

## C. Subramaniam – His Contribution in the National Politics

---

**M. R. Raj Kumar**

Assistant Professor of History, St. Joseph's College (Autonomous), Tiruchirappalli

---

### Introduction

Tamil Nadu has been the birth place of many great political leaders and thinkers. *C. Subramaniam* is a great leader popularly known as “C.S.” *C. Subramaniam* took a prominent part in Indian Freedom Movement. Distinguished, politician and a bountiful social worker of India. As a member of Constituent Assembly in 1946, he rendered valuable service in drafting of Indian Constitution. Later, he was elected as a member to the Madras Legislative Assembly and had the distinction of serving the state as Finance and Education Minister with excellence. He earned a great name for his grasp of the national problems and for his pragmatic approach. His efficiency and integrity paved the way for wider spheres of his activity at the national level. Among the few leaders from South India who have made their mark in all-India politics in the post-Independence period *C. Subramaniam* holds a unique place. In this research article, the scholar attempts to throw some light on his contribution in the national politics in India.

### Entry into politics

C. Subramaniam hankered to become a Congress worker, both during his high school and college days. He had taken part in the student's movement. When studying at High School in Pollachi, he had attended all the Congress meetings in his area. At that time he was on hearing the eloquent speeches of the state Congress leader Rajaji, District Congress leader Boopathy Mudaliar and Pollachi Congress leader Mahalinga Iyyer and also meets Avinashilingam Chettiar, V.O. Chidambaram Pillai, Vijayaragavachari and V.S. Srinivasa Sastri. These, meetings influenced C. Subramaniam to take part in the Congress activities. The simmering words of Jawaharlal Nehru in the Indian National Congress Session, Madras in 1927 along with many others made him enter into the field of freedom movement. In 1927, Mahatma Gandhiji had taken measures for the Freedom Movement in Tamil Nadu. C. Subramaniam had an opportunity to meet him in person in Madras friend L.K. Muthusamy. The simplicity, curiosity for getting freedom, dynamic efforts to elevate the downtrodden and effective utterances of Gandhiji attracted him and converted him to a congressman.<sup>1</sup>

After the meeting of these Congress leaders, C. Subramaniam gave up wearing foreign clothes and learnt to spin on Charkha and spun a certain quota of yarn every day. As a matter of fact, spinning was nothing new to the then. People did spin but with the advent of the cheap mill cloth, spinning had been given up and *Charkhas* had been kept away in the attics. All these *Charkhas* were taken out

and not only his family but also other families in his had the village taken to spinning. He used only *Khadi* clothes made out of yarn spun by his family, particularly by his mother and sister. The members of the Vanamalar Sangam underwent a tour of the villages spreading the message of Mahatma Gandhi, particularly the message of *Khadi*, Untouchability and Prohibition<sup>2</sup>.

### **Role in Freedom Movement**

#### **Salt Satyagraha in Tamil Nadu and C. Subramaniam's Role**

In Tamil Nadu Salt Satyagraha was organized by Rajaji, who was the president of the Tamil Nadu Pradesh Congress Committee at that time. The Congress Committee decided to defy the salt laws at Vedaranyam, a village situated in the Sandy region of point Cali mere but favorably situated near a salt factory. Rajaji was made the dictator of the movement. The idea was to defy law and discredit the British authority, marking the beginning of Civil Disobedience in Tamil Nadu. After a month of the famous Dandi March; Rajaji started the Vedaranyam March on April 13, 1930. A party of 100 volunteers headed by Rajagopalachari began its much advertised march to Vedaranyam near Cape Calimere where it proposed to scrape salt from the adjoining swamps. The British Government declared that too was illegal and put Rajaji and others on Jail<sup>3</sup>. C. Subramaniam joined the Salt Satyagraha Movement with a few of his friends. His family was utterly disappointed and late of cruces he joined the Madras Law College<sup>4</sup>.

