



## THE ROLE OF ANNIE BESANT THROUGH *New India* IN THE INDIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT

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### ABSTRACT

The role of both English and vernacular press was commendable particularly in disseminating information on freedom struggle to the people, educating them on the political developments, initiating debates and discussions on political issues, mobilizing the masses for the cause of independence etc., Annie Besant tried to create a suitable atmosphere for Indians to gain some rights from England by moulding public opinion through several media. After having made a case for India in England she returned to India in the year 1914 to find herself the editor of a daily newspaper *New India*. The strong protest emerged from various quarters for the internment of Besant, the editor of *New India* could speak volumes about its work for the freedom and the influence of the paper on the people particularly the educated elites and the youth.

**Keywords:** *Press, Movement; internment; freedom; mobilizing; freedom.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The press both the English and the vernacular played a seminal role all over the country during the Indian struggle for independence. It enlightened the masses through publication of powerful writings which brought out the oppressive and exploitative nature of the British colonialists. It enkindled the spirit of the nationalists; brought the leaders together [1-5]. Tamil Nadu is no exemption to this. As one reads the history of the freedom struggle in India he/she is impressed to learn the significant task played by the press. The role of both English and vernacular press was commendable particularly in disseminating information on freedom struggle to the people, educating them on the political developments,

initiating debates and discussions on political issues, mobilizing the masses for the cause of independence etc., Appreciating the former President of India commented on 30 August 2013 thus, "The history of journalism in India is closely linked to the history of our freedom struggle Indian journalists have fought not just for the freedom of the press but also for the freedom of the nation." This is not an exaggerated statement [6-10]. That is very much true. The author of the article focuses on "The Role of Annie Besant through *New India* in the Indian National Movement"

### 2. OBJECTIVES

This study has the following objectives:

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- \* To bring out the origin and development of *New India*.
- \* To analyze the role of *New India* to the National Movement.

### 3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

As the present study “The Press and the National Movement in Tamil Nadu with reference to *The Commonwealth and New India*.” is a historical one, it largely depends on the government records and archival materials which constitute the primary source of information [11-17]. Since the press is the primary aspect of the topic, large amount of newspapers and journals, both in vernacular and English were referred. A large number of writings do exist on ‘*Dr. Annie Besant and Her Life*’ in different dimensions on various aspects such as Social, Cultural and religious. C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer conducted a research on Mrs. Annie Besant. It is a biographical sketch focused on her childhood, early struggles, her contribution to Theosophy and Theosophical Society and her work for Home Rule in India. Some research books, thesis and articles are already published on a few selected areas like Mrs. Annie Besant and Home Rule in India [18-24].

‘*The Press in Tamil Nadu and the Struggle for Freedom, 1917-1937*’ written by A. Ganesan deals with the social and economic issues that figured in the newspapers, the political movements, attitude of the administration to press writings.

‘*Tamil Press and the Colonial Rule*’ written by K. Mohan Ram attempts to focus attention on the role of the Tamil press in the regional context of the National Movement which was spearheaded by the Indian National Congress party for the liberation of India from British Rule. But the role played by *New India* newspapers of Mrs. Annie Besant was not given proper attention.

Raj Kumar, has authored a research on ‘*Annie Besant’s Rise to Power in Indian Politics*’. It is only Mrs. Annie Besant and her political career that were discussed.

R. Saravanan has done Ph. D research on the topic ‘*Dr. Annie Besant and Her Works*’. In his research he focused on the political, economic, social and religious aspects of Mrs. Annie Besant. This is also pertaining to all India level not specific to Tamil Nadu.

Dr. Mary John has completed a research study on the similar theme and brought out his thesis entitled ‘*Indian Catholic Christians and Nationalism*’

published by Allianz Publications, Delhi in 2011. He is dealing with mainly the role of four catholic magazines viz. *The Examiner, The Catholic Herald, The Week and The New Leader* to the National Movement. And his study is only on those four catholic magazines.

N. Shanthi has completed her unpublished M. Phil dissertation on ‘*Mrs. Annie Besant and New India*’ in which she analysed politically the work of Mrs. Annie Besant through the newspaper *New India*.

