CHAPTER II

THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND THE MADRAS PRESIDENCY

The First World War of 1914-1918 worked as a catalyst to the Indian National Movement. While it accelerated the pace of the National Movement, there swelled a wave of loyal sentiment all over India. In 1914 the Congress at Madras resolved to convey to His Majesty the King Emperor and the people of England its profound devotion to the throne, its unswerving allegiance to the British and its firm resolve to stand by the Empire at all hazards and at all costs\(^1\).

India’s participation in the War was no nominal affair, not a mere gesture, She sent thousands of her sons and supplied millions of rupees to help England in fighting her enemies. The Indian political parties gave their full co-operation. The heroic deeds of gallantry performed by Indian soldiers on the frosty and frozen battle fields of Flanders as well as under the blazing sun of the Mesopotamian deserts received universal acclamation\(^2\). The people of India were willing to serve the Government in every possible way. There was an outburst of spontaneous loyalty all over the country. Nearly 900000 Indians were recruited to serve in the army and the Government of India gave an outright donation of 100 million dollars to Britain. The British openly declared that they were fighting the Germans to make the world safe for democracy\(^3\). The Indian

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2 Keswani, K.B., op.cit., p.305.
3 Tulsivatsal, op.cit., p.170.
leaders like B.G. Tilak and Mrs. Annie Besant took advantage of the situation and decided to infuse a new life into the National Movement in the country⁴.

**Indian War Loan**

As the War imposed a heavy strain on the finances of the Imperial Government, India was also made to share the burden. When the British Government announced its policy of raising a war loan, the Indian public was taken by surprise. They also realized that such a loan would have certain injurious effects on the Indian Finance⁵. There was a general indignation as to whether the whole amount raised as war loan would be given to His Majesty's Government to assist in the prosecution of the war. It was also not clear whether the money was to be given as a loan or as a gift⁶. The Indian Press was also pessimistic about the success of the loan, as the people had not at their disposal enough money to give⁷. No doubt England desired Indian help in its war effort. In the same way India was in need of English help for prosperity in peace as well as for safety in War⁸. It is significant to note that the Madras Presidency’s contribution to the success of the Allies in the War was quite commendable.

The First World War broke out in Europe on 4⁴th August 1914. Its causes lay deeper and more remote than the immediate cause, the assassination of heir-apparent to the Austrian throne. This War had important bearing to the events in India and its constitutional development. The British Government declared that

⁵ The Hindu, 19th January, 1917, Madras, MNNR, p.58.
⁶ New India, 19th January, 1917, Madras MNNR, p.60.
⁷ The Manorama, 23rd January, 1917, Madras, MNNR, p.95.
⁸ Mrs. Annie Besant, Congress Speeches, Madras, 1917, p.50.
it was fighting against Germany and her Allies to make the world safe for democracy. Woodrow Wilson, the then President of the United States of America, also echoed the same thing later on. Many Moderate leaders of the Indian National Congress that when British was fighting that when British was fighting for saving democracy then naturally she could not deny the same to India which her due.

Lord Hardinge was the Governor General of India during the First World War. He had won the sympathy of the Indian people by his tactful handling of the situation. Therefore, princes of Indian states and the people of this country extended all help to the British Government. The President of the Indian National Congress Session of 1914 declared that India and Britain were fighting a devastating war side by side for honour, liberty and justice. Lord Pentland, the then Governor of Madras, attended the open Session of the Congress when the resolution of unswerving allegiance to Britain was passed. Supporting the resolution, Banerjee emphasized that the Congress would not trade in the loyalty to England. Gandhiji who had done much for alleviating the sufferings of the Indian in South Africa was in London when the war broke out. He extended his full sympathy and support to the British Government in the crisis. He rejected the opposite argument that it was the duty of the slave seeking to be free to make the masters need his opportunity. He remarked if we could improve our status through the help and cooperation the British. It was also our duty to win their help by standing them in their hour of need. Gandhiji and Swrendanath Banerjee went from one place to another to urge the countrymen to extend all help to the British in their hour of need and give maximum recruitment to the army. The keynote of the speeches surendranath banerjee was that Self-Government which
was the goal of our political aspirations connoted Self-defence and that, if we sought the privileges of Imperial citizenship, we must bear its burdens and responsibilities and the foremost among them was to fight for the defence of the empire. Similar by the Indian princes lent their support to the British Government and placed their resources at its disposal.

