Home Rule Movement in Madras (1916–18) – Annie Besant, New India, Ootacamund Internment 1917, Sir S. Subramania Iyer & the Non-Brahmin Response | TNPSC Notes

TNPSC Notes · https://www.shanmugamiasacademy.in/tnpsc-notes/home-rule-movement-madras/en

The **Home Rule Movement** was the First World War-era campaign for **self-government for India within the British Empire**. **Tilak** started his league at **Belgaum in April 1916**; **Annie Besant** started the **All India Home Rule League in Madras** (Adyar) in **September 1916**. Her daily **New India** and weekly **Commonweal** were published from Madras. In **June 1917** the Madras Government interned Besant, **G. S. Arundale** and **B. P. Wadia** at **Ootacamund**; nationwide protest won their release in September 1917. In December that year Besant presided over the Calcutta session as the **first woman President of the Congress**.

தமிழில் படிக்க

These notes are written for TNPSC Group 1, 2/2A and 4 aspirants. The topic falls under **History, Culture, Heritage and Socio-Political Movements of Tamil Nadu** and the **Indian National Movement**. Since Madras was the headquarters of Besant's league, the Tamil Nadu angle is central; read it with the Justice Party and the labour work of Thiru.Vi.Ka., which arose in the same years.

At a Glance

Detail	Fact
Period	1916–1918 (First World War years)
Aim	Self-government for India within the British Empire
Two leagues	Tilak – April 1916, Belgaum (Maharashtra, Karnataka, Central Provinces, Berar); Besant – September 1916, Madras (rest of India)
Besant's headquarters	Adyar, Madras (headquarters of the Theosophical Society)
Papers	**Commonweal** (weekly, January 1914); **New India** (daily – the "Madras Standard", bought and renamed in 1914)
Key associates	G. S. Arundale, B. P. Wadia, C. P. Ramaswami Iyer; Honorary President Sir S. Subramania Iyer
Repression	June 1917 – Besant, Arundale and Wadia interned at Ootacamund; released September 1917

Outcome	Montagu Declaration (20 August 1917); Besant – Congress President (Calcutta, December 1917)

Background: Why 1916?

- **First World War (1914–18):** India gave men and money for the war; the feeling grew that political rights must follow.
- **Irish model:** the term and method of "Home Rule" came from Ireland's demand for self-government; Besant was of Irish descent.
- **Congress inertia:** after the Surat split of 1907 the Moderate-led Congress was passive; Tilak was released from Mandalay jail in 1914.
- **Wartime prices and taxes** created discontent.

Annie Besant – A Movement from Madras

- **Annie Besant (1847–1933):** came to India in 1893; President of the Theosophical Society from 1907, with its headquarters at **Adyar**, Madras.
- **January 1914:** started the weekly **Commonweal** for political work.
- **1914:** bought the Madras daily "Madras Standard" and renamed it **New India** – the main voice of the campaign.
- **1915:** announced her plan for a Home Rule League at a meeting in Bombay.
- **September 1916:** the All India Home Rule League began in Madras. **Sir S. Subramania Iyer**, a former judge of the Madras High Court, was Honorary President; **G. S. Arundale**, **B. P. Wadia** and **C. P. Ramaswami Iyer** were key workers.

Methods of Propaganda

Method	Explanation
Newspapers	New India (daily) and Commonweal (weekly) – from Madras to the whole country
Branches	League branches in towns and small places; enrolment of members
Meetings and lectures	Public meetings and discussion groups
Libraries and reading rooms	Reading rooms with books on national politics
Pamphlets	Tracts and small books on Home Rule
Students and youth	College students and young lawyers were drawn in large numbers

Internment at Ootacamund (June–September 1917)

- **June 1917:** the Madras Government interned Besant, Arundale and Wadia at **Ootacamund (Ooty)** (sources differ between 15 and 16 June 1917 for the arrest). Besant stayed at **"Gulistan"**, the summer home of Theosophical Society founder Henry Steel Olcott.