#### **C. Subramaniam and Second Civil Disobedience Movement, 1932**

The Salt Satyagraha Movement was suspended and Mahatma Gandhi proceeded to London as the sole representative of the Indian National Congress to participate in the Round Table Conference. There the future of India was to be discussed and determined. Gandhiji's speeches at the Round Table Conference received worldwide publicity and served the cause of Indian freedom by creating an international opinion in favor of India. In spite of all this the Round Table Conference ended without any positive decision being reached regarding the freedom of India. The British Government was not prepared to think in terms of full freedom for India, and therefore, India had to wait for some more years and go through the fire before reaching its goal of Purna Swaraj. The new Viceroy Lord Willington was out to crush the Indian National Congress and resorted to a policy of repression. Another Civil Disobedience Movement became inevitable. It took the form of picketing liquor and foreign cloth shops. Most of the Congress leaders found themselves in prison<sup>5</sup>. In 1932, Civil Disobedience Movement was rampant in all nook and corner of India. C. Subramaniam also participated in the movement and was behind the bars in the prisons of Coimbatore and Vellore for nearly a year. In February 1934, Mahatma Gandhi undertook a tour of the Coimbatore District as part of his Harijan Movement. One night Gandhiji stayed at the Vidyalaya at Podanur and C. Subramaniam was asked to look after him<sup>6</sup>.

### **C. Subramaniam and Toddy Shop Picketing**

Gandhiji asked all congressmen to take part in “Toddy Shop Picketing”. Subramaniam and his colleagues of the congress organized picketing of toddy shops. In July 1932, auctions were to be held for toddy shops at Pollachi, the taluk headquarters. On that fateful day along with seven other volunteers he proceeded to the taluk office where the auction was being held and shouted slogans requesting the people to boycott the auction and follow the mandate of the Indian National Congress. They were promptly arrested and taken to the police station.

### **C. Subramaniam and Individual Satyagraha**

The Individual Civil Disobedience campaign had opened with Vinoba Bhave’s speech protesting against dragging India into the war against its willingness. This movement took an effective shape during 17<sup>th</sup> October 1940 to December 1941<sup>7</sup>. Without the consent of the Indians and without the knowledge of the Indians, Indian wealth was granted for the world war by the British. C. Subramaniam started the Individual Satyagraha on 7<sup>th</sup> January 1941 at Pollachi. When he shouted slogans about the prohibition and against the war activities of British, he was subjected to lathi charge from the police. As he led the Individual Satyagraha he was arrested on 7<sup>th</sup> January, 1941 at Pollachi<sup>8</sup>.

### **C. Subramaniam and Quit India Movement**

C. Subramaniam took active part in the Quit India Movement. Coimbatore District was very actively involved in the Quit India Movement. Particularly, the textile labourers were actively participated in many of the acts of sabotage. C. Subramaniam had boldly given shelter and sufficient economic help to leaders like V.M. Ubayadullah, Thiruvannamalai, N. Annamalai Pillai, C.N. Muthuranga Mudaliar and M. Bhaktavatsalam, the important leaders of the Quit India Movement. At a Congress conference in Bombay under the leadership of Gandhiji, C. Subramaniam participated in national processions, hartals and meetings in Thirunelveli. When he shouted slogan against the foreign government, he was lathi charged by the police and arrested and put behind the bars<sup>9</sup>.

### **Member of Constituent Assembly**

After the 1946 elections, he was selected as a member of the Constituent Assembly presided by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. He was one of the youngest members to participate in the framing of the constitution. He was elected a member of the Constituent Assembly. He became one of the principal architects of the Indian Constitution<sup>10</sup>. As a member of the Constituent Assembly during 1946-52, he rendered valuable service in the drafting of the Indian constitution<sup>11</sup>. On 15<sup>th</sup> August 1947, India restored her child of freedom, having sunken cheeks and the lack of lustrous eyes due to the harassment of the British imperialistic exploitation<sup>12</sup>.

