



Quit India Movement In South Arcot District

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Abstract:

The present work analyses the political aspect of the Quit India Movement in South Arcot district and shows how these trends acted and reacted against each other and how different sections of the people reacted in South Arcot District. During the struggle for India's Independence, the contributions of South Arcot District deserve a deep study. The aim of the present study is to highlight the Quit India Movement events that took place in the various city, town and villages of South Arcot District in 1942 (August- December).

Keywords: Students, Womens, Mass Participation, Violence, Non-Violence, Extremism

Introduction:

The entry of Japan in the Second World War in December 1941 created a grave situation in Asia. The Allies desperately needed India's willing co-operation. The American public opinion pressed for a fair deal to India. The British Government decided to placate American criticism by sending out Sir Stafford Cripps to India. The Cripps Offer promised freedom after the war and at the same time, sought to introduce Pakistan through the back door. Regarding the present, it was proposed to Indians the Executive Council. But the reformed council was not to be treated as a responsible Cabinet. Besides, defence was to remain in British hands. No wonder, the Cripps mission was a failure. The manner in which negotiations ended sent a wave of resentment throughout the country. There was also the danger of India becoming a threat of war. All these induced Gandhiji and the Congress to make an all-out effort to get rid of the British rule. The nation could wait no longer for independence.

Methodology:

The present work follows descriptive and analytical method from a gender perspective. It also uses sociological approach for wider understanding of the subject matter. The present article involves a critical use of both primary and secondary sources based on external and internal criticism. The paper is basically compiled with various sources like books, journals and newspapers.

Discussions:

On 9th August, Gandhiji and other members of the Congress Working Committee were arrested and the prominent congress leaders were rounded up all over India. On 9th August, the Madras government declared the Tamilnadu Congress Committee as an unlawful association, confiscated its documents, funds and also, sealed the office. In a rapid sequence, the Madras Congress Committee and other local congress committee were also declared as illegal associations. Following the arrest of the congress leaders, protest meetings, strikes, picketing and other illegal activities burst forth in almost all the districts in Tamilnadu.

But no government faced with an impending foreign invasion from outside would tolerate the growth of a rebellion inside which was sure to hamper the efforts for defence against such

aggressions. The arrests aroused popular feelings and the leaderless masses lost all balance and self-control. They indulged in acts of violence to paralyse the activities of the Government. The bureaucracy retaliated with unprecedented ruthlessness and though it succeeded in putting down the open rebellion, an underground movement went on for several months.

The situation in the Presidency was much worse than elsewhere. Rajaji had resigned from the Congress on the issue of Pakistan and other leaders who would have had a restraining influence on the people had been incarcerated. College Students abstained from classes immediately after the movement was launched. In Loyola and Pachaiyappa's Colleges, students threw the stones at police and there was a lathi charge to disperse them. Throughout the movement in the Madras Presidency, the students of Loyola, Christian and Engineering Colleges figured prominently in staging demonstrations and obstructing electric trains braving lathi charges and whipping and courting imprisonment. The people were more or less left to themselves and their resentment in many places resulted in acts of violence. Indeed, a study of the records indicated that the policy of the Government was largely responsible for these acts of violence. The Government not only imprisoned all the leaders who could have exercised a restraining influence on the people but also banned all non-violent activities such as hartals, meetings, processions and demonstrations. The result was that popular violence broke out with virulence hitherto unknown in the political annals of the Madras Presidency. People lost patience, resorted to all sorts of acts, including sabotage and arson, and courted imprisonment in large numbers.

The situation of South Arcot district rendered spontaneous support to the Quit India Movement. On hearing the arrest of Gandhiji and other leaders, a large number of people in the district burst in rage and indulged in all sorts of anti-British activities including cutting of telephone and telegraph wires, burning of government buildings and toddy shops and pouring of acid in post boxes in August 1942. Despite these, without any care for police warnings, the congressmen of the district organized speeches and marches widely and intensively. On 9th August, a small protest meeting was held in Cuddalore, Chidambaram and other places. A few students stayed away from schools but there was no strike.

