



S. Satyamurti

**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI**

OCTOBER 2002

S. SATYAMURTI

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PREFACE

A valiant freedom fighter, great patriot, eminent lawyer, educationist, brilliant orator, great connoisseur of art and culture, universal humanist and an outstanding parliamentarian, Shri S. Satyamurti contributed immensely to our national life in the pre-Independence era. He quit his lucrative practice as a lawyer and joined the struggle for *Swaraj*. Making a humble beginning in politics as a volunteer of the Congress, he entered the Madras Legislative Council and later the Central Legislative Assembly where he distinguished himself as a parliamentarian. His successes in the Central Legislative Assembly led Gandhiji to remark that if there had been ten Satyamurtis in our Legislatures, the British would have quit long ago.

A grateful nation honours the memory of Shri S. Satyamurti on 1 October, 2002 when the Hon'ble President of India, Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam unveils Shri Satyamurti's statue in the Parliament House. The initiative for installing the statue came from General Purposes Committee of the Lok Sabha.

The statue of Shri S. Satyamurti, sculpted by the eminent sculptor, Shri Kishore J. Nagappa, is 8 feet 10 inches in height, having a Pedestal of 9 inches. The statue has been donated by the former Union Minister Dr. Subramanian Swamy.

To mark the occasion, the Lok Sabha Secretariat is bringing out this publication which carries Shri Satyamurti's brief profile, his views on various aspects of our national life and some select photographs. An exhibition on the life and times of Shri S. Satyamurti is also being organized by the Parliamentary Museum and Archives of the Lok Sabha Secretariat.

We are grateful to the Hon'ble Speaker, Lok Sabha, Shri Manohar Joshi, for his keen interest and valuable guidance in organizing the function. We also thank Dr. Subramanian Swamy, for donating the statue.

This publication is a humble tribute to the memory of Shri S. Satyamurti. We hope it will be found useful and informative by all.

NEW DELHI;
1st October, 2002

G.C. MALHOTRA,
Secretary-General,
Lok Sabha.

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S. SATYAMURTI

- A Profile

One of the illustrious sons of India, a visionary, a true democrat, a great parliamentarian and a selfless and dedicated social worker, Satyamurti fought throughout his life for the cause of a free and independent India. Satyamurti was a charismatic leader with sterling qualities of head and heart. Having a deep regard for the multiethnic and multicultural fabric of the Indian society, he endeared himself to all sections of the society and made in their hearts an indelible impression of his personality and achievements. He nourished a dream of a progressive and modern India and ceaselessly endeavoured to fulfil it. As a Member of the Madras Legislative Council and as a member of the Central Legislative Assembly, Satyamurti displayed unparalleled qualities of an eminent statesman and an outstanding parliamentarian.

Early Days

Satyamurti was born on 19 August 1887 at Thirumayyam village in Pudukottai district of the present Tamil Nadu. Satyamurti was the third child of a family of eight, the eldest of four sons. His father, Sundara Sastriar, was a learned Brahmin, a scholar and a pleader in the indigenous style, with a flourishing legal practice. When Satyamurti was eight, his father passed away.

Inspired by the sense of purpose shown by his mother Subhalakshmi, Satyamurti diligently pursued his studies. He passed the matriculation examination in 1903 and went on to complete his preliminary college study in Pudukottai before moving on to the Madras Christian College for his B.A. course. While in the Pudukottai College, Satyamurti organized a meeting to protest against the partition of Bengal. It reflected that even at such young age the appeal of politics to his emotional nature was natural and it became the consuming passion of his life which led him to sacrifice his profession and all other interests for the service of the Indian National Congress.

During his days in the Madras Christian College, he came into contact with several eminent scholars in the faculty and was exposed to the growing force of nationalism blowing through out India at that time. Among his contemporaries in the college were Alladi Krishnaswami Aiyar, A.V. Ramanathan, the two Arcot Mudaliar brothers and P. Subbaroyan.

revolutionary hands of Mahatma Gandhi, Satyamurti's independent outlook did not suffer any diminution. Satyamurti did not agree with the Gandhian programme of Non-cooperation, being convinced that in the fight for *Swaraj*, all available means should be used. Satyamurti believed that work within Legislatures could be an equally effective instrument for furthering the nationalist cause not only by highlighting the deficiencies of an alien rule but also by demonstrating to the British our ability to master the nuances of the parliamentary system which, until then, had been regarded as the monopoly of the Westminster.

