

# APPOLO



# STUDY CENTRE

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## Unit - 9

# Freedom Struggle in Tamil Nadu

### Introduction

Tamil Nadu showed the lead in resisting colonial rule. As early as the late eighteenth century the Palayakarars, resisted the English attempts to establish their political hegemony in Tamil Nadu. Even after the defeat of the Palayakarars, an uprising was organised by Indian sepoys and officers in Vellore Fort in 1806 that had its echoes in several cantonments in south India. Thanks to the introduction of Western education and eventual emergence of educated Indian middle class, the struggle against the British took the constitutional path. The freedom struggle in Tamil Nadu was unique, because from the beginning it was not only a struggle for independence from the English rule but also a struggle for independence from social disability imposed by the obnoxious caste system. In this lesson we shall study the role played by nationalists wedded to diverse ideologies in Tamil Nadu.

### Early Nationalist Stirrings in Tamil Nadu

By the middle of the nineteenth century a group of educated middle class emerged in Madras and began to show interest in public affairs. As in other parts of India, they formed political associations, such as the Madras Native Association and the Madras Mahajana Sabha to articulate their grievances.

#### (a) Madras Native Association

The Madras Native Association (MNA) was the earliest organisation to be founded in south India to articulate larger public rather than sectarian interests. It was started by Gazulu Lakshminarasu, Srinivasanar and their associates in 1852. It consisted primarily of merchants. The objective was to promote the interests of its members and their focus was on reduction in taxation. It also protested against the support of the government to Christian missionary activities. It drew the attention of the government to the condition and needs of the people. One of the important contributions

of the MNA was its agitation against torture of the peasants by revenue officials. These efforts led to the establishment of the Torture Commission and the eventual abolition of the Torture Act, which justified the collection of land revenue through torture. However, by 1862, the Madras Native Association had ceased to exist.

### **(b) Beginnings of the Nationalist Press: The Hindu and Swadesamitran**

The appointment of T. Muthuswami as the first Indian Judge of the Madras High Court in 1877 created a furore in Madras Presidency. The entire press in Madras criticized the appointment of an Indian as a Judge. The press opposed his appointment and the educated youth realized that the press was entirely owned by Europeans. The need for a newspaper to express the Indian perspective was keenly felt. G. Subramaniam, M. Veeraraghavachari and four other friends together started a newspaper The Hindu in 1878. It soon became the vehicle of nationalist propaganda. G. Subramaniam also started a Tamil nationalist periodical Swadesamitran in 1891 which became a daily in 1899. The founding of The Hindu and Swadesamitran provided encouragement to the starting of other native newspapers such as Indian Patriot, South Indian Mail, Madras Standard, Desabhimani, Vijaya, Suryodayam and India.

### **(c) Madras Mahajana Sabha**

Madras Mahajana Sabha (MMS) was the earliest organisation in south India with clear nationalist objectives. It was the training ground for the first generation of nationalist leaders. On 16 May 1884 MMS was started by M. Veeraraghavachari, P. Anandacharlu, P. Rangaiah and few others. P. Rangaiah became its first president. P. Anandacharlu played an active role as its secretary. The members met periodically, debated public issues in closed meetings, conducted hall meetings and communicated their views to the government. The objective of MMS was to create a consensus among people of different parts of the Presidency on various issues of public interest and to present it to the government. Its demands included conduct of simultaneous civil services examinations in England and India, abolition of the Council of India in London, reduction of taxes and reduction of civil and military expenditure. Many of its demands were adopted later by the Indian National Congress founded in 1885.

### **(d) Moderate Phase**

Provincial associations such as the Madras Mahajana Sabha led to the formation of an all-India organisation, the Indian National Congress. Leaders from different parts of India attended several meetings before the formation of the Congress. One such meeting was held in December 1884 in Theosophical Society. It was attended by Dadabhai Naoroji, K.T. Telang, Surendranath Banerjee and other prominent leaders apart from G. Subramaniam, Rangaiah and Anandacharlu from Madras.

### **Prominent Nationalists of Tamil Nadu in the Moderate phase**

The early nationalists believed in constitutional methods. Their activities consisted of conducting hall meetings and deliberating the problems of the country in English. These views were communicated to the government in a language couched in a liberal discourse in the form of petitions, prayers, memoranda, and as evidence in various government commissions of enquiry. When, at the time of Partition of Bengal, Tilak and other leaders adopted popular methods such as mass public meetings, and used vernacular languages to address the larger public, the early nationalists came to be known as moderates. The distinguished Tamil Moderates from Madras: V.S. Srinivasa Sastri, P.S. Sivasamy, V. Krishnasamy, T.R. Venkatramanar, G.A. Natesan, T.M. Madhava Rao, and S. Subramaniam. The primary contribution of moderates lies in exposing the liberal claims of the British: they exposed how the British exploited India and their hypocrisy in following democratic principles in England and imposing an unrepresentative government in the colonies.

The first session of the Indian National Congress was held in 1885 at Bombay. Out of a total of 72 delegates 22 members were from Madras. G. Subramaniam through his writings advanced the cause of nationalism. He ranks with Naoroji and Gokhale for his contribution to the understanding of the economic exploitation of India by the British.

The second session of the Indian National Congress was held in Calcutta in 1886, with Dadabhai Naoroji in the Chair. The third session was held at Makkis Garden, now known as the Thous and lights, in Madras in

1887 with Badruddin Tyabji as president. Out of the 607 all India delegates of 362 were from Madras Presidency.

Tamil Nadu was then part of the Madras Presidency which included large parts of the present-day states of Andhra Pradesh (Coastal districts and Rayalaseema), Karnataka (Bengaluru, Bellary, South Canara), Kerala (Malabar) and even Odisha (Ganjam).

## Swadeshi Movement

The partition of Bengal (1905) led to the Swadeshi Movement and changed the course of the struggle for freedom. In various parts of India, especially Bengal, Punjab and Maharashtra popular leaders emerged. They implemented the programme of the Calcutta Congress which called upon the nation to promote Swadeshi enterprise, boycott foreign goods and promote national education. The Swadeshi movement made a deep impact in Tamil Nadu. The Congress carried on a vigorous campaign for boycott of foreign goods.

### (a) Response in Tamilnadu

V.O. Chidambaranar, V. Chakkaraiyar, Subramania Bharati and Surendranath Arya were some of the prominent leaders in Tamilnadu. Public meetings attended by thousands of people were organised in various parts of Tamilnadu. Tamil was used on the public platform for the first time to mobilise the people. Subaramania Bharati's patriotic songs were especially important in stirring patriotic emotions. Many journals were started to propagate Swadeshi ideals. Swadesamitran and India were prominent journals. The extremist leader Bipin Chandra Pal toured Madras and delivered lectures which inspired the youth. Students and youth participated widely in the Swadeshi Movement.

### Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company

One of the most enterprising acts in pursuance of swadeshi was the launching of the Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company at Thoothukudi by V.O. Chidambaranar. He purchased two ships Gallia and Lavo and plied them between Thoothukudi and Colombo. However, due to cutthroat

competition from the European company and the blatantly partisan role played by the government, V.O.C's efforts ended in failure.

### **Tirunelveli Uprising**

V.O.C joined with Subramania Siva in organising the mill workers in Thoothukudi and Tirunelveli. In 1908, he led a strike in the European-owned Coral Mills. It coincided with the release of Bipin Chandra Pal. V.O.C and Subramania Siva, who organised a public meeting to celebrate the release of Bipin, were arrested. The two leaders were charged with sedition and sentenced to rigorous imprisonment. Initially V.O.C. was given a draconian sentence of two life imprisonments. The news of the arrest sparked riots in Tirunelveli leading to the burning down of the police station, court building and municipal office. It led to the death of four people in police firing. V.O.C. was treated harshly in prison and was made to pull the heavy oil press. Others to be arrested included G. Subramaniam and Ethiraj Surendranath Arya. To avoid imprisonment Subramania Bharati moved to Pondicherry which was under French rule. Bharati's example was followed by many other nationalists such as Aurobindo Ghosh and V. V. Subramanianar. The brutal crackdown on Swadeshi leaders virtually brought the Swadeshi Movement to a close in Tamil Nadu.

### **(b) Revolutionary Activities in Tamil Nadu**

As elsewhere the Swadeshi movement inspired the youth. Left leaderless, they turned to the revolutionary path. Pondicherry provided a safe haven for the revolutionaries. Many of these revolutionaries in Tamil Nadu were introduced and trained in revolutionary activities at India House in London and in Paris. M.P.T. Acharya, V.V. Subramanianar and T.S.S. Rajan were prominent among them. Revolutionary literature was distributed by them in Madras through Pondicherry. Radical papers such as India, Vijaya and Suryodayam came out of Pondicherry. Such revolutionary papers and Bharati's poems were banned as seditious literature. These activities in Pondicherry intensified with the arrival of Aurobindo Ghosh and V.V. Subramanianar in 1910. These activities continued till the outbreak of the First World War.

## Ashe Murder

In 1904 Nilakanta Brahmachari and others started Bharata Matha Society, a secret society. The objective was to kill British officials and thereby kindle patriotic fervour among the people. Vanchinathan of Senkottai, was influenced by this organisation. On 17 June 1911 he shot dead Robert W.D'E. Ashe, Collector of Tirunelveli in Maniyachi Junction. After this he shot himself. Divorced from the people these young revolutionaries, despite their patriotism, failed to inspire and mobilize the people.

### (c) Annie Besant and the Home Rule Movement

While the extremists and revolutionaries were suppressed with an iron hand, the moderates hoped for some constitutional reforms. However, they were disappointed with the Minto-Morley reforms as it did not provide for responsible government. Despite this the Congress extended support to the British war effort in the hope of getting more reforms.

Thus when the national movement was in its ebb, Annie Besant, an Irish lady and leader of the Theosophical Society, proposed the Home Rule Movement on the model of Irish Home Rule League. She started Home Rule League in 1916 and carried forward the demand for home rule all over India. G.S. Arundale, B.P. Wadia and C.P. Ramaswamy assisted her in this campaign. They demanded home rule with only a nominal allegiance to British Crown. She started the newspapers New India and Commonweal to carry forward her agenda. She remarked, "Better bullock carts and freedom than a train deluxe with subjection". Under the Press Act of 1910 Annie Besant was asked to pay hefty amount as security. She wrote two books, How India wrought for Freedom and India: A Nation and a pamphlet on self-government.

Students joined the movement in large numbers who were trained in Home Rule classes. They were formed into boy scouts and volunteer troops. Annie Besant and her coworkers were interned and prohibited from making public speeches or involve in any political activity. Annie Besant was elected the President of the Congress session of 1917. Members of the Home Rule Movement such as B.P. Wadia played a key role in organising the working classes by forming trade unions. Not only did they succeed in

improving their working conditions, they made them part of the struggle for freedom. However, with the rise of Gandhi as a national leader Annie Besant and the Home Rule Leagues were eclipsed.

## **Non-Brahmin Movement and the Challenge to Congress**

In the meanwhile, there was rapid growth in education in the Madras Presidency. There was an increase in the number of educated non-Brahmins. Intense political and social activity discussed above politicised the educated non-Brahmins. They raised the issue of caste discrimination and unequal opportunities in government employment and representation in elected bodies, which were dominated by Brahmins. Further, the Congress was also overwhelmingly composed of Brahmins.

### **(a) The South Indian Liberal Federation**

The non-Brahmins organised themselves into political organisations to protect their interests. In 1912 the Madras Dravidian Association was founded. C. Natesanar played an active role as its secretary. In June 1916 he established the Dravidian Association Hostel for non-Brahmin students. He also played a key role in bridging the differences between two leading non-Brahmin leaders of the time, Dr. T.M. Nair and P. Thyagarayar. Both of them were earlier part of the Congress and were disillusioned by how non-Brahmins were sidelined in the organisation. On 20 November 1916 a meeting of about thirty non-Brahmins was held under the leadership of P. Thyagarayar, Dr. T.M. Nair and C. Natesanar at Victoria Public Hall in Chennai. The South Indian Liberal Federation (SILF) was founded to promote the interests of the non-Brahmins. They also launched three newspapers: Justice in English, Dravidian in Tamil and Andhra Prakasika in Telugu. Soon the SILF began to be popularly known as Justice Party after its English daily. The Justice Party also held several conferences throughout the Presidency to set up branches.

### **Demand for Reservation**

The Non-Brahmin Manifesto was released outlining its objectives viz., reservation of jobs for non-Brahmins in government service, and seats in representative bodies. It opposed the Home Rule Movement as a movement of Brahmins and feared that Home Rule might give them more power. It also criticised the Congress as a party of the Brahmins. Montagu's



announcement of political reforms in the Parliament in 1917 intensified political discussions in Tamil Nadu. The Justice Party demanded communal representation (i.e. representation for various communities in society). The Madras Government was also supportive of the Justice Party as the latter believed that English rule was conducive for the development of the non-Brahmins. The Act of 1919 provided reservation of seats to non-Brahmins, a move criticised by the Congress but welcomed by the Justice Party.

## **Justice Ministry**

The Congress boycotted the elections of 1920. The Justice Party won 63 of 98 elected seats in the Legislative Council. A. Subburayalu of the Justice Party became the first chief minister. After the 1923 elections, Raja of Panagal of the Justice Party formed the ministry. The Justice Party introduced various measures for the benefit of non-Brahmins. They were reservation of appointments in local bodies and education institutions, establishment of Staff Selection Board which later became the Public Service Commission, enactment of Hindu Religious Endowment Act and Madras State Aid to Industries Act, abolition of devadasi system, allotment of poramboke lands (waste government lands) to the poor for housing and extension of primary education to the depressed classes through fee concessions, scholarships and mid-day meals.

## **(b) Government's Repressive Measures: Rowlatt Act**

Given the important contribution of India (especially the soldiers who fought in far-off lands in the cause of Empire) in World War I Indians expected more reforms from Britain. However, a draconian Anarchical and Revolutionary Crimes Act, popularly known as the Rowlatt Act, after the name of Sir Sidney Rowlatt, who headed the committee that recommended it was passed in 1919. Under the Act anyone could be imprisoned on charges of terrorism without due judicial process. Indians were aghast at this. Gandhi gave voice to the anger of the people and adopted the Satyagraha method that he had used in South Africa.

## **Rowlatt Satyagraha**

On 18 March 1919 Gandhi addressed a meeting on Marina Beach. On 6 April 1919 hartal was organised to protest against the "Black Act". Protest

demonstrations were held at several parts of Tamil Nadu. Processions from many areas of the city converged in the Marina beach where there was a large gathering. They devoted the whole day to fasting and prayer in the Marina beach. Madras Satyagraha Sabha was formed. Rajaji, Kasturirangar, S. Satyamurty and George Joseph addressed the meeting. A separate meeting of workers was addressed by V. Kalyanasundaram (Thiru. V. Ka) B.P. Wadia and V.O.C. An important aspect of the movement was that the working classes, students and women took part in large numbers.

