

Role Of E.V. R. Periyar In The Dravidian Press And The Social Transformation

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Abstract

The Social revolution of twentieth century in Tamil Nadu led by the Dravidian movement and its Press. The movement and the press aroused awareness among the masses on the subjects like God, Caste, religion and Superstitions through its speeches and writings. Remarkable changes were occurred in the socio-economic life of Tamilians. The Press fought for multiple objectives such as Prevention of Child marriage, self-respect marriage, widow re-marriage. Abolition of Courtesans, class rights, reservation and soon. Also the Statistical facts Published by press highlighted use need to end dominance of Brahmins and to elevate the life of backward classes and depressed castes in socio economic and political spheres. In this struggle Periyar's Tamil journals namely, kudiArasu,(Republic) Puratchi,(Revolution) Pahutharivu (Rational),viduthalai (Freedom),unmai(Truth), Dravidan and the English journals like Revolt, Justice, were largely contributed. The 'Modern Rationalist' was also in the fray for social liberation and renaissance. These journals continued to spread the policies and opinions of the South Indian Lebral Association, Justice Party, Self-Respect Movement, Dravidar Kazhagam and Dravida Munetra Kazhagam.

Eighty Five years back when there was no Constitution, much less a Directive Principle in the Constitution and when the concept of social justice was unknown in this country, there appeared in the horizon of Tamil Nadu a Missionary, a born crusader against social inequalities and injustice and a known and confirmed heretic. Who thundered that a caste-based hierarchical system is a social anachronism and dinosaur of a by-gone Vedic age that deserves to perish. The social revolutionary who so thundered and raised his voice

against social injustice is none other than E.V.Ramasami, the Father figure of Tamil Nadu and popularly known to the entire Tamil Nadu and the neighboring southern states and reverentially addressed as “THANTHAI PERIYAR”¹. At the end of 19th century and in the beginning of 20th century, most of the journals Published in Tamil Nadu were aimed at Social renaissance. Among these, Periyar’s journals opposed the dominance of Brahmins in support of the progress of the suppressed and oppressed people. The notable Press which conveyed their revolutionary ideas were, Karal Mark’s Rainish Journal, German French Journals of History, Lenin’s Iskara, Saria, Rayochiaand Kasetha, Ho-si-min’s journal veithlab, Dr.Ambedkar’s Janatha, Bahiskrith and Bharath. On the same line periyar established journals for social justice rather than political freedom.² Before the advent of Constitution there was an unjust social order in this country. The Hindu VARNSHRAMA DHARMA and the caste system pitchforked Brahmins as a highly privileged class with a high hereditary social status. Learning was their prerogative and monopoly. The Hindu social structure branded the vast majority of people as ‘SUDHRAS’ and ‘PANCHAMAS’ fit for manual labour only. Deprived of educational oppourtunities and codemned to a low status, they suffered social oppression and ostracism. A claim to privilege is the worst from of evil in society. Hindu religion never recognized the democratic concept that all men are born equal. It is most undemocratic as it confers a hereditary high social status to Brahmins and relegates all the non-Brahmins to a low social status and stamp them as Sudhras, fit only for manual labour. The arbitrary and unjust division of the society into Brahmins, Sudhras and panchamas and the hereditary high social status accorded to the Brahmins and their dominance in all spheres with meek acceptance by the rest of the society resulted in gross social injustice in this country. The caste based social system assigned a hierarchical position to each caste giving rise to conflict and disharmony. The caste system with its differential treatment stood for negation of social justice. Thanthai Periyar E.V Ramasamy championed the cause of all the communities from the day of his entry into public life till the day of his death. He joined the All India Congress Party in 1919 on the specific understanding that the Congress would work for the salvation of the suffering non-Brahmin communities. As a Congressman and follower of Gandhi, he sincerely worked to strengthen the Congress Movement countering the justice Party activities. His contributions to Khadder Movement, Prohibition, Eradication of Untouchability, and other causes are all glorious pages in the annals of the Congress

Party. The Brahmins exhibited their communalism at the Kancheepuram Session of the Tamil Nadu Congress in Nov. 1925 by rejecting his resolution demanding communal representation in all walks of public life, he quit the Congress, establishing the fact that the Congress Party was meant only to safeguard the interests of the Brahmin community. His writings in "Kudi Arasu" dated 6.12.1925 reveal us many facts of historical importance.

