



QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT IN THE DEVAKOTTAI TALUK OF SIVAGANGAI DISTRICT, 1942-1943

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Abstract

Movement in India Rowlett Satyagraha (1919), the Non-Aligned Movement (1920-22), the Civil Disobedience Movement (1930-34), the individual satyagraha (1940) and Quit India Movement (1942) are a remarkable major event in the history of the Indian Freedom Struggle. They're the non-violent struggles for Indian independence rehearsal prepared for immediately after the Second World War to the dominion of India Cripps Mission eligibility belated announcement of the promise. Cripps titirena went to leave particularly India (12 April-1942) in pursuit of the British government, aroused suspicion and the thread of Japanese invasion of India was at any given time. Britain, India to save the event of such a situation was to no guarantee. British invoking stayed Japan to attack India. During the struggle of Quit India Movement, urban centres played a dominant role in Devakottai, a taluk of Sivagangadistrict in Tamil Nadu, was one such nationalist urban centre whose contribution deserves a deep study.Devakottai was an active town in the Indian Independence Movement. So, the struggle Gandhi a launched the Quit India Movement. The municipalcourt of Devakottai was burned to the ground during the Quit India Movement.

Keywords: Gandhiji, Quit India, Devakottai, Struggle, Resolution, Quit India Resolution.

Introduction

The Quit India movement saw the yearning of freedom flow through every Indian's blood, making it a massive movement of mass participation. The country was more determined than ever to "do or die" in the case of India's freedom. The movement ignited the spirit of freedom like never before and spread throughout the country like wild fire affecting each Indian heart. Once the idea was born, it gripped Gandhiji completely and he started devoting all this time to the elucidation and justification of his formula which soon became famous as the "Quit India" demand. It is remarkable that although throughout the year 1942, an atmosphere of tense excitement prevailed in many parts of India, there was no communal disorder anywhere except on a very minor scale in isolated areas. The third stage witnessed the birth of Non-Co-operation Movement, the Civil Disobedience Movement and Quit India Movement. These three movements were the brainchild of Mahatma Gandhi. Of these three phases, the Quit India Movement played a vital role in the freedom struggle. Devakottai taluk of Sivanga District which was part of the Ramanathapuram district during the Quit India Movement of 1942 lies in south western Tamil Nadu in India. This taluk was also the home of the freedom fighters which proved by the fact that the number of participants in the Quite India movement in the district. An earlier many attempts were attempted to survey the participation of freedom fighters in the taluk of Devakottai in every phase of the Independence struggle.

Birth of Quit India Movement

India's struggle for freedom, reached the peak with the passage of Quit India Resolution, which reverberated the national demand for independence and declared that India could line up with the Allies in the war only as a free nation. In March 1940, the Congress met in sessions at Ramgarh and reiterated demand of complete independence. It decided on Civil Disobedience as the next plan of the Congress.¹ Quit India resolution Gandhi's strategy to examine new protest committee met in ward on 14 July 1942. In Bombay the all-India congress committee approved on August 7th speaking at the meeting, attended by Gandhi was the cry. "I have a little mantra that teaches you, 'Do or Die' is the magic. We are one of India to release or abandon the effort alive again in through to the extent that we should not live life". All India congress committee meeting in Bombay on 8 August 1942 and ended at 10 pm. Gandhi and other congress leaders were arrested in the early hours of the next day. The movement has arrested a week all over the country figures in the congress.²

On 8 August 1942, the Quit India resolution was passed at the Bombay session of the All-India Congress Committee (AICC). The draft proposed that if the British did not accede to the demands, a massive Civil Disobedience would be launched. However, it was an extremely controversial decision. At Gowalia Tank, Mumbai, Gandhi urged Indians to follow a non-violent civil disobedience. Gandhi told the masses to act as an independent nation and not to follow the orders of the British. The British, already alarmed by the advance of the Japanese army to the India-Burma border, responded the next day by imprisoning Gandhi at the Aga Khan Palace in Pune. The Congress Party's Working Committee or national leadership was arrested all together and imprisoned at the Ahmednagar Fort. They also banned the party altogether. Large-scale protests and demonstrations were held all over the country. Workers remained absent a masse and strikes were called. The movement also saw widespread acts of sabotage, Indian under-ground organisation carried out bomb attacks on allied supply convoys, government buildings were set on fire, electricity lines were disconnected and transport and communication lines were severed. The disruptions were under control in a few weeks and had little impact on the war effort. The movement soon became a leaderless act of defiance, with a number of acts that deviated from Gandhi's



principle of non-violence. In large parts of the country, the local underground organisations took over the movement. However, by 1943, Quit India had petered out.

