



THE ROLE OF NAVASAKTHI JOURNAL IN INDIAN FREEDOM MOVEMENT

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ABSTRACT

The term "Journal" means a daily record, as of occurrences or observations. It includes a newspaper especially a daily one, a periodical or magazine published for a learned society. In the words of the American Journalists G.F.Mott, "The press is a full fledged institution in our modern world, and the various media utilized by the press are generally called by Journals and now professionally united under the common name of Journalism". "Navasakthi" a leading Tamil Journal was started in 1920 by Thiru. Vi. Kalyanasundara mudaliar, popularly called as Thiru Vi. Ka. His nick name was 'Tamil Tendril'- Tendril means (breeze from the south) as he was affectionately called by the Tamil world. He was a lover of Tamil language and our Nation, his editorials were pungent and fervent. The main aim of *Navasakthi* was to propagate the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi and to inspire the people to fight for our Independence. This Tamil Journal *Navasakthi* offered a scope to express his sentiments to the cause of nationalism through his appeals.

The decisive role played by the Tamil Journals in the Freedom Movement has been further confirmed in the words of Lord Listwell the last Secretary of state for India, "The Indian Newspapers have every reason to be proud of the part, they have played in the great constitutional change and of the good influence, they have exercised on Indian opinion". The Tamil Journals contributed a lot for the upliftment of weak social institution, even the rise of the *Navasakthi*. This was only a sign of growth and not an index to the actual strength of the Tamil Journalism. The Tamil Journals generally lacked capital, journalistic expertise and popular support.

KEYWORDS: *Modern Mass Media , spread of education , Freedom Movement.*

INTRODUCTION

The term "Journal" means a daily record, as of occurrences or observations. It includes a newspaper especially a daily one, a periodical or magazine published for a learned society. In the words of the American Journalists G.F.Mott, "The press is a full fledged institution in our modern world, and the various media utilized by the press are generally called by Journal and now professionally united under the common name of Journalism"¹. Roland E.Wolsely, the famous American professor of Journalism defines Journalism thus: "Journalism is the systematic and reliable dissemination of public information, public opinion and public entertainment by Modern Mass Media of Communication". The role of Journalism in India during the Freedom Movement represents a shining chapter in the history of the totality of our National Movement. The Journals have been inextricably linked with the spread of education and the general awakening of national pride and socio-political consciousness among different segments of the people. The impulses released and the intellectual emotional ferment created by the Journals have been greatly responsible for the awakening of the Freedom Movement in its various phases². The term vernacular Journalism has been

coined by the Britishers to publish Journals in the native languages of the people. During the early part of nineteenth century, a number of Journals in the vernacular languages began to grow; The Governor-general Lord William Bentick's role in developing the vernacular press was marvelous. He firmly believed that "Liberty of the press is one of the most useful engines for promoting good administration in the country".

Richard Johnston was the founder of the first newspaper in Madras presidency. His paper "*The Madras Courier*" came in to existence on 12th October 1785. The pioneer Tamil Journal was the "*Tamil Magazine*" which was published on 1831 started by the Madras Religious Tract Society. It was followed by the Journal "*Raja Vritti Bodhini*" on 1833. P. Percival founded the Journal "*Dinavartamani*" on 1855. In its initial phase the Tamil Journals was concerned almost solely with social and religious causes. This attention was focused on existing social evils among the masses, when the grievances of the people against the British rulers multiplied, the concentration of Tamil press turned to political affairs. It resulted in the culmination of the demand for self-government.

The Tamil Journals played a crucial part in the development of nationalism. The study of Tamil Journals and nationalism in Tamilnadu during the colonial rule is an interesting one. The services of the Tamil Journals to the cause of Tamilnadu and nation were commendable and beyond description. The Tamil Journals acted as the best recorders of events and educated the people about The Freedom Movement. They reflected the public opinion with regard to the vital issues of the country. The Journals infused patriotic feelings into the hearts of the Tamils and awakened their political consciousness³. According to Ma. Po. Sivagnanam, "The Tamil Journals and the freedom Struggle were the sides of a coin". This statement further confirms about the part played by the Tamil Journals during the Freedom Movement. The Tamil Journals were made possible the symbolic sharing of human experience, providing common understanding and common basis for collective action. "To the consummation of Indian Freedom and the press had made no mean contribution over more than half a century of the nation's struggle for liberation"⁴.

