CHAPTER-V

V.O. CHIDAMBARAM PILLAI (1872-1936)
CHAPTER V

V.O. CHIDAMBARAM PILLAI (1872-1936)

The life history of V.O. Chidambaram pillai has been a neglected chapter in the annals of India’s Struggle for freedom. He can be called “Tillak of South” for he was a contemporary and a close associate of Tilak.

Vallinayaka Olaganatha Chidamabram Pillai who was popularly known as “Swadeshi Pillai” was born in a small village town of Ottapidarm on 5 September 1872\(^1\). Ottapidaram is near Panchalamkurichi and Ettayapuram, which were the birth places of Veerapandiaya Kattambomman (1765-1799) and Poet Subramaniya Bharathi (1882-1921) respectively.

ChIdambaram Pillai was much influenced by the heroic life and deeds of Subramaniya Pillai, who was the chief advisor of Kattabomman. When Kattabomman was executed his chief advisor subramaniya Pillai also met the same fate. He was a relative of Olaganatha Pillai, the father of Chidambaram Pillai\(^2\). He was also inspired by the folk songs of kattabomman which were very popular at Ottapidaram\(^3\).

Chidambaram Pillai belonged to an orthodox middle class saiva vellala family. His great-grand father was poet Chidambaram\(^4\). Poet Chidambaram’s eldest son was Valliyappan when valliappan’s first wife died, he married Meenachi and had three sons and two daughters. Of these five children, Chidambaram was the eldest and he died at the age of 28\(^5\).

\(^1\) V.O.Chidambaram Pillai, Enathu Suyacharithai (Autobiography, in Tamil) (Madras:Pari Nilaiyam, 1966) P 6
\(^2\) Ibid.,p-6
\(^3\) Vannamamalai, V.O.C. Murpokku Iyakkan Kalin Munonodi (Madras:People Publication, 1930), p 17
\(^4\) V.O.C., Enathu Suyacharithai, p 7
\(^5\) Ibid. p 7
The death of Chidambaram was great shock to his father Valliyappan. Olanganathan the second son married Paramayi and had five sons and three daughters.

V.O.Chidambaram Pillai was born to Olanganathan and Paramayi on 5 September 1872. He was named Vallinayakam Olakanatha Chidambaram in memory of his uncle, the first son of Valliyappan and the elder brother of Olanganatha.6

**HIS EDUCATION**

Realising the importance of education, Olanganatha appointed Tutors to teach the languages Tamil and English.

In 1878, at the age of 6 the boy Chidamparam was taught Tamil by Veera Perumal Annivayar. This profound Tamil scholar taught him Tamil ethical works like Naneeri and Moothurai.7

Krishnan Iyyer, who worked at the Taluk Office of Ottapidaram taught him English. When Krishna Iyyer was transferred, Olanganathan appointed Aram Valartha Nathan of Ettayapuram to teach him English.8

Olanganatha started a new school at Ottapidaram in Shivabiran Sannathi street for his son. Other children of that area were also benefitted by it. The boy Chidamabram passed his fourth class without any difficulty.9

The Priest Adamson from Puthiyamputhur a neighboring village was invited to start the fifth class and was asked to teach everything except the Bible.

---

7 Ibid, P.11.
8 Ibid., p. 13.
9 Ibid. p. 13.
Swamyathan was appointed as the Headmaster\textsuperscript{10}. In 1886, at the age of 14 Chidambaram joined the Roman Catholic Xavier’s High School at Thoothukudi and failed in the first year because of his laziness. There he had the opportunity to study under Madhura Nayagam\textsuperscript{11}.

He got through the middle school at Caldwell High School, Thoothukudi and joined Xavier’s High School again for his Matriculation. There he was much impressed by the teaching and personality of his teacher, Anna Durai Iyyer\textsuperscript{12}.

**FAILD IN MATRICULATION**

After this, Chidambaram went to Tirunelveli and studied in the Hindu College High School. Again he joined Xavier’s High School of Thoothukudi. There he studied English and Tamil respectively under Kasthuri Iyyengar and Savari Rayyar\textsuperscript{13}. But he failed in his examinations and passed the same in the next year with the help of Vengusamy\textsuperscript{14}.

For his further studies, he was sent to Caldwell College at Thoothukudi. As he wasted all his time there, his father took him back to Ottapidaram and put and end to his studies\textsuperscript{15}.

---

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., p. 15.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., p. 16
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., p. 17
CLERK

In view of disciplining Chidambaram Pillai, instigated by Nellaiappan his father got for him the job of a clerk at Thoothukudi\textsuperscript{16}. But he found it very difficult to pull on as a clerk even for a couple of months and told his father his desire of becoming a lawyer.

It was a turning point in his life. By choosing a career of a lawyer, he become “A poor man’s pleader” and prepared the ground for his adventures.

A BUDDING LAWYER

To fulfill the desire of Chidambaram, he was sent to Thiruchirapalli where he learnt law at the hands of two legal luminaries, Ganapathi Iyer and Harihara Iyer\textsuperscript{17}.

He was so much interested in laws, and he passed through “Pleasership Examination of the High Court of Judicature, Madras” held at Tirunelveli in February 1894 in second grade\textsuperscript{18}. Later this Sannad was cancelled by the British authorities and was given again by which he earned his livelihood.

AS A PLEADER

Even though Chidambaram Pillai had been practicing both civil and criminal cases, he had reputation for the latter. His friend and freedom fighter Sathu Maharabooshanam remembered him as a poor man’s pleader, who had a roaring practice\textsuperscript{19}.

\textsuperscript{17} V.O.C. Enathu Suyacharithai, p. 18.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., p. 23.
Chidambaram Pillai was not in the good books of the police for more than one reason. When the poor people fell a prey to the police, he not only defended them but also pleaded for them free of charge and released them. So the police were waiting for an opportunity to get at Chidambaram by book or crook.

THE MURDER CASE OF SUBRAMANIYAM- THE HEAD CONSTRBLE

When the police wanted to fish in the troubled waters they never failed to include the name of Chidambaram Pillai. In the murder case of the police Head Constable who was attacked by some one\(^\text{20}\), as the police wanted to prevent Chidambaram Pillai from appearing for the defendants, they cunningly included him among the accused. At the same time they unofficially bargained with him promising to remove his name from the list of accused if he would not appear against the prosecutions. To their surprise, Chidambaram Pillai readily assented and got his name removed. Chidambaram Pillai wanted to pay them in their own coin. When the case came up for hearing at the court, Chidambaram Pillai appeared as the main pleader for the defendants. He had cleverly outwitted them. The prosecution was shattered by Chidambaram Pillai’s arguments and the defendants were acquitted. The police once again wanted to try their luck. They instituted another case against him charging him of tempering with the witness for the prosecution. Again Chidambarm Pillai succeeded in winning the case. Lionel Wibert, the Joint Magistrate dismissed the case and the head Constable who was responsible in putting Chidambaram Pillai to all the trouble got dismissed\(^\text{21}\).