## **Nehru Government and C. Subramaniam**

### **Chairman of Land Reforms Committee**

C. Subramaniam served as a minister of Madras State Government until 1962. But, he was included in the Central Government of India's Ministry due to the recommendations of Kamaraj<sup>13</sup>. C. Subramaniam attracted the special attention of Prime Minister Nehru during one of the All India Congress Committee sessions at Nagpur, when the former spoke on the Land Reforms Resolution. After he finished his speech, Jawaharlal Nehru called him and congratulated him on the excellent speech he had made and asked him to take up the Chairmanship of the Land Reform Committee to be appointed by the All India Congress Committee and to submit a report. Thus began a very close and loyal association between Jawaharlal Nehru and C. Subramaniam. As a chairman of Land Reform Committee he made several reforms in India<sup>14</sup>.

### **Formation of Ministry**

In 1962 election congress got an absolute majority in the Lok Sabha. Jawaharlal Nehru again formed the ministry. C. Subramaniam was conferred as the Minister of Steel and Heavy Industry from 6<sup>th</sup> April 1962 in the Nehru's Ministry. The Prime Minister Nehru bestowed C. Subramaniam with the portfolios of Mines, Minerals and Heavy Engineering on 14<sup>th</sup> February 1963. Due to his efforts a steel industry was installed at Burga on 26<sup>th</sup> October 1962, which produced 35,000 tons steel in the same year and he took efforts to establish a steel industry in Karnool<sup>15</sup>. C. Subramaniam's achievements in the Steel Ministry were significant in many ways. He sought to give a new deal to the steel plants by reorganizing their managerial set-up and combining greater decentralization and autonomy at the plant level with greater responsibility for production and efficiency. He introduced a new thinking in the management of the steel plants by decentralizing the powers of management and control to some extent. In regard to distribution of steel, he appointed the "Raj Committee" to enquire into the steel distribution system which resulted in the Creation of the Joint Plant Committee which functions effectively to this day. C. Subramaniam had a visit to Japan to get loan 1050 lakhs of rupees from her on 30<sup>th</sup> October 1962. He allotted 84 lakhs of rupees on 29<sup>th</sup> November 1962 to import needful materials from Western countries. Iron was produced abnormally in Visakapattinam. It produced 250 metric tons per annum. Roorkela Iron Industry also produced 26 tons more than the year 1961<sup>16</sup>. C. Subramaniam collaborated with private industries so as to produce materials excellently. Such collaborated firms are: 1. Hindustan Motor Industry. 2. Heavy Vehicle Industry, Bhopal and 3. Praja Steel Industry, Hyderabad.

He increased the production in the industries from 1.5 lakhs tones to 3 lakhs tones. He passed an Act on 17<sup>th</sup> December 1962 to establish Small Scale Steel Industries in all the states. His able steps, in the Third Five Year Plan, Five coal Mines were constructed at Roorkela in Bihar. Those were able to produce 122

Megawatt electricity. In the same plan he extended the Coal Refinery Factory at East Kangadi<sup>17</sup>. Jawaharlal Nehru's tragic demise on 27<sup>th</sup> May 1964, C. Subramaniam announced the demise of the Prime Minister in the Lok Sabha in a choking voice, "The Light is out". The death of the Prime Minister Nehru interrupted his tenure in the steel ministry, because Lal Bahadur Sastri was elected as prime Minister on 29<sup>th</sup> June 1964 and he formed new team of ministers<sup>18</sup>. He was the minister for Agriculture and Food from 29<sup>th</sup> June 1964 to 7<sup>th</sup> January 1967. Lal Bahadur Sastri died on 14<sup>th</sup> January 1965. Then Mrs. Indhira Gandhi became the Prime Minister. In her ministry C. Subramaniam continued as a Minister with his previous portfolios and also he held the portfolios of Community Development and Co-operation as additionally in 1966-67<sup>19</sup>.