- **Protest:** meetings and resolutions across India; many Moderate leaders who had stayed away now joined the league.
- **Sir S. Subramania Iyer:** wrote to US President **Woodrow Wilson** seeking support for Indian self-rule (letter dated 24 June 1917). Censured by the British government, he gave up his knighthood in 1918.
- **20 August 1917:** Secretary of State **Montagu** announced the goal of "progressive realisation of responsible government" (Montagu Declaration); the three were released in **September 1917**.
- **December 1917:** Besant presided over the Calcutta Congress – the **first woman President of the Congress**.

Impact in Tamil Nadu

Field	Impact
Political awakening	Educated youth in Madras, Madurai, Coimbatore, Tiruchirappalli and other towns entered politics; a volunteer base for the later Gandhian movements was formed
Journalism	Tamil papers spread the Home Rule idea along with New India; Thiru.Vi.Ka. became editor of the daily "Desabhakthan" in December 1917
Labour movement	Home Rule leader **B. P. Wadia** became the first president of the **Madras Labour Union** in 1918 – regarded as India's first organised trade union
Women	Besant's leadership encouraged women in public life; the Women's Indian Association was formed at Adyar in 1917
Non-Brahmin response	The South Indian Liberal Federation (Justice Party, 1916) opposed Home Rule – see below

The Non-Brahmin Response: Justice Party and Madras Presidency Association

- **Justice Party (South Indian Liberal Federation, 1916):** feared that self-government would leave power with the small group already ahead in education and jobs; issued the **Non-Brahmin Manifesto** in December 1916; its English daily "Justice" (1917) attacked the Home Rule campaign.
- **Madras Presidency Association (1917):** formed by non-Brahmin leaders inside the Congress; President **Kesava Pillai**, with **E. V. Ramasamy** among the vice-presidents; **P. Varadarajulu Naidu** and **Thiru.Vi.Ka.** were also active. It backed the national movement while demanding reserved seats for non-Brahmins.
- **Result:** the two streams of Tamil politics – nationalism and social justice – became clearly visible in these years; this was the base of the later Dravidian movement.

Decline (1918–1920)

- The league divided over the Montagu–Chelmsford proposals (1918); Besant moved towards accepting them.
- Tilak went to England in 1918 for the Chirol libel case, weakening the leadership.
- Besant did not accept Gandhi's satyagraha method (1919); the youth turned to Gandhi.

- **1920:** Gandhi became president of the All India Home Rule League and renamed it **"Swarajya Sabha"**; it merged into the Congress.

Assessment

Achievements	Limitations
Made nationalism a year-round, organised activity	Mostly urban educated people; little role for peasants and workers
Helped the climate for the Moderate–Extremist reunion and the Congress–League pact at Lucknow (1916)	Demand was self-government within the Empire, not full independence
Added pressure for the Montagu Declaration (1917)	Could not remove non-Brahmin suspicion in Madras
Brought women and students into politics; a volunteer base for Gandhi	Faded quickly after 1918 because of leadership splits

Writing Mains Answers (Group 1 / Group 2)

Role of Madras in the Home Rule Movement (about 150–250 words)

- **Introduction:** First World War background; Tilak (April 1916, Belgaum), Besant (September 1916, Madras).
- **Madras as headquarters:** Adyar; New India, Commonweal; Arundale, Wadia, C. P. Ramaswami Iyer, Sir S. Subramania Iyer.
- **Repression and protest:** Ootacamund internment of June 1917; the letter to Wilson; release in September 1917.
- **Impact:** Montagu Declaration; Besant – first woman Congress President; Madras Labour Union (1918).
- **Response:** Justice Party opposition; Madras Presidency Association (1917).
- **Conclusion:** forerunner of Gandhian mass politics; beginning of the nationalist and social-justice streams in Tamil Nadu.

Why did the Justice Party oppose the Home Rule Movement? (about 150 words)

- Fear that power would pass to a small educated group.
- Low share of non-Brahmins in government jobs, education and legislatures.
- Non-Brahmin Manifesto (December 1916); criticism in the daily "Justice".
- Remedy sought: communal representation – partly accepted later in the 1919 reforms.