In his journal, he stressed that 'our country should be superior in the fields of politics, economics, sociology and overall in ethics. Each and every community should be developed and mere national patriotism is not enough. Among the people, self-respect, equality and fraternity should be the motto of every individual in the society. In human society the feeling of self-respect and brotherhood should be flourished.³ The thought 'oneness of human being's must prevailed and communal hatred and clashes should not be happened. Further, he said every community having into representation with equality and to have their stakes. He further mentioned that this was released through the Board standing order 125 in the year 1840. The class right representation of untouchability communities was more essential than the communal representations on Non Brahmins. Eradication of untouchability is one of the most important progress of the Non-Brahmins, in all aspects. He appealed through the journals that India could be attained self-rule by mean of abolishing untouchability. To develop the self-respect movement among the people a man should protect his self-esteem which was his birth right. Self-rule was not considered important when there was no self-respect. Self-respect was important for a man who had no Self-government.⁴ Periyar's Propaganda, Writing in 'Kudi Arasu' on 13.4.1926, Periyar Ramasami condemned the British Government and the Brahmins for putting up hurdles in realizing communal representation. The Brahmins opposed the policy purely out of self interests. The Britishers tried to prolong their rule in India by creating a split amongst the different Indian communities. Accordingly they sowed the seeds of dissension and hatred among people. If communal representation had been awarded during the 150-year British rule, the vast majority of the non-Brahmins would have progressed and prospered. In an editorial written in 'Kudi Arasu' on 21.11.1926, Periyar E.V. Ramasami demanded reservation in administration besides in the Legislature. He wrote: "Ever since the talk of Indianisation of Services, only the Brahmins have been opposing the wholesome policy of the communal representation. "The Brahmins in Tamil Nadu are cunningly postponing the issue. The are

putting up all sorts of obstacles in implementing the policy. The government itself had condescended to accept this policy. Periyar E.V. Ramasami wrote a series of articles in 'Kudi Arasu' exposing the mean minded and mischievous propaganda of the Brahmins. Writing in 'Kudi Arasu' on 16.12.126, he traced the history of the different nations and pointed out that there had been evil forces everywhere opposed to the formation of a society based on equality. He added: "Those who condemn and criticize the communal representation have not put forward any sensible arguments as to why they oppose it. They have not given any alternative proposal acceptable to all the communities. They exhibit their insincerity in advocating socialism. That betrays their disinterestedness in solving the problem facing all the communities."⁵

The youth should have taken the responsibility to achieve the aim of self-respect movement. In order to stop the ill-treatment of women the youngsters involved in the Propaganda campaign to make them to feel the self-respect.⁶ As per the resolution of the Chenglepat conference, the journals like Dravidan, Kudi Arasu (Republic) and 'Revolt' to be published on behalf of Self-respect association. Most of the resolutions were related to the issues of religious and communal aspects. The journals were published with an intention of eradicating the evil deeds in the society which prevailed in the name of religion and they want to provide the Knowledge of equality and liberty among the people. Presided over by Dr. Ambedkar expressed his views that an equality among the people spoiled the self-respect in the society to lead a peaceful life. Unanimity will be achieved through law by destroying caste discrimination and 'varnashram,' for that the self-respect movement was very important.⁷ The writing skill of the Periyar brings the name and fame for him. The journal 'Kudi Arasu' published opinions, and writings of Periyar and great scholars the activities of self respect and country wide news too. Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy's efforts to eradicate Devadasi system and some social evils, against women were praise worthy. The minutes of Varnashram Conference about the casteism, the attitude of the society to treat the women and encouragement of widow re-marriage and inter-caste marriage were rightly placed in the journals. Those who got into inter caste marriages were published in the journals and honoured. The views and news of the journals reached nook and corner of the society which inspired the masses in general. The impact of Brahminical dominance should be highlighted

in the journals to create a society based on self-respect and every me say in the society 'swaraj' is my birth right'.⁸