At that moment, the Congress and indeed the nation had been sharply divided over the question of the Council Entry as opposed to Non-cooperation. The no-changers, namely, those who wished to adhere to the Gandhian credo of Non-cooperation outnumbered the pro-changers who wanted the Congress to give legislative activity a chance to play its part. If Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Babu Rajendra Prasad and C. Rajagopalachari comprised the *panch-ratna* of the Gandhian programme of Non-cooperation and *Satyagraha*, the pro-changers among the Congress were no less impressive. Their own *panch-ratna* included Motilal Nehru, C.R. Das, Vithalbhai Patel, Hakim Ajmal Khan and Satyamurti. The Congress rejected the Council Entry Programme in its historic Gaya Session in 1922, and, that was when the Swaraj Party was born.

Satyamurti won the confidence of Motilal Nehru and of Chittaranjan Das and became one of the All-India spokesmen for the Swarajist cause. None in the Congress doubted the Swarajists' commitment to India's freedom, even though they did not endorse their methodology. The Swarajists, likewise, fully shared the nation's trust in Gandhiji and his colleagues. Congressmen looked upon the Swarajists as their parliamentary wing, while the Swarajists regarded Congressmen as their comrades in the field. And so it was when the time came for elections to the Councils in 1923, Gandhiji declared that it was enough if one Satyamurti was sent to the legislature.

The 1923 elections which the Swarajists contested saw Satyamurti entering the Madras Legislative Council. His fame as an unrivalled legislator spread all over the country. Effective in all departments of legislative work, Satyamurti excelled himself

in the Question Hour. He became a master of the art of interpellation.

Satyamurti was made the Secretary of the Madras branch of the Swarajya Party. In this capacity, he played a crucial role to dispel the misapprehensions and fears of those within the Congress about the objectives and programmes of the new party. Satyamurti undertook a whirlwind tour of all the districts of Madras and delivered numerous speeches that exposed the motives of hostile critics who sedulously propagated falsehood. He took pains to convince the people that the Swarajya Party was but a wing of the Congress; that it was a bold and outspoken party that would sell its conscience to none; and that it would do nothing to impair the image of the Congress.

He emphasised that the Swarajya Party was the best disciplined, the most organised and the most popular party in India. It was fighting for *Swaraj* with the weapons made available by the British themselves. The fight would continue until the goal was attained. He took care that his pronouncements did not acquire a partisan party character for that would have neutralised the very purpose of his tour. He made it clear that notwithstanding the religious and political differences that might exist in India, all Indians were united in their demand for a full-blooded self-government for their country.

As a Parliamentarian

Satyamurti's brilliant and effective speeches from the public platform and in the Madras Legislative Council earned him the sobriquet 'Trumpet Voice' and he was called by his political opponents as the 'Drummer Boy' of the Congress. He took these as compliments and was proud to be the 'Drummer Boy' of the Congress, and not a 'Drone' behind the British bureaucracy.

Another field of parliamentary specialization which brought out the best in Satyamurti was the Budget. His very first participation in a Budget discussion in the Madras Council in March 1924 revealed how the Budget could be torn to pieces, clause by clause, proposal by proposal. He condemned the levy on salt as an inequitable impost six years before Gandhiji started his famous Salt Satyagraha. He had anticipated the great movement and had proved his point that Council Entry and Non-cooperation were not antithetical.

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Satyamurti made a mark in the Madras Legislative Council and excelled even his own formidable standard as a member of the Central Legislative Assembly from 1935 to 1939.

The Assembly was unique. There was a galaxy of distinguished men both on the Government side and on the Opposition. Sir N.N. Sircar, the Law Member; Sir James Grigg, the Finance Member; Sir Henry Crake, the Home Member; Sir Giriya Shanker Bajpai and Sir Mohammed Zafrullah, constituted the formidable official phalanx. Among the stalwarts in the Opposition were Bhulabhai Desai, Govind Ballabh Pant, Asaf Ali, N.V. Gadgil, N.G. Ranga and Satyamurti. M.S. Aney, H.P. Mody and C. Jahanagir were some of the other stalwarts in the House. Bhulabhai Desai was the Leader of the Congress Party, Govind Ballabh Pant, Deputy Leader and Satyamurti was the Secretary. The role suited him admirably. His warm and gregarious nature made him an excellent organizer and coordinator, while easy articulateness and alertness made him a superb spokesman for the Group. Each of the Congress stalwarts contributed his own special talent to the legislative task. It was given to Satyamurti to offer his very best as a lawyer, as a scholar of Eastern and Western literature, as a student of political science, as a keen observer of the world of finance and, above all, as one who understood human psychology. A memorable performance of Satyamurti in the Central Legislative Assembly was his marathon speech lasting nearly five hours on a Bill for the repeal and amendment of certain repressive laws. He made a thorough analysis of the state of law and his speech was copiously interspersed with citations of case law, cases tried under the section and judgments delivered in the various High Courts.

