CHAPTER VI.
Sastri represents the best amongst the Liberals discussed in the previous chapters. He stood out as a giant amongst them and received the respect of all those who took active part in the National Movement of those days. The Right Hon'ble V.S. Srinivasa Sastri (henceforward Sastri) represents the best of the Liberal ideals in theory and in practice. A study of his activities in depth would illustrate more fully the contribution the Liberals had made in the growth of nationalism in India.

Born on 22nd September 1869 at Valang iman in Kumbakonam in the Madras Presidency, he was the son of a middle class Brahmin called Sankara Narayana Sastri. He was the fourth of seven children. His parents were orthodox, his mother was pious and religious and his father was a scholar in Sanskrit and officiated as a priest in religious ceremonies. He had not much of a clientele and had to forage for bare subsistence. He himself spoke of his poverty in the Council of State in 1923. He said "for many years when I was a little boy, the prospect of starvation was a familiar companion and among my sharpest recollections is the following
incident. One year, when money was scarce and among the necessaries of life salt was dear, my poor mother was obliged to decline a gift of mangoes because she could not afford to purchase the salt necessary to pickle it". Born in poverty, also there was a marked strain of unworldliness and of renunciation in his ancestry. His grandfather and great grand father embraced Sanyas Ashram.

His mother since very early in life influenced him. Sastri did his schooling in the Native High School under the guidance of Appu Sastriar, the headmaster, who instilled in Srinivasa Sastri that eternal love for India which became a way of life with him. He taught Sastri Mathematics. Sastri himself reminisces that the headmaster used to read "from newspapers, parliamentary records, history books and magazines discussions of topics of absorbing contemporary interests. It was in the mathematics class that my public spirit as it may be called was first aroused. I felt my blood boiling within me".

He read books written by Tyndall. These opened his eyes to the true methods of Science. Another book which influenced him was a collection of T.M. Huxley's writings and speeches containing an exposition of man's place in
nature and his relation to society. He read works of Spencer and John Stuart Mill which helped in implanting in his mind ideas of liberty and equality.

At the age of 14, whilst still in his matriculation class, his marriage to Parvati was proposed. He was in a fix. At that time Hindu marriage reform formed a very live subject. His teachers compelled boys to take a vow that they would not marry till they were over eighteen. His parents did not take his vow seriously and got him married.

He passed his Matriculation Examination in 1883 and when he was hardly fifteen; he came out first in the First year arts examination in 1885. This enabled him to have a free education for the Bachelor of Arts degree which he earned in 1888, standing first in the whole of the Presidency in Sanskrit. He won a prize of Rs.350/- and a gold medal for proficiency in English.

Very early in life he showed a sensitiveness to correctness in grammar and pronunciation, Sastri pointed out some mistakes in English grammar by J.C. Nesfield whose text book was followed in high schools. A sensation was created by an Indian correcting the English grammar of an English grammarian. An English Dictionary was his constant companion.
He became a teacher in the Municipal High School Mayavaram on a salary of Rs. 50/- and persuaded his parents brothers, and sisters to like with him. He joined the Teacher's Training College, Madras, in 1891 and excelled in debates, drama and sports.

During his time in this college, he had an interesting encounter with its Principal, A.A. Hall, an Englishman. He appreciated Sastri's command over English and reprimanded others for their lapses. Sastri resented this and also pointed out mispronunciation of words by the Principal. Sastri gently urged him to consult a dictionary; and the Principal acknowledged his error.

Sastri was appointed Teacher assistant in Salem in 1893 and began to take an interest in public affairs. He came into contact with C. Vijayaraghavachariar who was then known as Salem Hero. Sastri joined him in a dispute with the Madras Government which dealt with a highly paid commission being imposed on the Madras Municipality. But the Government did not pay much attention. He deplored the repressive press laws and wrote several articles on the subject to the Hindu. As he was a Municipal servant, Sastri was reprimanded by the Government for his writings.
In 1895 he joined Pachaiappa's School, Madras as Assistant Teacher in English and in 1902, became the headmaster of the Hindu High School, Triplicane, Madras which he served with enthusiasm and won for it the distinction of the Model High School in the Presidency. He was the Editor of the Education Review and also one of the sponsors of the Indian Review.

While he was at the Hindu High School, he heard that the Nagapatam High School run by non-official Indians was facading difficulties due to lack of finance. At that time Missionary schools alone had the full support of the Government and received better financial help. Sastri suggested that Indians should combine and create a greater impression on the government and get better grants. At the same time schools should be paid their resources too. He even went to the extent of volunteering to serve the school on a lower salary but was dissuaded from taking the step.

About this time the Principalship of the Pithapuram Raja's College at Kakinada fell vacant. Sastri applied and was informed by the management that they wanted him to impart religious education in the Hindu faith. Sastri refused being imparted as he was opposed to religious instruction in educational institutions.
Social reforms interested him and he advocated post puberty marriage. In 1906 he published a pamphlet on Hindu Marriage after puberty in accordance to Hindu sastras. He argued that the Hindu sastras did not forbid such marriages. In keeping with his principles, he got his daughter married after puberty.

