

The Role Of In V.O.C. Home Rule Movement-1915-1920- A Study

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ABSTRACT

The Government was very careful in stopping the re-plantation of V.O.C. in Tirunelveli again in the beginning for sometime. So he was asked not to enter his home district since he was very popular man in Tirunelveli, So he concentrated his energy in writing and publishing various Tamil Books during this time and published the following Books ‘Meiyarivu’, ‘Meiyaram’, and ‘Tadarthirattu’. In 1914, Lokmanya Tilak, was making serious effort to bring together his followers and the moderates into the United fold of Congress. On March 8, 1915, both Tilak and Chidambaram Pillai had some discussion on world affairs and Indian National interest. Within a year of this meeting, the Indian leaders like Tilak and Besant decided to put new life in the National Movement. On 28, April, 1916 the Indian Home Rule League was set-up with its Read Quarters at Pune by Lokmanya Tilak. It was thought that “the 2 extremists were likely to attend the meeting at Tuticorin Home Rule Movement in order to prevent a bigger agitation against the British in India. In May, 1918, V.O.C. along with Varadarajulu Naidu gave a lecture in Tanjore, and Subramania Siva was writing articles to papers and issuing leaflets for the organisation of a society to work for ‘Swaraj’ on the terms of “Old Nationalistic Lines”. At Madras on 20th February, 1919 about 4,000 people attended a meeting organised by Siva to protest against the Rowlatt Bill. Under the respectively of Madras Provincial Committee a meeting was held on 14 January 1920, Sadhu Ganapathi Banthulu of Tirunelveli presided.

KEY WORDS: Home Rule movement, V.O.C., Lokmanya Tilak, Annie Besant, Rowlatt Bill, Subrananya Siva, Hari Sharvothama Rao, Railway Workers, Satyamoorthy Iyer.

After his release from the jail, he faced a many number of problems of personal, private and public. The Government was very careful in stopping the re-plantation of V.O.C. in Tirunelveli again in the beginning for sometime. So he was asked not to enter his home district since he was very popular man in Tirunelveli, they expected Law and order problem because of his active previous public image. So they took measures already when he was in prison in suppressing his supporters and running the Navigation company by tactful means.

Because of the ban on his return to native district, he settled down in Madras and lived with his family from 1912 to 1920. During this period he suffered very much and there was no standard income for the maintenance of his family, more over he was debarred to practice as a pleader since his 'Sanned' to work as a pleader was cancelled for his anti-British activities. So he concentrated his energy in writing and publishing various Tamil Books during this time and published the following Books 'Meiyarivu', 'Meiyaram', and 'Tadarthirattu'. And through this he was serving his motherland by propagating morals and ethical code of conduct and Dharmic principles etc. as not removed from the active participation in freedom struggle.

It appears that he also eked-out his livelihood, by selling 'Ghee and Rice' in a small scale. All these work, for the upkeep of the family has not endangered his public life to a great extent. He continued his contact and connections with the leaders of the congress party of his own liking. In 1914, Lokmanya Tilak, was making serious effort to bring together his followers and the moderates into the United fold of Congress. Mr. Pillai on being summoned by Tilak reached Pune on

March 6, 1915 but unfortunately on that day Mr. Gokhale, the leader of Moderates passed away.

On March 8, 1915, both Tilak and Chidambaram Pillai had some discussion on world affairs and Indian National interest. They had discussed on subsequent days also about the existing world war-I and their attitudes by European countries.

Within a year of this meeting, the Indian leaders like Tilak and Besant decided to put new life in the National Movement. In November and December, 1915, Besant published a series of editorial on Home Rule. Tilak decided to use the term in the place 'Swaraj' as the goal of his movement. On 28, April, 1916 the Indian Home Rule League was set-up with its Head Quarters at Pune by Lokmanya Tilak. A similar Home Rule League was founded by Mrs. Besant on 15th September 1916 with its Head Quarters at Adyar in Madras. Tilak toured the country and made vigorous propaganda for attainment of Swaraj and Home Rule League became immensely popular.

As Tilak was popular in the North, Annie Besant was prominent in the south. She visited a number of places and enlisted popular support for the Home Rule agitation. In the south, meetings were held in every district and students strikes were organised in many colleges and schools. But the only meeting which had been stopped, was at Tuticorin. The particular meeting had to be prevented owing to the past history of Tuticorin.

It was thought that "the 2 extremists were likely to attend the meeting at Tuticorin and force the people against the wishes of other politicians. Chidambaram Pillai considered the arrival of Mrs. Besant in politics as "a mere pretence". He said that Mrs. Besant was an agent of the British, diverting attention to the Home Rule Movement in order to prevent a bigger agitation against the British in India and he thought that she was forcing her way into politics hoping to

off-set a possible revolt in India during the time of the war. Pillai was sore with his political Guru Tilak, who had been now-co-operating with her.

