

THE FREEDOM FIGHTERS OF RANIPET DISTRICT HISTORICAL A STUDY

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Abstract

Kalyanraman, the great patriot, played an important role in the freedom struggle. He took part in Salt Satyagraha Civil Disobedience Movement. Individual satyagraha and quit India movement. He was arrested thrice and sentenced for more than three years. The credit of saving Kamaraj from being arrested by the police and of the successful conduct of Quit India Movement in Madras Presidency also goes to Kalyanraman. Otherwise, the very course of the freedom struggle in Madras Presidency would have been different.

Keywords: Other Leader North Arcot - Individual Satyagraha 1941 - Quit India Movement - Kamarajar Stayed Ranipet.

Introduction

The Freedom Fighters

A turning point came in the life of Kalyanarman in 1929 when he was undergoing teacher's training at Ranipet. He read in the newspaper that Akkur Ananthachariar and Kadsperi Jamadagni would be arriving at the Wallajah Road Junction after serving their sentences in jail which was imposed on them for their participation in Simon Commission boycott. He was eagerly awaiting the arrival of these freedom fighters. The sight of the freedom fighters getting down from the train filled Kalyanaraman with inexpressible emotion. Raising the slogan 'Vande Mataram' thrice he ran and knelt down before them with folded hands. The awe-inspiring behaviour of Kalyanaraman provoked the leaders to enquire about him. He rose from the ground and introduced himself as a person filled with unquenchable thirst for the freedom of our motherland. Akkur Ananthachariar appreciated the deep favour of Kalyanaraman in the freedom movement. From that day Kalyanaraman Akkur Ananthachariar as his Guru.¹

Salt Satyagraha and Civil Disobedience Movement

Gandhiji's arrest on 6th May, 1930, was followed by a hartal at different places of North Arcot Districts meetings were arranged inspite of imposition of ban orders. Picketing of today and arrack shops had been taking place at Ami, Gudiyattam, Arkonam, Tirumalpur, Vellore, Arcot, Wallajah, Polur, Sholingar and Ambur. At Arkonam due to the efforts taken by Akkur Ananthacharier, Wallajah Sundaravaradan, Kalyanaraman and Jamadagni, a camp was organised to picket in front of the toddy shops. In 1931, Mahatma Gandhiji led the Indian people in an incessant struggle demanding full independence of the country by hoisting the tricolour. A dawn-to-dust curfew was clamped down throughout the length and breadth of the country to stifle the freedom movement, undaunted by the imposition of this curfew, Kalyanaraman, who was then a student in the Teacher's Training School (1929-1931), hoisted the tricolour at Ranipet. The police immediately arrested him, since he was a student he was cautioned by the Police not to indulge in such activities in future and set free.²

As one of the steps towards to the attainment of its goal, the Congress working Committon authorised Gandhiji to lunch civil disobedience and in pursuance of this decision, he, accompanied by seventy eight disciples, set out from his ashram, at Sabarmati, on 12th March, 1930, to offer civil disobedience by making salt at Dandi, a coastal village in Gujarat, without the permission of the Government. Gandhiji campaign against the salt laws a symbolic resistance and the whole of India was stirred to depths. Gandhiji was arrested in May, 1930. The arrest of Gandhiji created an unprecedented uprising throughout India. In Madras Presidency, the Madras Congress Committee nominated Rajaji, the then President of Madras congress Committee, and Santhanam to lead salt satyagraha. The Madras Congress Committee's Executive Council met at Vellore, hand quarters of North Arcot District and resolved to start salt satyagraha in Madras Presidency at Vedaraniyam in Tanjore District. This it salt satyagraha was earned out in different places.