Satyamurti virtually stormed the citadel of the British Empire in India with the power of marshalling facts in the advocacy of his case, his rapier-like wit and his indefatigable energy. Satyamurti acquired a reputation for speaking the blunt truth bluntly, and wasting no time on non-essentials. Once he gave the House a piece of advice, quoting from the *Ramayana*, the advice Maricha gave to Ravana. Translating the Sanskrit verse of Valmiki, he said:

“Men who talk pleasant inanities are plenty, but those who speak the truth, be it pleasant or unpleasant, are very few. And those who listen to the truth are fewer indeed.”

Satyamurti's successes in the Central Legislative Assembly led Gandhiji to remark that if there had been ten Satyamurtis in our legislatures, the British would have quit long ago.

His Views on Education

In the field of education, his contribution was as singular as in the legislature. He was an elected member of the Senate of the Madras University for several years and throughout his life he was associated with the running of the University and education work. The Annamalai University owes its existence to him and while Rajah Sir Annamalai Chettiar was the founder of the University, it was Satyamurti who was the brain behind the idea. He helped to pilot the Bill for the establishment of the Annamalai University in the Madras Legislative Council. He took an active interest in the affairs of both the Madras and Annamalai Universities and he rarely missed a meeting of the Senates of the two Universities.

On Women's Education

On women's education, Satyamurti had some definite views. Though he was considered a conservative, he was all for educating girls. But regarding higher education to girls, he expressed his opinion thus in one of his letters written to his daughter Lakshmi, in July 1941, from the General Hospital, Madras, where he was undergoing treatment as a prisoner. He wrote:

“Need higher education in the case of girls also mean collegiate education? Education is a life-long process. Books are not the only means of education. Professional teachers are not the only teachers. Examinations and degrees are not the only hallmarks of education. The whole world, nature and life are great educators. We live and learn... Let me say at once that I want our girls to get the highest possible education in literature, in your case *e.g.* in Hindi, Tamil, Sanskrit and English. I want you to become a great scholar in all these languages and literatures or at least in some of them. Then I want you to know the history and geography of the world to understand world affairs. You must know enough elementary science to take an intelligent interest in things around you. You must know domestic hygiene and public health. You must

know the history and geography and politics of your country fairly intimately. You must know at least one of the fine arts—music or painting. You must be so well educated that you can, with the help of books, learn more. All this and more I want. But I am not generally in favour of girls joining professional colleges.”

His Interest in Art and Sculpture

Satyamurti was truly a man of culture. He was a lover of art. In the midst of his exacting public work, he found time to interest himself in the fine arts. He was one of the original founders of the Music Academy, Madras, with which, for the promotion of music and dance, he was actively connected till the end. He was a great lover of music and he encouraged and patronized musicians.

In one of his letters to his daughter Lakshmi, he says, “A love of fine arts is a sure sign of culture”. In another letter to his daughter Lakshmi, he extols the virtues and beauty of the arts of painting and sculptures which, he says, give form to our conceptions of the Divine. In his public speeches, Satyamurti used to say, “We shall win our way to Swaraj singing.” He had an equally great love for fine arts—dance, painting and sculpture. “What has always evoked the greatest admiration in me is the expression on the faces of these so-called lifeless figures,” he says, referring to sculptures.

He gave a cultural tone to the Congress in Madras by organizing an Art Festival of Music and Dance during the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the Indian National Congress; subsequently, too, these cultural festivals were continued as part of the Annual Exhibitions.

Satyamurti conceived and organized the All India Swadeshi and Khadi Exhibition first during the Congress Jubilee Year (1935) and thereafter in subsequent years also. These Exhibitions and Cultural Festivals became an annual feature of the Madras Congress.

Satyamurti’s interest in the stage was also another side of his cultural life. He was an active member of the *Suguna Vilasa Sabha*, one of the oldest cultural organisations in Madras, which specialized in amateur dramas. Satyamurti acted in many of the

plays produced by the *Sabha* and he took part in Sanskrit and Tamil dramas staged by the *Sabha*. One of his outstanding performances was in '*Manohara*' a popular Tamil play in which he was in the title role, as hero.

Linguist Par Excellence

Satyamurti was endowed with linguistic proficiency in three languages, *viz.*, English, Tamil and Sanskrit. A keen student of Sanskrit, Satyamurti was one of the pillars of the Sanskrit Academy in which he used to take active interest. He could speak in Sanskrit and his early training under his father had laid strong foundations for the love for Sanskrit in him. Usually, no speech or lecture of his would be complete, either in the legislature or on the public platform, without an apt quotation in Sanskrit.