#### 3.1 Rise of *New India*

Annie Besant tried to create a suitable atmosphere for Indians to gain some rights from England by moulding public opinion through several media. After having made a case for India in England she returned to India in the year 1914 to find herself the editor of a daily newspaper. In July, of 1914 she purchased *The Madras Standard* an Anglo-Indian paper. It was the oldest paper in the city, which had been founded in 1841 and passing in 1892 into the hands G. Parameswaran Pillai, followed a more extreme policy. When he acquired *Madras Standard* and made the tri-weekly into a daily he had to work against the establishment both Indian and British. On 16 October 1909, *Madras Standard* was transferred to the hands of P. N. Raman Pillai, a Hindu Malayali, the 40 year old newspaper. During his editorship the paper had a circulation of 2,150. After a year in June 1911 *Madras Standard* changed the editorship to A. Ramasesha Aiyar. It was unknown and quite unpopular. It was neither edited nor even printed properly [25-28]. But Annie Besant did wonders. She said, “It was a rag,” “I will make it good.” Her hopes were realized. From a circulation of a few hundreds she built it up with astounding rapidity, and it reached a circulation of 30,000, the largest Anglo-Indian paper at the time.

On 1 August, 1914, Besant gave a new name to the paper, *New India*. This was not merely a change in name only, but something more. The motto of the new paper was “For God, Crown, and Country”. The first issue of *New India* came out on 4 July 1914. Initially 1,100 copies were printed but within a month the number increased to 5,000. The paper, *New India*, served as the mouthpiece of Besant. The reporting in the paper was bold and forthright. The paper published on all issues which affected the interest of the Indians. *New India’s* views on anti colonial struggle, administrative and educational reforms, assessment of personalities etc., were regularly published. In *New India*, Annie Besant wrote various articles on social, political and religious issues. The article written by her entitled “From the Congress Camp” she focused on the All India Home Rule

League and its resolution of the Indian National Congress. It had three new departures. She was the first to formulate a scheme for the attainment of Self-Government and shape a programme for continuous education and propaganda throughout the year [29-34]. She frequently published about the All India Home Rule League and its functions.

As Besant wrote in her editorial of *New India* on 8 June 1916, her purpose in buying the paper was “to press forward the preparation for the coming changes in India, and to claim steadily India’s place in the Empire”. The rates of subscription of *New India* are as follows: Single Copy: One *anna*. The editor of the paper stated that the subscriptions are to be paid strictly in advance. In addition to this, the *New India* also carried the rates for casual advertisements, special short advertisements under the captions, notices, for sale, to let etc., were inserted at the rate of four *annas* per line of six words [35-46]. The minimum charge was one rupee per insertion. Domestic announcements such as birth, death, marriage etc. were made at the rate of Rs.2 per insertion. Company notices and trade announcements were charged Rs. 3 per inch and

the minimum charge in the case of publishing a company prospectus for each piece was rupees two hundred. The paper announced that it would not publish any verse or quotation.

### 3.2 *New India’s* Role in the National Awakening

In politics *New India* insisted on the ideal of self-government for India along the colonial line, remembering that the mission of every man and institution in the country was to bring about the speedy attainment of the self rule. The Indian National Congress had worked for the same goal viz., government by the inhabitants of India for Indians. Mrs. Besant wrote a series of political pamphlets through *New India*. From 1915, she published continuously on political social and educational affairs. *New India* was destined to wage battle for home rule in India. She published a political pamphlet in August 1914, called, ‘India: A Nation. A plea for Indian Self- Government’. She claimed “India as a Nation, claiming her freedom, with an appeal of Self-Government.” In the same year she published a series of articles in *New India* entitled *How India Wrought for Freedom* with subtitle of history of National Congress as told from the official Records (1885-1914). In that Besant said “It is a plain story of India’s constitutional struggle for freedom, a story so pathetic in its patience, so strong in its endurance, so far seeing in its wisdom, that it is in India’s justification and for

arresting the right to freedom for her demand for Home Rule.” Apart from these, she published various pamphlets on political affairs, such as *Shall India remain a Nation? What is Swaraj? Steps for freedom and Educate for Home Rule*, etc. Entire nation was impressed at the writings of Mrs. Besant through *The Commonweal* and *New India*. The demand for swaraj spread to every part of the country. Annie Besant was increasingly becoming popular for her criticism of the colonial government.

