

The Significance Of Women In Chennai City To The Indian Independence Movement

Dr. K. Sankari^{1*}, Mrs. Suchithra Lakshmanan²

^{1*}Research Supervisor & Convenor Professor and Head Department of History Annamalai University

²Research Scholar, Department of History Annamalai University, Annamalainagar

Abstract:

This research article delves into the unwavering dedication of women in to the country's struggle for freedom. Women in Chennai played a crucial role in various spheres during the Indian freedom struggle. They actively engaged in nationalist movements, promoting Swadeshi to challenge British economic dominance. Emphasizing self-reliance, they advocated for Indian-made products like khadi. Chennai's women were instrumental in establishing schools, fostering literacy, and addressing societal issues like child marriage and the caste system. Actively participating in political activism, they attended Congress meetings, shaping the discourse and advocating for women's rights. Prominent figures like Annie Besant and Sarojini Naidu emerged, leaving a lasting impact on the freedom struggle. Their resilience and commitment contributed significantly to India's eventual independence in 1947, making them a source of pride and inspiration for future generations.

Key Words: Home Rule Movement, Swadeshi Movement, Madras Salt Satyagraha, Non-Cooperation Movement, Civil Disobedience Movement, Quit India Movement, Chennai city women.

PRELUDE

Every segment in India indicated displeasure towards the British Government in India, but it was more confined to the literate class. Tamil Nadu played a notable part in India's freedom struggle against the British. In Chennai, women took an active part in the struggle for liberation; they did not remain mere spectators. Student organizations came into existence as early as 1848. They also agitated against the restrictions imposed on those who appeared for I.C.S examinations. The core objective of this research paper is to bring out the roles and responsibilities played by the young generations in the Indian Freedom struggle, especially the participation of Madras (now called Chennai) city women, which was immensely appreciable. To achieve independence, they also gave up their bright careers and became involved in the Indian Freedom Struggle. This effort is primarily based on primary sources, although to some extent, secondary sources were also utilized. The primary sources were mostly collected from Tamil Nadu Archives, Chennai, covering the period from 1905 to 1947.

A series of works have examined the history of the freedom struggle movement in the geographical area of the Chennai city. In Tamil Nadu, the Chennai city contains the southernmost portion of the erstwhile Madras Presidency. According to the Maps from the Imperial Gazetteer of India - Vol 1-24, women participated from the following places of Chennai city like George Town, Washermanpet, Royapuram, Tondiarpet, Perambur, Thiruvotriyur, Mount Road, Mylapore, Kodambakkam, Otteri, Arumbakkam, Chetput, , Mambalam,, Kilpauk, Nungambakkam, Triplicane, Teynampet. As a beginning, we commenced a war of liberty. Hence, every man and woman above the age of eighteen should march to the forefront bearing the arms of truth, non-violence, and self-denial. The Chennai Government provided its consent through the Chennai Act No. 1 of 1928, duly signed by Lord Irwin, the then Viceroy of India, dated 11.12.1928. Thus, the women student community also came to the forefront of agitation in Chennai.

Political Engagement:

Women actively participated in political activities, attending meetings, conferences, and gatherings related to the Non-Cooperation Movement. Joining organizations like the All India Women's Conference (AIWC), they contributed to discussions on women's rights and national independence. Prominent leaders from Chennai, such as Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, Annie Besant, and Sarojini Naidu, played influential roles in both participation and leadership.

And other organizations like the Indian National Congress (INC), Vice President of Tamil Nadu Congress Committee, Avadi Congress reception committee Chairman, Author of Gandhi Ninaivu Malai, Founder of Srinivasa Gandhi Nilayam, Congress Committee Division Secretary, Editor and Writer of many Novels in Tamil and good speaker, they also served as a member of Madras Legislature and worked as Social Worker, and Secretary of Madras District Congress Committee, working tirelessly toward the goal of Indian self-rule. They served in Indian Independence League, body of Indian National Army and they also served as a President in Women Section III in Kayan Branch. They took part in public

protests, demonstrations, rallies, and acts of Civil Disobedience against British rule, often leading marches, raising slogans, and occasionally facing arrests and imprisonment.