At his residence at Sydoji lane Triplicane, a study circle met and it was here many dreams were discussed. One of them was the setting up of the Triplicane Urban Cooperative Society, which grew in leaps and bounds. The President was Mr. S. Muthukrishnan. It included teachers like Sastri, T. K. Hanumantha Rao, K. B. Ramanatha Ayyar, T. S. Subramanya Ayyar, U. V. Swaminathier, S. M. Natesa Sastri, C. V. Krishnasami and M. Singaravei Chettiyar. It included 6 Government officials. This catered to the wants of the middle class. Essential goods and commodities could be bought at fair price through the ration shops like rice, wheat, sugar. From early years, he took keen interest in public affairs.

At this time he wrote a sketch on Gokhale's Life of whom he had heard so much and wanted to meet. This was published in the Indian Review 1905 on the eve of the Benaras
session of the Indian National Congress. Having already the sanyasi inclination in his blood, he was impressed with Gokhale's ideas on sacrifice and sanyas. He wanted to be one of Gokhale's political disciples.

He attended the Benaras session of the Indian National Congress as a delegate and wanted to meet Gokhale. He applied for admission to the Servants of India Society which he had wanted to join after he read pamphlets about it. He wrote in his application "I am a Headmaster in Triplicane, with 17 years' service. I graduated in arts in 1888 and am now 37 years old. My age, I fear, may be against me, as I may not have many years more to give to the service of my country, nor have the confidence that I can do very much in the few years that I have before me ... such as I am, however I offer myself and hope to be accepted. I don't write this letter under an impulse of the moment, but the idea has been long in my mind, and it was for this purpose chiefly that I made up my mind to come here as a delegate."

Initially Sastri did not receive a reply. So he sought the help of V. Krishnaswami Aiyar, a friend of his and Gokhale. In 1906 he was asked by Gokhale to meet him at Poona. Sastri was with him during Easter, and decided
to join the society and therefore resigned from the Hindu High School. He could not join the Society immediately as he was not relieved of the Headmastership. During this time many dissuaded him from joining the society. Rumours were afloat that Sastri had second thoughts and that he had shrunk from financial sacrifice. Further, that V.Krishnaswami had to subsidise him with Rs.10,000 to overcome his reluctance. Sastri rebuffed this canard years later in 1926. The attempt to besmirch him may be due to the eminence he had secured in Madras public life. Now at Gokhale's instance he attended of the Indian National Congress that the 1906 December session at Calcutta. It was here/Sastri was introduced to Dadabhai Naoroji. Sastri was formally admitted to the Servants of India Society on January 15th, 1907 in a House on Rowland Road, Ballygunge Calcutta. Gokhale administered the seven oaths. Sastri's public work as an apprentice of the Society started on 16th January, 1907. Gokhale asked him to tour East Bengal and relaxed the general rule that members of the society should not address public meetings or write in the Press for the first five years, which was their training period. The training otherwise was vigorous.
During this period he visited the National Schools in Bengal, where literary and physical education was imparted. The extremists had opened them in Bengal, Punjab and Bombay Presidencies because they regarded the existing system as denationalising and inadequate. Sastri observed that the students of these schools took part in the Swadeshi Movement and organised picketing of shops which sold foreign cloth. He did not think it was proper that National Schools be looked upon as the special care of the Extremists as they would mould the students into turbulent groups. Further, he felt that students should not take part in the political agitations of the country and that they should concentrate on their studies. He reflected the Liberal point of view.

In the meanwhile the Extremists started to take more positive action to exhibit the intensity of their feelings. They started Swadeshi and boycott movements which gave encouragement to Indian industries. Sastri felt that the Swadeshi doctrine was built on sound economic principles and true patriotism. After all, it was a means to improve the economy. He felt boycott should be used as a last resort when everything else had failed.
On further observation, he realised that the Swadeshi Movement did not have an impact on most of the Mohammadans as they were influenced by the maulvis in the pay of the Nawabs. However, the weavers and the educated Mohammadans were influenced.

As a trainee, Sastri helped Gokhale in his work as Secretary of the Indian National Congress and as a member of India's Legislative Council and attended all the important meetings where Gokhale spoke.

Sastri was present at Surat Congress session and witnessed the split. Leaders like Pherozeshah Mehta, D.E. Wacha, Gokhale, V. Krishnaswami Aiyar decided to reconstitute the Congress and held the next session in Madras, 1908. In this connection, Sastri toured Madras Presidency to secure support for the reconstituted convention of the Congress of which he was appointed Secretary.