There was a meeting of the Annamalai University students in which they passed a resolution condemning the action of the Government in arresting the Congress leaders. The Vice-Chancellor at once sent for the professors to persuade the students to disperse and they did so. A procession taken out by the students at night was stopped at the intervention of the College Professors. In Chidambaram Annamalai University more than 50 per cent of the students stayed away from classes. The Vice-Chancellor warned the students against such activities.

On 10th August in Tirukoyilur taluk, congress volunteers meeting were held. On 11th August, at Chidambaram town, a congress meeting, proposed to be held in the evening, was banned under section 144, Cr.P.C. R. Vinayagam Pillai, M.A., B.L., the principal organizer, was arrested as he was about to address the meeting. The audience dispersed quietly. The students staged an unimpressive demonstration as the Hon'ble Mr. Aney was taken round the University Buildings.

The Movement took a violent turn by 12th August. The district Magistrate acted swiftly and ordered (Section 144) the banning of political demonstrations of all sorts in the busiest political centers such as Tindivanam, Cuddalore, Chidambaram, Nellikuppam, Villupuram and Valavanur.

The Porto Novo (Now Parangipettai) congressmen organized a meeting of about 60 persons which was dispersed by the police. The speaker was prosecuted under Town Nuisance Act, and sentenced to one week's R.I. In Tindivanam, a few cloth shops were closed for a few hours.

Three Congressmen were arrested from Chidambaram town under the D.O.I. Rules for surreptitiously arranging a meeting in defiance of the prohibitory orders in force in the town. On the night, telephone wires were cut at a secluded spot, between Cuddalore Old Town and New Town. The lines were repaired.

On 13th August, the Cuddalore Municipal High School and Men's Government Training School students were on strike and formed a small procession which passed off quietly. On that day the Panruti town Congressmen organized meeting which held without previous notice passed off quietly. The students of the Panruti School struck and led a procession which passed off without any incident. The strike was said to be engineered by two students who had come from Madras, and the local congresssites.

On 14th August, an attempt to go on strike in Pachiyappa's High School at Chidambaram and the students of High school at Virudhachalam fizzled out. In Virudhachalam taluk, two people were arrested for shouting slogans. The station Master received a notice from the secretary of a body styling itself "Free India League" to say that the railway station would be burnt and looted on the next day. Precautions were taken.

On 15th August, in the Small hours of the morning, one Municipal conservancy shed was burnt down in Cuddalore Town. It is not certain whether this was due to the Quit India Movement. Posters appeared on the walls of the Chidambaram University, exhorting the students not to lag behind the rest of the Presidency where students organised demonstrations against the action of the Government. An Annamalai University Organization has been formed with the object of promoting unlawful activities in connection with arrest of the leaders. Subscriptions at the rate of four annas per head were collected and the receipt bore the imprint "Freedom, Peace, and Progress."

On 17th August the District court arrested three persons who attempted to picket at Cuddalore. On that day, a procession of students organized in the morning did not materialize. The organizers were arrested. On the next day, picketing by some Annamalai University students within the university premises was reported. An effigy of Mr. Aney was burnt in the evening.

On 18th August, the congressmen of Chidambaram organized a mammoth procession. The local police used force and opened fire to disperse them. Many were seriously injured in the public firing. The coercive measures of the British infuriated Thiru D.Gopalasamy Naidu and the local congress people continued to stage demonstrations against the British. The south Arcot district Congress Committee met under the headship of Thiru D.Gopalasamy Naidu. In the evening of the day the gathering passed a resolution condemning the high handedness of the police. Mr. Naidu also referred the entire matter to the president of Tamilnadu Congress Committee in Madras. This letter addressed to the President was published in Kodinal dated 16th September 1942.

On 19th August, in Annamalai University, after a decision to call off the strike in the morning, the students resumed strike in the afternoon. In this connection, one Baladandayutham,

a dangerous Communist was arrested on suspicion but was subsequently released. The two members of the staff were reported to be hand in glove with the strike. Their names were communicated to the Director of public Instruction. One person was arrested for shouting slogans in Cuddalore and Kallakurichi.

