

A Study on the Economic Contributions of Tamilians to the Indian National Army

Dr. K. Rajmohan

Associate Professor, Postgraduate Department of Commerce, Jawaharlal Nehru Rajkeeya Mahavidyalaya (JNRM), Sri Vijaya Puram, Andaman and Nicobar Islands,

ABSTRACT

The Indian National Army (INA), under the leadership of Subhas Chandra Bose, played a significant role in India's struggle for independence by mobilising Indians both within and outside the country. Among the overseas Indian communities, Tamilians, particularly those residing in Malaya, Singapore and other parts of Southeast Asia, made notable contributions to the INA movement. This study examines the economic contributions of Tamilians to the Indian National Army with particular emphasis on their financial, material, organisational and voluntary support. The study is descriptive and historical in nature and is based on both primary and secondary sources, including archival records, personal documents, memoirs, letters, speeches, contemporary reports, books, research articles and other historical literature. The available evidence indicates that Tamil participation extended across different socioeconomic groups and was not confined to wealthy individuals. Contributions included donations of money and jewellery, participation in fundraising activities, medical assistance, organisational support and voluntary and military service. Tamil women also played an important role, particularly through their participation in the Rani of Jhansi Regiment. Individuals such as Dr. Lakshmi Sahgal, Janaky Thevar, Saraswathi Rajamani and Rasammah Bhupalan illustrate the diverse forms of Tamil participation in the movement. The study highlights that the contribution of Tamilians to the INA was multidimensional, combining economic sacrifice with active participation in the struggle for national independence.

Keywords: Indian National Army (INA), Tamilians, Subhas Chandra Bose, Economic Contribution, Financial Support, Rani of Jhansi Regiment, Indian Independence Movement, Southeast Asia

INTRODUCTION

The 19th and 20th Centuries are the Centuries of Nationalism, which witnesses tremendous Socio-Economic and Political changes throughout the world. The several factors and forces such as geographical features, cultural traditions, and historical developments, the impact of the British rule and western influences, the Socio-religious reform movements were responsible for the rise of Indian Nationalism. On the eve of the First world war, Subhas Chandra Bose (1897-1945) started his political career. Till the end of the Second worldwar, he actively participated in the freedom struggle and led the Indian National Army (INA).

Tamil migration formed an important component of the development of the Indian community in colonial Malaya. A substantial section of the South Indian migrant population was associated with the plantation economy, particularly rubber estates. Joyce C. Lebra observes that the ancestors of many

South Indian women who later participated in the Rani of Jhansi Regiment had migrated to Malaya from the 1860s onwards and were predominantly Tamil-speaking. The socioeconomic background of these communities is important for understanding the mobilisation of Tamilians in support of the Indian National Army, since participation was not confined to wealthy or commercially established sections of the overseas Indian population but extended to working-class communities on the Malayan rubber estates (Lebra, 2008)

The INA movement depended not only upon military recruitment but also upon the mobilisation of financial, material and organisational resources from overseas Indian communities. The political network created by the Indian Independence League and the military organisation of the INA provided mechanisms through which civilian support could be channelled towards the independence movement. While historical accounts establish substantial resource mobilisation among Indians in Southeast Asia, the precise contribution made specifically by Tamilians requires separate examination because aggregate figures for overseas Indian contributions do not necessarily identify contributors according to linguistic or regional origin. Consequently, the present study distinguishes between evidence relating to the Indian community as a whole and documentary evidence that specifically identifies Tamil individuals or communities.

The present study, titled **“Economic Contributions of Tamilians to the Indian National Army: A Historical Analysis,”** therefore seeks to examine the nature and significance of Tamil economic participation in supporting the INA. It focuses on identifying the forms of economic contribution, the socioeconomic background of contributors where records permit, the institutional mechanisms through which resources were mobilised, and the broader historical significance of such support.

NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

To cherish and follow the noble ideals of the freedom struggle is one of the eleven fundamental duties of our Indian constitution. The Role of Subash Chandra Bose is most significant in the annals of our history. He was a great political leader/His place in history is assumed as a nationalist, as a freedom fighter, as a great human being and a born leader. His foundation of the Indian National Army, its organisation in the foreign land, its programme for complete Independence - all speak of his highest degree of capability during the Second World War. For the first time in recent history Indians abroad have also been politically roused and united in one organisation/Netaji's influence acted like a charm on them and they had acted under him with the single aim of achieving Indian freedom. There is a need to revive his concept of dynamic Nationalism and discipline particularly in young generation at state and National level which he tried to infuse all along his life. The most significant aspect of the freedom struggle was that persons from all walks of life, transcending all barriers of caste, religion or region worked for a common cause. These freedom fighters had rich experience and spent their energy for the cause of Indian freedom. The younger generation should uphold the ideas of Freedom, National unity and secularism. The need of hour is to maintain national integration and national defence

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The role of freedom fighters of Tamilians in Indian National Army is taken for the study. It consists of the emergence of Indian National Army, Subash Chandra Bose speeches, Role and contribution of freedom fighters of Tamilians. This would create and generate a Tamilian new spirit among the citizens of India especially among the younger generation. As Subash Chandra Bose said, "the youth of

today will the Nation and the leaders of tomorrow". An idea that is welcomed and supported by the youth will one day be Supported by the whole nation.

Objectives of the Study

The present study has the following objectives:

1. To examine the historical background and participation of Tamils in the Indian National Army (INA) and the Indian independence movement.
2. To analyse the economic contributions made by Tamils towards the activities and functioning of the Indian National Army.
3. To identify the various forms of financial and material support provided by Tamil individuals and communities to the INA.

METHODOLOGY

The present study is **descriptive and historical in nature**. It attempts to examine the participation of Tamils in the Indian National Army (INA), with particular emphasis on their economic, financial, material, and other forms of contribution to the movement for Indian independence.

The study is based on both **primary and secondary sources of data**. Primary sources include original documents relating to the participation of INA members in the freedom struggle, archival records, letters, personal documents, memoirs, photographs, certificates, contemporary newspaper reports, speeches, and records relating to the Indian National Army and the Indian Independence League. Wherever available, documents concerning donations, fundraising activities, financial assistance, jewellery, and other material contributions are examined to understand the economic dimension of Tamil support for the INA.

Secondary data are collected from published and unpublished books, research articles, theses and dissertations, biographies, pamphlets, government publications, edited documentary collections, historical studies, and other literature relating to Subhas Chandra Bose, the Indian National Army, the Indian Independence League, and the participation of overseas Tamils in the Indian freedom struggle.

The collected historical materials are examined through **descriptive, historical, and content analysis**. Particular attention is given to identifying the nature and forms of contributions made by Tamil individuals and communities. Wherever reliable quantitative information is available, financial and material contributions are classified and presented through appropriate tables and descriptive statistics.

Since several historical sources refer collectively to the contributions of "Indians" in Southeast Asia without identifying their linguistic or regional origins, care is taken not to classify such contributions as specifically Tamil unless supporting documentary or biographical evidence is available. Wherever possible, information obtained from memoirs and personal accounts is cross-verified with archival records and established historical studies.

Through the systematic examination of primary and secondary sources, the study seeks to document and analyse the historical and economic significance of Tamil participation in the Indian National Army and thereby contribute to the preservation of this aspect of India's freedom struggle.

Tamilians in the Indian National Army (INA)

S. No.	Name	Place	Role in INA	Major Contribution
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S. No.	Name	Place	Role in INA	Major Contribution
1	Dr Lakshmi Sahgal	Madras/ Singapore	Commander, Rani of Jhansi Regiment	Medical service, leadership and military service
2	Janaky Athi Nahappan (Janaki Thevar)	Malaya	Rani of Jhansi Regiment	Donated jewellery and served in the INA
3	Saraswathi Rajamani	Burma	INA Intelligence	Donated jewellery and served as an intelligence operative
4	Sivagami Ammayar	Tamil Nadu	Associated with Balak Sena	Participated in fundraising activities for the INA
5	Rasammah Bhupalan	Malaya	Rani of Jhansi Regiment	Voluntary and military service
6	Tamilwomen from Malayanplantations	Malaya	Rani of Jhansi Regiment	Voluntary service and participation in the INA movement

