CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The History of Tamil Nadu dates back to 6000 years B.C., which can be broadly divided into Ancient, Medieval and Modern history of Tamil Nadu. Tamil Nadu witnessed the rise and fall of several dynasties. The three famous dynasties that ruled Tamil Nadu were the Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas.

Rajaraja Chola was the greatest ruler among the later Chola rulers. Architecture reached its pinnacle during his regime. His son Rajendra Chola expanded the kingdom and built a new capital called Gangaikondacholapuram to commemorate a victory.

Pandyas followed the Cholas and ruled the territory with their capital at Madurai. The Kingdom of Pandyas lasted for four centuries and gave way to the dynasty of Pallavas, who had Kanchi as their capital.¹ The second phase of the Chola dynasty rule started in the ninth century. During the last decade of the eleventh century the second Pandya dynasty emerged. Kulasekara Pandyan who ruled between the years 1190 and 1216 AD was the founder of the second Pandya Dynasty.²

The Chera dynasty ruled the western part of Tamil Nadu. Between 1330 to 1380, for a brief period of 50 years, the Muslims ruled certain areas of Tamil Nadu with Madurai as their capital of the Sultanate. Vijaya Nagar Empire, which marginalized the Muslim Sultanate, ruled Tamil Nadu till 1565 AD. Thereafter, Nayaks of Madurai ruled the state, which was replaced by the Mughals in the year 1736 AD.

The Mughal rule came to an end with the ascendancy of the British power in India. Between 1792 and 1801 English East India Company took over the reins of

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power in Tamil Nadu. The Madras Presidency, established in the 19th Century by the British has Madras as its headquarters.

After India’s Independence, the present day Tamil Nadu was carved out of the then Madras State in the year 1956 with the addition of Kanyakumari District and the Senkottai taluk. With the passing of the Act by the Parliament on 14th January, 1969, the present nomenclature of the State (i.e. Tamil Nadu) came into effect.

In the Indian as well as Tamil society, family, the basic unit of the social structure is based on patriarchal system. The head of the family is father whose words are to be followed by everyone in the family. This patriarchal nature of the family finds its reflection in every institution man has innovated. The Manu Dharma, the sacred Hindu Code says that a girl’s father protects her in childhood, her husband protects her in youth and her son protects her in old age and she is never fit for liberation. 3

_Bhakti_ movement to some extent recognized gender equality in the matter of religious activities. Great women exponents of bhakti such as Andal, Kairikal Ammaiayar and Thilagavathiar are examples of lead role women played in religious activities.

In the medieval Tamil society, caste system took firm roots, which aggravated the position of women in the society. Most of the customs which had gender bias derived their strength and existence from religion. Therefore, challenging such customs became increasingly difficult. Such challenges were considered anti-religious.

The late 19th century and the first half of the 20th century brought perceptible changes in the society vis-a-vis these social practices. In urban centres like Madras leading Brahmin lawyers allowed their womenfolk to join elite associations where

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3 Jones William, _Manu Dharma Sastra or the Institute of Manu_, Madras, 1880, p. 231.
western ideas thrived. Ladies Club of Egmore came into existence at this point of time. Started by Lady Sankaran Nair, this club gave opportunities to its members to know each other. These clubs paved way for emergence of associations.  

A number of women participated in Swadeshi movement in Madras Presidency. K.P. Sundarambal who was praised by Arignar Anna as ‘Kodumudi Kokilam’ was the prominent among them. Later on she became a famous play back singer known for her patriotic and devotional songs. She was kept in high esteem by national leaders like Satyamurthi and Kamarajar. Because of her patriotism she was nominated as a member of State Legislature.

Sarojini Naidu, hailed as the Nightingale of India was a great leader of Indian Independence Movement. From 1915 to 1918 she lectured all over India on the welfare of youth, dignity of labour, women’s emancipation and nationalism. In 1925 she was elected as the President of the Congress, the first Indian woman to hold the position. On 26th January, 1930 when the Indian National Congress proclaimed independence from British Raj, Sarojini Naidu was arrested soon after Gandhiji was arrested. After independence, she became the first woman governor of independent India (appointed as the Governor of the United Provinces, which is now known as Uttar Pradesh). Although born in a Brahmin family, she married Dr. Muthyala Govindarajulu Naidu. It was an inter-caste marriage not acceptable in the society those days. They married under the Brahmo Marriage Act (1872) in Madras in 1898.

**Annie Besant and the Home Rule Movement**

Annie Besant, an Irish woman who was a member of the Theosophical Society came to India in 1893. She helped establishing the Central Hindu College in 1898 at

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Benares. She joined Indian National Congress. In 1914 she launched Home Rule League to campaign for democracy in India and dominion status within the British Empire. In 1917 in recognition of the services and sacrifices of Annie Besant, the Indian National Congress elected her as the President of the 32\textsuperscript{nd} session of the Indian National Congress at Calcutta.\textsuperscript{6} Being the first woman president of the Indian National Congress, she enhanced the prestige of Indian womanhood. Her address in the 32\textsuperscript{nd} Session of the Indian National Congress was applauded as the charter of national liberty.\textsuperscript{7} Besant Nagar in Chennai is named after her.

The Madras Presidency became the centre of Home Rule Movement in India.

**Movement for Women’s Rights**

With the dawn of 20\textsuperscript{th} century, a number of organizations exclusively for women issues started appearing in India. Saroj Nalini Dutt, the daughter of an officer of the elite Indian Civil Service founded *Mahila Samitis* (Women’s Committees) in many towns from the year 1913.\textsuperscript{8} The *Bharat Stree Mahamandal* (Federation for Indian Women) came into existence with the efforts of Saraladevi by this time.\textsuperscript{9} The three major women’s organizations established since 1917 were, Women’s Indian Association, The National Council of Women in Indian Association and The All India Women’s Conference.\textsuperscript{10} Women’s Indian Association and All India Women’s Conference played an active role from 1917 onwards in taking up women issues. The objective of these organizations was to work for the upliftment of women.\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{7} Pratima Asthana, *Women’s movement in India*, Delhi, 1974, p. 65.
\textsuperscript{9} Kaul, Vinita, *Women and the Wind of Change*, New Delhi, 2000, p. 22.
\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., p. 23.
Women’s Indian Association also worked for the political rights of women. Women’s Indian Association has all-India presence. It was established in 1917 by Margaret Cousins, Dorothy Jinarajadasa and Annie Besant. Annie Besant became its first president with Margaret Cousins, Dorothy Jinarajadasa, Malati Patwardhan, Ammu Swaminathan, Dadabhoy and Ambujammal as honorary secretaries. By 1923-1924 it had fifty four branches and 2500 members, which went up to 4000 members by 1926-1927.

The principal objective of Women’s Indian Association was to get voting rights for women in the local administration and in Central and Provincial legislatures. Other objectives of the Association were, to encourage women to form groups for the purpose of self development, education and service to others, to secure every children right to education through compulsory primary education including religious study, to ensure abolition of child marriage and increasing the age of marriage of girls with consent to sixteen, to secure for women the right to get elected as members of municipal bodies and legislative councils, to bring to the notice of the women their responsibility as the daughters of India, to make them realize that the future of India lies in their hands as being home-makers and mothers and to make them play an important role in shaping the children who would run the country in future. The Association admitted women of all shades of life as members. The active members were prominent citizens who were willing to take higher responsibility. The Association was also involved in training of Indian middle-class women in home science, economics, hygiene, spinning, tailoring and handicrafts. Awareness was

14 Stri-Dharma, Vol. 16, No. 11, Women’s Indian Association, Madras, 1918, p.11.
15 Ibid., Vol. 4, No. 1, Women’s Indian Association, Madras, 1918, p.2.
created by the Association on the role of women in the national movement and in social
service. The Association was instrumental in setting up social service institutions
such as the Madras Children’s Aid Society, Avvai Home and Orphanage, Swadeshi
Emporium, Madras Seva Sadan and few Montessori schools.

