CHAPTER II

BUDDING OF NATIONALISM:
EARLY POLITICAL ACTIVITIES IN MADRAS CITY

The City of Madras witnessed early political activities towards the close of 19th century when Congress Party played a vital role in the political awakening of national feelings.

Political organizations were at work in the Madras City even before the birth of the Indian National Congress. The initiative was taken by certain non-Brahmin merchants. The proselytizing activities of the Christian Missionaries aided by government officials in the mid-nineteenth century aroused the religious indignation of the non-Brahmin Hindu merchants. To provide an alternative to the educational institutions of the missionaries, they founded Pachaiyappa's College in Madras in 1842. G. Lakshminarasu Chetti (1806-68), a Telugu non-Brahmin merchant of Madras, also launched the newspaper namely, 'The Crescent' to defend the rights and privileges of the Hindu community. These merchants disliked the existing powers of the East India Company and the excessive taxation

1 Note: The Tamil population was distinctly divided into two groups on the basis of the castes, namely Brahmins and non-Brahmins. The depressed classes (Harijans) who constituted one-fifth of the population were considered totally outside the caste structure.

system. They found an opportunity to raise their voice when the Parliamentary Inquiry into the affairs of the East India Company was ordered, prior to the renewal of its Charter in 1853. They formed the Madras Native Association in February 1852, as a branch of British India Association, in order to appear before the Parliamentary Inquiry as well as to ventilate their grievances. After six months it became an independent body. A dominant figure in that body was G. Lakshminarasu Chetti. However after his death in 1868, it became moribund. But its mode and techniques of political agitation conducted through petitions and peaceful meetings directed at the British Parliament was followed by subsequent Indian political organizations. As an opponent of the Madras Native Association, the Madras Hindu Debating Society was founded in 1852 by M. Venkatayalu Naidu, another non-Brahmin merchant. Following his death this society had also become defunct in the mid 1860s. Then came the Triplicane Literary Society. Established in 1868 by a Muslim named Ibrahim Ali and later reformed by some Hindu graduates around Triplicane, it expressed the native opinion and discussed important questions of the day. Despite that, public opinion in the Madras Presidency was stagnant, because there was no recognized forum to

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4 Ram Gopal, How India Struggled for Freedom, p.30.
voice the feelings and grievances of the people. The members of the Triplicane Literary Society realized the need for the native newspapers when the Anglo-Indian newspapers in Madras criticized the appointment of T. Muthuswami Iyer, a Brahmin lawyer as the first South Indian Judge of the Madras High Court. So, in order to represent the opinion of the people, the members of the Triplicane Literary Society started “The Hindu”, an English newspaper in Madras in 1878. G. Subramania Iyer, one of its founders also founded Swadesamitran, a Tamil newspaper in 1882. With the circulation of these newspapers, political activities in the Madras Presidency were restored.

The Madras Association was also revived in 1882 under the Presidentship of V. Bashyam Iyengar. But the association came to an abrupt end due to the highhandedness of Sir Mount Stuart Grand Duff, the then Governor of Madras. His administration was known for a series of blunders, sensations and scandals. The two notorious scandals in his tenure which shocked the Madras Presidency were the Chingleput ryots case and the Salem riots. Farmers of Chingleput district petitioned to the Governor of Madras about the highhandedness adopted by the tahsildar of Chingleput district in collecting land tax with vengeance on the

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7 Rangaswami Parthasarathy, A Hundred years of the Hindu: An Epic Story of Indian Nationalism (Madras, 1978), p.1
10 Rangaswami Parthasarathy, A hundred years of the Hindu, p.2.
farmers who had levelled charges against the tahsildar. A village munsiff who presented the petition was dismissed from service and was sent to jail on charges of giving false evidence\textsuperscript{11}. Many such cases of high handedness against the landholders and ryots by the government officials were reported. The other incident of such nature was the Salem riots, in which an ordinary communal problem was exaggerated and treated as a seditious revolt by the government. Salem's foremost advocate C. Vijayaraghavachari was arrested, tried and sentenced to ten years rigorous imprisonment. Soon 'The Hindu' carried on a vigorous campaign for the release of the persons falsely implicated in the case. Finally, due to the intervention of Lord Ripon, the then Viceroy, the prisoners were acquitted by the High Court of Madras\textsuperscript{12}. These events brought the people of Tamil Nadu together on the same platform.