\(^{20}\) V.O.Chidambaram Pillai’s Enathu Suyacharithai, p. 28
\(^{21}\) Ibid.
AGAINST THE CURRUPT OFFICIALS

Chidambaram Pillai was not only a terror to the police but also for the corrupt officials. He also appeared against the corrupt officials like Vasudeva Rao and Panchabikesava Rao B.A., B.L., and got them punished.22

BETWEEN THE FATHER AND THE SON

Another important case was between the father and the son. A poor man had borrowed a small loan from a European businessman through an intermediary. This intermediary had a covetous eye on a piece of ancestral land belonging to the indigent fellow and induced the European businessman to instigate proceedings. The European appointed Olaganatha Pillai as his pleader. When the defendant approached Chidambaram Pillai, the latter asked him not to worry. At the court Olaganatha appeared on behalf of his client and carried on his argument in an admirable way. When no lawyer appeared for the defendant, the Magistrate asked him whether he had any one to appear for himself. For a moment it appeared as if fortune was smiling at the side of the European.

To the surprise of all, at the court Chidambaram Pillai appeared on the scene in support of the defendant. By his cross examination Chedambaram Pillai proved many of the witness to be false and won the case.23 This poor defendant was Madasamy who later became one of the faithful followers of Chidambaram Pillai.

Eventhough Olaganatha was so proud of his son, he was not quite happy about his attitude. As Chidambaram Pillai had often clashed with the British

---

22 V.O.Chidambaram Pillai’s Enathu Suyacharithai, P 29.
officials, where Olaganatha was serving, he decided to send his son to Thoothukudi for further practice.

**PILLAI’S FIRST MARRIAGE**

In 1894 Chidambaram Pillai married Valliyammal, the daughter of Tiruchendur Subramaniyam. She was a quiet, gentle and delicate woman with a deep religious bent, belonging to an orthodox conservative family. Despite caste prejudices prevailing around her, she whole heartedly served food to a blind sage namely Ramaiya Desihar of Virudhunagar who was patronized by her husband\(^{24}\).

But Chidambaram Pillai was not blessed to have her companisship for a long time. She passed away in 1901. Chidambaram Pillai wrote a biography of his wife Valliyammai Charitam expressing his profound admiration for her\(^{25}\).

**SECOND WIFE MEENAKSHI**

As a token of love and gratitude for his first wife, again he married another girl from the very same family. He married Meenakshi, who was destined to be with chidambraram Pillai in all his ups and downs. She was bold and courageous. She gave away her jewels willingly to her husband to feed the workers during Coral Mill strike in February 1908\(^{26}\). She also possessed a fund of Practical wisdom traditionally.

**PILLAI’S CIRCLE OF FRIENDS**

Chedambaram Pillai had a wide Circle of friends both in and outside his profession. Somasundera Bharathi, Chinna Annasami Iyer, P.J. Vengu Iyer. K.R.

---

\(^{24}\) V.O.Chidambaram Pillai, Enathu Suyacharithai, p. 32
\(^{25}\) Ibid., p. 31
\(^{26}\) Ibid., p. 31
Venkatarama Iyer and S. Visvanatha Iyer were some of his professional friends. All these friends used to assemble at the house of A. Narayana Iyer at Perunkulam. Heated arguments took place there on Politics and on Tamil Literature.

**INSPIRED BY SWAMI ABEDHANANDA**

Once he went to Madras with one of his aunts and met Swamy Abedhanda and was much inspired by his speech. When he asked that he had done for Swadeshi, he replied “Nothing”. Then Swamy Abedhananda advised him to spread the Swadeshi movement in his country for its liberation from the foreign yoke. It was Swamy Abedhananda who lit the fire of Swadeshi activities. V.O. Chidambaram Pillai’s son Subramaniyam feels that Swamy Abedhananda was mainly responsible for his father’s involvement in the Swadeshi activities.

As soon as he returned from Madras, he started various Swadeshi organizations like

1) Chennai Jana Sangam
2) Thoothukudi Industrial Welfare Association
3) The Dharma Sangam
4) The Swadeshi Industry and
5) The National Emporium, a shop for selling Swadeshi goods
6) Spinning and Weaving centre and
7) Desabimana Sangam in 1908 at Tuticorin

Within a short span of time Pillai was able to introduce Swadeshi organizations on a large scale and Swadeshi flourished under his magic touch around Thoothukudi.

---

27 Ibid.
In 1906 itself Chidambaram Pillai did a lot for the spread of Swadeshi in Thoothukudi. The Hindu says:

“Swadeshism is making rapid strides of progress in Tuticorin and the credit is due to Mr. V.O.Chidambaram Pillai a prominent speaker and a good Tamil Scholar”\(^{28}\).

A close study of all these organizations will reveal the fact that he had the economic aspect in his mind. Furthermore, he started his new venture, Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company on 16 October 1906 against British imperialism\(^{29}\).

**HIS ENTRY INTO POLITICS**

He was not quite contended with all his Swadeshi activities. He regularly attended all the Congress sessions keeping a close touch with it\(^{30}\).

**NATURE OF THE PERIOD 1900-1906**

The first five years of the twentieth century witnessed the strenuous days of Lord Curzon’s rule. His high handed acts included the curtailment of the powers of the Calcutta Corporation, Official Secret Acts and Officialisation of the Universities. The partition of Bengal was the last straw for the Indians already struggling under the burden of imperialism and a new spirit was raised in the Nation. This was a crisis in the history of India, witnessing a spirit of National awakening and political consciousness.

\(^{28}\) The Hindu, 23 March 1906
\(^{29}\) V.O.Chidambaram Pillai, Enathu Suyacharithai, p.45.
\(^{30}\) Ibid., p.58. V.O.C. attended the Surat Congress in 1907.
The year 1907 was a remarkable year for the implementation of the new slogans like Swadeshi, Boycott and National education everywhere. The word Swadeshi was in the lips of everybody. This year, above all was noted for the Surat Congress which split the Congress which split the Congress into two groups viz., Moderates and Extremists.

**BIPIN CHANDRA PAL’S ARREST**

The Government started a prosecution against the Bande Mataram in September 1907 on a charge of sedition and put Sir Aurobindo Ghose under arrest as editor. But no one’s name was printed as editor of the paper, as it was not yet made compulsory under the law. Evidence was needed to prove who the editor was. After a prolonged search a letter from Pal to Aurobindo as editor was found and Pal was cited as a witness. He refused to give evidence and Aurobindo was saved but Pal was tried for contempt of court and awarded the maximum sentence which was six months simple imprisonment\textsuperscript{31}.

The prosecution did not expect such blank refusal from Pal to bear witness against a colleague with whom differences had already shown up over the policy and programme of the paper. Pal explained his conduct in the course of a recorded statement.

Pal accepted the sentence whole heartedly and was taken to the Presidency Jail through a back door of the court, in a hired carriage under the escort of a police officer.

The Government was evidently nervous. The same was the reason for transferring him to Buxar Jail (Bihar) soon after. Pal served his sentence mainly in Buxar Jail and was released on 10 March 1908.

Bipin Chandra Pal, Ambika Charan Mazumdar, Baikunta Natha Sen, from Bengal were all men of first rate position and abilities and were popular speakers of the Congress then.

Pal the uncrowned “Prince of Bengal” was an orator of renown and he swept the country from end to end by his eloquence in preaching his new cult of Boycott, Swadeshi and National education.