A monthly journal with the nomenclature Stri-Dharma was published by the
Women’s Indian Association, which included articles in both Hindi and Tamil. S.
Muthulakshmi Reddy was the editor of the journal from 1931 to 1940. The Women’s
Indian Association started its campaign for women suffrage in the year 1917.

Introduction of compulsory primary education for girls in Madras city is one of the
main achievements of the Women’s Indian Association.

**Women’s Associations and their Fight for the Rights of Women**

The Women’s Indian Association was the first women association to present a
memorandum to the Round Table Conference on Women’s Suffrage and their
Constitutional Rights. The Association also sent its representative to attend the Round
Table Conference.

The Child Marriage Restraint Act was passed by the Central Legislature in the
year 1929. The Women’s Indian Association in order to facilitate implementation of the
said Act, appointed Sarada Committee. Ultimately the Sarada Bill was introduced and
passed in October 1929, which finally became the Sarada Act, 1930. Madras
Legislative Council adopted a resolution unanimously on 31st August, 1929 stressing
that a legislation raising the marriageable age of boys and girls to twenty one and

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17 NNPR, Swadesamitran, Madras, dated 2.2.1921.
18 Sixteenth Annual Report of the Women’s Indian Association for the year 1932- 1933, Madras, pp.3 - 4.
21 Government of Madras, G.O. 544, Law Department, dated. 15.2.1928.
sixteen years respectively was necessary. The resolution was moved by Muthulakshmi Reddy.

Margaret Cousin’s visit to the United States of America to attend Pan Pacific Women’s Conference inspired her to plan an All Asian Women’s Conference. She raised funds for All Asian Women’s Conference, which was organized successfully.\textsuperscript{22} The Women’s Indian Association was in correspondence with the British Commonwealth League.\textsuperscript{23} The Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom was also in touch with the Women’s Indian Association.

In the year 1927, the Women’s Indian Association established the All Indian Women’s Conference as the forum for advancing the causes of women’s education and to make recommendations to the Government. The All India Women’s Conference first met in Poona from 5 to 8, January, 1927. Maharani Chimanbai Saheb Gaekwad of Baroda was the first president of the All India Women’s Conference. She stressed the need for a special type of education for women that suited with their nature.\textsuperscript{24} The second conference of the All India Women’s Conference was held in the year 1928 at Delhi under the presidentship of Begum Mother of Bhopal. In the year 1929 a constitution was framed for the All India Women’s Conference and it became a women’s organization. Promotion of education and attending the problem related to the welfare of women and children are the primary objectives of All India Women’s Conference. The third conference of the All India Women’s Conference was held at Patna in the year 1929. Sarojini Naidu presided over the 4\textsuperscript{th} conference of the All India Women’s Conference held in Bombay in the year 1930. Resolution supporting the passing of Sarada Act was adopted in the conference. The fifth conference of the All

\textsuperscript{22} Prathima Asthana, \textit{op.cit}, pp 69 - 70.
\textsuperscript{23} Report of the Women’s Indian Association for the year 1930- 1931, Madras, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{24} Durrany, K.S., \textit{The Women’s Movement in Religious Communities in India}, Delhi, 2002, p. 61.
India Women’s Conference was held in Lahore in the year 1931 under the chairpersonship of Muthulakshmi Reddy.

The All India Women’s Conference constituted a number of sub-committees as and when required to deal with problems such as Sarada Act Sub-Committee to deal with the issue of child marriage, Sub-Committee for Vigilance Association to deal with the problem of prostitution, Sub-Committees for political matters etc.

In the year 1932, the 6th All India Women’s Conference held at Madras under the chairpersonship of Sarala Ray, decided that women as citizens should have equal opportunity to take part in national agitations and that the Conference itself must address the question of freedom for the country, voting rights for women etc. The conference also repeated its demand for compulsory primary education for girls.25 From then onwards, the All India Women’s Conference started addressing various political matters etc.26

The ninth session of All India Women’s Conference held at Karachi under the presidency of Rustonji Faridonji decided to make efforts to impress upon the British Parliament that there should not be communal electorates and wifehood qualifications should not be imposed on them. The demand of the conference for appointment of a commission on the legal disabilities of Indian women for suggestion of reforms in the light of modern conditions was considered favourably. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur was appointed as the liaison officer to maintain permanent contact with women’s organizations in England.27

27 Pratima Asthana, op.cit., p. 94
The tenth session of the All India Women’s Conference held in December, 1935 under the presidency of Maharani Sethu Parvathi Bai of Travancore was attended by distinguished women from China, England, Japan and USA. The Sub-Committee on the Child Marriage Restraint Act made a notable contribution.\textsuperscript{28} The 11\textsuperscript{th} session of the All India Women’s Conference held in 1936 under the presidency of Margaret Cousins sought the support of the public for CD Deshmuk’s Bull to amend the Hindu law governing women’s right to property.\textsuperscript{29} In the 13\textsuperscript{th} session of the All India Women’s Conference held in 1938 in Delhi under the presidency of Rani Lakshmibai Rajwade it was decided to publish a journal of the All India Women’s Conference. In the 15\textsuperscript{th} Session of the All India Women’s Conference held at Bangalore under the presidency of Rameswari Nehru while taking note that the Government heeding to their request has appointed a committee to examine the injustice meted out to women under the Hindu law, protested against the limitations imposed on the committee due to the limited terms of reference.

In the 19\textsuperscript{th} session of the All India Women’s Conference held at Akola in 1946 under the presidency of Lady Rama Bai, the conference drafted a charter on women’s rights and duties and prepared a memorandum on planning for national welfare. In the year 1947, the 20\textsuperscript{th} session of the All India Women’s Conference was held at Madras under the chairmanship of Anasuyabai Kale. The Conference has grown in stature after India attained independence. After independence, the central office of the Conference was shifted to New Delhi and the building in New Delhi was made to serve as a memorial to two of its doyens i.e., Sarojini Naidu and Margaret Cousins.\textsuperscript{30}

\textsuperscript{28} The Indian Annual Register, Vol. I, January – June 1936
\textsuperscript{29} Pratima Asthana, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 95
\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 98- 100.
**Women’s Suffrage movement**

In India, passing of the Indian Councils Act of 1892 was a watershed so far the growth of democratic institutions in the country is concerned. This Act was the beginning of the inclusion of Indians in local governance.

In the later part of 19th century, European women started several women’s organizations to fight for native women’s right. Millicent Fawcett and Emmeline Pankhurst emerged as leaders of British women’s suffrage at the beginning of the twentieth century.\(^{31}\) Deeply inspired by Annie Besant, Margaret Cousins, wife of James H. Cousins, an Irish poet and Sophist, came to India and took part in the movement spearheaded by the Women’s Indian Association for securing the voting rights for women. As mentioned earlier, the principal objective of Women’s Indian Association was to get voting rights for women in the local administration and in Central and Provincial legislatures.\(^{32}\)

The Bombay and Madras provincial conferences passed resolutions to do away with sex disqualification from the Reform Bill. Resolutions favouring women suffrage was also passed by the Andhra Provincial Conference, Congress special session at Bombay, the Indian Home Rule League and the Muslim League. In the Special Session of the Congress at Bombay, Sarojini Naidu said that extending suffrage to women was consistent with human rights.\(^{33}\) The Women’s Indian Association was successful in achieving voting right for women in municipal and legislative bodies.

The contribution of All India Women’s Conference in the fight for women’s right to vote was significant. In the year 1917 when the Secretary of State for India E.S.

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\(^{32}\) *Stri-Dharma*, Vol. 16, No. 11, Women’s Indian Association, Madras, 1918, p.11.

Montague visited India, a delegation of All India Women’s Conference met him at Madras and presented a memorandum demanding women’s voting right. The delegation comprised leading women such as Sarojini Naidu, Margaret Cousins, Annie Besant, Malathi Patwardhan, Rani Lakshmibai Rajwadence and Naguthai Moropant Joshi.