The Maharajas of Bikaner, Jothpur, Kishengarh and Patiala went into the field at the head of their state forces. Besides that, India sent over a million and a quarter men including those who served in the labour corps to the different theatres of War and subscribed 30,000,000 American dollar annually to the British Government besides handsome donation to Red Cross Society and subscriptions to War Loans amounting 75,000,000 American dollar.

Statesmen, political leaders of all parties and the people of England were highly impressed by India significant contributions in all field. They noted with great satisfaction that Indian people had espoused their cause, Asquith, the then Prime Minister of England observed that we welcome with appreciation and affection the proffered aid of Indian and in an Empire which knows no distinction of race or class. We all alike are subjects of the king-Emperor and are joint and equal custodians of our common interests and fortunes. Montague spoke of the common devotion of great Britain and India to the ideal of freedom.

The War had created a feeling of Self-respect in India. Sir Satyendra Sinha expressed his sentiments as “a feeling of profound pride that she has not fallen behind other portions of the British Empire but has stood shoulder to shoulder with them in the hour of their sorest trial. Indians, were therefore, to be given equal status with other Dominion countries in international conferences. The
Supreme Legislative Council passed a Resolution in 1915, demanding that India should be represented at the Imperial conference along with other countries. The demand was conceded and India was represented in the Imperial War Cabinet and Conferences in 1917-18. The representative of India signed the Paris Peace Agreement in her own name and India became the original member of the League of Nations like the Dominions.

The War had generated a greater demand for Self-government in India because it had created an awakening in India never witnessed before. First of all, the assurances of Mr. Asquith (British Prime Minister) that in future Indian questions would be viewed from a different angle of vision and the declaration later on of Mr. Lloyd George (British Prime Minister) that the principle of self-determination would be applied “in tropical countries also” raised new hopes and expectations amongst the Indians. They thought that they were fighting against despotism to preserve democracy and after the war in lieu of the services rendered to the British Empire, they would be given Dominion Status. The high-sounding words of President Wilson of the U.S.A. that after the war right of self-determination would be granted to small nations and nationalities had further heightened the spirit of freedom. To quote Principal Shri Ram Sharma, “The affirmation of moral values in the war and the emergence of the doctrine of self-determination, deeply influenced Indian public opinion. If the war was being fought to make the world safe for democracy, it was hoped that it would at last put India on the road of Self-government”. The elaborate war preparations had telling effect even in the remotest village from Delhi. Extortion of money for war fund resulted in financial bankruptcy of our country and political awakening in the masses. The Indian soldiers and officers who fought on foreign soil
witnessed for themselves the tremendous differences between the status of a slave and free citizen. They came back to their motherland at the end of war with mutilated bodies and injured feelings. Thus the country which had received from war wooden legs (Mutilated soldiers), orphans, widows and bankruptcy naturally demanded substantial reward in the form of ‘Dominion Status’. The British Government puffed up with their victory gave a cold shoulder to national aspirations which eventually led to increased activities of the revolutionaries and the Home Rule Movement of Annie Besant and Tilak.