Gokhale worked hard and worked his assistants hard. When he introduced his Elementary Education Bill, he wanted searching for it a particular quotation. Sastri sat for hours and he thought he had found it. Gokhale was not satisfied.
In 1907, he visited Bangalore with instructions from Gokhale to speak about Social Reforms and solicit donations for the Ranade Memorial. In 1911 he again visited Bangalore to give lectures on marriage reforms and how students could serve the motherland. But the meeting on the latter subject was prevented by the Mysore Maharaja as Sastri had not informed the Indian State whether he proposed to enter them for public purposes. Sastri considered it a lame excuse, but years later friendly relations were restored between him and the Maharaja.

He also undertook to canvass Gokhale's education Bill in Madras and Mysore for which interviewed the Municipal Councillors and District Boards and also planned a campaign in Trichy.

Gokhale wanted Sastri to accompany him to England, but Sastri held back because of his ailing mother. It was that at this time Sastri met Gandhi in January 1915 and felt that Gandhi should drop his own views and take up of the liberals and join the Servants of India Society. If not, he should eschew politics and become exclusively a social worker - Gandhi did neither.
Gokhale passed away in 1916 and the mantle of leadership fell on him. His colleagues chose him as the first member of the society. Sastri scotched the rumours that Gokhale nominated him as successor. He said "though reminded of the society and entreated to state his wishes in regard to it he said nothing. Perhaps he retained to the last a misgiving that he had always had about me, that I had a marked leaning towards the other school, and was only an extremist in disguise. Perhaps he too remembered that Mr. Gandhi was back in India and that they had anxious talks about him joining the Society".

By the time Gandhi completed his tour, Gokhale had died. Gandhi sought admission but due to differences of methods to be adopted to further national interests he withdrew.

SASTRI AS A LEGISLATOR 1913-1916:

In 1913 Pentland the Governor of Madras had heard of Sastri through William Wedderburn. Pentland was attracted to Sastri and consulted him on important issues and nominated him to the Madras Legislative Council.
Sastri took keen interest in the proceedings of the Legislature. He moved resolutions on a variety of subjects, particularly on education. He applied his Liberal ideals as a legislator at Madras. Though he was never committed to the official view, he was considered as a supporter of the Government of Madras. Sastri clarified his position and said "I enjoy a position of comparative freedom. I have let myself go on occasions and tried to take a more detached view and perhaps one would expect from one who ordinarily range himself on the side of the non-officials..."

He could never accept the view that the role of Liberals in the Legislature was wasted labour. He felt that suggestions, apparently rejected, had gone home and borne fruit. Questions answered rather curtly in the council, had however been taken up for investigation and had led to remedies desired.

He had introduced a resolution in the Council of April, 1914 with regard to sending selected officers from the Provinces of subordinate educational service on a deputation to study educational systems in England. He spoke against Model Schools and pleaded for elementary
schools so that a greater number would be benefitted by it. Among other topics he spoke about were freedom of speech and reduction of fees for schools and extension of service of gazetted officer. He wanted a reduction in the entrance fees for admission to secondary schools.

The British rule was no longer progressive. In fact, primary and technical education was not making any progress. The officials were gradually becoming suspicious of higher education. The Universities Act of 1904 tried to bring education under tight control. Moreover since the first World War was going on money was required to finance the war. So although initially some progress had been made, education came practically to a standstill.

Sastri wanted private bodies to impart education rather than the Government. He advocated an increase in the teachers salaries and wanted the medium of instruction to be in English, although personally he felt that the medium of instruction should be in one's mother tongue. However, this did not mean he wanted to undermine English as a medium of instruction. He just warned of the day when English would not be spoken in the country.
He spoke for the teachers' rights and condemned fining of low paid teacher for their lapses.

Sastri passed a resolution regarding the formation of the Panchayats. For this, villages were to be chosen with care and training was to be given in legislation at the Panchayat level. He was not successful, but nevertheless the seed had been sown to widen the base of local self-government.

Sastri passed a resolution regarding the election of the Chairman of Village Panchayats. His resolution read "This council recommends to the Governor-in-Council that in respect of the new Panchayats contemplated in the recent Government order on village Panchayats, the village headman be not made ex-officio Chairman but that Chairmen be elected in an informal way by the 'General body of villagers'. He objected to the village headman as being Chairman as he correctly pointed out, it would result in officialising these bodies. The Government accepted the resolution.

Sastri played a role during a discussion on a Resolution moved by B.N.Sarma on 7th April, 1916. The
Resolution dealt with the establishment of institutions for a course of training for medical students to be conducted in the vernaculars so as to qualify them for ordinary medical practice in rural areas and assist private enterprises to provide such medical education.

Sastri felt that it would have been better if the question was not raised in this form at the present moment. He said, "Now that in the Imperial Legislative Council a similar resolution has been arrived at, it would have been probably wiser to wait till the results of the experiment were more fully known to us".

He felt that the opposition to the resolution ran on bigoted lines. "If we go on abandoning good ideas because it would take time we shall be going on to the end of time working on the old ideas without making progress." He refuted the official view as projected by Cardew that, if law was taught in the vernacular, it would not work out well. Sastri pointed out that in Hyderabad law had been practised in the vernacular. He did not agree with Cardew over the question of expansion of education since 1871. He said that the expansion, if any, had been slow and retarded. The resolution of B.N. Sarma had been agreed upon.
Earlier, Sastri moved a resolution regarding altering the minimum proportion of net profits to be carried to the reserve funds of cooperative societies.

