



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

BHARATHP R. NARAYANASAMY – A MARTYR FROM THEVARAM

Author

Mrs. R. KARPAGAM

Assistant Professor

Department of Historical Studies

Queen Mary's College (Autonomous)

Chennai-600 004

Tamil Nadu.

India

Corresponding Author

Dr. B. PRAMILA

Associate Professor & Head

Department of Historical Studies

Bharathi Women's College (Autonomous)

Chennai - 600 108

Tamil Nadu.

India

Abstract

The freedom movement in India has a long history and many sacrificed their lives to free our mother country from the clutches of the foreign yoke, the British. Though millions of people sacrificed their families, wealth and their lives for achieving the goal of freedom from the British, only the role played by the most important leaders have taken the pages of our history. Especially, the contributions of people and leaders from the south has not given a reasonable place in the pages of history by many authours. Role of Rani of Jansi has been given more importance while the same of Velu Nachiar from Tamilnadu who sacrificed her life for the cause of freedom is not given equal place. Same way there are lots of unsung heroes whose sacrifices are sidelined. Hence, here, an attempt has been made to bring out the contributions of one such freedom fighter from Thevaram, the area in the down south of Tamilnadu.

Key words

Freedom Movement-Martyr-Tamilnadu-Bharathi Narayasamy-Devangas

Introduction

The freedom movement in India has a long history and many sacrificed their lives to free our mother country from the clutches of the foreign yoke, the British.

Though millions of people sacrificed their families, wealth and their lives for achieving the goal of freedom from the British, only the role played by the most important leaders have taken the pages of our history.

As the Historian Ranajit Guha rightly points out that there are millions of people from the below whose sacrifices and contributions for the freedom movement went unnoticed. The story of the organic, class consciousness of the Indian masses who constituted an autonomous domain of anti-colonial and anti-bourgeois politics of their own, paralleled to the domain of the elitist power contest, which often, to the inconvenience of the nationalist elites, burst forth into violent resistance to both the colonial state and the elite nationalist movement in order to realize their political "hegemony." The author argues that these resistance movements, though they were systematically betrayed by the elite nationalist leadership and brutally suppressed by the colonial power, formed the true history of Indian Freedom Struggle and Indian people.¹ In the same way.

The contributions made by the leaders and the people of the South to the freedom struggle have also sidelined by the historians and due importance have not been given to the sacrifices made by them.) Even among the States of South, if Tamil Nadu is taken the leaders like, Bharathiar, V. O. Chidambaram Pillai, Subramaniya Shiva, Vanchinathan and few others were known to all. The sacrifices made by many others are not brought to frontline, and their roles have become unnoticed. Hence, it is noteworthy to bring out the contributions made by the ordinary people and the leaders who were not brought to limelight.

Here in this Paper, an earnest attempt has been made to trace the contributions made by Bharathi Narayana Samy, a leader who hailed from a simple family background from the place called Thevaram in the district of the then Madura.

The sources for the paper are mainly the primary such as the District Manuals, Gazetteers, Parliamentary Speeches, Biography of Freedom Fighters, etc.¹

Theni district is one of the developing districts situated in the old Madurai district in Tamil Nadu. This district situated exactly 76Km's west of Madurai. This district was under the Pandyas, the earliest rulers of Tamil Nadu who held sway over it up to eleventh century A.D. In 1344 A.D the southern side of Theni region was captured by a Kannada king Kenjeyyan. After that the region came under the Nayaks of Madurai. For the administrative convenience, the Viswanatha Nayak divided the country into 72 Palayams. Thevaram was one of the palayams of Viswanatha Nayak. In 1742, the Woodayar, Raja of Mysore conquered Dindigul from the Nayaks and formed it into a Jaghir. Dindigul Province was divided into 26 Jaghirs². In 1759 company took possession of the Jaghirs. Again in 1767, Col. Wood laid siege to the province of Dindigul. After the treaty of Seringapatam in 1792, the company got Malabar, Dindigul and Baramahal. In November 1795, the place might have been divided into 6 Taluks namely Kambam, Uthamapaiyam, Periyakulam and Tadikomba.³ Then, the administrative council of the Madras Presidency took charge of the administration in the district. In the beginning of the 19th, the British East India Company divided the Madras Presidency for administrative Convenience. The country was divided into districts. Districts were also sub divided into Taluks. (Theni district came under Dindigul Province and Periyakulam become the head quarters of the Taluk. The British East India Company took efforts for the development of Taluk. Thevaram was the chief village of the taluk.⁴ Protest against the English began by the beginning of the 20th century and the role played by the people in the freedom struggle was noteworthy. Devangas, a caste of weavers constitute a major population in the Thevaram.⁵ Many people of the community took active part in the freedom struggle, and one among them was 'Bharathi' R. Narayanasamy. He was a native of Thevaram near Uthampalayam He was born on 28.12.1893.⁶

He was the second son of Ramasamy and Kamatchi Ammal. As his ancestors employed in Pooni Arm chieftains his family was named as 'Sevuga Sethiram'.⁷ As hailed from an economically backward family he could not proceed his studies after 8th standard. He started his career as a primary school teacher in Ramasamy

Iyer Padasalai at Thevaram.

