

# The Modern Rationalist annual number 2017

December 2
SELF-RESPECT DAY

## Self-Respect is the Congenital Asset of Humans



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1933
2017
K.Veeramani's Birthday Special

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*Hearty Greetings on the 85th Birthday of our beloved Leader Dr. K.Veeramani*



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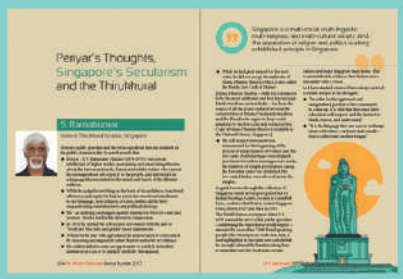

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# Long Live the Harbinger of Social Justice, Protector of Human Rights!

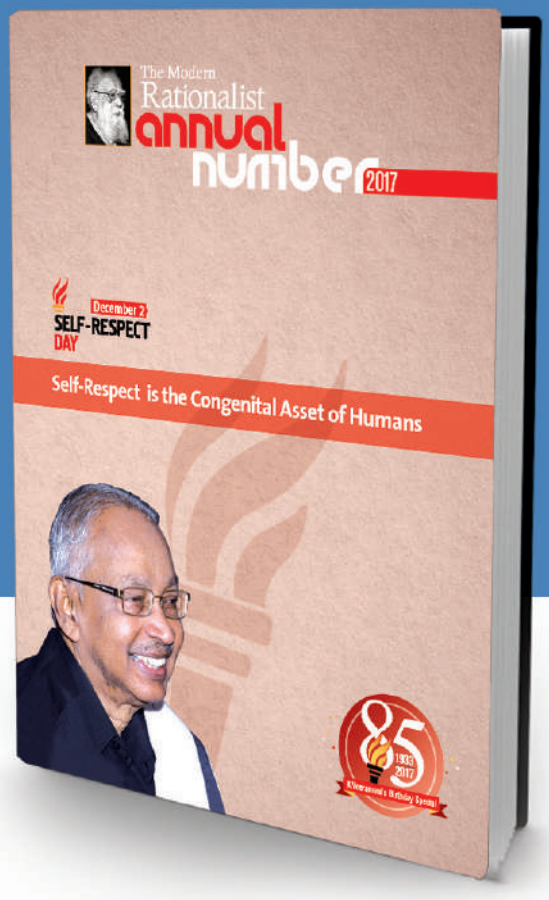
The Modern Rationalist' was started by Thanthai Periyar in 197` with a view to meeting a wider audience, outside Tamil Nadu and even abroad. Published by Periyar Self Respect Propaganda Institution, the monthly has been serving the cause for which Periyar devoted his entire life. As is wont with him, the Editor-in-Chief, Dr. K. Veeramani, a stickler after perfection has been showing a lot of interest and care in it since it is a vehicle which takes our thoughts to the non Tamil knowing people, who are interested in Periyarism, or also have been subscribing to the same ideals without knowing that Periyar had been in the forefront in shaping them.

It was in 2012 that the editors thought of bringing an instructive and colourful Annual Number. When the idea was mooted to the Asiriyar, he welcomed it, but started brooding when the day on which we proposed to bring it out was revealed to him. We decided that it must be released on December 2, his birthday. Already we had got his permission to celebrate it as *Self-Respect Day* to the jubilation of the cadres, votaries of Self-Respect and his admirers in general.

Apart from jubilation, all the days in Periyar Movement are observed with sobriety and serenity, devoting then for reflecting on Self-Respect, Rationalism, Equality and Human Dignity, every tenet Periyar struggled to achieve till the end of his life. When we explained all this to Asiriyar, he relented and gave us the green signal. What can make him happier than an occasion to disseminate the thoughts of the Movement? He laid down a condition that the Annual Number must be thematic – that is, a particular theme must be chosen for the year.

Accordingly, we chose the theme *"Eradication of Superstition and Development of Scientific Temper,"* for the number published in December 2013 and the trend has been maintained.

This year, 2017, happens to be more special to all the cadres of the Movement, and the followers of Periyar, for December 2 of this year marks the eighty fifth birthday of our beloved Asiriyar, the trusted lieutenant of Periyar and his chosen heir. So, this year, we decided that the Number must celebrate his birthday. The theme is dear to the heart of the Asiriyar.




*Self Respect is the Congenital Asset of Humans*

We, as a country are passing through difficult days. The dragon of Hindutva is trying to swallow it up. Fascism is bearing its poisonous fangs to inject evil into the social fabric. The pedlars of hatred have waxed bold, since the present atmosphere, when the country is in the danger of being taken over by a reactionary, revisionist and divisive ideology, without any qualms in using force to quell all voices of reason. Yes, countrymen, we are passing through a dark period in modern history and unless we are vigilant, the entire sub-continent will be engulfed in darkness.

The only way we can keep the dark forces at bay is to keep the light of reason burning, for reason alone can lead us towards equality, social justice and importantly, humanism. Periyar always used to insist that the entire mankind is one. Only reason can take us towards realising that ideal.

With all this in mind, when we solicited contributions, the response was heartening. There are many who feel that the Movement and the entire Tamil Society whose redemption it has working for, is greatly indebted to Periyar and Asiriyar. There are articles which speak of Asiriyar's qualities of head and heart, looking at him from various angles. There are articles which speak of the principle of Self Respect, in keeping with the central theme. On the whole, the Number will prove to be a treat, with a variety of its own. We are grateful to all the great thinkers who have taken the trouble to contribute material to *The Modern Rationalist Annual Number, 2017*. We thank the Editor-in-Chief for his valuable guidance and encouragement.

Finally, we wish him a long life serving the cause dear to him, bequeathed by his mentor Periyar, so that humankind moves towards a life of happiness. After all, as Periyar said, only a life with Self Respect can assure us of lasting, unalloyed, happiness.

**Editorial Committee**
The Modern Rationalist - Annual Number 2017

**PINARAYI VIJAYAN**
**CHIEF MINISTER**

**GOVERNMENT OF KERALA**

**Secretariat**
**Thiruvananthapuram-695 001**



No.1390/Press/CMO/17

November 29, 2017.

## MESSAGE

I am happy to note that "The Modern Rationalist" is bringing out its Annual Number 2017 in connection with 85th birthday of Asiriyar Dr. K. Veeramani with a theme "self respect is the congenital asset of humans".

We are aware that concerted attempts are going on to undermine the core values like democracy, secularism and emancipation that upheld by our freedom movement and later enshrined in our Constitution. It is the duty of every patriot to defend our Constitutional values and strive hard for unity of people irrespective of their caste, religion and creed.

I extend my best wishes for the magazine and its Annual Number.

**Pinarayi Vijayan**

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## Message of Greetings

I am happy to know that the 85th birthday of respected leader and my close friend

Dr. K.Veeramani falls on 2nd December 2017. My relationship with him has been long and lustrous covering several decades, associating with The Rationalists' Forum, Chennai. My friends and I had a lot to do with Dr. K.Veeramani. Myself and J.Paramanandam used to meet Periyar EVR and discuss with him several issues relating to Self-Respect Movement and Dravidar Kazhagam. I have also addressed quite a few meetings at Periyar Thidal presided over by Periyar and attended by Dr. K.Veeramani and K.Dhiraviyam. I am aware 'The Modern Rationalist' magazine has been doing excellent service to propagate self-respect movement among the people. It is but proper that this magazine proposes to bring out a special number on the birthday of Dr. K.Veeramani with the theme "Self-Respect is a Congenital Asset of Humans".

The relationship between Periyar EVR and Babasaheb Dr.B.R Ambedkar had been long and enduring. While Periyar continued his mission in the south, Babasaheb did his best in the north to spread the principles of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity and the principles of self -respect movement. In a speech in Chennai Babasaheb Ambedkar made a special mention of Periyar's service, he said "here in the south Periyar EVR has been doing excellent work while I am trying my best in the north. It is only proper that you all follow EVR and his Principles." After the passing away of Periyar EVR and EVR Maniammaiar the mantle fell on the shoulders of Dr. Veeramani. With great courage and fortitude, Dr. Veeramani has been continuing the struggle despite different difficulties and hardships. He has been carrying forward the flag of Periyar Movement with great gusto. Whenever I met the respected former President of India Dr. K.R.Narayanan, he used to enquire about Dr.Veeramani and the Dravidian Movement.

When Dr. K.Veeramani delivered, "Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Memorial Lecture" in Madras University under my presidentship, we both narrated several incidents and happenings in the Dravidian and Self – Respect Movement. The problems of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and Backward Classes still remain in our society.

Our struggle must continue. Dr. K.Veeramani's illustrious leadership should continue. I wish him a long life with good health and commendable success.

November 30, 2017

A.Padmanaban
(A.Padmanaban)

# Gone is Prof. Ma. NANNAN, Periyar Peruraiyalar

**1924**



**2017**

We are extremely sorry to inform that Periyar Peruraiyalar Ma. Nannan (94) passed away at 9.15 a.m. today (7.11.2017).

Since his student days at Annamalai University he was actively interested in Dravidar Kazhagam and lived till his last breath following the principles of Thanthai Periyar. He has also made his mark as Professor of Tamil at Presidency College and the Director of Tamil Development Department.

He was decorated with *Periyar Peruraiyalar Award* by Dravidar Kazhagam for his lectures in Aruppukottai Kailasam Trust. He has lived with Periyar at Erode for some time and has also accompanied him in his tours. He has also been the President of State Rationalists' Forum. He has served as the Chairman of the Committee which was appointed by Chief Minister M.G.Ramachandran for compiling the biography of Periyar. He was the Chairman of the Social Reform Committee in the DMK rule at the latest.

He has set a record by publishing the thoughts of Periyar in a number of booklets under different titles.

On the memorial day of his departed son Dr. Annal, he used to award Rs. 10,000/- to five selected inter-caste couples. When he was ailing for a few days towards the end of his life, we met him and had a brief conversation.

*"I have led a rounded life as a Periyar follower. Everyone who follows Periyar's way of life will meet with both total success am a confirmed atheist. I am completing my life with perfect satisfaction,"* he said in a firm voice.

Pulavar. Ma. Nannan demise is a very great loss not only to Tamil Nadu, but to all the Tamils and Rationalists living all over the world.

On behalf of Dravidar Kazhagam, I express my heartfelt condolence and words of comfort to his life partner Parvathi, daughters Venma and Avvai, other members of the family, and his comrades and offer a heroic salute to his immense service.

Dr. **K.Veeramani**,
President, Dravidar Kazhagam

# The legend that was Nannan

Prof. Nannan, who spent all his life in working for preserving the purity of Tamil, Tamil culture and spreading Periyarism was born at Kavanur, Cuddalore District in 1924, as the son of Manikkam and Meenakshi. He started his education at Annamalai University getting the diploma of Pulavar. He continued his education at the University of Madras, getting a Master's degree and Ph.D. Though he started as a believer in his boyhood, he became an out and out rationalist and atheist once he attained maturity.

He has taught Tamil at all levels, starting at the primary level and going up to university level. He has also worked in teacher training colleges. He has been associated with imparting training in official Tamil, teaching Tamil to non Tamil knowing people and to adults.

He has offered sterling service as the Director of Tamil Development. He has been associated with syllabus committees, text book committees, text book experts committees, Board of Secondary Education and Adult Education Board and special bodies like University Syndicate. Starting in 1942, he has spoken on platform on a number of topics connected with education, sociology, politics, literature, labour problems and the like.

He has written many text books, non-detailed text books, more than a hundred research papers, a number of books on literature and education. He has served the cause of Periyarism by writing a number of books on individual topics connected with it. He came to the limelight and became a house hold name when he started taking lessons on the Television on how to speak and write flawless Tamil, in a simple-but effective language. The serial went on for more than sixteen years. He wrote and directed more than fifty playlets which were telecast to the delight of the viewers.

His crowning glory is his evolving a method of teaching Tamil, which came to be known as *'Nannan Method'*, preparing textbooks, and methodology for it.

He involved himself in the Quit India Movement of 1949, and went on to participate in a number of agitations connected with the Dravidian Movement like the Anti-Hindi Agitation and Tamil Music Movement. He has also accompanied Periyar in some of his tours, besides offering his services as the President of Tamil Nadu Rationalists' Forum. When he was ailing for a few days towards the end of his life, he declared in a firm voice:

**"I have led a rounded life as a Periyar follower. Everyone who follows Periyar's way of life will meet with both total success. I am a confirmed atheist. I am completing my life with perfect satisfaction."**

# Landmark - Globalising Self Respect Success of a Human Mission

Dr.K.VEERAMANI
President, Dravidar Kazhagam

Self-Respective Humanism is a wonderful philosophy, Periyar E.V.Ramasamy, the great revolutionary of the South India, propounded.

Unlike other countries in the world Indian's Society is caste ridden and keeps women in slavery. In other countries there is social injustice in class form, that is, economic status 'haves and have-nots'. But in India in addition to that class discrimination, there is another abominable discrimination in the name of caste which is the source of evil practices like untouchability, unseeability and unapproachability. Nowhere in the whole universe has this kind of atrocity ever been heard of even in this 21st century.

Periyar started his Self-Respect Movement as a purely non–political movement, without aspiring for any name or fame, only for swimming against the current. His weapons are rational propaganda and peaceful public agitations. He named his movement Self-Respect Movement because humans alone could ascertain their dignity and reason. Humans are rational animals.

Periyar's Self-Respective humanism pinpoints that it is not confined to a particular country or a particular people – it is meant for universe as a whole.

Periyar is an original free thinker. In the beginning when he started his movement it received more brickbats than bouquets. He never cared about the vilification of his campaign by the reactionary forces, and vested interests. His commitment and unassailable firm involvement won the youths, students and enslaved women.

He lived up to the 95th year of his age and saw the success of his movement in various fields like caste eradication and equality and empowerment of women.

He insisted through his Self-Respective Humanism, that education should be the instrument of social change. His movement is an open-book which brought success through many legislations on the social reform side. He called himself not a social reformist who was interested only in repairing matters as the need arose but a social revolutionary who dares to destroy the old, dingy, dilapidated system so that a new system could be constructed in its place.

Conquering by ideas is not an easy job and that too without any economic gains but Periyar's philosophy of Self-Respective Humanism, has been able to make its mark in USA, United Kingdom and other Western countries.

He passed away in the year 1973. His movement has spread through other states in India by the depressed and the down-trodden. Any medicine, invented by any scientist is not meant for the people of his country only. The whole world benefits by its wide use to eradicate the disease. Like that Periyar's Self-Respective Humanism has travelled in the East from 1929 year onwards, during his life time.

After Periyar, his ardent disciples who shoulder the responsibility are very happy to see the movement slowly and steadily conquering the West also. Conquering by ideas is not an easy job and that too without any economic gains but Periyar's philosophy of Self-Respective Humanism, has been able to make its mark in USA, United Kingdom and other Western countries.

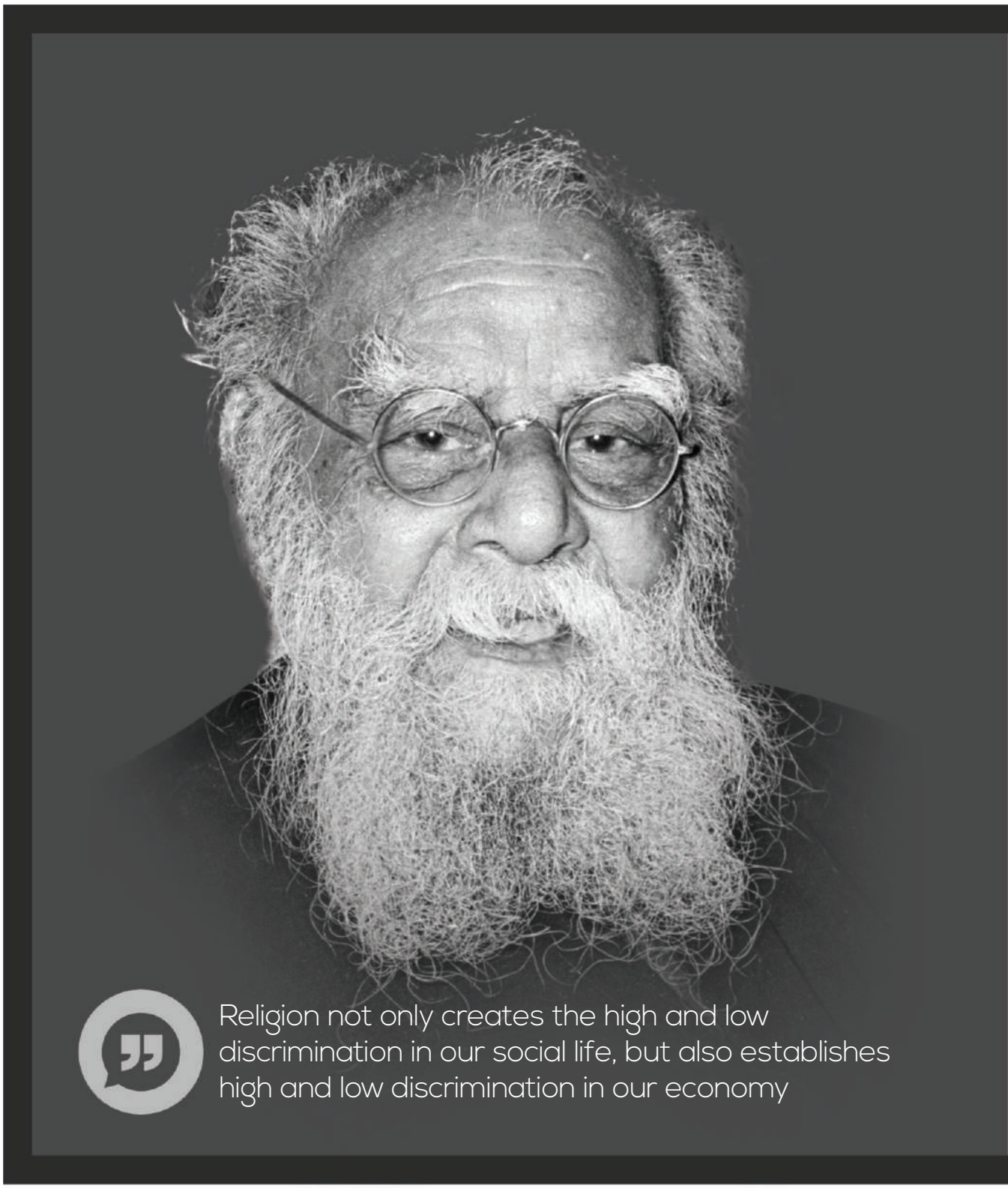
Recently we were heartened to work for the first of its kind. Self-Respective Humanists of Germany hosted an International Conference in the Cologne University campus on July 2017, (27, 28 & 29) which turned to be a splendid success. The three day conference and symposium were historical and thought provoking enough to break a new path towards breaking ignorance, injustice and indignities in the social fields. We heartily congratulate the German fraternity who came out with flying colours, very effectively conducting the deliberations for the three days.

