

Enlightening the Untold Stories of Freedom - Unsung Hero N.M.R. Subbaraman

R. Murugan¹ and Dr. R. Abbas²

¹Ph.D Research Scholar (Full-Time), Department of History,
Annamalai University, Annamalai Nagar. Chidambaram-608 002
Email: murugankishoor880@gmail.com

²Assistant Professor, Department of History,
M.V. Muthiah Government Arts College for Women, Dindigul-624 001
Email: dr.r.abbas@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper delves into the life and contributions of N. M. R. Subbaraman, an often overlooked figure in the annals of India's struggle for independence. Through meticulous archival research and analysis of historical narratives, the study aims to illuminate Subbaraman's pivotal role in shaping the course of India's freedom movement. From his early activism to his involvement in key movements and organizations, Subbaraman's dedication to the cause of liberation underscores the complex tapestry of resistance against colonial rule. By shedding light on his untold stories, this paper seeks to reevaluate and acknowledge the significance of Subbaraman's contributions within the broader context of India's fight for freedom. Through this exploration, we aim to offer a more comprehensive understanding of the diverse voices and actors that propelled India towards independence, ensuring that Subbaraman's legacy remains rightfully honored and celebrated in the annals of history.

Key Words: N. M. R. Subbaraman, Freedom movement, colonial rule, Independence, liberation

Introduction

N. M. Ra. Subbaraman, also known as N. M. R. Subbaraman, was born on 14th August 1905 and passed away on 25 January 1983, played a significant role in the Indian freedom struggle, aligning himself with the principles of Mahatma Gandhi. Hailing from the Nattanmai Malli family in Madurai, he was born Rayalu Iyer-Kaveri Ammal, the second son. His wife's name was Parvathavardhani. Despite being born into a prosperous family, Subbaraman actively participated in the Indian freedom movement, earning the affectionate

moniker "Madurai Gandhi" from the people of Madurai. During his imprisonment for his involvement in the freedom struggle, Subbaraman formed strong connections with notable individuals such as Coimbatore Su. Avinasilingam Chettiar and Vedaranyam Sardar. A. He actively engaged in the Congress movement alongside Vedaratnam and contributed to Sarvodaya projects and initiatives, reflecting his commitment to social upliftment and Gandhian principles. It's worth noting that Rabindranath Tagore, the National Poet, spent two years studying at the Santiniketan Academy in Calcutta. Despite his affluent background, N. M. Ra. Subbaraman chose to actively participate in the fight for India's independence, leaving a lasting impact on the freedom struggle.

Freedom movement in Madurai

Madurai district played a significant role in India's freedom struggle, with pivotal moments marked by Mahatma Gandhi's visits in 1919 and 1921. During Gandhi's first visit in 1919, he came to Madurai to mobilize people against the oppressive Rowlatt Act. Choosing to stay at Barrister George Joseph's residence in Alvarpuram, north of Madurai, Gandhi's plans took an unexpected turn when he learned that Dalits were prohibited from entering the Meenakshi Amman temple. In response, Gandhi firmly refused to visit the temple, emphasizing his commitment to equality. A noteworthy public meeting took place in Madurai on March 29, 1919, drawing a crowd of 20,000 people, mainly comprising panchal workers. George Joseph's persistent efforts culminated in a massive rally on April 5, 1919, followed by a citywide hartal (blockade) the next day. The labor movement gained momentum among the panchals in Madurai, intertwining with the freedom struggle among mill workers and handloom weavers. Gandhi returned to Madurai in 1921, staying at the residence of his friend and Congress leader Ramji Kalyani on Melamasi Road. It was during this visit that the city left a lasting impact on Gandhi, offering insights into the challenges faced by the average Indian. The educational institutions of Madurai became a hotbed for the fervor of India's freedom, with political leaders addressing the student community at Madurai American College. These speeches played a pivotal role in fostering a nationalistic sentiment among the students. The political landscape evolved further in 1937 with the Madras Provincial Assembly elections. In Madurai, NMR Subpuraman contested for the Congress Party, while EM Gopalakrishna Gon represented the Justice Party. Although, at that time, only the educated and affluent residents of Madurai had voting rights, campaign meetings witnessed substantial student participation, reflecting the growing political

awareness and enthusiasm among the youth. Madurai district is the residence of numerous freedom fighters and social reformers who have left an enduring mark on history. Among them is N. M. R. Subbaraman, a prominent figure in the region.