Practice: Match the Following

Item	Match
Tilak's league	April 1916, Belgaum
Besant's league	September 1916, Madras (Adyar)

SHANMUGAM IA

New India	Besant's daily (1914)
Ootacamund	June 1917 – internment of Besant, Arundale, Wadia
Sir S. Subramania Iyer	Letter to Woodrow Wilson (1917)
B. P. Wadia	Madras Labour Union (1918)
Montagu Declaration	20 August 1917
Swarajya Sabha	1920 – renamed by Gandhi

Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Tilak's league came first (April 1916); Besant's came later (September 1916).
- Besant's league was headquartered in Madras – not Bombay (she announced the plan in Bombay in 1915, hence the confusion).
- New India was a daily; Commonweal a weekly. "Young India" was Gandhi's paper.
- The internment was at Ootacamund – not Adyar; the three were Besant, Arundale and Wadia.
- First woman President of the Congress: Annie Besant (1917); first Indian woman President: Sarojini Naidu (1925).
- The Justice Party opposed, not supported, the Home Rule Movement.

Key Terms – Tamil / English (for the bilingual paper)

தமிழ்	English
தன்னாட்சி இயக்கம்	Home Rule Movement
அனைத்திந்தியத் தன்னாட்சிக் கழகம்	All India Home Rule League
பிரம்மஞான சபை	Theosophical Society
காவலில் வைத்தல்	Internment
பொறுப்பாட்சி	Responsible government
பிராமணரல்லாதார் அறிக்கை	Non-Brahmin Manifesto
சென்னைத் தொழிலாளர் சங்கம்	Madras Labour Union
வகுப்புவாரிப் பிரதிநிதித்துவம்	Communal representation

Quick Revision Table

Year	Event
1893	Annie Besant arrives in India
1907	President of the Theosophical Society (Adyar)
January 1914	Commonweal weekly

1914	New India daily
April 1916	Tilak's league, Belgaum
September 1916	Besant's league, Madras
December 1916	Lucknow session; Non-Brahmin Manifesto
June 1917	Ootacamund internment; letter to Wilson
20 August 1917	Montagu Declaration
September 1917	Release of the three
December 1917	Besant – President, Calcutta Congress
1918	Madras Labour Union (Wadia); Subramania Iyer gives up his knighthood
1920	Swarajya Sabha (Gandhi)

TNPSC Key Points (PYQ-style facts)

- Besant's All India Home Rule League: September 1916, Madras (Adyar).
- Tilak's league: April 1916, Belgaum – the first.
- Besant's papers: New India (daily), Commonweal (weekly).
- Ootacamund internment (June 1917): Besant, G. S. Arundale, B. P. Wadia.
- Wrote to Woodrow Wilson and later gave up his knighthood: Sir S. Subramania Iyer.
- First woman President of the Congress: Annie Besant, Calcutta 1917.
- First president of the Madras Labour Union (1918): B. P. Wadia.
- Madras Presidency Association (1917): Kesava Pillai (President), E. V. R. (Vice-President).

Related notes: Justice Party, Thiru.Vi.Ka., Periyar, Muthulakshmi Reddy, Rajaji.

Frequently Asked Questions

Where and when did Annie Besant start her Home Rule League?

She started the All India Home Rule League in Madras (Adyar, the Theosophical Society headquarters) in September 1916. Tilak had started his league earlier, at Belgaum in April 1916.

Which papers did Besant use for the Home Rule campaign?

New India (a daily – the Madras Standard, bought and renamed in 1914) and Commonweal (a weekly, January 1914). Both were published from Madras.

Where was Besant interned in 1917, and why was she released?

In June 1917 the Madras Government interned Besant, G. S. Arundale and B. P. Wadia at Ootacamund. After nationwide protest and the Montagu Declaration of 20 August 1917, they were released in September 1917.

SHANMUGAM IA

What was the role of Sir S. Subramania Iyer?

