

Arya alias Bhashyam

The Youth who hoisted the national flag at Chennai fort in 1932

On January 25th, 1932 in the streets of Triplicane Arya Bhashyam enquired in each and every textile shop, “Do you have stock of Indian national flag?”.

Many of them said, 'No'. Some of them secretly showed him a small sized national flag. But that was not what Arya Bhashyam wanted. He needed a huge flag.

He designed a national flag all by himself. Arya Bhashyam purchased a four yards dhoti and dipped it in water soaked with colours of saffron, blue and green. In the middle of the flag he drew a spinning wheel and wrote, “From today India will breathe the air of freedom”. After the flag got dried he folded and wrapped it around his waist.

He bought a ticket and entered Elphinstone theatre in Mount road, Madras. After the film ended when the audience came out Arya Bhashyam moved along with them. The police patrol at Fort Saint George also dispersed. None noticed him as he was in Khaki uniform.

He walked towards the 200 feet high flagpole near the fort. He climbed up to 140 feet easily as it was accessible by foot. The rest 60 feet was nothing but an iron pipe. Slowly and steadily and step by step Arya Bhashyam reached the top. He removed the flag around his waist and hoisted it on the flagpole.

The next morning there was a commotion among the officers of Fort Saint George. All the dignitaries assembled near the fort flagpole.

As if nothing had happened, Arya alias Bhashyam was walking in Thambu chetty street near Madras high court.

Jawaharlal Nehru wanted the country to celebrate republic day on January 26th in 1932. To implement Nehru's vision, Arya Bhashyam hoisted the national flag. At that time he was 25 years old.



Virupakshi Gopal Naicker

**The person who made the British
panic by conducting Guerrilla attacks**

Gopal Naicker was the 'son of soil' of Virupakshi. He ascended the throne as the 19th Palayakars and changed the mindset of his people as self respecting warriors. By uniting people of small governments in Tamilnadu he revolted against the British.

After Veerapandiya Katabomban was hanged his younger brother Oomaidurai was imprisoned in the Palayamkotai jail. Leading from the front Gopal Naicker and members of 'Veerasangam' stormed into the jail and after a fierce battle brought back Oomaidurai. Gopal Naicker made Oomaidurai the king of Panchalamkurichi again granting him 6000 soldiers.

From the foothills of Karumalai and Vardharaja Perumal temple complex Gopal Naicker along with his revolutionary soldiers ambushed the British army. The collector of Dindigul B. Harris who came to know through his spies that Gopal Naicker was the person behind the Guerrilla attack, summoned him with charges against him. But Gopal Naicker did not bother about it. A second summon in 1799 ordered him to surrender with a warning by the British. After a grueling battle at Virupakshi the British were not able to trap Gopal Naicker. So, they announced an amount of Rs. 20000 for his head. Greed for money a few traitors informed about his whereabouts.

On May 4th, 1801 he was arrested and kept as a prisoner in Dindigul jail and tortured. The British hanged Gopal Naicker on September 9th, 1801 in a tamarind tree at a lake near a place now called Gopal Samudram. Since he was hanged here this place came to be known as Gopal Samudram.

He was unperturbed even when the noose was around his neck and accepted death as a true warrior.



Maveeran Madasamy

He was involved in collector Ashe's murder case

In the Ashe Durai murder case, Maveeran Madasamy was one of the accused. He composed and sang songs to inspire people to seek freedom. The worker at Coral Mills in Thoothukudi toiled day and night for meagre wages and increased the income of the management.

Madasamy raised slogans condemning the British for not adequately compensating the workers. During the protest he provided food and motivated the starving workers. Ashe who had been promoted as Collector of Tirunelveli district, was active in suppressing those with Swadeshi views.

He ordered that no one should hold processions or stage sermons for the freedom struggle. And in public meetings, he collected information with the secret police to find out exactly who was speaking against the British. The speeches and movements of some were observed in their homes by the secret police, whom he considered as home-grown terrorists.