When religion and gods are dividing the people, Periyar's Self-Respective Humanism unites them as one family, cutting across various artificial differences and discrimination.

The delegates from the United States of America wanted to conduct the next such Conference of Periyar Self-Respective Humanism in USA in 2019. It will provide practical solutions, for many evils arising out of our ignorance and irrational practices. It is up to us to take his message to all corners of the world so that the entire humankind enjoys the life of honour and dignity.



Periyar Speaks



# SELF RESPECT AND GOD AND RELIGION

Religion is the sum of the rules related to cooperative living and code of conduct needed for a society. Self-Respect Movement is not against such a harmoneous society. Even if it is said that religion is needed to reach god we will not interfere. It is after all an individual's personal affair.

But, if religion destroys the wisdom in the society, if it endangers the self-respect, if humanity is differentiated as high and low, if it brings disunity and demolishes freedom, our Self-Respect Movement will not leave it. Take for example numerous religions. Let us not worry about the religions of foreigners. Let us consider Hinduism, which is said to be our religion of India.

Is there any other reason for Indians to be so disunited? Is not Hinduism responsible for the creation of so many divisions and differences? Is not Hinduism responsible for the creation of so many castes, that too some as high and some as low? The Vedas and Sastras (Hindu Doctrines) prove these. If we are to get rid of castes and untouchability without converting to other religions like Islam, think over whether anyone else except Brahmin is enjoying so much facility and freedom in social and economic fields. What else is needed to prove that Hindu religion should be destroyed? No one thinks about what religion has done to humanity.

The evils caused by the intoxicating drinks are lesser, when compared to the evils caused by religious fanaticism. Liquor spoils only when consumed. Religion spoils you the moment you think of it.

Religion not only creates the high and low discrimination in our social life, but also establishes high and low discrimination in our economy. Think over! Has not religion created a separate class of people who are hard working and a separate class of people who enjoy without any hard work?

The wealth of the world is denied to the toiling masses. Lazy fellows who do not exert or work are able to enjoy the wealth of the world. Is it not because of religion? Common man is in poverty. He is made a slave, a low caste and heinous human being. Those who have got exemption to work by religion are free from worries and are able to amass wealth and subordinate all others on account of this religion.

# Long Live K. Veeramani

## The Young Man who enhances Periyar's Glory


**Inamaana Perasiriyar K. Anbalagan**

General Secretary - Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam




My younger brother K. Veeramani is eighty five. How time flies! He was introduced to me in 1940 when he came as a young speaker, holding the hands of his teacher Dravidamani to a meeting addressed by me. Later I met him at Salem Justice Party Conference in 1944.

More than just saying that he is following the footsteps of Periyar, it would be appropriate to knowing that he considers it his life's mission and his greatest ambition to move in the footsteps of Periyar. When I think of it I am amazed and am thrilled at it.

He has been brought up by Periyar from the days he learnt how to put questions. He dedicated himself to the glorious movement created by Periyar, the Sun of Reason, for the noble task of leading the mankind in the path of justice and reason. He never forgets he is humble volunteer, a worker, even after he has taken over the leadership of the lofty movement. I am amazed and am proud of him.

He has never failed to point it out and loudly proclaim it. Let me put it in his own words.

"Those who want to serve mankind never worry about time or reason. Any hesitation or egostic thought will spoil the whole affair". He points out this *Kural* to the followers of the movement and exhorts them.



Of all the services of K.Veeramani who shines as the matchless heir of Thanthai Periyar who has carved a niche for himself in the political history of India and the history of the Dravidian Movement, the most remarkable is the globalization of Periyar.

"Comrades, once you are in public life, don't think of your honour. Don't mind the inclement conditions. Don't expect gratitude. Don't hanker after fame. I consider it may blessing to have sailed as a canoe in the perennial waters that held on to intellectual honesty till the last breath, carrying on a task of making 'men' out of human beings, never thinking of doing what they liked. That Thanthai Periyar, the Sun of Wisdom is the only leader I have served for more than sixty five years."

This deep felt sentiment and resolve that has enabled him to work, unmindful of time, and neglecting his own health. That is why when he was undergoing treatment in the hospital and after he returned home, I have never failed to go to his residence to inquire after his health.

Likewise, I am aware of his concern for my health. The basic reason for that is the culture, affection and the glorious trait of hailing humanism.

This is the period when Periyarism is badly required. K.Veeramani is of the firm opinion that the only panacea for the malady of Hindutva, which afflicts people with a craving to saffronise education, all the while carrying the flag of manudharma and misusing the authority of the government. And K.Veeramani is passing on his conviction to the society. The very fact he is continuously urging people towards the chosen goal through his speeches and writings.

Of all the services of K.Veeramani who shines as the matchless heir of Thanthai Periyar who has carved a niche for himself in the political history of India and the history of the Dravidian Movement, the most remarkable is the globalization of Periyar.

He came to receive my greetings before he left for the International Periyar Self-Respect Conference in Germany and shared the happenings there after his return. The very thought of these gestures make me happy.

Sami Chidambaranar started writing the biography of Thanthai Periyar, the born warrior, under the title 'Thamizhan Thalaivar'. Later happenings have shown him as the leader of mankind. The tribute paid to him by Bharati Dasan in his words.

'The entire mankind will acclaim the thoughts emanating from his head' has culminated in an award by UNESCO.

Brother Veeramani's gift to the younger generation as "The Life History of Periyar – World Leader", in which he gives a detailed account of the political, economical, educational and social happenings of the day, and what was sown by Periyar and how rich and useful harvest did mankind receive from it. The book is a milestone in the history of the success of mankind.

On this occasion when Brother Veeramani enters the 85th year of his life, I shower on him my heartfelt greetings. May he take proper care of his health and yet go ahead in the missionary pursuit he has undertaken.

# Rajaji and Periyar

Gopal Krishna Gandhi

Former Governor of West Bengal



*Asiriyar Dr K Veeramani is, among many other things, a natural-born archivist.*

Documents, manuscripts, newspaper clippings, antiquarian books and papers from the past are to him what rock-specimens or fossils are to a petrologist, or coral and rare sea-bed forms are to a marine biologist.

He revels in their age, their nature, their secrets and takes tender care of them.

A good archivist is not just she or he who takes care of precious papers but one who shares them with those interested or connected with them, generously, spontaneously and even pro-actively. The Asiriyar is exactly one such.

It was my great good fortune to see some of his archival treasures recently and even greater pleasure, amounting to a rare privilege, to receive from his hands copies of a nugget of a correspondence between two friends whose relationship oscillated between ideological polarity and personal mutuality – the compellingly devout Rajaji and the atheist, Periyar.

As any reader of this journal would know, the two were hyphenated in age by a one year distance – Rajaji being 1878 born, and Periyar, 1879.

Periyar, who yields to no one in his admiration for Valluvar's genius has, in his dialectically brilliant and thematically post-modern *'Penn yein adimaiyaanaal?'* ( *Kudi Arasu*, circa 1930) critiqued what he calls the concept of 'husband worship' – a procedure adopted for generations in our society from which Valluvar does not depart.



They were joined by a common past in the Congress' struggle for freedom and separated by Periyar's withdrawal from that organisation and spear-heading of the movement for Dravidar self-respect. And yet, hyphenations, collaborations, distancings apart, the two maintained a mutual esteem and affection that confounded both reason and emotion, perplexing their friends and non-friends alike and throwing political assessments into some confusion.

The two-letter correspondence which the Asiriyar was so kind as to share with me belonged to the year 1949 and comprised letters written in Tamil by Rajaji, who was then Governor General of India to Periyar, who was then contemplating re-marriage. Periyar's letters to Rajaji in this exchange are not available and should they become available, will make the exchange doubly valuable.

In a lecture in memory of the great jurist, Alladi Krishnaswami Aiyar I spoke about the literary style of these letters.

Rajaji's Tamil is highly Sankritic, of course ; no quibbling over that patent character of it. He wrote a Brahminical or Sanskritised Tamil for he knew no other. But it is naturally, not



Periyar's forbearance at this was monumental. He did not hold the letter's extreme presumptions against his nannban. He also knew better than to heed the vivahamvendam advice and went ahead with the wedding, good for him ! Learning of it, Rajaji lost no time sending from Delhi a hand written message of felicitation. This is the second letter. Vazhttu-k-kadidamezhuduhiren.And added, Idu tangal manaiviyarukkumaha...

attitudinizingly Brahminic - Sanskritic. He does not flaunt its Sanskrit, he just employs it as a carpenter might employ his equation with wood or a potter with clay. When he writes a Sanskritised Tamil he writes a Tamil which has a great deal of Sanskrit in it, not a Sanskrit which has some Tamil in it. His Brahminic-Sanskritised Tamil is like the Bhadra Bengali of Jana Gana Mana not the Sanskrit-Bengali of VandeMataram. It reflects his piety which carries its adherence in the heart as a belief, not on the forehead as a totem. He does not hide his piety; to do so would be hypocritical. He does not flaunt it; to do so would be hyperbolic.

But let me return to this specific correspondence. What is the subject-matter of these two letters from Rajaji to Periyar ?

It is about Periyar's plan of re-marrying and, by extension, about marriage and about companionship itself.

To take the immediate, 'first' cause of the correspondence, first.

It is not widely known that when Periyar decided amid much controversy and opposition at age 70+ to re-marry and that, a lady who was only30+, he made an unusual and unexpected request to Rajaji.

Can you, Periyar asked Rajaji, be a legal witness to the wedding's civil registration ?

The request and the idea behind it lend themselves to speculation.

Periyar or EVR as he then was, in asking Rajaji to testate the wedding was asking three persons within and constituting that one person :

1. His partner in a contested and also time-tested friendship.
2. A pre-eminent member of the priestly caste associated with the performing of rites.
3. India's first 'official'.

In all these three roles, he was in effect asking Rajaji to do a self-adjusting.

1. Periyar was asking Rajaji to place friendship above the plinths and terraced palates of circumstance. The 'Rajan', in other words, was being asked to embrace a pre-Rajahood friendship.
2. Periyar was askinga self-evidently pious if non-proclamatory Sri Vaishnavite to witness and by his signature, attest, the registration, in a new rite, a secular rite, that would replace the religious one by a new one that was no less binding, no less solemn, no less committing than the one performed by fire as witness.
3. Periyar was asking India's first citizen, its pre-eminent 'official' to witness a 'civil wedding' establishing thereby the principle of marriage

being a social and legal covenant , not a sacerdotal sacrament.

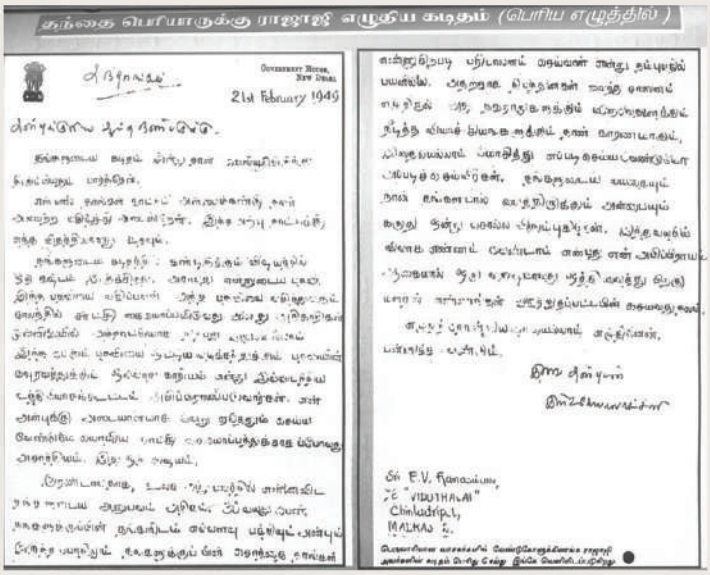
In all three attempts, Periyar was challenging, one might say, his friend to be just that much different, that much original, that much innovative, even revolutionary. In modern parlance, Periyar was also asking Rajaji to be what may be called 'a sport'.

Needless to say, Rajaji declined. With politeness, even warmth. But his no was a clear no.

Rajaji's declining makes for a good story – this one. Had Rajaji agreed, he would have made history.An occasion, an event, a historic statement that would have made. But, no, not for him the theatre of falsehood, the drama of play-acting. If Periyar was being Periyar in asking Rajaji to do something innovative, Rajaji was being Rajaji in choosing conservatism. Both were being true to themselves. Periyar must ask what Periyar must ask. Rajaji must do what Rajaji must do, not what someone else would want him to do.

Rajaji's reply to Periyar is in classic Rajaji style. He makes two observations in it. The first is made matter-of-factly and has typical sardonic Rajaji humour in it. The second is presumptuous and contains the purist Rajaji's admonition. And then comes from him, towards the end, a piece of wholly un-solicited advice. The letter, on top of which Rajaji has written in his own hand. *'Antarangam'*, meaning 'Confidential', is two-pages long. I will give but excerpts from it:

*Anbukkuriya aptanannbarukku, Thanguludaiya kadidaminru nan veliyurilirindu tirumbiyudam parten…. Tangaludaiya kaditattil*


தந்தை பெரியாருக்கு ராஜாஜி எழுதிய கடிதம் (பெரிய எழுத்தில்)

Confidential letter written by Rajaji to Periyar

*kandiyirukkum vishayattil oru kashtamirukkiradu… Adavadu ennudaiya padavi… Irundavadaha… 30 vayadu penntangilada mevvalavu bhaktiyum anbum irundupodilum tangalukku-p-pin sottaitangalennuhirap padiparipalanamsey valenrunambuvadilpayanillai…. Indavayadil vivahaennamvendamenbaduenabiprayam…. Ezhudutonriyadaiyellamezhudinen, manikkavum… anbudan, Rajagopalachari.*

Periyar's forbearance at this was monumental. He did not hold the letter's extreme presumptions against his *nanban*. He also knew better than to heed the *vivaham vendam* advice and went ahead with the wedding, good for him! Learning of it, Rajaji lost no time sending from Delhi a hand written message of felicitation. This is the second letter. *Vazhttu-k-kadidam ezhuduhiren.* And added, *Idu tangal manaiviyarukkumaha…*

The *30 vayadupenn* became overnight as it were, *tangal manaiviyar.* And as we know, up-turning Rajaji's reputation of being a good fore-teller of events, after Periyar passed away, Maniammaiyar not only did Periyar's material assets - such as they were – all the *paripalanam* they needed, but also became a symbol of his ideology.

I will turn now to the concept and ideal of marriage hovering over this correspondence.

Both men were committed to their wives – Rajaji to his one and only wife, Periyar in sequence to his first and



*Asiriyar Dr K Veeramani is, among many other things, a natural-born archivist.*

then to his second wife, equally. Rajmohan Gandhi in his moving biography of Rajaji describes the manner in which Alarmelmanga merged her brief life in that of her husband and how, in 1915 when her husband lay grievously ill, with all around him, and he himself, being prepared for 'the exit', she prayed for his recovery at the local temple, herself falling ill just as he recovered and then, as he became well, succumbing to her illness. There is in that marriage something of the 'ideal' that Tiruvalluvar extols in his *Tirukkural*. Whereas Periyar, who yields to no one in his admiration for Valluvar's genius has, in his dialectically brilliant and thematically post-modern *'Penn yein adimaiyaanaal?'* (*KudiArasu*, circa 1930) critiqued what he calls the concept of 'husband worship' – a procedure adopted for generations in our society from which Valluvar does not depart.

Worship is, by its very nature, an unequal equation. It can be in many ways an admirable expression of adoration but is orchestrated at two heights, two levels – that of the worshipper 'up there' and that of the worshipped 'here under'.

Rajaji's care of his wife was deep and tender. Theirs was by any standards as ideal a marriage as it was tragically brief. And that had everything to do with the kind of persons that Rajaji and Mangamma were. More, it had everything to do with his viewing marriage as a sacrament. Married once, married forever. That was his view of marriage. And that is what actuated his 'advice' to Periyar. But not just to Periyar. Rajaji held out that ideal, that view, to not just Priyar, his colleague but to Gandhiji, hi 'Master. When, in June 1920, Gandhiji was contemplating his now much - written about, new and rather unique concept – a 'spiritual marriage' with Saraladevi Chaudhurani, the married niece of Rabindranath Tagore, Rajaji was incensed. He described, in a letter addressed to 'My dearest Master', the idea, purely 'spiritual' as it was, as being 'near to unutterable shame and ruin', he reminded him of his duty to his wedded wife. Comparing Saraladevi– not the person Saraladevi so much as the idea of Sarala devi becoming a 'spiritual wife' – with Kasturba Gandhi, Rajaji said '…it would be comparing a kerosene oil Ditmar lamp to the morning sun'. Chastised by his own 'disciple', the Master gave up his idea.

Rajaji was to do another similar 'thing' again, in the case of a pair that was in love and over a prolonged period, but out of marriage – George Arundale, the famous Theosophist and the future pre-eminent exponent of Bharata Natya and founder of Kalakshetra, Rukmini Devi. It is not clear to me if the advice was unsolicited or not. But it was clear. 'Get married, if you wish to live together'. The Arundales would, I am sure, have got married even without Rajaji's advice. But then, there it is : the advice of 'no marriage, no exclusive companionship' and the fact of the couple's marriage.

Rajaji's ideal of exclusive companionship in marriage came from the address, the hinterland,

> The 30 *vayadupenn* became overnight as it were, *tangal manaiviyar*. And as we know , up-turning Rajaji's reputation of being a good fore-teller of events, after Periyar passed away, Maniammaiyar not only did Periyar's material assets - such as they were – all the *paripalanam* they needed, but also became a symbol of his ideology.

of benevolent patriarchy. One might say it was, like his Tamil was, a Brahminic-Sanskritic address where the seven steps taken at the wedding with fire as witness make it a religious site. Now, that is fine as far as things are fine with the couple, as long as there is mutual respect and real, deep love. What in the absence of that? The husband can easily be different, and one must add, so can the wife be. What if one of them is, owing to behaviour and attitude, an unlikeable creature, who may be unfaithful to his wife and also abusive, to boot ? In the case , traditionally, of the husband being so, in traditional style, the wife would 'simply accept' the condition as her fate.