In Calcutta, Pal received an “unprecedented” reception. The city was illuminated in the evening in a spontaneous outburst of joy, a purse of a few thousand rupees was presented to him at a public meeting which was utilized later to send him to England, where he lived for three years as an exile so to say, carrying on the National on the National propaganda as best as was possible.

In welcoming Pal, the Kistnapatrika from Masulipatnam writes,

“Our Chandra Pal is coming out like a rearing whale or a big tiger that emerges out of a cage/ Look for him, eye enemies. Bipin Chandra Pal will come out resplendent with pure light, relieved of the evil influence of evil star. Our sons of India, welcome him with full devotion, righteousness alone will conquer.”

A NEW STAR

After returning from Surat Congress session Chidambaram Pillai not only feverishly worked round the clock for the progress of the Swadeshi Steam

\[32\] TNA. MNNR 8, March, 1908. Kistnapatrika.
Navigation but also found enough time to take active part in the affairs of the country.

SUBRAMANIYA SIVA

Subramaniya Siva was born in 1884 at Batlagundu in Madurai district. His parents were Rajamayyar and Nagambal. Siva as an exceptional child spent almost all his time in worship. His parents moved to Madurai to give him education and Siva did his studies at Kattuchety Mandapam and at Sethupathi High School.

Siva’s parents were forced to settle down in Trivandrum because of their poverty. At Trivandrum there were charity institutions like Ottup Purai which were run by the Maharaja of Travancore. This charity institution freely fed the Brahmins from various provinces of the Madras state. Siva continued his education at the town school as well as at the native school.

Siva married in 1899 and the next year left for Coimbatore. That year he took deep interest in Boer wars and composed many poems about the heroic deeds of the Boers in English language.

THAKURKHAN’S INFLUENCE

At that time, religious organizations like Arya Samaj also tried to liberate their mother country from foreign yoke. Thakurkhan Chandra Varma of Arya Samaj visited various parts of India and preached the love of Nationalism.

He also visited Trivandrum and organized a number of meetings. Siva was much impressed by his speech and wanted to follow his foot prints and started the

---

33 R.Srinivasa Varadhan. The Life History of Subramaniya Siva (Madurai: Bharatha Book Shop, 1962), P 10
Dharma Paribalana Sangam, where he discussed politics with his friends\textsuperscript{34}. Through this Samaj, Siva enlightened the people and asked his sisters and others to sing the National Anthem. He also asked the girls to embroider Bande Mataram on their skirts.

**EXPELLED FROM THE STATE OF TRIVANDRUM**

People listened raptly to his ideas and many became his followers. Siva’s philosophical speeches interspersed with political allusion got him into trouble with the Travancore authorities who expelled him.

**MESSAGE OF SWADESHI**

Siva left the state on foot and preached the gospel of Swadeshi wherever he went. He reached Tirunelveli with a dhoti, a shirt and a turban as his only possession. At that time Swadeshi was progressing well there and it was studded with a number of Swadeshi shops. He visited one of the Swadeshi shops “National Emporium” run by Sankara Narayan\textsuperscript{35}.

Siva’s close friend R. Srinivasa Varathan describes Siva’s arrival to Thoothukudi as “Cotton and fire brought together”\textsuperscript{36}. At that time Pillai was very badly in need of a mass orator to stir the people and Siva fitted perfectly into that role. Poet Bharathi also visited Thoothukudi at that time and was much impressed by Siva and called him affectionately as “Shivaji”.

At Tirunelveli Sankara Narayanna Iyyer was an active member of Swadeshi movement. He was overjoyed to see Siva there and asked him to stay in Tirunelveli for a few days to deliver lectures on Swadeshi to the public.

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., p.33.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., p.34.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., p.35.
On the very same day of his arrival, he made all arrangements to conduct the meetings. Five hundred people attended Siva’s meeting on the first two days and the number reached a thousand on the third day and on the fourth day it reached five thousand. The number went on increasing day by day.

After finishing his company’s work, Chidambaram Pillai attended Siva’s meetings and was greatly moved by them. Within a few days Siva became a quest of Chidambaram Pillai. Both Siva and Pillai addressed the gatherings awakening the spirit of Swadeshism in the minds of the mass.

**CORAL MILL STRIKE 26 FEBRUARY 1908**

At that time the Harvey mill workers received less pay under the British and the workers had neither a trade union nor any organization of their own. The employers were tyrannical and the condition of the workers was very bad. They had to get into the factory before dawn and continued to toil until they could not see the lines on their palm. They were quite discontented with their meager wages and in human working hours.

The people became Pro-Swadeshi as a result of the speeches of Siva and Pillai and the workers of the Coral mill, a British owned textile unit in Thoothukudi struck work on 26 February demanding higher wages. The mill was making huge profits and declaring a dividend of sixty percent to its British shareholders, while the workers were getting meager wages.

Chidambaram Pillai fully realized that violence springs only from an empty stomach and that the workers must be made aware of the existing conditions. He
also made the workers understand that though justice may be their demand, it could not be achieved in a single stroke but gradually step by step.

Every day he held workers meetings and kept them abreast of the developments. When there was no sign of an end to the strike, the mill agent, with the British Steamers employees, went round to work and begged the people to persuade the strikers to resume work. When the people refused, the agent took six masteries by force to the mill premises and confined them there for three hours\(^{37}\). They exhorted the others to resume work, misrepresenting that the confined hands had done so. But the strikers unanimously refused to resume work unless their grievances were redressed. Meanwhile the confined men were able to escape and the strikers were paid one week provisions from the relief fund raised by Vakil Venkatarama Aiyar\(^ {38}\).

One Subramani Pillai, an employee of the mill, who in later years became the Director of the company also started negotiations and was offering terms of settlement, promising some increase in the wage and reduction in the working hours. When Pillai was considering this, he was summoned by the District Collector Wynch. Wynch advised him to withdraw the strike immediately or to be prepared to face the consequence. The Collector charged Chidambaram Pillai of instigating the workers to go on strike.

At the end of the strike, the worker’s salary was increased by half and they were granted leave during their illness also\(^ {39}\). This Coral Mill strike also spread to Madurai where the cotton mill workers launched a strike.

\(^{37}\) The Hindu, 5 March 1908.
\(^{38}\) Ibid.
\(^{39}\) V.O.C. Enathu Suyacharitthai, p.71.
Chidambaram Pillai and Subramaniya Siva were responsible for the success of the Coral mill strike. Both gave lectures in the beach on “union” and Boycott especially bureaucratic court and the police.

The District Magistrate came to Thoothukudi on 7 March and called on Chidambaram Pillai at the Swadeshi steam Navigation office and told him that Pillai must leave Thoothukudi that very night and should stay somewhere else for three months, failing which he would be put under custody.

Pillai turned a deaf ear to the District Magistrate’s threat as he had no power for such a move at all. When Pillai and other Swadeshi leaders like Subramania Siva and Padmanaba Iyengar were so busy promoting the celebrations of Pal, they were served notice by the court.

In spite of the notices, a grand meeting was held in the Bandipettai on Great Cotton Road next to the mosque at Thoothukudi. After Pillai’s address, Subramaniya Siva got up and gave the following speech.

“Gentlemen I am going to the court tomorrow, as notices have been served upon us to appear before the District Magistrate and I do not know whether I shall return or not.”