In 1919 before the South Borough Franchise Committee, which visited India, a delegation of women lead by Annie Besant and Sarojini Naidu presented their case for women’s suffrage at par with men. After a thorough study, the said Committee concluded that the social customs in India were not conducive for granting suffrage to women as such suffrage would be premature. The silver lining of the recommendation of the Committee was that this matter should be reconsidered in the next revision.

Sankaran Nair, the only Indian member of the South Borough Committee thereafter asked the Bombay Committee to send an Indian delegation with Annie Besant and Sarojini Naidu. The Bombay Committee elected Herabai Tata as a delegate and she along with her daughter Mithan Tata went to England to attend the Committee. Due to paucity of time, Herabai Tata was asked to submit their submission in writing. The delegation presented that the developments in the social and educational spheres restored Indian women their former power and influence.

Leaders like Tilak, V.J. Patel, U.P. Madhav Rao, Jinnah and Yakub Hassan supported the demand of women on suffrage while giving evidence before the Joint Select Committee on the Government of India Bill in 1919. The Government of India Act, 1919 adopted age and property as the basis for granting right of voting to men and

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35 Chopra, P.N., India’s Struggle for Freedom: Role of Association Movements, Vol. 4, Delhi, 1985, p. 703.
women. Provincial legislative Councils were allowed to settle the matter of suffrage of women.\textsuperscript{37}

The Reforms Act of 1921 gave voting right to certain category of the Indian population. This included women with qualifications of wifehood, property and education. Slowly, one after another the provincial legislatures started enfranchising women.\textsuperscript{38}

Madras Province was the first province to grant voting right to women in the year 1921. Justice Party won the elections in Madras Province in the year 1920. Diwan Bahadur M. Krishnan Nayar moved a resolution at the request of the Women’s India Association to remove the disqualification of women in the matter of voting. The resolution was passed in the Madras Legislative Council on 1\textsuperscript{st} April, 1921. Consequently, the Government of Madras notified the Madras Electoral Sex Disqualification Removal Legislation.\textsuperscript{39} Following the lead taken by the Madras Province, other provinces such as United Provinces and Travancore and Cochin in the year 1923, Bengal Province in the year 1925, Central Province in the year 1927 and Bihar and Orissa in the year 1929 granted women suffrage.\textsuperscript{40}

In 1926, Government of India allowed women to contest elections in the provincial legislatures. In the elections to the Madras Legislative Council in the year 1926 none of the women candidates won although the Women’s Indian Association campaigned vigorously for the women candidates. A deputation of women of the province met the Governor of Madras and requested him to nominate few women as members of the Legislative Council. Although the deputation of women requested for

\textsuperscript{38}Margaret E. Cousins, \textit{Indian Womanhood Today}, Allahabad, 1941, p. 32.
\textsuperscript{39}Government of Madras, G.O. No. 108, Law (Legislative) Department, dated 10.5.1921.
\textsuperscript{40}Pratima Asthana, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 113.
nomination of four members, the Madras Legislative Council nominated Muthulakshmi Reddy and thus she became the first woman of India to become a member of any Legislative body. Muthulakshmi Reddy has written that during this period a number of women had been nominated and elected as magistrates and as representatives in local bodies.\footnote{Muthulakshmi Reddy, S., \textit{My Experience as a Legislator}, Madras, 1930, p. 4.}

At the Karachi session of the Indian National Congress in the year 1931, Nehru moved the ‘Fundamental Rights Resolution’ which accepted the principle of complete equality of men and women in political life.\footnote{Niroj Sinha, ‘Women as Marginals in Politics’, in Pramila Dandavate (ed.), \textit{Widows Abandoned and Destitute Women in India}, New Delhi, 1975, p. 32.} It was made clear in the Karachi session that in independent India, there would be no discrimination on the ground of sex.\footnote{Devaki Jain, (ed.), \textit{Indian Women}, New Delhi, 1975, p. 32.}

The Lothian Franchise Committee, appointed by the British Government in the year 1931 visited India in the year 1932. All India Women’s Organizations met the commission and gave a joint memorandum. This Committee ultimately rejected adult franchise in India.

The Women’s Indian Association objected tooth and nail formation of separate communal electorates on the basis of sex and also reservation of seats for communities in the Assemblies and Provincial Councils.\footnote{Women’s Indian Association, \textit{Sixteenth Annual Report for the year 1932-1933}, Madras, p. 16.} A memorandum prepared by the All India Women’s Conference, Women’s Indian Association and the National Council of Women in India demanded adult suffrage and objected separate electorates on the basis of sex and reservation of seats for difference communities.

Linlithgow Committee heard witnesses before the passing of the Government of India Act of 1935. Before the Committee, Muthulakshmi Reddy appeared on behalf of Women’s Indian Association, Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur appeared on behalf of All India...
Women’s Conference and Begum Hamid Ali appeared on behalf of the National Council of Women in India. They insisted on increasing the number of women voters to about five million.\textsuperscript{45} The Government of India Act, 1935 gave the right of vote for women with property and educational qualifications and to wives of men in military service. It provided reservation of 41 seats in the provincial legislatures to women. In the elections held in the year 1937, eight women were elected. In the Constituent Assembly set up in the year 1946, three women of distinction, namely, Sarojini Naidu, Durgabai Renuka Roy and Hansa Metha were included.\textsuperscript{46} Thus, the long drawn movement of Indian women for participation in the democratic process and also to participate in the process of law making realised its objective and paved the way for greater participation of women in social and political activities of the post independent India.

\textit{Khilafat and Non-cooperation movements}

In the \textit{Khilafat} and Non-cooperation movement also Indian women took active participation. After the World War I, Montague Chelmsford Reform Act of 1919 was passed, which did not satisfy the Indians. The Rowlatt Act passed in March 1919, which denied basic protections of the accused such as right to defend, appeal etc was vehemently opposed by nationalists. Gandhiji started his movement of Satyagraha against the Rowlatt Act. Gandhiji attended a public meeting in the Madras city on 18\textsuperscript{th} March, 1919 which was also addressed by other prominent leaders like S. Satyamurthi, C. Vijayaragavachair, Sarojini Naidu etc.\textsuperscript{47} There was division of opinion in the Madras Provincial Congress Committee about the proposed Satyagraha movement. The moderate section under Annie Besant considered Satyagraha ‘unwise, inexpedient and

\textsuperscript{45} Margaret E. Cousins, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 76.
\textsuperscript{46} Tara Ali Baig, \textit{India’s Women Power}, New Delhi, 1976, p. 218.
\textsuperscript{47} \textit{The Hindu}, Madras, dated 19.3.1919.
injurious to the best interests of the country’. Their main objection was that it would hinder the reform proposals and possible introduction of the Bill in May 1919.\(^{48}\) Annie Besant resigned from the Provincial Congress Committee along with prominent leaders like G.A. Natesan, L.A. Govindaraghava Iyer, B.P. Wadia and C.P. Ramaswami Iyer. Those who held the extreme view under Kasturiranga Iyengar took over the Provincial Congress Committee. They included T. Rangachari, T.V. Venkatarama Iyer and Satyamurthi. After the resignation from the Provincial Congress Committee, the Moderates organized an association namely, ‘Liberal League’, which was inaugurated on 5\(^{th}\) April, 1919. The entire Madras Province showed its solidarity with Gandhiji in his Satyagraha movement. The first hartal organized on 6\(^{th}\) April, 1919 had wide participation in Madras Province.\(^{49}\) When the nation-wide movement was handled in a tyrannical manner at Jalianwallbagh on 13\(^{th}\) April, 1919 in which hundreds of people were killed and thousands injured, the nation-wide Satyagraha scheduled on 18\(^{th}\) April, 1919 was called off. In Madras also the Satyagraha was called off as advised by Gandhiji.

In the year 1920, opposition to Rowlatt Act subsumed to a demand for a bill of rights to be written into the Indian Constitution.\(^{50}\) The extremists in the Congress began to look for the first elections to the reformed legislatures scheduled for November, 1920. At the end of 1919, they shed the ‘Extremist’ label and in common with the Tilakites, adopted the name ‘Nationalists’. In the election manifestos they made a demand for Dominion Status for India as a full and equal partner in the British

\(^{48}\) *Letter from V.S. Srinivasa Sastri to Sapru*, dated 5.3.1919, *Srinivasa Sastri papers*.