Periyar's care of Nagamma and then of Maniamma was, as far as I have been able to make out from observation and from available knowledge (in the absence of a definitive biography in English) of Periyar, also deep and tender. But it came from an address, a hinterland, that was altogether different and was far more rooted in modern ideas of marital reciprocity. His belief in companionship found fulfilment in marriage, not vice versa. And this, again, had everything to do with the kind of husband he was and the kind of persons Nagamma and Maniamma were.

Marriages may or may not be made in heaven. But they are maintained on earth. And are so maintained through something which can only come from the human 'within' – companionship.



The next 'position' in logic would be to say that marriage without companionship is a farce, marriage with companionship is forever.

As and when Professor A R Venkatachalapathy's biography of the great man appears, we will know more. Until then, suffice it to say that Rajaji's misgivings, the misgivings of an ethical traditionalist, about the second marriage of Periyar, an ethical non-traditionalist, were misplaced. And that Rajaji's good wishes to them both, once they were married, worked to the script of trust, mutuality and – the self-respect that informs companionship.

*I offer, through this article,* ***my gratitude once again to the archivist in Asiriyar Dr K Veeramani for giving me access to this remarkable pair of Rajaji's letters to Periyar. And I offer to the Asiriyar my felicitations on his 85th birthday and to him and to Mrs Mohana Veeramani,***

***my regards.*** ■

# ATHEISM AND SCIENTIFIC WAY OF LIFE


## Dr. G. Vijayam

Executive Director, Atheist Centre, Vijayawada




*"Do not believe what you have heard.*
*Do not believe in the tradition because it is handed down many generations.*
*Do not believe in anything that has been spoken of many times.*
*Do not believe because the written statements come from some old sage.*
*Do not believe in conjecture.*
*Do not believe in the authority or teachers or elders.*
*But after careful observation and analysis, when it agrees with reason and it will benefit one and all, then accept it and live by it."*

*-BUDDHA*

India is not only a land of religion, superstition and blind beliefs, but also of atheism, rationalism, humanism, skepticism and agnosticism. It is a land of enlightenment, philosophical quest for truth and practical application of the principles for common good. It is the birthplace of the Buddha and Mahaveera, and also of Charvakas and Lokayatas and Samkhya philosophy. In the Middle Ages, Sant Kabir challenged idol worship and strove for national and social integration. In South India, we have a few illustrious sons of the soil who fought against

> Unlike in the West, in India there was no apparent conflict between science and religion. In India, we find that the conflict is between religion and social reform. In our country, the rigid social structure leads to structural violence. Religion opposes any deviation from its prescribed path.

superstitions and blind beliefs and appealed to people to use their faculty of reason and act with compassion. Vemana was a social revolutionary of Andhra who challenged the orthodoxy and appealed for unconventional thinking. Basaveswara in Karnataka raised the banner of revolt against caste system, outmoded customs and fought against caste and untouchability. He brought new awakening among the so-called backward classes.

The dawn of the modern Age was accelerated by outstanding social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Eswar Chandra Vidya Sagar, Kesab Chandra Sen, Mahatma Phule, Pandita Ramabai, Mahadeo Govinda Ranade, Maharshi Karve, Kandukuri Veeresalingam and many others who brought a new awakening among people and heralded a new era.

In the 20th Century it was Mahatma Gandhi who linked the struggle for political independence of the country with social emancipation and with his constructive programmes which made the freedom struggle the most potent force for the onward march of society. He left no field of life untouched with his integrated approach. Similarly, Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar led an uncompromising struggle against caste system and untouchability. It was Jawaharlal Nehru who spearheaded the struggle for modernization and secularization and strove incessantly for promotion of Scientific Temper and humanism.

Similarly, Periyar E.V. Ramaswami, M.N. Roy, Gora and Abraham T. Kovoor were the architects of the atheist, humanist, rationalist and skeptical movement in modern India.

Thus every social reform measure was a step further in creating humanism and liberal outlook in the society. They opposed the belief in Karma and fatalistic thinking of people. They tried to rejuvenate the society with fresh ideas and progressive thought and action.

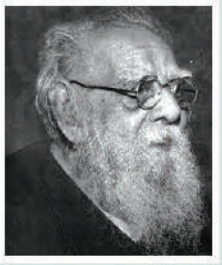
The fight against caste and untouchability was a long drawn one. It is not only a fight against caste system and segregation, but also against abject poverty, inequality, and oppression. When caste barriers fall, people will be liberated from many superstitions, blind beliefs and also from the belief in Karma. Untouchability and caste represent the structural violence. For the first time in the 20th Century great strides were made to fight the evil in a concerted way. The legal ban on untouchability, the constitutional provisions for social equality, and the provision for educational and the employment opportunities for the socially weaker sections of the society brought a sea change in the outlook. The march towards equality and social justice received a fillip.

**RATIONALSIM:**

In 20th Century Periyar E.V.Ramaswami, M.N.Roy, Gora and A.T.Kovoor propagated atheism, rationalism and humanism. Gora championed atheism as a positive way of life. Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr. B.R.Ambedkar and many others stressed on reason and championed agnosticism. Sardar Bhagat Singh harped on the need for atheism.



Mahatma Jothiba Phule



Periyar E.V.Ramasamy



Babasaheb Dr.B.R.Ambedkar



M.N.Roy



Gora

Miracle mind is a bane of progress. The babas and other so-called miracle men are cheating people. Miracles do not happen. The so-called miracle men perform only magic tricks. Skeptics, rationalists and progressive minded people have already exposed many of the so-called miracles.

The writings of Robert Green Ingersoll, Charles Bradlaugh, P.B. Shelly, Bertrand Russell and others created a congenial atmosphere for rationalism, Karl Marx made it clear that religion is opium of the people. The growth of the nationalist movement, the humanist ideals of Jawaharlal Nehru, and the progressive thought promoted unconventional thinking. The nationalist movement, which was opposed to the religious communalism, led to the inculcation of scientific outlook and secularism. India became a secular state. Organized efforts for atheism, rationalism and humanism have grown.

**CONFLICT BETWEEN SCIENCE AND RELIGION:**

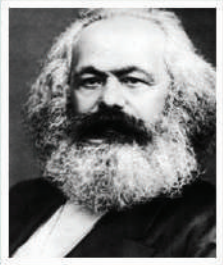
In the West, the conflict is between religion and science. The Church tried its best to prevent the onward march of society through scientific discoveries. The best examples are the Church's opposition to Copernican Theory. Earlier, the Church opposed the growth of medical science. Vesalius, the Father of Modern Anatomy was not allowed to dissect human bodies on the pretext that the human body was a divine creation.

In the field of astronomy, Bruno was burnt alive and Galileo was imprisoned for life. The Church's opposition was fierce when Darwin proposed the Theory of Evolution.

Bertrand Russell, one of the best brains of the 20th Century, was a relentless champion of rationalism and science. In his article, *"An Outline of Intellectual Rubbish"* he highlighted the conflict between science and religion. He wrote:

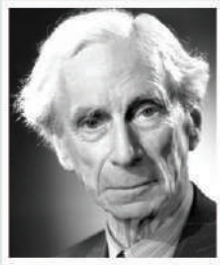
"Throughout the last 400 years, during which the growth of science had gradually shown men how to acquire knowledge of the ways of nature and mastery over natural forces, the clergy have fought a losing battle against science, in astronomy and geology, in anatomy and physiology in biology and psychology and sociology. Ousted from one position, they have taken up another. After being worsted in astronomy, they did their best to prevent the rise of geology; they fought against Darwin in biology, and at the present time they fight against the scientific theories of psychology and education. At each stage they try to make the public forget their earlier obscurantism, in order that their present obscurantism may not be recognized for what it is." (Bertrand Russell on *'God and Religion'* edited by AI Seckel, 1986, p.209).

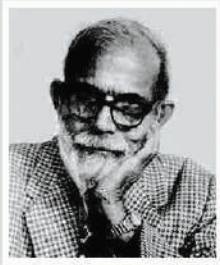
In the Western world, religion is trying to come


Karl Marx


Robert G. Ingersoll


Charles Bradlaugh


Bertrand Russel


Abraham T.Kovoor

back by equating its theory of creation with the scientific theory of evolution. They are trying to combine fiction with fact of science. Draper in his monumental work of *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science* (1873) declared: "The history of science is not a mere isolated discoveries; it is a narrative of the conflict of the two contending powers - the expansive force of the human intellect on one side, and the compression arising from traditionary faith and human interests on the other. No one has hitherto treated the subject from this point of view."

**INDIAN CONTEXT:**

Unlike in the West, in India there was no apparent conflict between science and religion. In India, we find that the conflict is between religion and social reform. In our country, the rigid social structure leads to structural violence. Religion opposes any deviation from its prescribed path. Every social reformer tried his best to inculcate scientific and rational thinking among people and questioned the old values and outmoded religious customs. Thus the efforts for social reform made people think with a broad mind and liberalized the society.

In our country superstitions are in abundance. The belief in rebirth, afterlife, astrology, palmistry, numerology; mediums, spirits, demons, devils and ghosts; good and bad omens, varjya , vara and thidhi and muhurtha; and innumerable other irrational beliefs compounded the problem.

Miracle mind is a bane of progress. The babas and other so-called miracle men are cheating people. Miracles do not happen. The so-called miracle men perform only magic tricks. Skeptics, rationalists and progressive minded people have already exposed many of the so-called miracles. In the West the famous magician Harry Houdini challenged such people by announcing a reward to anyone who can prove the so-called miracle. The challenges of Dr. A.T.Kovoor are well known. Babas thrive on the ignorance of the people. Rational outlook and the scientific temper will alter the situation.

**SECULARISM AND SCIENTIFIC OUTLOOK:**

Successive social reform measures paved the way to adopt secularism in the Indian context. Secularism is humanism and atheism in action. In this multi religious and multi ethnic country, it is secularism that is the unifying bond. Secularism aims at separation of religion and politics. Secularism ultimately necessitates separation of religion and education and also religion and culture. It is high time that it were realized that mere acceptance of science and enjoying the fruits of science is not enough.

When god is relegated into the background and human being becomes important, there is progress in the modern world. We have come a long way in the modern world. All round progress and sustainable development is possible only when human being becomes the primary concern. Human life and its problems must gain precedence over others. We have to move away from the imaginary god centred universe to the Human Centred World. ■

# MY TRYST WITH THIDAL

## Thidal - Periyar's abode during life and after


S. RAJARATNAM

Tax Management Consultant




Thidal an erstwhile tram shed is now a symbolic international headquarters for the Movement of Periyar, the Socrates of the East, a rationalist to the core, comparable in every respect with Spinoza, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Voltaire, Leibniz and Immanuel Kant and much more so with Rene Descartes, who considered science as a solution for all matters, a view not dissimilar to Periyar's philosophy. He was a life-long fighter against casteism and was highly critical of theism, because it is the fountainhead of all superstitions. He was not alone in this view, since none of the philosophers of the west were ever concerned with God in their treatises. It was Freud who convincingly demonstrated the folly of belief in after-life, a belief prompted by man's unwillingness to reconcile himself with death. It was philosopher Nietzsche, who prophesied the continued Darwinian evolution of man to superman as different from today's men as from monkeys deriding the idea of God by one of his characters in *"Thus spake Zarathustra"*, the philosopher declaring that the gods are dead. When asked how they died, he said, "they died laughing because some people still believe that the gods really exist".

Periyar was one with such great thinkers of the world. It is in Thidal, Periyar rested during life and continues to rest after.

It is my fortune that I became familiar with Thidal attracted by Periyar's message based on rationalism, hostile to Varnashrama and enslavement of

women with strong support for reservations in jobs and for education for the backward classes and for upliftment of the under-privileged. He was a great researcher, speaker and writer, who saw India as Gandhi Desam, a true citizen of the world with love for all and bias against none.

Dr. K. Veeramani, hereinafter referred to as Asiriyar, the mentor of Periyar movement not only propagates Periyar, but has also institutionalised Periyar as Plato did for Socrates.

**My contact**

My first contact with Thidal was, when I had visited Thidal for the marriage of the son of Thiru Satyendran, a District Judge, who was my colleague in the Sales-tax Tribunal. It is for the first and last time I have heard Periyar in person.

I had an occasion after his demise to hear a reference application as a Member of the Tribunal as to whether a question of law arose for reference to the High Court from a decision of another Bench of the Tribunal in favour of tax exemption of the public trust founded by Periyar. Reference to the High Court was sought mainly by demonising Periyar characterizing him as a bad person. When I wrote the judgement for the Bench along with Thiru T. Lakshmanaperumal, a former District Judge as the other Member, we had ruled that the character of Periyar was irrelevant for the issue, because even if he were bad, the trust could still be valid with reference to its objects and activities, since a bad man can make a good trust equally as a good man can make a bad trust. This decision surprisingly attracted a widespread reaction in the Department as an extraordinary justification branding me as a votary of Periyar's philosophy. Probably, the Thidal too thought so, because I began getting *Viduthalai*, the official organ of Periyar's movement immediately thereafter without subscribing for it. I do not know till date as to who is responsible for it. It may have been got done at the instance of Asiriyar with my name described as S. Rajamanickam instead of S. Rajaratnam, however, with the



correct address, apparently to save me from any possible embarrassment on the inference of my association with Periyar movement likely to affect my career prospects. The sentiment behind this gesture moved me.

I happened to be familiar with Mr. N.D. Sundaravadivelu, former Vice-Chancellor of Madras University, because he was familiar during his stint at Delhi with my sister and brother-in-law, both professors of Tamil in Delhi. On the basis of this familiarity, I used to invite him on quite a few occasions to preside over the meetings and seminars organised, while in the Income-tax Department and later by the Society of Auditors as its Honorary Director. Shortly

after retirement, he asked me whether I would be interested in undertaking an assignment as a lecturer for the IAS Training Course conducted at Thidal. I readily accepted the offer and met Prof. Ramasamy, Asiriyar's Asiriyar and Prof.Nannan, Periyar's follower. I developed good rapport with them. I was to assist Prof. Ramasamy to revive *"Southern Economist"*, a monthly journal, but his unfortunate death intervened.

My association with Thidal had a surprising further development, when I was asked by Asiriyar to be one of the trustees of The Periyar Self Respect Propoganda Institution and some time thereafter to be a Correspondent of Periyar Maniammai College of Technology for Women. I became more and more involved in the affairs of the schools and colleges and became a Member of the Governing Body of Periyar Maniammai University after it was formed. It was during this period, I had occasion to have more than a casual relationship with Asiriyar in respect of various matters. It was indeed during this period I came to appreciate his well-deserved reputation.

Asiriyar is a multi-faceted personality, proficient not only in Periyar's writings recording his continuing monumental history, having had a very close relationship with Periyar in the activities of the movement from his very tender age till date, under the title *"Vazhviyil Sinthanaigal"*. I am an ardent reader of his experiences which throws light on the history of Tamil Nadu during the formative stage of not only Periyar's movement but also the Governments of different parties, whether K.Kamaraj, C.N.Annadurai, M.Karunanidhi or J.Jayalalitha. He continues to be appreciative of all, where such appreciation was deserved without any inhibition or any affiliation with any party, while being critical, where it is necessary.



Though he is firm in his view, he is friendly with leaders of parties. For instance, he recently described Mr. Kumari Ananthan as a good friend though politically often at opposite ends and praised him for his devotion to the cause of prohibition as he did during a recent public function.

It is very difficult to classify Asiriyar under any category. He has been active as the Editor of *Viduthalai* for every page of which bears his stamp ably assisted by Thiru. Kalipoongundran, Thiru. Saravanan and others and has published numerous books making him an editor par excellence. I am reminded of a passage in Lewis Carrol's *"Alice in Wonderland"* where Alice exclaims "What is the use of the book which has no picture or conversation!" But it is a surprise that the books of Periyar movement have rarely any pictures or conversation, but extremely absorbing because of the manner in which Periyar spoke and wrote and Asiriyar communicated the personality and the works of Periyar.

The Himalayan effort to realise the Periyar's dream of dalit priests in the *sanctum sanctorum* of Hindu temples has been realised in Karnataka and Kerala today and Tamil Nadu possibly tomorrow, thanks solely to Asiriyar's efforts, his homage to his leader.

**Asiriyar's antecedents**

What is his qualification? He is an Honours graduate in Economics besides holding a degree

Asiriyar Dr. K. Veeramani is not only a seasoned economist but also has all the political experience without brand image of any party. He is truly a historian, for example in his knowledge of Indus Valley Civilisation, which is no less than that of any History Professor.

in law with practice in law. He has obtained a Doctorate, honoris causa from Alagappa University. He fits the appellation of a doctor in more than one sense in that the word doctor is derived from Latin to mean a teacher, which he is. I have always found a remarkable resemblance when I hear him speak in comparison with my most eminent teachers in the University and elsewhere.

My familiarity with Periyarism was the lectures, which I heard with rapture from C.N.Annadurai, V.R.Nedunchezhiyan and K.Anbazhagan, though I was also an admirer of powerful speakers in other parties like Jeeva of the Communist Party. The American College at Madurai with its liberal traditions used to have them almost at every meetings presided over by Mr. A.S.P.Aiyar, who was then the District Judge at Madurai before he became a High Court Judge, who always used to make interesting remarks in his uninhibited Malayalamised (!) English. I remember a series of lectures from Father Heraz expatiating Indus Valley Civilisation with Mr. Aiyar supplementing it. Asiriyar's pre-occupation with Indus Valley Civilisation as a precursor of the Tamil heritage is now more and more understood after largely deciphering the Indus Valley script and the artefacts at the ancient sites in Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa and now Keezhadi.

He is not only a seasoned economist but also has all the political experience without brand image of any party. He is truly a historian, for example in his knowledge of Indus Valley Civilisation, which is no less than that of any History Professor.

