

## Prof. K. Rajayyan's Contributions to Historical Studies

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### ABSTRACT

Prof. K. Rajayyan is a versatile personality, among the historians of India in general and South India in particular. His zeal as a teacher creating an organization called the South Indian History Congress, an association of Archaeologists, Historians, Archivists, Numismatists, Epigraphists, Anthropologists, Historiographers and young researchers who are committed for qualitative historical writings. He created a platform for a forum of professional historians and archaeologists throw light on many aspects of South Indian History which was neglected and marginalized when compared with North Indian History. He served as a lecture in History, Prof. K. Rajayyan rose to the position of Chief Professor of History at the prestigious Presidency College, Chennai. As Professor and Head of the Department of History at Madurai Kamaraj University, his work is remarkable, for he gave a new lease of life to the subject of History in South of India. As a visiting Professor, he shared his experiences at many South Indian Universities.

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### Introduction:

Prof.K.Rajayyan is a well-known historian. He authored twenty books and over 150 research articles. Prof. K. Rajayyan starting his career as historian has risen to great prominence as a historian of South India, Tamil Nadu and Tribes of USA. He was the first and foremost historian of Tamil Nadu to highlight the idea of preserving the past glories of Tamil Nadu to South Indian History. He took keen interest in studying the history of Tamil Nadu, South Indian History and the History of USA. As prolific writer he remains an inspiration for many Historians and researcher. Prof. Rajayyan a doyen Historian who began his career as a very simple teacher rose to the positions of Professor, Head of Department, Chairman, Board of Studies and Editor, proceedings of the South Indian History Congress and stands as a role model for and Historian of the present day.

### Tamil Nadu- A Real History:

Prof. K. Rajayyan has contributed a lot to the Tamil Nadu history. "Tamil Nadu- A Real History" brings out the history of the Tamil Nadu, which represents an exercise based on a comprehensive as well as realistic approach to the study. It is an original work which makes it a significant contribution to historical scholarship. According to Prof.K.Rajayyan, writing the history of the Tamils is a painful task. The historian should have an experience the anguish and ordeals through which the intelligent and industrious people struggle. The traditional approach for History of Tamil Nadu the selected areas like history of the Pandyas, Cheras, Cholas and Pallavas have received much attention and also they did for religious, art and architecture. But, the life of the people, social evils and the later developments are ignored. There is no encouragement for the study of these areas to the study of Tamil Nadu History. The present work is based upon original research that he did for about four decades. He

did several works on the history of the Tamils and he felt it essential to do more for gaining truth. Accordingly, he collected additional data and gave due importance to interpretation for identifying the missing links. This work is divided into twenty nine chapters in addition to an Introduction and a Conclusion. This work seeks to reconstruct the history of Tamil Nadu so as to represent a scientific approach and a complete study.

**South Indian Rebellion:**

Prof.K. Rajayyan was the Doyen of South Indian History and significant work was South Indian Rebellion. He was the first historian to be called as the rebellion of the First War of the Independence. It dealt with the great struggle that was organized and waged by the rebels of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka and Andhradesa. The main aim was not only to liberate South India from British Sway but also to prevent the fall of the rest of India to European imperialism. South Indian Rebellion (1800-1801), the first war of independence is considered as a magnum opus. In his book South Indian Rebellion (1800-1801), he points out that South India played a vital role in the freedom movement in which it led the country in freedom struggle against the British in India. Prof. K. Rajayyan mentioned that Madurai and Tiruchirapalli were served as the meeting ground of the rebel organizations of Tirunelveli, Ramnad and Dindigul. The rebels also who gained the support from the peasants. The Kallans of Kallarnadu served as the link in the alliance system of Tamil Nadu. Gounders of Coimbatore rendered their help to the rebel groups of Dindigul and Malabar. According to him, after the execution of Kattabomman, the Tirunelveli League was suppressed. In Malabar, the league was reconciled and Kerala Varma was pensioned off. Tipu Sultan was killed and Mysore was vanquished. In the meantime, the Tirunelveli league, gained the alliance from the Jatitalaivan of Thoothukudi, the headman of the Parava Community.