Next to Sanskrit, Satyamurti loved Tamil. In the twenties and early thirties when the hallmark of a politician or a public man was his ability to speak in fluent English with affected English accent, Satyamurti used to speak in Tamil to large audiences. His Tamil was impeccable, eloquent, flowing and in simple straight language, devoid of pedantry; and this appealed to the masses.

His English was equally flawless and eloquent. In the Madras Legislative Council and the Central Legislative Assembly, his speeches were patterns of perfection so far as the language was concerned. He had no patience with faulty English and often he twitted the Government benches for bad English and bad drafts.

Death and Tributes

During the Quit India Movement in 1942, he was imprisoned in the Amraoti jail where he took seriously ill and breathed his last on 28 March 1943. As the news of his death spread, huge crowds began pouring in Thyagarayanagar at his residence. Thousands of fellow-workers, followers, admirers and members of the public surged into his house to pay their last respects. Eminent leaders like the Rt. Hon. Srinivasa Sastri and others called at his residence. Leaders of all parties, Judges of the High Court, prominent citizens from all walks of life, common people who were his admirers—all paid their homage to the departed leader.

On his death rich tributes were paid to Satyamurti. C. Rajagopalachari who was in New Delhi at that time said:

“A restless soul has found rest. Red-hot will to live had been of no avail. Madras has lost a dynamic personality. I am sorry I am far away from the bereaved family which stands sorely in need of solace from friends.”

The Hindu dedicated a full-column editorial to Satyamurti, under the caption “Servant of the People”. It said:

“He was a born fighter—a ‘leonine’ fighter, as the Scots would say to whom the fight was the thing.”

It described him further as a:

“Very Rupert of Debate, master of startling repartees—the punch that deflates without leaving a sting—he shone supreme as a gladiator in the parliamentary arena.”

Paying tributes to Satyamurti in the Central Legislative Assembly, the Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell, the Home Member said:

“Sir, I ask your permission to refer to the death of Mr. Satyamurti, the news of which has naturally come as a shock to the members of this Assembly where he was so conspicuous a figure. He played a prominent part in public life for many years, both before and after he became a member of this Assembly, and in addition to his parliamentary and political activities, he held the office of the Mayor of Madras with conspicuous distinction. But we here naturally think first of his outstanding parliamentary ability and of the immense industry which he brought to bear on the discharge of his functions as a member of this House and as the Deputy Leader of the principal Opposition Party therein. His skill and pertinacity at the Question Hour and in debate will not readily be forgotten, and even those who like myself often had to cross swords with him could not but feel a liking for his earnest personality. I would ask you to convey in expression of the sympathy of this House to the members of his family.”

Appreciating his qualities and contribution to the nation, Nawabzada Muhammad Liaquat Ali Khan said:

“I join the Honourable the Home Member in mourning the loss of one of our valued colleagues and paying a tribute to his memory. Mr. Satyamurti, as has been pointed out, entered public life many years ago and for several years he occupied a very prominent position in the political arena of the country. As Mayor of Madras he rendered invaluable services to that city, and I am sure that people of Madras, in particular, will remember the services which he had rendered to that city, with gratitude. Mr. Satyamurti believed in constitutional development and working the constitution, and although on occasions he did not see eye to eye with his party with regard to the policy of ploughing barren sands with the furrow of civil disobedience and boycott, yet, he always obeyed the behests and the decisions of the party. He never hesitated to suffer privations, physical or otherwise, whenever the call came, and thus, the sense of discipline which he showed is worthy of emulation. As a member of this House he was one of the powerful personalities. His forceful speeches and his mastery over the marshalling of facts and historical survey of problems that came up for discussion before this House, evoked the admiration of every member of this House. His loss will be felt very much by every section of this House, and we shall indeed miss him greatly. I join the Honourable the Home Member in requesting you to send our sympathies, the sympathies of the Muslim League Party, to the members of the bereaved family.”

Paying tributes to the departed leader Dr. P.N. Banerjea said:

“I associate myself with the observations which have been made by the Honourable the Acting Leader of the House and the Honourable Deputy Leader of the Muslim League Party. Mr. Satyamurti was a man of great ability and phenomenal industry, and his devotion to work in this Assembly was almost unparalleled. Mr. Satyamurti suffered from illness for a considerable time, and the circumstances in which he died make his death all the more regrettable to us. Mr. Satyamurti has passed away but he has left behind an example for all of us to emulate. The country and his Assembly in particular has suffered a great loss, and both the country and this Assembly are distinctly the poorer by his passing away. I request that you may be able to convey the condolence of this Assembly to the bereaved members of his family.”