The Tamil Journals have developed into a powerful instrument of social and political change during the colonial period its development was manifest clearly increase in the number of newspapers and their circulation, the variety of extent of their reach. This significant development of the Tamil Journals might partly be ascribed to factors like the increase in population, the rise in the literacy level and the improvement in transport and communication system while these were contributory factors, the operation of social and political factors could be considered as the prime conceptive factor for the development of the press⁵. The Tamil Journals from its beginning in 1880's became a powerful agent for shaping the opinion of the public for the cause of the India's struggle for freedom. Throughout its career from 1905 to 1947, it passed through many difficulties, surmounting many challenge at one time and succumbing too many trials at another. However, in its course it stimulated the progress of the freedom movement and the same time received stimulatory from the movement for its own development and the ups & downs in the course of the nationalist movement in Tamilnadu were determined by its own behavior besides other factors, stronger the support of the movement received from the press greater was its success⁶.

"*Navasakthi*" a leading Tamil Journal was started in 1920 by Thiru. Vi. Kalyanasundara mudaliar popularly called Thiru Vi. Ka. His nick name was 'Tamil Tendril' - Tendril means (breeze from the south) as he was affectionately called by the Tamil world. He was a lover of Tamil language and our Nation; his editorials were pungent and fervent. The Navasakthi Journal was critical of the act since it failed to do away with the repressive measures of the government and pointed out by him. The main aim of *Navasakthi* was to propagate the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi and to inspire the people to fight for our Independence. This Tamil Journal *Navasakthi* offered a scope to express his sentiments to the cause of nationalism through his appeals⁷. Thiru. Vi. Ka withdrawal from Desabakthan spread throughout south India, after he decided to start a new Journal for getting permission and he sent many letters, telegraph to the authority moreover his friends council to start a new Journal. Then due to the request of him, friends and well-wishers feared that he may left this area and to settle in his native place Karaikudi. His friends told him that, if he left poor people mainly worked in industries feel bad and this will discourage the poor people to do their work efficiently⁸.

In order to form a new Journal all laborers gathered together to a meeting, this meeting was attended by Thiru. Vi. Ka and his friends, their ultimate aim was to start a new Journal under the leadership of Thiru. Vi. Ka benefits of the laborers. This Newspaper gave more importance to welfare of the laborers, and old age people. Finally they collected 5000 rupees, some other friends collected 2000 rupees, the total amount 7,000 rupees used to spent for purchasing printing machines, Thiru Vi. Ka gave a new name to this printing office that is Sadhu, but some of them criticized this new press, many newspaper also criticized this name, But Thiru Vi. Ka explained to the people and the importance of press, in mainly for the progress of new Journal⁹.

Navasakthi contributed a lot to the field of Nationalism, they do much for the development of Tamil instead of using pure, simple tamil works, they used English words such as "bureaucracy" Thus; the use of English words was quite common in almost all the Tamil dailies and Journals in those days. But Thiru Vi. Ka Changed this trend in his *Navasakthi* be using pure simple Tamil words from 1917 to 1933. He only simple drove away the foreign literary dominance in the Tamil Journals and contributed for the development of Tamil language through his Tamil Journals. Before *Navasakthi* came into existence, all Tamil Journals published two heading one in English and its Tamil translation. But Thiru Vi. Ka gave up this practice and never used English and Sanskrit language, he introduced many new Tamil words instead of using English words¹⁰.

During the period 1920 witnessed the withdrawal of Thiru Vi. Ka from *Desabakthan* after 3 months he started a new Journal *Navasakthi* as weekly this newspaper gave more emplace to some factors.

1. Freedom of Nation
2. Gave importance to Tamil language.
3. Women Libration
4. Limitation of caste system
5. Priorities to labor
6. Importance to democracy
7. All there one for the welfare of common people¹¹.

June, 1920 the *Tamilnadu* along with the *Navasakthi* played a unique role in this period. As the leading papers run by the Non-Brahmins, they supported the congress and its ideals, when the Non-Brahmins Movement dominated the poltices of Tamil Nadu. The significance and value of their supported to the congress appeared considerable in the context of limited support extended by the leading and Brahmin controlled *swadesamitran*, and *The Hindu* to the Non Co-operation movement. The *Navasakthi* Journal converted as a weekly journal which continued for twenty years as a pro-congress paper this paper facilitated communication among the congress workers and also made them aware of the party programmers and activities.

The *Swaraj* party which emerged in 1920 Tamilnadu felt the necessity of paper for itself. The *Swarajis'* tried to bring *Navasakthi* under their control, but Thiru Vi. Ka. refused later the *Swarajis'* approach. *Swarajya* a tamil daily with the help of Prakasam was started by V.R.M.S subramani Iyer as its sub-editor Thus the English paper *Swarajya* was under the control of Gandhians and *Swarajests* of Tamil Nadu. *Navasakthi* war one of the most popular Journal in south India, but Thiru Vi. Ka willing to stop this action in feture. But his friends request him and not to left from this Journal because that much brilliant, Thiru Vi. Ka accepted the advice of his friends, and continued his work¹². The *Navasakthi* Journal did much more help to the people against the British rulers, reached its by the national movement.