The Youth Congress men took a major part in violent activities, especially communication network, with the object of paralyzing the functioning of the administrative machinery. Some of the Youth Congress men at 100 feet telegraph wires and 20 feet Public Working Department (PWD) telephone wires were stealthily cut at Titagudi about 60 miles from Cuddalore. The lines were restored. Five youth were arrested in this connection.

On 20th August, a mob of 500 raised a blockade on the road leading to the collectorate at Cuddalore. Then the intervention of police said that two persons convicted for Qui India Cuddalore and sentenced to one week rigorous imprisonment. In this connection, with each man under the Town Nuisance Act, one person was similarly convicted at Kallakurichi.

On 23rd August, the Subdivisional Magistrate received an anonymous letter from a "Justice" stating that some Government servants were trying to set fire to the records of the stationary in the Sub-Magistrate's office at Tirukovilur. Police made enquiries in this connection. On the same day, at Bhuvanagiri, a village situated eight Kilometers away from Chidambaram, some congress men and students cut off telephone wires. The police was not able to trace out the connection, students of Annamalai University, but arrested six students namely K.Prakasam. G.Muthusami, R.Govindaswami, R.Gopalan, Rajadurai, Michael and C.R.Narasimaraj. They were convicted at Madras, Coimbatore and Trichinopoly jails.

On the same day in an anti-British procession was organized the precisionists were going along the south car street at Chidambaram. Abrutly, a group of local police interfered and dispersed them by lathi charging. Many were injured in the police assault. This high handedness of the police action resulted in widespread tension and its repercussions were widespread throughout the district. The local leaders all over the district conveyed their sympathy to the people of Chidambaram and vehemently condemned the police repression. But these types of police repressions did not deter their nationalistic activities.

A number of anti-war slogans were found on the walls of several buildings in Tiruvannainallur. Some civic guards resigned and joined the Congress. When questioned by the Circle Inspector of Police, they said that they resigned as they feared that they would be used for suppressing the civil disobedience movement in the villages. Subsequently, all except one stated that they resigned because they were not paid batta for the days on which they had worked.

On 28th August, 12 Young boys at Kurinjipadi went in a procession and then attempted to picket the local school but they were driven off. They were charged under the town Nuisance Act. At the same time, a crowd of people ran along the railway line to stop the train in Kullanchavadi Station near Cuddalore. They dispersed on seeing the police.

The movement reached its climax towards the end of August. It may be said that the people of the district more or less forgot the Gandhian creed of non-violence and let themselves move towards violence. On 30th August, a toddy shop was picketed in Cuddalore and Tirukovilur and

two people were arrested. In Tindivanam and Kllakurichi taluks there was a small protest meeting and eleven local congress leaders were arrested for requesting Government to release them at once. Two of the speakers were arrested under the D.O.I. Rules. Tirukovilur, two congress men picketed on the road leading to the District Munsif's Court. They were arrested. At Ananthapuram village in Gingee taluk an attempt was made to loot paddy. Similar incidents, occurred in other places in the district.

On 1st September, a couple of Congressmen at Tirukovilur went round the streets shouting slogans asking Government servants to resign and vakils not to attend the courts, etc. In this issue, the court order of section 144 was promulgated partial, hartal on that day shops reopening at 2 p.m. Congress men indulged in cutting of 2000 feet telephone and telegraph wires at a spot 11 miles from Tirukkoyilur. The police enquiries were made in that connection. In the morning, one fish-plate was found removed between the Tiruvannainallur and Kandamanadi railway Stations. A gang man discovered it and stopped the oncoming passenger train in time. The damage was repaired and the train started after a delay of 47 minutes. On 3rd September, thirteen telephone wires were cut between Cuddalore new town & old town, at a secluded spot. The wires were set right. A Congress member was arrested at Tirukkoyilur and two at Tiruvannainallur.

After the issue of a Government Communiqué on 2nd September, warned students that disciplinary action would be taken against them if they continue to be absent, the students of all the colleges in the city, somewhat tardily, called off the strike. Attendances in all the city colleges and schools are now normal. Some students had, however, vacated the hostels on the ground that they were not allowed to fly the Congress flag in the hostels. On 5th September two students were convicted and whipped for throwing stones at a suburban train. "This aroused a large volume of protest in the press and elsewhere. But the offences by students on the Railway line stopped from that day."