**What is he?**

Notwithstanding the difficulty in categorising him, I would not give up my effort to classify him as between his role as an editor, economist, lawyer, orator, writer, teacher, historian, and above all a Periyarist, who would with all humility claim to be only a follower of Periyar. He has the art of explaining principles of Periyarism, which he says has all the answers for all questions which arise or may arise. He is not a mere disciple but a worthy successor of Periyar in every sense. I for myself know Periyar only through him. He has made Periyar's thoughts familiar in India outside Tamil Nadu and has internationalised him by links with rationalist movement all over the world with his renowned publications both in Tamil and English besides other languages. He is not only the renowned editor of *Viduthalai* and other journals in Tamil but also of *The Modern Rationalist* in English, another harbinger of Periyar's thoughts. The publications include not only Periyar's books but also classics on rationalism filling up a library. May I add that two of my books have also been published by this publisher!

I sometimes wonder whether he is a robot by the manner in which he tirelessly works for hours and days often neglecting his health.

> Notwithstanding the difficulty in categorising him, I would not give up my effort to classify him as between his role as an editor, economist, lawyer, orator, writer, teacher, historian, and above all a Periyarist, who would with all humility claim to be only a follower of Periyar.

I also wonder, whether he could be classified as Shahjehan, the great builder judging by massive buildings architecturally beautiful for many schools and colleges including a University all over the South, besides the palatial Periyar Centre at Delhi. A monumental statue of Periyar is coming up at Siruganur near Trichy comprising of Centre of Research with a Light and Sound Show comparable to the great Nalanda University, which exported Buddhism to the East with hardly any communication comparable to the present.

He reminds me of Benjamin Franklin, who has left a colourful life and legacy as great editor of Poor Richard's Almanack, later first President of a College at Philadelphia, which has become University of Pennsylvania.

When I read his articles on Periyar and his movement, I am reminded of Boswell, but for whom the genius of Dr. Johnson might not have been so well known. I am of the firm belief that he is Periyar's Boswell, but as described by one of Boswell's biographers "instead of writing a respectful and dry record of Johnson's public life in the style of the time, he painted a vivid portrait of the complete man brought to life through an aromatic style of dialogue". Canon Doyle's character Sherlock Holmes, said to his assistant Dr. Watson "I am lost without my Boswell". Boswell's work on Johnson is described as the greatest biography ever written. Asiriyar does no less for Periyar.

Asiriyar is a great leader. A person can be considered to be a leader if he can create a cadre. What a great cadre he has created in Tamil Nadu and rest of the world! Thanks to him I became familiar with his coterie consisting of Justice S.Mohan, Justice A.K. Rajan, Late Thiru. K.Samidurai, Late Thiru. A.Devasahayam, Mayilai Krishnan, Tmt. A.Arulmozhi, Dr. A.Rajasekaran, Dr. M.S.Ramachandran, Dr. Nal Ramachandran, Prof. P.Subramaniam of Trichy, Thiru.V. Anburaj, Thiru. V.Kumaresan of *The Modern Rationalist* and its own ever-active assistant Mr.Seetharaman, and numerous others, many of whom became my invaluable friends.

Thidal with its Radha Mandram and Periyar's majestic statue is a landmark in Chennai.

Recently, I was impressed to hear Thiru Kalyanam, who was personal attendant to Mr. Gandhi, the greatest Indian after Buddha. He expressed with reasonable pride combined with humility in a meeting, that he too had walked with Mahatma. I felt the same pride, because I too walked with Asiriyar! It is one of the rare privileges for me to have not only known him but also worked for him and with him, besides being the beneficiary of the affection of himself and his family members, friends and associates.

# Dr. K. Veeramani
# SYMBOL OF DEDICATION



## Dr. A. RAJASEKARAN

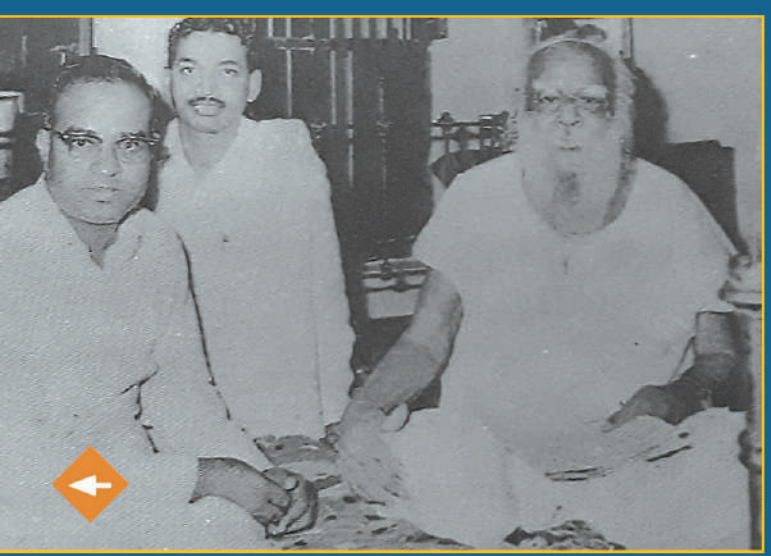
Consultant Urologist & Andrologist
Padmashri & Dr. B.C. Roy Awardee

My association with Dr. K.V dates back to 1948, when both of us were studying 9th standard at SPG High School Cuddalore O.T. and subsequently at Annamalai University. As post graduate student of economics and commerce, he distinguished himself as class topper winning several prizes and medals. Our association continued when he was staying at Law College, Broadway, Chennai not far away from Stanley Medical College where I was student in MBBS Course. Initiated into public speaking, even from his tender age of 12 years ably guided and tutored by Dravidamani, K.V made his presence felt as a platform speaker, propagating Periyar thoughts and Self Respect Movement. He has unique distinction compared to his contemporary speakers in Dravidar Kazhagam, when most of them left Periyar for greener pasture, K.V. struck to Self Respect Movement and Dravidar Kazhagam. Subsequent events in his life cemented his association with Thanthai Periyar.

Periyar EVR found in him a person with vast knowledge, sincerity and commitment to social causes. At a time when K.V. was successful

As Urologist, I had my share in looking after EVR, for whom Dr. H.S.Bhat, of Christian Medical College (CMC), Vellore established continuous bladder drainage without much ado EVR carried the bag during public platforms unmindful of severe agony now and then. Any other person in public life would have avoided embarrassing moments on the stage but not Periyar EVR.

lawyer at Cuddalore, Thanthai Periyar was desperate to find a right person as Editor of 'Viduthalai'. Accepting the challenge, K.V. took over the responsibility without any remuneration and carved a niche for himself as a writer, speaker and revolutionary – Thanthai Periyar's demise and Maniyammaiar passing away, added great responsibility on the young shoulders of K.V. to carry forward Periyar's thoughts to global level. He established many educational institutions of high standards, educational complexes and Periyar Mainammai University & affiliated institutions. He shouldered the responsibility as Editor of *'The Modern Rationalist'* and founded the children magazine *'Periyar Pinju'* etc as regular magazines (monthly) and kept the momentum sustained to such high levels which EVR himself would have been proud of. Meticulous planning, humility, honesty and dedication are distinct qualities of K.V. He is a social leader distinguished himself among the contemporary politicians / public figures of Tamil Nadu.



It was during the period from 1970 to 1973 till the demise of Periyar and for several decades thereafter I became a close associate of K.V. Our families created close contacts. As Urologist, I had my share in looking after EVR, for whom Dr. H.S.Bhat, of Christian Medical College (CMC), Vellore established continuous bladder drainage without much ado EVR carried the bag during public



platforms unmindful of severe agony now and then. Any other person in public life would have avoided embarrassing moments on the stage but not Periyar EVR.

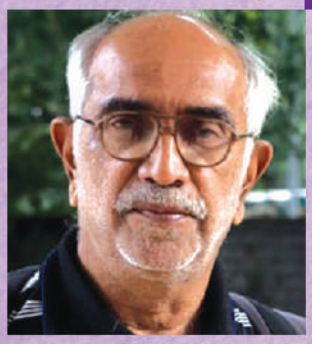
It was because of Asiriyar K.V. our family members - young and old developed great affinity towards Periyar. We were fondly welcomed by him. At our invitation Periyar and Maniammai visited our home when I was Resident warden at Madras Medical College Men's hostel and joined us for a lunch. When our family members brought out a family magazine *"Kudumba Malar"*, Thanthai Periyar not only appreciated our efforts but wrote 26 pages foreword to encourage our ordinary effort. Thanthai Periyar had special appreciation for our family members – never hesitated to speak at length on public platforms, which gave us encouragement to achieve greater things in our life. When my brother Mr. A. Rajmohan IPS, then superintendant of Police, Trichy was targeted by the upper class, Periyar condemned such atrocities, through editorial in '*Viduthalai*' a rare gesture! When we had to select a chairman for Tamil Nadu Backward Class Commission, it was my friend K.V. who personally took me to Periyar at Trichy and at his suggestion Thiru A.N. Sattanathan ICS was made Chairman.

Thiru. K.V. as Editor of '*Viduthalai*' gave the facelift to the magazine by introducing modern printing technology. When the Periyar Trust was subjected to Tax related issues, it was K.V. who took upon himself personally to safeguard the interest to enable finances of Trust on sound footing. Asiriyar has launched 'PERIYAR ULAGAM' a mega event to remember legendary Periyar. Once known in Tamil Nadu, Thanthai Periyar Movement has now become a global event all over the world. Asiriyar K.V. has versatile qualities as great writer, eloquent speaker, organizer, above all sincere and dedicated in all his actions.

We are happy to know he would step into 85th Birthday. It is our earnest desire that Asiriyar should be in good health with excellent frame of mind to guide the future generation and live surpassing the age of Thanthai Periyar himself.

# The Obscurantist Agenda of the Present Ruling Dispensation


## Prof. Narendra Nayak



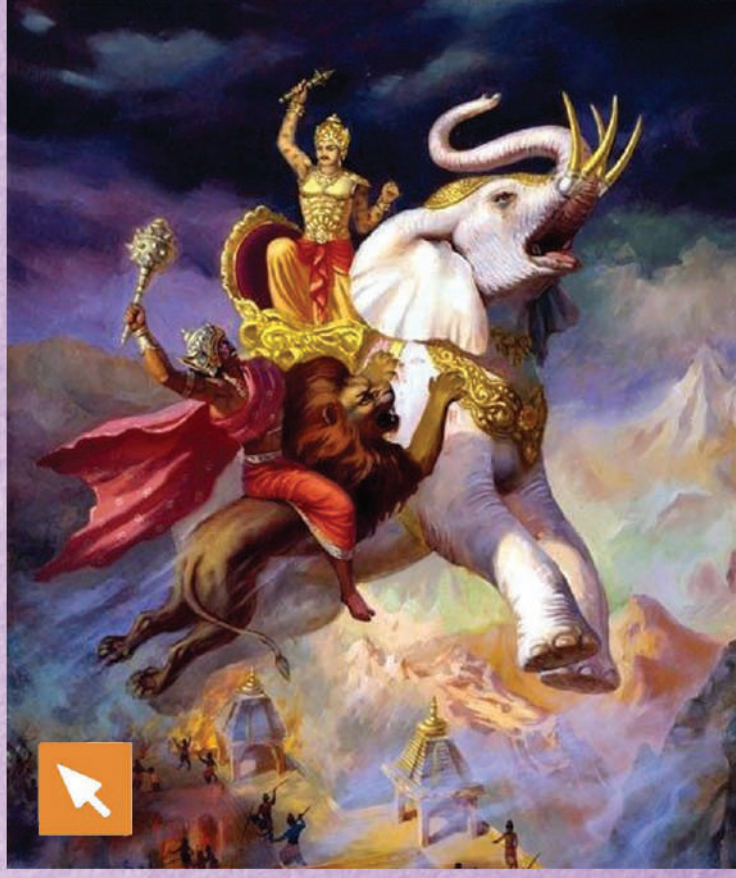
National President,
Federation of Indian Rationalist Association


The tragedy of the sixteenth century mindset being superimposed on 21st century is slowly unfolding in this country at the expense of the secular, rational thinking citizens of this nation. Well, the Hindu society or rather I should say the Manuvadi mindset is very technology friendly despite its primitive casteist mindset. It is this attitude that perfectly blends with the exploitation of all weaker sections socially, economically or in any other manner. The rule seems to be take advantage in every way you can and perpetuate the injustice by looking for things compatible with the latest technology! If you cannot do puja at home do it on the net! You can add camphor, oil arati, coconut breaking additional mantras or whatever you wish! But you can rest assured that the whole software has been created by a Manuvadi who will be also reaping the physical profits from it! A continuation of the same brahminical attitude that makes the other castes work for them promising goodness in after life or other gains in the present life itself mostly of the former!

Whether it is the field of nutrition, transport or communication to name a few, obscurantism is gaining ground steadily and surely. The

people of our country who are by training obedient to those older in age and subservient to authority - however illegitimate it may be, are a prey for these forces. The system is so terrible that those who succeed have to put on a Manuvadi appearance to be in power or come anywhere near it. The virtues that are extolled, the qualities that are claimed to be desirable are all springing from the same origin! If you take the present ruling clique, the figurehead though he claims to be from the so called lower castes is more Manuvadi than even the most orthodox Brahmins. The flaunting of his vegetarianism, his observance of religious rituals like fasts, the regalia of the religion to which he belongs are all symbols of this. So, the role models for the younger generation if any are those who support such values. This is reflected in everything that we see- take the largest manufacturer of consumer and the second largest- the second is fast on the way to be the first - none other than the one owned/operated/run/guided or whatever it is by the winking bearded wonder who would like to flaunt his flat stomach and churn it too gyrating half naked on a stage watched by as they claim-millions! Crying swadeshi from roof tops, shouting about a medicine free society etc. he manufactures (allegedly) and peddles his own versions of 'medicines' for every disease under the sun, moon and stars! Not only that; he dispenses gratuitous advice about the same too! He extols virtues like celibacy, vegetarianism etc. This country of sheepish followers fawn on his words and fall over each other to buy his noodles, detergents, biscuits or whatever that he peddles.

It is not just the goods offered that lure the population of this country but a mix of alleged patriotism and a love for the past! The inferiority complex of the native of this subcontinent makes him or her look for some straws to cling to boost our hurt egos. What if the Wright brothers made the first flying



> A good look at their life styles shows their hypocrisy. The top man does not go on his world tours on a Pushpak viman. He uses a regular top end air craft. Our borders are not guarded by the army with the bows and arrows of the golden old age!

it is time that our citizenry saw through this hypocrisy of these new age obscurantists and follow a scientific lifestyle rather than a mythology based one. This is particularly the need for the middle class whose confused value systems with access to the latest technology which makes them vulnerable to such exploitation.

machine? Our ancestors were much better. They had those which could fly up, down sideways and even backwards! They were capable of even interplanetary travel. What if even the plain aspirin was discovered in the West and surgery too? We had things like head transplant thousands of years ago! What if the world has nuclear weapons now? We had them during Ramayana and Mahabharat days. So, in every field we were far advanced than the rest of the world. In fact ours is the mother of all civilization, technology and innovations. The lack of evidence does not deter us at all. That was because it was all destroyed by the foreign invaders. Some of the ancient tomes which contained these treasure houses of knowledge and technology have been taken by the victors, been stored safely in their archives and all modern day technology is being extracted from them.



The search for legitimacy for our contentions is now being channelized to our research institutions too. It sometimes looks like they have been presented with preset conclusions which have to be just legitimized by them. We have claims of Gaumata (mother cow) exhaling more oxygen than she inhales, the potent mixture of five components of products from it (including its dung and urine) being a panacea, the urine itself being a cure all for more than four hundred diseases and so on. Obscure journals have even claimed to have publications like gold being found in the urine of cows etc.

The population of the country suffering from a variety of diseases, caused by malnutrition at one end of the spectrum to those suffering from obesity and life style diseases at the other has been advised that all these can be cured by yes- yoga! With confusions about what it is each proponent comes up with his or her brand of contortions, breathing patterns,

calls it a fancy name and even take patents on it. We have a plethora of gurus, sadgurus, jagatgurus etc. The state humors them, funds them and also turns a blind eye to all the laws that they violate because a holy man cannot be at fault! Even if an allegation is made, proved in a court of law it is dismissed as a conspiracy against Hindutva by the missionaries and the leftists who have made an alliance to break the rich tradition of this glorious nation!

It is not that the predictive 'sciences' are left out. We have our own versions of astrology, Feeng shui called vastu, mathematics called vedic mathematics etc. Though there is no evidence that these things work none is needed. The picture of a meditating figure with a long beard is enough to credit some rishi muni from the Himalayas having found these things through deep meditation sitting in a snow covered cave. The extreme cold apparently does not affect them because of the powers conferred by these techniques. This had gone to the extent that the Indian Institute of Science, the premier science establishment, had proposed a two day workshop on astrology in daily life or something to that effect till a chorus of protests including a sarcastic open letter from the President of the Federation of Indian Rationalist Associations forced the director to cancel it!

Well, do the people at the top follow these obscurantist agendas in their personal lives? A good look at their life styles shows their hypocrisy. The top man does not go on his world tours on a Pushpak viman. He uses a regular top end air craft. Our borders are not guarded by the army with the bows and arrows of the golden old age! While Ayurveda, Yoga etc are touted as panaceas for the common man, the top man and his cabinet are treated with the well known evidence based methodologies like the minister for foreign affairs who had a kidney transplant, the finance minister who had a coronary bye pass etc.



So, it is time that our citizenry saw through this hypocrisy of these new age obscurantists and follow a scientific lifestyle rather than a mythology based one. This is particularly the need for the middle class whose confused value systems with access to the latest technology which makes them vulnerable to such exploitation. Periyar though he did not have much of formal education had a very clear perspective of such things though he had lived when technology was not as dominant as it was today. The next decade will be the most crucial time for our nation and the events then will determine whether we become a modern secular state or a theocracy, It is high time that we all awaken and arise to this task if we want it to go in the right direction. As someone remarked a few years ago the next battle is not going to be between the political left and right but between the right and the extreme right!

# MY REMINISCENCES OF ASIRIYAR Dr. K.VEERAMANI


## Prof. G. RAJU



Former Prof & Head, Dept. of Science
Regional Institute of Education (NCERT)


Asiriyar K. VEERAMANI and I belong to Cuddalore OT. I knew his father and two elder brothers, K.V. was known as public speaker at an early age, inspired by Mr.Dravidamani, a staunch believer of Periyar ideology. K.V. established his own style of public speaking. K.VEERAMANI's characteristic gait and small figure endeared him to many senior members of Dravidar Kazhagam.

After my schooling at Cuddalore, I joined Annamalai University K.V. and I were day scholars commuting daily between Cuddalore OT and Chidambaram. A few of us formed a small group enjoying our train journey with Asiriyar K. Veeramani, who used to engage us with anecdotes and jokes.

