INTRODUCTION
INTRODUCTION

During the early period of Indian History, most of the women kept away from politics. Yet a few made marks in war, diplomacy and administration. However, the medieval period produced some prominent women administrators and rulers. During the first war of independence of 1857 Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi emerged as a great heroine. Except Rani Lakshmi Bai, the other prominent women who participated in the 1857 revolt were Rani Trace Bai, Begum Hazrat Mahal, Lalita Bakshi Talkari, Kasibai, Motizal and Rani of Tulsipur. Their extraordinary courage, integrity, self-respect, combined with the spirit of sacrifice, dedication and devotion to motherland, made them the champions of freedom movement. They symbolized the spirit and qualities of Indian womanhood. They also surpassed them all by jumping quickly into politics in large number and demanded political rights equal to those of men.

The women played a significant role in politics in India. Besides Indian women, European women also entered the Indian political scene and started a number of organizations and volunteered their services. For instance, Annie Besant played a prominent role for the awakening of Indian women in politics. She proclaimed that self government was not as a reward but as a right. To achieve the goal with law abiding and constitutional methods, she founded the Home Rule League in September 1916. Sarojini Naidu, Kamala Devi Chattopadhyay, Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur worked along with her in the freedom movement. The other remarkable women freedom fighters in Tamilnadu were Rukmini Lakshmipathi, Ambujammal, Janammal, Vai .Mu. Kothainayagiammal, Padmavathi Asher and Padmasini Ammal
participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement. They actively participated in the hartals, students strike and other demonstrations. Thus, the tremendous work of women's movement greatly awakened the women of Tamil Nadu which later on helped India to get independence.

**Scope**

The topic related to the recent past and hence much attention has not been so far focused on the positive work by any researcher in this field. The area selected for the study is present day Tamilnadu and the period fixed for the study is from 1885, when the Indian National Congress was started to 1947, when British rule came to an end.

**Period of Study**

The Proposal research work on the topic, "Women freedom Fighters in Tamil Nadu" covers the period from 1885 till India attained independence in the year 1947. The thesis is limited only to women of Tamil Nadu who participated in the different phases of the freedom struggle. This work is specially devoted to the Gandhian era. Immediately after joining the Congress Organization, Gandhiji brought out complete change in its Constitution and transformed it into a democratic and mass organization. Subsequently this paved the way for women to join the movement.

**Limitation of the study**

The major limitation of the study is the paucity of written records. It is evident that women of Tamil Nadu actively participated in the freedom
struggle, the police were hesitant to arrest them in the early stages of the struggle and hence the police reports are far from complete in this respect. Even the contemporary newspapers did not provide a vivid picture, because whenever any major political agitation took place in the country, rigorous censorship was clamped down on the newspapers. Nevertheless they still furnish some information, which is very useful.

Hypothesis

Mass participation of women in the national movement was a unique phenomenon. There were contemporaneous western models women in the west were primarily involved in the demand for suffrage, they were motivated by a desire for personal gain and for benefiting their own group. On the other hand, women of India were generally committed to the independence of the country; they felt a sense of national pride of the Indian society and culture. The nationalist movement made it possible for women, wives and mothers to identify themselves with public life and seek fulfillment in their personal lives. The participation of women in the nationalist movement created a tradition of female involvement in politics. The involvement of women in the nationalist struggle guaranteed recognition of women's right in the post-independent India.

Sources of information

The study is entirely based on both Primary and Secondary sources. The important primary sources to be consulted for the preparation of
this dissertation are the sources available in the Archives, University and Public Libraries. Tamil Nadu Archives furnishes a real wealth of information such as History of Freedom Movement Bundles, Under Secretary Safe Files, Fortnightly Report from 1914 to 1947, Proceedings of the Madras Legislative Assembly 1937-1939, 1946-1947, Madras Legislative Council 1921-1960.


Tamil Nadu by Rajalekshmi, Dictionary of National Biography I to III by S.P.Sen, March to Freedom in Madras Presidency by Saroja Sundararajan, who's who of freedom fighters in Tamil Nadu, Women's movement in India by Prathima Asthana, Elite women in Indian Politics by Agnew Vijay, Freedom Movement in India 1859-1947 by Vaidehi Krishnamurthi. The Congress in Tamil Nadu: The Nationalist politics of South India 1919-1937 by David Arnold, Freedom struggle in India by Ahluwalia, The Role of women in Indian struggle for freedom by B.S.Basu, Madras in the struggle for freedom by B.S.Baliga are some of the important sources for this research work.

**Chapterisation**

This study is consisted of five chapters excluding introduction and conclusion. The first chapter deals with women participants of the Swadeshi Movement like A.Saalambigai Ammal and Agil andammal. They were the prominent women who participated in the Swadeshi Movement. They not only the picketed the foreign cloth shops but also burnt the foreign cloths in public place. They also actively participated in Khadi programmes.

The second chapter explains certain important incidents which encouraged the women to involve in the Home Rule Movement with special reference to Annie Besant. She was an Irish-born Indian Citizen and her political activities in Tamil Nadu between 1916 to 1920 deals with the work of Annie Besant in the struggle for freedom. She was the greatest social and political reformer in Madras Presidency and she founded the Home Rule League in 1916. She organized strikes, hartals and students demonstration
for the awakening of Indian women into politics throughout the length and breadth of India, and helped to create political consciousness among the women of Tamil Nadu.

The content of the third chapter is the Non-Co-operation Movement and Khilafat Movement which describes the anti-British activities of women under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi in India as well as Tamil Nadu. There were some women participated actively in the Congress programmes such as picketing of liquor shops, boycott of foreign cloths, promotion of Khadhi and conducting meetings against British Government. Nagammal, the wife of E.V.Ramaswami Naicker and Kannammal, his sister played a vital role in the Non-Co-Operation movement in Tamil Nadu. Women also did their best to encourage men to participate in the struggle and were helping to carry on the non-violent Satyagraha. In the meanwhile in South Arcot District Anjalai Ammal, Ambujammal of Madras also participated in the Congress programmes and anti British activities met the same punishment and they were convicted and sentenced to imprisonment.

The fourth chapter explains the participation of women in the Civil Disobedience Movement. Rukmini Lakshmipathi, Lakshmi Bharathi, Ambujammal, Janammmal, Vai.Mu.Kotlaibayagi Ammal and Margaret Cousins, an ardent Congress Worker, took part in Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930-1932 and were arrested. In TamilNadu Padmavathi Asher played an important role in the Nationalist movement.
The fifth chapter described the women's role in the Quit India Movement. The Quit India Movement was the last all India Movement was the last all India Satyagraha conceived by Gandhi on the Indian Soil. Gandhiji announced Quit India Movement in 1942 against the British administration during the crucial time when Second World War was going on. In every province they were glorious tales to tell about the heroic part played by women. In Madras Ammu Swaminathan, Anjalai Ammal, Manjubashini and Rukmini Laksmipathi were participated convicted and sentenced to imprisonment. After the end of the war the British Prime Minister Clement Attlee announced on 20 February 1947 that the British would transfer power to India. India was partitioned and became independent on 15 August 1947. The Nationalist movement paved the way for women to gain access in political activities and later became rulers of India as Prime Minster and Chief Ministers.