### **Kamaraj Plan**

In 1963 the famous Kamaraj Plan of the congress was mooted at a time when there was lack of discipline among the congress men and Pandit Nehru was worried. Perhaps very few know that C. Subramaniam was indirectly the originator of the idea<sup>20</sup>. C. Subramaniam mentioned to Jawaharlal Nehru that the same was occurring in Tamil Nadu and Kamaraj was thinking in terms of resigning his Chief Minister ship to bestow his full attention for organisational work. C. Subramaniam made a draft plan and submitted to panditji for his consideration in which C. Subramaniam suggested that some of the senior ministers of Central Cabinet as well as some Chief Minister should be released from office and assigned to organization work in order to strengthen the party. This is how the Kamaraj Plan emerged and as the nation knows many important personalities like Morarji Desai, Jagjivan Ram, Lal Bahadur Sastri and Kamaraj. laid down their office to work for the organization<sup>21</sup>. It was during this period that, the well-known syndicate was formed and a group of prominent congress people were members of the syndicate. At the death of Nehru and later Lal Bahadur Sastri the syndicate had a prominent part to play in the election for the post of Prime Minister Ship. Thus, C. Subramaniam, during his 50 years and more as a Congress man had faced ups and downs in the organization, from the beginning as member of Coimbatore District Congress Committee to the role of being the confidant of Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. It can be said that by and large C. Subramaniam had a successful and eventful carrier as a congress man and justified the confidence reposed in him by Rajaji and Nehru<sup>22</sup>. Due to the intervention of Indhira Gandhi, the elected member of Krishnagiri parliamentary constituency resigned his post and in the same constituency C. Subramaniam was elected through a by-election<sup>23</sup>. After the election he was immediately appointed as minister for Planning and Deputy Chairman of the Planning commission from 1971-72. The newly formed department of Science and Technology was later added to his charge. He kept this charge from 1971 to 1974<sup>24</sup>.

He was the minister for Industrial Development from 1972 to 1974. The Prime Minister Indira Gandhi nominated him as the Minister of Finance on 11<sup>th</sup> October 1974. He had served as the Finance Minister until 12<sup>th</sup> January 1977. C. Subramaniam appointed a committee to analyze the functions of the Reserve Bank of India on 4<sup>th</sup> November 1974. This Committee collected income taxes. This committee made more than 61 check-ups and collected income taxes. In order to proliferate the life of poor he sanctioned loan rupees 7.19 crores of rupees under the scheme N 292 in December 1974.<sup>25</sup>

### **Commencement of Banks**

In 1975 he increased the strength of officers of the State Bank of India to 11,239 whereas 714 in the previous year. He took this step so as to ease the works and to make the masses to use the services of the Banks. In the same year he nationalized eight private Banks. He ordered all banks of India including the Reserve Bank to submit their report to the Government. On analyzing the developments of the banks he asked the banks to give loans to farmers, cottage industries and landless farmers. The Bank loan was 470 crores of rupees from June 1975 to June 1976 which were distributed to farmers and small industries. On 28<sup>th</sup> February 1975, C. Subramaniam submitted the budget for the year 1975-76 in the Indian parliaments. He imposed new taxes for 35.5 crores of rupees and managed the some sort of scarcity of the nation. However, it resulted the deficit of 247 crores of rupees. Besides he took steps to reimburse the debts of foreign<sup>26</sup>.

On 10<sup>th</sup> June 1976 he made a treaty with World Bank and got loan of 25 million dollars and used it for the development of the states. Besides, he wanted to open many branches of the State bank of India in all parts of the all states. So he made agreement with United States and got 10,000 US dollars of loan. In 1976, the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi announced 20 point programme in India. C. Subramaniam appropriated 111 crores of rupees for the fulfillment of the programmed<sup>27</sup>. In 1977, he increased the salary for the employees of the central government. So, the budget 1976-77 had the scarcity of 270 crores of rupees. C. Subramaniam increased the customs Tax to 5% in February 1977 and so he raised the worth of Indian goods. C. Subramaniam hammered out to make grand irrigation projects in India, so as to develop the agriculture. He allotted 578 millions of rupees for the same in 1976. He provided 1.21 crores of rupees for the Land Development Bank in the same year under the Land Development Plan<sup>28</sup>.

