INTRODUCTION

The formation of Indian National Congress made various changes in the political history of India. Western educated Keralites like Barrister G.P. Pillai and Sir C. Sankaran Nair actively participated in the activities of the Congress. George Joseph (1887-1938) played an important role in shaping the policies of the Congress during the first quarter of the 20th century. Eventhough he had played a major role in the course of National movement in India, Joseph is unknown to the present generation. This work is an attempt to shed some light on the activities of that great nationalist whose services to the nation remains obscure for reasons unknown.

Born to C.I. Joseph and Saramma, in a middle class Syrian Christian family of Chengannur on the 5th of June 1887, George Joseph had his early education in Adoor, Alleppy and Kottayam. In 1905, he went to England where he passed the Bar – at Law from the Middle Temple, London. Side by side with his activities for Home Rule, George Joseph also wrote articles on all important issues in dailies and journals, both English and Malayalam. He was a believer in modernization. He had deep faith in the non violent and constitutional methods followed and propagated by Gandhiji. As a member of Congress Working Committee and All India Congress Committee, Joseph shaped the decisions of the Congress considerably. His articles, editorials, and notes in various national newspapers influenced the thought of Indians so much that
they became more and more conscious of their just rights and privileges.

Mahatma’s decision to suspend the Non-co-operation movement subsequent to the Chauri Chaura incident made Joseph to resign from the Indian National Congress in 1926. Ineffective political programmes also influenced his decisions to leave the national organization. Towards the close of 1934, he returned to the Congress and within three years he became a member of the Indian Legislative Assembly. Despite his ill health, he proved himself to be a good debater and a great parliamentarian who fought restlessly for the people whom he represented. While he was just over 50, George Joseph passed away on the 5th of March 1938.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Many efforts had been made to study Kings, Diwans, Social reformers etc like the Raja of Gwalior or Sri T. Madhava Rao or Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer. But one who was a Gandhian who opposed some of the Gandhian policies had not been studied at length or in depth. Born in Kerala, resided in Madurai and worked all over India for social and political freedom is unique in the case of George Joseph.
IMPORTANCE OF THE TOPIC

George Joseph’s contribution to India and to South India had not been studied by anybody in detail. He was in jail along with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru but none knew of his contacts like those with Lord Willington, the Viceroy. As editor of *Young India* he rendered real service to Gandhiji to activate public opinion by his strong but, dispassionate views. Perhaps he is one of the pioneer Christians in India who gave up a lucrative legal profession for the sake of the country. Like leaders like Pheroz Shah Mehta, George Joseph became an acknowledged leader at the national level whom even Gandhiji consulted for expert opinion. Barrister G.P. Pillai, Editor of the *Madras Standard* was one of the persons whom Gandhiji visited soon after his arrival in India after prolonged stay in South Africa. Untimely deaths of Barrister G.P. Pillai and Dr. T.M. Nair, (leader of the Non-Brahmin and anti Brahmin movement in Tamilnadu) created a political and social vaccum in South India and George Joseph filled it in right earnestness as a link between South and the North, between national struggle and local struggles like Vaikkom, Thangasserry and the Abstention movement, Struggle for Responsible Government etc.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The private papers of Barrister Joseph is an important depository of knowledge. His brother Pothan Joseph and his
daughter Maya Thomas has written papers and books on the Barrister. Several unpublished papers are preserved in private hands at Chengannur. My aim is to evaluate Barrister Joseph dispassionately as a nationalist who fought for social and political freedom. George Gheverghese Joseph too has written a good book. These books were written without fully knowing the historical background of George Joseph. His insatiable thirst for freedom, social, political and humanitarian has not been studied. The material available in EVRA, TNA, NAI, NMML has not been tapped by anybody so far in spite of the sad demise of the person in question 75 years ago. It is this negligence on the part of the researchers that made me to study this person in detail consulting original and unpublished data.

**DESIGN OF THE STUDY**

Initially the present author wanted to write an analytical study. But when I went through the unpublished documents, it was felt that a descriptive study is the need of the hour but without any passion or bias towards George Joseph. He was such an upright man who should not be left in the lurch because he was a fighter for freedom. No effort knowingly or unknowingly has been made to exaggerate the contribution of GJ to Thangasserry issue, Vaikkom satyagraha, Struggle for responsible government in Travancore, problems of national politics like the rise of pro changers and anti changers, moderates, extremists, terrorists and revolutionaries.
He was the most acceptable man in between Lytton or Ripon, Gandhi or Jawaharlal Nehru, Patel or V.P.Menon, or in South India - K.P.Kesava Menon, K.Kelappan, T.K.Madhavan, EVR, T.R.Krishnaswamy Iyer or K.Kamaraj - loyalty to all and never been a camp follower of anybody.Merit was the sole criteria for fidelity, love, affection etc. GJ was unique and a fighter par excellence.