### **George Joseph**

George Joseph, a barrister and eloquent speaker, played a leading role in organising and publicising the cause of Home Rule League in Madurai. Though born in Chengannur (Alappuzha district, Kerala State), he chose to settle down in Madurai and practice as a people's lawyer. In the course of his long public life, he led the Vaikom Satyagraha in Kerala, as he viewed it as an issue of civil rights for all citizens of India. He championed the cause of the "Criminal Tribes" of Tamilnadu. He was fondly called "Rosaappu Durai" by the people of Madurai for the services he rendered to the affected communities. He helped the Harvey Mill workers of Madurai to set up Madurai Labour Union (1918). The Union's initial struggles resulted in higher wages and reduced work hours for the mill workers.

### **(c) Khilafat Movement**

Following the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre General Dyer who was responsible for it was not only acquitted of all charges but rewarded. After the First World War the Caliph of Turkey was humiliated and deprived of all powers. To restore the Caliph the Khilafat Movement was started. Muslims who had largely kept from the nationalist movement now joined it in huge numbers. In Tamil Nadu Khilafat Day was observed on 17 April 1920, with a meeting presided over by Maulana Shaukat Ali. Another such conference was held at Erode. Vaniyambadi was as the epicenter of Khilafat agitation.

## **Non-Cooperation Movement**

Tamil Nadu was active during the Non-cooperation Movement. C. Rajaji and E.V. Ramaswamy (EVR, later known as Periyar) provided the leadership. Rajaji worked closely with Yakub Hasan, founder of the Madras branch of the Muslim League. As a result, the Hindus and the Muslims cooperated closely during the course of the movement in Tamil Nadu. A Congress volunteer corps was set up to distribute pamphlets, carry flags during processions and to maintain order in the meetings. They also played an important part in picketing of liquor shops.

### **(a) No Tax Campaigns and Temperance Movement**

As part of the non-cooperation movement, in many places, cultivators refused to pay taxes. A no-tax campaign took place in Thanjavur. Councils, schools and courts were boycotted. Foreign goods were boycotted. There were a number of workers' strikes all over region, many of them led by nationalist leaders. One of the important aspects of the movement in Tamil Nadu was the temperance movement or movement against liquor. Toddy shops were picketed. Demonstrations and hartals were organised in all parts of the Presidency. There were also agitations by communities against the Criminal Tribes Act. In November 1921 it was decided to organise civil disobedience. Rajaji, Subramania Sastri and EVR were arrested. The visit of Prince of Wales on 13 January 1922 was boycotted. In the police repression two were killed and many injured. The Non-Cooperation Movement was withdrawn in 1922 after the Chauri Chaura incident in which 22 policemen were killed

### **(b) E.V.R. and the Constructive Programme**

E.V.R. played an important role in Tamil Nadu during this period. He campaigned vigorously for the promotion and sale of khadi. In his opposition to consumption of liquor he cut down an entire coconut grove owned by him. He also played a key role in the satya graha for temple entry in Vaikom, then under Travancore. It was a time when the depressed classes were not even permitted to walk on the streets around the temple or come within a certain distance of the upper castes. After the major leaders of Kerala were arrested, EVR went to Vaikom and galvanised the

movement. He was arrested and sentenced to one-month imprisonment. He refused to leave Vaikom even after his release. He was arrested again for making inspiring speeches and was sentenced to six months rigorous imprisonment. When he returned to Erode after his release he was arrested for his speeches to promote khadi. In June 1925, the ban on the roads around the temple in Vaikom was lifted. For his contribution against caste discrimination and temple entry agitation in Vaikom, Periyar was hailed as 'Vaikom Hero'.

### **Cheranmadevi Gurukulam Controversy**

However, by this time E.V.R. had become increasingly dissatisfied with the Congress. He felt it was promoting the interests of the Brahmins alone. The Cheranmadevi Gurukulam controversy and opposition to communal representation within the Congress led E.V.R. to leave the Congress.

To further the cause of national education, a gurukulam was established in Cheranmadevi by V.V. Subramanianar. It received funds from the Congress. However, students were discriminated on the basis of caste. Brahmin and Non-Brahmin students were made to dine separately and the food served too was different. The issue was brought to the notice of E.V.R. who questioned the practice and severely criticised it along with another leader, Dr P. Varadarajulu.

In the Kanchipuram Conference of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee held on 21 November 1925, he raised the issue of representation for non-Brahmins in the legislature. His efforts to achieve this since 1920 had met with failure. When the resolution was defeated, he left the Conference along with other non-Brahmin leaders who met separately. Soon E.V.R. left the Congress and started the Self Respect Movement.

### **(c) Swarajists-Justicites Rivalry**

Following the withdrawal of the Non- Cooperation Movement, the Congress was divided between 'no-changers' who wanted to continue the boycott of the councils and 'prochangers who wanted to contest the elections for the councils. Rajaji along with other staunch Gandhian followers opposed the council entry. Along with Kasturirangar and M.A. Ansari, Rajaji advocated the boycott of the councils. Opposition

to this led to the formation of the Swaraj Party within the Congress by Chittaranjan Das and Motilal Nehru. In Tamil Nadu the Swarajists were led by S. Srinivasanar and S. Satyamurti.

#### **(d) Subbarayan Ministry**

In the elections held in 1926, the Swarajists won the majority of the elected seats. However, it did not accept office in accordance with the Congress policy. Instead they supported an independent, P. Subbarayan to form the ministry. The Swarajists did not contest the 1930 elections leading to an easy victory for the Justice Party. The Justice Party remained in office till 1937.

#### **Agitation for Removal of Neill Statue (1927)**

James Neill of the Madras Fusiliers (infantry men with firearms) was brutal in wreaking vengeance at Kanpur ('the Cawnpur massacre', as it was called) in which many English women and children were killed in the Great Rebellion of 1857. Neill was later killed by an Indian sepoy. A statue was erected for him at Mount Road, Madras. Nationalists saw this as an insult to Indian sentiments, and organised a series of demonstrations in Madras. Protesters came from all over the Madras Presidency and were led by S. N. Somayajulu of Tirunelveli. Many were arrested and sentenced to prison. Gandhi, who visited Madras during the same time, gave his support to the agitation. The statue was finally moved to Madras Museum when Congress Ministry, led by C. Rajaji, formed the government in 1937.

#### **(e) Simon Commission Boycott**

In 1927 a statutory commission was constituted under Sir John Simon to review the Act of 1919 and to suggest reforms. However, to the great disappointment of Indians, it was an all-white commission with not a single Indian member. So the Congress boycotted the Simon Commission. In Madras, the Simon Boycott Propaganda Committee was set up with S. Satyamurti as the president. There was widespread campaign among the students, shopkeepers, lawyers and commuters in train to boycott. The arrival of Simon Commission in Madras on 18 February 1929 was greeted with demonstrations and hartals. Black flags were waved against the Commission. The police used force to suppress the protest.

## **Civil Disobedience Movement**

### **(a) Towards Poorna Swaraj**

In the 1920s, Congress with Gandhi in leader ship, was transforming into a broadbased movement in Tamil Nadu. The Madras session of the Indian National Congress in 1927 declared complete independence as its goal. It appointed a committee under Motilal Nehru to frame the constitutional reforms in opposition to the Simon Commission. In the 1929 Lahore session of the Congress, Poorna Swaraj (complete independence) was adopted as the goal and on 26 January 1930 the national flag was hoisted by Jawaharlal Nehru on the banks of river Ravi as the declaration of independence.

### **(b) Salt March to Vedaranyam**

When the Viceroy did not accept the demands put forward by Gandhi, he launched the Civil Disobedience Movement by setting out on a Salt Satyagraha with a march to Dandi on 12 March 1930. The Civil Disobedience Movement was a mass movement with the participation of students, shopkeepers, workers, women, etc. Demonstrations, hartals, staging of swadeshi dramas and songs were the order the day in both rural and urban areas. Tamil Nadu was in the forefront of the Civil Disobedience Movement. In the city of Madras, shops were picketed and foreign goods boycotted. Rajaji organised and led a salt satyagraha march to Vedaranyam. The march started from Tiruchirappalli on 13 April 1930 and reached Vedaranyam in Thanjavur district on 28 April. A special song was composed for the march by Namakkal V. Ramalinganar with the lines, "A War is ahead sans sword, sans bloodshed...Join this march." Despite a brutal crackdown by the police, the marching satyagrahis were provided a warm reception along the route. On reaching Vedaranyam 12 volunteers under the leadership of Rajaji broke the salt law by picking up salt. Rajaji was arrested. T.S.S. Rajan, Rukmani Lakshmipathi, Sardar Vedarathnam, C. Swaminathar and K. Santhanam were among the prominent leaders who participated in the Vedaranyam Salt Satyagraha.

### **(c) Widespread Agitations in Tamil Districts**

The satyagrahis under the leadership of T. Prakasam and K. Nageswara Rao set up a camp at Udayavanam near Madras. However, the police arrested them. It led to a hartal in Madras. The clashes with the police in Tiruvallikeni which lasted for three hours on 27 April 1930 left three dead. Volunteers who attempted to offer salt Satyagraha in Rameswaram were arrested. Similar attempts at Uvari, Anjengo, Veppalodai, Thoothukudi and Tharuvaikulam were stopped. Mill workers struck work across the province. Woman participated enthusiastically. Rukmani Lakshmipathi was the first woman to pay penalty for violation of salt laws. Police used brutal force to suppress the movement. Bhashyam, popularly known as Arya, hoisted the national flag atop Fort St. George on 26 January 1932. Satyamurti actively picketed shops selling foreign clothes, organised processions and distributed pamphlets. N.M.R.Subbaraman and K. Kamaraj also played an important role.

### **Martyrdom of Tirupur Kumaran**

On 11 January 1932 a procession carrying national flags and singing patriotic songs was brutally beaten by the police in Tirupur. O.K.S.R. Kumaraswamy, popularly Tirupur Kumaran, fell dead holding the national flag aloft. He is hailed as Kodikatha Kumaran. Thus, civil disobedience movement was one of the largest mass movements in Tamil Nadu with participation of people from all sections of the society.

### **(d) First Congress Ministry**

The Government of India Act of 1935 introduced Provincial Autonomy. The Council of Ministers, responsible to the legislature, administered the provincial subjects. However, the Governor was empowered to disregard the advice of the elected government. In the 1937 election the Congress emerged victorious. The Justice Party was trounced. Congress victory in the elections clearly indicated its popularity with the people.

Rajaji formed the first Congress Ministry. He introduced prohibition on an experimental basis in Salem. To compensate for the loss of revenue he introduced a sales tax. On the social question, he opened temples to the

'untouchables'. Efforts of T. Prakasam led to the appointment of a committee to enquire into the condition of the tenants in the Zamindari areas. However, excepting debt conciliation boards to reduce rural indebtedness, no other measure was adopted.

When the British involved India in the Second World War without consulting the elected Congress ministries, the latter resigned.

A temple entry programme with "harijans" in Madurai Meenakshiamman temple was organised (9 July 1939) by Vaidyanathar, L.N. Gopalsamy, President and Secretary of Madurai Harijana Sevak Sangh respectively. The Temple Entry Authorisation and Indemnity Act, 1939 for the removal of the civil and social disabilities against the "depressed classes" was passed.

### **(e) Anti-Hindi Agitation**

One of the controversial measures of Rajaji was the introduction of Hindi as a compulsory subject in schools. This was considered to be a form of Aryan and North Indian imposition detrimental to Tamil language and culture, and therefore caused much public resentment. E.V.R. led a massive campaign against it. He organised an anti-Hindi Conference at Salem. It formulated a definite programme of action. The Scheduled Castes Federation and the Muslim League extended its support to the anti-Hindi agitation. Natarajan and Thalamuthu, two of the enthusiastic agitators died in prison. A rally was organised from Tiruchirappalli to Madras. More than 1200 protestors including E.V.R. were arrested. After the resignation of the Congress Ministry, the Governor of Madras who took over the reigns of administration removed Hindi as compulsory subject.

### **Quit India Struggle**

Failure of the Cripps Mission, war time shortages and price rise created much discontent among the people. On 8 August 1942 the Quit India resolution was passed and Gandhi gave the slogan 'Do or Die'. The entire Congress leadership was arrested overnight. K. Kamaraj while returning from Bombay noticed that at every railway station the police waited with a list of local leaders and arrested them as they got down. Kamaraj gave the police the slip and got down at Arakkonam itself. He





## Unit - 10

# Social Transformation in Tamil Nadu

### Introduction

Europeans established their political power over Indian subcontinent in the latter half of the eighteenth century. While they were concerned with annexing India, by the beginning of the nineteenth century they were reordering Indian society. New revenue settlements were made. Influenced by British Utilitarian ideas and evangelicals they also tried to impose their cultural superiority over the Indian people. Indigenous traditions were treated as primitive. Indian society was portrayed as conservative where human beings were discriminated on the basis of caste, gender, language and creed.

This caused a reaction among the Indians. During the nineteenth century, educated Indians from different parts of the country began to feel the humiliation and responded by seeking their socio-cultural identity from their past. However, they understood some merits in the colonial arguments and were ready to reform. Raja Rammohan Roy was among the pioneers in this process. Roy and many like him came to be known as social reformers. They were preparing a social and cultural sphere to counter the cultural hegemony of Europe. It resulted in the social and religious reform movements in modern India. This particular historical development is also identified as the Indian renaissance.

Renaissance is an ideological and cultural phenomenon. It is closely tied to modernity, rationalism and the progressive movement of the society. Critical thinking is at its root. A new philosophical tradition centring around human rationality and equality is its characteristic. The basic inspiration of renaissance is humanism and questioning the fundamentalist religious practices that denied humans their dignity. This ideology of humanism stimulated creative energy in all spheres of social life and knowledge such as language, literature, philosophy, music, painting, architecture, etc.

## Tamil Renaissance

The cultural hegemony of colonialism and the rise of humanism brought several changes in the socio-cultural life of the Indian subcontinent. Modern Tamil Nadu too experienced such a historical transition. Tamil language and culture played a significant role in their identity construction. The introduction of printing press, linguistic research on Dravidian languages, etc... underpinned the process of Tamil renaissance. Although religious literature was taken up predominantly for publication in the early years after the advent of printing technology, things began to change gradually. Works that can be described as secular were taken up for publishing.

### Advent of the Printing Technology

Tamil was the first non- European language that went into print. As early as in 1578, Tamil book, ThambiranVanakkam, was published from Goa. In 1709, a full-fledged printing press had been established thanks to in Tranquebar. Thirukkural was one of the earliest Tamil literary texts to be published in 1812. This led the resurgence of interest among Tamil scholars in publishing the more ancient Tamil classics around that period.