\textit{It was at this time the announcement regarding the holding of an International Exhibition in Calcutta in December 1883 was received. It was expected that important people from all over India would visit the exhibition. The Hindu urged the Indian Association\textsuperscript{13} to take full advantage of the situation and advised to organize a grand National Conference in Calcutta by inviting leaders from all over the country, to discuss important national issues. As suggested by}

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., pp.9-11.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., p.12; "The Indian National Congress-2", Indian Express, 1 Dec.1985; R.T. Parthasarathy, Tamilnadu thantha thalaivargal (2\textsuperscript{nd} edn., Chennai, 1985), pp. 5-7.
\textsuperscript{13} Indian Association was founded by Suremdranath Banerjee in Calcutta in 1876.
The Hindu, a conference was held at Calcutta in which more than 100 delegates from all over the country participated. Anand Mohan Bose in his opening speech remarked that it was the first step towards a national parliament.

In Madras, during 1883-84 the leaders staged three large scale political demonstrations. The first demonstration was held on 21st April 1883 to demand an extension of Lord Ripon’s term as Viceroy and the next demonstration was held on 18th May 1883 to celebrate the first anniversary of the issue of Lord Ripon’s famous resolution on local self-government. The third was conducted on 31st January 1884, in honour of Lord Ripon’s visit to Madras. At that time they began canvassing support for the idea of a comprehensive central association which could claim to speak on behalf of the entire presidency. These demonstrations were characterized by unprecedented enthusiasm, unanimity of feeling, careful organization and growing cooperation between metropolitan and mofussil leaders. Thus, the stage was set ready for a national organization.

It must also be remembered that in December 1884 seventeen delegates from all over India who had assembled in Madras for the second annual convention of

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14 R. Sutharaligam, Politics and Nationalist Awakening in South India, p.237.
the Theosophical Society, discussed to start a national association of all India interest.\textsuperscript{16} There is no record of what they did after the meeting was over.

However, the most immediate and acceptable provincial forerunner of the Indian National Congress was the Madras Mahajana Sabha. It was founded in March 1884 by a group of educated men. Prominent among them were G. Subramania Iyer, P. Rangiah Naidu, M. Viraraghavachari, S. Subramania Iyer, R. Balaji Rao, C. Vijayaraghavachari, A. Ananda Charlu and Salem Ramaswami Mudaliar.\textsuperscript{17} It provided a forum for the non-official intelligentsia spread all over the presidency. Here, came the shifting of the political leadership in the Madras Presidency from merchant class to intelligentsia. The First Conference of the Madras Mahajana Sabha was held in Madras in December 1884. Its Chairman P. Rangiah Naidu advised that similar conferences should be held every year to express opinion on important questions, affecting the millions of people in India\textsuperscript{18}.

The Indian Association of Calcutta also held a conference in December 1884.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{16} Note : Annie Besant, How India Struggled for Freedom: The Story of the National Congress told from Official Records (Madras, 1915), p. 1. Thosophical Society was founded at Adyar in Madras in 1882 to encourage the study of religion, philosophy and science and also to form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour [Mammothanksaur, Women in India’s Freedom Struggle (New Delhi, 1985), pp.75-75].


\textsuperscript{18} G.O. No.1433, Pub, 10 July 1886.

However, all these moves were independent of each other. Such developments confirmed the fact that Indian public opinion was seeking an outlet through an All-India organization to provide a common platform for giving expression to the aspirations of the intelligentsia and channelizing action for implementation.

However, the occasion of Lord Ripon's departure from India provided an opportunity for the Indians to demonstrate their united might. For almost two months, the Indian press waged a relentless war to stir up popular enthusiasm for the farewell demonstration. In November 1884, a large public meeting was held in Madras which was attended by all sections of Indian people. In the meeting it was decided to present an address by a deputation to Lord Ripon in Bombay. Similar meetings were held in other mofussil towns in Tamil Province as well as in other parts of India. It was during the farewell meeting in Bombay, the members of the Madras deputation had a talk with the delegates from other provinces and decided to have a meeting of representatives from all over India. On 26th December 1884, The Hindu wrote that the simplest way of securing such expression would be to affiliate the number of local associations scattered all over the country with a common mother. It also strongly advocated that the political consciousness generated among the Indian people during the viceroyalty of Lord Ripon should

be nurtured and developed into a powerful expression for voicing forth the grievances of the Indian people.\textsuperscript{22} Perhaps The Hindu was one of the earliest organs of public opinion in the country to urge the formation of a national party.