\(^{49}\) *The Hindu*, Madras, dated 7.4.1919.

\(^{50}\) *The Hindu*, Madras, dated 26.4.1920.
Common Wealth and paid greater attention to programmes of reform in local government, administration, education and revenue.\textsuperscript{51}

In the year 1919, All India Khilafat Committee was formed under the leadership of Moulana Azad, Hakim Ajmalkhan and Hasarat Mohani. In the Madras province, Khilafat movement was organized by Abdul Majid Sharar and Yakub Haisan.\textsuperscript{52} The All India Khilafat Committee decided to organize the first All India Khilafat Conference at Lucknow on 21\textsuperscript{st} September, 1919. Gandhiji supported the Khilafat movement as he considered the movement an opportunity for Hindu- Muslim unity. Muslims of Madras Presidency observed 17\textsuperscript{th} October, 1919 as the first Khilafat day.

The period 1920- 1922 which witnessed Non-cooperation and the Khilafat movements, is rightly called as the beginning of Gandhian Era of the Congress movement. During this period Congress made concerted efforts to reach out to Indian women and in that endeavour they made considerable success. The Gandhian message and programme were designed in such a way that Indian women were able to make vital contributions to the course of Non-cooperation and Khilafat movements.\textsuperscript{53} After the Nagpur session of Congress in December, 1920, the Khilafat issue was merged into the Non-cooperation movement.\textsuperscript{54}

The British Emperor in his Royal Proclamation announced that in order to inaugurate the new Constitution, he would send the Prince of Wales to India. Since the Prince of Wales was not in good health, Duke of Connaught was sent in his place. The Nagpur Session of Congress in 1920 passed a resolution asking the people not to

\textsuperscript{52} Government of Madras, \textit{The Non-cooperation and Khilafat Movement in the Madras Presidency (Confidential)}, Madras, 1923, p. 37.
\textsuperscript{54} Saroja Sundararajan, \textit{March to Freedom in Madras Presidency 1916 to 1947}, Madras, 1989
participate in the functions arranged in connection with the visit of the Duke of Connaught, as a part of the Non-cooperation programme.\textsuperscript{55}

Gandhiji’s call to women to join Congress, Non-cooperation programme and to participate actively in the non-violent struggle for Swaraj saw very good response in different parts of the country and women folk took out processions and participated in meetings. They took part in ‘Prabhat Pheri’, Madras and propagated the use of Charka and Khadi. Many young girls left government schools and colleges, and in some cases even risked arrest. In a speech at Ahmedabad, Gandhiji stated, “I am personally a beggar. In my begging, I especially seek out sisters. Men I have found everywhere. But I try especially to seek out sisters. For I know that, unless our sisters in the country give their blessings, India’s progress is impossible”.\textsuperscript{56} As the Non-cooperation movement progressed, it became increasingly clear that there were several women all over the subcontinent who were willing, able and keen to play active roles in the Congress campaign. He wanted the women to participate actively along with men as he believed that the major objectives as well as the various dimensions of the movement could not be adequately fulfilled if 50\% of India’s population i.e., women remained aloof or uninvolved in the non-violent campaign. He said, “If women do not share in men’s tasks the country is bound to remain in a wretched state.”\textsuperscript{57}

Sarojini Naidu was enamoured by the call given by Gandhiji and returned the Kaijer-i-hind gold medal awarded to her by the Government in 1908 for the humanitarian service performed by her during the floods in Hyderabad city.\textsuperscript{58} She accompanied Gandhiji to few places during his tours and addressed meetings to

\textsuperscript{55} David Arnold, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 51.
\textsuperscript{56} The CWMG, Vol. XVIII, Ahmedabad, p. 53.
\textsuperscript{57} The CWMG, Vol. XV, p. 290.
popularize the Non-cooperation movement. She stated “We want daughters for the free service of the motherland as without their wholehearted cooperation satyagrahis would fight with half of their strength”.

In response to the call of Gandhiji, Renuka Ray left the college with her friends. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay left her college in England and returned to India to actively participate in the national movement. Sarla Devi Chaudhurani renounced her ‘war broacher’ granted for recruiting services with regard to the formation of Bengal Regiment and toured many places to encourage people.

Although, Annie Besant, opposed to Gandhiji, there were women of southern India, who actively participated in the Congress programmes of picketing of liquor shops, promotion of Khadi, Swadeshi movement etc. Participation of women in Nationalist movement received a fillip when Gandhiji visited Vijayawada between 21st March and 1st April, 1921 to attend All India Congress Committee Session. His call to women of Madras Presidency to participate in various programmes of Congress received good response from the women folk. They contributed money and ornaments to Swaraj fund.

Subbamma, a woman from Madras became politically active after attending the meetings addressed by Gandhiji. She exhorted women to wear Khadi and spin thread during leisure time and organized picketing of shops selling foreign clothes. She formed an organization of Deva Sevikas (women devoted to the service of God). The Government arrested her and sent to jail for her participation in the National

59 Ibid.
60 Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay Papers, A short Biography of Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay An Article by Yusuf Moharally, 1944, NMML, New Delhi.
movement. It seems she is the first women of the region to go to jail for the cause of National movement.\textsuperscript{62}

Anna Purnadevi, a newly wed from Ellore donated all her jewellery except her 
\textit{mangalsutra} to the fund. She also switched over to \textit{Khadi}.\textsuperscript{63} Ambujammal was an ardent follower of non-violence.\textsuperscript{64} She organized various activities such as picketing shops selling liquor and shops selling foreign clothes, promotion of \textit{Khadi} etc.\textsuperscript{65} The story of Durgabai, is inspiring for her tireless work and tender age. At the age of 12 she dedicated herself for the service of the Nation. During Gandhi\'s visit to Godavari district she donated her entire jewellery. She started selling \textit{Khadi}. She arranged a meeting of \textit{devadasis} addressed by Gandhi. Around one thousand \textit{devadasis} attended the meeting. The participant \textit{devadasis} donated ornaments and twenty thousand rupees and took a vow to be \textit{swadeshi} henceforth.\textsuperscript{66}

Moovalur Ramamirtham Ammayar, who was initiated into \textit{devadasi} system at a very early age joined Congress after meeting Gandhi\'s at Mayuram in the year 1921. She campaigned for non-cooperation at the grass root level. In the Congress, she allied herself with Periyar E.V. Ramasami Naiker, who believed in ideological struggle against conservatism by launching social reform.\textsuperscript{67} Women from Madras Presidency, namely V.T. Kamalambal, Angammal and Thaiyalnayagi joined the movement and took part in toddy shop picketing.\textsuperscript{68} A. Abhisegathamammal took part in liquor picketing,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{62} Leela Kasturi & Vina Majumdar (ed.), \textit{Women and Indian Nationalism}, New Delhi, 1994, p. 113.
\item \textsuperscript{63} \textit{Young India}, dated 13.4.1921.
\item \textsuperscript{64} Ambujammal, S., \textit{Naan Kanda Bharatham (Swaya saridai)}, (Tamil), Chennai, 1973.
\item \textsuperscript{65} Ambujammal, S., \textit{Mahatma Gandhi Ninaivu Maalai} (Tamil), Madras, 1944.
\item \textsuperscript{66} Bharti Thakur, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 56.
\item \textsuperscript{67} Ka. Thirunavukkarasu, \textit{Dravida Iyakka Veerarkal} (Tamil), Chennai, 1991, pp. 219-226.
\item \textsuperscript{68} David Arnold, \textit{op. cit.} pp. 64 & 65.
\end{itemize}
Salt Satyagraha in 1930 etc. and was imprisoned in the years 1925, 1928 and 1930 and kept in the jails at Nagapatnam, Thiruthuraipoondi and Madras.⁶⁹