His Resolution read as follows: "This recommends to the Governor-in-Council that the minimum proportion of net profits which must be carried to the reserve fund shall, in the case of cooperative societies with the shares and limited liability, be one-fourth as before, not one-half as laid down in the second paragraphs of rule IX(a) of the revised rule under the Cooperative Societies Act issued under date October 2, 1918."

He pointed out that there were three classes of societies which were affected by this new rule. In the first place, there were central societies which were ten in number. There were agricultural societies 97 in number which included stores and building societies. There were some agricultural societies with limited liabilities and shares which were 20 in number. He pointed out that it was these three societies which were affected by this rule. He showed the impact of this rule. He said that of the net profit, 25% should be carried to the reserve. But the government proposed under the new rule to compel all such societies to carry forward
to the reserve 50% of the net profits. This, in the opinion of those interested in the advance of cooperative movement, was somewhat injurious. Sastri agreed with the object of the rule that the reserve fund should be built up as rapidly as possible. But, there were other interests which should be taken care of. "To build up a reserve fund is a good thing, but we must not forget at the same time that we must give these societies an opportunity of attracting sufficient share capital. Share capital is an essential part of the wherewithal with which these societies conduct their operations". He pointed out that if they carried 50% of the net profits to the reserve fund, then there was so much the less to give the shareholder in the way of dividends. To prevent dividend hunting in the extreme form, the Government had made at the same time a rule which "we accept loyally" that no society should declare a dividend of more than 90% any year. According to Sastri this put a limit on any abnormal tendencies that societies may have to dividing their profits together and distributing them as dividends. To secure this object it was necessary, he said, to remember that to fix a maximum at 90% was not all that was required because the share capital had to yield a sufficient capital interest to the investor, otherwise the share capital would not come in. To make the
share capital attractive, he emphasised that the Government should encourage a society to pay this 9% as far as possible and should not make it difficult for those who invested to get this 9%.

He further said .... Hereafter the interest accruing will not be taken into calculation. The interest actually realised in any year will alone be taken into account. I do not quarrel with this provision. But this wholesome rule is bound to restrict the net profits which the societies will realise, thereby aggravating the difficulty.

Thus, he revealed himself as a tough legislator and did not always support the Government. Whenever time arose, he pointed out its defects.

AS AN IMPERIAL COUNCIL LEGISLATOR:

Sastri's work as a Legislator of Madras and his brilliant oratory won him public acclaim. He contested the Legislative council on general franchise. He was then elected by the Madras Legislative Council to the Imperial Council. Sastri was among two who were elected. The other member was B.N. Sharma. Both were Brahmins. C.Vijayaraghavachari,
a Brahmin, was defeated, along with T.M. Nair, a non-Brahmin. Sastri was singled out for severe criticism by the non-Brahmins on the allegation that he had appealed to communal sentiment, which was not true. In fact, he obtained support both from the Brahmins and non-Brahmins and did not win on communal grounds. He took his seat in the Indian Legislative Council at its Simla session on September 5, 1916.

Here also, he spoke on questions pertaining to education, Indianization of the Civil Service, Police Service, Indian Armed Forces, Budget and Finance. In all these discussions, he asked for the reduction of powers of control by the British.

From the beginning itself Sastri participated in the discussions. When C. Sankaran Nair introduced his Bill on the Patna University of 27th September, 1916, Sastri joined in the discussion. The Bill was introduced to establish and incorporate a University at Patna. This was considered a necessity in the wake of the creation of new provinces of Bihar and Orissa in 1912. It was recognised that in order to make them self-contained, it was necessary to furnish them with a High Court and a University. The High Court is an accomplished fact, and it remained for the Indians to bring
into existence the desired University. A committee consisting of nine Europeans and eight Indians was appointed in 1913 and reported to the Government in March, 1914. The committee submitted its schemes on 28th May, 1915 to the Government of India who had sanctioned it. The object of the Bill was to secure a Legislative sanction to the scheme.

Sastri welcomed the motion. He hoped the Government of India would find a good part of the money that was necessary to support the University.

Whilst talking on this issue, he reverted to the 1904 Universities Act. He said that "The Act has become old and time has arrived for liberalising its provision. With this object, I intend, if the Council will allow me, to bring up before long certain definite proposals. It was with some alarm that I heard from the Hon'ble member the detailed proposals for placing the senate in a position of inevitable inefficiency with regard to the administration of the Patna University. It ought not to be a purely deliberative body. If the executive Government of the University must vest in a small body like the syndicate, the general management and responsibility for the administration of the University must certainly be vested in a large body, a part of which is going to be elected."
He pointed out that those who controlled the Universities were asserting themselves too much in the older Universities and that the Senates were without the means of enforcing their will and decisions on the syndicates. He hoped such defects would not appear in the Patna University.

