



## V. O. Chidambaram Pillai

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### Why in News

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Recently, the Prime Minister paid tribute to V. O. Chidambaram Pillai, the legendary freedom fighter on his **150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary**.

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



### Key Points

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- **Birth:**  
**Vallinayagam Olaganathan Chidambaram Pillai (VOC)** was born **5<sup>th</sup> 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 the **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 9<sup>th</sup> 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 **18<sup>th</sup> November 1936** in the **Indian National Congress Office** at Tuticorin as was his last wish.

**Source: PIB**