People were moved to tears by the speeches of their leaders and shouted Bande madharam. Suddenly Chidambaram Pillai, got up and pacified them saying that it was only a proceedings under the security section and if they would offer bail of Rs. 2,500/- each they would return to Thoothukudi the very day. After this the crowd which numbered four thousand dispersed without any disturbance.

40 Judicial Department, G.O.No. 842-43, 18 June 1908, Indexed C.
41 Ibid
Under section of 108 criminal I.P.C. Proceedings commenced against Chidambaram Pillai, Siva and Padmanaba Iyengar. Notices were served on to them at 6 P.M. on 08.03.1908 and they were asked to appear before the District Magistrate in Tirunelveli on the following day at 10 A.M\(^{42}\).

On 9 March Chidambaram Pillai, Subramaniya Siva and Padmanaba Iyengar, the trio, came to Tirunelveli and made all arrangements for the celebration of Bipin Chandra Pal’s release. But they were ordered not to come out in procession on that day in Thoothukudi. Inspite of the Collector’s order the trio led the procession.

After the celebration of Pal’s release even though the trio were advised not to go to Thoothukudi, they left Tirunelveli at 5 A.M. (10.03.1908) and went to Tuticorin at 7 a.m by train. When Pillai came to Thoothukudi he was accorded a hearty welcome by the crowd which had been waiting for him eagerly at the Railway station. When the Assistant Station Master, Cross asked the crowd to move away and not to be near the Railway carriage, they began to shout and create disturbances, so much that the Reserve Police had to be summoned\(^{43}\).

In spite of the order, at 10 A.M (10.03.1908) Chidambaram Pillai, Siva and Padmanaba Iyengar came out in procession with a photo of pal in the town accompanied by music.

At 12 noon they left Thoothukudi for Tirunelveli and there was a large crowd to bid them good bye with shouts of Bande Mataram. Again Chidambaram Pillai left Tirunelveli by 5.30 P.M. Train (10.03.1908) for Thoothukudi where he was again received by the crowd.

---

\(^{42}\) Judicial Department, G.O.No. 842-43, 18 June 1908, Indexed C.
\(^{43}\) Ibid.
On this day the workers of Burma oil Company struck work in order to attend the procession as they were refused leave by James Robertson\textsuperscript{44}. On That very day the scavengers of the Municipality too struck work in support of Chidambaram Pillai.

On 11 March evening, Chidambaram Pillai and Siva went straight from the District Magistrate’s Court to the river bed in front of it and again addressed a meeting while the District Magistrate who had found Bande Mataram inscribed on the walls of his court was followed to his house by a mob shouting the same war cry. On 12.03.1908 at the Office of the Collector of Tirunelveli, Chidambaram Pillai, Subramaniya siva and Panmanaba Iyengar presented themselves.

Under section 107 IPC criminal procedure code Winch took proceedings against Chidambaram Pillai, Subramaniya Siva and Padmanaba Iyengar. Under section IPC 108 Criminal procedure code notice was served upon them on 8 March. On 12 March Thursday afternoon they were remanded to the District jail, under clause 4 of section 107 criminal procedure code. To the surprise of all they were taken and removed to jail without demonstration of any kind on 12 March evening\textsuperscript{45}.

On 12 March, when Chidambaram Pillai, Siva and Padmanaba Iyengar were in the court in connection with the case under section 108 criminal I.P.C., notice was served on them and they were asked to produce the securities under section 107 IPC. They were also asked to plead without any time being given to them. The accused believed that section 107 criminal IPC was deployed only with a view to remand them to custody, a power not available if proceedings were under section 108.

\textsuperscript{44} Judicial Department, G.O.No. 842-43, 18 June 1908, Indexed C.
\textsuperscript{45} Judicial Department G.O. 913, 2 July 1908
They also offered security pending the disposal of the transfer petition to the High Court but the offer was not accepted, and the accused were remanded to custody about 4 P.M\textsuperscript{46}.

The application to the High court for a transfer of the case against Chidambaram Pillai from the file of winch to that of any other District Magistrate had been dismissed. In spite of the order of the High court releasing Chidambaram Pillai and others on bail\textsuperscript{47}, Wynch refused to carry it out and said that he could not believe the message of the High court. Above all Wynch said that there were some more cases due on every charge before release\textsuperscript{48}.

Pillai and others stood their trial in the District court and appealed against its judgment to the High Court the appeal was heard in October and November 1908. On 16 March Chidambaram Pillai, Siva and Panmanaba Iyengar appealed under section 149 of the code of criminal procedure for their release on bail\textsuperscript{49}.

As the British Authorities were greatly afraid of Chidambaram Pillai, they decided to arrest him in Tirunelveli itself. When the Collector L.M. Wynch sent word to Pillai to meet him at Tirunelveli. Pillai’s friends advised him not to meet the Collector. But the true patriot was not afraid of anything and when he met the Collector in Tirunelveli along with his friends they were remanded to custody.

**THE TIRUNELVELI RIOT**

The news of the arrest of Chidambaram Pillai and others spread like wild fire. Pillai was in the heart of everybody. He was Popular among the student community also. The whole of Tirunelveli District was behind him. When the

\textsuperscript{46} Judicial Department G.O. 842-43, 18 June 1908
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{48} T.N.A. MNNR 25, March 1908 Swadesamitr.
\textsuperscript{49} Judicial Department G.O. 842 -43, 18 June 1908.
people came to know of the arrest of Chidambaram Pillai and others, they observed hartaL. A number of Public meetings were held in various places, condemning the arrest of leaders.

When the leaders were in Palyamkottai on remand, a Head constable Gurunathaiyar of Tirunelveli resigned his job in a public meeting and shouted Bande mataram.\(^{50}\)

Next day all the People came to Tirunelveli from various directions with the plan of bringing back their leaders. But the events took a different turn.

**EVENTS AT THE HINDU COLLEGE**

Lokanathaiyar a member of the staff of the Hindu College approached the principal and suggested to him closure of the college. When the principal closed the college realising the situation, Lokanathaiyar gathered all the students and shouted “We have attained our independence. Let us also do our duty by joining the revolt”.

The most important personalities in the crowds were constable Gurunathaiyar, National Emporium, Sankara Narayana and Trivandrum Padmanaba Iyengar.

The crowd unexpectedly marched towards Tirunelveli Junction instead of Palyamkottai. From the Junction, it went to Tirunelveli town. The mob was uncontrollable. C.M.S. College and Training school students also joined the procession.\(^{51}\)

\(^{50}\) R.Srinivasan Vavachan, The Life History of Subramania Sivam, P .38
\(^{51}\) Ibid.,
Having reached the town, the rioters forced the shopmen to pull down their shutters. All the bazaars were closed in Tirunelveli and Viraragavapuram and the mob of several thousand broke all lamps, attached parry’s agent in his office and burnt the Tirunelveli police station and the Municipal Office. After this the mob entered the hospital and broke some of furniture\textsuperscript{52}.

The District Magistrate and P.P. Sweeting the District Superintendent of Police proceeded to Tirunelveli with available reserve and finally dispersed the mob by firing several times. In the firing four were killed and four were wounded\textsuperscript{53}.