The motion was put to vote and agreed. On February 11, 1917, Sastri moved a resolution on the Municipalities, Districts and Taluk Boards being elective. But he had to withdraw the resolution as he was informed by the Secretary to the Education Department that "while the Government of India sympathised with actions in the directions suggested", they were unable to discuss the same as they were in correspondence with the Secretary of State for India on the subject.

On 10th March, 1917, he helped to pass a Resolution regarding addition of Rs.30 lakhs for extension of elementary schools.

He felt that the most efficacious means of enlarging elementary education was by compulsion and not by voluntary efforts as suggested by the Government. The Government gave assurances in the matter, but not much progress had been made. He pointed out that the Government had sent Sir Harcourt Butler who ventured to envisage a scheme of educational
expenditure which at its culmination might have gone up to Rs.10 crores a year. He said "we were soon to welcome a promise made both in Parliament and in India by the Government that 91,000 schools would be added to the system of elementary education, nothing has come out of these schemes and Mr. Sharp had nearly admitted that the Department had been occupied in making plans and shelving them".

He said one can guess what happened in India from what took place in Madras. In Madras, the policy adopted by the Government in the matter of education had been liberal and promising with the Central Government advancing an amount of Rs.125/- lakhs. With this advance, the Government of Madras had utilised its own resources of a recurring grant of Rs.21 lakhs. But the war came and the Imperial Government changed its plans. Ever since, Sastri pointed out, there was no grant for education. Even the Government of Madras refused to spend any part of the sums at their disposal to open new schools. He said he had the misfortune to contend against this state of affairs for three years in the local council. He said "Time after time we asked that out of their own progressive 2 lakhs a year, the Government might, while they kept a lakh for the improvement of existing schools, devote the remaining lakh at least for creation of new schools. We
had no idea why our proposition on this subject was defeated, but I gathered after the war, that apparently the Local Government got the impression that their revenues are only pledged to the improvement of education while for any large schemes for opening of schools, they should look to the Government of India".

He felt that, Government of India ought to place large sums at the disposal of Local Governments for the extension of elementary education. "The Government must put their best foot forward in all directions. Improvement is a thing which has no end. Educational standards are rising, new ideas are creeping into the fields of education and revolutionises our methods. If we were to wait until we make all the schools we have as model schools, before we opened new schools, there is no hope of anything being done on voluntary plan."

The Government was not willing to budge an inch from it's stand. The resolution failed, as money was required to conduct the war. On 21st February, 1917, the commander-in-chief introduced a Bill to constitute an Indian Defence. He indicated that Indian help was required for war purposes with regard to men, money and material.
Srinivasa Sastri supported the Bill, but, he pointed out two matters on which the country had expected, but had not heard, satisfactory announcements. He hoped that of these matters would be heard in the near future. He said "I ought to state that it would certainly have made our pleasure complete if your Excellency or His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief had found it possible to conclude in the statement an assurance that, so far as may be possible, this Indian Defence force be commanded by officers chosen from our own countrymen". He further stated "we also expected, My Lord, some statement to the effect that Indians enrolled under this Bill would be on terms of perfect equality with the British force". He pointed out that the principle of equality was only introduced over questions of age rather than the status, prospects and training. The other Liberals who supported Sastri's views were Tej Bahadur Sapru, M.B. Dadabhoy Shupendranath Basu. The Council adjourned supporting the commander-in-chief's Bill.

Sastri also took part in the Budget session of the Legislature 1917-1918. With regard to the financial help India had given to the war efforts he said "I associate myself with the sentiments expressed hitherto as to the war
gift India had made to the British Empire ... It is burdensome and it is a great sacrifice". Whilst he appreciated that the budget was within "bearable limits", he wanted fiscal autonomy which has been the pole star of commercial and economic aspiration in this country. We feel that we are subservient economically to outsiders, that we cannot develop our own resources to the full to our own advantage. Fiscal autonomy has become a necessity that England cannot withhold". This was not given fully.

He spoke for Indianisation of the Civil Service and of the need of having simultaneous examination in India. He demanded that engineers for the public works department should be recruited from India, excepting those posts reserved for Royal Engineers. The steps taken by the Government were very slow.

Sastri criticised the policy of the Government in giving preference to the Anglo-Indians to the Post and Telegraph Department. He felt that a high educational qualification should be used as a criteria for appointment. Sastri said that because Indians were in the majority in some services, it does not mean Anglo Indians should preponderate in other services by a policy of reservation. A healthy competition was essential. He recommended speedier Indianization of
police services. To achieve equalization of opportunities for Indians and Britons, simultaneous and competitive examinations should be held in India. The Government however held the view that this suggestion would not bring out the character, capacity, initiative, individuality and responsibility among Indians. Sastri boldly repudiated this view and said that if the police was efficient, it was because of the Indians who were in it. Although his demands were not put into effect, the seed of Indianisation of Police services had been sown in the minds of the administration.