Navasakthi gives more importance to peaceful method; on the other hand adopt some secure method to fight request evils. 'It gave more importance to common people, gave priority to democracy of laborers. The publication of *Navasakthi* on 21th January 1921 issued an article which states that, "The spirit of the Non Co-operation is pervading thoroughly the land, without confining itself to the congress and the Muslim league, Non Co-operation will hereafter make its appearance at all places where hardships and grievances remain unheeded. Then Gandhi aim of the attainment of *Swaraj* will be completely fulfilled. Thus, '*Navasakthi*' was yet another Journal which played a noteworthy role in the freedom struggle. In the

beginning of 20th century, Tamil Nadu played a vital role in creating national consciousness among the people, especially during the Non Co-operation Movement. When the *Freedom Struggle* also reached its climax Thiru Vi. Ka rendered remarkable service to the people of Tamil Nadu.

Navasakthi on 14th April 1921, published a communication from correspondent who describes the Non Co-operation Movement as a war between the people and the British Government. In the course of the Non Co-operation Movement *Navasakthi* published some verses as, "Are we to seek the friendship of cruel persons, who bring about the imprisonment of our heroes who have been serving the country, of vicious youths who ravished virgin women, officials appreciate the action of those that killed a thousand of the innocent people In conducted the administration breaking pledges given openly and of the wicked men who afflict our people daily and treat them as Untouchables?" These words of *Navasakthi* roused the suspicious attitude of the people against the British powers¹³. India was famous for its quality of Submission and becomes a prey to repression. The British Government in India restored the repression method to curtail the Non Co-operation Movement, and reflect the idea of the British Government on 6th May 1921.

The tremendous progress of the hand spinning and weaving of the Khadi, which became the symbol of patriotism gave support to the Non Co-operation Movement. Large number of spinning wheels was introduced in the country, the boycott of foreign cloth prevailed in the country, during the Non Co-operation Movement. Thus *Navasakthi* inculcated the people to improve their interest to promote the sale of *swadeshi* goods, and *Navasakthi* questioned the people in an article, "if we ourselves take to the cleaning, spinning and weaving of the cotton grown in our country, without selling it to foreign, we will get rid our political bondage" and it war. The Journal published many articles pertaining to the spirit of Nationalism, for example in its issue of 27th June 1921 it explains to the people about the atrocities of the British Government as "The British Government wanted the Indian people forget Punjab incidents and to cooperate with the government. But the Indians cannot forget the Punjab Massacres as long as Lord Chelmsford, who is conducting the administration and his disciples are left unpunished.

In support of Swaraj, *Navasakthi* published many articles and one article of 29th January 1921 observes, "Oh! People of Tamil Country! Make efforts to achieve Swaraj for the sake of the Country and for safeguarding the treasures of Knowledge gained by your ancestors". Thus by these Words *Navasakthi* aroused the people for the achievement of Swaraj. The Madras Legislative Council granted the franchise to women on April 1921. Hence the Journal *Navasakthi* requested the women to realize their responsibilities and to support Mahatma Gandhiji's ideas. Gandhi suspended the Non Co-operation Movement as a result of the Chauri-chaura incident in 1922. The Journal *Navasakthi* opposed the suspension of the Non Co-operation Movement and supported the decision of Gandhi. Though the Non Co-operation Movement received public support, it failed to attain its objective i.e., the attainment of Swaraj¹⁴. The first Nationalist agitation, succeeded to the extent of cultivating the spirit of Nationalism in the minds of the people. The voice raised by the Journals in *Tamilnadu* gave the wide publicity to the movement for Freedom Struggle. As a result of the Non Co-operation Movement, both Hindus and Muslims were united and participated in the national activities for the achievement of a common demand.

Though It was the first nation-wide agitation, the Non Co-operation Movement ended in a Failure. The Tamil Journals have not only played an important role in the Non Co-operation Movement, but also in the Civil Disobedience Movement, which was started in the year 1930. Rajaji also condemned the increase in taxes to compensate the lavish expenditure of the British in India without hesitation' the paper supported Home rule agitation of Besant for it hold the opinion that, home rule was most suitable to the Indians¹⁵. It called leaders of the Justice party and their supported as traitors to the nation,

The fury of the people against, the British rulers reached its peak by the Non Co-operation Movement. The people learnt how to face the police and military atrocities boldly and courting arrest for the national cause became an act of patriotism. The country was once again prepared for Civil Disobedience and great enthusiasm was exhibited admirably when the movement actually started in 1930. The contribution of Tamil Journals during the Civil Disobedience Movement war much more. Many Journals appeared during this period and they played a vital role in the Freedom Movement. The *Navasakthi* Journals referred to the Civil

disobedience Movement as a "National War" against the British and played a vital role in mobilizing public opinion.