Mr. Hooseinbhoy A. Lalljee, a member of the Central Legislative Assembly said:

“I rise to associate my Party with the sentiments that have been expressed by the Leader of the House and the Leaders of the two prominent parties. I had the privilege of working with Mr. Satyamurti for several years and I can say from personal knowledge that there are very few Indians who have studied the questions that came up before them, in the thorough manner in which Mr. Satyamurti did it. We know very well that since 1937 he had not been keeping good health, but whilst suffering seriously, he never neglected his duties. In the Madras Presidency, and especially as Mayor of Madras, he did very good service, and those of us who know the great good that local municipalities can do to the people, can appreciate what immense good Mr. Satyamurti has been able to do for his Presidency. As Dr. Banerjea and the Deputy Leader of the Muslim League Party have stated, his death is a great loss to this House and we will miss him very badly. With these words, I beg of you to convey the sympathies of this House to the members of his family.”

Sir Henry Richardson on the death of Satyamurti said:

“We in this Group whole-heartedly associate ourselves with the sentiments which have been expressed by the Honourable the Home Member and the other Party Leaders. Mr. Satyamurti was a great fighter whose sterling qualities we admitted and respected even when we differed from him, and we sincerely regret the passing of this great Indian.”

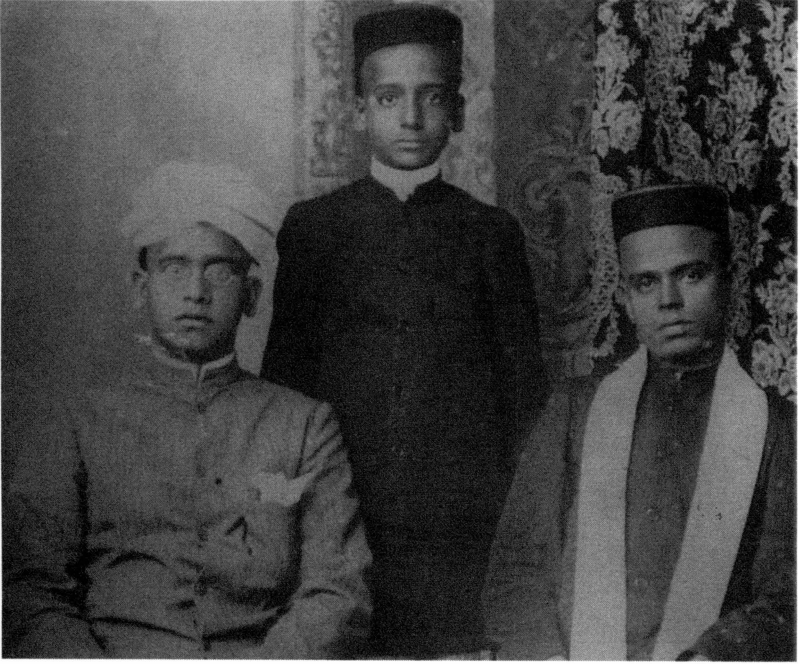
Mr. President, the Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim paid his tributes to Satyamurti in the following words:

“I fully share the sorrow which has been expressed from all sides of the House at the passing away of Mr. Satyamurti who was such a notable and prominent figure in this Assembly. No one could have watched him as I did for several years—the way in which he applied himself to his duties as one of the Leaders of the Congress Party, his extraordinary parliamentary gifts and his strenuous advocacy of the policy which he was here to represent, that his premature death is a great loss to this Assembly. I shall convey the sympathy of the House to the bereaved members of the deceased’s family.”