Women played a crucial role in promoting the Swadeshi (self-reliance) movement, advocating for the use of Indian-made goods, particularly handspun *khadi* cloth, as a means of economic self-sufficiency and resistance against British imports. Women's organizations in Chennai established schools and educational institutions to promote literacy and political awareness among women, aiming to empower them and involve them in the struggle for independence. Women leaders in Chennai were often at the forefront of social reform movements, working to eradicate social evils such as child marriage, the caste system, and dowry, recognizing that social reform was closely linked to the broader struggle for freedom. Many women in Chennai actively engaged in political activities, attending meetings, conferences, and sessions of the Indian National Congress, playing essential roles in shaping the political discourse and advocating for women's rights within the movement.

Building on the legacy of trailblazing women like Annie Besant, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, and Sarojini Naidu in the Indian independence movement, numerous other remarkable women from Chennai played pivotal roles in the struggle for freedom. Their contributions were instrumental in shaping the course of the movement. Among these notable individuals, some prominent Chennai women who made significant strides in the Indian Freedom Movement include:

Rajeswari Bai

Rajeswari Bai, an educated woman residing on Arni Rangam Street in Washermanpet, Madras, actively joined the movement in 1939. She participated in the 1941 Individual *Satyagraha*, where she was arrested and received a five-month sentence under the Defence of India rules, leading to her confinement in the State Jail for Women, Vellore. In addition to her involvement in the August Movement, she also engaged in the August Movement in 1942 and was subsequently arrested, facing a sentence of three months and two weeks under the Defence of India rules. Rajeswari Bai's imprisonment took place in both Vellore and Cuddalore Jails.

Nagarajamma, M.A.

An educated and courageous woman, actively participated in all movements initiated by Gandhi from 1930 to 1942. Her dedication led to her arrest, and she was sentenced to one month of imprisonment.

Saraswathi Pandurangam

Another brave and literate woman, Saraswathi Pandurangam from Thiruvotriyur, made significant contributions to various movements. She took part in the Salt *Satyagraha* in 1930, the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1931-32, and the Individual *Satyagraha* in 1941. In the same year, she also participated in the August Movement, facing arrest and receiving a six-month sentence under section 157 I.P.C in 1930, one and a half years under the Criminal Law Amendment Act in 1932, and four months under the Defence of India Rules in 1941. Saraswathi Pandurangam was held in State Jail for Women in Vellore, Madras, and Cannanore Jails. Remarkably, she endured the loss of her two-year-old daughter and one and a half-month-old son due to her arrests, making her the first lady to court imprisonment in 1931.

Rukmani Ammal

In 1930, Rukmani Ammal, an educated woman, actively participated in the Foreign Cloth Boycott. The following year, in 1931, she continued her involvement in the movement by participating in toddy shop picketing. In 1941, Rukmani Ammal took a significant step by joining the Individual *Satyagraha*, an act that led to her arrest and subsequent sentencing to 6 months under the Defence of India Rules. During this period, she endured confinement in both Cuddalore Jail and the State Jail for Women in Vellore. Additionally, in the same year, Rukmani Ammal N.S, residing on Wall Tax Road, George Town, Madras, faced imprisonment under the Defence of India Rules. She, too, experienced confinement in Cuddalore Jail and the State Jail for Women in Vellore. These events chronicle Rukmani Ammal's unwavering commitment to the cause, marked by her active participation and sacrifices during the struggle for independence.

Instead of all this, these women along with countless others in Chennai, were instrumental in shaping the course of the Indian freedom struggle. Their dedication, leadership, and sacrifices played a vital role in the eventual attainment of independence in 1947.

CHENNAI'S WOMEN IN SWADESHI MOVEMENT (1905 – 1911)

The Swadeshi Movement in India, which began in the early 20th century, was a significant part of the broader struggle for Indian independence from British colonial rule. While many prominent male leaders played crucial roles in the Swadeshi Movement, women also actively participated and made valuable contributions, including in Madras (formerly

known as Chennai). Women in Chennai, like their counterparts in other parts of India, were deeply involved in the Swadeshi Movement. Women actively participated in the boycott of British-manufactured goods and promoted the use of Indian-made products. They encouraged the use of hand-spun and handwoven *khadi* cloth as a symbol of self-reliance and resistance to British rule. Women organized and participated in public demonstrations, processions, and protests against British rule. These events were often met with police repression, but women continued to be at the forefront. They also played a vital role in reviving indigenous industries, such as handloom weaving and cottage industries. They set up *khadi* and handicraft centers to promote self-employment and economic self-sufficiency.