An uncertainty gripped among the patriots. As per collector Ashe's directive four civilians died on the spot in police firing. Shocked to see that, Madasamy went to Sengottai and met Vanchinathan there. They roped in youngsters from Sengottai, Tirunelveli and surrounding areas and formed an organization called "Bharatmata Association".

They took a vow before the Lord that, "I pledge to Parashakti and Bharata Mata to eradicate the British who enslave and rule our holy Bharath".

At Maniyachi railway station, Collector Ash was shot dead by Vanchinathan himself. Madasamy was actively sought by the police for his alleged involvement in the conspiracy. He disappeared undetected by anyone, till his last days the police were never able to find him.



Ondiveeran

He brought the British horse and sword to protect the motherland

In 1755, when the Nawab's and Kumbiniyar's forces attacked Palayakkar Pulithevan, who had refused to pay taxes, his commander-in-chief, Ondiveeran routed them at the border. In 12 consecutive years of battle with the Kumbini forces, the Kumbini forces were repeatedly defeated. Ondiveeran challenged the British, "If any of you are brave enough try to enter our camp and take the horse, sword, ring and strike the bronze gong, we will hand over the village, "Nerkattumsevalpalayam" to you.

Ondiveeran disguised himself as a laborer and claimed to be a cobbler who mended the soldiers shoes, and stayed in the British army camp for a few days. At the sound of the bronze gong, cannons were kept ready to attack and destroy immediately.

Choosing a new moon day, he directed the cannons to the target site, thrust his sword into his hip, and tried to mount his horse, but the horse refused to cooperate. When the English soldiers came running on hearing the noise, he took cover in a nearby stable. As the English soldiers rammed a spear into the ground to tie the horse Ondiveeran's hand was also impaled.

When the soldiers dozed off, Ondiveeran tried to remove the spear from his hand. Since he was unable to do that he slashed his own arm with the sword. After striking the bronze gong Ondiveeran galloped on his horse and said, "I will sacrifice my life to restore my motherland, not just this hand". Even after the death of Pulithevan, he continued the crusade.

Ondiveeran was a nightmare to his rivals, however he got killed in the battle at Thenmala and attained the Lord's feet. The Pulithevan community consider Ondiveeran as a guardian deity as he protected their family.



Puli Thevar

The first Indian to resist British imperialism in India



Puli Thevar was born on 1st September, 1715 in Nerkattumseval and was crowned as king in 1726. Right from the age of 12 Puli Thevar learned sword fighting, archery, horsemanship and elephant riding.

He had a passion to hunt tigers in the woods during the monsoon. His bravery and strength always gave trust to the citizens of his kingdom. The British couldn't stand in front of Puli Thevar's power and wisdom. Puli Thevar had the audacity to tell the British commander-in-chief that he would not pay the taxes.

To go against the British, he thought of bringing in like-minded forces together. Hence, a strong force called the Swadesi was formed by Puli Thevar.

In this coalition, some notable rulers from Sethur, Vadakarai, Oothumalai, Thalaivan Kootai, and Thiruvandapuram were among them.

They all waged 17 wars against the East India company and won 15 among them. The war, which started in 1761, ended after six years in 1767. Twenty-nine forts were destroyed.

In May 1767, Colonel Donald and his team brought cannons and exploded that created a crater in the Vasudevanallur fort where Puli Thevar was residing. Puli Thevar's men used their bodies to close the crater created by the cannon and not just with hay and sand. The war continued for one more week.

In the end, the British army captured the fort, arrested Puli Thevar's wife and children, and burned them alive. Puli Thevar was arrested. In the history of India's freedom struggle, Puli Thevar's patriotism and contributions were a forerunner to others.