A PICTORIAL TRIBUTE



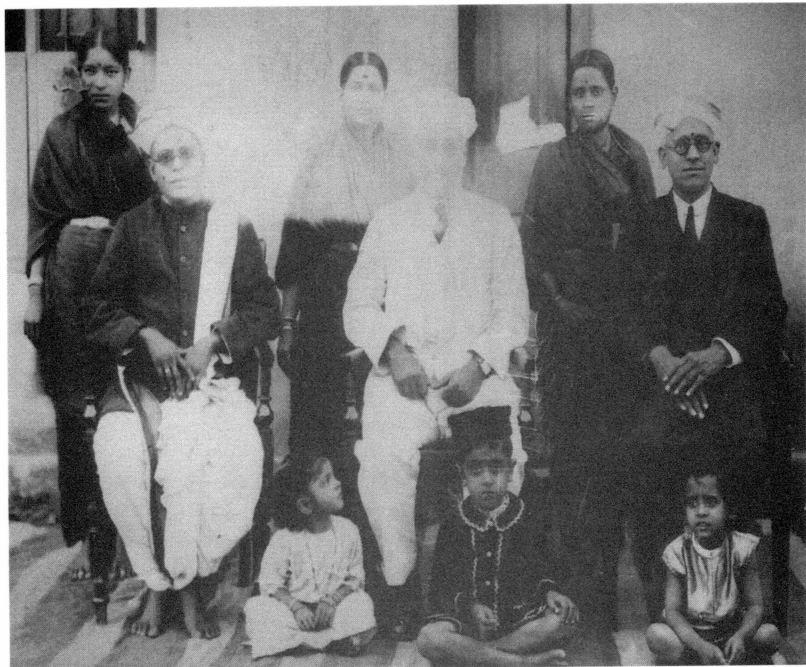
S. Satyamurti



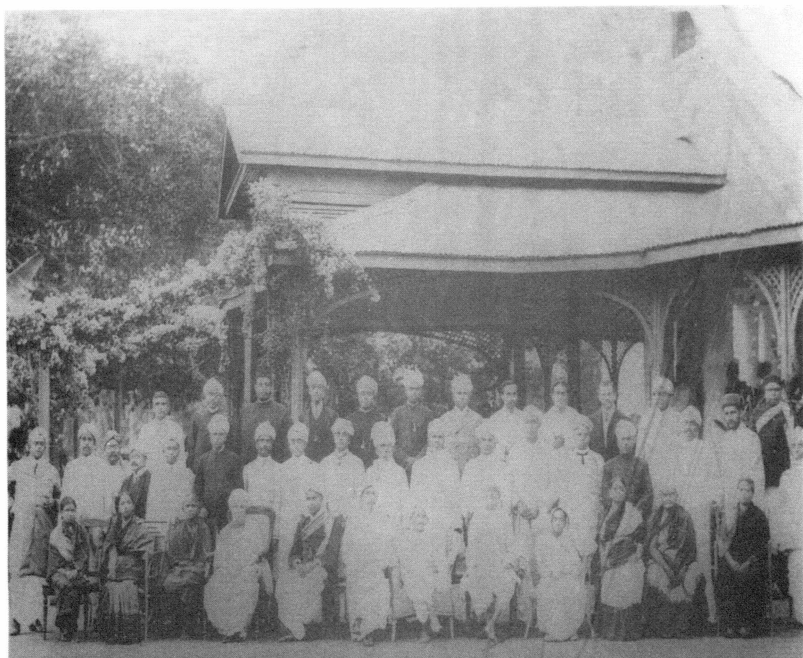
S. Satyamurti with his father and uncle



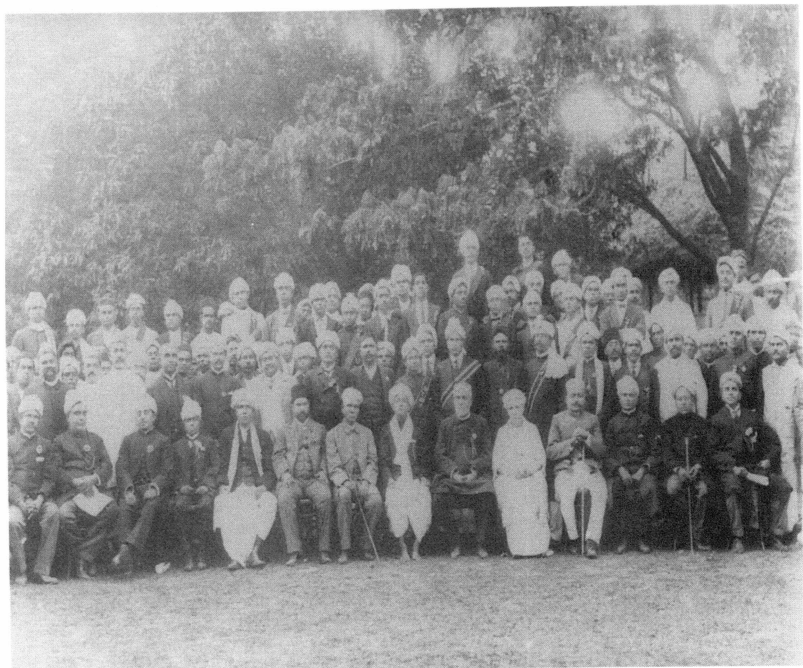
S. Satyamurti in his young age



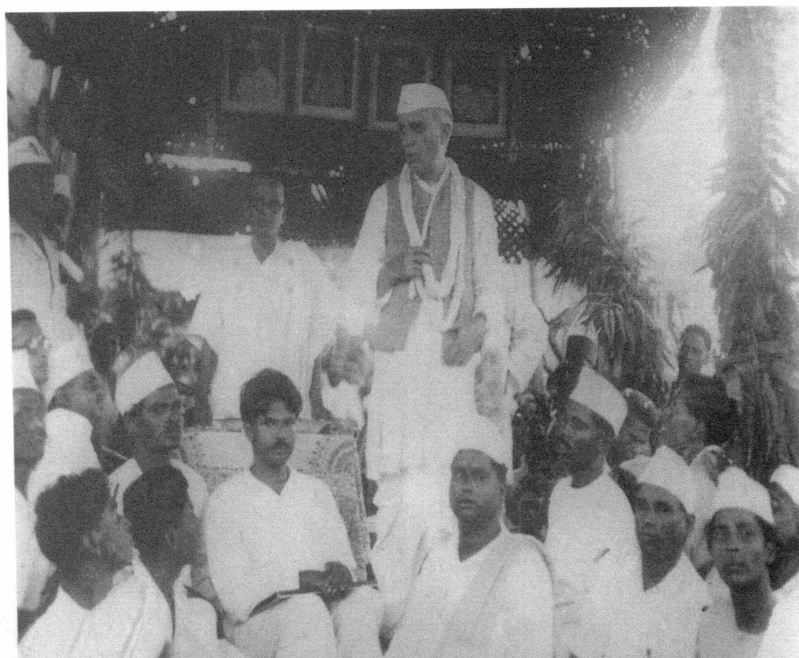