Quit India Movement in Madras

During Second War, after the failure of the Cripps's Proposals Gandhi had launched the Quit India Movement. In Tamil Nadu Quit India Movement drew the factory workers, students and common people. It was a wide spread movement. The Buckingham & Carnatic Mills, Port Trust and the Tramway workers joined the movement in large numbers. Quit India Movement was launched in places like North Arcot, Madurai and Coimbatore. There was police firing at Rajapalayam, Karaikudi and Devakottai.³

In Madras, the trouble started from 11th August onwards. Telegraph and telephone lines were cut and railway stations were attacked and burnt down. Many trains were derailed. These disturbances started from Guntur and spread to West Godawri, Ramnad and Tanjore districts. Schools and colleges were closed. Mills were close in Coimbatore district. On 24 August, Sullur aerodrome was attacked and twenty-two lorries and 3 drivers were burnt. Sabotage activities like felling trees across the roads, breaking culverts and cutting telegraph lines before they planned an attack continued in Anantpur, East Godawri, Nellore, Tanjore and Cuddapah districts. Schools, colleges and law courts were picketed. Even women took part in this demonstrations.⁴

The 1942 movement was indeed a movement of the youth. They took the arrest of the top Congress leaders as a challenge. The student community played a leading role and was, in fact the most troublesome element in cities. Different classes of people participated in the movement because of their sympathy with the Congress which commanded a wide measure of support in the province but the ferment among students seemed largely due to their romantic hero-worship of Jawahar Lal Nehru.⁵

Attack the public properties

With the arrest of leaders of foreign radio and heard people there are emotional through the authorities. Then people broken railway, telegraph and telephone wires were cut, Kanmaykulam broken tanks, Post sulfur was refrigerated, British imperial statues, arches, monuments, etc were broken, Village officials, teachers were forced to leave the job caused police vehicles, worn T-shirts, hats were set off, released prison inmates broke, Kajanas stolen, Fired government officials, Railway station were attacked and railway toppled.⁶

Public Response

Tamilnadu congress attended the meeting with the representatives returned Bombay K.Kamarajar, Vellore V.M.Upayatulla, Thiruvannamalai N.Annamalaipillai, C.N.Muthurangapillai, M.Pakthavathchalam, and S.Sathyamoorthy arrested and taken to jail in Vellore. MA.PO.Sivagnanam was arrested near Madurai. The people were shocked by the sudden attack the congress government. None of the people in a position to announce the protest leaders planto act arbitrarily. The fight began in August.⁷

In Tamilnadu, there is no lack of violence in the military uniforms of cloth provided by Buckingham and Carnatic mills strike. Chennai port trust, Chennai Corporation, Electric trams collapsed, Attacked public buildings, Demonstrators in North Arco district slaughtered phone telegraph wires. A freight train has flipped; Nearby KovaiSooloor airport was destroyed.⁸

Incident of violence took place in Ramanathapuram district. Chettinad young people were involved in the August revolution. Thiruvadana buses were fired. In magistrate court unruly crowd broke in the burning documents, they set fire to the buildings. Sub-winning breaking Thiruvadana China Annamalai T.N.Ramanathan and others were detained, released.⁹

National youth team in Rajapalayam huge procession held on August 9thRajapalayam mill workers were prevented from taking the job. Adjacent stones were thrown at police. Telegraph wires were cut. Postal boxes phosphorus applied ransacked. Protest meeting were held throughout the Sattur municipal court, Deputy Registrar office, Virudhunagar were picketing in front of the military recruiting center. Tirunelveli, Tuticorin cities such shutdown took place in the second week of August. Educational institution was closed. Students marched in defense of the prohibitory orders. Workers on strike in Tuticorin have mill closed.¹⁰ Due to the resolution of quit India movement also started in the Devakottai taluk.