Signs for the emergence of a national party was visible everywhere. But it was A.O. Hume\textsuperscript{23}, who took the initiative to form an all India association with the leading Indian politicians to bring them together once a year to discuss social matters\textsuperscript{24}. He met the then Viceroy, Lord Dufferin to get permission for the same. Lord Dufferin advised A.O. Hume to form a political organization. The Russian intrusion in Central Asia in 1885, created a threat to British power in India. In case of Russian attack, the cooperation of Indian population to tackle the problem was essential. Hence to ensure the support of the Indians, Lord Dufferin would have advised A.O. Hume to form a political organization.

In March 1885, A.O. Hume issued the first notice conveying the first Indian National Union to meet in Poona from 28\textsuperscript{th} to 31\textsuperscript{st} December 1885\textsuperscript{25}. Invitations to attend the first conference were issued by the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha and the Bombay Presidency Association\textsuperscript{26}. In response to the invitation the Madras

\textsuperscript{22} The Hindu, 26 Dec, 1884.
\textsuperscript{23} A.O. Hume was a retired British civil servant in India and was deeply interested in Indian welfare.
\textsuperscript{24} B.N. Pandey (ed.), The Indian Nationalist Movement, 1885-1947: Select documents (London, 1979)m p. 5.
\textsuperscript{25} EINC, 1885-90, Vol. I, p.36.
\textsuperscript{26} Poona Sarvajanik Sabha (1861) and Bombay Presidency Association (1885) were founded to establish a link between the government and the people of Maharashtra.
Mahajan Sabha held a meeting on 12th December 1885 and nominated eight active members as delegates to represent the metropolis. The mofussil areas nominated thirteen delegates and all of them were either members of the Madras Mahajana Sabha or had attended its provincial conferences. Out of the thirteen delegates representing the mofussil, eight were from Tamil Province. On the same day, The Hindu, a newspaper at Madras announced the birth of the national party for which it has been campaigning so vigorously.

On 28th December 1885, the First Congress Session met in Bombay, instead of Poona due to the outbreak of plague there. Seventy-two delegates participated in the session. Womesh Chandra Bannerjee, a Christian Barrister of Calcutta was elected as its President. In his presidential address he mentioned that almost every district and important towns in the Madras Presidency were represented. The presence of a relatively large delegation from South India in that Congress Session and their active role in the proceedings attracted the attention of the press. The Indian Mirror remarked that benighted Madras was the strongest in point of

number and claimed that in course of time, Madras would outrun not only Bengal, but every other provinces⁴¹. Delegates from Madras took an active part in the proceedings of the First Congress Session. G. Subramania Iyer from Madras was the first to move the first resolution in the First Congress Session⁴². He requested that a Royal Commission should be appointed to inquire into the working of the Indian administration in India as well as in England and the people of India should be adequately represented there on and evidence should be taken both in India and England. The Congress passed resolutions recommending the introduction of representative government in India. It also requested that all appointments excluding the minor ones should be filled in by competitive examinations⁴³.

On their return to Madras the delegates worked to mobilize all classes to bring pressure upon the government for a gradual transfer of power to Indians irrespective of class consideration. However, it was the decision to hold the Third Congress Session in Madras in December 1887, stimulated the political leadership in Madras. It enabled the leaders to make an earnest attempt to broaden the base of the Congress support in the presidency. The Hindu stressed the people of the

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⁴³ Ibid., pp. 1-2.
Madras Presidency to demonstrate to the country that they were not behind any part of India in discharging their political duty. Consultations to mobilize the support of all communal and factional groups in the Madras Presidency began in April 1887 itself. On 1st May 1887, a great public meeting was held in Madras and a reception committee consisting of 120 members with T. Madhava Rao as chairperson was formed. It included leading members of all communities such as Europeans, Muhammadans, native Christians and Hindus. Sub-committees were organized in every town of 10,000 inhabitants and above in the presidency. These sub-committees held public meetings and lectures to educate the masses on the nature and objectives of the Congress. In addition, pamphlets in Tamil (entitled Congress vinavidai Congress Catechism) containing the objectives of the Congress in the question and answer form was issued by M. Viraraghavachari, one of the Congress Secretaries, of which 30,000 copies were circulated not only in Tamil Province, but also in Mandalay, Rangoon, Singapore and the Eastern Islands where Tamil speaking people resided. While talking of the reforms in the Legislative Council, the 'Tamil Congress Catechism' emphasized that the farmers and poor citizens should be given representation in the council.

