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TEMPERANCE MOVEMENT IN TAMIL NADU, 1930-1934

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Abstract:

The Civil Disobedience Movement made its appearance in the country In March 1930. One of the major offshoots was temperance movement. The purpose of the movement was to cripple the revenue to the British by the sale of liquor in India. Gandhi felt that use of liquor is dangerous to Indian society. Hence Gandhi launched a stubborn campaign against the use of liquor. The Government of Madras Presidency on its part checked the movement by resorting to lathi charge and promulgating several ordinances one after another during 1930-34. This paper tries to account all the details which occurred relating to the movement during the period of 1930-34.

KEY WORDS:

Temperance Movement , Indian society , coconut trees and breaking .

INTRODUCTION

The people of Tamil Nadu developed un-abating courage and heroism during the Movement under the direction of Gandhi. The temperance campaign became the weapon of anti-British struggle. The campaign include anti-drink preaching, social boycott of persons associated with toddy, cutting off of spathes of coconut trees and breaking of toddy pots which were used to collect toddy. Men and women went to jail in thousands even children participated in the struggle. Even Gandhi was amazed at the awakening in the country, while the Government took fright inwardly.

The Temperance Movement was very intensive in Madurai. In July 1930 along with a congress office, a separate Satyagraha Ashram on the eastern side of the town was started with about 70 volunteers with the object of picketing liquor shop in Madurai. On July 17, picketing of liquor shops in Madurai was started. Sixteen volunteers were sent to three shops, on toddy shop at Manal Road all two arrack shops one each at the northern bank of obla chat and corripalayam. The campaign was organized by the dictator Munagala Patabhi Ramayya. Large crowds had gathered to witness the satyagraha some and the police arrested the volunteers posted at the mathictiam shop (opposite to the Satyagraha Camp) and took them to the police station. Lathi – charge was resorted to disperse the crowd but in vain.

At Kumbakonam the local Congress leaders and volunteers indulged in palivettuthal (cutting of the spathes of coconut trees. They made number trees unfit for tapping by cutting off the spathes of the trees. The police prevented further destruction, by arresting six among them. They were sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for four months. A Government report tried to belittle or underestimate the

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TEMPERANCE MOVEMENT IN TAMIL NADU, 1930-1934

activities of these Congressmen.

In Salem S. Marriappa along with his associates uprooted a number of coconut trees to force the toddy shop owners to face a deficiency of suitable trees. This resulted in an encounter between the congressmen and the owner of the coconut plantation. The police rushed to the spot and arrested two.

In May 1931 at Arakonam force was used against protesters. There were cases filed against volunteers under section 341, 35a, I.P.C. during the first half of June stones were thrown by some of the volunteers at the Excise Inspector at Arakonam. On another occasion the volunteers picketing a beer shop in the bazaar completely obstructed the traffic and the crowd had to be dispersed by the police. Volunteers also waylaid and molested consumers at street corners. The Taluk Congress President being severely assaulted by a Muhammadan whom he molested,

On 11th June 1931 at Amur volunteers refrained from picketing the liquor shops were assaulted and stoned by rowdies. Imagining that this must have been done at the instigation of the renter. The volunteers returned to the shop, abused the renter and assaulted his servants. In about half an hour's time the arrack shop was seen on fire. A case under section 147, 343, and 436 I.P.C was instituted against certain volunteers.

On 25 August 1931, the local Congressmen of Thirukkoilur widely distributed pamphlets and advocated temperance and boycott. In addition, they had written on the walls of the houses that drinkers would have their faces blackened and be paraded on donkeys. The movement went non-violently, then took a serious turn by the end of the month. The district magistrate issued an order under Section 144 prohibiting political demonstrations including the salutation of Congress flags. The move of the

Magistrate did not bring any change in the attitude of the people. They continued to fight bravely.

In July 1931 the congressmen of Sirkali took part more in Toddy shop picketing. The congress volunteers picketed even the toddy shop auction sales conducted by the Government. On 8th July 1931 toddy shop auction was conducted in the Sirkali Taluk office. The congress volunteers went in groups and picketed the taluk office and opposed the auction. The Sub-Inspector of police immediately arrested and kept them outside the compound of the taluk office. Under the pretext of Nuisance Act, the volunteers were kept in confinement till the auction sale was over. This way during the Civil Disobedience Movement, 12 persons were arrested and underwent imprisonment for their performance in Toddy shop picketing.

At Vellore in July 1931, picketers took their position in front of the shops in spite of the District Magistrate's orders that they should stand at a distance of 100 feet from shops throughout the district.

At Kaveripakkam, in September 1931, congress propagandist made a speech part of which was an attempt to spread disaffection among the lower ranks of the police (break of clause 5(4) of the pact).

In Ranipet September 1931, picketing took a most aggressive form from the picketers causing obstruction to customers, breaking toddy pots. Using foul languages and pushing them. When the Circle Inspector visited the place, the volunteers were found blocking the lane leading to the shop and refused to clear out when asked to do so by the police. This attracted a large crowd which had to be dispersed by a lathi charge.

At Arcot 22nd September 1931, a volunteer exhorted the merchants not to sell any article capable of intoxicating.

1932
1933
1934



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