George S. Arundale, the Organising Secretary of All India Home Rule, wrote an article in the *New India* entitled “National Education and Home Rule Movement” in which he emphasized the importance of the National education for home rule. In the correspondence columns of the paper, number of letters were received by the editor regarding social and political issues. Lakshmana Shastriar highlighted Annie Besant’s scheme of Self-Government in another issue. He wished that each district had its own representation in the Self-Government. He also said that “The Reformed Councils and the Awarded Regulation with special Reference to the Legislative Council.” *New India* of 11 August 1918 published an article on “Home Rule - The Ideal, Home Rule in Practical Politics.” In this article written by the Babu Surendranath Bannerji proclaimed the desire of India Home Rule, for Swaraj. “We want Self-Government for the highest ends of the national and the regeneration of India,” he asserted. He made it clear that Self government was not a favour but an inalienable right. The objective of home rule was “Self-Government.” The newspaper frequently insisted the concept of Home Rule and Self-Government in the newspaper. The article in *New India* “The Means of India’s Regeneration” written by Besant, emphasised on simple Indian dress made of Khadi’. She insisted the native products of India and its importance.

There were number articles published in *New India* to enlighten people on the concept of Home Rule. Advertisement for the book of “Wake-Up India” was frequently figured in her paper. A plea for social reform dedicated to the motherland also found its place in *New India*. This included “ Child Marriage, Our Duty to the Depressed Classes, Indian Industries as related to Self-Government, Mass Education, Education of Indian Girls, Colour Bar in England, The Colonies and India” etc.

The following pamphlets were used as a means of propaganda amongst the students through advertisement in *New India*: India a Nation, India and the Empire, Self-Government for India, The Political Outlook, Separation of Judicial and Executive

Functions, The Future of Young India, East and West in India, Under the Congress Flag, The Indian Council, Home Rule (a series of articles from *New India*). The pamphlets propaganda created patriotic spirit among the students and the educated people.

*New India* believed that self-government was the sole objective of the Home Rule Movement and she made vigorous campaign for home rule for which Besant used her papers *The Commonweal* and *New India*. She conducted lectures on constitutional topics, a number of college students became interested in home rule. She also speeded up her propaganda work through press. Propaganda Fund and "Groups" were created in favour of "Self-government." The Home Rule Movement really started in Tamil Nadu in the year 1916 had strong base in the south, where the Theosophical Society's followers spread the home rule message. Looking at the impact of *New India* the Government passed the Press Act and curtailed the freedom of press.

### 3.3 Indian Press Act

The Indian Press Act was passed in the year 1910. This legislation imposed censorship and restriction of all types on publications. The measure was put into effect in order to curtail and restrict the Indian freedom struggle. Under this Act in July 1915, the Governor of Madras, Lord Pentland raised strong objection to Annie Besant, on her publishing articles in *New India* and *The Commonweal* campaign for home rule. Annie Besant refused these objections expressed by the Governor, and continued her campaign on home rule in her two newspapers. She wrote in *New India*, "I am branded as a seditionist. I should indeed be guilty of sedition if for cowardly fear of further punishment at the hands of government, I shrank from urging the change which alone can prevent the disruption of the empire." The government authorities imposed severe repressive measures against the Home Rule Movement and to stop Besant's journalistic campaign.

Annie Besant continued her powerful writings against the government; action was taken against her under the Press Act. On 26 May 1916, at the instance of government solicitor, the chief magistrate of the presidency issued an order calling upon Annie Besant to deposit a security of Rs.2000/- within 14 days. And the government imposed another order on her, that demanding a fresh security of Rs.10,000/ for continuance of *New India* was suspended for three days on 18, 19 and 20 June of 1917. It reappeared on 21 June. P.K. Telang became the editor of *New India*.