Lokmanya Balgangadhar Tilak had been released a little after the mid-night of June 16, 1914 after six years internment (imprisonment) at Mandalay. Britain had declared war against Germany on August 4, 1914. It is significant that Tilak’s first reaction to the war betrayed no bargaining spirit. he chivalrously declared in a statement on August 27, 1914: “At such a crisis the duty of every Indian, be he great or small, rich or poor, is to support and assist His Majesty’s Government to the best of his ability. “He went further and added: “I have like other political workers my own differences with the Government as regards certain measures and, to certain extent, even the system of internal administration. But it is absurd on that account to sepak of my attitude as in any way hostile to His Majesty’s Government. I may state once and for all that we are trying in India as the Irish Home Rulers have been doing in Ireland for a reform of the system of administration and not for the overthrow of the Government. I have no hesitation in saying that the acts of violence which have been committed in different parts of India are not only repugnant to me, but have, in my opinion, only unfortunately retarded, to a great extent, the pace of
our political progress. Whether looked at from an individual or a public point of view they deserve to be equally condemned⁹.

This initial reaction of Lokmanya Tilak soon changed. Tilak soon foresaw that the British Government only wanted its own maximum help during the war crisis but was not ready to give anything to the Indians. Therefore, Tilak demanded from the British Government that it must promise the self-government to the Indians in lieu of the help that India has rendered to the British Empire. On 20ᵗʰ February, 1917, Tilak wrote in Kesari that even before the enactment of Defence of India Force Bill our leaders like Mahatma Gandhi were encouraging the people to get themselves recruited in the army and for that purpose they were holding public meetings. The Viceroy should have no doubt on this point that the people would not listen to his appeal for the recruitment. The Indians still doubted whether the British Government would begin an era of liberal and just policy or even in such a crisis it would continue its policy of discrimination between the black and white. Whatever be the policy of the Government, we had decided our policy and action and our leaders like Mahatma Gandhi were giving the recruitment to the Government without any condition.

Tilak further wrote that it had to be seen whether the Government accepted the various appeals made by the Indian leaders or not. What was the meaning of opening the recruitment of the Indians for the army? Its meaning was clear that the Government could not do well without the help of the Indians. Therefore, the facility granted to the Indians was not a liberal measure of the British Government, rather it was an utmost necessity of the British Government. He

⁹ N.C. Jog, Lokmanya Balgangadhar Tilak.
further wrote, “We want to ask the Government whether it is ready to do justice actually with India or it merely wants to make us soldiers for the fulfillment of its own ends. How far we listen to the call of Government for recruitment depends on the answer of the British Government to our query?”.

The Home Rule League had been established on April 28, 1916 at Belgaum with the object of “attaining self-government within the British Empire by all constitutional means and to educate and organize public opinion in the country towards the attainment of the same”. Tilak made vigorous propaganda for the attainment of that goal. Everywhere he was received enthusiastically and thousands of people attended the League meetings. The British Government took serious notice of the utterances of Tilak. The Government was in no mood to tolerate mass agitation in the midst of the war. On the basis of Tilak’s speeches at Belgaum and Ahmedabad, the District Magistrate of Poona served a notice to Tilak on July 22, 1916 asking him to show cause why he should not be ordered to execute a bond for a sum of Rs.20,000 with two sureties in a sum of Rs.10,000 for his good behavior for a period of one year. On next day fell the sixtieth birthday of Tilak and thousands of his admirers decided to celebrate it with the presentation of an address and a purse of Rs. One lakh. Tilak and his admirers did not worry at all about the notice of the District Magistrate and the function was held with great enthusiasm. On the occasion Tilak said, “The national task that faces us today is so great and so urgent that you must work together with zeal and courage greater than I might have been able to show. It is a task that cannot be put off. Our motherland tells every one of us to be up and doing. I do not think that her sons will disregard this call. God alone can help us in our efforts and if not by us, it is certain that the fruit will be gathered by the
next generation”. Though the District Magistrate convicted Tilak but the Bombay High Court let him off. The Bombay High Court quashed the interpretation of sedition which had hounded Tilak since his convection in 1897. In exonerating Tilak, Justice Lallubhai Shah of Bombay High Court observed that “reading his speeches as a whole it appeared that his object was only to make a demand for Indians getting Home Rule, educating public opinion in support of the demand and enlisting membership of the Home Rule League. Tilak had not advocated any unconstitutional or unlawful methods in pursuing his objective”. This judgment was of paramount importance to the cause of free speech. Tilak’s acquittal gave a fillip to the Home Rule Movement. Another effect of the war was that the Muslims of India came nearest to the Congress as Sultan of Turkey, Caliph of the entire Muslim world, was lighting against the British. Therefore, that was a Lucknow Pact between the Congress and the Muslim League in 1916 and both of them presented their joint demand to the British Government.