Prohibition movement has spread in almost all the districts of Madras Presidency by the end of February, 1921.⁷⁰ The arrack and toddy shops had been boycotted in many places. Periyar E.V. Ramasami Naicker, C. Rajagopalachari and N.S. Rangaswami Iyengar organized group of volunteers known as ‘thondarpadai’ to picket liquor shops in the Madras Presidency. The volunteers interfered with the functioning of the shops by various activities such as preventing the men from carrying liquor to the shops, burning shops, persuading the owners of coconut trees not to give the trees for tapping toddy etc. These activities affected sale of liquor and in several places re-auctioning of the shops was ordered.⁷¹ Because of the sizeable loss of revenue, the Government of Madras intervened in the matter in October, 1921. The Government started prosecution against volunteers on a large scale. Leaders like Periyar E.V. Ramasami Naicker, C. Rajagopalachari and M.V. Subramaniya Sastri were imprisoned. Thereafter, women like Periyar’s wife Nagammal and his sister Kannammal took over the leadership of the agitation and pursued the movement at Erode.⁷² Inspired by the above women, a number of women from Erode participated in the agitation. Sensing the seriousness of the situation, the Government lifted the ban under section 144 of Cr.P.C. When Gandhiji was asked by the Congress to stop the agitation he stated that the things were not in his hands and that the agitation was in the hands of two women from Erode.⁷³

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⁷² Tamilnadu, dated 25.12.1921.
Flag satyagraha

The Chauri Chaura incident happened on 5th January, 1922 in Gorakhpur district in the United Provinces in which a mob of 2000 villagers attacked a police station and burnt to death 22 policemen, made Gandhiji to announce suspension of the Non-cooperation movement. The tempo of the movement which was lost by the Chauri Chaura incident was regained by the Flag Satyagraha enacted in Nagpur. This movement resulted from the action of the police authorities of the Central Provinces objecting to a procession carrying the National Flag to certain prohibited areas such as Civil Lines in Nagpur. The volunteers under the leadership of General March Ershaw Avari, the Chairman of the Nagpur Municipality defied the prohibitory order, and were, therefore, arrested and sentenced to imprisonment. The All India Congress Working Committee, which was holding its meeting in Nagpur from 8 to 10 July, 1923 called upon the nation to observe 18th July as the ‘Flag day’. The agitation soon became a national movement and Sardar Vallabhai Patel took charge of it. While processions were taken all over the country and the Flag was displayed during such processions, in Nagpur, volunteers from all over the country assembled to vindicate the honour of the Flag. In Madras, C. Rajagopalachari took the lead and organized the sending of 100 volunteers to Nagpur to participate in the agitation. The volunteers while taking part in the agitation were arrested and imprisoned. In the prison, they were subjected to harsh conditions. They were served uncooked cereal bread and green leaves. They were made to draw oil-extractor. S. Kamakshi who took part in the Nagpur Flag Satyagraha was arrested, sentenced to seven months imprisonment and was kept in the Nagpur and Betul jails. 74 Similar flag agitations were organized in various parts of Madras Presidency. Speeches on the occasion were made by Sarojini Naidu. Marriyam Bibi

was a Muslim woman who participated in the agitation was arrested under sections 109 and 188 of the Indian Penal Code and sentenced to six months imprisonment and imprisoned in the Central jail of Cuddalore.  

**Agitation for the Removal of the Statue of Neill**

In Madras City, an agitation was started in the month of August 1927 for the removal of the Statue of Col. James Neill from Mount Road. Neill was responsible for acts of cruelty against Indians in the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857. Neill who came from Madras to Culcutta towards the end of May, 1857 was instrumental in securing Benaras and Allahabad and relieving Kanpur from the insurgents. Neill let loose a reign of terror in those places. In recognition of the services rendered by Col. James Neill, the British Government erected a statue of him at Madras.

In a public meeting held on 18th September, 1927 at Triplicane beach under the auspices of the Madras District Congress Committee and the Madras Mahajan Sabha, Satyamurthi, leader of Congress moved a resolution to the effect that in view the barbarous and cowardly acts of revenge by General Neill, which does not deserve a commemoration statue of him in Mount Road, the statue of Neill should be removed forthwith. On the issue, Gandhiji wrote in Young India that “There is no doubt that the agitation for removing the Neill statue and the like, is likely to increase the feeling of hatred against the English. The reformer seeking to spread non-violence, must take note of the fact and guard against hatred.” In the agitation, sixty eight volunteers, including few women went on a satyagraha. One Anjalai Ammal and her daughter

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75 Ibid.
76 Government of Madras, G.O. No. 248, Public (Confidential) Department, dated 13.3.1928.
79 *Young India*, dated 13.10.1927.
Ammakkamal participated in the satyagraha. Both were arrested. While all the participants including Anjalai Ammal were convicted and sentenced to terms of imprisonment, Ammakkamal was sent to Children’s Home, Madras. In spite of the agitation, the Government decided not to remove the statue and the Legislative Council passed a resolution for the retention of the statue. Ten years later, on 19th November, 1937, the statue of Neill was removed by the first Congress Ministry headed by Rajaji and was sent to the Museum.

Civil Disobedience Movement (1930-1934)

The Civil Disobedience Movement was started in the year 1930. After the rejection of Nehru Report of 1928 by the British Government Congress was left with no option but to intensify the agitation by starting the Civil Disobedience Movement. Gandhiji was authorized by the Congress Working Committee meeting held at Ahmedabad on 15th February, 1930 to work out the details of the programme of Civil Disobedience Movement in consultation with the working committee and the All India Congress Committee. The programme of Civil Disobedience Movement included defiance of Salt law, boycott of educational institution and Government offices, picketing of shops selling liquor, opium and foreign goods and bonfire of foreign clothes and non-payment of taxes. Congress Working Committee drafted a declaration of Independence for to be read at public meetings in the country on 26th January, 1930. It is comparable to the American Declaration of Independence issued on the eve of America’s war on Britain.

82 Saroja Sundararajan, op.cit., pp. 419 - 420.
Many Indian women actively participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement. In the Civil Disobedience Movement initially although Gandhiji was reluctant to involve women directly in the main scene of action the remarkable feature was that many Indian women of good background were mobilized into action in their own humble ways.

Defiance of salt law was a very innovative initiative Gandhiji opted during the Civil Disobedience Movement. Defiance of salt law made a powerful appeal to every Indian man and woman. On 2nd March, 1930 Gandhiji wrote a letter to the Viceroy informing him that he would defy the Salt law and thus the Civil Disobedience Movement started.84

The historic Dandi March of Gandhiji, which started on 12th March, 1930 with seventy nine inmates of Sabarmathi Ashram culminated on 6th April, 1930 when Gandhiji picked up a handful of salt on the sea coast. He thus defied the salt law.85 Gandhiji was arrested immediately thereafter and he assigned the role of leading the agitation to Sarojini Naidu.86 Sarojini Naidu raided the Dharsana Salt Works on 15th May, 1930 and she and fellow volunteers were arrested and were released on the same day. She lead another raid with 25,000 volunteers on the same salt works on 21st May, 1930. Although the police provoked the volunteers by inflicting atrocities on them, they remained absolutely peaceful.87

During the Salt Satyagraha, Gandhiji made an appeal to Indian Women to come out of the seclusion in household and participate in the movement to end the British Rule in India. Although prior to the year 1930 only few women from the families of

84 The CWMG, Vol. 43, 1971, p. 52.
85 Jim Masselos, Indian Nationalism (an History), New Delhi, 1985, pp. 180 - 181.
leaders participated in political movement, during Salt Satyagraha women increasingly enrolled themselves as volunteers.\textsuperscript{88} Prominant women who participated in the Salt Satyagraha were Anajuyabai Kale, Avabtujgavau Gokhale, Captain Sisth Perinbehn, Durgabai, Goshibehn, Jamkidevi, Lilavathi Munshi, Lukanji and Shantabai Vengsantan.\textsuperscript{89}