Narayanasamy's Contribution in Freedom Struggle

In the Director Periyakulam taluk took part in the Home rule movement in 1917. Narayanasamy spread the movement through the volunteers and collected the signatures and sent it to Indian Ministry. He sent volunteers from Thevaram to Nagpur Flag Stir in 1923. He formed village congress committee in the village.

Theni district Devangas mostly engaged in Cardamom plantation and Cardamom export. So, he organized Travancore Cardamom Planters Association and celebrated its Anniversary.

When the Tamil Nadu Congress volunteers took part in the movement for the upliftment of Harijans by the influence of Gandhi, he Convened Adi Dravida Conference in Thevram on 10.02.1923.⁹ He started a monthly called 'Devanga Mitran'. It was based on Nationalism, Harijan Upliftment and empowerment of Devanga castes.

Devanga Mitran was published from Thevaram but it was printed at Madurai. The 38th Session of the All India Congress Conference was held at Kakindada on 28.12.1923. The Conference was presided over by Moulana Mohamed Ali, R.Narayanasamy along with 10 volunteers from Thevaram.¹⁰ Congress volunteers return to their home on 16.1.1924. Narayanasamy established a medical centre called as 'Agasthiar Housathalayam' in Thevaram for the eradication of Choera in 1924. As a lover of books, he started a printing press in Ramasamy Iyer Padasalai at Thevaram on 15.01.1925.

In 1929, he started to print 'Bharathi' a Tamil Magazine. This Magazine published Tamil Poems of Bharathi, Kavimani Desiyavinayagam Pillai and published the translated works of Narayanasamy, like Durka Das, An Introduction of Jansirani, Nehru's Soviet Russia, Sarojini Naidu, Letters of Vivekananda etc., This magazine first published from Uthampalayam was later shifted to Madurai Ananda Press. Circumstances forced him to keep away from his writings and concentration on publications.

He seriously involved in the freedom Movement. On 03.02.1930, the telegram office was opened at Thevaram by the efforts taken by Narayanasamy. On 11.04.1932, he mobilized the public of Thevaram to participate in salt Satyagraha and organized a long procession. He was arrested and sent to Uthamapalayam, and then to Vellore prison with one year imprisonment issued by the district collector on 04.08.1930 and was released on 19.03.1931).

When Shri C. Rajaji visited Thevaram in 27.04.1931, Narayanasamy along with Arunachalam gave a grand reception to him. Bonfire of British goods and Toddy shop picketing programmes were successfully organized and completed by Narayanasamy on 06.08.1931. The 'Flag day' was celebrated by him on 30.08.1931. After the arrest of A. S. Krishnasamy Iyyengar, Tamil Nadu congress committee appointed him as a Director of Periyakulam Taluk.

Gandhiji travelled through out Tamil Nadu for raising the Harijan improvement fund in 1934 February. It was the time Gandhiji visited Madurai twice with Rajaji¹². He carried on effective propaganda for improving the social and economic conditions of Harijans. Thevaram Cardamom Planters Association promised to pay Rs. 1000 for the Harijan Improvement Fund. Narayanasamy met Dr. T. S. Rajan and confirmed Gandhiji's visit to Thevaram.

Gandhiji's Visit at Thevaram

Narayanasamy arranged the volunteers for receiving Gandhiji on 19.01.1934. But, Gandhiji cancelled his program. Narayanasamy met Gandhiji on 27.01.1934 at N. M. R. Subburaman's residence and he explained the devotion of Thevaram people. Gandhiji was convinced and whole heartedly accepted to visit Thevaram.,

On 9 February 1934 Gandhiji arrived at Thevaram.¹³ Thousands of enthusiastic volunteers from Kombai to Thevaram extended their heartfelt welcome to Gandhiji by standing both the sides of the road.