Role of the Bhoodan Movement

The Bhoodan movement, also known as the Land Gift movement or the Bloodless Revolution, was a voluntary land reform initiative that took place in India. Launched in 1951 by Gandhian leader Vinoba Bhave, the movement aimed to encourage affluent landowners to willingly donate a portion of their land to those who were landless. Vinoba Bhave, drawing inspiration from the principles of the Sarvodaya movement and Gram Swarajya, embarked on a remarkable journey across India on foot. His mission was to persuade landowners to contribute a share of their land to address the issue of landlessness. The movement gained momentum when Bhave achieved his first success on April 18, 1951, at Pochampally village in Nalgonda district, Andhra Pradesh (now part of Telangana). Pochampally was a significant location due to its association with the Telangana peasant movement and ongoing conflicts between peasants and local landlords. During his stay in Pochampally, Bhave engaged with the villagers, particularly the landless Harijans. In response to their request for land, he posed the question of whether the villagers themselves could take action if government intervention proved challenging.

V. Ramachandra Reddy, a prominent landowner in the region, responded by initially donating 100 acres of his 3,500-acre land. Later, he extended his support by contributing an additional 800 acres. This marked the beginning of the Bhoodan movement in the area. Subsequently, the movement continued under the auspices of a Bhoodan trust, with Reddy's sons actively participating in the land donation initiative. Notably, the 7th Nizam of Hyderabad, Mir Osman Ali Khan, made a significant contribution by donating 14,000 acres of his land to the Bhoodan movement. Other notable landowners, including Raja Bahadur Giriwar Narayan Singh and the Raja of Ranka (Garhwa, Jharkhand), collectively donated an impressive 102,001 acres to the Bhoodan initiative. This collective donation stood as the largest of its kind in India, showcasing the impact and reach of the Bhoodan movement in addressing land-related inequalities. N. M. R. Subbaraman was a Sarvodaya volunteer

who gave away his hundred acres of agricultural land to the poor and needy as per the scheme laid out by Sarvodaya Sangh president Vinoba Bhave through bhuthanam (land donation).

Charities made by the N. M. R. Subbaraman

- ❖ Gandhi Gram University, Dindigul
- ❖ Gandhi Museum, Madurai
- ❖ Gandhi Niketan Ashram, The. stone slab
- ❖ Ramakritna Misan Vidyalaya, Coimbatore
- ❖ All India Gandhi Memorial Fund, Madurai Gandhi Museum, Madurai
- ❖ Arishana Seva Sangam, Madurai
- ❖ Chennai State education institutions

He set up cooperative societies to strengthen the cooperative movement in Madurai.

N. M. R. Subraman: A Pivotal Figure in India's Struggle for Independence

In 1923, N. M. R. Subraman attended the All India Congress Party Conference in Kakinada as a representative of Madurai Nagar, fueling his fervor for Indian freedom. His commitment deepened when he was elected as the President of the Madurai District Congress Party in 1930. In 1934, Mahatma Gandhi initiated a nationwide campaign against untouchability. During the Gandhijis' visit to Madurai, Subraman hosted them for two days, solidifying their familial connection. His dedication to the cause led to his involvement in the "Quit the Whites" protest, spearheaded by Mahatma Gandhi, resulting in imprisonment. From 1935 to 1942, Subraman served as the Chairman of Madurai Municipality, showcasing his commitment to local governance. His political journey extended to the Madras State Legislature, where he served as a member in 1937 and 1946. Post-Independence in 1947, Subraman continued his public service, representing the people as a member of the Lok Sabha from 1962 to 1967. His enduring commitment to the welfare of the nation and his active involvement in various political capacities underscore his significant role in the political movement for Indian independence and subsequent governance.