Women from Madras Presidency overwhelmingly particapped in the Salt Satyagraha. The main event of Salt Satyagraha in Madras Presidency was held in Vedaranyam. About hundred volunteers lead by Rajaji defied the salt law near Cape Calimere in Vedaranyam. All of them were arrested and produced before court. Rajaji was convicted under section 145 IPC and section 14 of the Madras Salt Act. Rukmini Lakshmipathi, Vice-President of Tamil Nadu Provincial Congress Committee who accompanied Rajaji in the Salt Satyagraha was also arrested and sentenced to one year imprisonment.\textsuperscript{90}

In Madras, Durgabai Ammal and Smt. Prakasam lead the women volunteers of Salt Satyagraha.\textsuperscript{91} Durgabai Ammal was arrested and was punished with imprisonment of nine months and three months. Other eminent women who participated in the Salt Satyagraha and arrested were Lakshmi Narasamma, Unnava Lakshmibayamma and Vedantam Kamala Devi.\textsuperscript{92} On 25\textsuperscript{th} April, 1930 a group of 100 women volunteers lead by Durgabai Ammal and Varaga Ammal who were engaged in Salt Satyagraha in Madras were brutally attacked by the police. Women lead Salt Satyagraha in other places of Madras Presidency such as Coimbatore, Salem and Tirunelveli. A number of

\textsuperscript{88} Young India, dated 30.4.1930.
\textsuperscript{90} Indian Ladies Magazine, dated July 1930, p. 610.
\textsuperscript{91} Government of Madras, G.O. No.952, Public (Confidential) Department, dated 16.9.1931.
\textsuperscript{92} Government of Madras, Fortnightly Report, Second half of May 1930; GO No 699 (D), Under Secretary Safe File, dated. 8.6.1930.
women in Madras Presidency were arrested and convicted for participating in Salt Satyagraha. According to a report, the total number of persons arrested and sentenced to jail in Madras Presidency were 3490 of which women were 291.\(^{93}\)

The Salt Satyagraha was followed by foreign cloth boycott movement. The movement gained momentum. In the year 1930, the import of foreign cloth came down to one-fourth of the import figures of the previous year. Sixteen textile mills in Bombay, owned by the British were closed.\(^{94}\) Some of the women of Madras Presidency arrested and convicted for picketing shops selling foreign cloth were: Angachi Ammal, Kamala Bai w/o Lakshman Rao, Zamindar of Melmandi, Tirunelveli, Sakuntala Bai,\(^{95}\) Sivaraja Subbmmal, Kameswarammal, Yamini Purna Tilagamma,\(^{96}\) Indira Bai, w/o Madhava Rao and Gomothiammal, w/o Harihara Sarma.\(^{97}\)

**Gandhi – Irwin Pact and Round Table Conferences**

Recognizing the role of Congress in the Indian polity, the British government realized the need of arriving at a settlement with the Congress. In pursuance of this policy change, the Government lifted the ban on the Congress and released all the leaders including Gandhiji unconditionally on 17\(^{th}\) February, 1931. A pact was concluded between Gandhiji and Lord Irwin on 5\(^{th}\) March, 1931.\(^{98}\) Government agreed to withdraw all ordinances and cases pending against the political workers; to release all the political prisoners excepting those who were guilty of violence; to permit the persons living within certain distance from the seashore to collect or manufacture salt without being taxed, to permit peaceful picketing of shops selling liquors, foreign

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\(^{93}\) Rajan Mohan *op.cit.*, p. 299.  
\(^{94}\) Agarwal, R.C., *op.cit.* pp. 219 - 220.  
\(^{95}\) *Swarajya*, Madras, dated 28.1.1931  
\(^{96}\) Government of Madras, GO. No. 1133, Law (General) Department, dated 15.3.1930: GO No. 1062, Law (General) Department, dated 7.3.1931.  
\(^{97}\) Government of Madras, GO. No. 1061, Law (General) Department, dated 7.3.1931.  
goods and opium; to restore the property seized in connection with the Civil Disobedience Movement and to return all the movable and immovable properties forfeited in lieu of land revenue.\textsuperscript{99} On behalf of Congress it was agreed to suspend the Civil Disobedience Movement; not to press for enquiry into police excesses; to take steps to associate Congress with the Round Table Conference; and to withdraw all boycott plans.\textsuperscript{100}

The Round Table Conference as envisaged in the Gandhi- Irwin pact came to an end on 1\textsuperscript{st} December, 1931 without any success. Gandhiji reached India on 28\textsuperscript{th} December, 1931. During his absence the Viceroy resorted to repression in violation of the Gandhi- Irwin pact. The Conservative Party in power in England favoured a stern attitude towards Indians and in particular, towards Congress.\textsuperscript{101} Viceroy’s office informed Gandhiji on 2\textsuperscript{nd} January, 1932 that the request to meet Viceroy had been turned down and that severe action would be taken against the leaders and followers of Civil Disobedience Movement. Gandhiji shot back conveying the firm determination to resume the Civil Disobedience Movement accepting full responsibility for the consequences.\textsuperscript{102} Lord Willington, the Viceroy hurried to arrest Gandhiji on 4\textsuperscript{th} January, 1932. Various draconian measures such as declaring all Congress organizations as unlawful, restriction of civil liberties etc were taken.\textsuperscript{103} In Madras, Rajaji was charged and convicted under section 4 of the Ordinance V of 1932 with six months imprisonment. Ambujammal, daughter of former Advocate General, S. Srinivasa Iyengar, Janammal, daughter of Late V. Bashyam Iyengar, Justice of the Madras High Court and L. Kamala Bai were also convicted under section 4 of

\textsuperscript{99} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{100} Agarwal, R.C. \textit{op.cit.}, p. 221.
\textsuperscript{101} The \textit{CWMG}, Vol. 48, 1971, p. 434.
\textsuperscript{102} Saroja Sundararajan, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 484.
\textsuperscript{103} Government of Madras, GO No.683, Public Department, dated 16.5.1932.
Ordinance V of 1932. Sakuntala Bai, a student of Rayapuram Medical College and V.M. Kothainayagiammal, a member of Madras District Congress Committee were charged under section 17 (2) and section 17 (1), respectively under the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1908 and were convicted with imprisonment and fine. Similarly, Rukmini Lakshmipathi, a member of Women’s Association was convicted under 17 (1) of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1908.

In Madras, a group of women formed the Women’s Swadeshi League, with Ambujammal as one of the founders. The primary objective of the League was to encourage hand spinning and weaving. The members of this League were active in picketing foreign cloth, for which Ambujammal was convicted with prison term. In Madras, another organization, namely, the Women’s Swadesi League was formed with Rukmini Lakshmipathi as its chairperson. The members of this League propagated Swadeshi items. One Visalakshi Ammal of this League visited Tripur for propagating Swadeshi Movement.

For Indian Women, the Civil Disobedience Movement provided the most liberating experience to participate in different capacities, and the period constitutes their first major entry into the sphere of political activities. The active participation of women in this movement represents a notable advance in Indian women in close association with the Congress. By now Indian women were keen to play active roles and some of them verily ‘pressurized’ Gandhiji to associate women as an integral member of the Satyagraha Army. Women displayed remarkable organizational capacity and leadership ability in furthering the nationalist programme.

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104 Government of Madras, G.O. No. 984, Law (General) Department, dated 10.3.1932.
107 Government of Madras, GO No 759, Under Secretary Safe File, dated. 25.4.1932.
Women, the movement was the most liberating experience and could truly be said to have marked the beginning of their entry into public space.\textsuperscript{109}

**Individual Satyagraha and Quit India Movement**

Gandhiji called off mass Satyagraha on 14\textsuperscript{th} July, 1933; however, he allowed the people to court arrest individually.\textsuperscript{110} On 7\textsuperscript{th} April, 1934, Gandhiji withdrew the movement completely and invited people to work for the removal of untouchability and for implementation of other items of constructive programmes.\textsuperscript{111} Under the Government of India Act, 1935, popular ministries were in place in the provinces.

