



V. O. Chidambaram Pillai

For Prelims: Freedom Movement, Swadeshi Movement, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai.

For Mains: V. O. Chidambaram Pillai.

Why in News?

Recently, the Prime Minister paid tribute to **V. O. Chidambaram Pillai**, the legendary freedom fighter on his **151th birth anniversary** on 5th September 2022.

- He was popularly known as **Kappalottiya Tamilan (The Tamil Helmsman)** and **Sekkizuththa Semmal** (scholarly gentry who suffered at the oil press).



Who was Chidambaram Pillai?

- **Birth:** Vallinayagam Olaganathan Chidambaram Pillai (VOC) was born **5th September 1872 to an eminent lawyer Olaganathan Pillai** and Paramyee Ammai in Ottapidaram, **Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu.**
- **Early Life:** VOC graduated from **Caldwell College, Tuticorin.** Before beginning his law studies, he worked for a brief period as a taluk office clerk.
 - His tussle with the judge forced him to seek fresh pastures at Tuticorin in 1900.
 - Until 1905, professional and journalistic activities consumed most of his energy.
- **Entry in Politics:** VOC entered politics in 1905 following the **partition of Bengal.**
 - Towards the end of 1905, VOC visited Madras and was drawn closer to the **Swadeshi Movement initiated by Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Lala Lajpat Rai.**
 - VOC was drawn towards **Ramakrishna Mission** and came into contact with Subramania Bharati and the Mandayam family.
 - It was not until the arrival of VOC at Tuticorin (Present day Thoothukudi) that the **Swadeshi movement** in Tirunelveli district began to gather force and momentum.
- **Role Played in Freedom Movement:** By 1906, VOC won the support of merchants and industrialists in Tuticorin and Tirunelveli **for the idea of establishing a Swadeshi merchant shipping outfit** by the name of the **Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company (SSNCo).**
 - He established many institutions like **Swadeshi Prachar Sabha**, Dharmasanga Nesavu Salai, National Godown, Madras Agro-Industrial Society Ltd and Desabimana Sangam.
 - VOC and Siva were aided in their efforts by a number of Tirunelveli-based lawyers, who formed an organisation called the **Swadeshi Sangam, or 'National Volunteers'.**
 - The nationalist movement acquired a secondary character with the beginning of the Tuticorin Coral Mills strike (1908).
 - Even prior to **Gandhiji's Champaran Satyagraha (1917)**, VOC took up the cause of the working class in Tamil Nadu, and thus **he is a forerunner to Gandhiji in this respect.**
 - VOC, along with other leaders, resolved to take out a mammoth procession on the morning of 9th March 1908 to celebrate the release of Bipin Chandra Pal from jail and to hoist the flag of Swaraj.
- **Writings:** Meyyaram (1914), Meyyarivu (1915), Anthology (1915), Thirukural with literary notes of Manakudavar (1917), Tholkappiam with literary notes of Ilampooranar (1928), Autobiography (1946).
- **Death:** V.O.C died on **18th November 1936 in the Indian National Congress Office** at Tuticorin.

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