He spoke against the suggestion of reorganisation of provinces in British India on linguistic basis as it would lead to parochialism and fissiparous tendencies. This was taken into consideration as the Act of 1919 did not include linguistic provinces. Sastri attacked the Criminal Law Emergency Powers Bill. This was based on the Report of Rowlatt Committee. Sastri said "I am perfectly clear that the Government have chosen a very unfortunate time. In the first place, your Excellency, I think it is not in accordance with the practice of other Governments to bring in repressive legislation of this nature long before its necessity has become clear". Sastri was not able to find in the recommendations of the Rowlatt Committee any mandate or strong counsel
to the effect that any of the measures proposed must be permanent and that they must be worked into the penal code or into the criminal procedure code. He said "I think the course taken by the Government in recommending to this Council permanent legislation involving alterations in the Penal Code and Criminal Procedure Code goes beyond the recommendation of the Rowlatt Committee and has necessarily evoked a great deal of alarm". Further along, he said, "you cannot place on the Statute Books such drastic legislation without putting into the hands of over enthusiastic executive officers what I consider short cuts to administrative peace." He ended his speech thus "as a test of our capacity to stand any measure of responsible Government are the members of this council going to face unpopularity, the odium of passing of repressive measure? I am no member of the Indian Civil Service. I have not been schooled in stern discipline of that service. I am perhaps too tender by nature. It may be that I and several others ... may be unable to face the storm of popularity - but I should like to say that I am not ashamed of it, that we certainly do not think that the sign of strength, that sure proof that you are a born administrator who consists in courting unpopularity and defying public opinion. I am not made that way. But at the same time, when the stern call.
of duty comes, when requirement of truth is laid on me, when the best interest of the country, as I understand them, require it, I am perfectly prepared to submit to unpopularity. But it has got to be proved to one that it is necessary". The Bill was passed amidst loud protests, with 36 ayes and 21 noes.

Sastri took part in the discussion involving the Dacca University Bill which has already been discussed. The resolution was introduced by Mr. Shafi to establish and incorporate a unitary teaching and resident University at Dacca.

Sastri did not approve of the communal sentiments voiced out by Nawab Ali Chandhuri during the discussion. He said it was disappointing to find Nawab Ali Chandhuri making references to the enemies of the Mahomedan Movement, reference which had found emphatic echo in the representation made by the Muhammadans of East Bengal to the Council. The shadow of justification was the attitude assumed by the Calcutta University towards one of the cardinal features of the scheme namely communal representation. He said "Those that refer to this principle must always do so with a very heavy sense of responsibility and I wish on this occasion to allude to this principle and make clear what is my judgement, it carries ... an undue extension of this principle, a desire
to perpetuate it and to safeguard it against further inroads, these seem to me to be entirely wrong as an attitude to take up. We ought to admit the principle that it is a lamentable necessity that compels us to do so ... we ought to look forward to the time when we should discard it in the interest of the general community". Of course his advice had not been taken into consideration. The communal question became the bane of our National Movement. By the Act of 1919 separate electorates had been introduced. This was a part of the British policy of separating the Hindus from the Muslims.

Thus from the role Sastri played in these legislatures whether at Madras or at Delhi, it can be seen that the British did not exactly democratise the Indian legislatures. At best the Legislatures were a sham where Sastri and other Liberals essayed the role of critics. They were thoroughly disillusioned with the reforms and asked for more. His ire knew no bounds when he was given no permission to discuss the Hunter Report. The Viceroy however gave him permission to discuss any other subject. Sastri would not comply and staged a walk out.
SASTRI AND THE HOME RULERS:

The growing nationalist feeling in India and the urge for national unity produced two developments at the Lucknow session of the Indian National Congress in 1916. The two wings of the Congress reunited. Old Moderate leaders had welcomed Tilak back. So also the Congress and the Muslim League came to an understanding. During this time, the First World War was going on. In the beginning, the Indian Moderates and Lokmanya Tilak had also supported the war. The Moderates adopted an actively pro-British attitude mainly in the mistaken belief that grateful Britain would repay India's loyalty and enable her to take a step forward on the road to Self-Government. However they did not realise that the western powers were fighting to safeguard their colonies.

