continued that spirit of learning until his last breath. He always loved to enhance his knowledge through discussions and various debates with numerous personalities. Western education enabled George Joseph to come into the forefront of the national movement with other prominent leaders like Gandhi, Nehru, Motilal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhai Patel and others. George Joseph’s spirit of nationalism was the result of his closeness with the western ideologues, which enabled him to develop a unique personality throughout his life.
Endnotes:

8. Interview with George Gheverghese Joseph by the present author on 26th February 2009.
23. *Ibid*, pp. 46-49
27. *Ibid*.
29. *Ibid*
32. *Ibid*.
34. *Ibid*.
39. NAI Cover Files on Indian National Movement, Unclassified,
    Bundle IV, Passim.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid.
45. Interview with Maya Thomas by the present author on 20th
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
50. Ibid.
51. T.P. Sankarankutty Nair (ed), Modern India : Society and
    Politics in Transition, K. Rajayyan, Trends in Party Politics of
    Tamilnadu by, pp. 268-71.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid.
55. Diary of George Joseph for 1930-34.