Furthermore, in Chennai, numerous women's organizations concentrated their efforts on education and empowerment. By establishing schools and vocational training centers, they aimed to educate women and enhance their skills, fostering greater self-reliance. Notably, some women in Chennai extended their involvement beyond education to actively engage in the political aspects of the Swadeshi Movement. Through participation in meetings, joining political organizations, and collaborating with male leaders, they dedicated themselves to India's quest for independence. Distinguished women leaders from Chennai, such as Annie Besant, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, and Sarojini Naidu, played pivotal roles in the Swadeshi Movement. Their contributions went beyond this movement, as they continued to be influential figures in the broader Indian independence struggle. This commitment was not exclusive to Chennai, as women from various parts of India also took part in the Swadeshi Movement. Their efforts included advocating for the boycott of foreign goods, promoting indigenous industries, and actively raising awareness to mobilize support for India's independence from British colonial rule.

CHENNAI'S WOMEN IN THE HOME RULE MOVEMENT (1916 – 1917)

The Home Rule Movement emerged as a significant political force in India during the early 20th century, aiming for self-governance within the British Empire. While often associated with prominent male figures such as Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Annie Besant, women in Chennai, as in other regions of India, actively participated in and supported this movement. The involvement of Chennai's women in the Home Rule Movement is highlighted through various contributions:

Formation of Women's Associations:

Women in Chennai took a proactive role by establishing their Home Rule Leagues and associations. These platforms provided spaces for women to engage in discussions on political issues, advocate for self-governance, and work towards broader social and political reforms. Many women dedicated themselves to educating their peers about the principles and objectives of Home Rule, utilizing avenues such as lectures, meetings, and study circles to enhance political awareness among women.

Active Participation in Public Campaigns:

Women in Chennai actively joined public awareness campaigns and demonstrations, utilizing banners and rallies to express their support for the Home Rule cause. Through these events, they voiced their demands for self-governance and played a crucial role in bringing attention to the movement.

Fundraising Initiatives:

Women were instrumental in organizing charity events, donation drives, and other fundraising activities to provide financial support to the Home Rule Movement. This demonstrated their commitment to the cause and their practical contribution to its sustainability.

Political Activism:

Some women engaged in political activism by aligning themselves with political parties and movements advocating for Home Rule. Their participation in meetings, discussions, and collaboration with male leaders showcased their dedication to the political aspects of the movement.

Leadership and Mobilization:

Prominent women leaders in Chennai, including Annie Besant, not only played key roles in the Home Rule Movement but also held influence in the Theosophical Society. Besant, with a substantial following among women in Chennai, played a pivotal role in mobilizing support for the movement and advocating for self-governance within the British Empire.

In summary, the women of Chennai made significant contributions to the Home Rule Movement through the establishment of associations, awareness campaigns, fundraising efforts, political activism, and influential leadership. Their efforts were crucial in building grassroots support and advancing the cause of self-governance within the British Empire.

CHENNAI'S WOMEN IN THE NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT (1920-1922)

The Non-Cooperation Movement, initiated by Mahatma Gandhi in the early 1920s, marked a pivotal phase in India's struggle for independence from British colonial rule. Women in Chennai, like their counterparts across the nation, actively engaged in various facets of the Non-Cooperation Movement.

Boycott of British Goods:

Ambujammal and Leela Jamadagni, distinguished participants from Chennai, played noteworthy roles in the Indian Freedom Movement. Ambujammal passionately embraced the foreign cloth boycott in 1932, enduring a six-month sentence under section 4 of the Ordinance Act of 1932. Despite facing imprisonment, she unwaveringly championed the boycott of British-made goods and actively promoted the use of khadi as a symbol of self-reliance and non-cooperation. Meanwhile, Leela Jamadagni courted imprisonment and was held in Central Jail Madras for her dedicated involvement in the non-cooperation movement.

Ambujammal's influence extended beyond her activism; she also served as the Vice President in the Avadi Congress of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee. Furthermore, her literary contributions are notable, with the authorship of "Gandhi Ninaivu Malai" and the establishment of the "Srinivasa Gandhi Nilayam" organization, reflecting her commitment to preserving the legacy of Mahatma Gandhi. Ambujammal emerged as a dynamic figure, making significant strides in both the political and social spheres. Her advocacy encompassed women's and children's rights, emphasizing the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi, and her establishment of the "Srinivasa Gandhi Nilayam" highlighted her dedication to uplifting and empowering marginalized communities.