The rioters were fired upon by the police sentry when the police station was attacked. Again the Reserve Police shot at them in the main street leading to the temple and for a second time near the police station. When the District Magistrate gave the first order to shoot, the rioters set fire to the post office, Municipal Office, Station house and District Munsif’s Court and also attacked both the Police station and the dispensary\textsuperscript{54}.

The mob also set fire to the Kerosene tank in the Pennington market and it was burning for two days. P.N. Appusamy who was at Veeraragavapuram in the house of B.N. Vnekatachalam Iyyer saw the flames at Tirunelveli along with P.N. Krishnasamy Iyyer (a retired judge)\textsuperscript{55}.

\textsuperscript{53} Judicial Department G.O.913, 2 July 1908
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.
The rioters also entered the Church Mission College and asked the head-Master Rev. Schafter to say *Bande Mataram* thrice and left the premises. The college properties were also destroyed by the mob\textsuperscript{56}.

Rioting continued for three more days and it spread to Thoothukudi and Thachanallur also. A Public meeting was arranged in the open-air car stand at Thoothukudi. People from various walks of life also participated. Suddenly the mounted police shot at the crowd without any warning. Sub Collector Ashe played an iron hand in this.

The British authorities announced that the expenses of the mounted by the police would be collected from the public\textsuperscript{57}.

Military forces were posted in all the houses of the British. Gurusmay Iyyer along with two more important persons went to Madras and asked the authorities to remove the mounted Police. But they were told that it would not be called back unless peace was maintained\textsuperscript{58}.

When the riot occurred, the people caught hold of the police and forced him to come around the street on a hourse\textsuperscript{59}.

The people were carried away by the swadeshi spirit and they continued to boycott the Europeans. Indian workmen like barbers, washermen and butlers refused to serve the European officials and also pro-British Indians. Referring the Tirunelveli riots, G.Subramania Iyer’s *Swadismiratan* said, “It was Mr.Wynch and not the people who gave the provocation (for the riots)\textsuperscript{60}.

---

\textsuperscript{56} Judicial Department G.O.913, 2 July 1908
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{59} R.Srinivasa Varadhan, The Life History of Subramania Siva, P. 43.
\textsuperscript{60} R.A. Padmandbna, *V.O.Chidambaram Pillai*, P.67.
With regard to the riots of Tirunelveli the Bhavani of 3 April writes “Why is he who shot dead an innocent boy not tried for murder? He might perhaps escape under the exceptions to the section on murder. But however, he must be first charge with the offence. “Perhaps the parents of the deceased boy are helpless”.”\(^{61}\)

Again, regarding the riot in Tirunelveli Swadesamitran of 28 March writes.

“Thus it is clear that if only Mr. Wynch had made arrangements to guard the town carefully before he remanded the trio to custody, so much of damage to the property and the loss of so many lives could have been spared. So the whole blame of the riots rests upon the shoulders of Mr. Wynch, who seems to have entirely forgotten the proverb that prevention is better and in cases like this, easier than cure.”\(^{62}\)

**TRANSPORTATION FOR LIFE**

The sessions court, Tirunelveli under section 124A 153A IPC sentenced Chidambaram Pillai on 7 July 1908 to transportation for life. Subramania Siva was sentenced to ten years transportation. Prosecution of Padmanaba Iyengar was dropped.

With reference to trial and conviction of Messrs. Chidambaram Pillai and Subramania Siva in Tirunelveli the Madeganni of 11 July says “British Justice has thus been degraded to the level of arresting and oppressing of simple and honest persons. It is difficult to say how far loyalty will be promoted among the people if respectable and self sacrificing patriots should be put in Jail”.\(^{63}\) On 26 March 1908 the seditious cases against V.O. Chidambaram Pillai and Subramania Siva were taken up by the committing Magistrate E.H. Wallace, Additional District

---

\(^{61}\) TNA MNNR. 3, April, 1908, Bhavani.

\(^{62}\) TNA MNNR. 28, March, 1908, Swadesamitran.

\(^{63}\) TNA MNNR. 11, July, 1908, The Madeganni.
Magistrate, N.K. Ramaswami, a leading lawyer appeared as Counsel for Chidambaram Pillai at the request of the Pro-Tilak Nationalist Party of Madras. As the enquiry by the Magistrate seemed to be absurd and useless, Pillai asked his advocate to withdraw from the case and refused to defend himself.

Pillai and Siva were committed to the sessions by the Additional Magistrate and Padmanaba Iyengar was released. A special sessions Judge was appointed in addition to the nomination of handpicked Judge A.F. Pinhey, to deal with the case, by the Madras Government. Under section 124A of the IPC Siva was charged for the three speeches made by him on 23 and 25 February and 5 March 1908. Under section of 124-A, 109 and 114 of the IPC Chidambaram was charged for the two speeches made on 23 & 25 February and for the abetment on 5 March 1908.

THE REDUCTION OF THE SENTENCES ON PILLAI AND SIVA

Chidambaram Pillai was sentenced to transportation for twenty years and Subramniya Siva was sentenced to ten years of rigorous imprisonment by the session court of Tirunelveli under section 124-A and 153 IPC and this was reduced by the Madras High court to six years in each case.

CHIDAMBARAM PILLAI IN PRISON

Chidambaram Pillai, Siva and Padmanaba Iyengar were taken to Palayakottai central jail first and from there Pillai and Siva were taken to Trichy Jail. After some times Pillai was transferred to Coimbatore Jail. Pillai’s son V.O.C Subramaniyam explained the circumstances that led Pillai to pull the oil machine. Pillai was an orthodox Saiva and was a devotee of Lord Siva. Pillai used to worship God in the Jail, while walking here and there. Once when he was meditating like this, he was called by the Jailor. As Pillai was praying, the jailor’s

64. TNA. MNNR. 28, March, 1908, Swadesamitran.
words failed to reach him and the jailor was much offended. When the jailor complained of it to Pillai, the latter told him, that he was worshipping a person (God) higher than him, and so he did not listen to him.

The jailor felt that he was insulted by such a statement and wanted to take revenge upon him. He wanted to punish Pillai for it and gave him the work of pulling the oil machine.

**COIMBATORE JAIL RIOT**

At Coimbatore jail there were so many criminals who participated in the Tirunelveli riots. As they were all the followers and supporters of Chidambaram Pillai, they were all alarmed and shocked to see Chidambaram Pillai under the oil machine and wanted to take revenge upon the Jailor.

**THE JAILOR WAS STABBED**

On 23rd August 1908, when the Jailor was in his office with his three children, suddenly three convicts entered the office and one of them hit the Jailor on the left side of the head with a stick. When the jailor tried to get hold of the stick, he received a cut in his right hand and the three convicts attacked him continuously with stick and knives. The jailor received firm stabs and wounds on the head and was bleeding freely and was carried out to a room.

When the convicts tried to escape, they were fired upon by the Jail Superintendent. The warden also fired at them. The jail Superintendent Gadsden fired at one man and he died.
Raman, Petha Naikan, Kotila Koran Marai were the three convicts who assaulted the Jailor in his office.\textsuperscript{65} In this connection, the Assistant chief warden Muhammad-Usman-Sahib was rewarded Rs.250/- for all his help to the superintendent of jail. The Assistant chief warden Muhammad-usman-sahib rendered valuable assistance in the suppression of the disturbance. He was presented a silver watch by the District Magistrate of Coimbatore.