In the nineteenth century, Tamil scholars like C.W. Damotharanar (1832–1901), and U.V. Swaminathar (1855–1942) spent their lifetime in the rediscovery of the Tamil classics. C. W. Damotharanar collected and edited different palm-leaf manuscripts of the Tamil grammar and literature. His editions included such texts as Tolkappiyam, Viracholiyam, Iraiyanar-Akapporul, IlakkanaVilakkam, Kaliththokai and Culamani. U.V. Swaminathar, a student of Meenakshisundaranar, took efforts to publish the classical texts such as Civakachinthamani (1887), Paththupattu (1889), Chilapathikaram (1892), Purananuru (1894), Purapporul-Venpa-Malai (1895), Manimekalai (1898), Ainkurunuru (1903) and Pathitrupathu(1904). This provided the Tamil people with a revelation about their heritage. Therefore, the rediscovery of ancient classics and their publication is considered the foundation of Tamil renaissance.

The publication of these ancient literary texts created an awareness among the Tamil people about their historical tradition, language, literature and religion. Modern Tamils founded their social and cultural identity on the ancient Tamil classics, collectively called the Sangam literature.

Linguists, historians and Tamil scholars recognised the uniqueness of Tamil culture, which had a separate and independent cultural existence before the coming of the Aryans into the Tamil land.

In 1816, F.W. Ellis (1777-1819) who founded the College of Fort St George, formulated the theory that the south Indian languages belonged to a separate family which was unrelated to the Indo-Aryan family of languages. Robert Caldwell (1814-1891) expanded this argument in a book titled, *A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South Indian Family of Languages*, in 1856. He established the close affinity between the Dravidian languages in contrast with Sanskrit and also established the antiquity of Tamil.

Tamil intellectuals of this period identified the fundamental differences between Tamil/Dravidian/ Egalitarian and Sanskrit/ Aryan/Brahmanism. They argued that Tamil was a language of Dravidian people, who are non-Brahmin and their social life was casteless, gender-sensitised and egalitarian. Tamil renaissance contributed to the origin and growth of Dravidian consciousness in the Tamil country. These ideas are exemplified in the Tamil invocation song in the play, *Manonmaniam* written by P. Sundaranar (1855-1897).

Tamil renaissance questioned the cultural hegemony of Brahminism. These developments were reflected in art, literature, religion, etc. Ramalinga Adigal (1823-1874), popularly known as Vallalar, questioned the existing Hindu religious orthodoxy. Abraham Pandithar (1859-1919) gave prominence to Tamil music and published books on the history of Tamil music. C.W. Damotharanar, U.V. Swaminathar, Thiru Vi. Kaliyanasundaram (1883-1953), ParithimarKalaigarnar (1870-1903), Maraimalai Adigal (1876-1950), Subramania Bharathi (1882- 1921), S. Vaiyapuri (1891-1956), and the poet Bharatidasan (1891-1964), in their own ways and through their writings, contributed to the revival of Tamil literature. Meanwhile, M. Singaravelar (1860-1946) an early pioneer in Buddhist revival, promoted communism and socialism to counter the colonial power.

Pandithar Iyotheethassar (1845-1914) and Periyar E.V. Ramasamy (1879-1973) held high the radical philosophy to defend the rights of the socially underprivileged and marginalised section of the people. In addition, the twentieth century Tamil language movements such as Tani

Tamil Iyakkam and Tamil Isai Iyakkam, made a significant cultural impact in creating a pure Tamil free from the influence of Sanskrit.

### **V.G. Suryanarayana Sastri (Parithimar Kalaighnar)**

V.G. Suryanarayana Sastri (1870-1903), born near Madurai, was professor of Tamil at the Madras Christian College. He was one of the earliest scholars to identify the influence of Sanskrit on Tamil, and adopted a pure Tamil name for himself: Parithimar Kalaignar. He was the first to argue that Tamil is a classical language, and demanded that the University of Madras should not call Tamil a vernacular language. Influenced by Western literary models, he introduced the sonnet form in Tamil. He also wrote novels and plays, and a number of essays on science. Tragically, he died at the young age of only 33.

### **Maraimalai Adigal**

Maraimalai Adigal (1876–1950) is considered the father of Tamil linguistic purism and the founder of Tani Tamil Iyakkam (Pure Tamil Movement). He wrote commentaries on the Sangam texts, Pattinappalai and Mullaipattu. As a young man, he worked in a journal, Siddhanta Deepika. Later he served as a Tamil teacher in the Madras Christian College for many years. He was inclined towards non-Brahmin movement. His teachers such as P. Sundaranar and Somasundara Nayagar were key influences in his life.

### **Tani Tamil Iyakkam (Pure Tamil Movement)**

Maraimalai Adigal promoted the use of pure Tamil words and removal of the Sanskrit influence from the Tamil language. The movement made a great impact on Tamil culture especially in language and literature. The beginnings of the movement are usually dated to 1916 even though the process of identifying influence of foreign words in Tamil and eliminating them can be dated much earlier to the late nineteenth century. His daughter Neelambikai, played an important role in its foundation. He changed his own name Vedachalam and took on the pure Tamil name of Maraimalai Adigal. His journal Jnanasagaram was renamed Arivukkadal and his institution, Samarasa Sanmarga Sangam, was re-christened as Potu Nilai Kalakam. The movement was critical of Hindi, Sanskrit and the Brahminical hegemony in Tamil society. Neelambikai compiled a

dictionary that provided pure Tamil equivalents to Sanskrit words that had crept into Tamil vocabulary. This movement paved the way for later social movements that countered Brahminical and the Sanskrit tradition in Tamil society.

### **Rise of the Dravidian Movement**

In India, Brahmins enjoyed a high social status, based on their birth, and held great social privileges. In Madras Presidency, Brahmins dominated all the fields of society, especially politics, education and job opportunities in the government. The 1911 census showed that Brahmins were slightly over 3 per cent of Madras Presidency's population, and non-Brahmins 90 per cent. Yet in the ten years from 1901 to 1911 Madras University turned out 4,074 Brahmin graduates compared with only 1,035 non-Brahmin graduates. Numbers for other groups, based on how the population came to be classified then, included Indian Christian 306, Mohammedan 69 and European and Eurasian 225.

In this context, the Dravidian movement emerged as a defence of the non-Brahmins against the Brahmin dominance. An organisation called The Madras Non-Brahmin Association was founded in 1909 to help the non-Brahmin students. In 1912 C. Natesanar, a medical doctor, founded the Madras United League, later renamed as Madras Dravidian Association to support Dravidian uplift. The organisation focused on educating and supporting non-Brahmin graduates and conducting regular meetings to share their grievances. Meanwhile, Natesanar founded a hostel, the Dravidian Home, at Triplicane (Madras) in July 1916 to address the lack of hostels for the non-Brahmin students which hindered their educational development. In addition, the home had a literary society for the benefit of non-Brahmin students.

### **South Indian Liberal Federation (Justice Party)**

As World War I was in progress the British government was considering the introduction of representative institutions for Indians after the War. Fearing that such political reforms would further strengthen the political power of Brahmins, educated non-Brahmins decided to organise themselves politically. On 20 November 1916 around 30 prominent non-Brahmin leaders including Dr. C. Natesanar, Sir Pitti Theyagarayar, T.M. Nair and Alamelu Mangai Thayarammal came together to form the South

Indian Liberation Federation (SILF). In the meantime, at a meeting held in the Victoria Public Hall the Non-Brahmin Manifesto was released in December 1916. The manifesto articulated the voice of the non-Brahmin communities and surveyed the general condition of the non-Brahmins in Madras Presidency.

The association started publishing three newspapers: Dravidian in Tamil, Justice in English and Andhra Prakasika in Telugu, to propagate the ideals of the Party.

The Non-Brahmin Manifesto pointed out that though “Not less than 40 out of the 411/2 millions” of the Madras Presidency were non-Brahmins, “in what passes for the politics in Madras they have not taken the part to which they are entitled”. Arguing that a government conducted on “true British principles of justice and equality of opportunity” was in the best interests of India, it declared, that “we are deeply devoted and loyally attached to British rule”.

The first election, under the Montagu- Chelmsford Reforms, was held in 1920 after the introduction of the Dyarchy form of government in the provinces. The Justice Party won the election and formed the first-ever Indian cabinet in Madras. A. Subbarayalu became the Chief Minister of the Madras Presidency and the party formed the government during 1920–1923 and 1923–1926. In the context of Congress Party boycotting the legislature, the Justice Party continued to remain in office till 1937 elections were held. In the 1937 elections the Indian National Congress contested the elections for the first time and trounced the Justice Party.

### **Programmes and Activities**

The Justice Party is the fountain head of the non-Brahmin Movement in the country. The Justice Party government widened education and employment opportunities for the majority of the population and created space for them in the political sphere. Tamil Nadu’s legacy of social justice owes its existence to the formative years of Justice Party in power.

The Justicites removed the legal hindrances restricting inter-caste marriages and broke the barriers that prevented Depressed Classes from the use of public wells and tanks. The Justice Party government ordered

that public schools accommodate the children of the Depressed Classes. Hostels were established for the students belonging to this social group in 1923. In the meantime, the Madras legislature under the Justice Party government was the first to approve participation of women in the electoral politics in 1921. This resolution created space for woman and thus facilitated Muthulakshmi Ammaiyar to become the first woman legislator in India in 1926.

The Justice Party worked towards legislating provisions for communal representation – reservations for various communities. Two Communal Government Orders (16 September 1921 and 15 August 1922) were passed to ensure equitable distribution in appointments among various castes and communities as a part of achieving social justice. The Justice Party rule established the Staff Selection Board in 1924 for the selection of government officials and encouraged all the communities to share the administrative powers. In 1929, the Government of British India adopted the pattern and established the Public Service Commission.

The Justice Party further concentrated on reforms in religious institutions. Tamil Nadu has a large number of temples and these commanded huge resources. In general, the resources were monopolised and exploited by the dominant caste in the society and led to mismanagement of public resources. The Justice Party introduced the Hindu Religious Endowment (HRE) Act in 1926 and enabled any individual, irrespective of their caste affiliation, to become a member of the temple committee and govern the resources of the religious institutions.

### **Self-Respect Movement (Suyamariyathai Iyakkam)**

The Self-Respect movement, while critiquing the then prevailing social, political and economic relations, introduced a programme of non-Brahmin uplift in Tamil Nadu. The movement was concerned with the marginalised sections of the society and criticised Brahminism and the cultural hegemony of the Brahmin. It advocated a casteless society devoid of rituals and differences based on birth. The movement declared rationality and self-respect as the birthright of all human beings and held these as more important than self-rule. The movement declared illiteracy as a source for women's subordination and promoted compulsory elementary education for all. It campaigned for the empowerment of women and questioned the superstitious beliefs in the society.



The movement demanded women's emancipation, deplored superstitions, and emphasised rationality. The movement also advocated self-respect marriage. Race was central to self-respect concept, which argued that the non-Brahmin Dravidian people had been systematically subjugated by Aryan- Brahmins over the course of their long history.

The Self-Respect Movement championed not only the cause of the non-Brahmin Hindus, but also that of the Muslims. The Self-Respect Movement extolled the lofty principles of Islam such as equality and brotherhood. They exhorted the Muslims to admit into their fold the depressed sections of the Hindu society, in order that they might enjoy the equality and brotherhood of Islam. Muslim elite considered the Tamil Muslims as Dravidians. Yet Periyar did not hesitate to attack certain customs like wearing of purdah by Muslim women. He wanted the Dravidian Muslims to follow Mustapha Kemal Pasha of Turkey and Amanullah of Afghanistan who initiated reforms in Islamic society.

### **Periyar E.V.R.**

Periyar E.V. Ramasamy (1879- 1973) was the founder of the Self-Respect Movement. He was the son of a wealthy businessman in Erode, Venkatappa and Chinna Thayammal. Though possessing little formal education, he engaged in critical discussions with scholars, who used to be patronised by his devout father. As a young man, he once ran away from home and spent many months in Varanasi and other religious centres. The firsthand experience of orthodox Hindu religion led to his disillusionment with religion. On his return, he took care of his family business for some years. His selfless public service and forthrightness made him a popular personality. He held different official positions of Erode that included the Chairmanship of Municipal Council (1918-1919).

In the context of the rise of the non- Brahmin Justice Party after 1917, the Congress inducted non-Brahmin leaders such as Periyar and P. Varadarajulu, at the initiative of C. Rajaji. Periyar resigned all the government positions to support the Non- Cooperation Movement (1920-1922). He gave up his profitable business and became an active member of the Congress. He promoted khadi and sold it on the streets of Tamil Nadu. He cut down 500 coconut trees in his farm to support the campaign for

prohibition. He held the positions of Secretary and President of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee.

As president of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee, Periyar proposed a resolution regarding the rights of “Untouchables” to temple entry. In the name of “caste dharma” the “lower caste” people were denied access to the temples and the streets surrounding the temple. In Vaikom (a town in the then Princely State of Travancore and in present day Kerala), people protested against this practice. In the initial stages George Joseph of Madurai played big role. After the local leaders were arrested Periyar led the movement and was imprisoned. People hailed him as Vaikom Virar (Hero of Vaikom). In the meantime, he was disturbed by the castebased discrimination in the dining hall at the Cheranmadevi Gurukulam (school), which was run by V.V.Subramaniam (a Congress leader) with the financial support of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee. Periyar was disappointed when, despite his objections and protests against this discrimination, the Congress continued to support the iniquitous practice in the Gurukulam.

Periyar was keen on the introduction of reservation in representative bodies such as the legislative council for non-Brahmins. He wanted to pass the resolution in the annual conference of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee in 1925 at its Kanchipuram session but in vain. The Congress’s inability in addressing these concerns made him quit the Congress in 1925. Following his disillusionment, Periyar started the Self-Respect movement in 1925.

Periyar understood the relevance of mass communication in spreading rationalist thought. He started a number of newspapers and journals such as Kudi Arasu (Democracy) (1925), Revolt (1928), Puratchi (Revolution) (1933), Paguththarivu (Rationalism) (1934), and Viduthalai (Liberation) (1935). Kudi Arasu was the official newspaper of the Self-Respect Movement. It brought out the multiple voices and ideas of Non-Brahmins, women and religious minorities. Usually, Periyar wrote a column and expressed his opinion on social issues in each of its issues. He frequently wrote columns under the pseudonym of Chitraputtiran.

Over the years, Periyar visited many countries and interacted with intellectuals all over. He visited Singapore and Malaya (1929– 1930, 1954), Egypt, U.S.S.R. (modern Russia), Greece, Turkey, Germany, England, Spain, France and Portugal (1931–32), and Burma

(1954 to attend the 2500th birth Anniversary of the Buddha). His experience of travelling in the Soviet Union and Europe carried Periyar towards socialist ideals. Periyar had a close relationship with Singaravelar who is considered the first communist of south India and a pioneer of Buddhism. In 1936, Periyar got Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's Annihilation of Caste translated into Tamil immediately after it was written. He also supported Ambedkar's demand for separate electorates for scheduled castes.