Other Leaders North Arcot

In the initial stage meetings were held, training camps were started, processions were taken and more satyagrahis were enrolled. Training

camp for Satyagrahis were started at Vellore, (Vaidya Chetty Street, Arasamarapet), Arcot, Tanjora, Sadras, Chingleput and Ranipet. At Ranipet, under the leadership of Kalyanaraman, Satyagraha training camp was started, with 40 Satyagrahis, and other preparatory arrangements were

also made. In all the taluks of North Arcot District foundation was laid

for the ensuing struggle by observing the 26th January as the Republic Day. Kalyanaraman as one among the leaders who guided the Satyagraha Movement in North Arcot District. Kalyanarman was one among the

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N. Annamalai Pillai, Jamadagni, Akkur Ananthachariar, Sundaravaradom, Kodaiedi Kuppuswamy Mudaliar, Obaiyathuliah Aahed of Vellore, Ramanuja Reddiar, Srinivasa Rao of Arni, Saminathan of Gudiyattam (Annal Thango), M. Saminathan of Katpadi, C.V. Rajagopal Acher and Sathur Srinivasa Sarathi were other leaders who took part in the movement. But the government was always undoing everything. By 2nd June, 1930, Rajaji along with other Satyagrahis were arrested and were given up to one year's imprisonment.³

Central Jail at Vellore

The Satyagraha camp was also forcibly disbanded by the police at Vedaranyam in Tanjore District. Yet the freedom struggle, continued and got intensified, during the year 1932, Civil Disobedience Movement was resumed thousands of congressmen were arrested and imprisoned. In spite of the repressive measures of the government, the civil disobedience movement was carried out in full swing. This scene national feeling in the mind of Kalyanaraman. Kalyanaraman who was serving as a teacher, relinquished his job and plunged into the freedom struggle, keeping the interest of the motherland upper most in his mind. He distributed pamphlets in the rural areas defying the British rule and educated the masses. He demanded the immediate release of Gandhi from prison. So, he was arrested by the police and given one year's imprisonment. He underwent his first jail sentence in the central Jail at Vellore. Though he was a Brahmin, he gave a go-by to his orthodox way of life, on becoming a freedom fighter. He realised that all are born equal and vowed to root out the scourge of untouchability and bring equality and justice.

Individual Satyagraha 1941

To implement the Satyagraha programme of Mahatma Gandhiji in 1940, training camps were held all over the country, one such training camp was held at Arcot in c. Abdul Takeem High School in 1940, under the aegis of the North Arcot District Congress Committee and under the guidance of Kalyanaraman. The camp was held to impart training akin to what was given by Gandhiji in Eraveda and Sabarmathi Ashrams. Volunteers had to court imprisonment during the period of struggle, they were taught how to withstand the hardships inflicted upon them in the prison and how to accustom themselves to the situation in jails. More than 40 men and women volunteers drawn from different parts of the district were trained in such camps. The training paved the way for such volunteers to man the party's posts at taluk levels and to become able orators. The training camp which, was inaugurated by Omadur Ramasami Reddiar was concluded by

K. Kamaraj.

The effective manner in which the camp was conducted by Kalyanaraman and the interest and enthusiasm evinced by the volunteers in undergoing the training draw praise from Gandhiji, Nehruji and Rajaji and these leaders sent congratulating message to the camp. Newspaper sent their correspondents for making an on-the-spot study of the training camp and published encouraging reports on the successful conduct of the training⁶. When the viceroy was not able to make any commitment in 1939 on the independence of the Indian Sub-continent, Congress launched direct action on the advice of Gandhiji to achieve the goal of freedom. Congress ministries in the presidency were advised to dissolve their cabinet and engage themselves in anti-war activities. In accordance with the directive of the congress high command, all congress ministries in the presidencies were dissolved. In Madras presidency Rajaji tendered the resignation of his cabinet on 26.10.1939.

Anti-war slogans were raised throughout the country. In North

Arcot district, steps were afoot to establish anti-war committees. But the Muslim League and the Justice party in Madras Presidency, particularly

E.V. Ramasamy Naicker, C.N. Annadurai, P.T. Rajan and Bobbli Raja campaigned supporting the British war efforts and pooh poohed the congress party's anti-war activities. However, the country did not take cognisance of their bashful support to Britain. So the Congress declared one man Satyagraha in 1941, throughout the length and breadth of the country.⁷ Gandhiji selected Vinobhaji as the first man to launch Satyagraha in that phase of the struggle. Volunteers were advised by Gandhiji to carry on struggle by trekking on foot, forsaking food and shelter. The Indian people who had already exhibited their opposition to the draconian laws of the British imperialism offered their unstinted support to the present move of Gandhi. Thousands of people drawn from the reunited rural areas and towns alike came led on their struggle and courted arrest in large numbers, behind for want of accommodation in prisons were advised by Gandhiji to continue Satyagraha. In North Arcot District also Kalyanaraman launched a Satyagraha at Ranipet and was arrested and given a Jail sentence for nine months, along with a fine of 5,250/-. He underwent this jail sentence at Tirupattur, Bellari and Alipure.⁸