The officials filed a case against the criminal who were responsible for the riots and were sentenced to undergo imprisonment from one to two years. After this incident Chidambaram Pillai was transferred to Cannanore jail.

Raman was responsible of the riots in Coimbatore jail. Raman who was a native of Malabar was a barber. He had great love and respect for Pillai and used to greet him. Raman was offended when he was warned and was scolded by the Jailor for his greeting to Pillai, and above all he could not tolerate the sight of Chidambaram Pillai under the oil machine. So he decided to put an end to the life of the Jailor along with his friends.

**TREATMENT OF PRISONERS IN THE COIMBATORE JAIL**

Regarding the treatment of the convicts in the Coimbatore jail swadesamitran writes,

“Chidambaram Pillai, who was the ninth witness for the defense in the Coimbatore jail riots case has stated that the convicts in this jail were beaten terrible and that one convict was forced to eat human excreta. He has also said that the meals served out to the convicts were full of mud and stone particles and that

\textsuperscript{65} . G.O. 1416,confidential 229 A, 15 October, 1908.
though all this was reported to the Inspector General of jails, no notice was taken of it”.  

Chidambaram Pillai was depressed by all these inhuman treatment. But he was not at all idle in prison. In the jail, he taught Tirukkural to the prisoners.

When Chidambaram Pillai was at Coimbatore Jail, his wife was at Tiruperur near Coimbatore and used to visit him once in a week, along with her two sons, Olaganatha and Arumugam. At that time Chidambaram Pillai’s family was supported by Pichaiyappa Pillai (the brother of Meenakshi) and Gnana Desiham Pillai (Father of Meenakshi).

**THE TROUBLES GIVEN BY THE SWADESHI STEAM NAVIGATION COMPANY**

When Chidambaram Pillai was put under harassment inside the jail, the Director of the Swadeshi steam Navigation Company did not hesitate to give him troubles.

The company could not function after the arrest of Chidambaram Pillai and above all, the directors were not in a position to wage war against British Imperialism. They were extremely afraid of the double transportation sentence that was given to Chidambaram Pillai. As they were afraid and felt that the same sentence would be also served upon them, they simply sold it to the British.

Pillai was shocked at the news and spent a number of sleepless nights. The directors were not only satisfied with these things but also blamed Pillai for liquidation of the company. In addition to this, they the demanded compensation too from Pillai and took legal steps for the same.

---

66. TNA. MNNR.5, December, 1908, Swadesamitran.
67. Ibid.,
Pillai was deeply troubled to hear the end of his Herculean Task and wrote a touching letter to Salem C.Vijayaraghavachariar, the legal advisor of the company.

“Let me extend my wishes to all the people who gave money liberally for the establishment of the company. As the company had liquidated, the loss must be shared by all the shareholders. If they refused to meet, I myself will pay, that amount, but ask the people to be patient, until I come out of the jail.”

He also wrote a poem in Tamil to the friends of his company and the English version runs thus:

“My body and my mind, health and way of life,
Wife, children, wealth and my intelligence,
What if they perish?
I shall stand unbowed, unbroken,
If death comes, let him
Yea, and conquer him”.

THE TIRUNELVELI CONSPIRACY

In 1911 the persecution of Chidambaram Pillai in jail had an unexpected repercussion outside. On promotion the Sub-Collector Ashe came to Tirunelveli as collector. During this period in south India, a number of secret societies were established.

In South India, “Abimana Bharatha Sangam” was established by the youngsters. They took oath to dedicate their lives and properties for their Nation,

---

69. Ibid.
and signed with blood. These people had a printing press in the name of Feringi Destroyer Press. Only from this press, revolutionaries released their secret pamphlets and literature. Because of such publication the Government chased many youngsters. Including krishnasamy of karur, many were arrested and punished.\textsuperscript{70} Some revolutionaries escaped to Pondicherry and took shelter there.

Among such revolutionaries, Neelakanda Brahmacari, Sankara Krishna Iyyer and M.P.Thirumalachari were important personalities. The Madras revolutionaries at Pondichery had connection with the revolutionaries in London and Paris.

At London, “The India House” becomes the centre of the revolutionary activities, under the leadership of Vinayaka Dhamodhar Savarkar, V.V.S. Iyyer was his lieutenant. V.V.S. Iyyer, shiyamgi, Krishna Varma and few others went to London through Paris from Pondicherry. The revolutionaries, at London had been watching the events of Thoothukudi. These young revolutionaries wanted to liberate their country through revolutionary methods.

After listening to the lectures of Bipin Chandra Pal at Madras in 1907, Nilakanda Brahmacari determined to serve the Nation at any cost. That night itself, he met pal in Lord Govinda Dass Bungalow at Peter’s Road, Madras, along with kunchi Banerji.

On his way to attend the congress of Surat at Madras poet Subramaniya Bharathi introduced Nilakanta Brahmacari to V.O.Chidambaram Pillai. Chidambaram Pillai asked Nilakanta Brahmacari to come over to Thoothukudi to serve the Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company.

\textsuperscript{70} Ma.Po. Sivagnanam, Kappal Otiyya Tamilan (Inba Nilayam, Madras, 1950) p.79
In 1908 poet Bharathi introduced Nilakanta Brahmachari to Chandra kanth the great revolutionary of Calcutta.\textsuperscript{71} Chandra kanth came to Madras with the intention of starting revolutionary activities and he discussed the same with Nilakanta. After a long discussion, Nilakanta was satisfied and took charge of the revolutionary activities in south India. He also visited many places including Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi, Madurai, Trichy and Travancore and preached the message of Swadeshi. He selected bold young men and they all took an oath at the temple of kali and often met underground for their activities.

In 1914 Germany promised to help India against Great Britain. It also promised to send armaments and other accessories. The Revolutionaries wanted to utilise this opportunity and planned to start Armed Revolt throughout India. Nilakanta and Siva stayed at Chidambaram Pillai’s house. At that time Chidambaram Pillai asked Nilakanta to have contact with the Poligars of Panchalamkurichi.

Nilakanta also visited the Poligars and told them that they all would be supplied enough weapons for the Armed Revolt. At the time the successors of Kattabomman and Umaithurai were living at Chekkakudi and Aadanoor.

HELP BY THE POLIGARS

The Munsiff of Aadanoor promised to send 2000 men through Mappillai Samy. The successors of kattabomman and Pichandi Devan of Maravankuichi also promised to send 3000 men, Vellai Devan of Naduvappattai guaranteed 6000 men and a few thousands were promised by Periyasamy Dear.\textsuperscript{72}

\textsuperscript{71} Ma.Po. Sivaganam, Kappal Ottiya Tamilan (Inba Nilayam, Madras, 1950) p.80
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., p.82.
Sankara Krishna was the Secretary of Nilakanta. He was active, energetic and resourceful. He too had worked in India at Madras and Pondicherry. In 1910 Nilakanta visited Poonalure along with Sankara Krishna. At Poonalure Nilakanta met the young enthusiastic Vanchinadan who was the son-in-law of Sankara Krishna. When Nilakanta explained his Armed Revolt to Vanchi, the latter accepted it whole-heartedly. After this meeting, Nilakanta often contacted him in person as well as through letters.