### 3.4 Reaction of the British: Internment of Annie Besant

Annie Besant refused to stop the home rule activities in Tamil Nadu. Her newspapers continued to publish articles on home rule which were against the British particularly during the First World War when the situation was tense. The government failed to contain her activities in spite of its repeated attacks on her paper *New India*. Also she delivered a strong speech on home rule at Cuddalore in May 1917. Before Besant meeting Lord Pentland, she published an article in *New India*, wherein she defended all her activities as absolutely constitutional and blamed the government for the prevailing situation in India. Lord Pentland, had an interview with Annie Besant on 16 June 1917 at Madras. About an hour after interview with her and two colleagues and B.P. Wadia and Arundale were interned on 17 June 1917 by the Governor in exercise of Section 3 of Defense of India Rules, 1915.

The Press Act said that "there was reasonable ground for believing Annie Besant has acted and is about to act in manner prejudicial to the public safety." The orders imposed them to make speeches, attend meetings and publish or procure the publication of any writings or speech. The notice on 15 June 1917, "choose six places where they should live in internment". According to the orders all the three were authorized to live together in the same place of internment under police control and censorship. But, later the government decided to intern the three in different places. But its second thought having come long after the first, the government could not implement it. Pentland's government realized little that by making a martyr of Annie Besant through its own order it was indirectly supported to her cause [47-49].

Lord Pentland punished not only Annie Besant and her close associates and also her staff and their relatives. On 19 June 1917 an order was served on Narayana Sadashiva Maratha of Poona who had taken up residence at Adyar, Pentland ordered to leave the presidency within forty-eight hours due to the connection of Sadashiva with the Indian Revolutionary Party both in Germany and in America. Pentland considered unsafe to allow him to remain in Madras. On 1 August 1917 the Madras government directed Narayana Sadashiva son Karandikar, who was on the staff of *New India* to leave the presidency under Rule 3 of the Defence of India Rules, 1915 The charges against him were that he was touring the mofussil districts and preaching on Swaseshi ; forming branches of the Home Rule League to stir up ill-feeling over the internment of Besant, and causing disturbance to the public.

### 3.5 Protest Meetings against the Internment

The internment followed by strong protests by the public in many parts of the country. In July 1917, Besant was arrested in Madras. The home rulers of the district felt angry over it and their indignation against the British rose up. They continued their protest with much vigour. The protests were more intense in the towns like Cuddalore, Chidambaram and Tindivanam and some villages like Omandur and Puduchathiram near Cuddalore. At this stage the movement had gained a more mass base and the home rule surge inspired many minds in the district.

The protest meeting was presided over by B.N. Sharma at Young Men's Indian Association in Madras. Many people from the Madras other than the students expressed the disapproval of the Government Press Act. In this meeting the subscriptions were collected for the 'Besant Fund'. A number of meetings to condemn the repressive policy of government were arranged by the local branches of the Home Rule League. In the Madras Presidency protest meetings were organized to seek her release. The internment brought new strength to the home rule movement in Madras Presidency as well as in other parts of India. 'Home Rule' became a live issue in the country. People began to look upon Besant as a Goddess and called her, affectionately '*Vasantha Mata*'. Nationalists like Jinnah, Sapru Motilal Nehru, C.Y. Chintamani and C.R. Das joined the Home Rule League. The day Besant was interned was observed as 'Internment Day' and protest meetings were held in Madras, Kakinada, Tenali, Bezwada and in several other places of Madras Presidency. There was an intensification of Home Rule activity and the movement became especially strong in Krishna and Chittoordistricts [50-52]. The non-Brahmin papers, while reporting the internment pointed out that they did not "subscribe to the Home Rule agitation". A leading member of the Justice Party, K. V. Reddi Naidu, pointed out that since India was not prepared for immediate home rule any campaign for this purpose should be put down firmly by the government. The anti-Besant Anglo-Indian paper *Madras Mail* "persisted in their demand that Besant should not be released unless she foreswore her past actions". The protest meetings were organized all over India against this "unconstitutional act of aggression upon Indian constitutional agitation as typified in Besant." Bomanji, an well-known Parsi contractor of Bombay and life member of the Bombay League donated Rs.1,00,000 to enable that League to resist attacks against the aims and objects of the League.