So, many Indian leaders felt that the Government was not going to give any real concessions unless popular pressure was brought to bear on it. This could not be brought about through the Moderate dominated Indian National Congress. Therefore Home Rule Leagues were formed - one under Tilak and the other under Annie Besant and S.Subramaniya Iyer.
Sastri was the first to be influenced by Annie Besant's philosophy to a certain extent. She organised the Madras Parliament at Madras. Sastri became under-secretary in this organisation on February 26, 1916, ably assisted by a Madras Liberal L.A. Govindaraghava Iyer. His interest developed as a result of a very vigorous propaganda. Mrs. Annie Besant's paper 'New India and the Commonweal', had led the way. Stirring articles were written in them. On New Year's Day 1915, it was proposed to start a Madras Parliament, which was a debating society which observed Parliamentary forms for it was aimed at Home Rule. National problems were studied in great depths. Methods of producing measures were followed. Reports of the debates and the circulation of the Transactions in the form of Acts served to arouse disciplined political activity. A committee of 17 was formed in February, 1915. It drew up rules. The first speaker was Mr. Justice Sadashiv Iyer. L.A. Govindaraghav Iyer was offered the post of the Leader of the House, but as he declined, it was left to the members to elect their own man. The inaugural meeting was held on February, 14. Annie Besant was elected Prime Minister. March, 6 was fixed for the first business meeting. The 1st ministry was announced in the common weal of February, 26 namely Annie Besant - Prime Minister for Treasury, under secretary was not chosen. Local
Government was under T. Rangachariar, Under Secretary was K. C. Desikachari, education was under C. P. Ramaswami Iyer. Under Secretary was C. Jinarajadasa, Industries was under B. N. Sarma. The Liberals and the Home Rulers joined forces in educating the voters about the Reform Act and actively cooperated against non-cooperation.

Sastri published a pamphlet in December, 1916 suggesting that Home Rule should not be totally ignored by the Liberals. His acceptance of Home Rule, however, did not include the inclusion of masses.

In October 1916, Sastri was one of the nineteen members who signed a Memorandum. This was much influenced by Gokhale's will and testament. The Memorandum as already discussed demanded that Indian participation in the Government be real, enlarged councils should be granted, a process of Indianization of the Provincial and Imperial Legislature be stepped up. It suggested abolition of the India Council and wanted it to be replaced by two under-secretaries one of which was to be an Indian. It wanted the Governors of Provinces to be directly appointed by the Parliament. It further demanded an extension of local self-Government as enjoyed by the Dominions for the Provinces to be granted
immediately. They also wanted Indians to be included in the army.

As Sastri said the keynote of the memorandum/“India does not claim any reward for her loyalty, but has the right to expect the want of confidence on the part of the Government, to which she ascribes her present state, should now be a thing of the past, and that she should no longer occupy a position of subordination, but one of comradeship.”

He opposed the proposal of the Lionel Curtis, Editor of the English Quarterly Round Table in U.K., for Constitution of Imperial Parliament or Federation as it would amount to India being ruled by Great Britain and the Dominion. He rebutted the argument that Indians were unfit to rule.

He anticipated the Congress-League scheme and published a pamphlet “Congress-League scheme—an exposition. The fundamental of the scheme was as follows:

1) The voice of the duly elected representative of the people should prevail and in Indian Councils elected members should be in the majority.
2) The members should have freedom of legislation subject to certain exclusions such as prerogative of the Governor General.

3) Legislatures should have full control over finance.

4) Legislatures should have control over the Executive.

5) Elections should be direct and on a wide franchise.

6) Judiciary should be separated from the executive.

He condemned the wide powers enjoyed by the authorities which according to him were "indefensible on the grounds of justice".

He said that the Congress-League scheme provided ample guarantee for the maintenance of British sovereignty in India. Navy and foreign relations were still in their hand. He refuted the argument that with the transfer of power, anarchy would prevail. He said "there is no reason why the grant of internal autonomy should wait on the process of their military equipment being established. He totally disapproved of communal electorate."
Sastri supported the agitation for Besant's release, but he did not consider it proper to boycott the legislature or follow the Congress call of passive resistance. The Congress had passed this Resolution in its August 14, 1917 session at Madras. He defined his position saying "Roughly passive resistance was of two kinds - that which was almost forced upon by Government's prohibition of meetings, being denial of elementary rights and that which the people invented for as a special form of protest, against the wrong or obtaining political concession". He was for the former.

Since/force of nationalism was on the upsurge, the Government announced its Declaration that responsible Government would be granted in stages. The British were to be the judges of time and progress of each advance. Utilising this opportunity, Sastri called on Montague to release Annie Besant, otherwise, serious repercussions would follow. She was released on September 16, 1917 and the proposal for Passive Resistance was dropped.

Soon after, the Jallianwala Bagh Massacres took place. Here was a new method of struggle. The nationalists could now act in place of giving verbal expressions to their disappointment. The Congress was now forced to become
an organisation for political action. It relied on the support of the poor masses. The Government repressed the mass agitation and Gandhi called for a hartal on 6, April 1919.

The position of Sastri and the Liberals was made difficult. He said "We did our best to minimise the evil, we warned them at the time that the agitation which would follow would be unparalleled". He blamed the obstinacy of the Government for the turn of events.

For a time it looked as though the Liberals and the Home Rulers would work together. They were against the repressive character of the British regime. With the arrival of Montague it was hoped that things would change.

Sastri in the meanwhile, was trying to cement good relations between the Hindus and Muslim. He played on Montague's sympathies for Indian aspirations and appealed to the good sense of the Congress requesting them to be prepared to sacrifice unimportant clauses of the Congress-League scheme.