A former judge of the Madras High Court, he was Honorary President of Besant's league. In 1917 he wrote to US President Woodrow Wilson seeking support for Indian self-rule; after censure by the British government he gave up his knighthood in 1918.

Why did the Justice Party oppose the Home Rule Movement?

It feared that self-government would leave power with the small group already ahead in education and government jobs. It issued the Non-Brahmin Manifesto in December 1916 and demanded communal representation.

Practise this topic with our free Tamil quizzes, follow daily current affairs (English) and Tamil current affairs, and see our TNPSC PYQ books such as the General Tamil PYQ book and the Tamil Nadu Administration PYQ book. For classroom and online TNPSC coaching at Gandhipuram, Coimbatore and Anna Nagar, Madurai, see our TNPSC course page or call 99941 46662 (Coimbatore) / 73059 47122 (Madurai).

Frequently asked questions

Where and when did Annie Besant start her Home Rule League?
She started the All India Home Rule League in Madras (Adyar, the Theosophical Society headquarters) in September 1916. Tilak had started his league earlier, at Belgaum in April 1916.

Which papers did Besant use for the Home Rule campaign?
New India (a daily – the Madras Standard, bought and renamed in 1914) and Commonweal (a weekly, January 1914). Both were published from Madras.

Where was Besant interned in 1917, and why was she released?
In June 1917 the Madras Government interned Besant, G. S. Arundale and B. P. Wadia at Ootacamund. After nationwide protest and the Montagu Declaration of 20 August 1917, they were released in September 1917.

What was the role of Sir S. Subramania Iyer?
A former judge of the Madras High Court, he was Honorary President of Besant's league. In 1917 he wrote to US President Woodrow Wilson seeking support for Indian self-rule; after censure by the British government he gave up his knighthood in 1918.

Why did the Justice Party oppose the Home Rule Movement?
It feared that self-government would leave power with the small group already ahead in education and government jobs. It issued the Non-Brahmin Manifesto in December 1916 and demanded communal representation.

SHANMUGAM IAS

Practice questions

1. Where did Annie Besant start the All India Home Rule League?

A. Madras
B. Bombay
C. Calcutta
D. Belgaum

2. Where did Tilak start his Home Rule League?

A. Poona
B. Belgaum
C. Bombay
D. Nagpur

3. Which was Besant's daily newspaper?

A. Kesari
B. Young India
C. New India
D. Vande Mataram

4. Which weekly did Besant start in January 1914?

A. Harijan
B. National Herald
C. Indian Opinion
D. Commonweal

5. Where was Besant interned in 1917?

A. Ootacamund
B. Vellore
C. Adyar
D. Kodaikanal

6. Which two were interned with Besant in 1917?

A. Tilak and Jinnah
B. Arundale and Wadia
C. Satyamurti and Rajaji
D. Olcott and Blavatsky

7. Which Madras leader wrote to US President Woodrow Wilson and later gave up his knighthood?

A. Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer
B. Sir P. Theagaraya Chetty
C. Sir S. Subramania Iyer
D. Sir C. Sankaran Nair

8. On which date was the Montagu Declaration made?

A. 13 April 1919
B. 15 June 1917
C. 26 December 1917
D. 20 August 1917

SHANMUGAM IA

9. Who was the first woman President of the Congress?

A. Annie Besant
B. Sarojini Naidu
C. Nellie Sengupta
D. Indira Gandhi

10. Besant presided over which Congress session?

A. Lucknow 1916
B. Calcutta 1917
C. Amritsar 1919
D. Nagpur 1920

11. Who was Honorary President of Besant's league?

A. G. S. Arundale
B. B. P. Wadia
C. Sir S. Subramania Iyer
D. C. Vijayaraghavachariar

12. Who was the first president of the Madras Labour Union (1918)?

A. Singaravelar
B. Thiru.Vi.Ka.
C. V. O. Chidambaram Pillai
D. B. P. Wadia

13. Which Madras body opposed the Home Rule Movement?

A. South Indian Liberal Federation (Justice Party)
B. Madras Mahajana Sabha
C. Madras Labour Union
D. Women's Indian Association