Chenbagaraman Pillai

**The freedom fighter who coined,
'Jai Hind'**

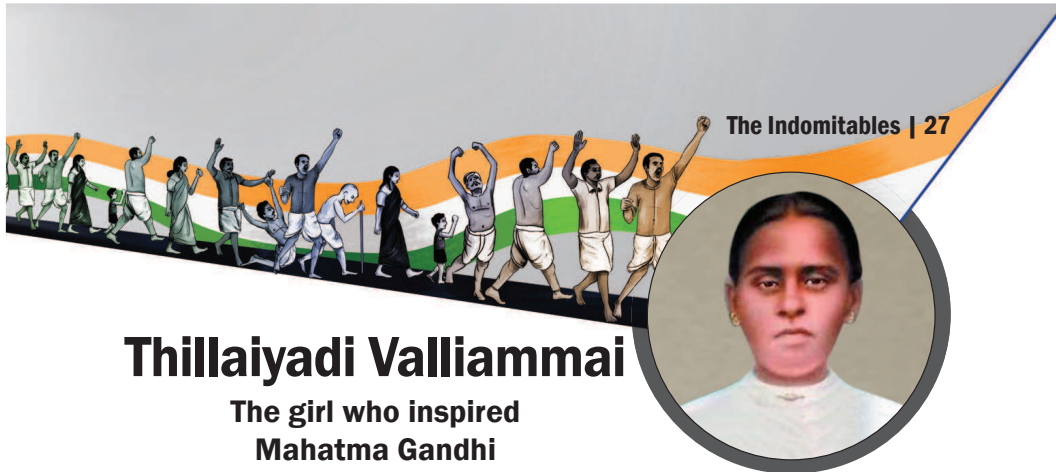
Born on September 15, 1891 in Thiruvananthapuram to Chinnaswamy Pillai and Nagammal. In September 1914, Chenbagaraman Pillai founded the 'International Pro-India Committee' in Zurich and was the chairman of the committee. During the same time, he saw the urge of the Indian revolutionaries abroad to achieve freedom.

Chenbagaraman Pillai was one of the freedom fighters who wished to join hands with the common enemy to drive away the British from his homeland and organise an armed attack from outside. He influenced the Germans to such an extent that they were forced to trust him.

Chenbagaraman was instrumental in directing the German ship, 'Emden' which attacked the British ships at Madras on the night of 22nd September, 1914. Many places were damaged including an oil depot. This incident shook the Britishers and announced a reward of one lakh pounds to anyone who successfully captured Chenbagaraman and handed him to them.

It was Chenbagaraman who gave India and Indians living in India and abroad fighting for the country's independence the slogan, "Jai Hind".

Chenbagaraman met Lakshmi Bai a native of Manipur in Berlin and got married in 1931. When Adolf Hitler started assuming that Indians were incapable of ruling themselves, Chenbagaraman stood against Hitler, and forced him to give a written apology. As a result, he became a victim to the Nazis who killed him by food poisoning on May 26th, 1934, at the age of 42.



Thillaiyadi Valliammai

**The girl who inspired
Mahatma Gandhi**

Valliammai was born to Munusamy Mudaliar and Mangalathammal of Thillaiyadi village in Mayiladuthurai district. She was well versed in music, Tamil literature and English.

The family migrated to South Africa in search of work and sold fruits and vegetables for their livelihood. After that Valliammai had never been to India. She grew up in an environment that was hostile to the Indians there.

On March 14, 1913, the Supreme Court in South Africa ruled that only Christian marriages are valid, and that marriages performed in other traditional ways would be held null and void which disproportionately affected the Indian community in South Africa. It was at this juncture, Valliammai got initiated into political struggle by Gandhi. She marched with her mother from Transval to Natal to protest against these unjust laws.

Thillaiyadi Valliammai worked with Gandhi in her early years and developed non-violent methods to fight against the colonial powers in South Africa. When the South African government imposed a three and half pounds tax on workers, Valliammai and her mother protested. Her father could not participate as he was recovering after an operation.

On October 29, 1913, she marched ahead and campaigned for the laborers at different places. Valliammai was arrested and sentenced to prison. She fell sick and her physical condition was greatly affected yet she remained unperturbed and persisted in her principles.