S. Satyamurti with his wife Balasundaram, daughter and other family members



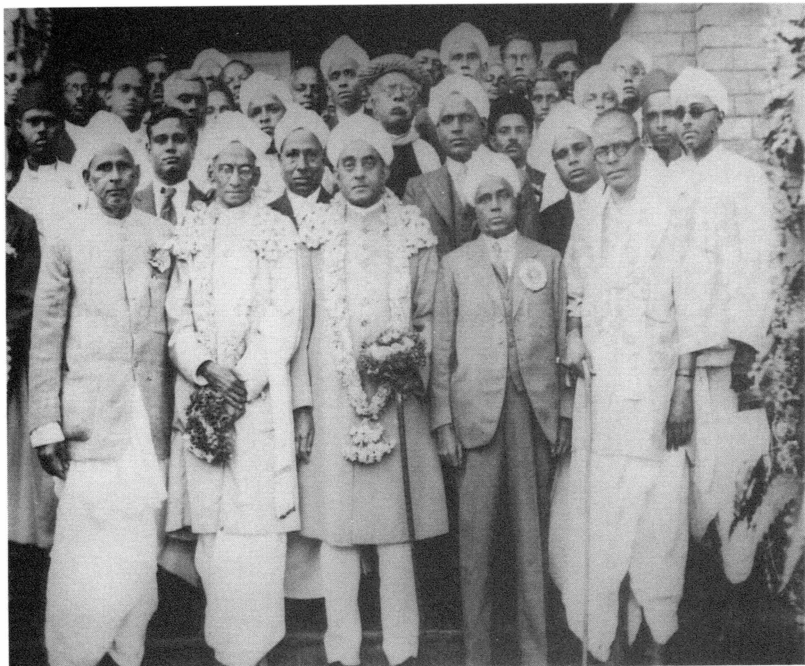
S. Satyamurti with Mahatma Gandhi



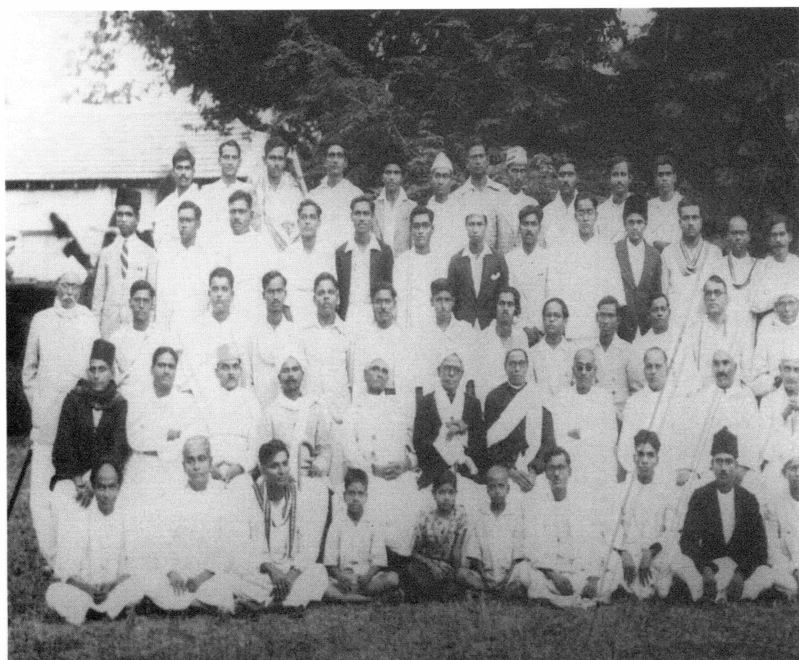
S. Satyamurti with Annie Besant and other colleagues