Narayanasamy arranged a public meeting in Thevaram. More than 10,000 volunteers attended the meeting and moved by the inspiring speech of Gandhi. Gandhiji was very much pleased for the work of volunteers from Kombai to Thevaram. In the meeting congress volunteers wear white Khadhi dress. So, Gandhiji named this place as 'Southern Burdoli'. Gandhiji suggested the volunteers to construct a proper road from Kombai to Thevaram without any expectations of the Government, but with the aid of District and Taluk boards. He also felt sorry for the unhygienic condition.

Besides the public gathering Gandhi spoke with women in the Zamindar's residence where lot of local women presented their jewellery for the fund. Gandhi urged them to throw out untouchability.¹⁵

Then Narayanasamy diverted his attention towards individual Satyagraha and got one year imprisonment. Quit India movement was started by Gandhiji. As usual, congress volunteers were arrested. Narayanasamy was imprisoned for Months. After his release, he actively took part in the activities of Madurai Zillah congress and made an effort to start many schools in the villages. He mobilizes the village people to encourage women education. By his tremendous efforts many women in Thevaram got their higher studies and appointed as the primary school teachers. Bharathi Narayanasamy joyfully celebrated India's freedom by hoisting the tricolor National Flag around 8.30 a.m.

Due to the efforts of Narayanasamy Vivekananda Board High School was opened by the District Collector C.A. Ramakrishnan in 1954.¹⁷ The land for the school was donated by Thevaram Zamindar. He was nominated for the second Loksabha election from Periyakulam Taluk. He won the election with the margin of 51308 votes.¹⁸ His parliament Residence, which was located at No. 137, the North Avenue, New Delhi was always opened for the needy and the poor people. He held the post of various committee members like Education, Block Development, Indian Coffee Board, Railways, etc.; He spoke on railway Budget and expedited the opening of Dindigul- Gudalur railway line. He explained the difficulties of the people of the region of Madurai to transport their goods from one place to the other in the absence of a proper railway line. He added that it affected the business of the people.¹⁹

Narayanasamy led the orphanage at Suruli Hills in 1962 and named it as 'Arulagams'.²⁰ He died breathed last on 05 February 1965 in Madurai Hospital at the age of 72.²¹

A man who was born with a simple background, but, by his noble virtues made a name for himself as a primary school teacher to a member of the parliament. At that time leaders from all over India and leaders of the Tamil Nadu Congress Party paid their homage to the great soul.

To sum up, it is important to note that not only the great and important leaders sacrificed their lives for the freedom of our country. But, the contributions made by the ordinary leaders who might not have been born with the silver spoon are equally important and noteworthy. The role played by the leaders all over the country and even the lay men without whose participation, contributions and sacrifices the freedom could not have been achieved should also to be brought to limelight.)

END NOTES

- ¹ Ranajit Guha, **Dominance without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India**, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998, Pp. xvii.
- ² The Madura country A Manual - The Madras Government, J.H.Nelson, Madras 1868 Part - III p. 291, Part - IV p. 11, 106.
- ³ IbidPart-IVp.9.
- ⁴ Gazetteer of India Madras. Madurai -B.S. Baliga, Madras 1958, p.425.
- ⁵ R. Karpagam, **Theni, A Socio-Cultural and Political History**, Prabhu Publishers, Chennai 2008, p.53.
- ⁶ Who is Who Freedom Fighters, Madurai District, p.458
- ⁷ Interviewed with K.Parasuram, a Retired Public Works Department Officer, Thevaram Dt. "19.05.2013.
- ⁸ Madurai District Freedom Fighters Commemoration volume (Madurai 1948)
- ⁹ Viduthalai Virar Bharathi R. Narayanasamy Chettiar Nurrandu Vizha Ninaivu malar (Tamil) - R.Govinda rajan, Mylapore, Chennai.
- ¹⁰ Photo evidence Appendix – I
- ¹¹ Who is who Freedom Fighters, p.458
- ¹² Gazetteer of India Madras Madurai - B.S.Baliga, Madras 1958 p.81.
- ¹³ The Report of Chief Secretary Government of Madras dated 29th January 1934.
- ¹⁴ **The Hindu**, dated 12.02.1934.
- ¹⁵ Viduthalai Virar 'Bharathi' Narayanasamy Chettiar Nutrandu Vizha Ninaivu malar (Tamil), R.Govindarajan, Mylapore, Chennai p.2.
- ¹⁶ Interviewed with R.Seethalakshmi Cumbum dated 17.05.2013.
- ¹⁷ ibid.
- ¹⁸ Viduthalai Virar-p.59.
- ¹⁹ Parliamentary Times - It was heard in Parliament.
- ²⁰ Photo Evidence - Appendix -111 & IV.
- ²¹ The Hindu dated 12.02.1934.