In 1937, in opposition to the Rajaji's government's move to introduce compulsory Hindi in schools, he launched a popular movement to oppose it. The anti-Hindi agitation (1937-39) had a big impact on Tamilnadu's politics. Periyar was imprisoned for his role in the movement. When he was still in jail, Periyar was elected the president of the Justice Party. Thereafter the Justice Party merged with the Self-Respect Movement. It was rechristened as Dravidar Kazhagam (DK) in 1944.

Rajaji, the Chief Minister of Madras State (1952-54), introduced a vocational education programme that encouraged imparting school children with training in tune with their father's occupation. Periyar criticised it as Kula Kalvi Thittam (caste-based education scheme) and opposed it tooth and nail. His campaigns against it led to the resignation of Rajaji. K. Kamaraj became Chief Minister of the Madras State. Periyar died at the age of ninety four (1973). His mortal remains were buried at Periyar Thidal, Madras.

### **Periyar's Anti-Hindi Stance**

Periyar emphasised that the caste system in south India is linked with the arrival of Brahmins from the North. Ancient Tamil society, he said, had a different stratification based on tinais (regions), determined by natural surroundings and the means of livelihood or occupation of the people. Anti-north Indian campaigns had made Periyar to take an anti-Hindi stand.

### **Periyar on Religion**

Periyar's experiences taught him that it was necessary to eradicate religion in order to impart progress and justice. Periyar advocated atheism to deconstruct the established practices of faith, culture and custom. Periyar wanted religion to be replaced by rationalism. 'Religion means you accept superstitious beliefs', he asserted. Periyar spent his entire life campaigning

against superstitions through Thinkers or Rationalists Forums he had formed. Periyar objected to the hereditary priesthood in temples. He argued that eligible individuals, who have a proper religious knowledge, should become priests rather than being based on caste. He encouraged the people to boycott the Brahmin priests and their Vedic rituals. He advocated inter-caste and Self-Respect Marriages devoid of any such rituals.

### **Periyar, a Feminist**

Periyar was critical of patriarchy. He condemned child-marriage and the devadasi system (institution of temple girls). Right from 1929, when the Self-respect Conferences began to voice its concern over the plight of women, Periyar had been emphasising women's right to divorce and property. Periyar objected to terms like "giving in marriage". This, he said, treats woman as a thing. He wants it substituted by "valkaithunai," (companion) a word for marriage taken from the Tirukkural. Periyar's most important work on this subject is Why the Woman is Enslaved?

Periyar believed that property rights for women would provide them a social status and protection. He welcomed equal rights for males and females in property, guardianship and adoption. He was a strong champion of birth control and contraception, and said that motherhood was a burden to women.

In 1989, Government of Tamil Nadu fulfilled the dream of radical reformers by the introduction of the Hindu Succession Tamil Nadu Amendment Act of 1989, which ensured the equal rights to ancestral property for women in inheritance. This Act became a trendsetter and led to similar legislation at the national level.

### **Rettaimalai Srinivasan**

Rettaimalai Srinivasan (1859–1945), popularly known as Grandpa (Thatha), was born in 1859 at Kanchipuram. He fought for social justice, equality and civil rights of the marginalised in the caste order. He was honoured with such titles as Rao Sahib (1926), Rao Bahadur (1930) and Divan Bahadur (1936) for his selfless social services. His autobiography, Jeeviya Saritha Surukkam (A Brief Autobiography), published in 1939, is one of the earliest autobiographies.

Rettaimalai Srinivasan who had experienced the horrors of untouchability worked for the progress of the deprived castes. He founded the Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha in 1893. He served as president of the Scheduled Castes' Federation and the Madras Provincial Depressed Classes' Federation. He constantly engaged in discussions with leaders of the Indian National Congress and the Justice Party on questions involving the depressed castes. Rettaimalai Srinivasan met Gandhi in South Africa and was closely associated with him. He became a member of the Madras Legislative Council in 1923 and influenced the Justice Party to take affirmative action to safeguard the interests of the depressed and deprived sections of the society.

A close associate of Dr B.R. Ambedkar, he participated in the first and second Round Table Conferences held in London (1930 and 1931) and voiced the opinions of the marginalised sections of the society. He was a signatory to the Poona Pact of 1932.

### **M.C. Rajah**

Mylai Chinnathambi Raja (1883-1943), popularly known as M.C. Rajah, was one of the prominent leaders from the "depressed class". Rajah started his career as a teacher and wrote different textbooks for schools and colleges. He was one of the founding members of the South Indian Liberal Federation (Justice Party). He became the first elected Legislative Council Member (1920-26) from the depressed classes in Madras province. He functioned as the Deputy Leader of Justice Party in the Madras Legislative Council.

Later, he left the Justice Party. M.C. Rajah demanded abolition of untouchability and organised a number of political meetings and conferences for the "untouchable castes" to have access to public wells and pathways to burial grounds. In addition, he advocated the use of such as terms, Adi-Dravida and Adi- Andhra. In 1928, he founded the All India Depressed Classes Association and was its long time leader. Rajah had earlier called for separate electorate; but after the Poona Pact, he supported the idea of joint electorates.

## **Labour Movements in Tamil Nadu**

Labour Statue in Marina Beach The First World War (1914–18) provided stimulus to industrial growth in India. These industries, catering to war time needs, had employed a huge number of workers. At the end of the War there were retrenchments across the industries, as the war time requirements receded. Combined with high prices, this gave a momentum to the labour movement. The nationalists realising the value of organised labour power began to support the cause of labour. B.P. Wadia, M. Singaravelar, Thiru. Vi. Kalyanasundaram and others initiated the formation of labour unions in the Madras Presidency. In 1918, India's first organised trade union, the Madras Labour Union, was formed.

The first All India Trade Union Conference (AITUC) was held on 31 October 1920 in Bombay. The delegates discussed several resolutions. These included a demand for protection from police interference in labour disputes, the maintenance of an unemployment register, restriction on exporting foodstuffs, compensation for injuries, and health insurance. In addition, the delegates demanded that Indian workers be given some representation in the government, just as employers had representatives on legislative councils.

M. Singaravelar (1860–1946), was a pioneer in the labour movement activities in the Madras presidency. He was born in Madras and graduated from the Presidency College, University of Madras. He advocated Buddhism in his early life. He knew many languages, including Tamil, English, Urdu, Hindi, German, French and Russian and wrote about the ideas of Karl Marx, Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer and Albert Einstein in Tamil. He organised the first ever celebration of May Day in 1923. He was one of the early leaders of the Communist Party of India. He published a Tamil newspaper, Thozhilalan (Worker) to address the problems of the working class. He was closely associated with Periyar and the Self- Respect Movement.

## **Language Agitation before Indian Independence**

In general, language is a dominant symbol of identity and it is associated with culture and sentiments of any society. Tamil regained its prominence in the latter half of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Maraimalai Adigal's Pure Tamil Movement, the language reforms of

Periyar and Tamil Isai Movement helped to galvanise the Tamil language. Tamil renaissance that led the Dravidian consciousness made a great intervention in the development of modern Tamil language and its art forms. Agamic temples did not permit rituals in Tamil. Tamil songs had a marginal place in musical concerts. Abraham Pandithar systematically studied the history of Tamil music and attempted to reconstruct the ancient Tamil musical system. He founded the Tanjore Sangitha Vidya Mahajana Sangam in 1912 and it became the kernel of the Tamil Isai Movement (Tamil Music Movement). The movement gave importance to the singing of Tamil compositions in music concerts. The first Tamil Isai Conference was held in 1943, to discuss the status of Tamil music.

The implementation of Hindi as a compulsory language in Tamil Nadu, at various points of time, was seen as a threat to Tamil language and culture. C. Rajaji, the Premier of Madras Presidency, introduced Hindi as a compulsory subject in schools. This created a stiff opposition in Madras province. Periyar declared that the introduction of Hindi over Tamil would deny the Dravidians of their job opportunities. Maraimalai Adigal pointed out that the Tamil language would suffer with the introduction of Hindi. The anti-Hindi campaigners considered it an ideological battle against Brahminism and the hegemony of Sanskrit over Tamil. They saw Sanskrit as a vehicle for propagation of Brahmanical ideology, there by preserving the caste hierarchies and gender inequalities. The agitation was marked by massive protest meetings, demonstrations, and hunger strikes. Tens of thousands of people took part in the agitation.

## **Women's Movements**

There were several streams of women's movements and organisations established in the early twentieth century to address the question of women empowerment in Madras Presidency. Women's India Association (WIA) and All India Women's Conference (AIWC) are the important among them in Tamil Nadu. WIA was started in 1917 by Annie Besant, Dorothy Jinarajadasa and Margaret Cousins at Adyar, Madras. The Association published pamphlets and bulletins in different languages to detail the problems of personal hygiene, marriage laws, voting rights, child care and women's role in the public. In the meantime, WIA formed the All India Women's Conference (AIWC) in 1927 to address the problem of women's education and recommended that the government implement various policies for the uplift of women.

Women's liberation was one of the important objectives of the Self-Respect Movement. Selfrespecters led by Periyar E.V.R. worked for gender equality and gender sensitisation of the society. The movement provided a space for women to share their ideas. There were several women activists in the movement. Muthulakshmi Ammaiyar, Nagammai, Kannamma, Nilavathi, Muvalur Ramamirtham, Rukmani Ammal, Alarmelmangai Thayammal, Nilambikai, and Sivakami Chidambaranar are prominent among them.

There was a custom of dedicating young girls to the Hindu temples as a servant of God, known as devadasi. Though intended as a service to god it soon got corrupted leading to extensive immorality and abuse of the women. Dr. Muthulakshmi Ammaiyar, was in the forefront of the campaign pressing for a legislation to abolish this devadasi system. The Madras Devadasis (Prevention of Dedication) Act 1947 was enacted by the government.

In 1930, Muthulakshmi Ammaiyar introduced in the Madras Legislative Council a Bill on the "prevention of the dedication of women to Hindu temples in the Presidency of Madras". The Bill, which later became the Devadasi Abolition Act, declared the "pottukattu ceremony" in the precincts of Hindu temples or any other place of worship unlawful, gave legal sanction to devadasis to contract marriage, and prescribed a minimum punishment of five years' imprisonment for those found guilty of aiding and abetting the devadasi system. The Bill had to wait for over 15 years to become an Act.



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### Unit- 14

### Political Developments in Tamilnadu

Diary of Events		
1914	-	Birth of Dravidian Association
1916	-	South Indian Liberal Federation was formed
1917		Justice Party
1919		Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms
1925		Periyar founded Self Respect Movement
1937		Congress Ministry formed under the leadership of Rajaji
1937		Anti-Hindi Agitation
1944		At Salem conference the Justice Party was renamed into Dravidar Kazhagam (DK)
1946		T.Prakasam of Congress formed Government in Madras Presidency
1947		O.P.Ramaswamy became the Chief Minister
1949		P.Kumaraswami Raja formed his ministry
1949		Birth of Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK)
1952		First General Elections took place
1956		States Reorganization Act
1965		Anti-Hindi Agitation.
1967		Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam formed government under the leadership of C.N.Annadurai.
1969		Madras State was renamed as "Tamilnadu"
1969		C.N.Annadurai passed away.
1969		M.Karunanidhi became the Chief Minister of the State
1972		AIADMK was founded by M.G.Ramachandran (MGR)
1974		State Autonomy Resolution was passed in the Assembly

#### Learning Objectives

- ❖ To understand the nature of political discourses that took place in Madras presidency during the 1900s.
- ❖ To unravel the emergence of Non-Brahmin movement and how it had paved the way for the Dravidian parties rule in the state of Tamil

Nadu.

- ❖ To explore the nature of centre-state relations during the rule of various political parties in the state.
- ❖ To study the welfare policies of the Dravidian parties and its significant impact on the society.
- ❖ To examine whether any state level political will has any impact on national politics.
- ❖ The chief aim of the study is to understand various dimensions of the social welfare policies of successive governments in the state.
- ❖ o explore the reasons for the fragmentation in Dravidian politics and in consequences.

## Political History of Tamil Nadu

Compared with rest of India, Tamil Nadu has had a healthy administrative and political culture, more or less stable economic life, and continuity of traditions from the hoary past to the present. Madras Presidency of South India came into existence due to the administrative and political needs of the British. The Madras Presidency was formed in A.D (C.E.) 1801. The Presidency, as it existed during the 19th and 20th centuries, comprised of the present states of Andhra Pradesh, Malabar region of Kerala, Southern Karnataka, Southern most part of Odisha and Union Territory of Lakshadweep.

Madras Presidency politics in the early part of 20th century was dominated by the "Brahmin - non - Brahmin conflicts". Scholars and political thinkers believed that understanding the conflicts between these two groups, (the Brahmins and non - Brahmins), is necessary to understand the South Indian Politics and society.

## Madras Presidency

Simultaneously a few members of Non-Brahmin caste groups sought employment in industries, commercial enterprises etc., Significant but a portion of non-Brahmin caste groups migrated from rural areas to urban pockets of the Presidency and wanted to ascertain their identity as 'Dravidian' and 'Tamils' and gradually challenged the monopoly of powers and privileges enjoyed by the Brahmins in politics, administration and society.

The word 'Dravidian' was used by scholars and non - Tamils to identify non-Aryan Tamil speaking people. At the same time Brahmins were identified as "Aryans" and the custodians of Sanskrit civilisation where as non-Brahmins were considered as "Dravidians" and the custodians of Tamil language, culture and civilisation.

## Emergence of Dravidian Movement

In order to protect and promote the Tamil identity, culture, socio-political and economic interest of non-Brahmins, a movement called 'Dravidian Movement' was started in Madras Presidency by a group of non - Brahmins.

## Dravidian and Non-Brahmin Identity

In 1801 Madras Presidency was formed by the colonial regime as a multilingual province (Tamils, Telegus, Malayalees, Kannadigas and Tulus). India's diversity could be noticed in the political developments of the Madras Presidency. In Bengal and in the rest of North India a Sanskrit and Vedic centered Indian culture was projected, besides an Indo-Aryan or Indo-German group of languages were acknowledged. Non-Vedic, Non-Sanskrit cultures were not recognized. The deciphering of Brahmi script in 1837 by James Prinsep and researches on south Indian languages (Ellis in 1816 and Caldwell in 1856) came to establish that Indian culture was not homogeneous;

Ellis is praised by Tamil enthusiasts as lover of Tamil, Valluvar, Kural and so on, without knowing the colonial and christian background of him. In fact, he tried to forge valluvar as Jain, to promote the "thomas myth" in India

Francis Whyte Ellis

Born: May 7, 1814, Clady, United Kingdom Died: August 28, 1891, Kodaikanal, India

Robert Caldwell

Buddhist and Dravidian traditions also existed in India. In the south, especially in the multi-lingual Madras Presidency, theories on Dravidian group of languages and Dravidian cultural heritage led to assertion of Dravidian identity among the Non-Brahmin.

Two factors (1) Brahmins claiming superiority over Non-Brahmins and (2) Brahmins monopolizing educational and employment opportunities transformed the Dravidian identity into Non-Brahmin identity. (In Maharashtra too Mahatma Jyotiba Rao Phule launched a Non-Brahmin movement on similar lines). Dravidian also indicated the Non-Brahmins in south India.