Public Demonstrations and Civil Disobedience:

Women actively partook in public demonstrations, rallies, and protest marches against British rule. Often at the forefront, they carried placards, sang patriotic songs, and demanded independence. Some engaged in acts of civil disobedience and *Satyagraha*, leading to arrests and imprisonment.

Promotion of Indigenous Industries:

Women played a vital role in promoting indigenous industries and crafts. Establishing *khadi* centers, they encouraged the production and sale of handspun and handwoven textiles, providing livelihood opportunities for many Indians.

Educational and Empowerment Initiatives:

Women's organizations in Chennai continued efforts to educate and empower women. Establishing schools, vocational training centers, and social reform programs, they aimed to improve women's status in society and enhance their participation in the independence movement.

Influence on Legislation:

Women in Chennai made history when, on 20th August, the Queen Mary's College women picketed a nearby toddy shop, urging consumers to denounce drinking. Chennai became the first Legislature in British India to pass a Women's suffrage resolution in 1921, granting women voting rights on par with men. Bombay followed suit shortly after.

Post-Non-Cooperation Movement:

Following the disruption of the Non-Cooperation Movement in February 1922, Gandhi shifted focus to constructive programs. These included popularizing temperance and *khadi* and addressing the issue of Untouchability.

In essence, women in Chennai played an indispensable role in the Non-Cooperation Movement, contributing significantly to its success and the eventual attainment of India's independence. Their multifaceted involvement, from grassroots activism to leadership roles, showcased their dedication to the cause.

CHENNAI'S WOMEN IN THE NEIL STATUE SATYAGRAHA (1927)

The Neil Statue Satyagraha, also known as the Neil Statue Protest, marked a significant episode in the Indian freedom struggle that unfolded in Chennai (then known as Madras) in 1938. The protest emerged in response to the British colonial administration's decision to erect a statue of Sir William James Richards, the Chief Justice of the Madras High Court, near its premises. This move was vehemently opposed by the Indian National Congress and other nationalist groups, viewing Richards as a symbol of British injustice and oppression in India.

In this historic event, women in Chennai played a crucial role alongside men. They made their presence felt in demonstrations, holding placards and voicing slogans against the statue's installation. Participating in acts of nonviolent resistance and *Satyagraha*, women boldly defied British orders and actively joined the civil disobedience movement.

Leela Jamadagni, a literate woman born on 14th February 1920 from Senniamman Koil Street, Tondiarpet, played a significant role in the Neil Statue Satyagraha, facing imprisonment in Central Jail Madras.

Women, providing crucial support and solidarity, played an instrumental role in organizing meetings, distributing pamphlets, and mobilizing public opinion against the installation of the statue. Notable women leaders and activists, including Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay and Rukmini Lakshmi pathi, actively advocated for the cause, leveraging their influence to shed light on the injustice and garner public support. Actively engaging with the media, women ensured the protest received widespread coverage. Through articles, interviews, and contributions to newspapers and publications, they effectively raised awareness about the issue. Similar to their male counterparts, women were not deterred by arrests and imprisonment, showcasing their willingness to make sacrifices for the larger struggle for Indian independence.

Ultimately triumphant, the Neil Statue Satyagraha led to the cancellation of the statue's installation. This protest served as a powerful exemplification of nonviolent resistance and civil disobedience, with women in Chennai playing an integral role. Their active participation and unwavering commitment underscored their dedication to the cause of independence and their determination to challenge British colonial authority.

CHENNAI'S WOMEN IN THE CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT (1930 – 1934)

The Civil Disobedience Movement, a pivotal chapter initiated by Mahatma Gandhi in 1930 as part of the Indian freedom struggle, witnessed robust involvement from women in Chennai. This movement was aimed at peacefully protesting British colonial rule and fervently demanding independence. Among the ardent participants in the Civil Disobedience Movement were women from Triplicane, Madras, such as Gomathiammal and Kamala Bai, who made notable contributions to the cause. Gomathiammal faced arrest and a six-month sentence under section 151 IPC, leading to her confinement in the State Jail for Women, Vellore. Similarly, Kamala Bai, another dedicated activist, underwent arrest and received a six-month sentence under section 151 IPC and section 4 of the Ordinance Act, with her incarceration also taking place in the State Jail for Women, Vellore.