The beginning of Quit India Movement could be traced to the outbreak of World War II. Lord Linlithgow declared India as a party to the World War II, without consulting the popular ministries in the provinces and the elected members of the Central Legislature.\textsuperscript{112} The Working Committee of the Congress which met in August, 1939 opposed all attempts to impose a war on India. The Viceroy was seeking Indian leasers’ support for war. Gandhiji met the Viceroy on an invitation at Shimla. In his letter he made it clear that if at all there could be any negotiation for support it could be between the Government and the Congress. Gandhiji also conveyed that his own sympathies were with Britain and France from a purely humanitarian point of view.\textsuperscript{113}

In an emergency session at Wardha on 14\textsuperscript{th} September, 1939 Congress declared that a free democratic India would gladly associate itself with the free nations for mutual defence against aggression. Therefore, Congress invited the British Government to declare without any terms and conditions their war aims and views about democracy

\textsuperscript{109} Janaki, D., *Women’s Issues (Perspectives from Social History)*, 2001, p. 80.
\textsuperscript{113} Bharti Thakur, *op. cit.*, p. 136 - 137.
and, in particular, how those were to apply to India before and after the war.\textsuperscript{114} The response of the British Government was disappointing. Linlithgow, the Viceroy in his statement on 17\textsuperscript{th} October, 1939 referring to the differences among the Muslim League and the Princes against the Congress did not define Britain’s war aims except stating that Britain was resisting aggression. According to Gandhiji, the Viceroy’s statement revealed only the reiteration of the policy of divide and rule, which eliminated the possibility of any immediate friendly relationship between the Congress and the Government. Thus, the Working Committee, finding the statement wholly unsatisfactory, took a decision not to participate in the war exercise. It also instructed all the Congress Ministries in the provinces to resign.

At its Ramgarh Session held in March, 1940, Congress resolved to launch a kind of Civil Disobedience Movement under the leadership of Gandhiji. Gandhiji, who was authorized to decide the time and strategy for such a movement was initially reluctant to start a Civil Disobedience Movement. Finally he opted for a limited Satyagraha. The Satyagraha would be confined to the demand for carrying on anti-war propaganda and preaching non-co-operation with the British Government in their war efforts.\textsuperscript{115}

On 17\textsuperscript{th} October, 1940, the Individual Civil Disobedience Movement started. Persons having faith in non-violence and constructive programmes alone were eligible for offering Satyagraha and they were selected by Gandhiji himself.\textsuperscript{116} Vinoba Bhave was the first to offer Satyagraha by making anti-war speeches in the village Panaur and he was arrested subsequently.\textsuperscript{117} Jawaharlal Nehru, who was to offer Satyagraha on 7\textsuperscript{th}

\textsuperscript{115} The \textit{CWMG}, Vol. 70, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 440-442.
\textsuperscript{116} Geoffrey Ashe, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 346.
November, 1940 was arrested a week in advance and was sentenced to four year imprisonment for his speeches delivered earlier in October, 1940.\footnote{118 Nanda, B.R., \textit{op.cit.}, p. 444.}

There were meetings and demonstrations in the Madras Presidency against the conviction of Nehru. Individual Satyagraha in Madras Presidency was started by T.S.S. Rajan, former Minister for Public Health. He was convicted and sentenced to one year rigorous imprisonment and fine of Rs. 1000/- or in default of payment of fine six months further imprisonment. Notable among the other leaders who offered individual Satyagraha were Rukmini Lakshmipathi, Deputy Speaker of the Madras Legislative Assembly and T. Prakasam, former Minister for Revenue. Rajaji was arrested on 3\textsuperscript{rd} December, 1940. Satyamurthi offered individual Satyagraha on 13\textsuperscript{th} December and was arrested and convicted with imprisonment for nine months. The participation of women volunteers in individual Satyagraha was remarkable. The first woman to court arrest was Sucheta Kripalani. Bhag Devi, Priyamvada Devi and Mahadevi Kajariwal offered individual Satyagraha in their respective provinces of Punjab, Orissa and Bihar. In Madras Presidency, Anjali Ammal, MLA of South Arcot, Lakshmi Ammal, MLA of Tirunelveli and Lakshmi Bharati, MLA of Madura District were convicted and sentence to imprisonment.\footnote{119 Government of Madras, GO No. 208, Public (Confidential) Department, dated 31.1.1941.} Prominent women of Madras city who vigorously participated in the individual Satyagraha Movement were J. Navaneethammal, M.S. Balammal, N.S. Rukmini, Rajam Bharati, Rajeswari Ammal, Rukmini Lakshmipathi, Sitalakshmi Kumaraswamy and Thayarammal.\footnote{120 Premalatha, P.N., \textit{Nationalism and Women’s Movement in South India 1917–1947}, New Delhi, 2003, p. 146.} In Coimbatore district eminent women who offered Individual Satyagraha were: A. Lakshmi, A.K. Panjali, Bagavathiammal, Lakshmi, Padmavathi Asher, Pankajathammal, Savithri Ammal and
The Individual Satyagraha was offered by women of other districts of Madras Presidency also. The noted women who participated in the Individual Satyagraha from other districts were: Janaki, Rajaman Devi, Jagadambal and Piyari Bibi in Trichinopoly district; Anjalai Ammal MLA, Lakshmi Ammal, Pathanji, Krishnaveni Ammal, Muthulekshmi Ammal, Aranga Nayaki Ammal and Jagadambal of South Arcot district; K.P. Janaki, Lakshmi Bharati MLA, V. Ahilandammal, Alamelu Sundararajan, Rangammal and Lakshmi of Madura district; Narayanamammal and Vishalakshi of Ramanathapuram district; Parvathi, Sakunthala Gurjali and Lakshmikanthammal of North Arcot district; and Lakshmi Venkatram and Bharathi of Nilgiris district.

On 4th December 1940, the Government announced its decision to release all civil disobedience prisoners whose offences were ‘merely formal and symbolic in character’. As per the new directive issued on 17th June, 1941, a released satyagrahi must seek to conduct satyagraha again as soon as possible. At the Bardolai session on 30th December, 1941, the Congress Working Committee suspended the Individual Satyagraha and offered to support the British war efforts in case the Government was willing to effect real changes.

When the pressure of war mounted, Britain became anxious to secure the full and active cooperation of India in the War efforts. The Cripps Mission came with the
promise of dominion status and a plan for future constitutional developments. All the offers would materialise only after the War. The plan was rejected in view of India’s demand for immediate self-government to enable her to fight for freedom of other countries. The Congress Working Committee, accordingly, in its meeting in July 1942 at Wardha passed a resolution asking the British to transfer power to India and to ‘Quit India’, otherwise it would be forced to launch a Civil Disobedience Movement.  

A meeting of the All India Congress Committee was summoned on 8th August, 1942 in Bombay to endorse the ‘Quit India’ resolution. Gandhiji asked every Indian to act as if he was no longer under the heel of the imperialism. 9th August 1942 was the day to launch the ‘Quit India Movement’. Government arrested Gandhiji along with his wife Kasturba, Sarojini Naidu and Gandhiji’s secretary, Mahadev Desai and they were taken to the Aga Khan Palace at Poona. Many other prominent leaders of Congress were also arrested. Although important leaders were taken to jail, when the news of the arrest of Gandhiji and other leaders spread, spontaneous protests erupted all over the country. Women joined in large numbers in the protests. The Government decided to suppress the agitation with iron hand. Educational institution and factories were forcefully closed. Government buildings like police stations, railway stations and post offices were attacked. Satyamurthi was arrested on the night of 11th August 1942 at Arakonam junction. He was first taken to Vellore Jail and thereafter to Amraoti Jail. While transferring to Amraoti Jail he was not even provided drinking water. After a month he was brought back to Madras and was admitted in the General Hospital and he died on 28th March, 1943. Many eminent leaders were arrested, which included Kamala