14. Who was President of the Madras Presidency Association (1917)?

A. T. M. Nair
B. Kesava Pillai
C. P. Theagaraya Chetty
D. C. Natesa Mudaliar

15. What was the aim of the Home Rule Movement?

A. Complete independence (Purna Swaraj)
B. Separate provinces
C. Self-government within the British Empire
D. Restoration of princely rule

16. What new name did Gandhi give the Home Rule League in 1920?

A. Lok Sevak Sangh
B. Swaraj Party
C. Satyagraha Sabha
D. Swarajya Sabha

SHANMUGAM IA

17. In which year did Besant come to India?

A. 1879
B. 1893
C. 1907
D. 1914

18. Where is the headquarters of the Theosophical Society?

A. Mylapore
B. Adyar
C. Egmore
D. Guindy

19. The "Gulistan" house at Ooty where Besant stayed was the summer home of whom?

A. G. S. Arundale
B. Lord Pentland
C. Henry Steel Olcott
D. C. P. Ramaswami Iyer

20. Which statement on the Home Rule Movement is correct?

A. Besant's league began before Tilak's
B. The Justice Party supported it
C. It demanded complete independence
D. Besant, Arundale and Wadia were interned at Ootacamund in 1917

Answers with explanations

1. A) Madras – In Madras (Adyar), September 1916.

2. B) Belgaum – At Belgaum, April 1916.

3. C) New India – New India – the Madras Standard, renamed in 1914.

4. D) Commonweal – The weekly Commonweal.

5. A) Ootacamund – Ootacamund, June 1917.

6. B) Arundale and Wadia – G. S. Arundale and B. P. Wadia.

7. C) Sir S. Subramania Iyer – Sir S. Subramania Iyer – letter 1917, knighthood given up 1918.

8. D) 20 August 1917 – 20 August 1917 – progressive responsible government.

9. A) Annie Besant – Annie Besant – Calcutta 1917; Sarojini Naidu was the first Indian woman President (1925).

10. B) Calcutta 1917 – Calcutta, December 1917.

11. C) Sir S. Subramania Iyer – Sir S. Subramania Iyer, a former Madras High Court judge.

12. D) B. P. Wadia – Home Rule leader B. P. Wadia; Thiru.Vi.Ka. was vice-president.

SHANMUGAM IA

13. A) South Indian Liberal Federation (Justice Party) – The Justice Party – Non-Brahmin Manifesto, December 1916.

14. B) Kesava Pillai – Kesava Pillai; E. V. R. was one of the vice-presidents.

15. C) Self-government within the British Empire – Self-government within the Empire; Purna Swaraj came only in the 1929 Lahore resolution.

16. D) Swarajya Sabha – Swarajya Sabha; the Swaraj Party (1923) of C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru is different.

17. B) 1893 – 1893; President of the Theosophical Society from 1907.

18. B) Adyar – Adyar, Madras (Chennai).

19. C) Henry Steel Olcott – Theosophical Society founder Henry Steel Olcott.

20. D) Besant, Arundale and Wadia were interned at Ootacamund in 1917 – The Ootacamund internment is correct; the rest are wrong.

Shanmugam IAS Academy – next step

- **Classes:** TNPSC Group 1, 2 / 2A (Prelims + Mains), Group 4, UPSC / IAS, Bank, SSC, SI – Coimbatore · Madurai · Online – https://www.shanmugamiasacademy.in/fees
- **Books (PDF):** TNPSC PYQ books, General Tamil complete book, UPSC books – https://www.shanmugamiasacademy.in/study-materials
- **More free PDFs:** https://www.shanmugamiasacademy.in/free-pdf-download · This page: https://www.shanmugamiasacademy.in/tnpsc-notes/home-rule-movement-madras/en

Admissions / WhatsApp: 99941 46662 · 99944 27714 · www.shanmugamiasacademy.in