S. Satyamurti with Jawaharlal Nehru at a meeting



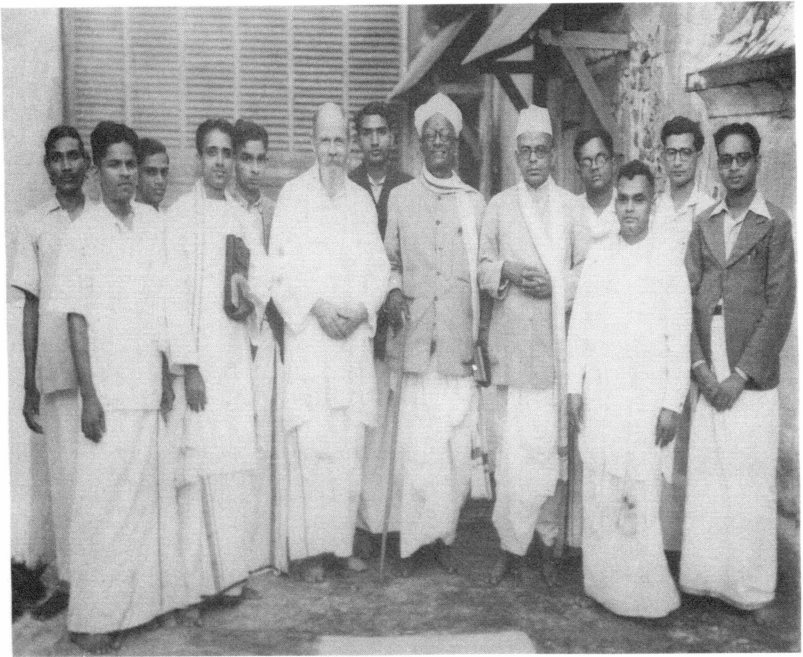
S. Satyamurti with C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar



S. Satyamurti with C. Rajagopalachari and others



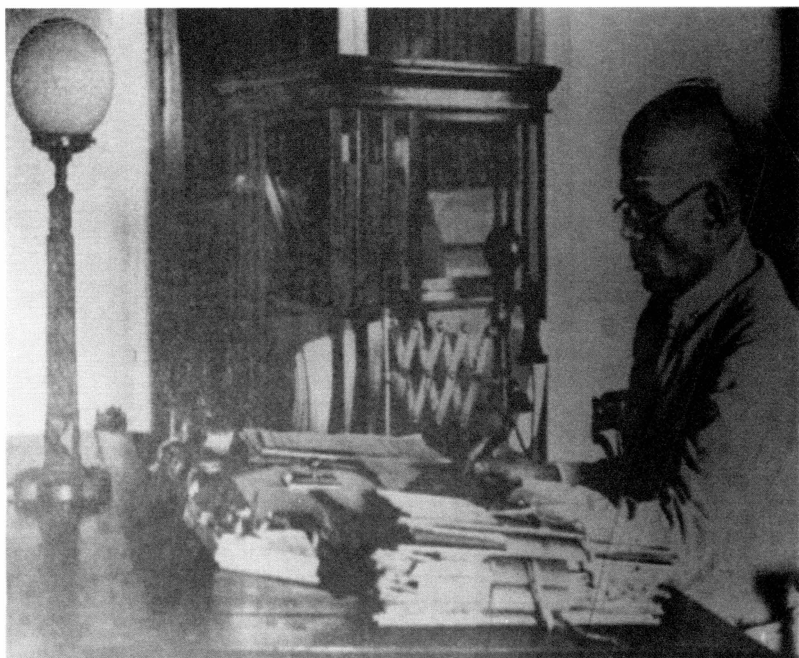
S. Satyamurti with Vithalbhai J. Patel



S. Satyamurti with C.F. Andrews and others



S. Satyamurti with K. Kamaraj at Meenakshi Amman Temple in 1935



S. Satyamurti at Mayor's office