The police mocked her and asked, "India doesn't even have a flag. What are you really fighting for?". She ripped off the border of her saffron green white sari and replied, "If having a flag is what would give form to India, then here it is, MY FLAG, MY MOTHERLAND".

On 22 February 1914 at the age of sixteen she died. At that time, Gandhiji said that it was because of martyrs like Valliammai that had increased his resolve in fighting for Indian independence.

In 1971, the Government of India built a memorial to Thillaiyadi Valliammai at Thillaiyadi in Nagapattinam. On 31 December 2008, the Central Government honoured her by issuing a postage stamp in her memory.



T.V. Kalyanasundaram

Kindled the desire of freedom through spiritualism to the people of Tamilnadu

Thiruvarur Virudhachala Kalyanasundaram was born on the August 26, 1883 as son of Virudhachala Mudhaliyar and Chinnamma in a town called Thullam in Chengalpattu district. He is better known by his Tamil initials, Thiru.Vi.Ka. His father was well versed in literature and music. Initially Thiru.Vi.Ka got trained and educated by his father.

Later he came to Chennai and joined primary school in Royapettah. He excelled in studies and In 1906 joined an English firm called Spencer Industries as an accountant. In 1909, joined the Wesley School at Thousand Lights (A place near Royapettah in Chennai) as a teacher and worked there for six years. During that period Thiru.Vi.Ka got married to Kamalambigai.

In the year 1918 he became a strong campaigner for workers rights. He started the first Workers 'Welfare Association in South India. He worked as an editor in the magazine 'Desha Bhaktan' and In 1920, started his own Tamil weekly called 'Navashakti' and published a series of articles to create awareness for the country's liberation.

Thiru.Vi.Ka. authored many books on Ramalinga Adigalar, an influential Saivite philosopher-saint. He published more than 50 books like Manitha Vazhkkaiyum Gandhiadigalum ('Human life and Gandhi') and Pennin Perumai ('Women's pride').

He became active in the trade union movement and organized the first trade unions in south India. He was an excellent speaker on politics and society.

In his writings, Thiru.Vi.Ka. developed an unique prose style which was relatively new then, and the style he created was extremely influential and set a precedent for the future scholars. His interpretations on Tirukkural and Periya Puranam are still regarded as a milestone in Tamil literature.

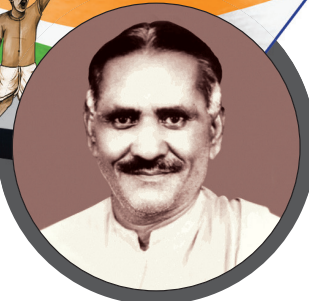
Though Thiru.Vi.Ka. was involved in religion and writing he continued to remain active in politics and the independence struggle. He was considered as one of the pillars of Tamilnadu Congress and served as the state president of the Congress party. During his tenure he toured all over the country to kindle the desire for independence.

Thiru.Vi.Ka. was involved in the freedom struggle until the country became independent. He joined the Lord on September 17, 1953 at the age of 71.



Namakkal V. Ramalingam Pillai

He composed patriotic songs and inculcated the spirit of independence



He was born on October 19, 1888. During the time when the freedom movement was intense in Tamilnadu he tried to meet Aurobindo and Bharathiyar. However he met V.O. Chidambaram Pillai and V.V.S. Iyer and was inspired. Ramalingam Pillai organized several meetings against the British in the Namakkal district where he lived. In 1914, he addressed a meeting held at Trichy. He composed the song 'Aadu Ratte Chuzanradum Ratte' (Let the spinning wheel rotate and swirl) to be sung in the play. This song stirred the people towards independence across India.

Among those who were inspired by his speech were Akilan and Kalki which is worth mentioning. During the Salt Satyagraha in 1930, Ramalingam composed the song 'Kathi indri, ratham indri, yuddham ondu Varuguthu' (No swords, no blood but a war is approaching) which inspired the freedom fighters and gave them a lot of enthusiasm.

