



MAYANDI BHARATHI – SOCIAL ACTIVIST

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ABSTRACT

Mayandi Bharathi , a man of courage and confidence . He was one of the freedom fighter worked under various eminent persons of freedom struggle. He was inspired by reading the poems of Bharathi, a patriotic poet. He used many songs of Bharathi to raise the fire of freedom struggle. Hence he was given the title, Bharathi by other rebellions. He was an ardent admirer of Gandhiji and Netaji Subash Chandra Bose. He also met several leaders like Pasumpon Muthuramalinga Thevar, K.P.Janaki Ammal, N.M.R.Subbaraman, Sasivarna Thevar, Sitarmaiah, M.R.Venkatraman and A.Vaidyanathu Iyer . He was imprisoned for 14 years for during the freedom struggle; Madurai's most loved and recognized freedom fighter, who continued to fight against injustice till the end. He worked as an editor on various communists like Janasakthi and Theekathir. He wished to accomplish social reforms for attaining social equality.

Key words: Communism, Socialists

INTRODUCTION

Mayandi Bharathi was an orator, powerful writer and a journalist. He was a revolutionary who participated in the Indian independence movement. He was born on 1917 in Madurai. He was in various posts in CPI for a long time. He was the president of the Chennai Province Extremists Youth Wing. Mayandi earned

the title, 'Bharathi' from his colleagues for unwavering passion for Subramania Bharathi's songs. Though he was a Gandhian by principle and philosophy, he was also an ardent admirer of Netaji Subash Chandra Bose. He went to prison thirteen times for participating in the Quit India Movement and till 1947 he fought for India's freedom. He worked as an

editor on various communists print media like Janasakthi and Theekathir. He was one of the very few leaders of his generation to fight for both political and social freedom. He was involved in a relentless struggle against the ruling class.

MAYANDI BHARATHI'S ROLE IN THE FREEDOM MOVEMENT

Mayandi Bharathi, was drawn into the freedom movement at a very young age. When Bhagat Singh was hanged in 1931, Mayandi Bharathi, who was a school student, participated in a protest rally. His life changed when he was 14. His classroom window allowed him a peep into the street opposite to where Government Rajaji Hospital, Madurai. There were no buildings then, only forests surrounded the Hospital hidden inside the shrubs was a toddy shop run by the British. Congress led picketing of shops selling foreign cloth and liquor. Several workers were lathi charged during a protest in 1932. Watching the action from his seat, Bharathi grew restless. He excused himself from the class, rid his school bag of the books and notebooks and filled it up with stones and pebbles instead and ran to the spot and supplied stones to the unarmed protestors to help them to hit back. He too got beaten up by the police. [1]

He joined the freedom movement in spite of strong opposition from his parents. January 25-27, 1934, Gandhiji came to address the public meeting in Madurai. Mayandi Bharathi attended the meeting when he was in only in 9th standard. Mahatma Gandhi spoke in Anupanadi tank which was dry at that time. He asked for donations for harijan development and every one contributed. The meeting was held in the evening and in the flowing sunlight he looked like a man God had sent. As he was getting into the house, he sat down in the corridor and while getting up, he took Mayandi's shoulders for support and he blessed him. [2]

Bharathi said that the All India Congress Committee met in Gowalia Tank Maidan in Bombay, and Mahatma Gandhi launched the 'Quit India' movement and called for 'Do or Die' The next day, Gandhi, Nehru and many other leaders of the Indian National Congress were arrested and this led to mass demonstrations throughout India. Thousands were killed and injured in the wake of the movement. Though he abided Gandhian philosophy and principles, he was much in awe of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose and was in the welcome committee when Netaji visited Madurai in 1939. [3]

The slogan of revolutionaries, "Down with British imperialism...long Live

Revolution...Inquilab Zindabad” always echoed in the ears of Mayandi Bharathi. He involved in many such rallies and protests and was jailed over a dozen times.

SWADESHI MOVEMENT AND BOYCOTT OF BRITISH GOODS

Bharathi become a regular at every rally that popularized swadeshi goods and khadi and boycotted collection of war funds. He went to prison numerous times between 1940 and 1946 and met several leaders of freedom movement including Pasumpon Muthuramalinga Thevar, K.P.Janaki Ammal, N.M.R.Subbaraman, Sasivarna Thevar, Sitarmaiah, M.R.Venkatraman and A.Vaidyanathu Iyer. Gandhi under took a country wide tour to popularise the struggle and in the course of the tour he addressed a public meeting. This meeting was attended by Mayandi Bharathi, who was so inspired by Gandhiji’s speech. [4]

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT

In Madras city attempts were made to advocate the Civil Disobedience Programme by organizations like National Students Organizations, Youth League, etc., In Madras the communists have joined in other organisations on a various campaign against the suspension of prohibition. In Madurai, they are collecting signatures for a mass petition on the

subject. [5] A staunch Gandhian and freedom fighter, Mr. Bharathi delivered a speech on Martyr’s Day here on Tuesday. He also recalled Quit India Movement and Civil Disobedience Movement launched against the British rule. He called August 8 a revolutionary day in the history of Indian freedom struggle. [6]

QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT

Bharathi said that in the year 1942, when he was 16 years, he was taken from Arappalayam to the Collectorate on foot and was sentenced to imprisonment for three months at the Alipure jail in Calcutta during the ‘Quit India’ movement struggle. After serving the jail term, he was debarred from continuing his studies at the Madras University. Due to the efforts of C.Rajagopalachari who drafted a letter to the then vice Chancellor A.L.Mudaliar and helped him to continue his studies.