One Chandrasekar was fond of loud conversation, which imitated our group and hence we nicknamed him as "Salippu" (disgust). He became Director of Forensic Science in later years and for his expertise provided in Rajiv Gandhi Assassination, he was awarded Padma Bhushan by the Government of India. All three of us kept our interaction all these years. Dr.Chandrasekar died a few months ago.

Having held several academic positions in many states of our country, I am leading a retired life. We have a common family friend Dr.A.Rajasekaran, who provides me with the opportunity to listen to the brilliant orations of K.V. I wish Asiriyar K.V. good health and happiness, sustained energy and enthusiasm to serve the cause of Tamils for many more years.

# Initiatives and efforts taken by a Rationalist organization to enact Anti Superstition Law


## Avinash Patil



Executive President,
Maharashtra Andhashraddha Nirmoolan Samiti


ANS began its march of eradicating superstition by declaring a manifesto of the movement, in the year 1989. The manifesto, among other things, had demanded to ratify a law against superstitions. It was conveyed to the then chief minister honorable Sharad Pawar. By conducting lot many struggles and removing many hurdles, the anti superstition legislation was enacted as, 'Maharashtra Prevention and Eradication of Human Sacrifice and other Inhuman, Evil and Aghori Practices and Black Magic Act 2013 (Maharashtra Act No. XXX of 2013). The journey undertaken to enact the law is described below.

1. A.P.G. Dasturkar presented a private bill to enact anti-superstition law in the legislative assembly in July 1995. The NDA was in power at that time. But the Congress party was in majority in the assembly. The bill was approved by the majority votes. But the NDA government did not take any further action on it.
2. In 1999 the UPA came into power. Their minimum common programme was drafted under the chairmanship of Prof. N.D.Patil and the party assured to pass the law against exploitative superstition within a year.
3. In 2003 the cabinet approved of the law. On 15 August the government announced that Maharashtra was the first state in India to pass such a law. Later the name of this law was changed to 'law against black magic' from the original "law against superstition'.
4. As the Assembly was packed up before its stipulated period draft

Punishable : To create an impression that special supernatural powers are present in himself, incarnation of another person or body spirit or that the devotee was his wife, husband or paramour in the last birth thereby indulging into sexual activity with such person.

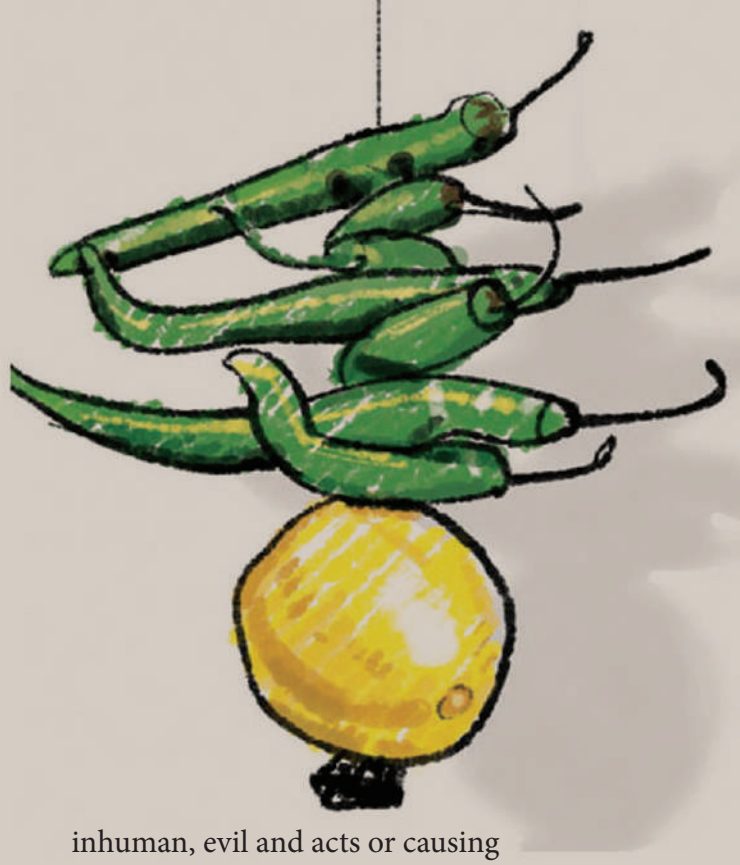
of the law was sent to the Governor for approval. But the Governor decided to defer it till the next Government came into power after the elections.

5. On 13 April 2005 the Minister for Social Justice tried to table this law in the Legislative Assembly. But it had to be deferred because of the wrongly made opposition by the party in power.
6. Next the law was revised and made less stringent. The modified compliant law was passed in the Legislative Assembly on 16 Dec. 2005. It was deferred once again by filibustering and was sent to the Joint Investigating Committee in 2007. The Committee called for people's opinion on the law, 55000 people opposed it while 80,000 supported it.
7. Then came a suggestion that the committee members should go to Pandharpur and hold discussion with the Varkaris on this issue. The Minister for Social Justice, Shri Chandrakant Handore, however, could not make it convenient to visit Pandharpur throughout the whole year. Finally after the assembly elections in 2009, the law bill became invalid.
8. In 2009, Ashok Chavan became the Chief Minister, but he did not do a thing to promote the passage of the law. In Nov. 2010, the reigns of the Chief Minister ship were handed over to Mr. Prithwiraj Chavan and the Cabinet endorsed the law in April 2011.
9. The Chief Minister had promised to pass the law during the Monsoon Session, this year, but it was only tabled in the Legislative Assembly.
10. An Ordinance was passed on 22 Sept 2013 in this regard and the Bill will be tabled in the next session, 2013.

**Provisions in the Law**

In order to avoid any dispute about Faith and superstition, erupting in the Court of Law, special provision is made in the law defining superstition. 12 items listed in Schedule are to be considered superstition. They are as under:

1) Under the pretext of expelling the ghost, assaulting by tying a person with rope or chain, beating by stick or whip, to make the person to drink footwear-soaked water, giving chilli smoke, hanging a person to roof, fixing him with rope or by hair or plucking his hair, causing pain by way of touching heated object to organs or a body of a person, forcing a person to perform a sexual act in the open, practising inhuman acts, putting urine or human excreta forcibly in the mouth of a person or practising any such acts.
2) Display of so called miracles by a person and thereby earning money; and to deceive, defraud and terrorise people by propagation and circulation of so called miracles.



3) With a view to receive blessings of supernatural power, to follow the inhuman, evil and practices which cause danger to life or grievous hurt, to instigate, encourage or compel others to follow such practices.

4) Doing any inhuman, evil and act and black magic in search of precious things, bounty and water resources, or for similar reasons in the name of , and making or trying to make human sacrifice in the name of or the like, or to advise, instigate or encourage committing such inhuman acts.

5) To create an impression by declaring that a power inapprehensible by senses has influenced one's body or that a person has possessed such power and thereby create fear in the mind of others or to threaten others of evil consequences for not following the advice of such person or deceive, defraud and deter him.

6) By making the persons believe that a particular person practices black magic or brings under the influence of ghost or diminishes the milking capacity of a cattle by or similarly accusing a particular person that he brings misfortune to others, or is a cause for spread of diseases and thereby making the living of such person miserable, troublesome or difficult to declare a person as or incarnation of saitan.

7) In the name of jaran-maran or chetuk, assaulting any person, parading him naked or put a ban on his daily activities.

8) To create a panic in the mind of public in general by way of invoking ghost or mantras or threaten to invoke ghost, creating an impression that there is ghostly or wrath of power inapprehensible by senses causing physical injuries and preventing a person from taking medical treatment and instead diverting him to practice inhuman, evil and acts or causing financial harm by practicing or tend to practice black magic or inhuman act.

9) Prohibiting and preventing a person from taking medical treatment in case of dog, snake or scorpion bite and instead giving him treatment like mantra tantra, gande dora or such other things.

10) Claiming to perform surgery by fingers or claiming to change the sex of a foetus in womb of a woman.

11) (a) To create an impression that special supernatural powers are present in himself, incarnation of another person or body spirit or that the devotee was his wife, husband or paramour in the last birth thereby indulging into sexual activity with such person.

(b) To keep sexual relations with a woman who is unable to conceive assuring her of motherhood through supernatural power.

12) To create an impression that a mentally retarded person as having supernatural powers and utilizing such person for business or occupation. ■

# Reservoir of Knowledge

## Dr. M.S.RAMACHANDRAN



Prof. Emeritus, Dr. MGR Medical University
Senior Medical Consultant & Diabetologist

கண்ணுக்கு தெரிந்த மனிதனை மதிக்காவிட்டால்
கண்ணுக்கு தெரியாத கடவுளை மதிப்பது வீண்

*- Mother Teresa*

I congratulate the organizers for bringing out a monograph on the life and achievements of our beloved Asiriyar on the occasion of his 85th Birthday. I thank you for the honour for asking me to send a few words about this illustrious leader par excellence. His birthday on 02.12.2017 is an iconic event laced with history. He has come from modest beginning but due to his innate desire he rose to eminence by merit after qualifying for his master and law degrees. It was his tryst with late Periyar, that gave him a meaningful life to serve the society to remove inequality, bring social justice and empower women and the depressed. He firmly believed in the theory that all are born equal but opportunities are uneven. But for the great revolutionary Periyar under whom his marriage with Ms. Mohana was solemnized, he would have adorned the highest echelons of the judiciary. It is because of his commitment, focus and passion the career change was a great milestone in his journey towards abolition of blind faith in idol worship, superstition, soothsayers and fake samiyars (God-men). He is a leader unsurpassed in truthfulness and never wore his success



For Asiriyar organization takes precedence over personal ambitions. He is simple, very respectful to everyone and is a global torch bearer for social justice. He reads a lot and his oratorical skills are legendry apart from being a tireless worker, 24/7.

on his sleeves. He respected the mentor unflinchingly in carrying out the command.

I must mention at this juncture, that all these would not have been possible without the active support of his better half Mrs.Mohana who comes of a noble family and nobler by actions. She is an intelligent woman, with commitment to Periyar's ideology in no small measure.

Our Asiriyar has scientific temper and a voracious reader equipped with knowledge of men and matters.

He is a very lucky person in the sense there is zero pin pricks or ambition among any of the family members. These are his real assets. I am inclined to think that he did very little for any of his children. For him organization takes precedence over personal ambitions. He is simple, very respectful to everyone and is a global torch bearer for social justice. He reads a lot and his oratorical skills are legendry apart from being a tireless worker, 24/7. His association with Kalaignar is commonality of beliefs, commitment to Periyar and mutual adoration. Even though the Late Chief Minister J.Jayalalithaa differed ideologically our Asiriyar did not fail to give accolades to her when she got 69 per cent reservation for in Tamil Nadu by her presence on the centre to amend the constitution. He is clear in his vision and does not hesitate to call spade, a spade.

There is hardly any other leader in Tamil Nadu who is eloquent in English and Tamil at ease, apart from being a reservoir of knowledge.

I fondly remember in 1976 when he was incarcerated he did not fail to send me a letter of condolence, on the occasion of my father's demise, from the jail. I have had several occasion to visit Vallam institutions and the ones in Trichy and the quality of Professors in the University are praise worthy. The vastness of the academic campus, featuring environmental safety, women empowerment, use of alternate energy were all lauded by no less a person than Dr. J. Abdul Kalam. The Periyar Center building in Delhi is again a standing monument for his forward looking attitude and being a visionary. No doubt he has faced many obstacles in his path but he took it on his broad shoulders and faced the challenges and came out with flying colours.

On this great occasion I wish him long life to serve the needy and the downtrodden. His unsurpassed talent, fund of knowledge and humanism are the attributes which draws the people to him. His crusade against irrational beliefs that took him to the centre stage in the global arena.

Last but not least, his younger son Mr. Anburaj is a great asset to the institution. He has sacrificed a lot in helping the institutions grow. Kudos to him on this great occasion!

May Asiriyar's (Kudos) Radiance remain undiminished!

வாழ்க வளமுடன்!
வாழ்க வையகம்!!

# Aagamas do not prohibit any caste


## Dr. Justice A. K. Rajan

Former Judge, High Court of Madras




**Pre-Vedic, Vedic and post-Vedic religions:**

There is no religion by name 'Hinduism'. It is not the name of any one religion. It refers to a group of religions. The name Hindu religion means and includes the aborigine or pre-Vedic religions, the Vedic religions, and the post- Vedic religions. Vaishnavism (Maha Vishnu worship), Saivism (Siva worship), Smarthism (non-idol worship), 'Sauram' (Sun-god worship), 'Ganabathyam' (Ganapathy worship), 'Kaumaram' (Subramannyam worship) etc. are all Vedic-religions. 'Shaktham' (Shakthi acts conjointly with Siva), appears to be a post-Vedic religion. The aborigine pre–Vedic religions include the ancient 'female-God worship', and the 'male-god worship', which are respectively known as the 'Amman-worship', and 'Kula–deiva or (devatha) worship'. Further, Vaishnavism, Saivism, Smarthism, Shaktham etc. are all the names of independent religions. They are not 'denominations' or a sect of a religion.

**'Aagamas'**

Aagamas are customs and practices followed in the temple worship. The Aagamas exist and are followed only in South India. North Indian temples do not follow any such practice, by name Aagama. There is a belief among some sections of the 'Hindus' of South India that construction of temples and the temple worship have to be done

> Aagamas require the temples to be closed after mid day (after uchchi kaala pooja) and during nights, after the late evening ( raak kaala) poojas. But nowadays many temples are kept open during the entire day time. Most of the temples are kept open at mid night on the English new year day.

as per 'Aagamas' and that, 'poojas' are to be performed only by Brahmins it is so ordained by Aagamas. That is far from true. Aagamas are nothing but a set of customs and rules followed, during while worshipping god, construction of temples, and the periodicity of such poojas. It is not stated in any of the Aagamas that only Brahmins could do the poojas in the temples. No Aagama prescribes any caste as a pre-requisite or qualification to do the poojas..

**ABORIGINE AMMAN WORSHIP:**

Amman worship was and is a separate religion by itself. It is not a sub-sect or a denomination of any religion including Saivism or Vaishnvism or Sakthism. The female god worship appears to be the ancient pre –Vedic religion of the aborigines of south India. Samaya Puram Maariamman, Thillai Kaali Amman, Pedamma and Mallamma of Andhra, Chaudamma of Mysore, Bagawthi Amman of Kerala and all other female Gods are all primary gods. They possess all powers; they have no consorts. That may be the reason for not having a shrine for any male god in the temples where the female god is the prime deity. In some of the amman temples, in recent years, Siva lingas have been installed. That is to give those temples a Saivite colour and to justify the imposition of Sivagamas in those temples.

**Vaishnava 'samhithis':**

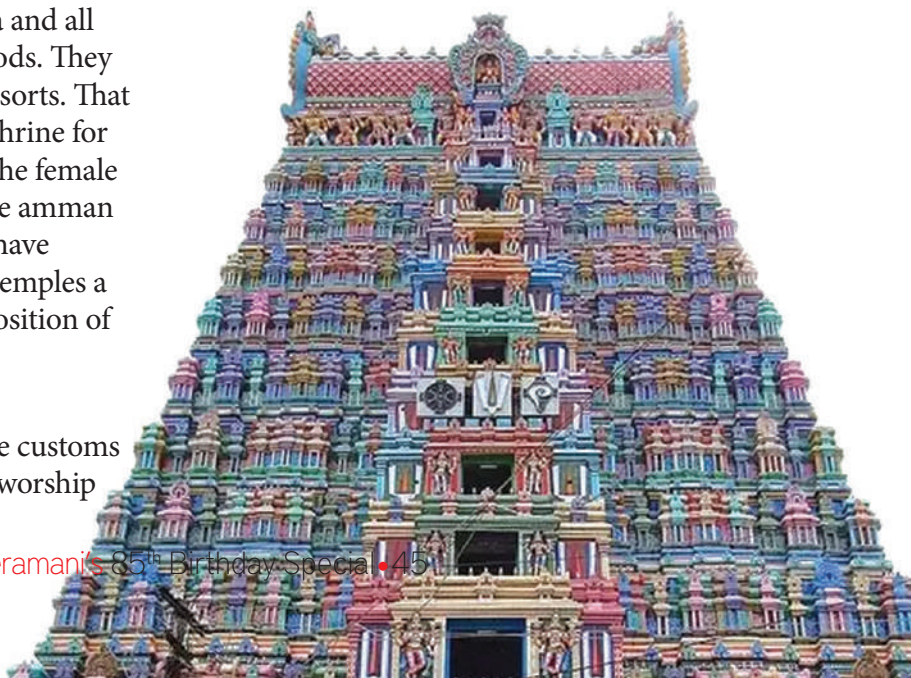
**Paancharathra:** In Vaishnavism, the customs and practices to be followed during worship of God Maha Vishnu is known as Samhithis. It is said that God Maha Vishnu himself revealed the Pancharathra 'Samhithis' to Five Vaishnavite rishis over five nights.

**Vaikaanasaa:** There is another set of Samhithis known as 'Vaikanasa' samhithis. It is said that they were given by the rishi 'Vikanasa'. The vaikaanasaa samhithis can be taught only to 'vaikanasa men'.

But, the basic doctrine in Vaishnavism is that no Vaishnvite shall ask another vaishnavite his caste. That is, asking a person's caste itself is considered irreligious in Vishnavism. Therefore caste of the poojari is irrelevant, for doing poojas, in Vaishnavite temples.

**Saiva 'aagamas':**

The customs and religious practices followed and the rites performed, in the Saivite temples,





> Deviations and Contradictions in Agama principles are in existence in most of the temples. These are all changes made according to the wishes of the kings, and the needs of the devotees, and many a time according to the convenience of the poojaries.

are known as 'Aagamaas'. It is also said that 'Aagamas' were the directions given by God Siva to the Five Rishis. Each aagamaa contains the rules for conducting poojas, its periodicity, offerings to be made; the rules for constructing temples, location of *sanctum–sanctorum*, and other mandapas, eligibility for performing poojas etc. The descendents of the five rishis are known as 'sivachariyas'. Sivachariyas are not Brahmins. The sivachariyas are the conglomeration of the off - springs of all those five castes. None of the Saiva aagamas prescribe that only Brahmins can perform poojas in saivite temples. That is, there is no 'caste–bar' for performing poojas in Saivite temples.