On 6th September, a meeting of the University Union was held under the presidency of the student chairman when the Whipping Act was condemned. Resolutions of sympathy with the students who were whipped at Saidapet and demanding the repeal of the whipping Act were passed. It was also resolved to strike on the 7th of September. There was also a procession inside the University led by about 30 lady students. The processionists returned to the Women's Hostel, hoisted the congress flag, but the procession was dispersed. The post office letter box, when opened, was found to contain some acid which apparently had been poured into it by some miscreants with the result that one cover and three post cards were found destroyed. The matter was investigated by the police.

On 8th September, the Vice-Chancellor, Annamalai University issued a notice to the students that the names of those who did not come to classes would be struck off the rolls. Annamalai University students absented from attending classes saying that all the names might be struck off the rolls. Picketing by girls was resorted to and a few Congress flags were hoisted within the University premises. The students of the Annamalai University continued on strike as a protest against the whipping of the two students in Madras. The University was closed early for the Michaelmas holidays. The illness and death on 10th September of Sir K. Kurma Reddi, the Vice-

Chancellor, deprived the University of its Controlling Authority at a critical period. But the students were not responsible for any acts of violence during the month of the civil disturbances. On that issue, the Annamalai University closed for 40 days till 20th October 1942.

On 14th September, at Thiyagadurgam, congressmen cut off telegraph wires. Six feet of wire was found missing. Cycle patrols were arranged and village servants of certain villages also patrolled the area. On 28th September, 15 feet length of telegraph wire was cut near Kallakurichi. The police promptly arrested the culprit and seized the wire from him numerous. Similar events took place in throughout the district. In connection with this, Govindasamy and Appavoo were arrested.

On 2nd October, an attempt was made to take out a procession in connection with “Gandhi Jayanti” celebration. The organizers were arrested and convicted on the same day. A similar procession was attempted at Chidambaram, but the timely intervention of police dispersed the gathering. On 7th October, T.K. Kothandaram, who was the author of several anonymous letters to officers asking them to resign and to the Railway Station Master, Cuddalore new town, threatening to burn down the station, was arrested and detained at the local sub-jail. On 18th October, report received from Joint Magistrate in Tindivanam, regarding the cutting of telegraph wire and the same day damaging of two telegraph posts in a firka of Gingee taluk.

The movement began to decline towards the end of October 1942. The government was also resorting to repressive measures continuously and thereby many, including R.Jaganatha Reddiar and Ramasamy of Villupuram, were clapped into prison. They were arrested on 18th December, 1942. However, the movement came to an end by end of December, when the repressive measures became limitless. Thereafter, the people of the district became outwardly calm as they had no possibility to continue their protests in the face of the armed British.

The agitation was resumed in Tamil Nadu when Gandhiji commenced his 21 day fast on 10 Feb 1943. In Madras, hartal was observed in front of the State Secretariat and several activists were arrested towns like Trichy, and Madurai . In the agitation was widespread and many courted arrest. On 9th August 1944 , the people of Tamil Nadu celebrated the Second anniversary of the Quit India Movement⁶² Congress swept the polls in the Provincial election held in 1946 and on 30 April 1946 T. Prakasan formed the ministry. Political prisoners were released. T.Prakasam was succeeded by O.P.Ramswamy Reddiar (23 March 1947) C. Rajagopalachari was included in the Indian Government headed by Nehru. Of the 49 representatives sent from the Madras Presidency to the Constituent Assembly 22 were from Tamil Nadu.

When India became Independent on the mid-night of 14-15 August 1947, Tamil Nadu celebrated the event with geity, gust and happiness. The National Tricolour Flag with Ashok Chakra in the middle was hoisted in St. George Fort replacing the Union Jack Flag. The Madras Legislature formally adopted a resolution welcoming the transfer of power of India. Tamil Nadu reverberated with the Bharathi song Aduvome pallu paduvome, Ananda swathantiram Adaintanvittom Enru.

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