The Non-Brahmins of the Madras Presidency had a grievance that the emerging nationalist leaders paid no heed to non- brahmin issues. In 1852 Gangalu Lakshmi Narash expressed this grievance, seceded from British Indian Association and floated his own organization named Madras Native Association. In the post-mutiny period, the non-brahmin leaders undertook social reforms rather than political reforms. After the introduction of Minto-Morley reforms in 1909 the non-brahmin leaders of Madras Presidency began to protest the inadequate representations to them in education and employment.

Sir Alexander Gordon Cardew, a member of Governor's Executive Council submitted statistical details (1913) to prove that the Brahmins who formed only three percent of the population cornered most of the opportunities.

### **Justice Party**

The major political organization of that time, Indian National Congress was dominated by Brahmins had refused to consider the demands of non-brahmin members. Thus the non-brahmin leaders of Madras Presidency began to think of floating a non-brahmin political organization. The prospects of political reforms after the First World War, and the possibilities of representing institutions stimulated their move.

In 1916 Dr.T.M. Nair, Pitti Theagarayar and Dr.C. Natesan founded the South Indian Liberal Federation to promote and safeguard the socio-economic political interests of the non- brahmin. This South Indian Liberal Federation (SILF) came to be popularly known as the "Justice Party" named after the English journal Justice. Through their relentless efforts they secured reservation of seats for the non-brahmin in the elections to the legislative council.

## **The main objectives of the Justice Party (JP)**

- i) To create and promote the Educational, Social, Economic, Political and material progress of all communities other than Brahmins of South India.**
- ii) To work for Non-Brahmins upliftment through Constitutional government.**
- iii) To make the government truly a representative government.**
- iv) To create public opinion infavour of Non-Brahmins demand.**

Montagu Chelmsford reforms 1919 introduced dyarchy in the presidencies by which a few departments were earmarked for Indian ministers chosen from the elected members. In the first elections under dyarchy in 1920, the Indian National Congress as a part of the Non-Cooperation Movement boycotted the elections, but many congressmen contested the elections under different banners.

The Justice Party won majority of the seats and A.Subbarayalu became the Chief Minister and after his death, Raja of Panagal became the Chief Minister of Madras in 1921.

## **Contributions of Justice Party**

In spite of the fluctuating fortunes in the subsequent elections, the Justice party continued to hold power from 1921 to 1937. They introduced a number of reforms. Through communal Government Order they ensured adequate number of opportunities to every category of non- brahmin communities. They removed discrimination against Sudras and Panchamas in public roads, transports, restaurants and public wells. They regulated the temple affairs through the newly constituted Hindu Religious Endowment Board, earmarked plots of land for the Panchamas (Panchami's Land) introduced new township and industrial estates. Special efforts were taken to provide education for the children of depressed classess. For the first time they experimented with "Noon Meal Scheme" in a few schools. Knowledge of Sanskrit as the basic eligibility for medical education was removed which facilitated non-brahmin students gaining entry into medical education. On an initiative from Dr. Muthulakshmi and others,

Devadasi system was abolished in Tamil Nadu and women were enfranchised. Co-operative societies were promoted. Mirasdari system was abolished, and a number of irrigation schemes were introduced in 1923. Annamalai University and Andhra University were founded during their regime. It was the Justice Party which provided the most successful government though they were assigned only a few departments.

### **Periyar E.V. Ramasamy:**

Periyar E.V. Ramasamy considered the decision of Rajaji's government to impose Hindi as a compulsory subject as a move to establish 'North Indian imperialism' and destroying the Tamil language and culture. Periyar, further, maintained that the imposition of Hindi was a calculated effort to subordinate the Dravidians in order to ascertain the supremacy of the Aryans.

Madras Presidency has witnessed massive anti-Hindi agitations and Periyar was imprisoned by the provincial government. It is significant to note that in fifteen years he went to jail twenty-three times and got the nickname as 'jailbird' (Siraiparavai). In 1938, Periyar was imprisoned for his Anti-Hindi agitation and then he was elected as the president of Justice Party. In the same year, the Justice Party passed a resolution that Tamil Nadu should be made as a separate state loyal to British government and it should be under the direct control of the Secretary of State for India.

Periyar E.V. Ramaswamy who played a pioneering role in the Madras Presidency Congress, had tried his best to make the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee adopt resolutions in favour of proportional representation for the non-Brahmins in political arena. He gave an effective leadership to the Vaikom Satyagraha and campaigned against caste-discrimination in the Cheranmadevi Gurukula, founded by Congress.

When all his efforts failed to make Congress adopt his programme, he left Congress and launched the self-respect movement in 1925. He shunned electoral politics and instead campaigned for social reforms, especially for eradication of caste system, removal of indignities and gender based restrictions on women, and rejection of hereditary priesthood. The self-respect movement carried on a vigorous campaign against age old superstitious beliefs and practices in every sphere and questioned the role of religion in justifying and sustaining such irrational traditions and

inequalities. The Self Respect Movement campaigned for rationalism, and against denial of dignity and equal status of individuals (including women) under the garb of tradition and religion.

The Self Respect Movement ordained its members to give up caste surname and caste-religious identities; it introduced the self-respect marriages. It fought against not only untouchability but even against the caste-system and the caste based disabilities and indignities imposed on individuals.

The Self Respect Movement propagated not merely letter treatment of women, but for equal rights, equal status an equal opportunities for women. Self Respect Movement's role in "Women Liberation" was unparalleled and for that E.V.Ramaswamy was given the title "Periyar" in a women's conference. Periyar's journal 'Kudiarasu' 'Revolt' and later 'Viduthalai' carried on the effective propaganda of self-respect ideals.

### **Self Respect Movement**

In 1929 the first Self-Respect Conference was held in Chengalpattu. In the crucial elections of 1937 the Congress party, led by C. Rajagopalachari, won majority every seats except one. The Congress party victory was largely because of the decline of Justice Party. The Congress formed the government and Rajaji became the Chief Minister of the Madras province.

Soon after assuming power the Congress government introduced Hindi as a compulsory subject in the schools. Periyar launched anti-Hindi agitations. A large number of students have participated in the agitations organized by Periyar.

During this period, the Communist Party (formally launched in 1925) became active in campaigning for socialist programme and organized labour movements. M.Singaravelu, and their associates were impressed by the social reform programmes of the Self Respect Movement, which in turn extended support to the economic programme of the communities, and these two movements agreed to work on a common programme (Erode Plan).

## Objectives of Self-Respect League

- I. **Reforming Dravidian society to make it truly rational.**
- II. **To teach the truth of ancient Tamil civilization to Dravidians.**
- III. **Save the Dravidian society from the domination of Aryan culture.**
- IV. **iv)Reforming the Hinduism by eliminating Brahmin influence and superstitious practices.**

He wanted to restore the past glory of Dravidian culture by creating social awareness among the non-Brahmins in general and particularly the youth. He advocated Self -Respect marriages, a marriage which was conducted in the absence of Brahmin priesthood, discouraged the people from performing religious ceremonies and not to employ the services of the Brahmins in any of the social events.

## Decline of Justice Party

By 1929, the Self-Respect Movement had become a formidable movement in the Madras Presidency. In 1930's the Justice Party began to face decline in the province. There were three major factors responsible for this decline. Firstly, the party lost its support among the Depressed sections of the society and minorities. Secondly the Self-Respect Movement, under Periyar had become more radical. Finally the elitist and pro-British outlook of Justice Party had also contributed significantly for its decline.

## Anti Hindi Agitation

The decline of the Justice Party and Periyar's refusal to enter into electoral politics together with the growing popularity of Mahatma Gandhi, enabled Indian National Congress to win elections in the Madras Presidency in 1937 and Rajagopalachari became the premier.

He introduced total prohibition (ban on liquor) and abolished the Zamindari system, and introduced legislations removing restrictions on temple entry for the depressed classes. Yet his measures leading to closure of many schools and introduction of Hindi as compulsory language in schools provoked the admirers of self respect and Tamil Nationalists like Mariamalai Adigal to organize the 'Anti Hindi Movement' in 1937.



Thousands of agitators including E.V.Ramaswamy courted arrests, and a number of agitators died in prison.

### Salem Conference, 1944

In 1944, at Salem conference under the leadership of Periyar, a historic resolution was moved to change the name of Justice Party to Dravidar Kazhagam (DK). Periyar organised 'Dravida Nadu' conference and demanded an independent homeland for 'Dravidians'. Further, he pronounced his very famous slogan 'Dravida Nadu for Dravidians' at the conference.

Apart from separate 'Dravida Nadu' demand, the Dravidar Kazhagam wanted to establish casteless society, condemned religious rituals, traditions and superstitious in Dravidian society. The Dravidar Kazhagam became very popular in many rural and urban masses, especially among the students. Many non-Brahmin leaders and students have changed their name reflecting Tamil Identity.

S.NO.	PREMIER CHIEF MINISTER	YEAR
1	A. Subbarayalu Reddiar	1920- 1921
2	Raja of Panagal	1921- 1926
3	P. Subbarayan	1926 1930
4	P. Munusamy Naidu	1930 1932
5	Poppili Raja	1932 -1937
6	P.T. Rajan	1936
7	K.V. Reddy Naidu	1937
8	C. Rajaji	1937 - 1939
(Note: Tamil Nadu was under Governor's rule from 29 th October 1939 to 30th April 1946)		
9	T. Prakasam	1946 -1947
10	O.P. Ramasamy Reddiyar	1947 - 1949
	CHIEF MINISTER	
11	P.S. Kumarasamy Raja	1949-1952
12	C. Rajaji	1952 - 1954
13	K. Kamaraj	1954-1957
14	K. Kamaraj	1957-1962
15	K. Kamaraj	1962-1963
16	M. Bakthavatsalam	1963-1967

17	C.N. Annadurai	1967-1969
18	M. Karunanidhi	1969-1971
19	M. Karunanidhi	1971-1976
20	M.G. Ramachandran	1977-1980
21	M.G. Ramachandran	1980-1984
22	M.G. Ramachandran	1985-1987
23	Janaki Ramachandran	1988
24	M.Karunanidhi	1989-1991
25	J. Jayalalithaa	1991-1996
26	M.Karunanidhi	1996-2001
27	J. Jayalalithaa	2001
28	O. Panneerselvam	2001-2002
29	J. Jayalalithaa	2002 -2006
30	M. Karunanidhi	2006 - 2011
31	J. Jayalalithaa	2011
32	O. Panneerselvam	2012 (Interim)
33	J. Jayalalithaa	May 16, 2016 - Dec .5 2016
34	O. Panneerselvam	Dec 2016 - Feb 2017
35	K. Palanisamy	Feb 2017 - till date

In accordance with the provisions of Article 313 of the Indian Constitution Hindi was made as the official language of the Indian Union on January 26, 1965. In order to protest the decision of the Union Government the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam decided to observe 26th January, 1965 as a 'Day of Mourning'. Many leaders of the party and its cadres were arrested. Tamil Nadu had witnessed a large scale of Anti-Hindi agitations. Because of the agitations the cause secured considerable amount of support among the student community. On the other hand the Congress party lost its base and support in the state of Tamil Nadu. Meanwhile, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam had withdrawn the demand for 'Dravida Nadu' and continue to actively participate in the electoral politics of Tamilnadu and became a ruling party in the state.

### **Dravidian Movement during second World War and after:**

In 1939, the congress protested the government's d e clarification involving India in the Second World War which led to the resignation of congress ministry. In Madras Presidency Rajaji's ministry had resigned but

Periyar raised the demand of Dravida Nadu on the ground that independence prior to socio-cultural equality would be injurious to Tamil interests. In 1949, Dravidar Kazhagam split and Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam was formed.

In 1951, the Supreme Court struck down communal reservations in higher education. Immediately Periyar launched a major agitation for the restoration of communal reservation.

Consequently, the first constitutional amendment Act was passed in the Parliament in favour of reservations for socially and educationally backward classes.

### **Rajaji Regime (1952-54)**

The politics of Madras State in India witnessed the continuation of struggle between statusquoists and reformists. C. Rajagopalachari (Rajaji) who led the first elected ministry in the Madras, under the Republican Constitution, again reduced the number of schools, attempted to impose Hindi in schools and Modified Scheme of Elementary Education which provided for part time learning of hereditary occupations popularly known as kulakalvi.

### **Arundhati Roy on Dandi March**

Resistance as spectacle, as political theatre, has a history. Gandhi's salt march in 1930 to Dandi is among the most exhilarating examples. But the salt march wasn't theatre alone. It was the symbolic part of a large act of real civil disobedience. When Gandhi and an army of freedom fighters marched to Gujarat's coast and made salt from sea water, thousands of Indians across the country began to make their own salt, openly defying imperial Britain's salt tax laws, which banned local production in favour of British imports. It was a direct strike at the economic underpinning of the British Empire.

(Arundhati Roy, *An Ordinary Person's Guide To Empire*, p.307.)

Dravidian leaders launched a statewide protest against movement. Even a section of congress leaders resented Rajaji's proposals which led to change in Chief ministership.

## Kamaraj Era (1954-1963)

Kamaraj abolished the Modified Scheme of Elementary Education, increased manifold the number of schools, built a number of dams for improving irrigation, provided more industrial estates and ensured astonishing industrial growth in the state. He made education more accessible to poor and rural children. Kamaraj also introduced the noon-meal scheme for school children.

In 1963, Kamaraj resigned (Kamaraj Plan) his chief ministership to become the President of Indian National Congress and M.Bhaktavatchalam took over the reins of the government. The Food shortage and anti-hindi agitation caused the un- popularity of his ministry.

## Dravidian Parties Rule

In the general elections of 1967, the congress party was defeated. The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam formed the government.

In 1956, through 'states reorganization Act' Madras Presidency gave up malayalam regions to Kerala, Telegu region to Andhra Pradesh and Kannada regions to Mysore. Thus, Madras state became a state of Tamils. Kamaraj provided a stable government.

The provision of affordable universal housing for poor, precursor to food security (Rice scheme) and establishment of Slum Clearance Board have substantially improved and received support among the urban poor people also. Significantly, the government renamed the State from Madras to Tamil Nadu in the year 1969. The other major achievements of the party were:

- A. Nationalisation of Bus routes larger than 75 miles.
- B. Waiver of Tuition fee for poor students of all castes in pre-University and pre- technical courses.
- C. Second World Tamil Conference was organised.
- D. Supply of subsidised rice for people of Tamil Nadu.

## **Dravidian Rule in Post- Independence Tamilnadu**

For the past 62 years Dravidian parties have been ruling Tamilnadu. Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam decided to enter electoral politics in 1957 and gave up its “Dravida Nadu” demand consequent to Chinese aggression of Indian territories and to overcome newly amended electoral laws. It won a majority in 1967 elections. Annadurai ruled for a brief period (1967-69), yet he renamed Madras state as Tamilnadu, passed civil marriages act, rejected three language policies of central government and enforced a two languages (English & Tamil) policy in Tamilnadu.