In Vedic religions- temples only for male gods:

In the Vedic religions of Saivism and Vaishnavism there are few temples where the female god is the primary or presiding deity. In the Vaishnavite temples invariably there are separate shrines for the consort, Lakshmi known as 'Thaaayaar sannithi'. But in most of the Saivite temples there would not be separate shrines for God Siva's consort Parvathy. In the temple city of Kanceepuram, where hundreds of saivite temples are situated, it is said that no temple has a separate shrine for Parvathy. That may be due to the fact that siva linga depicts both male and female aspects.

**Claim of Vedic religions:**

But, the Vedic Religions of Saivism and Vaishnavism claim the aborigine village female and male gods are their subordinates or smaller gods under the control of the Vedic Gods, Siva and Vishnu. One such ancient village male god, Karuppanna Samy, is worshiped by both Vaishnavites and Saivites.

**Smarthas :**

Smarthism is a different Vedic religion. It is neither Saivism nor Vaisnavism. They worship plurality of Gods, such as Sun, Moon, Indira, Varuna, Agni, Vayu and other gods. They do not believe in idol worship. Therefore there are no temples at all for them. Therefore there were no Aagamas for them.

**Contents of 'Aagamas' and Samhithis:**

The customs and religious practices followed in the Saivite temples alone are called Aagamas. But of late the rituals followed in the Vaishnavite temples, the samhithis, and practices rituals and rites performed in the Amman (female god) temples called 'Thanthras" are all loosely referred as 'Aagamaas'.

According to the Aagamic Experts, as per the aagamas in each temple, there must be a Sanctum Sanctorum ( Karuvarai in Tamil Moolasthanam in Sanskrit). In the Sanctum Sanctorum, the first half is Archana Mandapam and the second half is Ardha Mandapam. Ardha Mandapam is only a part of Sanctum Sanctorum. A small portion next to the Sanctum Sanctorum is 'Aga' Mandapam; adjoining that, 'Muga' Mandapam should be located. Next to Muga Mandapam, 'Maha' Mandapam should be located; thereafter a

flag mast (*kodi maram* in Tamil and *dwaja sthambam* in Sanskrit). Apart from this, in Saivaite temples there must be Balipeetam and Nandhi; 'Garudalvar' will replace Nandhi in Vaishanavaite temples. A temple could be considered as an Agama temple only when all the above features are fulfilled. Viewed, bearing all the above principles in mind, it may be seen that Natarajar temple at Chidhambaram is not constructed according to Agamic principles. Likewise, it may be stated that Murugan temple at Thiruparankundram, and Pillayarpatty Vinayagar temple are not aagamic temple, as there are no Aga Mandapam or Muga Mandapam in those temples. Similarly, there are many temples in Tamil Nadu which do not conform to Agamic principles or they are deviant from some of the Agamic principles.

In the Saivaite temples constructed based on Saiva Agama, only Saivaite idols should be installed and Vaishnavaite idols should not be installed. Likewise,Saivite idols should not be installed in the temples constructed as per Vaishnavite samhidhis. If 'Navagraga' idols are installed in a temple, they are not Agamic temples. That is because, installation of Navagraka idols is not mentioned in any of the Agamas. Likewise, there are Shrines *(Sannithis)* for Anuman in most of the Saivaite temples in Tamil Nadu which is against the Agama and in most of the Vaishnavaite temples, Vinayaga idols have been installed. That is also in violation of aagama. In Thiruchendur, Murugan temple there is no Siva Lingam consecrated. Therefore no Agamas in Thiruchendur temple (i.e. this is not a Agama temple). Only Kumara Thanthiram is followed in this temple.

**Presently No temple is an aagamic temple:**

As on today, no temple in Tamil Nadu can be said to be, is an aagama temple, in its strict sense, Deviations and Contradictions in Agama principles are in existence in most of the temples. These are all changes made according to the wishes of the kings, and the needs of the devotees, and many a time according to the



convenience of the poojaries. It is to be noted here, that no one objected to those changes and all those changes were accepted by the devotees at large. It may be due to the fact no devotee consider the aagamas inviolable and hence they do not take such changes seriously.

**Archanas done at request not part of aagama:**

The performance of Archanas, at the request of devotees, is not sanctioned in any of the aagamas. Archana, according to Aagama, is a part of main 'Kala Pooja'. That can be done only once in a day.

**Changes made:**

Agamas that is, practices, have been modified or changed according to the wishes of the persons in authority, needs of the devotees and change of circumstances. The method of worship has undergone very many changes. Aagamas require the temples to be closed after mid day (after *uchchi kaala pooja*) and during nights, after the late evening ( *raak kaala*) *poojas*. But nowadays many temples are kept open during the entire day time. Most of the temples are kept open at mid night on the English new year day. These changes have been made for the convenience and requirements of the devotees. But they are all undoubtedly violations of aagamas.

**Aagamas do not prohibit any caste :**

No aagama prescribes that only persons from a particular caste, can become a poojari in a temple. There is absolutely no prohibition for



The Smarthas are of a different religion; they do not worship any idol..... they cannot perform poojas in Siva, Vishnu or even Amman temples.... as on 2006, in the 187 temples under the control of H.R.& C.E. a total number of 218 Smarthas are employed as archakas.

any person of that religion to become a poojari in the temples. That is, no aagama proscribes any community from becoming a poojari. The only requirement is that the person must be eligible and should have training in the aagamas.

**Prevailing situation:**

In fact in almost all temples only a very few poojaris have had training in aagamas. Majority of the persons performing poojas in temples are not qualified or trained in aagamas. In the 17 big Saivite temples, including Madurai, Thiruthani, Thiruvannamalai, Rameswaram, Palani, Thiruchendur, out of the total number of 677 poojaries only 62 have undergone training for more than three years; only 9 have undergone training for 2 years; 41 have undergone training for one year. The remaining 565 persons had no training at all.

In the 6 big Vaishnava temples including Srirangam, Kanchipuram, Thiruvallikeni, Sholingar and Alagar Koil out of the total number of 124 poojaris, only 5 in Thiruvallikeni have undergone one year training.; the rest of 119 have not undergone any formal training.

In the Amman temples including Samayapuram, Thiruverkadu and Mangadu, out of the total number of 142 poojaris, only 21 have training for more than 3 years. In Suseendram out of 201 poojaris not even one have undergone training, even for one year. In the Amman temples and also in Suseendram temple only 'Thanthras' are followed.

The Smarthas are of a different religion; they do not worship any idol. They cannot go beyond the flag – mast or 'Kodi Maram'. Therefore they cannot perform poojas in Siva, Vishnu or even Amman temples. But actually, as on 2006, in the 187 temples under the control of H.R.& C.E. a total number of 218 Smarthas are employed as Poojaris (archakas).

**Court judgments:**

The Supreme Court has held in more than one case that while appointing poojaris (archakas) in a temple the aagamas of the temple shall not be violated. Since no aagama proscribes (prohibit) any caste, for appointment, as poojaris, in any temple there can be no caste bar for appointment as archaka in any temple. The only requirements are that the person must be eligible and is trained in the aagamas. Eligibility is that the trained person must have good conduct, devotion to god, and getting Deeksha (certification) from a qualified person.

**Conclusion:**

From what is stated in the foregoing paragraphs, it can be concluded that no Aagama proscribes that only persons of a particular caste can be appointed as archaka in temples. While a non-saivite and non-vaishnavite, a Smartha, could be allowed to do poojas, as archaka, in Saivite and vaihsnavite temples, there cannot be any legal impediment or objection for appointment of any person of that religion who has been trained in Aagamas. ■

# An Extraordinary Leader !




## Dr. Soma Ilangovan

Director, Periyar International - USA


Anyone who is 85 and functions like a 25 year old is not ordinary!

Long live his youth!

When you are 85, but your mind is sharp and open like you are 25 and you are full of genuine optimism that is not ordinary!

When young men and women consider you as one of their own and listen to you with love, a genuine love without expecting anything in return, that is extraordinary. This attention and respect continues even as you say at every opportunity that you are only a follower and student of Periyar and are explaining his thoughts and implementing his ideals. Many of them have not seen or heard Periyar, for them he is only what you have portrayed. Only gods have been created like that and images constructed around the fictitious stories built around them. Even the leaders that the religions have tried to form did not withstand the test of time. Some political leaders with the backing of powerful governments are mentioned but their ideas are mostly gone!

Your extraordinary sense of the fulfillment of the man and the leader and the flourishing of his ideals and philosophy is historic! That it is spreading around the world is extraordinary!

You started at a tender age of 10. Your public speaking has been ongoing and your daily writing is still very thoughtful, fact-filled, relevant and respected by the leaders in the field.

You are a voracious reader and a writer with clarity and purpose. Your writing covers all ages, many professions, is a tonic to the sick and healthy and a crystallization of many writers of extreme usefulness.

You are a leader to your devoted cadre, you are a teacher even to those who do not ascribe to your ideology! You give a patient hearing to one and all and give an apt and adequate reply at all times!

People who have been privileged to spend time with you enjoy your jovial, heartfelt laughter. The practical solutions you offer with the depth of your understanding for any complicated situation are simply extraordinary.

Time is essential and you do not waste it at all. Traveling is always combined with reading and writing. I call you Periyar Computer as whatever the input may be, it is always Periyar ideology that comes out! Many of us have realized this only after the passage of time.

It is amazing that a volunteer social movement that only asks what you can give for the society without expecting anything in return, that too a rationalist organization started by Periyar, has withstood all the onslaughts and is spreading in leaps and bounds.

It is possible only because a man called Veeramani has given his entire life to the cause for so long and is still happy when he sees the youth coming and telling him their thoughts!

He is an extraordinary leader!

Long live Veeramani, Long live Periyar!

# SCIENCE AND SCIENTIFIC TEMPER An Overview


## Dhaneswar Sahoo



President, Odisha Rationalist Society,
Bhubaneswar
2013 Awardee - 'K.Veeramani Award for Social Justice'


Science and scientific temper are interrelated though there is some conceptual difference between them. But they are quite antithetical to the notion of anything called paranormal. Again, each of these ideas, i.e. science, scientific temper or paranormal, refers to a vast range of activities and modes of thought; so it is some-times very difficult to specify the conceptual boundary to which each of them belongs. Further many intricate and complex issues seem to be associated with these ideas. In view of this, it is not possible to present a comprehensive or critical exposition of these ideas here. Mine will be a humble attempt to discuss these ideas from a common-sense point of view or from the point of view of a practical rationalist. A practical rationalist may not be a scientist nor might have any specialization in any branch of science. But he wants to promote scientific temper in the society by combating superstitions and dogmatic beliefs. For, he believes that superstitions and prejudices are evils which are detrimental to knowledge, social progress and civilized living. On the contrary scientific temper, spirit of enquiry and openness to truth add to social progress and enhance the quality of life. In view of this I aim to discuss the notions of science, scientific temper and the paranormal from a commonsense point of view without entering into any intricacies.

Scientific knowledge helps to explain why things and events occur as they do. When there is some phenomenon science helps to explain why that event occurs. Whether it is a single phenomenon or a class of

> spread of scientific temper in society is much more important than the spread of science and technology. In view of the cancerous growth of superstitions at all levels of our national life, some eminent scientists of our country maintain that scientific temper is an attitude of mind that calls for a particular outlook and pattern of behaviour.

phenomena, theories are brought in to present an explanation. A theory is supposed to have explanatory power, on the basis of which facts or events of similar type are to be explained. A scientific explanation is different from mystical, purposive or theological explanations. An explanation is scientific when it is evidence-based and does not conflict with other known laws of science. Such an explanation does not simply restrict itself to a single event but it explains other similar events of the past and future. An explanation is like a universal proposition having some predictive value. A scientific explanation is different from a purposive explanation, for the latter applies in case of human action. A person might have worked in a particular way with a purpose, but natural events have nothing to do with any purpose. All prescriptive laws presuppose some law-giver; it may be a legislature, an authority or an agent. But laws of nature are descriptive which do not admit any law-giver. Natural uniformity, exception less regularity or invariant happening is considered as descriptive. A descriptive law is neither changeable nor violable, whereas a prescriptive law is variable and changeable from time to time or place to place. Scientific explanation is in accordance with some law or theory and has nothing to do with any theological or supernatural explanation.

With this brief analysis of what science and scientific explanation mean, now we take up the other issue "what scientific temper" means. It is a historical fact that human civilization has progressed through a long period witnessing many rises and falls. Till the advent of the European renaissance, there prevailed stagnation and in the medieval or pre-medieval period humanity had retreated from reason. Religion dominated all aspects of man's social, political and cultural life and rationality was replaced by obscurantist beliefs. But with the advent of renaissance and the age of Enlightenment there occurred sea-changes in all dimensions. Particularly man's intellectual horizon widened and expanded and many myths and make-believes established by religious theology were challenged. It was conclusively established that no God has created the earth or the living world including man. All the planets including the earth and the sun came into existence some billion years





morality is taken as a matter of social obligation and has nothing to do with the idea of God. By experience and rational reflection man has learnt ethical ideals as a prelude to good life and social happiness. All these intellectual developments cumulatively established a new culture in accordance with the idea of scientific temper.

ago. So also through a long process of slow and gradual change man has evolved spanning millions of years. Similarly the geocentric world view was replaced by a helio-centric notion. All these ideas gradually replaced many theological beliefs on creation and origin of man. In the early age of modem science, i.e. during the period of renaissance, many free thinkers and great pioneers of science have faced lot of opposition from the religious conservatives. Some have been imprisoned or have become martyrs for promoting scientific ideas against the age-old religious beliefs. Despite all opposition, the march of science could not be checked as scientific knowledge was based on evidence, verifiable fact and truth.

In the process of rise of modern science some philosophical theories developed which were taken as the foundation of modern science. The edifice of science is supposed to be founded on naturalism. Naturalism gradually reinforced the idea that there is nothing supernatural in the world of events. Anything that exists or anything that happens can be explained by natural causes, whether they are known or not. There are a lot of mysteries in nature on account of the vastness and complexity of the natural world. But what seems to be a mystery today can be explained in future with the progress of knowledge and research. The scope and boundaries of human knowledge are constantly increasing, expanding and getting refined day by day. What appeared a mystery or something unknowable in the past becomes known and explicable today and what appears a mystery today may be known in the days to come. All the laws, theories and hypotheses are within the natural framework and they reinforce a naturalistic epistemic model. There is no supportive evidence to hold that there is something supernatural or theological. Everything relating to the world of existence and occurrence come within the framework of physical or biological laws. All the theories and laws constructed or discovered respectively in different branches of science cumulatively establish the notion of scientific naturalism. Theology, supernaturalism and miracle are ruled out from the domain of scientific explanation of the world.

Another thesis that emerged from the rise of modern science is that of a man-centric world view. Man has developed from a state of barbaric nomadism to the present day technological sophistication by human effort and intellectual inquisitiveness. No development has descended from the sky nor has been granted by any Deity. It is man who has been trying to develop from a primitive state to today's state by applying his intelligence and pursuit. He has been able to control many epidemics of the past, developed treatment for various diseases and tried to make life safe in the face of natural calamities. He no more falls

prey to the fury of nature nor does he feel quite helpless when there is some calamity. With the rise of modern science and technology he has been able to achieve spectacular progress in very many fields. Similarly once upon a time all moral ideals were supposed to be the dictates of God and all religious texts were taken as sacred. Comparative study of the religious texts exposed how there is a lot of doctrinal disagreement among them. Moreover, most of the cosmological and metaphysical speculations of various religions are false in the light of scientific findings. Similarly morality is taken as a matter of social obligation and has nothing to do with the idea of God. By experience and rational reflection man has learnt ethical ideals as a prelude to good life and social happiness. All these intellectual developments cumulatively established a new culture in accordance with the idea of scientific temper.

Some eminent personalities and great scientists of India having international repute had issued a signed statement on scientific temper. They realized that spread of scientific temper in society is much more important than the spread of science and technology. In view of the cancerous growth of superstitions at all levels of our national life, some eminent scientists of our country maintain that scientific temper is an attitude of mind that calls for a particular outlook and pattern of behaviour. They hold that scientific temper involves the acceptance, amongst others, of the following premises :

(a) That the method of science provides a viable method of acquiring knowledge;

(b) That human problems can be understood and solved in terms of knowledge gained through the application of the method of science;

(c) That the fullest use of the method of science in everyday life and in every aspect of human endeavour from ethics to politics and economics is essential for ensuring human survival and progress; and

(d) That one should accept knowledge gained through the application of the method of science as the closest approximation to truth at that time, and question what is incompatible with such knowledge; and that one should from time to time re-examine the basic foundation of contemporary knowledge.

The implication of these premises is, as hinted at earlier, that the method of science helps for a clear understanding of the nature of man himself as well as his social and natural environment. This method of science is the foundational basis for all kinds of objective and communicable human knowledge. Further the spirit of inquisitiveness and right to question seem very fundamental to scientific temper. It signifies an open mind and helps for pursuit of truth without any preconceived idea or prejudgment. The statement also maintains, "scientific temper is compatible with observation and insight, reasoning and intuition, systematic work and creative impulse. It gives rise to an attitude of mind which, while being conscious of vast areas of ignorance, is nevertheless, optimistic about human ability to gradually unravel the mysteries that surround us. To a great extent this statement is self-explanatory. It conveys the importance of scientific temper to remove obscurantic and irrational practices and beliefs from social life.

CSICOP, FIRA and many other Rationalist Forums are working hard to spread scientific temper, humanism and spirit of inquiry among the people. The rational approach inherent in critical scientific enquiry can help people to remove ignorance, age-old dogmas, unfounded beliefs and superstitious attitude. The system of education, media, seminars, workshops etc. can popularise the spirit of science and help inculcate the scientific spirit in the people. Science and scientific temper would not only be most creative but also usher in a liberating excercise. By removing all prejudices and falsehoods from society there will be a cultural upheaval of humanity. ■

# இன்னும் தேவையானவர்!

கவிஞர் ஈரோடு தமிழன்பன்



தந்தைபெரியார் தடத்தில்
தடைபடா நடை;
இடையறாஉழைப்பு
ஈடிலா அறிவு
ஆசிரியர்வீரமணி
ஆளுமைத்திறப்பாடு

பூக்கொய்தல்போலல்ல
பொதுவாழ்வு
புண்களின் சங்கமத்தில்
புதுவாழ்வைப்படைப்பது அது!

ஆயிரம் இடையூறுகள்
பாயிரம்படைக்க
ஆனதொரு காவியம்
ஆசிரியர்வீர்மணி.