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34 The Hindu, 21 Dec. 1887.
Pro-Congress organs launched a campaign calling upon the different minority groups to participate and show that there was an all India solidarity despite differences in caste, creed and languages. Attempts were also made to enlist the support of every community including that of non-official Europeans. It was in line with the policy of making the Congress fully representative of every ethnic and religious groups. When meetings were held to elect delegates, most of the prominent leaders of the Indian Christian Community were chosen including Subramaniam, Palney Andy, Jagga Rao Pillai and Paul Peter Pillai. Eventually, eleven Christians from South India attended the Congress Annual Session in December 1887. The forces of organized religions also moved at the back of the Congress. The Sankarachariar of Kumbakonam sent a representative with a large donation and the Pandarasannidhi of Dharmapuram constituted his disciples into the Congress electorate. Badrudin Tyabji, the leading Muslim Barrister of Bombay was unanimously chosen as the President. Almost all the communities were represented in the Congress. Of the total 607 delegates 442 were Hindus, eighty one Muslims, seventy five Christians, four Jains and five Parsis. From the Madras Presidency 362 delegates attended it. Of them fifty one Muslims, eleven Christians and the rest of them were Hindus. Further it was represented not only by the

educated elite, but also the masses. Quite a number of shop keepers, ninety five ryots or cultivators, nineteen artisans, and ninety five teachers participated in its proceedings. Not only Brahmins but also many non-Brahmins actively participated. One of whom, Mookanasari, a working carpenter from Tanjore, representing the industrial class spoke in Tamil. It was the first Tamil voice heard in the Congress. In his speech he emphasized that locally manufactured articles and goods should be encouraged and Indians should manufacture everything needed for India, so that the decaying industries could be recovered. He also stressed the necessity of a regular system of technical education. A.O. Home mentioned in his report on Congress that the most interesting feature of the debate was a long sensible matter of fact spoken in Tamil by Mookanasari of Tanjore. The participation of two Englishmen, John Adam, the Principal of the Pachaiyappa's College, Madras and Eardley Norton, the famous Barrister in the Madras Bar were notable. Lord Connemara, the then Governor of Madras hosted a garden party to the delegates of the Madras Congress Session. Though the first two Congress Sessions were represented by people who were educated in English language, the third one was represented by several speakers who were acquainted only with their own mother tongues. By giving representation to all the communal

40 Ibid, Madras, 1887, p. 17.
groups and by the choice of Badrudin Tyabji, a Muslim to the honoured office of the Presidency, Madras proved that the Congress was not a communal body.

Whenever the Congress Sessions were held in Madras, the leaders gave priority to mass mobilization. For that, pamphlets printed in vernacular languages were circulated, meetings were held and representations were thrown open to people belonging to all creed and communities. Even the farmers who had no idea about politics contributed to the Congress. This was due to the fact that the farmers had many grievances. Agriculture was the main occupation of the people of Tamil Province. The East India Company was not interested in the development of agriculture. Due to Ryotwari Settlement, the conditions of ryots in the Madras Presidency became the worst. According to Ramesh Dutt, “for thirty years the province of Madras became a scene of oppression and agricultural distress unparalleled even in India in that age”\textsuperscript{43}. After the administration was taken over by the British Crown, some attempts were made to improve the irrigation facilities. Dams were constructed across the rivers. Similarly, wells were excavated in various districts of the Madras Presidency\textsuperscript{44}. Yet they failed to satisfy the people because the outlook of the government was still governed by financial

\textsuperscript{43} Tara Chand, History of the Freedom Movement in India, Vol. II, p. 57.