HEROIC ROYAL INDIAN NAVY STRIKE

The Quit India movement united the Indian people against British rule. Although most demonstrations had been suppressed by 1944, Britain’s place in the world had changed dramatically and the demand for independence could no longer be ignored. The rising of the Royal Indian Navy took place on February 1946 in Bombay, Karachi and Madras. The Union

Jack was removed from the ships masts, Congress and Muslim League flags were hoisted instead. In their demonstrations in Bombay, the Naval ratings carried the flag of the Communist Party along with the other two flags and raised the slogans of Jai Hind, Inquilab Zindabad, Hindus and Muslims Unite, Release the INA and other political prisoners, Down with British imperialism, Accept our demands.[7] However, Bharathi was critical of the Congress for failing to support the sailor of Royal Indian Navy, when they staged a Mutiny in 1946. But he narrated with passion how sailors marched from Chennai port to the Congress office.

TEMPLE ENTRY MOVEMENT

In 1932, Gandhiji and Dr.Ambedkar signed the Puna Pact. As per the pact. Conferences and public meetings were conducted all over the country for the rights of Dalits. At the same time the King of Travancore wanted to abolish untouchability and he announced that from November 12, 1935 onwards every dalit would be able to enter all Hindu temples within his kingdom. Following this dalits entered the temples without fear and worshipped God. On hearing the news that untouchability had been abolished in Travancore. Vaidyanatha Iyer, a staunch Gandhian and Congress man of Madurai felt happy and motivated. He was

president of the Harijan Sevak Sangh in Madurai. He started with the support of Congress Socialists conducting many public meetings and conferences for temple entry all over Tamil Nadu. Vaidyanathalyer, MNR Subburaman. G.Ramachandran,Somasundarabharathy, Manakkal Pattabiramaiyer, Cholavandan Chinnasamy Pillai and Mattaparai Venkatrama Iyer, worked hard for the Temple Entry Movement in Madurai. At that period, Communist Party was banned. The Communists functioned as Congress Socialists. Many Congress Socialists including Pasumpon Muthuramalinga Thevar and Mayandi Bharathi joined hands in the campaign against untouchability.

In June 1939, during the temple entry, conference held in Madurai. Vaidyanatha Iyer announced that temple entry would definitely happen. After that, conferences were conducted for and against temple entry all over Madurai for a whole month. The members of the Meenakshi Amman Temple Trust and its chairman RS Naidu supported this reform. The caste Hindus opposed and dared to prevent the temple entry. At that time, Pasumpon Muthuramalinga Thevar issued a warning statement. He said, “I would be there at the entrance of the Meenakshi Temple. Those who dare to prevent the

Dalits' entry into the Temple, could come there and meet me. I will answer them". After this statement, the caste Hindus hesitated to prevent. After this, on July 8, 1939 the historic event took place. On that day, Vaidyanatha Iyer went to Meenakshi Amman temple with a group of dalits and members of other castes. At the entrance to the temple, they were honoured by R S Naidu who had made proper arrangements for them to worship the main deity of the temple. After this, Iyer announced that temple entry for Dalits had happened successfully. At that event, N.Sankaraiah, the then student leader of Madurai American College with many students gathered in front of the entrance of the temple to greet the Dalits. They witnessed the social revolutionaty action and were inspired. Later Sankaraiah become a great leader of the Communist Party. On hearing the news of the harijan's temple entry, the Brahmin community, under the leadership of Natesa Iyer, announced that Vaidyanatha Iyer and his family were no longer part of their community. Natesa Iyer also announced that Goddess Meenakshi was no longer in the temple. He placed an idol of Meenakshi Amman in front of his house for public worship.

Rajaji was then the chief minister of TamilNadu, he thought that the temple entry movement would create a revolution

in society. In September 1939, he had the bill for temple entry passed in the legislative Assembly and it becomes law. Following the Meenakshi Amman temple, temple entry took place in the Azhagar temple and Thiruparankundram, Thiruvarangam, Pazhani and Srivilliputhur all famous temples in TamilNadu. Madurai Meenakshi Temple entry movement was one of the great reform movements instrumental in abolishing untouchability in Tamil Nadu. [8] The Dalits and Nadars, the most suppressed communities in Madras Presidency of British India, successfully entered the famous Meenakshi Sundareshwarar Temple in Madurai and created a history in the struggle against untouchability in the country.

ANTI-WAR SPEECHES

The Socialists have made anti propaganda against the Government established by Law in British India, since the war with Germany was declared by the British. Critising the action of the British that in plunging our country into the Imperialistic War without the consent of the people. [9] People of India had a very bitter experience of the last war. At that time the British Government promised to give dominion status to India. Trusting the honesty of the Britishers even Mahatma Gandhi had volunteered to help with men

and money and 215 crores of rupees. As a return they got Jallianwallah Bagh murder and the Rowlatt Act. The country was becoming poorer and all the India's wealth had been drained.[10] Mayandi Bharathi of Madura spoke at a public meeting that in the war of 1914, the British Government promised Swaraj to us and then cheated. In return for this cheating, God was born as Hitler and was attacking the British Government. So none of the Indians should render any help in this war. [11]

CONCLUSION

As a person who continued to crusade against injustice was Mayandi Bharathi. He has authored a dozen books – the first in 1939. He published books on various aspects of the freedom struggle. He edited the CPI Journal Janashakti (1944-63) and the CPI-M's Tamil daily Theekathir (1964-91). He died at the age of 98 on February 24, 2015. He was worried about the present situation prevailed in the society like lack of jobs and education, food and shelter, increasing crime and disrespect for women, deepening caste based society, rich and poor division.

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