Hence V.O.C. began to oppose Besand slowly, and he began to participate in few publish meetings. In May, 1918, V.O.C. along with Varadarajulu Naidu gave a lecture in Tanjore, and Subramania Siva was writing articles to papers and issuing leaflets for the organisation of a society to work for 'Swaraj' on the terms of "Old Nationalistic Lines".

Chidambaram Filial and Krishnasamy Sharma joined hands with him and the movement seems to be sub-stantially identical with the Home rule campaign, and there were attempt to distinguish it by laying stress on social and religious reforms as an essential prelude to large political powers. In the same month, V.O.C. visited Perampur, and kanjeeपुरam and enlisted popular support for their campaign.

In January, 1919 the Indian Criminal Law Bill and Rowlett Bills, which provided authorities to use repressive measures to quell the Swaraj movement were introduced in the Imperial Legislative Council. These Bill aroused popular resentment and mass agitation through out India. At Madras on 20th February, 1919 about 4,000 people attended a meeting organised by Siva to protest against the Rowlatt Bill. At that meeting V.O.C. stressed that it was a tyranny, high handedness, injustice and cruelty of the British that provoked conspiracies against it. He further emphasised that the any course, left for those who were oppressed, was to runaway from the country or "to get out of the way of the Government or to get rid of the Government".

In a report of 18th February, 1919, sent by the Government of Madras to political Department of the Government of India: it is said that Pillai was appointed by Mr. Tilak as an organiser at Madras to form a Branch of the Home Rule League

of Pune, in which the whole hearted co-operation of Mr. Siva was available immediately.

Mr. V.O.C. carried on political propaganda in accordance with the policy of that pune Home Rule League. This branch, according to the report, was supported by Kasturi Ranga lyengar, the editor of the Hindu, Krishnasamy sharma and others were the strong-supporters of the movement, Krishnasamy Sharma in a casual conversation with an Officer of the Police Department said that Besant had no rights to speak on behalf of Indians on the subject of Home Rule or to advise them to accept installments and that the conditions in India would soon approximate to those in Ireland. V.O.C. and others were against Mrs. Besant and their aversion was so great that Mr. Siva wrote here name Annie Besant.

Probably in the same month of February, V.O.C. Chidambaram Pillai formed the Provincial Branch of Home Rule League of Pune at Madras. Siva and other nationalists also stood behind him in the league activities. Pillai became the secretary of the Tamil Provincial Branch of the League.

The leaders also concentrated on the Labour Movement and both Pillai and Siva had been addressing the meeting of “Tramway Workers” union and had dealt with methods of conducting strikes. Mr. Hari Sharvothama Rao also joined them in this work. And they were instrumental in organising the Tramway strike on 20th February, 1919 and it went till the end of March. His interests in the strike was more political it was to infuse the spirit of nationalism among the workers.

After the Tramway strike, they concentrated their work on Railway workers and on May 2, 1919, about 50 employees of the Madras and Southern Mahratta Railway Workers at Perambur formed worker’s Union to which Mr. Pillai was elected with rich tributes as its vice-President, while Mr. Ranganatha Naidu and Dhandapani Pillai were elected as President and Secretary.

Under the respectively of Madras Provincial Committee a meeting was held on 14 January 1920, Sadhu Ganapathi Banthulu of Tirunelveli presided. While Pillai, A. Rangasamy Iyer and Satyamoorthy delivered lectures. In the meeting V.O.C. expressed his displeasure against the Southern Mahratta Railway Workers Union, which joined with other unions headed by Mrs. Besant without his consent, though he was the Vice-President of the union.

He also criticised that the people should never forget why she entered politics. It was only because of after failure in other walks of life, she made the entry, V.O.C. said that she had “ignominiously” failed. During his speech he forcibly declared that the home Rule was the only cure for India’s political ills and grievances; that liberty was the most essential thing of everyone and that the aspiration to get one’s liberty was the essence of human nature. A small minority from outside India could not be allowed to rule the country arbitrarily and he became a staunch opponent of Mrs. Besant and her activities. He appealed through the columns of Newspaper of the danger of electing her as the president of the Congress.

After his release from prison, Chidambaram Pillai fought for his country mainly through the home Rule League and the emergence of Mrs. Besant on the national scene and her dominance in the politics of Madras Presidency had made Madras as the nucleus centre of Home Rule Agitation in India. It is true that Mrs. Besant paved the way for the emergence of a new force in the Indian National Movement and Chidambaram Pillai did not trust the leadership of Mrs. Besant. But he did not deviate even an inch from his avowed policy which was the establishment of “Swaraj”.

FOOT NOTES

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