The struggle going to win towards Indian Freedom continued inspire of the British checks and atrocities, with much disappointment of the Indian National Congress met at Lahore on 29th December 1929, and took important decision so far reaching consequences. A resolution was passed for interpreting the world 'Swaraji' to mean "Complete Independence". The Lahore session authorized Gandhi to launch the Civil Disobedience Movement. on 1930. The programmed of Civil Disobedience Movement included (i) The violation of salt - law, (ii) Boycott of the educational institutions by the students and offices by the Government employees, (iii) Picketing of shops dealing with liquor, opium and foreign goods and (iv) Bonfire of foreign cloth and Non-Payment of Taxes.

On 5th April 1930 Gandhi started his historic Dandi March to Break the Salt - Tax law¹⁶. The violation of the Salt Act was the first aim of Civil Disobedience as it would involve the entire population of the country. C. Rajagopalachari started a plan for Salt Satyagraha in TamilNadu on the Gandhian Model and successfully organized it at Vedaranyam on 13th April 1930. The Vedaranyam salt March drew the attention of entire Tamilnadu. The enthusiasm shown by the people during the march to Vedaranyam, and display of violence in Madras marked the rushing spirit of nationalism among the Tamils. On the same model led by T.Prakasam organished salt Satyagraha on the beach in Madras simultaneously, during this Satyagraha violence has started because the police beaten of the women volunteers. The Journal *Navasakthi* highlighted the atrocities of the police beating women Satyagraha in Madras.

The *Navasakthi* Journal played a very important part in this campaign of "Salt Satyagraha". The enthusiasm of the public was kindled and maintained by the vigorous writing of these Journals and the Journals displayed in bold headlines, the arrests of the leaders and published pictures of the huge protest processions organized. It also published the photos of the congress volunteers who were injured in the late charge made by the police. The Government of Madras, Public Department, issued a G.O. 587 on 17th June 1930 which declared Tamil Nadu was not a right place to live with peace. An unsuitable advertisements of the government, The *Navasakthi* opposing the press ordinance passed by the British government. Thiru Vi. Ka said, no civilized government would ever think of restricting the freedom of the press¹⁷. We must have full liberty, even to commit wrongs' as a result *Tamil Nadu*, its editorials and articles. Tamil Nadu article case made an failure the people get involved in the Civil Disobedience movement very much. Thiru Vi. Ka had all the qualities of a good Journalist and above all possessed a remarkable capacity to appreciate others working in the same field. *Navasakthi* was first newspaper to publish headings only in Tamil.

In the Gandhian era, it gave wide publicity to the Non Co-operation Movement and the Khilafat Agitation. While *Navasakthi* welcome the Gandhi-Das pact, the *Kudiarasu* and the *Dravidian* expressed their 4 dissatisfaction at it. It also published news about the Civil Disobedience Movement with great enthusiasm. It condemned the Pro Non Brahmin activities of the Dravidians, it was of the view that till the attainment of freedom. Indians should not open the topic of social Justice in fact Thiru. Vi. Ka was against E.V. Ramasamis' resolution of communal reorientation in the Kanjeevaram session of the congress in 1925. Devoted only to national cause *Navasakthi* perhaps did not want to side tract the issue and hence its silence about social justice or purchase its editor did not like the social Justice Movement

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Journalism also played a vital role in Indias' Freedom struggle. Tamil, Malayalam and Telugu Newspapers, Journalists cum Nationalists created a political awakening in this presidency and other neighboring regions. Lakshmana chettys' *The Crescent*, G. Subramania Iyer and Rangaswamy Iyengars' *The*

Hindu and Swadesamitran, Subrahmania Sivas' *Gnanbandu* Bharathiars' *India*, Thiru Vi. Kas' *Navasakthi*, Annie Besants' *New India* and *Commonweal*, E.V Ramasamis' *Kudiarasu*, and P. Varadarajulu Naidus' *Tamil Nadu* may be cited here as examples. These leaders used these organs as a means to spread the fervor of nationalism. Thiru. Vi. Ka devoted his entire life for the political freedom and the social betterment of countrymen. The secret of his mission lay in his unfailing sympathy for the cause of the poor and the downtrodden, and in his zeal to fight against injustice practiced in the name of caste and creed. In all these activities, early in the 20th century, there was a famous trio working together in the Madras presidency¹⁹.

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