Montague was impressed with Sastri's excellent command over English. He had several interviews with Montague
at which Sastri favoured the Congress-League scheme but finally said he would accept any scheme which had (1) progress and a guarantee for it. (2) Steps taken must be substantial with no humiliating stipulation of a Conference at Delhi of non-officials. He suggested that this should be a Conference of the Moderates as things were going awry between the Extremists and the Moderates. He further wanted a deputation to be sent to England.

When a suggestion was made by Montague to include Transferred and Reserved subjects, he was opposed to the Division. Montagu's proposals did not meet with Sastri's views. Sastri's decided to support the Congress-League scheme and did not give his consent to Montague. He said "I am the one of those who have been held up to the odium of/public as a small knot of politicians pledged to support and recommend to the country any reforms, however slight, that the Secretary of State may offer. I am not so pledged. I do not know of any one so pledged. The Viceroy and the Secretary of State did me honour to invite me to some conversation on the proposals before them. I tried as far as I could to interpret to them the best mind of India. But they told me only parts of the scheme of reforms and to this day I have no knowledge of it in its entirety and am free, like any fellow citizen of mine, to judge it".
He repeated his support to the Congress-League scheme and his preference for a non-responsible executive of Congress-League scheme as against Responsible Executive promised by Montagu Declaration. Sastri hesitated in taking lead where new grounds were to be broken. This hesitation may also be due to the consciousness of lacking the support of a powerful mass based party. He admitted that the Liberals had never made the political education of the masses it's duty. He considered the fact that Montague's proposals had not yet received approval from the British War Cabinet. There was still time for improvement. He urged for slight changes. But none was forthcoming. When the Montford Report was published, Sastri was disappointed. Yet, he decided to accept and seek improvement. He compared the extent Montagu's proposal had satisfied the aspiration of the Congress-League scheme. The claim to elective majority in the legislature was substantially met. However, the demand for subordination of the executive to the Legislature was only partially met in the Provinces and was totally absent in the centre, no financial control had been given. The only relieving feature was that it was the first step towards self-Government. The Congress called for a special session in August 1918 to discuss the Montford Reports. Sastri alone attended it whilst Wacha, Surendranath Banerjee, A.C. Majumdar, R.N.Mudholkar, N.M.Joshi, Tej Bahadur Sapru and Chintamani did not as they were against the Congress approach. Sastri preferred to adjust. But this did not mean he was against the Liberal approach.
In order to project the moderate views of his group, especially in the wake of the hostile nationalist press, he started the Servant of India journal on February, 19, 1918, on the 3rd death anniversary of Gokhale. He also felt the need of a political liberal organisation. So he was one of the founder members of the National Liberal Federation of India. This was established in Bombay on 1st November, 1918. His other colleagues were Dinshaw Wacha, Surendranath Banerjea, Bhupendranath Basu, Ambika Charan Majumdar.

The National Liberal Federation accepted the Montford Reform and hoped to improve it. They wanted the Government of India to be liberalised and hoped to secure fiscal freedom. The Federation recommended a new principle introduced by Sastri. An individual of a community which was given separate communal representation through communal electorate should be free to enroll himself in general electorates if he wished. Nobody should be compelled to vote on a communal franchise. The Federation decided to send a deputation to England on 28, April, 1919. Sastri was included in this group to plead for more reforms.

Sastri waited on Montague on July 15, 1919. He spoke and supported the Reform Bill and gave evidence before
the Joint Select Committee, August 15, 1919. He strongly pleaded the cause for fiscal autonomy. His efforts had not much immediate effect.

Sastri left London on November 28, 1919 for India. The Montague Bill was passed in the last week of December, 1919. This was followed by an amnesty for political prisoners. He attended the Congress session in Bombay for one day and left for Calcutta to attend the National Liberal Federation Meeting.

He helped to organise the National Liberal Federation as already discussed in the previous chapter and reiterated the stand that the "Liberal Party will work for the success of constitutional reforms by following policy of cooperation and promoting understanding among different communities in the country.

At this juncture of the History of the National Movement, the Moderates had to face stark reality. Their philosophy had been discredited. They had failed to take the opportunity to modulate their stand. Sastri foresaw this and tried to make amends. He preferred to search for adjustment rather than directly involving himself in any clash. In this resolution his liberalism was tempered with steel.
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Dr C P Ramaswami Aiyar
Born Deepavali Day
13th November 1879 - 26th September 1966.

Between 1916 and 1921, committees and other meetings of the Home Rule League and the Indian National Congress were held in "the grove" under the leadership of Dr Annie Besant. Dr C P was Secretary of the Home Rule League and later Secretary along with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru of the Indian National Congress.

Under this tree, Dr C P edited the "New India" when Dr Besant was interned inDOTACAMON by the Madras Government during the 1 World War 1914-1919.

This commemoration tablet was unveiled by The Hon'ble Shri M Hidayatullah, Vice-President of India on 9th November 1980.

The Hon'ble Thiru M G Ramachandran, Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Presided.