In this world there are lot of differences like a Boss and labourer, high and low, rich and poor, zamindar and peasant, labour and lazy and so on. If the God creates these cruelties, he is unfaithful, unjust, a global trailer discreate, killer, bad taste thief, and fool-thus he blamed the God. If the intelligent said, they have been called Ethist. He said the worst things should be completely rooted out of the world and God should be removed from dictionary⁹ - He told a case had been filed against C.L. Desayian, the editor of the English Journal "Reason" In that case it was alleged that the editor had written wrongly, with an intension to offending the hearts of Catholics and Muslims. In that case the Hon. Judge Sir Hear MustiarDasthur observed that to fight against the matters which conflicted against rationalism such as all the religions, social believes were the object of Indian rational party. As a rationalist to write against some religious and some of the social believes was not a contempt. This court verdict was an advantage to periyar.¹⁰ Further in the journal 'Puratchi' comrade P. Jeevanantham had written at length about socialism. Periyar asked under the caption, why is religion to eliminate. Hundreds of religions so many gods were being worshiped and lured the people every religion. There was no fraternity among Hindus If religious handle affairs by the religious fanatics then which religion should we follow?¹¹ Intercasteweddings to be encouraged to refrain caremmies and to give equal status to women. The journals had given clear explanation of self-respect weddings and 'ritual based' weddings to the people. To give respect to the nationalism was the important philosophy. It was stated that Self-respect weddings would give liberty to the woman and ritual based weddings made the women slaves of the male chauvinist's.¹²

As for as India was concerned people had given much importance's to the festives and festivals and their earned money was spent in the name of ceremonies. Those who were suffering from various health issues had not taken proper medicine, instead they Worshipped God and spent enormous amount of money by which they feel that they will recover soon from their sufferings, so their financial status deteriorated.¹³ This should be realized in its true sense, Periyar E.V. Ramaswamy echoed the situation of the non-Brahmins. Through self-thinking, self-respect, equal Justice, equal rights, equal opportunity to all, and these fundamental policies of self-respect movement were exposed through plea of

reservation.¹⁴Our social right struggle alone is our revolution. We did not decide to do this revolution through weapons or but to achieve through ahimsa. We are likeing to create feelings through the present shameful status of the Tamilians and through the expenses. We like to organize them and to eradicate the social shame we like to do revolution. That revolution should create desirable changes.¹⁵To cause the progressnives of Women, mothers you have to analyse everything. You should place interest in education, to change the status of and women. you stop the saying of men calling you retrogrades. Thus he had given his opinion¹⁶. South Indian society, Dravidian race people were undergrip of slavery mentality. To remove the mentality caste feeling, to demolish the religion faith and to wipeout the lies of puranasand God. Each and every one have a free and Independent thinking of all the journals and the best among is Periyar's writings, speech and the explanations of the policies.¹⁷

Self-respect movement had been trying to enforce not to reform the traditional Society instead to destroy it completely and to establish a new philosophy to build a new society. The veteran economist W.W.Rostoueexplained the differences in economical structure. Traditional social set up Hindu society was having traditional subject and conventional bondage. The latest invention of science and technology is applied in business development and in industrial progress naturally .¹⁸Not to reform the Traditional society to destroy it completely to find out a new society to enforce the efforts and involvedinit. Self-respect movement examined the differences of socio economic structure and its development said by great economist W.W.Rostow.¹⁹Periyarpublished many Journals in Tamil, and also published an English weekly namely 'Revolt' in the year 1938. Later in the year 1944, he started a weekly magazine in the name of 'Justice' in Erode. The main aim of this Journal is to avoid internal and external criticizism in the party. Thus it was used as an weapon.²⁰In order to spread lives views he published justice in 1945 and modern 'Rationalist' in 1971 at Chennai.

Conclusion:-

Periyar'srigrousefforts through journals is to eliminate the discriminations and untouchables among the people in the society. Periyar witnessed these differences, and trying to eliminate caste discrimination and gender discrimination in the society. In those times people were either Praising or eroticizingPeriyar. To-day also they break the statues of Periyar and humiliate him. The world organization "UNESCO" invited him and honoured

him with the title of “The Arch Enemy of Superstitions”. In one side Science and technology has been developing’ but in other side Casteism, superstition and some evils flourished in our society. Therefore Periyar advised to avoid casteism and discrimination to develop rational thinking. He published many articles of J.Reeves Joseph Meccaby, Dr.Howang in his journals.Periyar’s journals had fulfilled the duty of introducing the renaissance thinkers, to the Tamil population it was an irony that Periyar had been achieving renaissance in the society and thereby to liberate oppressed, suppressed and depressed people to lead a life of freedom, whereas the Great Periyar Captivated inside the locked iron bars as a statue!. Contemporary journals get fully involved to expose Periyar’s views and his principles in letter and spirit to strive hard to create a casteless India that was revealed through this research.

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