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Devi Arya. In Madras province, when the leaders were arrested, Rukmini Lakshmipathi became the acting President of the Provincial Congress Party. She kept the movement alive and visited all the places appealing the people to participate in the movement. Ambujammal helped the people affected with food and shelter by organizing 'Voluntary Corps'. Other prominent women who participated in the Quit India Movement and went to jail were: Dhamayanthi, Ignatius Ammal, Janaki Ammal, Kahalakshmi, Padma Singh, Solai Bagyalakshmi Ammal and Suryavathi Ammal. The following women also participated in the Quit India Movement: Ammu Swaminathan, Anushya, Balammal, Devaki Ammal, Janaki, Manjubhashini, Maya Joseph, Sushila, Thangamma, Thayarammal, Thirupura Sundari and Vasugiammal. Among them Ammu Swaminathan and Manjubhashini belonged to Women’s Indian Association, were actively organizing prayer meetings in Madras and defied the orders of the Police not to enter the venue for the meeting. Noted women from Coimbatore who participated in the Movement were: Alamalu, Amravalli Ammal, Maruthai Ammal and Savithri Ammal. Antony Ammal, a worker of Pankaja Textile Mill was arrested and sentenced to one year imprisonment for joining the strike called by the workers. Kuttiammal, a woman from Coimbatore was the leader of the group of labourers who destroyed railway lines at Siganallur. Lakshmikanthammal and Lakshmi Ammal of Tiruvannamalai town were punished with 6 months rigorous

132 The Hindu, dated 17.8.1942.
133 The Hindu, dated 13.8.1942.
134 The Bombay Chronicle, 10.10.1942.
135 Premalatha, P.N., op.cit., p. 148.
140 The Hindu, dated 25.8.1942.
141 Dinamani, dated 15.8.1942.
imprisonment for being members of unlawful assembly.\textsuperscript{142} In Ramnad, Naryana Ammal was arrested and imprisoned for shouting anti-war slogans etc.\textsuperscript{143} In Trichinopoly, among others, Jagadammal, Karuppazhani, Karur Piyaribibi and Kuppammal were arrested and kept in Vellore Jail in connection with certain derailments that took place in the month of August, 1942.\textsuperscript{144} About 10,000 people, mostly men and women of ages between twenty and thirty gathered at Gandhi Park, defied the ban order and indulged in activities such as cutting telegraph communication, picketing shops etc., which provoked police into firing at the people.\textsuperscript{145}

The movement was alive during the intervening period. In January, 1943, Independence day was celebrated with all gaiety. In Triplicane national flag was hoisted under the leadership of Radhabai Subbarayan, for which she along with others including Damayanti were arrested and imprisoned.\textsuperscript{146} On 19\textsuperscript{th} February, 1943 Anusuya Reddy was arrested and prosecuted for shouting prejudicial slogans at Egmore and Mahalakshmi Bharati was arrested and imprisoned for shouting slogans in front of the Secretariat.\textsuperscript{147} Ammu Swaminathan, President of the Madras branch of the All India Women’s Conference and Manjubhashini, President of Madras Women’s Students Organization were arrested and sent to Vellore Jail for organizing demonstration in defiance of prohibitory orders etc.\textsuperscript{148} In South Arcot, Anjali Ammal (popularly known as ‘Velu Nachiar’) who participated in Quit India Movement was engaged in daring revolutionary activities.\textsuperscript{149}

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\item \textsuperscript{142} Government of Madras, G.O. No. 3968, Home Department, dated 26.10.1942.
\item \textsuperscript{143} Government of Madras, \textit{Fortnightly Report}, dated 8.3.1942.
\item \textsuperscript{144} Dewa, C., \textit{Viduthalai Poril Tamilaga Muslimral} (Tamil), Tirunelveli, 1994, pp. 190-192.
\item \textsuperscript{145} Government of Madras, \textit{Fortnightly Report}, second half, August 1942.
\item \textsuperscript{146} Government of Madras, \textit{Fortnightly Report}, second half, December 1942.
\item \textsuperscript{147} \textit{Ibid}.
\item \textsuperscript{148} Government of Madras, \textit{Fortnightly Report}, 21 August 1943; Government of Madras, G.O. No. 629, Public (Confidential) Department, dated 26 February 1943.
\item \textsuperscript{149} Bharti Thakur, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 166-168.
\end{itemize}
Gandhiji was blamed by the Government for the violence that erupted in the country. The Government claimed that it had evidence to prove the doublespeak by Congress in talking peace and non-violence on the one hand and encouraging armed violence on the other hand. Rebutting the charge, Gandhiji decided to observe fast for 21 days to prove his innocence. With great difficulty Gandhiji survived the fast. Kasturba Gandhi died while Gandhiji was in detention. In April, 1944, Gandhiji fell seriously ill and was released on 6th May, 1944. Thereafter, the Quit India Movement was suspended. The Quit India Movement had a tremendous impact due to active participation of women and in the movement women assumed leadership in various programmes associated with the movement.

**Women in Indian National Army**

Women associated themselves in the Indian National Army founded by Netaji Subhas Chadra Bose. Lakshmi Swaminathan Sehgal, a graduate in medicine from Madras moved to Singapore for medical practice. When Subhas Chandra Bose arrived in Singapore in July 1943, Lakshmi Swaminathan Sehgal was one of the few who received Bose. She enlisted the support of women for armed training. Bose offered her the command of Rani Jhansi Regiment, a women regiment of Indian National Army. She joined the proposed Rani Jhansi Regiment on 14th July, 1943.¹⁵⁰ She visited Penang, Ipoh and Kuala Lumpur where she received good response. Two sisters, Janaki and Papathy joined her from Kuala Lumpur. She managed to get the services of five hundred women for the regiment. When the Provincial Government was to be formed on 21 October, 1943, Bose asked her willingness to join the Cabinet as minister in charge of Women’s Affairs. She gave her consent and the ceremony of the Provincial

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Government was held at the Cathay Cinema in Singapore on 21st October, 1943.\textsuperscript{151} She was designated as Lieutenant Colonel. When the Indian National Army collapsed she did not surrender to the British. She was captured and placed under arrest and later sent to Rangoon Jail. Her regiment was disbanded in 1945 and most of the girls of the regiment were sent to Singapore and Rangoon. After popular demand she was released in the year 1946, came to India and married Captain Sehal of the Indian National Army.

A few women sepoys from Madras also served the Indian National Army. They were Chinnammal, Jeyalakshmi Ammal (of Korukkupet), Radhambal (of Red Hills), Rukmani and Vellayammal @ Malai Ammal (of Vyasarpady). Angammal from Madurai and Saraswathi Ammal, Thanapackiam, Lakshmi Devi, and Meenakshi from Thanjavur, Chinnammal and Kamakshi Ammal from Ramanatha Puram district Govindammal of Salem District, Palaniyayee Ammal of Trichinopoly, Sengamalai Ammal from Tirunelveli District, and Pattammal from South Arcot District also served the Indian National Army.\textsuperscript{152} The death of Bose on 18th August, 1945, on his way to Tokyo in a plane crash put an end to the era of Indian National Army. On 22nd March, 1946 Lt. Col. Lakshmi Swaminathan while addressing the Indian National Army men who returned from Singapore by the ship ‘Nea Hellas’ on 21st March, 1946, stated that the achievements and fame of the Azad Hind Fauj, were well-known to the whole world, that it was unfortunate that they could not complete the task of liberating India, and they should not fail to remember the pledge they had all given to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. She asked them not to be led away by reactionary propaganda and communal politics. She further said that in their future fight for freedom the use of violence has to necessarily give place to non-violence.\textsuperscript{153}

\textsuperscript{151} Ibid.
Indian women actively participated in the struggle for independence. Their contribution in the Congress and other organizations was laudable. The role of Sarojini Naidu, Kasturba Gandhi, Vijaya Laxmi Pandit and Rukmini Lakshimipathi are laudable in bringing independence to the country. Women of Madras province did not lag behind women of other provinces of India in leading the struggle for freedom. Rather women of Madras Province showed to the rest of India how women can contribute equally in their struggle for freedom. The Home Rule League started by Annie Besant was a watershed in the women’s development in India. Their stress on women’s right and education caught the fancy of Indian women. They fought for women suffrage and finally won the same. It could lead to women’s empowerment, the fruits of which are now enjoyed by the present day women.