Prof. K. Rajayyan observed that the formation of the confederacy was one of the achievements of the rebels. The main aim of the Peninsular Confederacy was to bring the two streams of the movement of the south and north under a common banner. According to him, after the execution of Kattabomman, the Poligars had no rebel leaders. In the meantime, the rebel league of Marudu Pandya and Gopala Nayak merged into a common union which promoted the co-ordination of rebel activity in Tamil Nadu. Prof. K. Rajayyan holds the view that the Tamils had maintained maritime

relation with Ceylon, Burma and Bengal. They imported powder and balls which were manufactured in the villages and grains from the peasants. In Maratha, the villages were required to provide grain, wood or straw for further the cause of Rebellion. The Rebel Council at Palani decided to attack Coimbatore which marked the beginning of the Rebellion.

Prof. K. Rajayyan stated that the fall of Dhoondaji Waug who was an architect of the Peninsular Confederacy, and who served as a powerful link between the rebel leagues of the North and of the South had serious matters on the course of the rebellion. The native rulers of Poona, Mysore, and Hyderabad showed their interests with the enemy against the rebels. As a historian Prof. K. Rajayyan points out that the freedom movement in Tamil Nadu played a remarkable role in the organization of the anti-British Confederacy. Maruthappa Tevar was the Poligar of Woota Malai who fought on the side of British against the Tirunelveli League. The Paravas was the fisherman community of the coast who led by their Jatitalaivan or headman not only joined with the Rebellion but also provided junks, wall pieces and powder for the promotion of the struggle.

Prof. K. Rajayyan described that the rebel leaders were hanged to death at different places in Dindigul including Gopala Nayak, the Poligar of Jallipatti and MuthuVella Nayak. Vella Marudu, Chinna Marudu, Sevata Tambi, his son Muthuswami and Mutu Karuppa Tevar were executed on the ruins of the old fort of Tirupatore. The seventy three years old rebel Gopala Nayak and other leaders of Dindigul were executed with about the order of the Madras council. After the suppression of the rebels and execution of the leaders, the British issued a proclamation to impress the people with the determination and to consolidate of the rule in south India. They also agreed to respect the rights of property and life, religious usages and customs. After the suppression of the South Indian Rebellion of 1800-1801, the rebels made Vellore as the centre of their activity. Like general insurrection of 1800-1801, the Vellore Mutiny also brought the insurgents forces of the Peninsula under a common banner. Thus the enemy proceeded to consolidate and extended its sway. The South Indian Rebellion combined in itself the dominant features of the two subsequent freedom wars, the violence of the Mutiny of 1857 and the popular character of the struggle that led India to Independence in 1947. According to Prof.K.Rajayyan, "This was why

the rebellion in the South lasted longer from 1800-1806 and the Mutiny of the North collapsed in a short period. The rebellion ended in a Mutiny, the Mutiny ended with a rebellion. All the major powers of India supported the enemy in 1800 but several of the powerful princes took the side of the Sepoys in 1857". It is clear that the South Indian Rebellion was the first war of Independence in India.

**Treachery and Terror against Indian Tribes of USA:**

Prof. K. Rajayyan observed that the tribal in USA were called as Red Indians considered as savages. Their colour, culture and language were entirely different from the American white. They believed that their Civilization was superior to the European Civilization. During stay in USA, he never confined to place and destinations, but endeavored to collect and consult archival material in National Archives, USA for more than one year which reveals his commitment to study the original and authentic source material. This trip won him name and fame and became one of the specialists in the history of USA.