The Quit India Movement 1942

The failure of the Cripps Mission in April 1942 left the congress with no choice but to think in terms of a new struggle. Rajaji tried to prevent such a contingency by offering a proposal under which the congress would agree to the Muslim League's cooperation in the resumption⁹ a popular government in Madras, in view of the growing threat of Japanese invasion of the east coast of India. The Congress Legislative party at a hastily convened meeting. Rajaji rose from all positions in

congress, including his membership of the Madras Legislative Assembly, so as to free himself for carrying on his campaign. At this critical juncture, Kalyanaraman stood along with Rajaji. Meanwhile, the Congress Working Committee Met again and passed a resolution which was in the nature of an ultimatum to Britain. This was the famous “Quit India” resolution, which was passed by all India Congress Committee at Bombay, on 8th August, 1942. At the close of the meeting, Gandhiji told the congressmen that in the new struggle that was facing the country, the slogan for every patriot was ‘Do or Die’.

The leaders started dispersing from Bombay with the grim resolve to face whatever troubles might arise out of the ordeal to which they had unflinchingly committed themselves. It was well known that the government had drawn up a list of all the leaders and others to be arrested and had also issued instructions as to where they were to be arrested. Consequently, in the early hours of 9th August, 1942, most of the congress leaders were arrayed and the congress declared an illegal body. Although leaderless, the people themselves continued the ‘Quit India’ movement. Unfortunately, as there was no definite organization and a complete lack of leadership, violent riots, assaults, sporadic disorders, and destruction of public property. Occurred on a large scale in different parts of India. But there were no serious outbreaks of violence in North Arcot District. District Calendar of events of the Civil Disobedience Movement, August December 1942, observes:

There were no serious outbreaks of Violence in this district. Some processions and hartals took places which were quickly brought under control. A number of acts of clandestine sabotage were however committed, Telephone and Telegraphic wires were cut in several places and post boxes were stolen.

The Public Works Department Inspection bungalow at Panapakam was burnt on the 25th August, 1942 and on the

1st September three blocks of the newly built police huts in Vellore were also burnt. Three forests rest-houses near Vellore and two village chavadies in Panapakam and Timiri were also set on fire. In addition to these acts of incendiarism a goods train was derailed on 26th October, 1942 between Tandarai and Adichanur railway stations of South Indian Railway...

Kamaraj, who was returning from Bombay, did not want to fall into the hands of the police till he had gone round all the districts in Tamilnadu. On reaching Arkonam, he found a large contingent of police at the Metform. The police had apparently been alerted to be on the lookout for leaders who might be returning from Bombay. Kamaraj, however, escaped arrest because the police at Arkonam were not aware that he was on the list of leaders to be arrested. From the station he went to Kalyanaraman’s house at Ranipet at 10 p.m. and knocked at the door.¹² Kamarajar Stayed Ranipet

Kalyanaraman presumed that the police had come to arrest him because he was a member of the District Congress Working Committee. But he was surprised to see Kamaraj on opening the door. The immediate problem for Kalyanaraman was to save Kamaraj from the police. As his house was not safe he decided to arrange for Kamaraj's stay in a secluded cottage in a garden belonging to Janab A.B. Mohamad suleiman, a leading skin and hides merchant who readily agreed for it. Kamaraj stayed at Ranipet till next evening and distributed copies of the programme that had been drawn up under the Quit India Resolution.

An interesting incident occurred during Kamaraj's stay in Sulaiman's house. While Kamaraj and Kalyanaraman were in the house, they saw a police Sub-Inspector entering the garden, for a moment, Kalyanaraman was worried assuming that the police had possibly lost of Kamaraj's presence and had come to arrest him. So Kamaraj went into a room where they had been stocked and pretended to be asleep. After closing the door of the room, Kalyanaraman came outside to ask the sub-Inspector what he wanted. The latter told him that he had come to find out whether Sulaiman's house in the garden was suitable for the stay of the District Superintendent of Police who was expected to visit Ranipet on that day.