Meanwhile in England Lord Pentland had ridiculed the idea of home rule in a public speech.

Balgangadhar Tilak took it up as a challenge and advised the Congress organizations all over India not only to make vigorous protest, but also to prepare a petition to the Secretary of State to grant home rule to India. As a result of this the local home rulers started an intensive drive for signature campaign for the petition. A large number of Besant's supporters all over the district signed in the petition voluntarily.

Gandhiji on 7, July 1917 wrote a letter to the Viceroy stating that the internment was a 'big blunder'. All India Muslim League passed a resolution protesting against the internment and the action of Lord Pentland. Muhammad Ali Jinnah worked hard for her release. Only the anti-Besant Anglo-Indians demanded the internment to go on. Besant's internment added greatly to the excitement of the intelligentsia vitalized the Home Rule movement all over the country."

It is interesting to note that the matter of internment of Besant was taken to the notice of the American President Woodrow Wilson by S. Subramaniya Iyer who returned his knighthood on the arrest of Besant, requested him to intervene and persuade the British Government to grant home rule. In the midst of the agitation to secure the release of the interned leaders, Subramania Iyer wrote a letter on 24 June 1917 to Woodrow Wilson, pointing out British misrule in India. This letter was smuggled out of Madras by an American couple, Mr. and Mrs. Hotchner, who were on a visit to Adyar. It was all appeal from 'the aching heart' of India to one "whom we believe to be an instrument of God in the reconstruction of the world", The letter stated, "At present we are a subject nation, held in chains, forbidden by our alien rulers to express publicly our desire for the ideals presented in your famous war message "The liberation of peoples, the rights of nations, great and small, and the privilege of men everywhere to choose their ways of life and obedience. The world must be made safe for democracy. Its peace must be planted upon the tested foundations of political liberty. You and the other leaders have been kept out in ignorance of the full measure of misrule and oppression in India..."

This letter formed the subject of an interpellation in the House of Commons. In reply, the Secretary of State, Montagu, said that the Government of India informed Subramania Iyer that they viewed his action with surprise and regret, but that in view of his old age, failing health and past judicial services, they did not propose to take further action [53-57]. A joint meeting of the All-India Congress Committee and the Council of the Muslim League was convened in Bombay between 28 and 29 July 1917 to consider the situation created by the internment of Besant. The

joint Committee also recorded its strong protest against the government for prohibiting a public meeting which was to be held in Calcutta under the presidentship of Rash Behari Ghosh to protest against the internment of Besant, Arundale and B. P. Wadia trusted that "the people of Bengal would use every lawful means to vindicate their rights". The joint convention requested the government to implement the Congress-League Scheme and to give up the policy of repression by the immediate release of Besant and her colleagues.

### 3.6 Reactions of the Press

Lord Pentland warned the students not to ally with her and not to take part in political meetings. She strongly condemned this action of the government through the *New India*. Lord Pentland prohibited her on 7 June 1917 from writing or speaking or publishing anything political in the *New India*. He passed another order on the same day, which forced her and her co-workers B. P. Wadia and G. S. Arundale to take up their residents in any one of the following six places. Nilgiris district, Coimbatore district, Bellary, Palani hills, Shevaroy hills and the Municipal town of Vizagapattinam within fourteen days. Another Government Order was issued on 14 June 1917 reducing the period fixed from fourteen to seven days to leave Madras and Chingleput district for their place of confinement. Obeying the order, they selected Ootacamund in Nilgiris district and left Madras. There, they hoisted flag of Home Rule League. The District Magistrate issued an order under section 144 Criminal Penal Code, prohibiting them from hoisting the flag. Despite such restrictions, Ootacamund at once became a centre of political activities and a place of pilgrimage for the home rulers.