### **C. Subramaniam and MISA**

During the time of crucial period of Indian National Congress Committee in 1977. Indira Gandhi declared Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA). The MISA was opposed by C. Subramaniam, because, the MISA was composed with adamant policy in family planning, negligence in supplying food and the hateful attitude to the opposition front. It battered the fort of Congress in all

nooks and corner of India<sup>29</sup>. In the seventh general election Indira Gandhi came back to power with two-third majority for congress (I). She was invited to form the ministry in January 1980. But C. Subramaniam did not participate in the election. From the year 1980 onwards he completely retired from politics<sup>30</sup>.

### Conclusion

The role and activities of C. Subramaniam traced hitherto shows that he was a real administrator of profound ability. Besides, C. Subramaniam holds a dominant place in Tamil Nadu, Politics and as few parallels in the history of India. He started his career as a congress worker and become a constituent leader, by dint of hard work, dedication and devotion to the principles of the party. He rose to the zenith both in the state and central government by leery and concrete approach to the policies. He constantly held his sway over the masses. He was endowed with strong will powered and astern resonant to serve the people which made the people to look upon his as the 'Man of Destiny' to solve any problem.

### Endnotes

1. Subramaniam. C, *Hand of Destiny*, Bharathiya Vidya Bhavan, Mumbai, 1993, p. 22.
2. *India Today*, 15<sup>th</sup> October, 1989, p. 5.
3. Edinrajan. R., and Gunasekaran, R., *History of Modern Tamil Nadu*, Madurai, 1978, p. 198.
4. *Fortnightly Reports*, April 1930, confidential, p. 13.
5. Ramamoorthy, P., *Vidhthalai Porum DravidaIyakkamum*, Madras, 1983, p. 86.
6. Manian, 'C.S. OruKannottam', Palaniyappa Brothers Press, Chennai, 1976, p. 29.
7. Aggarwala. R.N., *National Movement and Constitutional Development of India (1857-1984)*, New Delhi, 1984, p. 226.
8. Subramaniam. C, *Hand of Destiny*, BharatiyaVidyaBhavan, Bombay, 1993, Vol.1, p. 36.
9. Khana and Varma, *EverLatest General Knowledge (Who's Who)*, Agra, 1987, p. 66.
10. Ranganathan, S., 'Recollections', C.S.65, C. Subramaniam's 65<sup>th</sup> Birthday Commemoration Volume, Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, New Delhi, 1975, p. 77.
11. Alladi Ramakrishna, C.S. Can be Excel himself?, C. Subramaniam's 65<sup>th</sup> Birthday Commemoration Volume, p. 51.
12. Durgadas, *An Example Worthy of Emulation*, C. Subramaniam's 65<sup>th</sup> Birthday Commemoration Volume, p. 31
13. *The Hindu*, Madras, 1<sup>st</sup> February 1957, p. 2.
14. S.R. Sharma., *Life and Works of Chakravarthi Rajagopalachari*, Book Enclave, Jaipur, 2009, p. 143.
15. *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol. XII, December 1962, p. 4898.
16. *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol. XX, December 1963, p. 3456.

17. *Indian Express*, Madras, 18 December 1962, p. 3.
18. *Indian Express*, Madras 28 May 1964, p. 3.
19. C. Subramaniam, *Passion for Excellence*, Bharatia Vidya Bhavan, Coimbatore, 2001, p. 119.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 150.
21. Srivastava, *Lal Bahadur Shastri - Prime Minister of India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1995, p. 8.
22. Manian, *Definition of a Gentleman*, C.S.65, Palaniyappa Brothers Press, Chennai, p. 73.
23. *India Who's Who 1985*, INFA Publications, New Delhi, 1986, p. 79-A.
24. *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol. XXI December, 1974, p. 1081.
25. *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol. XIII, February, 1976, p. 82.
26. *Lok Sabha Bulletin*, Part I, July 22, 1977, p. 503.
27. *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol. VIII, March 1976, p. 731.
28. Sathiabama, V., *Indira Gandhi*, Aruma Pathippagam, Koradacherry, 2009, p. 301-303. 29. *Indian Express*, Madurai, 25 March 1989, p. 2.
30. *Bhavan's Journal*, August 31, 1999, p. 8.

---