Janaki Ammal from Bricklin Road, Otteri, Madras, actively participated in the movement, facing arrest and a three-month sentence under section 17(1) of the Criminal Law Amendment Act and being confined in Madras Central Jail. Purna Tilakammal from Kilpauk, Madras, took part in the movement, facing arrest and a six-month sentence under section 151 I.P.C, and was kept in the State Jail for Women, Vellore. Distinguished female leaders from Chennai, including Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay and Padmaja Naidu, played active and influential roles in the Civil Disobedience Movement. They emerged as prominent figures in the relentless quest for independence.

Chennai's women made significant contributions to the movement through various impactful avenues:

Boycott of British Goods and Khadi Promotion: In the resistance against British rule, women such as Kamala Devi from Washermanpet and Indira Bai from Mylapore in Madras city actively engaged in advocating the boycott of British-made goods. They played pivotal roles in activities like Toddy Shop Picketing and were fervent promoters of *khadi*, reflecting a commitment to self-reliance and non-cooperation with the British regime. Kamala Devi, facing arrest, received a six-month sentence under the Ordinance of India Rules, leading to her confinement in Women's Jail and Cuddalore Jail. Similarly, Indira Bai, arrested under section 151 I.P.C, served a six-month sentence, resulting in her imprisonment in the State Jail for Women in Vellore.

Lakshmi from Thandairypet participated in foreign cloth picketing, faced imprisonment, and spent two years in Vellore and Cannanore jails. Navaneethammal from Washermanpet took part in the foreign cloth boycott, underwent imprisonment, and was held in Vellore jail for three months. A literate woman and a secretary of Madras District Congress Committee in 1938, Rajam Bharathi from Kilpauk, Madras took part in foreign cloth shop picketing, arrested and sentenced to three months under Defence of India rules and kept in State Jail for women, Vellore. Thulasiammal from George Town, Madras took part in foreign cloth boycott in 1932, Courted imprisonment and kept in Vellore Jail.

Political Engagement: Women from Madras city, including Triplicane's Kamala Bai, Washer Kamaladevi, Chetput Lakshmi Bharathy, George Town's Kamatchi Ammal, and Triplicane's Kothainayagiammal, actively participated in political activities. They joined the Indian National Congress, attending meetings and contributing to strategy discussions and objectives. Kothainayagiammal, known for editing Jaganmohini and writing numerous Tamil novels, was also a compelling speaker. She faced arrest and a six-month sentence under section 17(1) of 1908, leading to her confinement in the State Jail for Women, Vellore.

Lakshmi Bharathy, a member of the Madras Legislature in 1937, experienced imprisonment twice in 1933 and 1941, spending a total of 8 months in Vellore Jail. Kamatchi Ammal, arrested in 1932, received a one-year sentence under

section 144 I.P.C and section 4 of the Ordinance Act, leading to her confinement in the State Jail for Women. Their active involvement and sacrifices marked their significant contributions to the political landscape.

Public Demonstrations and Protests: Women participated in public demonstrations, rallies, and protests against British rule. They carried placards, raised slogans, and were vocal in expressing their demands for independence.

Defiance of British Salt Laws: Women played a crucial role in defying British salt laws, engaging in the production of salt. Their acts often led to arrests and imprisonment.

Media Engagement: Women actively engaged with the media, writing articles, giving interviews, and utilizing newspapers to raise awareness about the Civil Disobedience Movement.

Support and Solidarity: Women provided essential support and solidarity, organizing meetings, distributing pamphlets, and mobilizing public opinion against unjust colonial practices.

The diverse range of participants from different backgrounds underlines the integral role of women in Chennai in the success of the Civil Disobedience Movement. Their dedication, sacrifices, and unwavering support demonstrated their commitment to the broader cause of Indian independence from British colonial rule.

ORIENTATION GIVEN BY CHENNAI CITY WOMEN FOR MADRAS SALT SATYAGRAHA (1930 – 1934)

The Vedaranyam Salt *Satyagraha*, also known as the Madras Salt *Satyagraha*, held pivotal significance within the broader context of the Civil Disobedience Movement led by Mahatma Gandhi in 1930. This *Satyagraha* specifically targeted the British salt laws, aiming to challenge their monopoly on salt production and distribution. Women played a central and resilient role in this movement, particularly in Vedaranyam and surrounding regions of Tamil Nadu, displaying strong leadership in organizing and leading the salt *Satyagraha*. Rajalakshmi, a notable figure, emerged as a prominent woman leader, actively mobilizing women for the *Satyagraha*. Engaging in the collection of salt from the shores of Vedaranyam, these women boldly challenged the British salt laws, which imposed taxes on salt production. Utilizing traditional salt production methods, such as evaporating seawater in shallow pits to obtain salt crystals, they made a significant contribution to local salt production.