Revolutionaries and the First Great War

Whereas the Moderates were extending all help to the British Government and the Extremists were ready to give help to the British on the condition of conferring Self-Government or Home Rule upon the Indians, the Revolutionaries foresaw in the War a golden opportunity to free the country completely from the bondage. Therefore, Rash Behari Bose, who had thrown bomb upon Lord Hardinge in 1911, organized a great Revolutionary Movement in collusion with the Gadar Party which had been founded by Lala Hardayal in the U.S.A. While the British Government was preoccupied and vexed with the German aggression
in Europe, the revolutionaries decided to capitalize the occasion in their own interest. They believed in this principle that England’s difficulty was their best opportunity. A few hundred Indian revolutionaries, who were ready to face death for the liberation of their country, came to India to help Rash Behari Bose. 

Rash behari Bose, Bagi Kartar Singh (Kartar Singh Saraba), Sachindra Sanyal and Ganesh Pingale prepared a master plan to stage a countrywide revolution on February 21, 1915, but the Punjab Police detected the scheme through one traitor, namely Kripal Singh. His treachery brought to naught the entire scheme of the revolution. The police at several places arrested many revolutionaries, famous amongst whom were Bagi Kartar Singh, Vishnu Ganesh Pingale, Jagat Singh, Bhai Paramanad, Man Singh and Udham Singh. However, Rash Behari Bose escaped. Twenty-four persons including Kartar Singh, Bhai Paramanand, Man Singh and Udham Singh were awarded death sentence, while many others were transported for life. This case was termed by the Government as Lahore Conspiracy Case of 1915 because the trial of the revolutionaries, who were caught, took place at Lahore. The death sentence of Bhai Parmanand later on was commuted to life sentence. The Chief Justice was also inclined to commute the death sentence of Bagi Kartar Singh to life imprisonment who was handsome youth and very learned one but he declined the offer. Bagi Kartar Singh (Saraba) said, “I prefer gallows to life sentence”. “I wish I were born again to unfetter my Motherland. I shall be glad to be hanged every time I am reborn till my country achieves independence.
Part played by Madras in the War

At the outbreak of the War in 1914, a new situation developed in the Madras Presidency. When Great Britain dragged India to the arena of war, the Congress Party passed a Resolution in its Madras Session of 1914 extending full co-operation to Great Britain in the War efforts. Following this the people of the Madras Presidency girded up their loins to fight shoulder to shoulder with the people of other parts of the Empire\(^\text{10}\). The War forced Great Britain to make increased demands on India for men and money, and many politicians of Madras realized that the pressures of war were a chance to confront London with their own demand for political reforms\(^\text{11}\).

The Madras War Fund

On 11\(^{\text{th}}\) August 1914, the Madras War Fund was instituted at the instance of Lord Pepend, the Governor of Madras\(^\text{12}\). Many Chiefs and notables of the Madras Presidency placed their resources at the disposal of His Majesty\(^\text{13}\). Nearly eighty lakhs of rupees were collected as War Fund. Out of this fund 338 trained horses were purchased in India and safely sent to Southampton. Thirty motor cyclists were sent to the War front as despatch riders. Further hospital ship “Madras” was fully equipped and maintained. This ship made her maiden voyage on 17\(^{\text{th}}\) November 1914\(^\text{14}\).


\(^{12}\) Report on the Administration of Madras, 1914-1915, p.1

\(^{13}\) Ibid., p.2.

