CONCLUSION
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The Swadeshi movement which had its origin in Bengal spread even to the remote corners of India and Thoothukudi too was not spared. The S.S.N.Co. was the off-spring of the Swadeshi movement. The merchants of Thoothukudi were paying exorbitant amounts to the B.I.S.N.Co. for the transport of their goods. The passengers too had to pay a large fare. In spite of minting money this way, the B.I.S.N.Co. meted out only a step-motherly treatment to the Indians. This provided the basic urge to the merchant of Thoothukudi to have a Steam Navigation Company of Swadeshi origin.

From the time of the Poligars uprisings of the late eighteenth century, the people of Thoothukudi had acquired a reputation for rebellion and pronounced anti-British feeling. The way in which they responded to the Swadeshi Movement and nationalism reflected their traditions of resistance and struggle.

The role played by V.O Chidambaram Pillai, as he came to be known, in the Extremist movement, that swept Thoothukudi in the opening decade of the twentieth century is not easily exaggerated. VOC was an exceptionally talented organizer and propagandist, and an individual who believed in utilizing all available avenues to rouse the people. He possessed many of the qualities associated with outstanding leadership.

Pillai, the Swadeshi champion, from Thoothukudi was the ideal man to set into motion the formation of a S.S.N.Co. with his sincerity, courage and patriotism he could provide the right leadership as he had already established a few Swadeshi concerns in Thoothukudi. When the merchants aired their ideas, serious steps were taken to start such a company.
VOC was born in Ottapidaram in Thoothukudi district and graduated from Caldwell College, Thoothukudi. Before beginning his law studies, he worked for a brief period as the taluk office clerk. VOC began his professional career as a lawyer rather successfully; had he not come into conflict with a certain Thoothukudi judge, he might perhaps have led a conflict life as a prosperous lawyer. His tussle with the judge forced him to seek fresh pastures at Thoothukudi in 1900. Until 1905, professional and journalistic activities consumed most of his energy. The latter helped him make the acquaintance of a number of literary figures, including P.Pandithoreysamy Thevar, Zamindar of Palavanatham, President of the Tamil Sangam and destined to become an important supporter of VOC’s commercial enterprise, the Swadeshi Steam Navigation company.

Towards the end of 1905, VOC visited Madras and was drawn closer to the Swadeshi movement by his contact with Bharati and the Mandayam family. From this point onwards, he became increasingly involved in Swadeshi activism. By 1906, he had won the support of merchants and industrialists in Thoothukudi for the idea of establishing a Swadeshi Steam Navigation company.

The S.S.N.Co. was registered on 16 October 1906 under the Indian Companies Act of 1882 under registration no.13 of 1906. The capital of the company was Rs.10,00,000/- divided into 40,000 shares of Rs.25/- each. This company was to be held exclusively to the Indians, Ceylonese and citizens of other nations of the East. P.Pandithoreysamy Thevar, zamindar of Palavanatham, a great Tamil scholar and the president of the Madura Tamil Sangm, was the President and Secretary of the company.

Along with the President, the company had thirteen members on the initial Board of Directors. They were P.Pandithoreysamy Thevar (Ex.officio),
S.V. Nallaperumal Pillai, A.M.M. Arunachalapillai, S.S.V. Krishna Pillai, S.T.A. Arumugam Pillai, A.S.V. Velayutham Pillai, V.A.A. Venkatachalam Chettiar, A.A.A. Aumuga Chettiar, N.S. Deivanayagam Pillai, M.V. Maya Nadar, Ismail Hajee Abdul Rahim Sait, A.D. Solaimalai Thevar and others elected as the directors during the first meeting and its maximum strength was raised to thirty five.

The company was started as a joint stock company. People from different fields readily bought shares and the company grew steadily and became so strong that it posed a serious threat to the very existence of the British company. The Britishers, to begin with, took the Swadeshi company lightly and even described it as “a nine day wonder”. But the growth of the company was so real and intense that the Britishers panicked. This led to a rate war, with the British reducing their fare first.

The Swadeshi Company promptly respondent by reducing its own rate. The successive reduction of rate went to the extent of offering free trips and the British company even presented an umbrella along with the free trip. The British company was an established one and it could absorb these losses due to the rate war without much do. But the Swadeshi Company was just an infant then, needing all financial income it could help collect. It could not pay the last installment due on the purchase of its steamers. This was in spite of the fact that the people supported the S.S.N.Co. in an overwhelming way.

Seeing that the popularity of S.S.N.Co. could not be suppressed easily, the Britishers could not help turning to the British Government in India to save itself from sinking into total oblivion. To entice the ignorant Swadeshi, the British company even advertised itself as “Swadeshi passenger a Tapal company”. The most desperate effort taken by the British company was the attempt to buy off
Pillai. When all these varied tactics failed, the British company turned to its British Government in India for help.

First, Waller came to the help of the British company. With the help of the British Government, a dirty and dishonest counter offensive was launched against the S.S.N.Co. The workers of the company were continuously harassed and false charges were framed against them. This acted as a deterrent and a fear of the official machinery started creeping into the minds of the people. Seeing that Government was antagonistic, the business minded directors of the S.S.N.Co. forbade Pillai from taking part in the Swadeshi movement.

As a climax, Pillai was arrested for organising a meeting to celebrate the release of Bipin Chandra Pal. Such an innocuous act was treated as treason and Pillai was sentenced to transportation for life. Once Pillai was sentenced, the company was like a ship without its captain. The bickering and quarrels lying dormant among the directors came to the fore. To add to this difficulty there was a shortage of funds in the company. Seeing that without Pillai the company would not run and that the Government would not rest till the competition by S.S.N.Co was crushed, the directors decided to sell away the steamers. But the directors were so chicken hearted that they sold their steamers to the very same company against which they were fighting tooth and nail. Their business motive, fear of the Government and lack of patriotism resulted in the collapse of the company.

The S.S.N.Co.’s fall was also caused by the fact that it was started at a most unfavourable period. The Britishers were earning a lot and could not have liked to lose their easy money. Swadeshism just then was taking root and one could not have expected a timid and self centred board of directors to go all out to fight the foreign powers which were then so mighty all over the world.