Devakottai Taluk

Devakottai is a first-grade municipality in the state of Tamil Nadu, India. Located in the Sivaganga district, the town is situated close to the city of Karaikudi, near Rameswaram National Highway Road (NH-210). It is one of the major cities comes under the Chettinad area with rich heritage of houses built with limestone called "KaraiVeedu". It is the Second largest city in the district after Karaikudi. This Region is one of the villages in Chettinad belt.¹¹ The town is famous for its ancient temple Sri Meenakshi Sundaeswarar temple also known as Nagara Sivan Kovil. It was an active town in the Indian Independence Movement. The municipal court of Devakottai was burned to the ground during the Quit India Movement. This leads to the town becoming one of the historical landmarks of Tamil Nadu with typical building structures and monuments.¹²



Movement in Devakottai Taluk

Devakottai taluk made a keen effort during the Quit India Movement. It was also known on the 9th that the congress leaders were arrested. That evening there was a monster meeting at Devakottai, Presided over by the Devakottai congress committee president Mr. Mukundaraja Ayyangar that they protested against the arrested of the leaders and asked the people to be ready to sacrifice their lives. From the 9th there's were meeting almost every day. The speakers incited the public to commit act of violence. Sabotage of government buildings, property they also asked government servants to resign that the English should leave the country that foreign cloth shops schools etc. Should be boycotted that the telegraph wires should be broken, and that no one should help the police.¹³ Thiruvadanaï on the 12th asking him to go over immediately to Devakottai as his presence there was necessary. The sub magistrate p.w 5 accordingly went to Devakottaip.w 1 applied to him on the 14th for on order under section 144 cr.p.c the reason given in the said application are that on the 11th, 12th and 13th public meeting are proceedings had been organized and carried out. That in the meeting the speakers indulged in inciting to public to act of violence and sabotage and spreading disaffection among the police force.¹⁴

That as a result of the incitement, local telephone communication were out the previous night, that such disorder was likely to continue in the future, thus endangering public peace and frequently. The sub magistrate passed the order. Ex.B. under section 144 cr.p.c, on the 14th restraining the public from arranging, holding, conducting, or otherwise taking of part in any meeting or procession within the limits of Devakottai municipality and radios of five miles all round it. It was an expert order.¹⁵

On 14th morning a procession of stands was taken along the streets and i saw the procession from the police station. They were shouting slogans "Down with the traitors to the country" down with those resort to fire-arms. The procession passed sonly pas the police station and it saw throughout the window. One young man was taking an active part in the procession; it ascertained his name as Thirunavukarasu.¹⁶

On the afternoon of 14th received CID's report asking for order under section 144 cr.p.c, to restrain meeting and processions under the aspics of the congress in Devakottai town. Ex-A, is copy of the CID's report the original of it was destroyed in the fire at Thiruvadanaï, on 08 August 1942. It is true copy and a carbon copy of the report. Ex.B. is the order passed under section 144. The order was daily proclaimed in the town by beat of tom. A meeting was attempted to be held on the evening of the 14 but before the police inspectors could arrive there, the meeting dispersed. A meeting was announced for the 15 which did not place. It was widely talked in the town and also lithograph papers distributed on the 15th and 16th that on the 17th mass actions would be resorted to that schools, courts and liquor shops would be picketed and that shops must 'observe herbal' on the 15th, 16th, the telegraph and telephone wires in and around Devakottai were found out. That is at about 9.30, am on the 16th he had arrested two person, namely, Ramanathan, R.M. Annamalai.¹⁷