நடைவண்டிநாள்களிலேயே
தந்தைபெரியார்
படைகண்டுசேர்ந்தார்
பூபாளச்சொற்களிலேயே
நெருப்புப்பொறிகளின்
தெறிப்புகள்நிகழ்த்தினார்
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விழிப்புநேரங்கள்இயக்க
உழைப்புநேரங்கள்
இரவுப்பொழுதுகள்
கருத்துக்கருத்தரிப்புப்
பொழுதுகள்
ஆசிரியர்நாள்களை
அவசியமற்றவைஅள்ளிக்கொண்ட
போனதில்லை.
ஒவ்வொருநொடியிலும்
வாழும்
ஒப்பற்றதலைவர் வீரமணி.
வாழ்வதென்பது

மூச்சின்முகவரியில்
முகாமிட்டிருப்பதல்ல;

இயக்கம்என்னும்
வரிப்புலிமுதுகில்ஏறி
எதிர்ப்புகளை
வீழ்த்தும்முயற்சியில்
ஈடுபட்டிருப்பதாகும்.

அவசரப்பேச்சிலும்ஆயிரம்
கருத்துச்சரங்கள்இருக்கும்
கொடுத்தபுத்தகம்பற்றி
அடுத்தநாளே அலசுவார்
பேச்சில்

கையைவிட்டு
இறங்கியநொடியில்
புத்தகம்
இவரின்மனத்தில்
ஏறிக்கொள்கிறது.

தமிழ்மக்களுக்காகவே
தயாரிக்கப்பட்ட
இவர் வாழ்க்கைக்கு
வயதுஎண்பத்தைந்து

இன்னும்
இளவேனிற்காலம்உண்டு
இன்னும்மாரிக்காலம்உண்டு
இன்னும்
வாழ்காலம்ஆசிரியர்
வீரமணிக்குநீள உண்டு
ஏனெனில்
இன்னும்
போராட்டங்கள்
இல்லாமற்போகவில்லை.



# We Still Need Him!

## Kavignar Erode Tamilanban



Moving ceaselessly
in the path of Periyar
Toil without break
matchless brilliance
make Asiriyar's Veeramani's
magnificent personality.

Public life
is not like plucking flowers
It is
creating new life
in the confluence of wounds.

A thousand impediments
wrote a prelude
and an epic was made -
That is Veeramani.

Even while learning to walk
using a walker
he learnt of Periyar's regiment
and joined it.

Even while lisping
his words emanated like
sparks of fire.

The time he keeps awake is
the time he strives for
the Movement
Nights are
when thoughts are conceived
Never have unwanted chores
taken away Asiriyar's time.
Veeramani is an
unparalleled leader
who lives at every moment.

For him
living is not reckoned
as mere breathing.

It is
riding the
back of the tiger
called the Movement
and striving to
vanquish oppositions.

Even when he speaks
hurriedly
a thousand ideas can be
discerned therein

Give him a book -
the very next day
he will dissect it threadbare.

The book
that gets down from his hand,
gets into his head
the next moment.

His life
that has been made for the Tamils
has seen eighty five years.

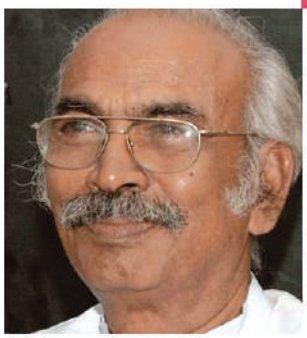
Still
he has springs to go
and winters.

Asiriyar Veeramani
has long years yet,
as there are still
battlefields awaiting him.

Translated by : Prof. **A. Ayyasamy**

# Let us Strengthen the Hands of Comrade Veeramani


## Ponneelan



National President,
All India Progressive Writers' Association
Central Sahithya Academy Awardee


India has never been a single country. The area known as North India is oriented towards orthodoxy; the South is oriented towards secularism or socialism. If it is one country all the areas of the country must have the same culture. India has never had such a single culture, nor can it ever have. For the past two hundred years there has been interaction between the two parts. But since the North is larger in area, its intrusion into the South is more remarkable than than the influence of the South on the North.

As a result, Brahminism or Manu's social code has intruded into the South for a long period and has established its supremacy in the South. Tiruvalluvar's statement that birth is the same for all living beings rejects Manu's code. The declaration of the Sangam poet, *'All places are mine and all men are my kinsmen'* is also similar. But in course of time such thoughts become weaker. Religious fervor let it be Saivism or Vaishavism signifies the rise of Manudharma influence in the South.

Yet South did not take things lying down. As early as the last century, voices were heard in South against Vedic culture or Manu's way of life.

Sundaram Pillai, who authored *'Manonmaniam'* declared in the 19th

> If Vedic culture still finds it impossible take roots in Tamil Nadu, the main reason for it is Thanthai Periyar. The task is continued by Comrade Veeramani after his demise, who keeps the flame of rationalism burning, expanding its sphere.

century that those who have grasped the philosophy of Tiruvalluvar will never think of Manu's ethics which lay down different ways of life for different castes. Along with his neo-Saivite assertion there arose an uprisal against Vedic culture. But all these remained at the intellectual level and never percolated down to the common people.

All this anti-Vedic thought got assimilated and became a warlike social movement only in the beginning of the 20th century. The political party popularly known as Justice Party initiated the endeavor. After Periyar joined the party it evolved into a massive movement opposed to Manu's way of life. Later this became the well organized Dravidian Movement with a clear cut ideology. It was Periyar who gave a complete form of thinking, making it rationalistic, op posed to Manudharma. No leader other than Periyar in the whole of India involved himself in this bold endeavor. That is Periyar called Thanthai Periyar and 'The Sun of Reason'.

In Periyar's time Congress Movement was strong all over India. But when Periyar realised that Vedic culture was its dominant core, Periyar quitted the organization and started propagating his views all by himself. He strengthened his movement into a social reform organization. He started *'Kudi Arasu'* weekly as his propaganda machinery. Later he started *'Viduthalai'* daily.

At one stage when the sales of the daily dipped, he handed over charge of publishing it to his trusted disciple Veeramani. He has been

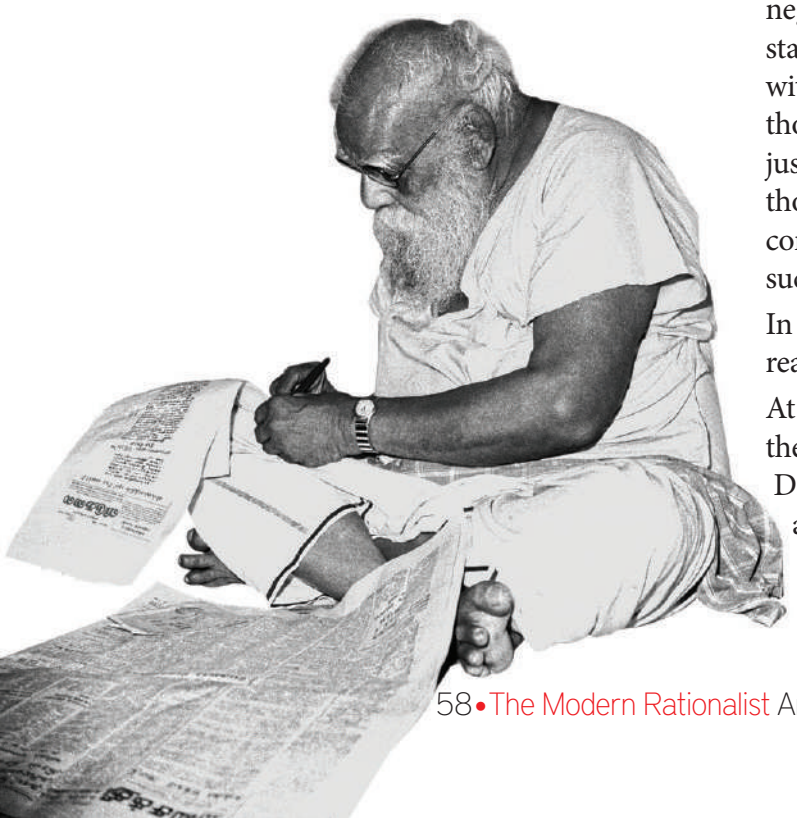


> At one stage when the sales of the daily, *'Viduthalai'* dipped, Periyar handed over charge of publishing it to his trusted disciple Veeramani. He has been running it without giving room for betrayal of the trust. It is a remarkable feat indeed.

running it without giving room for betrayal of the trust. It is a remarkable feat indeed.

He has not swerved even a bit from the purpose for which Periyar started *Viduthalai* – the liberation of the entire humanity, which continues to remain its goal even today. All believing in his own strength, without any advertisements.

I often start wondering whether I can locate any difference between Periyar and Comrade Veeramani. Periyar had a walking stick, and was spoting a white beard, Veeramani has neither of these. But, even now in his 85th year he is touring thousands of miles, meeting people and is spreading thoughts of humanism opposed to orthodoxy and Manudharma celebrating great humanists and narrating anecdotes illustrating humanism; all in the footsteps of Periyar.



Veeramani has expanded manifold the properties created in Periyar's time. Now there is Periyar Maniammai University consisting of all facilities introduced for the benefit of women and the downtrodden people. Many educational institutions, especially for women, have come up. His service does not end here. Veeramani is intent upon taking Periyar's thoughts to the lowest strata of society.

These institutions offer education of high standard. They impart education to the neglected sections of the society. Very high standard of education! Not only that. Along with bookish education, the rationalist thoughts of Periyar and his thoughts on social justice are imparted along with anti-orthodox thoughts. Education badly needed for the contemporary society. Where else can you get such education?

In all such efforts Comrade Veeramani is realizing the dreams of Periyar.

At eighty five, he goes round everywhere in the country, encouraging the volunteers of the Dravidar Kazhagam who spend all their time and energy in Public Service, eschewing all craving for power. He is with them in all the happenings in their families, happy or

otherwise. Which other party can claim to such selfless members in such large numbers?

Through the branches of his outfit spread all over the state he encourages activities that spread the message of rationalism and registers opposition to the activities that uphold vedic culture. He censures activities that are oppossed to rationalism. Wherever the occasion warrants, he conducts demonstrations or agitations. Besides rousing the volunteers he stands solidly behind them.

If Vedic culture still finds it impossible take roots in Tamil Nadu, the main reason for it is Thanthai Periyar. The task is continued by Comrade Veeramani after his demise, who keeps the flame of rationalism burning, expanding its sphere.

There have been leaders who have been rising in the social horizon and accomplished a lot. But after their time, their activities could not continue. It is only the great Movement of Periyar that goes ahead without any lapse. The reason for that is Veeramani who leads the Movement at present spending all his time and energy in involving thousands of men and women in that task.

Dear friends, we are living in critical times. Bharatiya Janata Party is working with the single minded aim of setting foot in Tamil Nadu, by encouraging dissentions; defection and desertions in other outfits. If Tamil Nadu is to be saved, Periyarism has to be developed. Dr. K. Veeramani's hands must be strengthened. The readership of '*Viduthalai*' must be increased many times. Everyone who believes in rationalism and social development must commit themselves to the task. '*Viduthalai*' subscription for a year or a half can be made wedding gift. Two or three people may join together and get '*Viduthalai*' for the public library in their area.

Friends, '*Viduthalai*' is not a mere daily. It is a vehicle that takes the evergreen thoughts


விடுதலை
VIDUTHALAI
மதம் மாறித் திருமணம் செய்துகொள்ள அகிலா - ஹாதியாகான் ஆகியோருக்கு சட்டப்படி உரிமையுண்டு - அதைத் தடுக்க யாருக்கும் உரிமையில்லை
அதிகாரம் கையில் இருக்கும் காரணத்தால் காவிகள் ஆட்டம் போடவேண்டாம் - உயிர்ப்பலிகளை அனுமதிக்க முடியாது!
கலைவாணர் பிறந்த நாள்: தமிழக அரசுக்கு வேண்டுகோள்!
கழகத் தலைவர் அறிக்கை
தேசியவாதம் ஆபத்தானது பொருளாதாரம் பாழாகும்
முன்னாள் சிஎஸ்ஏ வங்கி ஆளுநர் ரகுராம் ராஜன்

of Periyar to people, repeatedly. It takes new thoughts coming from anyone to the common people.

It points out the wrongs committed anywhere in the world and leads people in the proper path. It can be asserted without any doubt that in the whole of India there is no machinery comparable to it. Dr. K.Veeramani is roaming all over the globe to bring all rationalists together and motivate them through Periyarism. Let us strengthen his hands. Sharpen the machinery of '*Viduthalai*'. Let us take the message to our area, to the best of our abilities!

Let us realize the dreams of the great man of India! ■

# Periyar's Thoughts, Singapore's Secularism and the Thirukkural


## S. Ratnakumar

Writer & Thirukkural Scholar, Singapore




Periyar's public speeches and the write-ups about him are available in the public domain today. A search reveals that:

- Periyar - E.V. Ramasamy (1879-1973) -was not an intellectual of higher studies, postulating and enunciating theories about the heaven and earth, but an active field worker who carried his message (about self-respect) to the people, and delivered it in a language that resonated in the minds and hearts of the illiterate millions;
- While he judged everything on the basis of its usefulness, functional efficiency, and equity, he had no particular emotional attachment to any language, race, religion, or caste, neither did he have unquestioning commitment to any political ideology;
- He - an untiring campaigner against injustices to the low-caste and women - lived a fearless life driven by compassion;
- In 1925, he started the self-respect movement with the aim to "eradicate" the caste and gender based oppressions;
- Whenever he met with opposition, he endeavoured to overcome it by reasoning and argument rather than by authority or violence;
- He seldom failed to seize an opportunity to publicly defend his disbelieve in God or to publicly extol the Thirukkural;

> Singapore is a multi-racial, multi-linguistic, multi-religious, and multi-cultural society. And the separation of religion and politics is a long established principle in Singapore.

- While he had great respect for law and order, he did not accept the authority of Manu Dharma Shastra (which is also called the Hindu Law Code of Manu):

*[Manu Dharma Shastra – while it is considered to be the most celebrated and best known legal Hindu text from ancient India – has been the source of all the acute conflicts between the conservatives of Hindu/Vaishnavite tradition and the liberals who aspire to keep social injustices to the low-caste and women at bay. Copy of Manu Dharma Shastra is available in the National Library, Singapore.]*

- His self-respect movement was instrumental for the beginning of the process of emancipation of women and the low-caste; child marriages were stopped; provisions for widow marriages were made; the tradition of temple-prostitution (using the Devadasi caste) was abolished; the low-caste Hindus were allowed inside the temples.

A quick browse through the collection of Singapore Tamil newspapers preserved by Indian Heritage Centre, located at Campbell Lane, confirms that Periyar visited Singapore twice, first in 1929 and then in 1955.

The *Tamil Murasu* newspaper dated 3rd January 1955 carried the news of his public speeches – addressing the importance of self-respect – attended by more than 7,000 Tamil speaking people who were here on work visa. And, it was highlighted in the same news article that he strongly advised the Tamils working here to assimilate into the local main stream culture and make Singapore their home. This is unmistakeable evidence that Periyar was a rationalist with a vision.

As I have studied science, I have always noticed scientific temper in his thoughts.

- "In order for the oppressed and marginalized portion of the community to come up, it is vital that they must have education, self-respect, and the instinct to think, reason, and understand."
- "It is the language that one uses to exchange ideas with others – at home and outside – that is called one's mother tongue."





> The core of the Thirukkural is that "people are born alike". This draws a parallel not only to the aim – "equal rights regardless of caste or gender" - of the self-respect movement that Periyar started but also to the core of the National Pledge, "equality regardless of race, religion, or language".

- "A high quality education system should not include subjects either contradict reason or propagate ignorance."
- "The top ranking priority of educators should be to help people develop self-respect."
- "Devotion is a private matter, while behavior is a public responsibility; a lack of devotion is not a great loss but a lack of behavior is detrimental."
- "He who believes something – out of fear - that contradicts reason or experience is not a mature person."

Periyar passed away in 1973 but, the momentum of his self-respect movement continues to thrive today.

**Singapore's secularism**

Singapore is a multi-racial, multi-linguistic, multi-religious, and multi-cultural society. And the separation of religion and politics is a long established principle in Singapore. The Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act enacted in 1990 is a legal protection against the dangers of mixing politics and religion.

The uniqueness of Singapore's secularism:

- The Government keeps religion separate from politics – MPs, Ministers, and government agents do not invoke their religious faiths to support their argument.
- While all religious groups enjoy equal protection and equal opportunity to thrive, none of them or their representatives is allowed to proselytize or interfere in the functioning of the Government.
- While begging is illegal, no citizen is deprived of food, clothing or shelter – there are many government backed charities and voluntary organizations to look after the less fortunate.
- While people are free to move around at any time (day or night) without being anxious about their safety and security (barring accidents), no one is discriminated against, resented, or oppressed by the Government or fellow citizens because of one's language, skin-color, or one is not a born-and-bred Singaporean.

There is no state religion in Singapore. According to the Wikipedia, a 2014 analysis by the PEW Research Centre found Singapore to be the world's most religiously diverse nation. And, the latest census 2015 reveals that the religious composition in Singapore is: Buddhism (33.2%); Taoism and Folk religion (10%); No-religion (18.5%); Christianity (18.8%); Islam (14%); Hinduism (5%); Sikhism and others (0.6%).

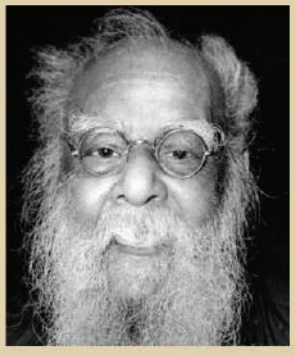
Arguably, the National Pledge is the bedrock of Singapore's secularism.

The original English text of the Pledge

*We, the citizens of Singapore,*
*pledge ourselves as one united people,*
*regardless of race, language or religion,*
*to build a democratic society*
*based on justice and equality*
*so as to achieve happiness, prosperity*
*and progress for our nation.*



*Lee Kuan Yew*



*Periyar EVR*

From August 1966 onwards, the staff and students began reciting the National Pledge before the start of each school day. Since then, the National Pledge has been recited during National Day occasions, the National Day Parade and school assemblies.

The Pledge was drafted by late Mr. S. Rajaratnam, the first Deputy Prime Minister, and late Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, the first Prime Minister, trimmed and fine-tuned it.And, according to the National Heritage Board, the English text of the Pledge was also translated into the three official languages: Chinese; Malay; and Tamil.