For the first time, he introduced a subsidized rice (one measure one rupee) scheme. His successor M.Karunanidhi continued his legacy. In 1972, M.G.Ramachandran founded his own Dravidian Party (All Indian Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam – AIADMK). He captured power in 1977 and retained the same till his death in 1987. Thereafter, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam under M.Karunanidhi and Selvi J. Jayalalitha of All Indian Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam led ministries in alternative elections. Besides, these two, there are a few other Dravidian parties like Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam.

More than, six decades of Dravidian rule contributed remarkably to the development of Tamil. They steadfastly protected the interest of Tamil language, Tamil people and Tamilnadu. A number of welfare schemes were introduced to alleviate the suffering of common people. They ensured food security through subsidized and later free rice schemes, nutritious meal scheme, free education until under graduate level, free electricity for farming, abolition of cycle rickshaws and manual scavenging , cradle baby scheme for the abandoned children, and welfare boards for various unorganized workers, and even for transgender. As a remedy to ruinous caste conflicts, ‘Samathuvapuram’ and ‘Uzhavarsanthai’ were created.

Free electricity was provided to huts, slum clearance board met the housing requirements of slum dwellers. The phenomenal increase in industrial activity increased the opportunities for youth; as a result of these developments Tamilnadu registered a high ranking in HDI (Human Development Index). Today, Tamilnadu is in prominent position in promoting

automobile industries, electronics, and in pharmaceutical industries. it's new economic zones are attracting huge investments. Tamilnadu's achievements in infrastructural development are acclaimed by all. Roads, harbours, electrification and availability of skilled labour facilitate industrial development.

There has been a manifold increase in the number of schools of different categories. There is a manifold increase in the number of universities. Tamilnadu has exclusive universities for women, engineering and technology, law, medicine, siddha medicine, sports etc. Promotion of Tamil language, through tamil university, ulaga tamil araichi niruvanam, world tamil conference and ulaga tamil semmozhi conference, and script reforms, led to all-round advancement of tamil language.

The Dravidian parties since the days of Annadurai have been championing the cause of secularism and autonomy of the states. The Dravidian parties have also been contributing substantially to national politics. Dravidian political stream continues to be formidable in Tamilnadu.

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## UNIT-15

# Tamil Nadu Political Thought

### Historical Background

The 'Classical Tamil homeland (Tamizhagam) is called as Tamil Nadu besides some parts of Kerala, Andhra and Karnataka; Strabo (63 BC(BCE) to c. AD(CE) 24), a famous Greek geographer and historian observed the early diplomatic history of ancient Tamil Kingdom of Pandiyas. Naval expeditions of Cheras, Cholas, Pandiyas and Pallavas inform early maritime power and influence of Tamils. Ports in the coast of Tamil Nadu were important centres of trade between India and the Mediterranean, and India and southeast Asia, in the period. 200 BC(BCE) to 300 AD(CE). The ancient ports of Korkai, Poompuhar, Vasavasamudram, Perimula, Arikamedu, Alagankulam, Mamallapuram reveal the active trade, commerce and cultural exchanges with the Southeast Asian countries, Sri Lanka, China, Egypt, Greece and Rome. An established tradition of shipbuilding combined with rich maritime heritage of ancient Tamils are definite indicators of the foundations of influential polity, society, culture, trade and commercial ties with the outside world.

Sangam literature dated approximately 300 BC(BCE) to 300 AD(CE) is another valuable literary source(s) that reflects society, economy, culture and politics. The classification of Sangam poetry into akam (on love) and puram (on war, good and evil, community, justice and kingdom) is a revelation of the Tamil polity. The Sangam literary works have been grouped into eight anthologies (Ettuthogai): (1) Natrinai, (2) Kuruntogai, (3) Aingurunooru, (4) Paditruppattu, (5) Paripadal, (6) Kalittogai, (7) Agananooru, and (8) Purananooru; and there is a ninth group of poems called the Patthupattu (Ten Idylls). The early part of the first two books of Tholkappiyam, a work on Tamil grammar, belongs to the same period.

### Learning Objectives

#### The students will be able to

- ❖ Learn about ancient political ideas in Tamil Nadu.
- ❖ State clearly the political ideas of Thiruvalluvar.
- ❖ Understand about Nationalism through Bharathiyar
- ❖ Learn about communist ideas that existed in Tamilnadu through

Singaravelar's writings on communism.

- ❖ Learn and understand Dravidian Ideology and its impact on the society, polity and economy in Tamil Nadu through the contributions of E.V.R.Periyar on social justice, equality and liberation from oppression of higher caste.
- ❖ Describe clearly the core meaning of Tamil Movement and Dravidian movement and its political discourse.

The famous post-Sangam literature which was collected later as an anthology is known as the Kilkkanakku. There are 18 works as part of this collection and the most famous is Silappadikaram, Manimekalai and Eighteen Minor Works (Pathinen kilkkanakku, which includes the Thirukkural) were written during this period. Prabandha literature consists of poetry of various forms: kovai, in which the verses are arranged according to a particular theme (usually about love), and kalambakam, in which the end of one stanza/line formed the beginning of the next (usually about kings and bravery) and parani. The best illustrations of this tradition are the Pantikkovai, Nandikkalambakam, and Kalingattup-parani.

The ancient Tamil literature of Sangam age, Thirukkural, Silappathikaram, Manimegalai etc provide deep insights into the nature of polity, society and culture. Tamil language formed the core and essence of Tamil identity, culture, customs and traditions. Despite the diversity of land, geography, rulers and chieftains spread across the Tamil speaking areas the idea of Tamil country and confederation of Tamil speaking areas did exist. This literary finding(s) is also substantiated by a stone inscription of Kalinga King Kharavela (BC(BCE) 165), who claims to have destroyed a 'Tamil federation' which existed for 132 years. Similarly such a Tamil federation of kings to fight foreign invasion is also mentioned in 'Agananooru', a sangam literature. Hence the idea and prevalence of Tamil nationalism is not simply a consequence of colonialism. The roots of Tamil nationalism are linked to the historical role and significance of Tamil language and culture in defining politics that could be traced even in the Sangam age.

The concept of State and the idea king coincided with the territorial emphasis of polity as the Greek city-state. The classical Tamil country known as Tamizhagam covered areas south of Tirupati hills up to the tip of the Cape Comorin (Kanyakumari). The land was traditionally classified according to its nature into five geographical regions (tinai): the



mountainous region (kurinji), the forest areas(mullai), fertile plains (marudam), coastal region (neidhal) and arid region (palai).

Tamil speaking areas were divided between the principalities of the Cholas (its capital at Uraiyur), the Pandyas (Madurai as capital), the Cheras in most of present Kongunadu (and Kerala) and the Pallavas (Kanchipuram as capital). Tamil country included several kingdoms ruled by kings (vendhar), major and minor chieftains (vel/velar) who was less powerful than the crowned kings. The Sangam poets sang songs of praise about the velirs, especially the Seven Patrons, for their generosity towards the poets. Kapilar and Avvaiyar mention chieftains like, Aay, Pari, Ori, Malayan, Elini, Pegan and Nalli..

The virtues of king did include the ideals of Just Ruler with qualities of kindness towards the subjects and bravery in the battlefield against enemies. The sabhai or mandram was the highest court of justice presided by the king himself. Every village had its own mandram which met at a common public place and was involved in organizing village and community activities. Warriors were respected, and a man who died in battle would have memorial stones erected in his honour and be worshipped in death. Even if a warrior dies in battle field with a wound in his back, it is considered derogatory in 'Sangam' traditions.

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## In praise of Citizen Kannagi

Eric Miller

Kannagi proved that even a non- native with no money and no family in sight can fight City Hall and win her case that is inspiring.

I write in praise of Kannagi, global symbol of justice, and of the dignity of the individual!

This is her story the Silappathikaram, the Epic of the Anklet as I know it: Kannagi and Kovalan married in Poompuhar, on the east coast. After some time, Kovalan went off with a dancer named Madhavi. A year later, he returned home. He and Kannagi walked to Madurai, a distance of about 250 km, to start a new life. There Kovalan was unjustly put to death by the local ruler, the Pandian king: Kovalan had been falsely accused of stealing

the queen's anklet. Kannagi came to the court and proved that her husband had been innocent of this crime. The king punished himself for the injustice he had

done, by simply laying himself down and dying. Kannagi walked around the city three times, tore off her left breast and threw it against the city wall, and called for the city to burn but for good people and animals to be unharmed. Agni, the god of Fire, accomplished this. Kannagi wandered to the western mountains, where some people worshipped her. Eric Miller did his Ph.D. in Folklore, University of Pennsylvania, USA. His dissertation is on Tamil children's songs and games, and language learning. To conduct research on the Silappathikaram, he walked in the footsteps of Kannagi from Poompuhar,

to Madurai, to the western mountains. Quotes are from R. Parthasarathy's translation from the original sen-Tamil: The Silappatikaram: The Tale of an Anklet, by IlankoAtikal, Columbia University Press, 1993.)

### Extended Learning

Refer The Hindu website and read the article by Eric Miller. Share your views in the classroom.

Lots of good practices of war find its mention in sangam literature. Purananooru, a sangam literature, hails the Pandyan king who announces all the women, children, sick and elderly people, cattles, to move to safety zone before invading a country. The idea of justice formed the conscience of State and king. Justice is an essential element in a king's rule. A good king should never sacrifice justice. Just rule and good deeds always will bring everlasting fame to the king. An important political principle that prevailed was that

(Despite the nature of political system being monarchy) the legitimacy of the king rests with the consent of the people as long as he enjoys people's support and he loses legitimacy if he loses their support. Sangam literature (Pattinappaalai) speaks about different types of taxations like customs duty, income tax, toll tax etc as specific source of revenue to the State. Tamil kings and chieftains ruled the land with simple administrative structure of council of ministers, subordinates and administrative officers. There were officers to deal with foreign trade and customs revenue which was an important part of the budget. Pandya

inscriptions mention about officers for pearl fisheries (kalatika) and the chief scribes (kanatikan). In flags and coins, the Cholas were represented by the tiger, the Cheras by the bow and arrow the Pandyas by the fish and the Pallavas by the lion.

The institution of 'spy' was considered as a necessary institution and the maintenance of peace and stability in the kingdom depended on the effectiveness of this institution. Though slavery as a form of institution was absent yet capturing of slaves after invasions, and slave trade or exchange for gifts did remain as practice among the rulers to undertake construction and building works.

The practice of caste system or jati was unknown among ancient Tamils. The idea and concept of class with differences in status based on professional distinctions did prevail. The caste system was alien and unknown to Sangam society. The division of society based on class has been revealed by the Sangam poets who mention about social categories (kudi): tudyian, panan, and kadamban; or arasar (rulers), vaishyar (traders), and velalar (farmers). Differences in status were accepted as inevitable, yet varna in the form of caste or jati seems to be little known to Sangam society.

Though social stratification did prevail yet legitimization of Manusmriti or Aryan-Brahminical interpretation of caste as divine arrangement was not integral to the cultural universe or worldview of the ancient Tamils. The beginnings and early inroads of the Aryan-Brahminical account of caste could be traced to later period of Sangam era. The ancient religion of Tamils was based on folk traditions. The worship of nature and natural elements were more common. The worship of Murugan among the tribes of Tamil Nadu and the cult worship of Murugan as the warrior God was based on folk culture. An earthly composition of God is rooted in the Tamil - Dravidian traditions. It was only after the sixth century AD(CE), inscriptions were written in Tamil as well as Sanskrit. Sanskritisation gradually spread to public space with the evoking of the doctrines of benevolence to Brahmin(s) and divine blessings to the king .

The seeking of blessings from the Brahmin soon became a source of legitimacy for the Tamil king after this period. Along with the Sanskritisation, Vedic rituals, worship and orientation to social (caste) system as advocated in Manusmriti found their passage to transform the

professionally stratified class structure of Dravidian society into a hierarchically classified social (caste) system with Vedic divine sanctions.

The State and king were being seen as one and the same. The hereditary principle and evoking of divine rights with earthly symbols were prevalent among the Tamil kings. The idea of territorial State provided inherent reconciliation to the changing dynasties and geographical changes as boundaries of principalities were drawn and redrawn. The governing principles of power and location of monarchy also moved from culture specific to power centric based on authority. Thus in later period, during the post-Sangam era, the king gradually became the sole source of authority.

The Pallavas maintained that as they were the descendants of Brahma, the kingship was of divine origin and was hereditary. The Pallava period witnessed the penetration of the Aryan culture of North India into the South as well as the assimilation of some of the patterns, ideas and institutions and rejection or modification of certain other aspects. Tamil devotional culture was one of the results of this interaction as revealed by the themes and dedication of deity at temples.

Women were highly respected and performed a variety of jobs and duties including as bodyguards to the kings, yet power and authority rested with men. Women participated in public assemblies but rulers and administrators were mostly men. Women formed significant part of social rituals and functioned as pivots of the family despite the inheritance rights and formal authority remained with men.

In narrating the role and status of women in Tamil society we need to mention about the tradition of Avvaiyar (meaning respectable women). More than a name, this was a title, literary canon, given to distinguished women who made contributions to Tamil literature. There were as many as four to six women who held this Tamil literary canon title at different times based on different sources.

Avvaiyars of Sangam age and Cholas age are best known for their extraordinary influence upon literature, culture, moral universe, nature of polity, war, peace and the art of diplomacy. Sangam age Avvaiyar lived during the 1st and 2nd century AD(CE). King Athiyaman Neduman Anchi of the Velir Dynasty was her chief patron and considered as contemporary

of literary legends Thiruvalluvar and Kabilar with notable contribution of verses in Natrinai, Kuruntogai, Akananooru and Purananooru. She is also credited as the most gracious and scholarly diplomat who undertook diplomatic missions for King Adhiyaman Neduman Anchi. Avvaiyar, a poetess and friend of King Adhiyaman, ruler of Tagadur, is supposed to have helped in avoiding war between two kingdom states.

King Thondaiman, ruler of Kanchipuram, had sent him a note declaring his intention to attack Thagadur Avvaiyar spoke “Oh Thondiaman, how different indeed are your clean and shiny weapons from those of Adiyaman, always stained with blood and under repair.”

Thondaiman had far less experience in war and was unlikely to win – she was making this clear under the guise of praise. Another famous Avvaiyar was from the Cholas age, around 10th Century AD(CE), who wrote moral universe for children and advocated ethical principles for all. Whilst her works Aathichoodi and Konraiventhan were written for young children, Mooturai and Nalvazhi were written for older children.

## **Thirukkural**

All these classical works not only reveal the cultural and literary traditions of the ancient Tamils. They also serve as historical testimony to the nature of Tamil society, socio-cultural and religious beliefs, livelihood, vocations, professions, role and status of women, marriage, gender, class structure, origins of caste system, kinship, polity, governance, ideas of justice, wars, peace, diplomacy, naval warfare, maritime traditions, trade, commerce, shipbuilding and seafaring skills, economy, land, water systems, agriculture, art, dance, poetry, music, architecture and relationship with the neighbouring countries and far away places.