Next day 17th morning 8.30 a.m or 9 a.m that appears clearly from the evidence and further there was a picketing is spoken to also by the headmaster the subordinate judge and the district monistic having already an idea as to what might happen on the 17th had taken the precaution of asking all the staff including the process. Staff to attend court early that day and accordingly the staff and process servers and amines that were available in town that day went to court before 10'o clock and the subordinate judge and the district music also went to court by about 9.30 am. The subordinate judge says that even when he want to court he saw a crowd just in front about 10.30 a.m and that stones were thrown on the court building. He therefore ordered the two big entrance into the eastern street to be closed and the small one two the south of that entrance to be kept open. But as the pelting of stone increased and there was a rush of people at the small entrance that too then closed. He deposes that again at about 11 a.m he saw there was a big mob in front of the court which tried to rush them in and also throw stones and that time he heard a gunshot and was informed that the police were on the spot. Some people at the mob got into the court house and threw down articles of furniture and records which were heaped upon the road and set fire to and that the court building itself was set fire to so that them massive building with all the valuable content there of totally destroyed.¹⁸

The joint magistrate Devakottai was that afternoon at Karaikudi; he deposed that on the morning of the 17th at about 11.30 a.m. The magistrate and district superintendent of police had arrived at Karaikudi half an hour before, they attempted to speak on the phone in order to get accurate information from Devakottai but they found that the line was interrupted they then before decided that the party must go to Devakottai and so the party consisting of the district magistrate. District superintendent of police and left with a police force consisting of two sergeants and about two section of reserve.¹⁹ They left a little afternoon 12 0' clock the distance is about 11 or 12 miles and while nearing Devakottai, road station which is about 6 or 7 miles to Devakottai, huge columns of smoke and from about a mile to Devakottai. They found there roads were barricaded here and there and also the telegraph and telephones wires cut and hanging loose.²⁰ They had to get down and remove the obstruction and when they reached the arch, there was a crowd of 4000 to 5000 there and the district magistrate ordered the crowd to disperse. Some left but some rioters stayed on the riot flag was exhibited, the district magistrate then ordered fire to be opened, the reserve men opened fire under the direction of the district superintendent of police.²¹ Some people were injured and some died subsequently. In all 51 rounds of ammunition were fired killing eight and injuring.²²



Six police officers were injured, several hundred run through the lands. They fired from the north of the arch while the police party headed by to the south of it and a bullet fired from the rescue party struck in his left high it was said to be whistled to the rescue party know the position where the police party was stationed.²³ There after the sub inspector of police the sub magistrate and other keep in at the original place and giving him sufficient guard went north wards and the rescue party comes south wards.²⁴ There were a number of people just to the north of the court building more a less crouching on the road side in front of three shops between the arch and court house.²⁵ They were immediately surrounded and they are people arrested.²⁶

Conclusion

At evening the mob of about 200 people armed with sticks, spears and bill- hocks surrounded the taluk office. The estate Chat ram and estate rest house attacked and intimidated the estate official of whom a firefly large number were present. Then in connection with the Jamabanthi of the taluk. They set fire to the buildings and records there, looted the granary, burnt are carried away the properties of some of the officials, set fire to the estate collectors car and committed other act of. After the rebellion of 1857, above the great struggle emotional in 1942. In Indian movement the culmination of the struggle for liberation, Indian countries became open prisons. Tirelessly to free the people of the great veneration for this role Devakottai, Thiruvadanaï placed correctly. This is the final struggle for India's independence. To conclude the freedom struggle continued in the district vigorously till the dawn of independence. Secret societies were however formed in some places of the district and revolutionary activities were carried on for some time but with little success. MuthuramalingaThevar indulged in violent attacks upon the Government and their responsibility for the atrocities of 1942. Now the leadership in Tamil Nadu passed into the hands of Kamaraj, the President of the T.N.C.C. India became independent on 15 August 1947 and the dawn of freedom was greeted with great rejoicings. The above Satyagrahies of this district contribute their service to the mother country. Their steadfast patriotism made India free. Thus the district played very significant role in the movement.

End Notes

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8. Ibid., p.258.
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16. G.O. No.1341, Home Department, 18 June 1943, p.20.
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18. Ibid., p.14.
19. Ibid., p.16.
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24. G.Venkatesan,op.cit., p.264.
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