Since the outbreak of the War, voluntary subscriptions were solicited for various relief funds. The two original funds were the Imperial Relief Fund and the Madras War Fund. The collections under the Imperial Relief Fund during the year 1915-1916 amounted to Rs.1,24,880/- and of this amount 75% was duly remitted to the Central Committee for local relief operations. The Prince of Arcot attended the War Conference at Delhi in accordance with His Excellency the Governor’s wishes. As he did not claim the travelling charges, the Government of India credited his cost of travel amounting to Rs.651-8-0 to the Madras War Fund.

Until 30th June 1915 the subscriptions to the Madras War Fund totaled Rs.27 lakhs, exclusive of Rs.69,000/- the monthly income of the hospital ship. The total amount raised by the various branches of the Madras War Fund from the beginning of the War to the end of March 1917 was nearly 55 lakhs of rupees.

Other Funds

Apart from the Madras War Fund and Imperial Relief Fund there were several other kinds of fund organized by the “Madras Mail”. The following amounts were collected by the Madras Mail under various heads: the Belgian Relief Fund Rs.1,04,944, Serbian Relief Fund Rs.21,302, Madras Aeroplane Fund Rs.22,652, Blinded Soliders and Sailors Fund Rs.13,079/- and Belgian Children’s Fund Rs.41,331/-. In August 1915 the South Indian Planters War

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15 Ibid., p.ii.
16 G.O.No.502, 4th October, 1918, Public Department.
19 Ibid., p.ii.
Fund was started with the object of assisting planters and members of the westcoast towns who were disabled by the War or the families of those who were killed. This Fund was managed in London and considerable collections were made. In February 1916 another hospital ship was equipped and staffed from the funds at a cost of Rs.65,000 approximately, and from time to time grants of money were made for the benefit of troops and hospitals at the war front\(^{20}\).

The War Fund was maintained through voluntary sub subscriptions which upto 31\(^{st}\) March 1916 amounted to Rs.39,27,472. To supplement the work of the fund a “Ladies’ Depot” was formed by Her Excellency Lady Pent land provided comforts of all kind for the troops in the battle field. This Depot had 73 local centres throughout the Madras Presidency. These centers maintained a continuous supply of warm clothing and other comforts through the St. John Ambulance Association and other agencies\(^{21}\). Since the 1\(^{st}\) of June 1918, the Madras War Fund continued its activities in various directions. It assumed new responsibility and the demands on its resources and on the activities of the Ladies Depot centres throughout the Madras Presidency remained considerable upto the end of June 1919. After the cessation of hostilities, the Fund supplied Red Cross comforts to the troops in Mesopotamia and to all the military stations hospitals and convalescent depots in the Presidency. The total sum contributed towards the Fund from the beginning of the War upto 31\(^{st}\) March 1919 was Rs.75.63 lakhs\(^{22}\).

The War Pamphlets and War Films

In order to make known to the people of the Madras Presidency the just cause for which the English were fighting, the Government of India decided to distribute copies of popular pamphlets which had been compiled for the reading public in the United Kingdom and elsewhere. Accordingly 110 copies of the pamphlets under the title “Why we are at War? Great Britain’s Case” and 500 copies of each of the pamphlets entitled ‘Great Britain’ and ‘European Crisis’ were forwarded to the Madras Government for being distributed, at the discretion of the local Government, to such persons as commissioners, collectors, Judges, Sub-Divisional Officers, Sub-Judges, Munsifs etc. and such institutions like libraries, Colleges, Schools and so on in the Madras Presidency.  

The Officers of the civil judicial departments to whom copies of the pamphlets were supplied were requested to place them in the bar libraries of their courts. Collectors were required to circulate the copies of the pamphlets to sub-Divisional Officers, Tahsildars, Sub-Magistrates, District and Taluk Board members and other people of education and influence. The Director of Public Instruction was instructed to distribute the copies of the pamphlets to educational institutions.