\textsuperscript{44} D. Sadasivan, Growth of Public Opinion in the Madras Presidency, 1858-1909 (Madras, 1974), p.92.
considerations and did not touch the problem or the poverty of the agriculturists. Material condition of the ryots remained unchanged due to the British policy of oppressive taxation. Charleswood wrote in 1864 that the government was entitled in the ways of taxes to half of the produce of cultivated lands. But the settlement officers were in the habit of assessing lands at a higher rate and the ryots were unable to meet the demand. Every time when the settlement officers proceeded to settle revenue, they increased assessment on the ground that the value of the land or of the produce had increased or that of the profits returned were great. Lord Ripon had reduced the tax on salt but during Lord Dufferin’s Viceroyalty the price of salt was raised from one-half to two annas a measure. Besides, the people were much annoyed by the salt officials who entered their houses to search and they had to answer groundless charges in order that those officials might either obtain a portion of fine inflicted or get promotion. The land and salt taxes directly affected the poor and they led a life of starvation. Before the country had time to recover from the shock caused by new forms of taxation it was visited by the terrible famine of 1876-78. This calamity was the result of a drought extending over three successive years and affected a large tract of country containing 2,00,000 square miles and a population of thirty six millions. The area which suffered in the Madras Presidency alone was 74,000 square miles containing a population of sixteen millions. It was estimated that nearly four million people died. The

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*Swadesamitran, 1 Aug. 1885, p.5 (MNR).*
progress of the agricultural classes in the affected districts and of the landless classes in other parts of the presidency received a severe check. In some districts, cultivation was held back for eight years by the loss of the population and by a disgracefully severe policy of land revenue. An enquiry was ordered in 1892 and its report submitted in 1897 suggested for the introduction of cooperative credit societies to help the famine-ridden people. In 1899, the Government of Madras reviewed the report, but declared that it was unnecessary to take any action in it as rural credit in their opinion was not an urgent problem. The heavy burden of land tax accentuated the sufferings due to famines and epidemics. Though the immediate cause of famines was undoubtedly the failure of rains, still as R.C. Dutt believed that the intensity and the frequency of famines were mainly due to the resourceless conditions and chronic poverty of the cultivators caused by the over assessment of the soil on which they depend for their living. The elimination of the poligars and zamindars of Madras had prevented the farmers of necessary leadership to organize. When the Congress began to voice their grievances, they started coming closer to the Congress. Resolutions were passed in the Congress sessions to safeguard the peasants and the same were sent to the British

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46 Srinivasa Raghavajyngar, Memorandum on the Progress of the Madras Presidency during the last forty years of British Administration (Madras, 1892), pp. 23-24.
Government for action. Thus, the bulk of the population who constituted peasants contributed their might to the cause of the Congress.

The Congress was broadened and extended during this period to the educated class also. The rapid expansion of higher education in the second half of the nineteenth century soon produced surplus of graduates. In 1882 Madras itself had a university, five arts colleges, three colleges for professional training as well as a medical and an engineering college, fourteen English high schools and fifty five middle and 154 primary schools. Between 1858 to 1894 Madras University granted arts degrees to 1900 Tamil students, 500 Malayalees, 450 Telugus and 300 Kannadigas. In the year 1890-91, out of the 2,169 graduates who came out of the Madras University, Brahmins constituted 1,461 and they predominated. Among the rest 445 were non-Brahmin Hindus, 168 Indian Christians, twenty Muslims and seventy five Europeans and the Eurasians. In 1901, the literacy rate of Brahmins was 36.55 per cent, non-Brahmin high castes, 24.8 per cent, non-Brahmin low castes, 5.8 per cent and the untouchables was 0.43 per cent. This system of education created a new elite who found themselves out of employment. Further no Indian could enter the high ranks of the civil service without passing the competitive examination held in England within the nineteen years of his age. This

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age limit and conducting examination in England rendered it impossible for the Indians to compete. As a result, all the important offices in the government were filled by Europeans only\(^\text{52}\). For the intelligentsia this was unpalatable. Added to that, Lord Curzon, the then Viceroy’s educational policy of applying check to free enterprise in education and reducing the number of colleges and the government expenditure on University education created a stir among them\(^\text{53}\). It was therefore these intelligentsia who took the lead in organizing an anti-colonial movement in Tamil Province in the 1880s in which the Brahmns predominated.

The Press rendered its major share in criticizing government actions as well as enlightening the masses. The Hindu and Swadesamitran proved to be of great value in spreading the new idea of nationalism and representative government among the people. They also projected the defects and shortcomings of British rule. The vernacular papers representing various languages, started during the later half of the nineteenth century in the Madras Presidency, played a vital role in mobilizing the masses towards the Congress.

\(^{52}\) Unnittanta Chintamanii, 13 Sep. 1894, p.33 (MNR).

