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A STUDY ON WOMAN FREEDOM FIGHTERS OF DINDIGUL REGION

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Women have a History

Women are in History

Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya, who wrote the novel *Anandmath* which published in 1882, that portrayed revolutionaries sacrificing their lives for the motherland. His emotional hymn “*BandeMataram*” (Hail to the Mother) became famous throughout India. This call to save the motherland was not a call to women to join the political movement but rather a linking of idealized women hood with nationalism.¹

Participation of women folk of India was quite significant in Indian Struggle of Independence. With the coming of Mahatma Gandhi a new phase began in the history of women's role in the freedom struggle. In his “*Young India*” he urged women to come out openly against the British. He encouraged them to take part in this struggle.² Dindigul district women were not an exception to this and the district women like Alamelu Ammal, Periagangai, Ignatious Ammal, Thankachi Ammal, Chellai Ammal and many of them voluntarily jumped into this struggle.

Thankachi Ammal had been much influenced by the Indian Independence movement and she became ardent supporter of the Indian National Congress and took part in almost all the major agitation against the British. She actively involved in the Neil Statue Satyagraha at Madras in 1927.³ James Neill had served as the General of the Madras Regiment. He ruthlessly suppressed the Rebellion of 1857. Neill wrought inhuman vengeance on those whom he regarded as guilty: they were either humiliated or executed.⁴ When the British Government installed Neill's statue at a central place in Madras in honour of his services to the Empire, the people of Tamil Nadu rose in revolt against the symbol of shame. A Satyagraha Committee was constituted under the presidentship of Nellai N. Somayajulu. It was decided to remove the statue. Madurai Srinivasanatha Iyengar and his wife Padmasani Ammal, R. Chidambara Bharati, P. Varadarajulu, let enthusiastic support to the satyagraha. On 11 August 1927 the satyagrahis under the leadership of Subbarayalu Naidu and Muhammad Salia damaged the statue. They were arrested and sentenced to six months rigorous imprisonment. Nellai Somayajulu, Gudiatham Swaminatha Muadaliar, Panrutty S.A. Devanayaga Ayya, who were Satyagraha Generals in turn, were arrested and sentenced. The Neil statue satyagraha started in August continued till December 1927 and during this period volunteers from several districts came to the city and participated in the agitation⁵. Thankachi Ammal made great part in this agitation. For her part in this agitation she was sentenced to rigorous imprisonment along with others.

In 1930, she engaged herself in the salt satyagraha and did vigorous propaganda among the public to support the agitation. Thankachi Ammal and her fellow fighters have tried to boiled salt water but they were arrested for violating the salt laws. All satyagrahis were arrested and they were mercilessly beaten by the police. She was sentenced to one year imprisonment for her active participation in this agitation and again she was arrested for the participation in the civil disobedience movement in 1932. In this agitation, she was sentenced to one year imprisonment for this time for her role in the civil disobedience movement. She played most significant role during the Quit India Movement. She took keen part in the court hartal agitation at Vedasanthur when the unexpected arrest of the national leaders. It provoked spontaneous protests across the district and total hartal was

observed. For her participation in this movement she earned one year rigorous imprisonment at Vellore women's jail. She suffered lot in her jail term.⁶

Chellai Ammal was very much interest in her nation's freedom and wanted to see it. She had great enthusiasm in Indian National Congress and its national programmes. Therefore she joined in the Congress and work hard for her mother's freedom from the British yoke. The freedom struggle was furious in the district by the public meetings. The drummer was responsible for gathering the peoples to the public meetings through his Thammukku (music instrument). He spread the information about the agitation programme to the peoples by his music instrument. Chellai Ammal acted as a drummer when the original drummer was refused to come. She sung song and playing *thammukku* for getting attention of the huge mass. She spread the information about the public meetings through her song among the mass.⁷

Another notable event in her account was toddy shop picketing. Chellai Ammal played a heroic role in this movement in Dindigul. On July 17, picketing of liquor shops in Madurai was started⁸ and it was spread to Dindigul in the same day. The volunteers were sent to the toddy shops to ask the people not to consume the toddy and picket the toddy shops. The police replied to volunteers by arresting them. But picketing went on smoothly and certain numbers of volunteers were arrested every day.⁹

Chellai Ammal vigorously rose against the toddy shops. She pleased the drunkard not to consuming toddy and stopped them in entrance of the toddy shop. Sometimes she imitated them to stop drink toddy. Her son Vairamuthu also played significant part in this picketing movement along with his mother. During the picketing movement she was convicted in set on fire in toddy shop case. She was arrested by the police and sentenced to six months imprisonment. During her imprisonment she was kept in Nilakottai Sub-jail where her suffering was cruel and unbearable. Chellai Ammal played a heroic role among the women folk and could place her at a conspicuous place.¹⁰