Abishegathammal. A, a literate woman from Amirrunissa Begum Street, Sabari Kunta, Mount Road, Chennai, displayed remarkable activism by participating in Liquor shop picketing in 1925 and the Salt *Satyagraha* in 1930. She endured imprisonment three times in 1925, 1928, and 1930, in jails at Nagapatnam, Thiruthuraiipoondi, and Chennai. Women, alongside their male counterparts, engaged in salt marches, symbolically defying British salt laws and monopoly by walking extensive distances to produce salt from seawater. Demonstrating nonviolent resistance principles, they faced police repression and arrests with steadfast nonviolence and determination. Public demonstrations, rallies, and protests were avenues through which they vocalized demands for salt and economic freedom.

In 1924, Lakshmi Bharathy, wife of Krishnasamy Bharathy, participated in the Salt *Satyagraha* movement, experiencing arrests and sentences of six months in 1930 and one year in 1932, being confined in Madras Central Jail. Women played a crucial role by offering food, water, and medical assistance to fellow satyagrahis, sustaining the overall movement. The Madras Salt *Satyagraha* successfully drew attention to oppressive salt laws and advocated for self-sufficiency in salt production. Women's active participation, marked by unwavering commitment to nonviolence and determination to challenge British salt laws, significantly contributed to the broader narrative of the Indian independence struggle.

CHENNAI'S WOMEN IN THE INDIVIDUAL SATYAGRAHA (1940 - 1941)

The Individual *Satyagraha*, initiated by Mahatma Gandhi in 1940 as a nonviolent protest against British colonial rule, witnessed the active participation of individuals, including women, in Chennai city. Responding to Gandhi's call, these Satyagrahis took individual vows to nonviolently resist British rule, upholding the principles of truth and nonviolence, and publicly declared their commitment to the cause of independence, often articulating their motivations and readiness to face consequences. Devaki Ammal, residing on Adam Sahib Street, Royapuram, played a significant role in the 1941 Individual *Satyagraha*, facing arrest and a 15-day sentence under section 38 of the Defence of India Rules, and was confined in the Presidency Jail for Women in Vellore. Thirupurasundari T.L, an educated woman from Park Road, East Shenoy Nagar, Chennai, actively joined the movement in 1937, enduring a three-month imprisonment in the Presidency Jail for Women, Vellore, due to her participation in the Individual *Satyagraha*. Women Satyagrahis, boldly resisting government directives, including reporting to the police and complying with colonial regulations, symbolized peaceful resistance against British rule.

The impact of individuals like Neelavathiammal, a Mambalam resident, and Rajeswari Bai from Arni Rangam Street, Washermanpet, was profound in inspiring and mobilizing Chennai's residents for independence. Neelavathiammal participated in the Individual *Satyagraha*, enduring a three-month imprisonment under section 38(5) of the Defence of India Rules and being confined in the State Jail for Women. Navaneethammal from Washermanpet took part in Individual *Satyagraha*, underwent imprisonment, and was held in Vellore jail for three months. Their actions played a pivotal role in raising public awareness and fostering broader community involvement in the cause of Independence. Sitalakshmi Kumaraswami from Perambur, a literate woman who joined the freedom movement in 1931, participated in Individual *Satyagraha*. Arrested and sentenced to imprisonment, fined Rs.250/- in 1941, she paid the fine and, later in the same year, courted imprisonment for six months in Vellore jail. She also served as the Secretary of Congress Committee First Division in 1941 and was a dedicated social worker. Radha from Royapuram took part in the Individual *Satyagraha*, arrested and sentenced to three and half months under section 38(5) of Defence India Rules and kept in Central Jail, Madras.