## **Introduction**

Politics intends to create change-oriented awareness in the society. It is not necessary to adopt and follow the existing social system which the present politics do. This awareness can be initiated by ideas and ideologies of society-laden thinkers.

With the advancement of civilization to the next stage through socio-economic and technocratic developments, emerging new ideas got

stumbled by the existing belief system and functions followed until now. Albeit of these stumbling blocks, the constructive impact made by the thinkers and thinking is ever-lasting on the basis of mind-capturing of the people. Ideas are dangerous than the technocratic revolution, positively. Quite apart, pen is more powerful than sword.

**In your note draw three columns as given in the text book**

POLITICS		
what I know?	what I want to know?	what I have learnt?

**The definite part of thinkers is as follows:**

- ❖ Being the basis for the social changes and subsequent events including the change in the public minds;
- ❖ Having taken political decisions which had an impact on social turning points;
- ❖ Serving as best brains behind the major political decisions which has benefitted the diversified communities;
- ❖ To convert social ideas into common which assisted people's advancement belonging to various communities

New political ideas are supported by the activities of the political thinkers which kindles interest and rational thinking of the common people. The interaction of those thinkers with the contemporary society makes a new framework for the entire system. New political decisions which intend to create great changes for the emerging generations were undertaken. The day-to-day life of common people may be engulfed with many changes by the political decision of the thinkers. At world level these kind of thinkers made changes in the socio-political systems. Such great thinkers made their extra-ordinary presence throughout the past centuries in India in general and Tamilnadu in particular.

National political thinkers, Tamil political thinkers, Socialist thinkers, Thinkers of social justice are the different parts of modern categorization. In this part we can discuss about different political thinkers of Tamilnadu who made out-standing contribution for the social changes.

Political ideologies in Tamilnadu is rich with ideas, beliefs, opinions and attitudes towards society, polity and economy. This is evident from the ancient political ideas of Thiruvalluvar, where as Bharathiyar is a nationalist and Singaravelar is a communist. According to periyar, Dravidian ideology focuses on social justice. The political ideologies in Tamil Nadu are a combination of all three left, Right and centre ideologies.

### **Ancient Political Ideas Thiruvalluvar**

In Arathupal of Thirukkural, Valluvar was a great enunciator of morals; In Inbathupal, he has become a poet and in Porutpal, he is known to be a political philosopher. The political philosophy of Thiruvalluvar is applicable across times even today.

### **Seven Parts in Porutpal**

Porutpal consists of 7 parts, further it has 70 verses / couplets. They are Politics-25, Ministry-10, Defence-2, Wealth-1, Army-2, Friendship-17, and citizens-13 respectively.

“ ஂறெ குடி கூழ்அறமச்சு நட்ர்ண் ஆறும்  
உறைொன அரெருள் ஏறு “ (குைள்: 381)

“ An army, people, wealth, a minister, friends, fort; six things  
Who owns them all, a lion lives amid the kings”  
(Kural: 381)

Thus, in porutpal, at the first verse itself valluvar differentiated the six categories essential for a state. Thus, different parts of government are ministry, army, wealth, people, friendship and citizens, which determines the rule of a king. Moreover, these components are categorized for king in a separate way, thus contributing a lot of ideas regarding administration of a state and assets for a king.

### **Nature of a king - 25 Chapters**

In porutpal, Valluvar mentioned about nature of a king in detailed manner in 25 chapters starting from Qualities of ruler (Iraimatchi - chapter

39) to idukkan azhaiyaamai (Unfazed in the face of trouble – chapter 63) in 25 chapters, in the name of “Arasar”, “Vender”, “Nilan Aandavar” “Mannavar” he has indicated 46 times about the king.

The King must possess the leadership qualities such as, Education (40), Listening Ability (42), Wisdom (43), Fending off Faults (44), Seeking the company of great men (45), Avoiding mean-minded (46) Rationality (47), Priority for time for action (51), Assessing and Assigning tasks (52), Embracing the Kin (53), Doing duty without forgetting (54), Justice (55), Knowing the right place (50), Refraining from Terrifying Deeds (57), Compassion (58), Espionage (59), Spirit (60), To avoid laziness (61), Perseverance (62) and Determination (63) which should be the requisites of a king. These above-mentioned qualities may also be possessed by good people.

### Ideas on Democracy

Valluvar lived in the period of monarchy. However, his ideas and ideals are also applicable for the present leaders of democracy. He also indicated the nature of state and government in the king’s rule. The words of Valluvar regarding government and state is applicable and suitable to all over the period as well as every organization in the world.

### Welfare state and King

To put it in simple words, Valluvar’s political system is based on welfare state. For instance, in Iramatchi (Qualities of a ruler), he says

முறைசெய்து காப்பாற்றும் மன்னவன் மக்க ட்கு  
இறையென்று வைக்கப்படும். (குறள்: 388)

Who guards the realm and justice strict maintains,  
That king as god over subject people reigns.

(Kural: 388)

If a king delivered justice by doing the duties honestly, he may be regarded as a God. Ideal path and welfare – arrived kings can be respected and kept on par with divine. This kind of view is not only applicable to monarchical period but it also applicable to present democratic period.



## Features of State

The characteristics of a state is to maintain ethics, the eradication of wrong doing activity, mandating impartiality of justice and protection of honour.

அறனிமுக்கா தல்லவை நீக் கி மறனிமுக்கா  
மானம் உடைய தரசு (குறள்: 384)

Kingship, in virtue failing not, all vice restrains,  
In courage failing not, it honour's grace maintains.

(Kural: 384)

King's path is the peoples' path, king should act as a guide for his subjects, if he does harm or evil activities, it may influence all. It is because of his position as a leader, his discipline and private life will spread to all in the kingdom. Moral and ethical life is quite essential for the ruling kings. Indicating "Respect" in a broad manner relating it with nation, Valluvar gave priority for great honour which may be equated with the courage. He stressed that king must be loyal to the nation, it is the honour of nation.

## Ideal State and Welfare of people

In the monarchical rule, the integrity and ideal governance for all periods were advocated by Valluvar. People of all regions expect rain for their growth; likewise, citizens of a nation expect integrity and ideal rule of the king.

வானஊக் கி வாழும் உலகெ ல்லா ம் மன்னவன்  
கஊ ல்நோக் கி வாழுங் குடி. (குறள்: 542)

All earth looks up to heaven where raindrops fall;  
All subjects look to king that ruleth all.

(Kural: 542)

In this couplet Valluvar indicates "Kol" as ideal rule which not only applies for monarchy but also for democracy.

குடிதழீஇக் கஊலோ ச்சும் மாநில மன்னன்

அடிதழீஇ நிற்கும் உலகு. (குறள் 544)

Whose heart embraces subjects all, lord over mighty land  
Who rules, the world his feet embracing stands.

(Kural: 544)

This means that for a King, who protects his citizens with love and affection, his feet will be embraced by his subjects with love. This is an everlasting phrase propounded by Valluvar related to good governance.

### Against Tyranny

In the chapter “Kodungonmai”, (Cruel Scepter) Valluvar explained it in negative words. The suppressive and exploitative rule of evil king may kindle unknown and indefinite agonies among the people. Those tears are most powerful and may annihilate the entire kingdom.

அல்லற்பட்டு ஆற்றா து அழுதகண் ணீரன்றே  
செல்வத்தைத் தே ய்க் கும் பட றை (குறள் 555)

His people’s tears of sorrow past endurance, are not they  
Sharp instrument to wear the marches wealth away.

(Kural: 555)

Sad tears of suffering citizens may dethrone and destroy the entire government, says Thiruvalluvar. Tears were equated with army, thus Valluvar’s visualization stands unique among others.

Autocrats and Dictators like Hitler, Mussolini and Czar were the negative players for whom, Thirukkural served as a funeral sound.

### Government’s Budget

A king should be an able handed administrator in increasing the income of government. Further he should be an expert in handling the budget.

In Iramatchi, he said,

இயற்ற லும் ஈட்ட லும் காத்த லும் காத்த  
வகுத்த லும் வல்ல தரசு. (குறள் 385)

A king is he who treasure gains, stores up, defends,  
And duly for his kingdom's weal expends.  
(Kural: 385)

At first point, a king should search for the different sources of income. For this, he calls it as "Iyatral". Then, the second point is that, all such resources should be put together, which is called as "Ettal". Third, the resources thus collected must be protected with all precautionary measures which is called as "Kaathal"

Fourth one, is most important (i.e) allotting the resources to various sectors for the welfare of the people, this he called it as "Vagutthal". Thus iyatral, eettal, kaathal and vagutthal are the four ways of utilizing the income to be expertise by the king of nation. It is a primary duty of the king.

These innovative and practical ideas were accepted by political and as well as economic exponents as the basic idea of socialistic society.

### **Relevance of Thiruvalluvar**

The Educational qualities that are indicated by Valluvar for a king may also apply to the citizens. Thus, he used the words "Idukkan Ariyamai", "Kalvi" for "Vazhum Uyirku", "Maandharkku" which is for all the people.

The political ideas advocated by Valluvar in porutpal highly circumvent around morals and noble principles. "People's-welfare" is the basic foundation of his contribution.

To put it in a different way, Valluvar's contribution to politics is applicable to the present democratic governance for the welfare of all the people.

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The political ideas advocated by Valluvar in porutpal highly circumvent around morals and noble principles. “People’s-welfare” is the basic foundation of his contribution.

To put it in a different way Valluvar’s contribution to politics is majorly applicable to the present democratic governance for the great welfare of all the people.

### Thirukkural – A truly secular book

The very first observation about the Kural is the fact that it is a secular book. During the days of Valluvar many religion existed in India. There were Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs, Hindus as well as agnostics and atheists. But secularism as a concept was unknown. Valluvar himself was a believer and he has devoted one chapter to praise of God. He must have observed a particular religion. But in his book he advocates no religion, he does not even refer to any religion.

The ancient Indian law-giver Manu and the ancient Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle maintained with absolute certainty that human beings were not born equal. This popular view is accepted in all civilizations over centuries. Valluvar, the philosopher poet, held a radically different view. He says:

“ All human beings are equal by birth; but differ as regards characteristics because of the different qualities of their actions.” (Kural 972)

### Nationalism Subramaniya Bharathiyar (1882 - 1921)

We shall not look at caste or religion, All human beings in this land, whether they be those who preach the vedas or who belong to other castes are one.

-Subramaniya Bharati

C. Subramaniya Bharathiyar was a poet, freedom fighter and social reformer from Tamil Nadu. He was known as Mahakavi Bharathiyar and

the laudatory epithet Mahakavi means a great poet. He is considered as one of India's greatest poets. His songs on nationalism and freedom of India helped to rally the masses to support the Indian Independence Movement in Tamil Nadu.

### **Bharathi: A poet and a Nationalist**

“We may have thousand of sects; that, however, does not justify a foreign invasion.”

Significantly, a new age in Tamil literature began with Subramaniya Bharathi. Most part of his compositions are classifiable as short lyrical outpourings on patriotic, devotional and mystic themes. Bharathi was essentially a lyrical poet. “Kannan Pattu” “Nilavum Vanminum Katrum” “Panchali Sabatham” “Kuyil Pattu” are examples of Bharathi's great poetic output.

Bharathi is considered as a national poet due to his number of poems of the patriotic flavour through which he exhorted the people to join the independence struggle and work vigorously for the liberation of the country. Instead of merely being proud of his country he also outlined his vision for a free India. He published the sensational “Sudesa Geethangal” in 1908.

Bharathiyar's "Panchali Sabatham" (The vow of Draupadi) is an iconic work that pictures India as Draupadi, the British, the Kauravas and the freedom fighters as Pandavas. Through Draupadi's struggle, he euphemised the struggle of mother India under British rule.

### **Bharathi as a Journalist**

Many years of Bharathi's life were spent in the field of journalism, Bharathi, as a young man began his career as a journalist and as a sub-editor in “Swadesamitran” in November 1904. “India” saw the light of the day in May, 1906. It declared as its motto the three slogans of the French Revolution, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. It blazed a new trail in Tamil Journalism. In order to proclaim its revolutionary ardour, Bharathi had the weekly printed in red paper. “India” was the first paper in Tamil Nadu to publish political cartoons. He also edited and published 'Vijaya', a Tamil

daily “Bala Bharatha” an English monthly, and 'Suryothayam' a local weekly of Pondicherry.

It is not surprising therefore that soon a warrant was waiting at the door of the “India” office for the arrest of the editor of the magazine. It was because of this worsening situation in 1908 that Bharathi decided to go away to Pondicherry, a French territory at that time, and continue to publish the “India” magazine. Bharathi resided in Pondicherry for sometime to escape the wrath of the British imperialists.

In Madras, in 1908, he organised a mammoth public meeting to celebrate ‘Swaraj Day’. His poems ‘Vanthe Matharam’, ‘Enthayum Thayum’, ‘Jaya Bharath’ were printed and distributed free to the Tamil People.

Subramaniya Bharathiyar was born on 11th December 1882, in a village called Ettayapuram in Tirunelveli District in Tamil Nadu and his childhood name was Subbiah. His father was Chinnaswamy and his mother was Lakshmi Ammal.

At the age of seven, he started writing poems in Tamil. When he was eleven, he wrote in such a way that even learned men praised him for his great knowledge and skill. In the eleventh year, Subbiah felt that he had to establish his credentials. He threw a challenge to the eminent men in the assembly of scholars that they should have a contest with him in a debate on any subject without any previous notice or preparation. The contest was held at a special sitting of the Ettayapuram Durbar at which the Rajah (the ruler) himself was present. The subject chosen was “Education”. Subbiah efficiently won the debate. This was a memorable moment in Subbiah’s life. The boy who was till then referred to as “Ettayapuram Subbiah” came henceforth to be known as “Bharathi”, and later he was respectfully referred to as “Bharathiar” by nationalists and by millions of Tamil lovers all over the globe.

In June 1897, Bharathi was hardly fifteen when his marriage took place, and his bride was Chellammal. Bharathi left for Benaras which was also known as Kashi and Varanasi. He spent there the next two years with his aunt Kuppammal and her husband Krishna Sivan. Speedily gaining a fair knowledge of Sanskrit, Hindi and English, he duly passed with credit the Entrance Examination of the Allahabad University. The Banaras stay

brought about a tremendous change in Bharathi's personality. Outwardly, he sported a moustache and a Sikh turban and acquired a bold swing in his walk.

During his exile, Bharathi had the opportunity to mingle with many leaders of the militant wing of the independence movement such as Aurobindo, Lajpat Rai and V.V.Subramaniam who had also sought asylum in the French ruled Pondicherry. The most profitable years of Bharathi's life were the ten years he spent in Pondicherry. From Pondicherry, he guided the Tamil youth of Madras to tread in the path of nationalism. This increased the anger of the British towards Bharathi's writings as they felt that it was his writings that induce and influence the patriotic spirit of the Tamil youth. Bharathi met Mahatma Gandhi in 1919 in Rajaji's home at Madras. Bharathi entered British India near Cuddalore in November 1918 and was promptly arrested. Even in prison, he spent his time in writing poems on freedom, nationalism and country's welfare.

