INTRODUCTION

Lord Irwin, the then Viceroy of India declared on 31st October 1929, that the goal of British policy was to confer Dominion Status on India. But a subsequent meeting between Lord Irwin and Gandhi revealed that the Dominion Status contemplated by Viceroy’s pronouncement was not up to the expectation of Gandhi. Hence the Lahore Congress of 1929 had authorized the Working Committee to launch a programme of Civil Disobedience including, non-payment of taxes. Gandhi put forth the program to be observed by the people on 26th January 1930 as Purna Swaraj Day which was approved by the Congress Working Committee. On 15th February 1930, the Congress Working Committee meeting held at Ahmadabad, authorized Gandhi to launch the Civil Disobedience movement at time and place of his choice. The Civil Disobedience began on the issue of Salt Tax. On 12th March he began his march to Dandhi with a band of devoted Satyagrahi’s to breach the Salt Law. Gandhi appealed to his country men to start the Salt Satyagraha at their respective region. Tamil Nadu played a commendable role in conducting Salt Satyagraha on the Gandhian model. It was conducted in various places like Marin Beach at Madras, Sholinganallur, Vedanayam and Tuticorin and in the Small coastal villages like Killai, Owari, Devanampattinam and Tharuvaikulam which imbibed the spirit of nationalism among the mind of people. This paper deals the incident on the micro level narrating the events from the grass root level.

SALT TAX

The salt industry is one of the oldest industries in India. It was a cottage industry for ages along the coast of Bengal, Bombay, Madras and the Rann of Cutch. The salt tax was levied by British in India. The salt policy of the British was an important factor for their administration. Salt may appear an insignificant factor in South Indian economy but its impact on nationalism cannot be ignored.

SATYAGRAHA OF GANDHI

Gandhi coined the word Satyagraha which is Indian origin. The evolution of the word Satyagraha has an interesting history. It was used to name the movement which Gandhi
had started in South Africa. “What name to give our movement”

In South Africa Gandhi started a movement of Indians between the years 1906 and 1914 against the unjust and inhuman laws of the British government which was working under the racial and social discrimination. In its early stages he labeled this movement as “passive resistance”. But very soon he found the English phrase “Passive resistance” an inadequate description of the movement which was creating a new force. After his return to India in January 1915 he used the same measures against the British salt laws. Gandhi the leader of mass of the nation commenced the Salt Satyagraha march on 12th March 1930 from the Sabarmathi Ashram with 77 Satyagrahis to break the salt laws at Dandi beach, as a token of Civil Disobedience Movement programme. They reached Dandi on 5th April 1930. Gandhi himself broke the salt law by picking salt lying on the Dandi beach on 6th April 1930. Further, Gandhi appealed the Congress men to conduct similar movement at their respective regions.

**MARINA BEACH SATYAGRAHA MADRAS**

Madras, though the capital of the Madras presidency and had a large number of Telugu speaking people blurted out during Salt Satyagraha movement. The energetic and patriotic call of veteran leaders like T.Prakasam and K. Nagewara Rao organized the Salt satyagraha. The first batch was chosen for this purpose consisted of 32 volunteers. Two days before the actual date for breaking the salt laws, T.Prakasam informed the Government that he and his colleagues would prepare the salt at Marina beach in Madras on 22nd April 1930. People in thousands thronged the Marina beach to witness the scene. The Marina beach which was located in Triplicane area he broke the salt law under with a of enthusiastic volunteers. According to the British, preparation of salt was unlawful and so everybody was anxiously waiting to see the consequences. After boiling the sea water on the beach first, the same afternoon produced salt in his residence. Salt making and other demonstrations were indulged in and were at first treated with forbearance as being contemptible. It soon, however became evident that defiance of law and order in any form, however ridiculous was at a danger of the public peace and stronger measure become necessary. The first step was to arrest of the leader.

Here the Salt and the Police officials got specific instructions and ready to take punitive measures. Once he had successfully violated salt laws on the Madras beach openly, T.Prakasam next wanted to prepare salt in indoors at his Udayana beach in Mylapore. He collected the salt water in brines from the beach and heated them. While at the beach the public allowed him to go scot-free, but all of a sudden F.L.Mullay, the Deputy Commissioner, rushed and tried to seize the white powder. But T.Prakasam’s followers resisted and didn’t yield. On knowing that large crowd gathered outside, the police gave up the recovering the salt powder and contented with arresting sheet anchor of this movement T.Prakasam. He was taken to the Mylapore magistrate put a question whehter he felt guilt. He replied boldly that himself broke the salt law intentionally. He didn’t show the signs of defiance or abetment. The Magistrate was satisfied and ordered him to be released to the surprise to both Police and public.