Thayarammal from Namasivaya Chetty street, Washermanpet, Madras, took part in Individual *Satyagraha*, courted imprisonment thrice under Defence of India Rules, and kept in Madras, Vellore, and Cuddalore central Jails for four and a half months. Some women, including lawyers and activists, provided legal support to Satyagrahis facing legal challenges or arrests. Prominent women from Chennai, alongside ordinary citizens, actively participated in the Individual *Satyagraha*, showcasing unwavering commitment to India's struggle for Independence. Jagathambal from Kodambakkam, Madras, took part in Individual *Satyagraha* and courted imprisonment, being kept in Vellore and Cuddalore jails for 9 months. A literate woman Rajam Bharathi from Kilpauk, Madras, participated in the movement, arrested and sentenced to three months under Defence of India rules and was kept in State Jail for Women, Vellore.

While the Individual *Satyagraha* involved a limited number of participants, it served as a significant precursor to larger movements that ultimately led to India gaining independence in 1947. The active involvement of women in Chennai reflected their dedication to nonviolence and determination to challenge British colonial rule through peaceful means, contributing significantly to the eventual achievement of freedom.

CAPTIVATION OF CHENNAI CITY WOMEN IN THE QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT (1942)

The Quit India Movement, also recognized as the August Movement or August Kranti, marked a pivotal milestone in India's quest for independence from British colonial rule. Initiated on August 8, 1942, by Mahatma Gandhi, the movement sought to bring an end to British dominance in India. Large-scale public protests and demonstrations were organized as part of the Quit India Movement, where women actively participated alongside men, brandishing placards, banners, and the Indian tricolor while demanding an immediate end to British colonial rule.

Devaki Ammal, the daughter of Ponnusami Naicker, born in 1924 on Adam Sahib Street, Royapuram, actively took part in the Quit India Movement in 1942. She was arrested and sentenced to one year under section 38 of the Defence of India rules, confined in the Presidency Jail for Women, Vellore. Muniammal from Royapuram also participated in the movement, facing arrest and a one-week sentence under section 81(4) of Defence of India Rules, and was kept in Central Jail, Madras. Following her release from prison, Thulasiammal continued her involvement in the August movement against the British.

Women engaged in acts of civil disobedience by deliberately breaking various laws and regulations imposed by British authorities. This included non-payment of taxes, refusal to cooperate with government officials, and defiance of curfew orders. One notable participant was Ammu Swaminathan, born in 1895 in Chennai, who emerged as a social worker. Arrested during the Quit India Movement in 1942, she endured a one-year detention in the Presidency Jail for women in Vellore under the Defence of India Rules. Ammu Swaminathan was also a Councilor of the Corporation and elected to the Provincial Parliament of India in 1946. Mahalakshmi Bharathi, born on December 25, 1923, from Harrington Road, Nungambakkam, Chennai, joined and actively participated in the Quit India Movement while in college. She was arrested and sentenced to six months under Defence of India Rules, being confined in Jail for Women, Vellore. Women's organizations in Chennai offered support to political prisoners and their families, organizing relief efforts, providing legal aid, and raising funds for the welfare of those imprisoned for their involvement in the Quit India Movement.

Prominent women leaders from Chennai, including Rajam Krishnan, Rukmini Lakshmi pathi, and Lakshmi Sahgal, actively participated in the Quit India Movement, showcasing their unwavering commitment to the cause of independence. Hillian from Chepauk served in the Indian Independence League, was a member of the Indian National Army, and also served as the President in Women Section III Kayan Branch. These women not only addressed public gatherings and provided strategic leadership but also played a crucial role in executing protest activities effectively. They contributed to

the movement's communication efforts by spreading information and propaganda against British rule through local publications, pamphlets, and word of mouth to raise awareness and garner support for the cause.

The Quit India Movement witnessed widespread participation from women across various backgrounds, including students, activists, and homemakers, highlighting the unity of purpose in the struggle against British colonialism. Some women engaged in underground resistance activities during the movement, distributing anti-British literature, organizing secret meetings, and providing shelter to underground activists. In terms of leadership and organization, women leaders in Chennai played pivotal roles in mobilizing people for the Quit India Movement. Despite the intense repression and mass arrests accompanying the movement, the active participation of women in Chennai and throughout India played a crucial role in drawing international attention to the Indian freedom struggle. Their substantial contributions significantly contributed to India's eventual independence in 1947.

CONCLUSION

In the intricate tapestry of India's fight for independence, the women of Chennai intricately woven threads of courage, resilience, and determination. From the early days of the freedom movement to the historic moments of nonviolent resistance and civil disobedience, Chennai's women played indispensable roles in the pursuit of self-rule and sovereignty. Their contributions spanned various dimensions. Participating actively in political movements and organizations, Chennai's women voiced their demands for independence by joining the Indian National Congress and other nationalist groups, attending meetings, and advocating the end of British colonial rule.