Their internment of Mrs. Annie Besant earned more popularity and support for Home Rule Movement. Almost all the papers censured their internments. *The Hindu*, in its editorial described it as a brutal and unconstitutional act of aggression upon Indian constitutional agitation. Thus, it encouraged a campaign against the government's action. *Hindunesan*, a Tamil paper of Madras echoed the feelings of the masses as there were several public meetings conducted against these internments, resolutions were passed and the telegrams were sent. According to *Swadesamitran*, protest meetings were conducted against these internments at Thanjavur, Madurai, Kaniyur and Sangagiri. The meeting held for women at Sangari Durg a resolution of protest against the internments was passed along with a swadeshi vow to be taken by all. The same paper reproduced the comments published in *Times of Ceylon*, a Tamil paper, mentioning that in the name

of suppressing Annie Besant, the government had brought her fame and glory.

*Dravida Patrika* from Madras reported about the ladies' meeting held at Sangari Durg. President Rukmani Ammal, urged said that "every man and woman should work for the acquisition of Home Rule for India." *The Hindu* added that the action of the government made the people furious. Supporting Annie Besant, it noted that if the government would come forward to know the public opinion through the press, it would help the development of the new fortitude in the country. *The Andhra Patrika* stated that because of the internment, her fame spread not only in India but also worldwide and the spread of her name and fame in belligerent countries against Britain would cause series problems for British Empire. It indicated that the reasonable political agitations could not be put down by any restraint. *Desabhimani* observed the action of the government of Madras was deeply regretted, it had outraged the feeling of the most of the people of India and manifestation of such feelings was felt every day at public meetings all over the land.

While most of the papers wrote in favour of Mrs. Annie Besant some Non-Brahmin Movement papers were in favour of the government. *The Andhra Prakasika*, a Telugu Non-Brahmin paper justified the internment. But at the same time it received some criticism from its readers. Another non-Brahmin paper *Dravidan* criticized the protest meetings as unwise, unjust and seditious. The paper, *Non-Brahmin* also criticized the agitations and remarked that nobody would follow the Annie Besant's way to attain home rule. But some nationalist papers condemned the writings of the Non-Brahmin papers. When Annie Besant was in internment, some papers published matters worrying about her health. *The Hindu* observed that she was suffering from serious nervous break-down and it asked the government to release her on health grounds. *Swadesamitran* observed that their readers would be pained to hear the news of her ill health. It expected that, on hearing the news at least the government would cancel the internment order issued against her.

Although almost all the journals expressed their voice against the government Patabhi Sitharamayya, the Congress legislator initiated some efforts in the Central legislature to free her. But those efforts ended vain. The All India Congress Committee and the Muslim League together held a meeting on 31 July 1917, to work out a plan to secure her release. A resolution was passed to launch passive resistance. But it couldn't succeed. The intensity of the home rule agitation in Madras Presidency and in other parts of

India, coupled with the American diplomatic pressure on the British Cabinet as a result of Subramania Iyer's letter were the important factors that contributed to the following declaration of policy by Montagu in the House of Commons on 20 August 1917: The policy of His Majesty's government with which the Government of India are in complete accord, is that of the increasing association of Indians in every branch of administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire.

In pursuance of the new policy of the 'Government, at last, yielding to the pressure built inside India and externally, the British government ordered the release of Besant and her colleagues unconditionally. Besant, Arundale and B. P. Wadia were released on 17 September 1917. The three arrived, in Central Railway Station of Madras on 21 September, 1917 "The usually quiet city streets", wrote, *The Hindu*, "were alive with surging crowds wending, their way towards the Central Station throughout the night". There was an estimated crowd of ten thousand to receive the leaders.

The reaction of the anti-home rule circles in Madras to Besant's release was in sharp contrast to the rejoicing in the nationalist circles, *Justice* opined that, the reversal of Lord Pentland's order on Besant's internment had damaged the prestige of the Madras Government. The *Madras Mail* saw in Besant's release Montagu's willingness to appease the South Indian lawyer politicians.