The Government of Madras wanted the leading newspapers to publish the photographs illustrative of the activities of the Indian troops at the war front. Hence the Indian Review, a monthly magazine was chosen as a suitable

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23 G.O.No.789, 17th April, 1915, Police Department.
24 Ibid.,
propaganda machinery\textsuperscript{25}. The indomitable bravery displayed by the Indian troops and the enthusiastic support of the people of the Madras Presidency were duly recognized by the British statesmen and the British press\textsuperscript{26}.

**Cinematograph Films of War**

As the War in progress the Secretary of State invited the attention of the Madras Government to the action taken at Home to disseminate information regarding the War by the exhibition of Cinematograph Films. In particular, mention was made of a film entitled ‘Britain Prepared’ which was being shown at the Empire Theatre, London. It was a picture illustrating the training of the new recruits in the army, making of munitions and the navy in the war time. It was a film produced with the permission of the war office\textsuperscript{27}. The first exhibition of this film was inaugurated by an address from the Governor of Madras-Balfour. Apparently it was intended to be a model for the production of other films of a like character\textsuperscript{28}.

At last the film ‘Britain Prepared’ was officially shown on the 27\textsuperscript{th}, 28\textsuperscript{th} and 29\textsuperscript{th} November, 1916 and the film “Battle of Somme” on 4\textsuperscript{th}, 5\textsuperscript{th}, 6\textsuperscript{th}, 7\textsuperscript{th} and 8\textsuperscript{th} December, 1916 at 6 P.M.\textsuperscript{29} Both the films pictured the part played by the Indian troops in general and the Madras troops in particular. These films created among the people of Madras a keen interest in the War.

\textsuperscript{25} G.O.No.1640, 13\textsuperscript{th} July, 1915, Judicial Department.
\textsuperscript{26} G.O. No.22, 4\textsuperscript{th} February, 1915, Legislative Department.
\textsuperscript{27} G.O.No.1215, 10\textsuperscript{th} May, 1916, Judicial Department.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{29} G.O.No.1833, 22\textsuperscript{nd} November, 1916, Public Department.
Effect of War on the Madras Presidency

The effect of the First World War on the Madras Presidency was perhaps more potent. It could be seen chiefly in the figures for the sea-borne trade. The foreign imports from August 1914 to March 1915 were 37% less than those of the previous year, while the exports declined to 34%. The industrial development also received a setback. The large weaving and spinning factories employed fewer hands and the expansion of the rice-hulking, cotton ginning and pumping industries was hampered by the difficulty in recovering outstandings. Germany discontinued the purchase of commercial products from Madras. Agriculture was also affected. Cultivation of cotton, coconut and groundnut also declined. All these led to a decrease in the state’s revenue. At such a time the available public resources were diverted for unproductive expenditure.

Articles like kerosene, oil, matches and sugar in the Madras Presidency became dearer than they were before the War. However there was slight increase in the price of salt. There were complaints about the high price of yarn, the restriction of credit and the difficulty of disposing of stocks, and more especially of the clothes that were generally sent to Burma and Singapore.

In this dark hour of trial, tribulation and suffering, the British drew their sword to vindicate their national honour, the cause of truth, righteousness, international morality and the Freedom of the oppressed nationalities. In that long, bitter and arduous struggle with an unholy alliance of primitive barbarism, the Indian heroes shed their blood on European soil and it cemented the ties.

between Great Britain and India. It was a matter of great pride for the people of Madras to have had their share in that epic struggle\textsuperscript{33}. It was also very gratifying that Madras sent a ship called “Christened” which battled waves and braved the perils of the sea and the enemy’s mines, with a Brother Councilor of the people of Madras, to take her share in the defence of the Empire\textsuperscript{34}. Thus the Madras Presidency stood by the Island Kingdom in sunshine and in storm without wavering in its loyalty to the British\textsuperscript{35}.

\textsuperscript{33} G.O.No.22, 4\textsuperscript{th} February, 1915 Legislative Department.
\textsuperscript{34} G.O.No.295, 14\textsuperscript{th} July, 1917, Public Department.
\textsuperscript{35} G.O. No.22, 4\textsuperscript{th} February, 191, legislative Department.