**History in Theory and Method:**

Another important contribution of Prof. K. Rajayyan to Research Methodology is *History in Theory and Method*. Historiography is the history of historical writing. In history and method Prof. K. Rajayyan observed that it is difficult to study history or any of its allied subjects in isolation. Prof. K. Rajayyan made contributions to the research methodology. He was a pioneer in a historical writings. He gave guidelines to the researcher for their research works. He introduced research methodology as a subject for the students. The author mentioned that research method is closely related to scientific method. He is an only historian to explain about the aims of Research Methodology. Research methodology aims at a study of how research is done systematically. Prof. K. Rajayyan stated that research methodology gives the needed training in the collection of data, in the use of statistics, in the preparation of questionnaires, in the analysis of evidences and in the interpretation of facts. Also it helps in the evaluation of results of the study. As a historian, Prof. K. Rajayyan found that no enquiry can be undertaken until a problem is there. The authors mentioned that the candidates are to fulfill certain requirements and possess the needed qualifications for undertaking a research. Prof. K. Rajayyan stated that a thesis should have a central and unifying theme. As a work to represent an original contribution to scholarship, it is to highlight a

significant and unique aspect of human experience. The author explained about research design and research proposal. He mentioned that the research design is to historical research what the blue print is for a building construction. According to Prof. K. Rajayyan, a research design is considered as of high standard which is provided for objectivity and depends upon the methods that are proposed for the collection of authentic data.

Prof. K. Rajayyan gives guidelines to the researcher for recording evidences. The inscriptions can be deciphered and manuscripts can be read. Photocopiers and microfilm reader printers are among the labour saving devices. Prof. K. Rajayyan advises the scholar that the collect data first from original sources before going to the published works. It enables the scholars to formulate their independent lines of approach. As a historian, he put into practice for selecting topics as very task regard historical studies. He had given certain guidelines to the research scholars. Through his writings, Prof. K. Rajayyan contributes something new to the History of Tamil, South Indian History and Culture and the tribes of USA. Prof. K.Rajayyan, laid the pathway for the future generations in the fields of research. His vision was to improve the standard of historical writing. Moreover Prof. K.Rajayyan made further study in various specializations with some new concepts, ideas and method. From that, Prof. K.Rajayyan was a realist Historian. As a realist historian, he points out the area of specialization for further research. He laid down that scope to new area and ideas to the researcher of historical research. Thus, as a historian he made further study on the South Indian Rebellion. Prof.K.Rajayyan made a pioneer in historical studies.

His two year tenure as Chief Professor of History at Presidency College was remarkable that he changed the curriculum and teaching methodology and enhanced the reputation of the Department of History of the College. He is a true historian without any prejudice and preconceived notion. His research went so deep in Tribal History of India and also on the Indian Tribes in USA. His outstanding research in Dravidian Culture revealed fact that Hinduism embraced most of the Dravidian cultural traits.

In the book *South Indian Relation 1800-1801*, he has established that it was South India that led the country in freedom struggle against the British in India. The American historians have condemned native Indians as savages but in his book *Treachery and Terror*

Against the Indian Tribes of USA, he asserted that they were humans who fell victims to the greed of their conquerors. In his work, Tamil Nadu A Real History, he employed what he terms as Dravidian interpretation in contrast to what is conventional and Aryan. His book History in Theory and Method is intended to promote historical research by scholars. The South Indian History Congress, that he founded in 1979 with the support of the historians and professors of universities, offers a forum for discussion and interaction among the scholars in history and publication of research works.

The Government of India has not yet given recognition to the South Indian Rebellion of 1800 obviously for fear of diluting its stand on the Sepoy Mutiny 1857. In his attempt to correct the aberration and render justice for this event, he even in his advanced was not only did fight a court battle but also had taken up the issue with the Indian Council of Historical Research. In fact the South Indian Rebellion of 1800 is the first war of independence in India whether it was in chronology, ideals, strategy, and organization or sacrifices of patriots. Thus Prof. K. Rajayyan a Doyen Historian who began his career as a very simple teacher rose to the positions of Professor, Head of the Department, Chairman, Board of Studies and Editor of Proceedings of the South Indian History Congress and stands as a role model for Historians of the present day.

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