In recognition of her services to the growth of Indian nationalism, Besant was elected President of the Indian National Congress which was to hold its annual session in Calcutta in December 1917. The two significant achievements of the Calcutta Congress were the passing of a resolution urging the government to implement the Congress-League scheme and another recognizing Andhra as a separate Congress circle. In her presidential address, Besant demanded a Bill during 1918 establishing self-government in India on lines resembling those of the commonwealth on a date to be laid down therein, preferably 1923, the latest 1928. The intermediate five or ten years being occupied with the transference of the government from the British to Indian hands, maintaining the British tie as in the Dominions. The difference in tone between the earlier Congress Presidential addresses and that of Besant was a fair measure of the transformation brought about by the Home Rule League in the Indian national movement. Besant succeeded in re-uniting the moderates and the extremists in the Congress by keeping the moderate goal of Home Rule and intensifying the agitation. The

Home Rule League became the voice of India. It paved the way for the emergence of a new force in India's struggle for freedom.

### 3.7 An Appraisal

From the beginning of the National Movement the Indian press both English and vernacular played seminal role in activating the freedom struggle. When the press in general *New India* and *The Commonwealth* in particular emerged as powerful weapons the national movement got accelerated. The legitimate aspirations of the Indians for home rule or self rule were powerfully expressed in *New India* for which Besant was the editor. *New India* was definitely able to take the freedom struggle to another level. It continued to create national awakening among the people. It created a space for the intelligentsia to express their opinions on political issues, to air their views on constitutional reforms, to engage in constructive debates on issues. The editorials of *New India* was able to condemn the oppressive policies of the British forthrightly. The discourses published in it created awareness on the nationalism, discussions it elucidated created clarity among the readers, news items which they printed revitalized the nationalists. All these continue to build up public opinion among the masses against the hegemonic British imperialism. It helped disseminating new political thoughts, and served as a vehicle in reaching out to the masses. The regular publications of reflective articles on nationalism, the powerful editorials articulated and expressed the mind of the people them to the rulers. the press certainly provided the required philosophical foundation for the National Movement and the programmes planned by Gandhiji and Indian National Congress and mobilized people for the struggle in each phase.

### 4. CONCLUSION

Thus *New India* under the editorship of Annie Besant intensified the freedom struggle by playing its catalytic role in the national movement. By its continued work she was able to get support from other countries too. For example 'India Home Rule League was established in New York to support the Home Rule Movement in India. It started publishing a monthly journal called 'Young India'. The main object of the league was to place the true conditions of life in India before the outside world. The Labour Party conference at Nottingham early in 1918, unanimously passed a resolution in favour of Home Rule for India. That why the rulers were scared of *New India* and banned for few days. Annie Besant played vital role in reuniting the Congress by taking the extremists back into the congress fold in order to forge a united front

for the attainment of colonial self-government. The strong protest emerged from various quarters for the internment of Besant, the editor of *New India* could speak volumes about its work for the freedom and the influence of the paper on the people particularly the educated elites and the youth.

### COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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19. Sir Kurma Venkata Reddi Naidu (1875-1942) was a lawyer, professor, politician and Justice Party leader who served as the Chief Minister of Madras Presidency from 1 April 1937 to 14 July 1937. He was the last Chief Minister of Madras Presidency from the Justice Party. He joined the Justice Party in 1919-1920 and was a part of T. M. Nair's delegation to the United Kingdom. Later, when Justice Party government was formed in Madras, Reddi Naidu served as the Minister of Development under A. Subbarayalu Reddiar and the Raja of Panagal. In 1923, the Raja of Panagal replaced Reddy Naidu as Minister of Development with T. N. Sivagnanam Pillai. Reddy Naidu served as India's agent to the Union of South Africa from 1929 to 1932 and acted as the Governor of Madras from 18 June 1936 to 1 October 1936. He was selected as Chief Minister on 1 April 1937 and served in this capacity till 14 July 1937. He also served as the Vice-Chancellor of Annamalai University in 1940.
20. Madras Mail, 1917.
21. Annie Besant, 'The Birth of New India', TPH, Adyar. 1917; p.p 362-365.
22. New India, 1922.
23. New India, 1920.
24. G.O.Ms. No. 744, Public (Confidential), 7 June 1917, TNA; Home Rule Files 167, Home Rule Movement, 1914 -1920.
25. Sir Kurma Venkata Reddi Naidu (1875-1942) was a lawyer, professor, politician and Justice Party leader who served as the Chief Minister of Madras Presidency from 1 April 1937 to 14 July 1937. He was the last Chief Minister of Madras Presidency from the Justice Party. He joined the Justice Party in 1919-1920 and was a part of T. M. Nair's delegation to the United Kingdom. Later, when Justice Party government was formed in Madras, Reddi Naidu served as the Minister of Development under A. Subbarayalu Reddiar and the Raja of Panagal. In 1923, the Raja of Panagal replaced Reddy Naidu as Minister of Development with T. N. Sivagnanam Pillai. Reddy Naidu served as India's agent to the Union of South Africa from 1929 to 1932 and acted as the Governor of Madras from 18 June 1936 to 1 October 1936. He was selected as Chief Minister on 1 April 1937 and served in this capacity till 14 July 1937. He also served as the Vice-Chancellor of Annamalai University in 1940.
26. Dravidan. 1917;12.
27. Madras Mail; 1917.
28. Annie Besant, 'The Birth of New India', TPH, Adyar. 1917;362-365.
29. G.O. Ms. No. 785, Public (Confidential), 14 June 1917, TNA.



30. Circular instruction from the acting Chief Secretary, Govt. of Madras to the District.
31. Magistrate, Public (Confidential), Ootacamund 19 August 1917, D.O. No. 19 in.
32. Home Rule Movement, 1914-1920, p. 45; Report on the Administration of the Madras Presidency. 1917-1918, p.9.
33. Report on the Administration of the Madras Presidency. 1918-1919;9.
34. The Hindu, Madras; 1917.
35. Hindunesan, Madras, 25 June 1917, MNNPR. 1917;I:1892.
36. G.O.Ms.No.744, Public (Confidential), 7 June 1917, TNA: Home Rule Files 167 in Home Rule Movement, 1914-1920.
37. G.O.Ms.No.785,Public (Confidential),14 June 1917, TNA .
38. Circular Instruction from the Acting Chief Secretary, Govt. of Madras to the District
39. Magistrate, Public (Confidential), Ootacamund 19 August 1917, D.O.No.191 in Home Rule Movement. 1914-1920;p.453.
40. Report on the Administration of the Madras Presidency. 1917-1918;9.
41. The Hindu, Madras 11 June 1917.
42. Andhra Patrika, Madras; 1918.
43. G.O.Ms.No.744, Public (Confidential), 7 June 1917, TNA: Home Rule Files 167 in Home Rule Movement; 1914-1920.
44. G.O.Ms.No.785,Public (Confidential),14 June 1917, TNA .
45. Circular Instruction from the Acting Chief Secretary, Govt. of Madras to the District Magistrate, Public (Confidential), Ootacamund 19 August 1917, D.O.No.191 in Home Rule Movement. 1914-1920;453.
46. Report on the Administration of the Madras Presidency. 1917-1918;9.
47. The Hindu, Madras; 1917.
48. Andhra Patrika, Madras; 1918 p.22
49. Desabhimani, 1917, p.35
50. Andhra Patrika, Madras, 28 June 1917, MNNPR. 1917;II:1903.
51. Dravidan, 1917.
52. MNNPR, Vol. II, 1917. p. 1909 & 3 July 1917; MNNPR/. 1917;II:1964-1965.
53. The Hindu, Madras; 1917.
54. Swadesamitran, Madras; 1917.
55. Edwin S. Montagu, op.cit., 'India Home Rule League was established in New York to support the Home Rule Movement in India. It started publishing a monthly journal called 'Young India'. The main object of the league was to place the true conditions of life in India before the outside world. The Labour Party conference at Nottingham early in 1918, unanimously passed a resolution in favour of Home Rule for India. 169.
56. The Hindu; 1917.
57. The Justice; 1917.