\(^{53}\) Constitution of University Senate, 1904

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Source: B.B. Misra, The Indian Middle Classes: Their Growth in Modern Times (rpt., Delhi, 1978), pp. 286-87
The extension of the Legislative Council with Indian members due to the effort of the Congress encouraged some people to join the Congress. In 1895, the Government of Madras appointed four representatives of the Congress as members in the Madras Legislative Council\textsuperscript{54}. Though this was more an ornamental body to the state and its members were more or less non-intention without any right or privileges, the membership in Legislative Council was considered a prestige issue\textsuperscript{55}. This perhaps was responsible for the financial support received by the Congress, especially from the chiefs and Zamindars.

The Congress created linkages through its membership with most of the important local land lords, merchants, peasants and political leaders. Door to door canvassing for Congress funds was much more productive in Madras than in other provinces. Tamil Congress Catechism, distributed widely at the time of the Madras Congress Session in 1887 had a great effect on the masses and the Congress was able to earn their support.

Although the Congress in Tamil Province tried to bring all the communities especially the Muslims into its fold, it however failed in that endeavour. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, the leader of the Muslims in a meeting on 28\textsuperscript{th} December 1887, a day

\textsuperscript{54} B.B. Misra, The Indian Political Parties: An Historical analysis of Political behaviour upto 1947 (New Delhi, 1976), p. 61.

after the Congress met in Madras, told his co-religionists not to join the Congress. He formed the United Patriotic Association in opposition to the Congress. He advocated that the best way for the Muslims to safeguard their rights was to cultivate friendship with the British and strengthen their rule. Muslim leaders in Madras, who were opposed to the Congress, held a meeting on 28th April 1888 and passed a resolution disapproving the Muslims to be identified with the Congress.

Though, pro-Congress organs made vigorous propaganda to unite Muhammadans and Christians with the Congress, the Muslim press in Madras started a campaign opposing Muslim participation in the Congress.

The British Government was also getting worried over the increasing popularity of the Congress. Lord Dufferin, seeing the development of the Congress as a mass organization, in his farewell dinner on 30th November 1888 in Calcutta, ridiculed the Congress as forming a microscopic minority and could not be taken as the representative of the people. He also said that the endeavour of the Congress to introduce political reforms was most unsuitable and they were competent to accomplish only social and religious reforms. Beck, the then Principal of the Aligarh College published in 'the Pioneer', that the Congress Movement would result in a second mutiny like that of 1857. The government issued an order

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57 R. Suntharamingam, Politics and Nationalist Awakening in South India, p.279.
in 1888 to the effect that no public servant should collect money on behalf of or render help in any way to the Congress. Again, the government issued another order prohibiting government servants from attending political meetings. All these affected the progress of the Congress. When the Madras Congress Session was held in 1894 for the second time, Mahammadans, Europeans and the native Christians kept aloof from the Congress.

There were differences of opinion within the Congress between the two groups known as the Mylapore and Egmore group. The origin of this rivalry could be traced back to late 1883 over the issue of giving a farewell dinner to D.J. Carmichael, a retiring member of the Governor's Council in Madras. While elderly leaders such as Madhava Rao, Ragunatha Rao, T. Muthuswami Iyer, V. Bashyam Iyengar and Humayun Jah Bahadur wanted to honour Carmichael, the young men such as G. Subramania Iyer, M. Viraraghavachari, Ananda Charlu, Balaji Rao, Salem Ramaswami Mudaliar and P. Rangiah Naidu vigorously opposed the move on the ground that Carmichael's career was not such as to deserve any special recognition on the part of Indiana. It was the anti-Carmichael faction which took the lead in founding the Madras Mahajana Sabha. Later, both groups worked in the name of the Congress. But when the Congress session was

\[\text{References:}\]
\[\text{Kerela Patrika, 8 Dec. 1888, Native News Paper Report, Madras p. 273}\]
\[\text{G.O. No. 678-79, Pub., 18 Mar. 1890.}\]
\[\text{Swadesamitran, 29 Dec. 1895.}\]
held in Madras in 1894, the Congress was nearly wrecked by the factions fighting amongst themselves. There was a fight between S. Kasturi Ranga Iyengar of the Egmore group and P.R. Sundara Iyer and U.C. Desikachari of the Mylapore group over the printing and distribution of tickets. T. Rangachari and P.R. Sundara Iyer quarrelled over the membership of the subject committee. S. Subramania Iyer resigned from the executive committee accusing some of the members of malpractice. The Mylapore group headed by C.P. Ramaswami Iyer and his kinsmen came to dominate and had access to governmental favour and they were able to keep in check their opposition, the Egmore group. Such kind of conflicts continued unabated in the succeeding years too.