Inspired by Mahatma Gandhi's principles of nonviolence, these women engaged in nonviolent protests, marches, and *Satyagraha* campaigns, becoming beacons of hope and setting examples for others to follow. Recognizing that social reform was integral to the broader struggle for freedom, Chennai's women tirelessly worked to eradicate social evils, promote education and women's empowerment, and contribute to the social transformation of Indian society. They played pivotal roles in initiatives like the Swadeshi Movement, encouraging the use of Indian-made products, especially *khadi*, as symbols of economic independence and resistance against British imports.

Prominent women leaders emerged from Chennai, leaving an indelible mark on the freedom struggle and becoming influential figures in shaping India's post-independence trajectory. They displayed unwavering solidarity with their fellow freedom fighters, making personal sacrifices, enduring arrests and imprisonment, and demonstrating resilience in the face of adversity.



Source: Maps from the Imperial Gazetteer of India (vols 1-24)

The tale of Chennai city women in the Indian freedom struggle embodies indomitable spirit and unwavering commitment. Engaging actively in political activism, social reform, and nonviolent resistance, these women showcased their enduring dedication to the cause of independence. Their pivotal contributions played a crucial role in shaping history and laying

the groundwork for a free and sovereign India. Today, their legacy serves as an enduring inspiration for future generations, illustrating the potency of collective action and the pursuit of justice and freedom.

Notes and References:-

1. Atlas, Madras Presidency – 1921
2. "Annie Besant: A Biography" by Arthur H. Nethercot:
3. "The Home Rule Leagues"; by M.Subraya Kamath, The Sons of India Ltd.,19 Esplanade Madras.,1918, p.18
4. "Inner Recesses Outer Spaces: Memoir" by Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay.
5. T. Ramu, Contribution of Women to Indian Freedom Struggle in Tamil Nadu – A Study, (Unpublished M. Phil, Dissertation, Department of History, Annamalai University, 2004) p.36
6. Annie Besant, C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar, Publication division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, Fourth Reprint, March 1992 (Phalgun 1913), pg. no.1
7. Ibid, pg. no.43
8. Annie Besant, Series Editor. M.A. Seewan / Editor, Saud Akhtar, R.K. Singh, Himalaya Book Pvt. Ltd, Mumbai – 400004, 2017, p.9
9. Aruna Asaf Ali, "Women's Suffrage in India" in Shyam Kumari Nehru(ed) Our Cause: A Symposium of Indian Women, p.356
10. Dr. K. Sankari, "Women of Annamalai University and Indian Freedom Struggle" Indian Publishers Distributors, Delhi, 2017
11. V. Sankaran Nair, Role of Women in Freedom Movement (with a special reference to Madras Presidency, Op. cit. p.156-157
12. S. Ganeshram, M.Phil Thesis – Role of Women in Freedom Movement in Tamilnadu 1916 -1942, School of Historical Studies, Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai – 625021, 1988
13. Women of Annamalai University and Indian Freedom Struggle, Dr. K. Sankari, Indian Publishers Distributors, Delhi, 2017
14. B. Palammal, Women Freedom Fighters in Tamilnadu, (Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, Department of History Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli), p.202.
15. K. Chellappan, (Trans) History of Freedom Movement in Tamil Nadu, Thanjavur, Tamil University, 1988, p.330.
16. H.K.Ghazi, Who's who of freedom fighters of Tamil Nadu, 3 Vols. Madras: Govt. Madras 1973.
17. M.P. Sivagnanam, TamilNadu in Indian Freedom Struggle, (Tamil), (Madras: Poongodi Pathipagam, 1997), Vol.I.p.630.
18. Siddhartha Dash, Role of Women in India's Struggle For Freedom, Magazine, Government of Odisha, 2010
19. Dr. V. Venkatraman, Ph.D., D.Litt, Women In National Politics And Freedom Struggle, Research article, SSRN, 8 March, 2018
20. Bhadoria, Singh, Kavita, Participation of Women in Freedom Struggle of India, (Thesis, Department of History, C.C.S University, Meerut, 2005.
21. Women Freedom Fighters arrest data from Tamil Nadu Archives.¹