Mahatma Gandhiji visited Palanitaluk in 1934 for collecting Harijan Welfare Fund, where he was stayed at the K.R. Sudararaja Iyer household. By the time of Gandhiji's stay, Alamelu Ammal Sundararaja Iyer, the women of the house, was a genial host. According to Madurai *Mavatta Sutandira PorattaVaralaru* (History of Freedom Struggle in Madurai District), Gandhiji invited Alamelu Ammal to join the Congress. Thus began her journey with the freedom movement. Both Alamelu Ammal and DeivaNayakaDesikar's wife were gave away their gold bangles for the Harijan Welfare Fund. They were been a role model for other women to donate Harijan Welfare Fund.¹¹ Further, S. A. Seshalyer, P. Ramachandran Chettiar, K. R. Chellam were also collected thousand rupees each for Harijan Welfare Fund and they handed over to Mahatma Gandhiji.¹²

Periagangai was born in 1919. She was an intermediate. Very early in life, she was very much influenced by Gandhiji. She was greatly attracted by his constructive social programme. She was connected with the congress activities and became member in 1941. She was one of the most loyal soldiers of the Indian National Congress. Periagangai actively took part in Individual Satyagraha Movement. She was imprisoned twice for her participation. First she was jailed for two months and later jailed for a year. She kept as detune in special jail of Thanjavur and Palayamcottah. Her services to the liberation of her country are note worthy.¹³

Alamelu Ammal was born in 1908 at Palani taluk. She was a literate woman who fell in love with Gandhiji's principles as a young girl. During Gandhiji visit to Palani taluk in 1934, he invited Alamelu Ammal to join the Congress. She went on to become an All India Congress Committee member. Alamelu Ammal actively participated in the Individual Satyagraha Movement in 1941 and inspired several women to do the same. She was courted arrest in 1941 for participating in the Individual Satyagraha and later she was jailed for three months in State jail for women at Vellore. She passed away in 1945, but leaving behind a history for herself and Dindigul District.¹⁴

Ignatious Ammal was a daughter of Vattiswan born in 1908. She holds a pride of a place among the women volunteers of Dindigul. She played commendable role in the Quit India movement.

Sornathammal, a leading freedom fighter in Madurai along with her fellow freedom fighter Lakshmibai Ammal on the night of October 2, 1942 organised a women's march in Madurai shouting the Vellaiyane Veliyeru (Quit India) slogan.¹⁵ In Dindigul Ignatious Ammal gathered a mass of women and delivered a speech about nation's freedom. She inspired them to participate in Quit India agitation. She, along with other fellow freedom fighters, organised a women's march in Dindigul and

they shouting against the British people and wanted them to quit. But the women were arrested by the police and beaten. Ignatious Ammal convicted and jailed to 3 months imprisonment under Sec. 143 I.P.C. was kept in state jail for women.¹⁶

Other notable women freedom fighters of the district were P. Kamala of Gandhigram, Rajammal of Solaihall in Dindigul town, Balammal of Koil Street in Dindigul town, R. Banumathi of Metturajakapatty, Soundravalliammal of Abirami Amman street, Y. Abithunnisa of Nagal Nagar and S. Padmashini Ammaiar. They were actively involved themselves in the various programmes of our nation's freedom struggle.¹⁷ Thus Dindigul district agitators demonstrated by example that they would not desist from violent and destructive activities in order to attain freedom to their country.

Conclusion

The above mentioned women agitators of Dindigul District were sacrificing all their luxury in life and they were seriously engaged themselves in the overthrow of the British rule. Their ambition was to free India from the foreign rule. It because of their steadfast patriotism and commitment to national cause India achieved its freedom. In July 1947 the British Parliament enacted the Indian Indian Independence Act, which was drafted at New Delhi after ascertaining the views of the leaders of India. It went into effect from August 15, 1947.¹⁸ When India became independent Dindigul district celebrated the event with gaiety, gust and happiness.

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AGRAHARAS AS DEPICTED IN THE INSCRIPTIONS OF HASSAN DISTRICT DURING HOYSALA PERIOD (AN EDUCATIONAL VIEW)

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Introduction

Education is an essential human virtue. Without it, man is a splendid slave, reasoning savage. It is to humanize him. Medieval Karnataka had a net work of Agraharas, Mutts, Brahmapuris, Ghatikasthanas and Temples. The educational institutions produced great luminaries of both sexes, in the field of religion, art and literature. The systematic promotion of learning resulted in the settlements of learned Brahmanas all over the country. These were brought into existence by the munificence of the state and the public.

Background of Agrahars