**VEDARANYAM SATYAGRAHA**

Gandhi’s re-entry to the active politics and his Salt Satyagraha march to Dandi in March 1930 infused a new spirit to the national movement in India. In Madras Presidency.
C. Rajagopalachari, the President of Tamil Nadu Congress Committee drew up a plan for the Salt Satyagraha in Tamil Province on the Gandhian model. He selected 100 Satyagrahis from all over Tamil region and started the march from Trichy to Vedaranyam beach on 13th April 1930. Vedaranyam is a small unimportant town situated on the east coast. There were various reasons for choosing Vedaranyam for Salt Satyagraha. It was favorably suited for salt campaign because it was near to Agashiyampalli salt factory. Further the Tamil Nadu Congress Conference was held in 1929 which was presided by Vallabai Patel. Further it was the native place of Vedarattanam Pillai, an active Congress worker and a license holder of Agashiyampalli salt factory. Thus Vedaranyam became a battle field.

C. Rajagopalachari showed very caution in selection of volunteers. Owing to the vigorous propaganda made by C. Rajagopalachari and T.S.S. Rajan nearly 1000 applications were received for enlistment as Satyagraha volunteers. C. Rajagopalachari scrutinized the application, selected 100 volunteers and formed the first batch to lead to Vedaranyam. The march was started on 13th April 1930 marked as being Tamil New Year and Jallian Wallaugh Day. The route chosen to Vedaranyam was from Trichy to Tanjore, Tanjore to Kumbakonam, Kumbakonam to Mannargudi and from Mannargudi to Vedarayam through Thituthurai pundi. The march was started from T.S.S. Rajan’s gouse at Trichy. The volunteers were singing the hymns and patriotic songs especially written for this movement by the popular Tamil poet Namakal Ramalingam Pillai. Propaganda was made all along the route. Rajagopalachari wanted very strict discipline among the volunteers. He announced the code of conduct and asked them to follow them very strictly. In the initial stage the Government of Madras remained aloof. On 3rd April 1930 J.A. Throne made a call to Madras seeking permission to arrest Rajagopalachari. But both permissions were rejected. The volunteers reached Vedaranyam on 28th April 1930 and on the next day 29th April was observed as a day of fasting and prayer.

On 30th April morning Rajagopalachari along with 15 selected volunteers and the local resident Vedarathinam, Pillai went into the swamp and collect the salt. However he was arrested immediately for violating the salt law and sentenced to 6 months simple imprisonment under Sec. 145 IPC and fine of Rs.200/- under the section 74 of the salt law. After his arrest other leaders who accompanied him attempted to continue the Satyagrah.

**RAMESWARAM SATYAGRAHA**

A proposal to make salt at Rameswaram a well known place of pilgrimages was planned in Ramand shortly after Gandhi’s arrest, but nothing came out. N.S. Ramaswami Iyear came from the Trichy district to infuse some life into the cause and by the 26th May preparations were completed. However on May 29th N.S. Ramaswami Iyer and five more were arrested and on the same day N.S. Ramaswami Iyer was convicted for an offence under Sec.117 I.P.C. and sentenced to suffer one year rigorous imprisonment for one year and to pay fine of Rs.200/-. Consequently the movement was stopped on May 30, 1930.

**TUTICORIN SATYAGRAHA**

Plans were made from time to time from April to June 1930 for making salt at different centers on the eastern coast like Ovary, Tuticorin, Tharuvaiukkam, Veppalodai and Anjengo. However the plans were abandoned shortly before the actual dates of Salt Satyagraha became the coastal villages consisted mostly of Parava Christians populations.
who have no sympathy for the movement. The contractors of Salt at the various factories along the coast were also powerful allies of government. The Secretary of the Congress Committee S.Palaniyandi Mudaliyar was a weak-kneed supporter of the Civil Disobedience Movement.26 Himself and the other office bearer suggest the Government the activities related to the movement were promptly suppressed and assuredly land them in prison.

CONCLUSION

There was a spontaneous response from the people to the Salt Satyagraha march due to the positive propaganda of the nationalist press and the political literature of Tamil Nadu. They motivated the rural and suburban people a lot to the movement. The Vedaranyam Salt Satyagraha turned the attention of India to wards South Tamil Nadu. The government took various counter measures to dilute the movement by issuing leaflets, passing anti Satyagraha acts, proscription of press etc. In spite of that the people of Tamil Nadu whole hearted by participated in the Salt Satyagraha and made the movement a successful one equivalent to Dandi March.

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