In his early days of youth he had good relations with Nationalist Tamil Leaders like V.O.Chidambaram, Subramanya Siva, Mandayam Thirumalachariar and Srinivasachari. Along with these leaders he used to discuss the problems facing the country due to British rule. Bharathi used to attend the Annual sessions of Indian National Congress and discuss national issues with extremist Indian National Leaders like Bipin Chandra Pal, B.G. Tilak and V.V.Subramaniam. His participation and activities in Benaras Session (1905) and Surat Session (1907) of the Indian National Congress impressed many national leaders about his patriotic fervour. Bharathi had maintained good relations with some of the national leaders and shared his thoughts and views on the nation and offered his suggestions to strengthen the nationalist movement. Undoubtedly, his wise suggestions and steadfast support to the cause of nationalism rejuvenated many national leaders. Thus Bharathi played a pivotal role in the freedom of India.

### **Bharathiyar as a social reformer**

Bharathi was also against caste system. He declared that there were only two castes-men and women and nothing more than that. Above all, he himself had removed his sacred thread. He had also adorned many scheduled caste people with sacred thread. He used to take tea sold in

shops run by Muslims. He along with his family members attended church on all festival occasions. He advocated temple entry of Dalits. For all his reforms, he had to face opposition from his neighbours. But Bharathi was very clear that unless Indians unite as children of Mother India, they could not achieve freedom. He believed in women's rights, gender equality and women emancipation. He opposed child marriage, dowry system and supported widow remarriage.

His meeting with Sister Nivedita, Swami Vivekananda's disciple, added women's rights to his already wide repertoire of social issues from caste to Independence to spiritualism. He took up the symbolism of Shakthi as the image of modern women; powerful, strong, independent and equal partners to men.

"World will prosper in knowledge and intellect, if both men and woman are deemed equal."

-Subramaniya Bharathiyar

## **Bharathiyar - A Visionary**

Bharathi as a poet, journalist, freedom fighter and social reformer had made a great impact not only on the Tamil society but also on the entire human society. He followed what all he preached and it is here that his greatness is manifested. His prophecy during the colonial period about the independence of India came true after two and half decades after his demise. His vision about a glorious India has been taking a shape in the post-Independence era. Bharathi did not live for himself but for the people and nation. That is why he is respectfully called as Bharathiyar. Even today, after many decades, Subramaniya Bharathiyar stands as an undying symbol of Indian freedom and vibrant Tamil nationalism.

Bharathiyar passed away on 11th September 1921. It was a travesty that only 14 people attended his funeral, fearing repercussion from the British and caste ostracisation.

The emergence of Swadeshi and Home rule movement in India in the initial part of 20th century aroused the thirst for freedom. Reforms were made in Hindu religion in accordance with the existing society. These



movements played a key role in creating the feeling of Indianness and Nationalism in the political Scenario.

But these movements are religious in nature. Moreover, those who participated in these movements are from upper social class. Freedom sought by these people are political in nature neglecting the interests and economic upliftment of farmers and labourers. This affected the majority Indians who are poor and belong to farmers community. Further, caste discrimination existed within Congress Party. Particularly, in Tamilnadu there existed a clear difference between brahmins and non-brahmins.

In this context, Singaravelar played a pivotal role in spreading rational ideas and scientific perception in to politics. He also played a key role in connecting welfare of farmers and workers in to freedom struggle and spreading socialist thinking in to politics.

### **Impact of Singaravelar's Ideas on Congress Party**

The British empire which exported the raw materials in the initial stages started industries later in India as the demand increased. This worsened common people's life standards. They are ready to work even for meagre wages. Hence, those who are employed were treated as slaves. Even a minor protests by the employees were suppressed with iron hands. More labour organizations emerged to protect the rights of working class. These organizations were headed by Thiru.V.Kalyanasundaranar and D.Varadharajalu in the Madras presidency. It was Singaravelar who took major efforts in the emergence of labour organizations in Madras presidency.

Singaravelar wanted to sensitize the workers on politics and wanted to engage them in the freedom struggle. But Congress Party did not accept this idea of Singaravelar. Singaravelar criticised it vehemently and send telegraphs to Congress high command, following this, he wrote a letter to Mahatma Gandhi. Further, he also wrote about this issue on the popular dailies Swadesamitran, The Hindu, and magazines like Navasakthi. He also propagated this among congress workers. In this juncture, he participated in the Congress Committee (1922) meeting as a representative of Tamilnadu, there also he explained the following demands and sought support from Congress members.

TMTM

- ❖ Indian freedom includes economic freedom of workers and farmers.
- ❖ The welfare of farmers and labourers should also be the motto of Congress party.<sup>TM™</sup>
- ❖ Farmers and labourers must be included in the Indian national movement.<sup>TM™</sup>
- ❖ Congress leaders should help to raise masses from different organization.

In consequent with this, in 1922, Indian National Congress, passed a resolution to raise people from various organizations. A six member committee was constituted, in which M. Singaravelar was appointed as a member. In addition to this, he also fought for the protection of labour rights. He emphasized this demand by writing in all popular dailies. As an outcome, labour protective law was passed in 1926, in India. Moreover, he advised for speaking in vernacular languages. Only then, he believed that the ideas will reach all the people. So, that leaders and people can maintain good relations. He is also determined to speak in Tamil, when speaking about the issues of Tamilnadu people.

In 1918, a resolution regarding this was passed during Chennai Presidency Association Conference. Singaravelar and Periyar were the dignitaries in this conference.

### **Singaravelar's Impact on Self-Respect and Communist Movements:**

When Periyar resigned from Congress Party citing the existence of Brahmin and Non-Brahmin divide and discrimination in the party, Singaravelar supported the action of Periyar. After visiting USSR, Periyar was influenced by the Communist ideals. He changed the name of self-respect movement to Self-Respect Social Justice Party. Singaravelar made his contribution in framing the policies and principles of the movement. He also wrote extensively in Periyar's Republic magazine against superstitious beliefs. These writings were simple and can be understood easily.

Singaravelar has a deep faith in the philosophy of Communism. He urged the Congress party to support labour organizations. In the name of Madras Socialists, he telegraphed Congress High Command. In all the Congress Committee meetings he argued as a Communist representative.

In 1923, it was he, who organized the first May Day celebrations in Chennai. In the same day, he announced the formation of labour-farmer political party. The demands of his new political party are

TMTM

❖ **Eight hours work**

❖ TMTM

❖ **Right to form union**

❖ TMTM

❖ **Right to strike as a last resort to pressure labour demands.**

❖ TMTM

❖ **Three level committees for reviewing the demands.**

❖ TMTM

❖ **Minimum wages**

❖ TMTM

❖ **Shelter with basic amenities**

❖ TMTM

❖ **Medical and life Insurance**

❖ TMTM

❖ **Provident fund facility**

❖ TMTM

❖ **Earned leave**

❖ TMTM

❖ **Free Medical assistance**

❖ TMTM

❖ **Maternity leave**

❖ TMTM

❖ **Put an end to contract basis**

### **For Farmers**

TMTM

❖ **Free water for agriculture<sup>TMTM</sup>**

❖ **Abolition of Zamindari system**

### **For People**

TMTM

❖ **Voting rights for all**

❖ **Right to contest in elections for poor, labour and farmer communities.**

First socialist conference was headed by Singaravelar in 1925, in Kanpur. He spoke about socialism without violence. Also, he resolved for

adopting Communism according to Indian circumstances. A socialist should play a role by being in the member of Congress Party, he advised. Eventually, Socialist block was formed inside the Congress Party.

## Life and Services

Since his childhood Singaravelar did not believe in the Varna System and superstitious belief. As a result of this, he established Buddhist Association and propagated against Varna System and superstitious beliefs during 1880 itself.

Born in a rich family and well versed with law, he served as a member in Chennai Municipality and also in health sector. Due to the endemic diseases in the down-trodden areas, he gave priority to health and education. He also fought for rights of labourers. Based on this, he played active role in Congress Party. Later, he joined in Periyar's Self - Respect movement.

Though he entered into politics after he crossed the age of 50, he actively propagated and wrote about communist ideas for more than thirty years. He was fondly remembered and called as the first communist of south India.

## Dravidian Ideology Periyar (1879-1973)

### Introduction

Periyar E.V.Ramasamy is regarded as the best political thinker in Tamilnadu. This is because he is the foremost reformist in our state. Let us see about him in detail in this lesson.

The original name of Periyar is E.V.Ramasamy. He was born in the year 1879 in an affluent business family in Erode. Even during his youth, Periyar criticized the superstitious beliefs in his family and surroundings. He did not enter politics at the early stages of his career. But still, he occupied posts like chairman of Erode municipality.

Periyar fought against superstitious beliefs, enslavement of women and social backwardness which existed in Tamilnadu from time immemorial based on his wisdom and self-respect throughout his life. It is

because of this, he is fondly called as ‘Thanthai Periyar’. Various scholars on Social Justice say that the Dravidian ideology enunciated by Periyar on cultural lines shines all around our country.

Periyar was attracted towards Gandhi’s entry into politics and hence joined congress and became actively participating in freedom movement and social reforms. During that period in 1920’s Congress was dominated by upper class people. But Periyar took Congress to the down trodden and successfully organized temple entry movements as a true Congress man. Periyar was very much disgruntled by the practice of Varnashrama in Congress party and left it. He joined Justice party and formed the self respect movement later. After this, the contributions and activities of Periyar became inseparable from the politics of India and Tamilnadu in particular.

In the name of nation, if a group of people exploit other groups that is not the real freedom which a nation fought for, said Periyar alias E.V. Ramasamy. Periyar vociferously criticized against Nation, Race and Nationalism at various levels. All Nation, nationality and nationalism are similarly related concepts. All these differentiations indicate the “Self Respect” of the entire population of a country. If anybody speaks about nationalism in Tamilnadu, I wonder, that will they think about “welfare or botheration about people” questioned Periyar.

### **Nationalism as exploitation**

There are people who may not bother about Indians, Tamilians and the self-respect of the people. They deceive people to believe in nation and nationalism for their own welfare and betterment. If self-respect is submerged in the name of nation and nationalism that will be the crime against India, stated Periyar.

### **An iconoclast and rationalist social reformer**

#### **His work and his legacy**

For the average Tamil, Periyar today is an ideology. He stands for a politics that foregrounded social equality, self-respect, and linguistic pride. As a social reformer, he focused on social, cultural and gender inequalities, and his reform agenda questioned matters of faith, gender and tradition. He asked people to be rational in their life choices. He argued that women

needed to be independent, not mere child-bearers, and insisted that they be allowed a equal share in employment. The Self Respect Movement he led promoted weddings without rituals, and sanctioned property as well as divorce rights for women. He appealed to people to give up the caste suffix in their names, and do not mention caste. He instituted inter-dining with food cooked by Dalits in public conferences in the 1930s.

Over the years, Periyar has transcended the political divide as well as the faultlines of religion and caste, and come to be revered as Thanthai Periyar, the father figure of modern Tamil Nadu.

Courtesy ; Arun Janardhanan, The New Indian Express, 13.3.2018.

Nationalism is an unreal feeling. Since National feeling is nothing but a conspiracy framed by rich and power-centered, people who deceive the other people by controlling the negative emotions. It is a false assumption, propagated by these upper rich communities in order to curtail the rights of the poor community.

Nationalism has become a buzz word of addictiveness and emotionalist for the people, he exclaimed.

### **Global Nationalism - A Denial**

Periyar in his speech in Sri-Lanka, opposed strongly against Nation and Nationalism when others used 'Indian Nationalism' as a weapon, Periyar spoke against these factors. He has also shown about other nations, nationalistic feeling apart from Indian Nationalism.

It is to treat people as scapegoat, Capitalist Class along with other similar people, Patriotic feeling was misused, said Periyar.

For instance, if rich communities in U.K have any clash with USA or vice-versa they may give clarion call as "Oh ! Britons, Patriots, our nation is under threat". Such kind of false words is only for their economic advancement and not for the poor communities. Erstwhile, Russia has many races and cultural groups, but there is no discrimination in that nation. He also supported communist revolution. These nations which are free of nationalism, religion and God may not be affected with luxurious

life styles, poverty and exploitation by rich community. Those people may not stick upon with national and godly attachments. Equality and egalitarian society is the only priority of that place. There will not be any discrimination like rich-poor, owner-worker, powerful-powerless in that region. Those people of high value and egalitarian-longing are not equal to the nation which gives priority for God and Nationalism.

By showing other nations as evidences, Periyar also criticized Indian nationalistic feelings and patriotism. Because these feelings are exploited as weapons by certain dominant groups.

### **India - A Land of Diversities**

Whether “Nation” as a concept is suitable for India? Periyar raised a pertinent question and answer as well.

“Madras is not a separate nation and cannot function separately,” says some of our friends. Once ‘Madras’ was a nation. Also now, “Dravidam” it is. The culture and other practices are different from Bengal and Mumbai. English language is the main base for the familiarly among these different nations in India. If British Empire and its language is relieved from India, Hindi may become the national language. Instead of calling India as a nation, Dravida Nadu, Andhra, Bengal can be separately called as nations respectively. For instance, Dravidian nation had its culture, language, civilization and rule for thousands of years on accordance with historical facts. Undoubtedly it is known to all the people.

“Dravidian Nationalism” proposed by Periyar was to a large extent against religious dominations.

### **On Language**

Each and everyone have their own rights to protect their languages. These rights can be protected and provided under Dravida, Socialist Republic Rule. No language can be enforced.

Language should not be misused as weapon for separatism. If people are dependent upon Central rule for all kinds of amenities, there is no outcome in it. If languages are officialised at Central level, will the poor people relieve out of hunger?

To put it in clear way, are Tamil labourers exploited only by the Tamil speaking owner class?

## **Casteless Society**

Periyar's protests and speeches always centre around, "Tamilnadu for Tamils and Dravidian nation for Dravidians." His ideologies include Common plan, common work plan, Islamic conversion, separate Dravidian nation for which he fought against the dominant communities.

His argument was that the dominant communities misused Tamil, Tamil nationalism, Tamil race for sustaining the power in Tamilnadu. It is with the help of Tamil leaders, they injected Tamil nationalism in the minds of the people for holding the power for a long time he said. Consequently, Periyar put an end to the demand of separate Tamilnadu and upheld the ideal of casteless society.

Thus, casteless society has become the top most priority for Periyar. Other ideals like separate Dravidian nation, abounding dominant communities, distortion of capitalist class became secondary priorities for Periyar.

This may be the only ambition and goals for Dravida Kazhagam, claimed Periyar. "The caste feeling, thus divided the Dravidian race and Dravidians became slaves for Aryans" stated Periyar in his writings published in the 1950's in Tamilnadu.