THE LIFE HISTORY OF VANCHI

Vanchi was the son of a poor Brahmin, Regubathi Iyyer, who was working at the temple of Shencottah. Vanchi’s real name was Sankarn, but he was affectionately called Vanchi.

It was a critical period at Tirunelveli. The whole of Tirunelveli was disturbed at the arrest of the Swadeshi leaders. Above all Ashe, the District Magistrate also ordered to shoot the patriots. Vanchi took three months leave on 9 January 1911 and visited Pondicherry.

In those days Pondicherry gave shelter to the political refugees, who were chased by the British. In 1908 poet Bharathi, V.V.S. Iyyer and Aurobindo Ghose came to Pondicherry. A number of magazines like Suriathayam, Vijaya and Tharuman were released. The place where the Tamil fortnight magazine Tharuman was released was called Tharumalayam. The Tamil Magazines were distributed to the readers free of cost. This Tharumalayam attracted youth from various parts of India. A.P. Goalketthar from Punjab, Neelakanta V. Ramasamy Iyengar, Madasamy from Tamil Nadu came to Pondicherry.73

When Vanchi came to Pondicherry, he was accorded a warm welcome by V.V.S Iyyer who wanted to utilise him for his plan. He taught Tamil, boxing, exercise to the youth at Tharumalayam and taught Vanchi separately.

N. Nagasamy who had been helping the patriots at ponds took Vanchi daily at 4 O’ clock in the morning to karadikuppam for shooting. Thus Vanchi was trained.

Vanchi had told one of the witnesses in the Tirunelveli conspiracy case that India had been ruined because of the British rule and it could be saved only if all the British man were killed and suggested that Ashe should be first killed as being the head of Tirunelveli District and an officer who had taken a leading part in the events of 1908.

MURDER OF ASHE

Vanchinadan shot Ashe, the District Madistrate of Tirunelveli on 17 June 1911, in a railway carriage at Maniyachi junction in Tirunelveli District. The assassin was accompanied by his brother-in-law Shankar Krishna Aiyar.

A letter was found in Tamil upon the body of the murderer which stated that

“Every Indian was trying to drive out the English and restore Swarajaya and Sanatan Dharma. Rama, Sivaji, Krishna, Guru Govind and Arjun ruled over the land protecting all religions, but now the English were preparing to crown in India, George V, a Melichha, who ate the flesh of cows. Three thousand Madrasis had taken a vow to kill George V as soon as he landed in the country. To make known

---

75 TNA seditious Committee Report, (1918) Calcutta, p. 150.
76 TNA Seitious Committee Report, 1918, Calcutta, p.151.
their intention to others, Vanchi, the least in the company had done that deed that day.\textsuperscript{77}

When Pillai came to know the murder of Ashe and the sacrifice made by Vanchi, he was moved and wrote the following letter.

“I extend my wishes to those who, following me, are conducting the Swadeshi agitation in a non-violent manner, even after my imprisonment. But I express my resent against the murders, taking place contrary to my principles. Our agitations are directed against the British rule only. Murdering British officials would not end the foreign rule. My principle is that no harm should come to their lives, though they are cruel. Please convey this to those involve in the revolution”.\textsuperscript{78}

When Chidambaram Pillai was at jail, his family suffered without any help, especially after the death of Meenashi’s father. As long as Gnanadesingan was there, the family was taken care of but after his demise, Meenakshi was left alone and was crowded with many problems.

**PILLAI’S LIFE AFTER RELEASE**

After undergoing full terms of sentence, Chidambaram Pillai was released from Cannanore central jail on 12 December 1912. After long travails in Coimbatore, which included solitary confinement for some time, he was at last transferred to the Cannanore jail in kerala.

Soon after his release Pillai had to face a number of prolems. when Pillai came out of prison his friends disowned him. Being afraid of the British

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{78} Ma. Po. Sivagnanam, Kappal Ottiya Tamilan, p.84.
Government they avoided his company. He was helpless and above all he could not practice as the Vakil Sannad was cancelled.

Another trouble dogged him. As the British Government was greatly afraid of Pillai, even after his release, it did not permit him to enter his native District, Tirunelveli.

With firm faith in God, Pillai turned to earn a scanty livelihood. Having learnt the value of silence which the prison had taught him, without a murmur, he accepted his state and took interest in Tamil literature as a manager in the insurance company

After his release from the jail, he was employed in Coimbatore in an insurance company as a manager for which he was paid Rs.12/- per month. But he could not prolong his stay there, as he had always conflicts with British officials.

Once Pillai went for field work and came late to the company. When he was questioned by the authorities, he gave his explanation, but the officials were not satisfied with Pillai’s explanation and questioned him again. As Pillai could not tolerate it, he simply left the company once and for all.⁷⁹ C.K.Subramaniya Mudaliyar a Friend his best to compromise Pillai with the English. But he failed to do so.

**PILLAI AT MADRAS**

After this, Pillai settled at Madras. He took tuition for students and even ran a provisions store selling rice, ghee and household needs. This patriot could not run his shop like other as he had no business motives. He tried a ghee shop at

---
⁷⁹ Ma. Po. Sivagnanam, Kappal Otiya Tamily, p.84.
Chintadripet and one at Mylapore. He failed to run both shops with profit motives.\textsuperscript{80}

In spite of his hand to mouth existences, he still took some interest in public affairs by working as Vice-President of the Railway Labour Union in Perambur.\textsuperscript{81}

He also visited his friends at Pondicherry and encouraged them. Pillai never felt that he had done something great for his country and never felt proud of himself. At that time, the poet Bharathi was living at Pondicherry at Eswaran Dharma Raja Koil Street along with seven members who were working in India.\textsuperscript{82}

Pillai made an appeal to British Government to get back his Vakil Sannad. The same was granted by the judge E.H.Wallace. In ever loving memory of this judge, he named one of his sons after him as Walleswaran.\textsuperscript{83} After getting back the Sannad, he practiced at kovilpatti as a Lawyer and after that he moved to Thoothukudi. In 1912 Pillai was at Kovilpatti and was practicing. When P.Sri called on him he saw him with Tirukkural. Pillai used to attend the lectures delivered by P.Sri on Kamba Ramayanam. At that time, he was much involved in Tamil literature.\textsuperscript{84}

In 1931, Pillai appealed for N.Somayajulu and others in connection with a prohibition case at kovilpatti. When the British Government filed a case under section 108 of IPC against M.S.Subramaniya Iyyer, Kuppusamy Mudaliyar and Deiva Nakaiya at Kovilpatti, Pillai appeared for those nationalists. They were charged on the ground that they induced the spirit of Nationalism among the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[80] Ma. Po. Sivagnanam, Kappal Ottiya Tamilan, p.84
\item[81] ibid, p.85
\item[82] ibid, p.86
\item[83] ibid, p.87
\item[84] ibid, p.88
\end{footnotes}
people by holding meetings. Pillai not only appeared for them but also fed them in his house.\textsuperscript{85}

**RETIREMENT FROM POLITICS**

Tilak was released from Mandalay jail in Burma n 1914. When the world was started, William Kaiser of Germany wanted to crush the British Empire. One of kasser’s plans was to incite an All India revolt during the war. The Revolutionary patriots of India carried it out with large scale arms supplied by Germany. Indian patriots abroad had been keeping in touch with leaders in India and organising underground opposition to the British.