Abolition of Untouchability

In Gandhian principles, Arsana chose and devoted himself to this. In 1939, the downtrodden protested to enter Madurai Meenakshi Amman Temple, Madurai. A. Subparaman fought with Vaidyanathiyar as his partner and took people like Kakkan along with him. He established boarding schools for the educational upliftment of the downtrodden. The fox girl adopted the child brought it up and married it. When the All India Gandhi Memorial Fund was launched, Subbaraman served as its Organizing Secretary in Tamil Nadu and later as its President till 1981. He dedicated himself to spiritual pursuits and played a pivotal role in promoting the recitation of the Bhagavad Gita by establishing the Geetha Bhavan. Additionally, he took the initiative to enhance the education of girls in the Chauratira community by founding the Chauratira Girls Higher Secondary School in Madurai. Furthermore, he generously contributed to the intellectual resources of the Sourathirak College Library in Madurai by donating books from his collection. A notable figure in the cooperative movement in Madurai, he played a significant role in establishing multiple cooperative societies. As a philanthropist, he donated his residence in Chokkikulam, Madurai, to the Department of "Gandhian Thought" at Kamarasar University. His varied contributions reflect a deep commitment to spirituality, education, cooperative endeavors, and the promotion of Gandhian principles.

Conclusion

In honor of his charitable contributions, the Indian Government's Department of Posts issued a special postage stamp on the occasion of N. M. R. Subbaraman's centenary in 2005. Additionally, a park in Madurai bears his name, courtesy of the Madurai Corporation. The inauguration of the flyover connecting Madurai Municipality, South Vasal-Villapuram on August 11, 1989, saw a significant tribute to Subbaraman, as the flyover was named 'N. M. R. Subbaraman Membalam' by the then Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, M. Karunanidhi. N. M. R. Subbaraman's philanthropy extended to donating his land to the Madurai Municipal Corporation, facilitating the construction of a maternity hospital. This hospital, dedicated to the memory of Subbaraman's father Rayalu Iyer, was named the Rayalu Iyer Maternity Hospital by M. Karunanidhi. Locals colloquially refer to this hospital as Gandhi Potel Hospital. Notably, a full-length statue of Mahatma Gandhi, erected by the

public, stands in front of this maternity hospital.

Notes and References

1. Extracts from the fortnightly confidential reports from the Madras Government to the Government of India on the State of the Country 1914 to 1927
2. Extracts from the fortnightly confidential reports from the Madras Government to the Government of India on the State of the Country 1928 to 1937
3. H. F. M. 1936-1947
4. Need To Release A Commemorative Stamp In The Memory Of Shri N.M.R on 23 March 2005". 14th May 2014.
5. "University in memory of NMR Subbaraman proposed". The Hindu. 18 August 2012. 13th May 2014.
6. History of Freedom Movement, File No.66, Extracts from Files relating to Civil Disobedience Movement, 1931-32, p.634. India, 22 September 1931.
7. G.O. No.1236, Public Department, 24 September 1932.
8. History of Freedom Movement, File No.65, Civil Disobedience Movement , Extracts from Secret Reports, 1929-30, p.211.
9. The Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society (Bangalore, India). The Society. 1998. p. 32.
10. "Members Bioprofile". Lok Sabha. 14th May 2014.
11. "Biography: N.M.R.Subbaraman". 13th May 2014.
12. "Throwing light on the life of 'Madurai Gandhi'". The Hindu. 20th August 2006. Archived from the original on 14th May 2014.
13. "N. M. R. Subbaraman College for Women inaugurated". The Hindu. 20 August 2010. Archived from the original on 23 August 2010.
14. Madurai Gandhi Na. M. Ra. Subraman, Editor, Kanamanjari Sampath, Alliance Publishing House, Chennai.