In 1932 he participated in the civil disobedience movement and went to jail. He composed songs based on the principles of Gandhiji such as prohibition of alcohol, abolition of untouchability and Kadhar movement.

Ramalingam composed many poems on industrial development and the Swadeshi movement. He has written more than 50 books. Due to his efforts, Gandhiji came to Karur and addressed the people. His novel 'Malaikallan' was made into a movie in several languages and was a blockbuster. Ramalingam was a multi faceted personality. Besides composing songs he was proficient in painting, writing, oratory, politics, music and translation.

A government building at Fort Saint George in Chennai is named "Namakkal Kavignar Maaligai" in Chennai. In 1971, he received the 'Padma Bhushan' award from the central government. He joined Lordship on 24th August 1972.



Veeran Azagumuthu Kone

**The freedom fighter who was killed
by the British with a tank gun**

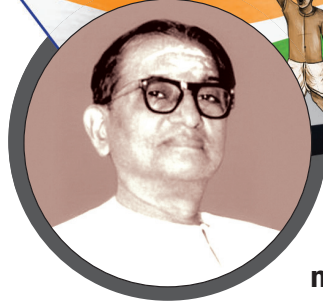
Azagumuthu Kone, born on 11th July, 1710, was an Indian Polygar who was the first freedom fighter to wage war against the Presidency armies.

He served as the military commander in the town of Ettayapuram and ruler of Kattalankulam. Ettayapuram ruler Jegaveeram Ettapar revolted against the British. He ordered that none of the villagers should pay taxes. He also sent a reply letter to the British government. It has been said that why should we pay taxes to foreigners who came to do business in our country?

As the East India company struggled to collect taxes from them, they appointed Khan Sahib to take over the job and keep them under their control. Khan Sahib, as told, centered a big army and blockaded them.

Azagumuthu Kone tried to bring a big army of youngsters around his city to fight against the British. He wanted to attack them secretly from Pethanayakanur fort. With the betrayal of his own relatives, Azagumuthu Kone's plan was rattled out and was defeated in the battle against British and Maruthanayagam's forces in July 1759. With 300 cavalry and 700 infantry, Azagumuthu Kone's army was attacked. In the end, the British killed Azagumuthu Kone by tying him in the mouth of the tank.

This war against the British by Azagumuthu Kone and his army was one of the primary triggers for Veerapandiya Kattabomman to revolt against them around 1799.



Periyasamy Thooran

One of the chief architects of the modern Tamil Intellectuals Movement

Periyasamy was born to Palanivelappa Goundar and Paavathaal on 26th December 1908 in Modakurichi, Erode district. He was greatly influenced by Subramania Bharathi. He declined to appear for the undergraduate exam, in protest of the execution of Bhagat Singh who was considered as the prince among patriots.

He began writing short stories and poems, using his lifelong pseudonym, 'Thooran'. Author of over 600 hymns on national, spiritual and moral issues. He was the chief editor from 1948 to 1978 of the Tamil Encyclopedia of Children's Art which ran to ten volumes. The credit for bringing out the first ever Children's encyclopedia goes to him.

Periyasamy Thooran was a recipient of numerous awards such as-. Padma Bhushan - awarded by the President of India in 1968, Music Scholar award by Tamil Sangam in 1972. Kalaimamani award given by the Tamilnadu Drama Society in 1970 and M. Annamalai Chettiar award in 1978.

He unearthed and compiled the essays, poems and short stories of Subramania Bharathi and published a book of 700 pages. To complete this work, he carefully researched the editions of 'Swadesha Mithran' published from 1904 to 1920 and chronologically documented all the works of Bharathi that appeared in them with dates. Periyasamy Thooran was awarded a gold medal for this monumental work.

Later, he republished them chronologically in a book titled 'Bharathi Tamil'. Thus Periyasamy Thooran was instrumental in rediscovering the genius of Bharathi. Had he not tried, one third of Bharathi's works would have been completely destroyed.