Efforts were made to bring together the Nationalists and the Moderates into Congress. On his release from Burma Tilak contacted all his lieutenants to make himself up-to-date on all that happened during his absence. Summoned by Tilak, Pillai went to Poona, and met Tilak on 6 March 1915. Pillai and Tilak discussed many things. Recalling these discussions Pillai had said in Reminiscence of Tilak Vol. III.

He (Tilak) had a talk with me about the war in Europe and about a message that he had received from some of the Indian patriots who were then in Germany. The message was to the effect that certain occasions might arise during the course of the war and that Indian leaders should do such and such things on those occasions. We discussed for two or three days about the advisability, possibility and probable result of our carrying out the terms of the message. Here my Guru

\textsuperscript{85} Ma. Po. Sivagnanam, Kappalottiya Tamilan, p.89
predicted that the occasions referred to in the message might not arise at all as there were several complications in Europe in connection with the war.\(^{86}\)

The guarded reference to “certain occasional” obviously refers to a plan for a revolt in India aided by the Germans. The Germans did try to lend arms to India, but as foreseen by Tilak, the occasion for the all India uprising didn’t come through as the British got wind of the schemes and nipped everything in the bud.

During these discussions Tilak is also reported to have told Pillai “Let each patriot do what he deemed best for the country, let not others put obstacles on his way”.

When Pillai asked about the advisability of Patriots accepting Government service, Tilak reported to have said, “Yes, I want all Government officers, both civil and military, to be occupied by real patriots. If all the Governors and the Governor Generals are real patriotic Indians, we have then attained Swaraj”\(^{87}\). Regarding entering legislative councils, Tilak said, “I want real patriot to occupy not only all seats in all legislative councils but also all seats and offices in all the institutions of the country, which will bring power, influence and money”\(^{88}\).

**AGAINST HOME RULE MOVEMENT**

Home Rule movement was started by Tilak along with Annie Beasant. But Chidambaram Pillai did not join the movement was noted for his principles and he never adapted any ideas without much thought. He explained his stand to Tilak during his Madras visit in December 1919.

---

\(^{86}\) R.A. Padmanaban, *V.O. Chidambaram Pillai*, p. 86.
\(^{87}\) Ibid., p. 86.
\(^{88}\) Ibid., pp. 86-87
“I am your followers. But I am keeping out because you have tied yourself with Besant in the Home Rule Movement. I have no confidence in that lady.”

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHIDAMBARAM PILLAI AND GHANDHIJI

When Pillai was at Madras, Gandhi came to know about his poverty and wanted to help him. During Pillai’s trial Ghandhi was in South Africa and had been fighting for the cause of the Tamilians. The Tamilians of the South Africa had great sympathy for Pillai and thanks to the efforts of Ghandhi and others, a fund was raised to help Pillai. Pillai’s relative Arumugam Pillai and Vedavalli Pillai were also there. The photo of Pillai was sold for four Annas and by all these efforts a sum around Rs. 2000 to Rs. 3000 was collected. Even though the money was collected during Pillai’s trial, it did not reach him until 1917.

When Ghandhi came to know of it, he made some arrangements and a sum of amount Rs.2000 or Rs. 3000 was sent to Pillai. Pillai was moved by this and asked Ghandhi the name of the donars and sent his Tamil work to all of them expressing his gratitude. For all the help that he received from Arumugam and Vedavalli, of South Africa, he named one of his sons and daughters as Arumugam and Vedavalli.

In 1920, Pillai went to Calcutta to attend the Congress session. Even though Pillai had great love and respect for Ghandhi personally, he did not take part in Non-Co-operation Movement and at the end, he resigned from Congress itself.

---

89 R.A. Padmanaban, V.O. Chidambaram Pillai, p. 86.
90 Ibid., p. 87.
Again he joined the Congress party in 1927 and presided over the Salem District Congress conference. But after this, Pillai didn’t have any touch with the Congress for some reason. At that time, the Justice Party wanted to use Pillai on their side. But he was unwilling to join that party.

When Chidambaram Pillai was struggling hard for his existence, he was helped by his Guru Tilak. Tilak had been sending Rs.100/- every month from the Deccan University Fund for three years\(^{92}\).

He was patronized by A.C.S. Kandasamy Chettiyar. The latter give him generously and Pillai referred to it that A.C.S. Kandasamy Chettiyar was to him like Jamnalal Bajaj was to Ghandhi. A.C.S. Kandasamy Chettiyar was a small Jamindar of Tiruchendhur and was the Chairman of the Temple Trust Board, when he was charged for the misappropriation of the Temple Fund, Pillai appeared for him\(^{93}\).

Velayutham Pillai also helped Chidambaram Pillai for the publication of his books\(^{94}\).

In spite of his limited means, he never refused to help anyone in need. For instance when a Tamil poet approached him for money, Pillai gave him Rs. 1000/- and he did not worry about his family\(^{95}\).

**UNHONOURED IN DEATH**

Chidambaram Pillai was sick for a month in 1936. On his death bed he asked his friends to take him to the Congress Committee office at Thoothukudi and asked

---

\(^{93}\) Ibid. p.90
\(^{94}\) Ibid. p.91
\(^{95}\) Ibid. p.92
to sing poet Bharathi’s songs. Till his last breath he was a patriot in the true sense and wanted to see his mother country’s Independence before his death.

Thiyagi Siva Gurunathan, Freedom fighter, took V.O.Chidambaram Pillai to the Congress Committee office along with his friends. Pillai passed away while hearing the song Enru Thaniyum Entha Suthathira Thagam⁹⁶. His star was not bright even after his death. It is ironical that the North Indians realized the value of Pillai more than the South Indians. At Surat Congress session, Aurobind Ghosh searched for him. The late President Rajendra Prasad called on him at his residence at Thoothukudi when he was in bed in 1936⁹⁷.

Only on 21 December 1939, the Congress Committee of Madras erected a statue of Chidambaram Pillai. The statue was unveiled by S.S. Rajan and S. Sathiyamoorthy presided over the function.

In 1949, a ship was launched between Thoothukudi and Colombo in the name of V.O. Chidambaram Pillai, Governor General Rajaji inaugurated it on 9 February 1949⁹⁸.

As the ship which was named after Pillai failed to spread the fame of Pillai, A.P.C. Veerabahu has started a College at Thoothukudi to commomorate his venerable name and “Just to cherish the memory of Chidambaram Pillai.

⁹⁶ Souvenir. V.O. Chidambaram Centenary Souvenir V.O.C. Centenary Committee, Tuticorin, 1972. p76
⁹⁷ Ma. Po. Sivagnanam, Kappal Ottiya Tamilan, P. 111.
⁹⁸ Souvenir. V.O. Chidambaram Centenary Souvenir V.O.C. Centenary Committee, Tuticorin, 1972. p.77
At the time of the world Tamil conference seminar in 1968 a statue of V.O.C. was installed at Marina, Madras.

Chidambaram Pillai’s birth centenary was celebrated at Thoothukudi and Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi released a souvenir in 1972.