The Sub-Inspector took a quick look at the house and left, saying that it was not enough. Kamaraj's presence was not suspected and thus he escaped, arrest, due to the efforts of Kalyanaraman. On the same day evening Kalyanaraman arranged for a taxi from Vellore and reached Kaniyambadi along with Kamaraj. From there both of them travelled to Thanjavur by train. At Villupuram Junction, a large contingent of Police force was present, apparently to arrest any congress leaders who might be getting down from the train, on seeing the police, Kamaraj stretched himself in the compartment covering himself with a blanket. Kalyanaraman met some newspaper agents and congressmen on the platform and distributed copies of the congress programme. Both of them, then reached Tanjore and went to the house of the local congress leader T.R.V. Narayanaswami. After meeting all the local congress workers, they left for Tiruchi by train and arrived there in the evening.¹⁴

At the Trichy Junction also, the police were prowling and it was a problem for both of them to slip out without being noticed. Unperturbed, Kamaraj, decided to get out of the compartment on the wrongs side of the platform and get away from the Station. They crossed the railway line and reached a hotel with towels wrapped around their heads like villagers. At Tiruchi, the Police had been mobilized in full strength to round up most of the prominent congressmen at secret conclave at Ariyalure. Through local congressmen Kamaraj and Kalyanaraman learnt about the police move. They went by a Jatkan to the house of M.S. Rangaswami and after meeting a few local congress workers, they left by car to Madurai. That night they met the Congressmen at Madurai and informed them about the Congress

programmes, Kalyanaraman was advised by Kamaraj to tour Salem and Coimbatore districts before returning to Ranipet. But Kalyanaraman had no money and asked Kamaraj for money. Kamaraj found that there was very little money with him. So Kalyanaraman went upto Tuticorin and returned to Ranipet without visiting the other places, due to lack of funds. When he reached Ranipet the warrant for his arrest was awaiting him.

Hardly had he got home than he was whisked away by the police to be kept in detention under the Defence of India Rules. He was first taken to the Walajapet Sub Jail, then to Vellore central Jail and later moved to Thanjavur. Subsequently he was given a jail sentence for eighteen and a half months.” He was in jail along with C. Subramaniam, O.V. Magesan and Gopal Reddi. When he was released from jail in 1944, he went straight to his home expecting a happy reunion with his mother and wife. But what he saw at home had a stunning effect on him. His mother’s face was filled with sorrow and his wife presented a picture of misery. They were almost rags. The children looked very much emaciated for want of food for days together. He realised that the whole family was starving for months together. This pathetic condition brought forth tears from his eyes. But he saw a lot of certificates, commending his service to the nation, hanging from the walls of the house. For a few minutes he was alternatively looking at the certificates and at the faces of his beloved mother and wife, suddenly he removed all the certificates from the walls, took them to the bazaar and fetched two sarees for his mother and wife by selling the certificates to an old per merchant.¹⁵

Right from the year 1930 Kalyanaraman participated in almost all the freedom struggle movements in the country and spent nearly four years in the jails at Cannanore, Vellore, Alipore and Thanjavur.” With his abundant knowledge in ‘Shastras’ he conducted Sanskrit classes in the jails and his jail term gave him a chance to move with stalwarts like Madurai Vaidyanatha Iyer, Thanjavur Sadagopalachari, Neelam Sanjeeva Reddi, Brahmanda Reddi, B. Gopala Reddi, Smt. Soundran Ramachandran, Rajaji, Kamaraj,

R. Venkataraman, and a galaxy of other Indian patriots. It is stated in the files maintained by the District Collectors that Kalyanaraman was considered as an emotional speaker capable of taking the masses with him. In this connection, it would be apt to quote an incident when Kalyanaraman, North Arcot District Board member and Secretary of the District Congress Committee, was charged under section 38-1 (a) and (5) of the Defence of India Rules.¹⁶

He was alleged to have made an anti-war speech at Tirupattur on 16th November, 1940 at the Poonjola Maiden, between 9.30 and 10.45 p.m. under the auspices of Desiye Podu Jane Seva Sangham”. He spoke on the title ‘Contemporary Situation and our Duties’, which was considered prejudicial to the efficient prosecution of the War. Initially the case was

taken up for trial on 20th December, 1940 by Mr. P.T. Raman Nair, I.C.S., Joint Magistrate, Tirupattur.

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