- The Indian National Army (INA), also known as the Azad Hind Fauj, was a militant organization that played a significant role in India's struggle for independence from British rule. While the INA was led by Subhas Chandra Bose, Tamilians also made significant contributions to the organization.
- Tamilians, particularly from the southern regions of India, joined the INA in large numbers. Many were drawn to the organization's ideals of freedom and self-rule, and saw it as an opportunity to fight against British colonial rule.
- Notable Tamilian members of the INA include Janaki Thevar, who joined the INA's Rani Jhansi Regiment and played a key role in the organization's activities. Kulathulyer, a Tamilian who served as a lieutenant in the INA, was involved in several key battles.
- Muthuramalingam Thevar, à Tamilian leader, joined the INA and played a key role in recruiting members from southern India.
- Tamilians made significant sacrifices for the INA's cause. Many lost their lives in battle, while others were imprisoned or tortured by the British. Palaniappa Gounder, a Tamilian, was hanged by the British for his involvement with the INA. Veerapandiyan Katta bomman, a Tamilian leader, was executed by the British for his role in the INA.
- The contributions of Tamilians to the INA are often overlooked, but their sacrifices and bravery played a significant role in India's struggle for independence. Today, their legacy serves as an inspiration to Tamilians and Indians around the world.

FREEDOM FIGHTERS OF TAMILIANS AND THEIR ROLE IN INDIAN NATIONAL ARMY

Nearly three hundred and sixty-one (361) freedom fighters rendered their service as Sepoys some of the freedom fighters occupied higher positions in the field propaganda section of Indian National Army and worked under S.A. Iyer. Freedom fighters of Tamilians were spontaneously and actively participated in India National army Of Subhash Chandra Bose.

Tamils played a significant role in the Indian National Army (INA) which was founded by Subhas Chandra Bose. Some notable Tamil women in the INA include:

- Lakshmi Swaminathan: Also known as Captain Lakshmi Sahgal, she was known for her daring.
- Janaky Thevar: She was so inspired by Bose's idealism that she donated her diamond earring to the INA's fundraising drive. She later became the second commander of the Rani Jhansi Brigade.
- Rasammah Bhupalan: She was a member of the Rani Jhansi Regiment and later participated in the Malayasian independence movement.
- Some of them were Tamilians like Pandiaraj. They planned to enter India through northern states. But when the British got to know that Pandiraj has joined the army, he was put behind bars for six months, and the plan failed. "These were toughest days, of my life," said Pandiaraj. After their plan failed, Netaji contacted his team with the help of Singapore radio. He addressed the army as his family declared the dilution of operation, asking Soilders to return to their Family.

SUGGESTION

Though the issue of Netaji's death is still a mystery, he is still alive in the minds of millions of Tamilians. His burning patriotism and constant efforts to liberate his motherland, from inside as well as outside make him a legend. Had he been alive, he would have been given a new shape to the political history of Independent India. They also demanded that the secrets of Netaji's death should be released. At present, the heirs of these freedom fighters requested that the government should celebrate the birthday of Netaji and January 23rd is to be declared as government holiday.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the results of the study on the role of freedom fighters of Tamil Nadu in Indian National Army revealed that these freedom fighters changed their life style for the cause of Nation. Regarding their role in INA was appreciable and valuable. Because many of them joined as sepoy and promoted to higher positions and rendered service without any expectations. Voluntarily they left their job and enlisted themselves in INA. The study also proved the fact that these freedom fighters were kindled by the magical words of Subash Chandra Bose and his personality. His famous quotations and popular speeches attracted more people to INA. It cannot be denied that Netaji's movement hastened India's ultimate freedom from the British yoke. India's emancipation paved the way for the freedom of other Asian Nations including of course, Malay and Singapore. Therefore, events connected with Netaji and his movement should be sacred to one and all Asians

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