There was a distinct fall in the number of delegates in the Madras Congress Session held in 1898. It might have been due to natural calamities and official opposition. The year 1896-97 witnessed the worst famine in India. About 20 million people were affected by it. The Calcutta Congress Session held in 1896 passed a resolution, that the excessive taxation and over-assessment by the British Raj for its extravagance were the main cause for famines. It reminded of the measures to be initiated for immediate relief of the famine striken people. The relief measures provided by the government were certainly inadequate. Bala Gangadhar Tilak

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54 Eugene F. Inechick, Tamil Revivalism in the 1930s, pp. 28-29.
vehemently criticized the policy of the government towards relief from plague in his paper 'The Kesari'. The angry mob shot Rane, the Plague Commissioner of Poona and his associate Lieutenant Ayerst, dead. Their murders ended up in the execution of Damodar Hari Chapekar and his brother without trial. Bala Gangadhar Tilak was charged for publishing articles inciting violence. He was arrested and sentenced to eighteen months rigorous imprisonment and then transported to Mandalay in Burma. Such a repressive imprisonment without appeal to the Privy Council provoked resentment throughout the country\textsuperscript{66}. The Hindu wrote that the progress of the people had been pushed back fifty years.\textsuperscript{67} The next aim of the government would be the Congress which they wanted to see stamped out. The new sedition law became an accomplished fact. Soon the people of Tamil Province had to face another difficulty, that was the gradual approach of plague towards the gates of Madras\textsuperscript{67}. Natural calamities like famine and pestilence, coupled with the apathy of the rulers played havoc with the life, health and personal liberty of the people. Even then the Congress held its session in Madras in December 1898. Despite the repressive measures of the government, the Congress continued its usual tone of moderation. But all these factors had indirect effect on the Congress membership. The number of delegates attended the


Congress Session was only 614 as against 1,163 in the previous Congress Session held in Madras in 1894. Out of this, 319 were from Madras. Previously it was 947.

In spite of all these hardships, the Congress grew year after year. In the Madras Congress Session in 1898, it was decided to set up a permanent body in order to discharge the work of the Congress throughout the year by circulating pamphlets in the vernacular, and by sending delegates to the countryside to explain the programme of the Congress thereby to awaken the interest of the whole country in the work of the Congress. Accordingly, the Madras Congress Session passed a resolution asking all the Standing Congress Committees to form Central Committees in their respective provinces for the appointment of agents and adoption of other measures for furthering the objectives of the Congress. Such Central Committees were asked to submit the reports of the work carried out in their respective provinces during the previous year at the Congress Annual Sessions. The Madras Provincial Congress Committee was organized in 1899 and district conference were held from 1899 onwards. The two fold purpose of such conferences were to serve as an auxiliary to the Indian National Congress in educating the masses and to serve as an independent body for the purpose of propounding measures calculated to benefit the particular locality and to advance

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68 Report of Indian National Congress, Madras 1898, P. XVI.
69 Daniel Argov, Moderates and Extremists in the Indian Nationalist Movement, p. 80.
70 Report at the Indian National Congress, Madras, 1898, p. 3.
by constitutional means\(^7\). These conferences organized by local leaders representing all communities discussed a number of important matters affecting the whole of India. The resolutions passed in these conferences were generally forwarded to the government. But as usual the government ignored them.

In all the Madras Congress Sessions, the Congress members made hectic efforts to provide a constitution for the Congress. To render the Congress a mass organization, representation was extended even to laymen. To make it a non-communal body, Muslims and Christians were represented. Though the Congress was moderate in tone, it severely condemned the repressive policies of the government.

During the first two decades, four Congress Sessions were held in Madras. It passed various resolutions regarding the grievances of the people and pleaded for their redressal. Its main demand was the increased Indian representation in the Legislative Council, but it failed to achieve any substantial concession from the British Government. So, a splinter group known as Nationalists\(^7\) with a new philosophy, political ideology and conception of the methods of struggle crystallized within the Congress with the demand for Swaraj.


\(^7\) Some scholars called them 'Extremists'.