The extract from the speech by Mr. Rajaratnam - when he was the Foreign Minister, at the dinner and dance of the Maghain Aboth Synagogue at Hyatt Hotel on April 8, 1978– reflects the aim of the Pledge, whichis to inculcate the sense of equality regardless of race, religion, or language.

*"There are many parts of the world where to be a minority is to be resented and be oppressed. In the kind of Singapore we are creating there are no majorities and minorities but simply good men and bad men with the good men whatever their race, language and religion invariably triumphing over the bad men whatever their race, language and religion"*

**- S. Rajaratnam.**

Mr. Lee Kuan Yew's argument - on August 19, 2009 - that "equality of men is an aspiration rather than the reality" and, hence, the "Pledge is not an ideology but an aspiration" was spot on.

I vividly remember Mr. Rajaratnam encouraging us, the new economic migrants in the 1970s, to unpack our baggage – to let go of our long-held ideas, emotions, and beliefs that are impediment to the Pledge that we were hauling around with great effort – if we wanted to become permanent settlers here. I, certainly, heeded his advice.

The Writer-in-Residence at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Irene Ng, in her book – *"The Singapore Lion: A Biography of S. Rajaratnam"*, 2010 – has given an insight into who Mr. Rajaratnam was. And, to quote two paragraphs from her book:

"A man becomes an American, or Frenchman, or Japanese because of mental conditioning he is subjected to. In other words, national consciousness is largely a question of education and upbringing. A child is not born a Frenchman, or a German or a Malayan, or even a Malay or a Chinese. It is through the long process of mental conditioning that he turns out to be a Malay, Chinese, or Indian," he contended.

In what had become his constant refrain, he said: "It is not race but cultural conditioning to which a man is subjected that makes him whatever he is". He pointed to his own experience: He himself thought as a Malayan even though he was a Ceylonese.

Mr. S Rajaratnam and Mr. Lee Kuan Yew passed away in 2006 and 2015 respectively



but, their aspiration - to build a democratic society based on equality – continues to resonate among the millions today.

- *"The causes of communal conflict are basically cultural – that they are based on differences of language, religion, customs, manners, and so on. By and large language and religious differences have been the more important factors in communal conflict."* **S. Rajaratnam**
- *"If anybody thinks he is being discriminated against either for a flat or a scholarship or a job or for a social welfare relief because of race, or language or religion, he can go to the court, take out a writ; and if he proves that it was because of discrimination on the ground of race, language, religion, culture, then the court will have to enforce the Constitution and ensure minority rights."* **Lee Kuan Yew**

**Thirukkural**

It is a 2000-year old compilation of 1330 couplets written in Tamil. It gives an insight into nearly every facet of moral and ethical philosophy without invoking the notion of God or being biased towards any particular race, religion, language, gender, ethnicity, political group, or movement.

Thirukkural is neither a quick fix for one's misery nor a happy story about imaginary people and events. It is, but a reliable guide to live a life driven by awareness.

- "Rainfall does not depend on rituals, sacrifices, or penance - worship of "vaanor" and special rituals will cease if the rainfall ceases." Couplet 18

  ["Vaanor" are believed to be those who reside in heaven.]
- "The reputation a person leaves behind, as he passes away, will show if he had good sense of fairness." Couplet 114
- "Begging is an undignified act, even if the scripture says it is a righteous way to earn a living: giving to the needy is an honorable act, whether or not there is heaven." Couplet 222
- "People are born alike – no one is higher or lower in social status by birth – but their self-esteem varies because of the jobs they do for a living." Couplet 972
- "It is the ability to seek out the truth that helps one to realize that the notion of rebirth is not conclusive." Couplet 358
- "Learn, until ignorance is gotten rid of; having obtained the relevant knowledge, stand by it." Couplet 391

To date, numerous scholars – religious men as well as rationalists - have interpreted and translated it into other languages and, the number is growing. The growth is a vindication of the notion that Thirukkural makes no claim to perfection or eternity; its only claim is to the light of reason.

**Conclusion**

The core of the Thirukkural is that "people are born alike". This draws a parallel not only to the aim – "equal rights regardless of caste or gender" - of the self-respect movement that Periyar started but also to the core of the National Pledge, "equality regardless of race, religion, or language".

- The self-respect movement that Periyar started is an aspiration.
- Thirukkural's only claim is to the light of reason.
- The National Pledge is an aspiration.

Arguably, the common denominator between Periyar's thoughts, Singapore's secularism, and the Thirukkural is "the right reason".

And, what the Great Scottish poet William Drummond (1585-1649) wrote rings true.

*"He who will not reason is a bigot; he who cannot is a fool; and he who dares not is a slave".*■

# Reminiscences

## Ko. Pasunathan



Teacher (Retired), Kurinjipadi

It was Mr. N.M. Manikkam Chettiar, the Tamil teacher of RCT School, Chidambaram, who was responsible for my developing rationalism and progressive thoughts. I had the opportunity moving with fellow students like Tillai Villalan and S.D.Somasundaram.

It was Manikkam Chettiar who word to take Dr. K. Veeramani, who was a boy then, to various places and made him address meetings. Since Dr. K.Veeramani was only a boy, he was made on a table so that people could see him. If, while going in a car, Dr. K. Veeramani sights me, he would send for me. I used to appreciatively watch him.

When he was but a lad of sixteen, he used to assert vehemently that Periyar was his only leader and Dravidar Kazhagam was his only Movement. He was a student of the famous historian and a great man R.Satyanathayyar.

Periyar used to say that Dr. K. Veeramani was born in an ordinary family, had no selfishness, was brisk and a worker who never expected anything in return. At Annamalai University Dr. K.Veeramani, President, Dravidar Kazhagam would speak in Gokhale Hall, and my friend Peri Sivanandiyar who rose to become a good poet, would admire his speeches.

Dr. K. Veeramani used to respect in the course of his conversations with me, that the Movement belongs to everyone, not anyone's personal property.

We must always think collectively of ourselves not about one's own self. He used to declare that more than his own intelligence, it was the knowledge passed on by Periyar which gave him strength.

After Periyar he has carried on many tasks in his way. He has got the

In my student days many people used to boast of their knowledge of Mahabharatam or Shakespeare. In the same way, now I can boast of my knowledge of *'Vazhviyal Sinthanaigal'*.



entrance test for professional courses abolished, he has fought for reservation for women, and he takes the message of social reform to works and corners of the state. He has modernized Nadigavel M.R. Radha Mandram in Chennai and made it a centre for propagating Periyar's thoughts.

A few years ago a friend of mine Thiru. A.Rajamohan, I.P.S., lent me five parts of his *'Vazhviyal Sinthanaigal'* (Tamil) with a covering letter explaining that they had nothing to do with politics, but contained profound thoughts which must be known to everyone.

I found that they were penned with the idea of enabling everyone to lead a healthy and happy life. Reading those volumes was equivalent to going round the entire world.

This work, which was beyond any caste or religion, must be prescribed for undergraduates. It speaks of night food habits, medicine, physical health, mental health, how to avoid getting angry, how to get rid of jealousy, how to get good friends, how to be happy and patient – these volumes have answers for all these querries.

In my student days many people used to boast of their knowledge of Mahabharatam or Shakespeare. In the same way, now I can boast of my knowledge of *'Vazhviyal Sinthanaigal'*.

When I completed 90 years of age, Dr. K. Veeramani complimented me on my having read the work; he added that our life must be measured more by the virtues we cultivate and the humanism we develop rather than the years we have crossed.

The unforgettable incident in my life happened in 1973, when a van was presented to Dr. K.Veeramani by Chief Minister Kalaignar in a mammoth meeting in Thanjavur. The following day my son had to join Thanjavur Medical College. We went to Karunthattamkudi, Thanjavur, to meet Periyar. Dr. K.Veeramani took us to Periyar and introduced my son as a medical entrant who hails from a most backward community.

Nadigar Thilakam Sivaji Ganesan says in a movie, *"It is not enough to stand on your own legs, you must keep staying where you one."* Dr. K.Veeramani has done that. On the occasion of his 85th birthday I heartily wish him a happy and healthy life much beyond a hundred years. ■

# Asiriyar shows the way forward


## Prof. Dr. S. Devadoss



Chief Executive Officer, Periyar Technology Business Incubator, Periyar Maniammai Institute of Science and Technology (Deemed to be University), Thanjavur


The first international Conference on Periyar Self-Respect Movement was a pioneering, historic and a momentous event. Cologne University in Germany the venue for the three day conference (27-29 July, 2017) had seen perhaps first time, a large number of delegates wearing black shirts in the conference. While stepping in to the conference hall in Cologne University, Germany, for Periyar self-respect conference, one is reminded of what Neil Armstrong said when he stepped on to The Moon (20 July, 1969) from Appollo 11 *"That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind"*. It is indeed a giant leap of the leader of Dravidar Kazhagam "Thamizhar Thalaivar" Dr.K.Veeramani in taking the Movement to newer heights to achieve its stated objectives. Following in the footsteps of his mentor Thanthai Periyar, Dr. K.Veeramani is spearheading the world's largest Self-Respect Movement triumphantly. Under his radical and dynamic leadership the Movement has made strides in several planks particularly in making its global presence transcending national borders. Today the Movement has its chapters in several countries. The Movement shines and reverberates the philosophy of Thanthai Periyar. The recently concluded international conference in Cologne, Germany, is the standing testimony for his distinguishing leadership quality.

Dr. K.Veeramani has been following the footprints of Thanthai Periyar in all respects. It is Thanthai Periyar's strong view "That Education is about inculcating intellectual curiosity and self-respect that enhances one's life by inducing knowledge into business or work environment". Reflecting on the principles Thanthai Periyar, Dr. K. Veeramani, started several educational institutions and dedicated them to the service of people. He established Periyar Maniammai College of Technology for Women in the year 1988 which has a unique distinction of being the first women's engineering college in the world.



> Dr. K.Veeramani has always been insisting that the students instead of squandering their time and energy in seeking job should become entrepreneurs and raise to be job givers. Keeping this in view Dr. K.Veeramani took the initiative of setting up the first women Technology Business Incubator to develop young entrepreneurs.

The college was established with the prime objective of women's liberation by providing access to higher education in the field of science, technology and engineering. With a view to institutionalising the lofty ideals of Thanthai Periyar and making it as a tool to reach out people globally Dr. K.Veeramani converted the Engineering College into Periyar Maniammai University (PMU) as a deemed university in the year 2007. Today PMU has grown leaps and bounds under his able guidance and stewardship as the Chancellor and become "People's University" in true sense upholding the principles of Social Justice the principles which are very dear to his heart. Dr.K.Veeramani "strongly believes that a business enterprise or an educational institution is an extension of the society and results in the strategic growth of the Nation as a whole". Hence he wants the students graduating from Periyar institutions to imbibe the qualities of being a good human being, respecting fellow citizens which he emphasised in the Dravidar Students Uprising Conference held on 19th May 1995 at Trichy where he made a clarion call to the student community to follow the principles of Thanthai Periyar and made them to vow that:

1. I shall go for a casteless marriage, widow re-marriage or divorcee rehabilitating marriage. Accepting dowry is an attempt of losing self respect and I vow that I shall never indulge in selling myself for dowry.
2. I shall keep at bay all the tempting vices such as God, religion, caste, cinema, wine, drug and superstitions.
3. I shall make myself a custodian of society for maintaining the environment, protecting the public property from being damaged and to maintain public order.
4. Following the maxim "Sound health is the source of sound mind" I shall devote myself as a true servant of humanity which upholds the welfare of the place and the world.
5. Following the dictum *"Forget God; Think of Humans"* of the great revolutionary philosopher Thanthai Periyar, I shall lead the joyful life of self-respect by doing what I say and saying what I could do.
6. Not getting disenchanted by being a job seeker, I shall have self-confidence and faith in my hard work to become a job giver.
7. I shall follow good character - simplicity, frugality, maintaining dignity with persons of opposite gender.
8. I shall always be an activist for the emancipation of my race which was damaged by the cultural invasions.
9. Instead of considering youth is meant for prosperity, I shall consider it an opportunity for social service.
10. I shall be the harbinger for establishing a new world order by imbibing the cardinal principles of Thanthai Periyar - "Morality is to conduct yourselves with others as what you expect of others."

Emphasising the importance of self-confidence and hard work Dr. K.Veeramani has always been insisting that the students instead of squandering their time and energy in seeking job should become entrepreneurs and raise to be job givers. His approach is very pragmatic. His advice the students are doable. Keeping this in view Dr. K.Veeramani took the initiative of setting up the first women Technology Business Incubator to develop young entrepreneurs. The Department of Science & Technology (DST), Government of India has initiated a scheme "The National Science & Technology Entrepreneurship Development Board for setting up of Technology Business Incubators (TBI) to promote clusters of technology based small enterprises (TBSE) in selected thrust areas utilizing the expertise, facilities and other infra-structure available in academic institutions and R & D Institutions of Excellence. The TBI is considered as one of the important instruments for promoting TBSE on one hand and also for promoting technological awareness among the existing Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) on the other hand." With the support of Department of Science & Technology, Government of India, on 18th July, 2006 Periyar TBI was set up in Periyar Maniammai University, Vallam, Thanjavur with the broad objective of promoting knowledge based and innovation driven enterprises for the youths and to provide facilities for small-scale manufacture of herbal products, testing facilities for herbal raw materials, finished products, to test the performance of products, tissue culture facilities for the production of plants etc. Pursuant to its objectives, Periyar TBI conducts Trainings, Entrepreneurship Development programmes, workshops and seminars periodically on need basis. Working in tandem with Periyar Maniammai University the host institution, Periyar TBI strives to inculcate scientific farming practices to the farmers. Periyar TBI has conducted several



*The value added architecture of PMIST entrance*

entrepreneurial trainings for women and youth, incubated and provided forward and backward linkages to make them successful entrepreneurs. Periyar TBI, with a single minded focus on promoting ventures, has incubated 19 companies since its inception in 2006. At present another 19 incubatees have registered with Periyar TBI focussing in the areas of Herbal products, Food, Bio and Pharma product development, Bakery products and food enzymes, e-commerce and computer hardware solutions, e-commerce based service providers, Energy environment to health smart controller to control the process, Bio medical products, Soya Bean snack , Hibiscus drink, Animal Cell Culture, Software solution, High fibre white rice, Automation and R&D projects, Aeronautical, Automation and R&D projects, Embedded system & Software Development, Hydraulics, Pneumatics, Mechanical Engineering, Press Component, Press tools & SPM hydraulic machine, Internet of Things (IOT) for Home appliances, Lathe engineering works etc.

Periyar Maniammai University campus provides a vibrant atmosphere and opportunities abundantly to the students to learn, test and practice innovative ideas. PMU is renowned for its focus on working hard in developing students with all round personality traits. Dr.K.Veeramani has given rightly the tag line to the university "THINK INNOVATE TRANSFORM". Periyar TBI is marching ahead in translating his vision into reality. ■

# Random Thoughts on a Rationalist


## Prof. Dr. Palani Arangasamy

Former Director, Centre of Excellence for
Periyar Thought, PMIST, Vallam, Thanjavur




Now begins the later-half of the eighties in the life of a veritable leader of Dravidar Kazhagam. Unlike others of the kind elsewhere, he has been growing along with Kazhagam ever since he associated himself with Thanthai Periyar. In the way he is relatively synonymous with Dravidar Kazhagam and Dravidar Kazhagam with him.

A student of Economics and gold medalist in Final Honours in Annamalai University, his Alma Mater; it is an outstanding academic record; Subsequently a student of law. All these in the early sixties of the last century. Ever since he has walked all the way through the frontiers of knowledge – politics, current affairs, history, philosophy, mythology, logic, psychology and literature. Now he proves himself an organ voice of the whole of Tamil Nadu. His regular statements on the first page and editorials in *Viduthalai* tacitly speak of his typical versatility. With apologies to Dr. Samuel Johnson, whose quote I utilize to say that Dr. K.Veeramani touched nothing that he did not adorn.

Short in stature, sharp in intellect, smart in decisions, strong in rationale and sound in common sense – where else can we see such a non pareil leader excepting him?

A combination of eloquence, rhetorical flourish, rare information with relevant quotations – where else can we get excepting in his lectures? He is a vocal magician who has the potential skill of keeping the entire audience spell-bound for hours together. With his knowledge encyclopaedic, he could speak off-handedly, but rarely he does so. He speaks with accuracy and authentication.

He is passive in thinking, active in performance, but mainly to wipe out

the tears of under privileged and un-cared for commoners. Ticklish problems of common interest, he takes up suo motto and deals with objectively.

Francis Bacon's laconic statement is *'Reading maketh a man'*. Those who read lengthy and detailed dissertations of all subjects that are interesting, are known as voluminous readers. Those who devour anything that is readable with eagerness and enthusiasm are voracious readers. Dr. K.Veeramani is both. He is like an insatiable cormorant in consuming the books of various interests. He prefers books rather than shawls and souvenirs when friends and well-wishers pay him courtesy calls. If Rig Veda says, Let noble thoughts come to us from every side it is this octogenarian reader who keeps his windows a jar for absorption and assimilation. Whatever information essential, inspiring and benevolently instructive, he learns promptly and disseminates it in his innumerable articles essays and lectures.

An example is his involvement in mobilizing an opposition to the problem of NEET and his continuous propaganda against it legally, constitutionally and socially. Such a deep-routed analysis of that problem in all aspects has not been done by anybody. In other words, his was a dogged fighting. But for him, the opposition parties would not have joined together and insisted on its exemption to the whole of Tamil Nadu.

Dravidar Kazhagam is an organization more of societal rather than of political interests. But when politicians dabble with social issues and problems, the Dravidar Kazhagam of which he, as President deals with scrupulously for the powers that are to accept. There were occasions when Chief Minister have paid heed to his wise counseling.

His camaraderie with members of the Dravidar Kazhagam is heart-warming and congenial. Never, he fails to attend social functions, when time permits and also to pay courtesy calls to the old guards of the party. This homely touch



with the rank and file enabled solidarity of the organization and making the wards tacitly obey even his preemptory orders for the welfare of the party.

Periyar too wouldn't have dreamt that his protégé would proliferate his principles and ideals to the extent of propagating them at the Regional, National and Inter-national levels. The message that Periyar has left behind in the pages of *Kudi Arasu, Revolt* and *Viduthalai* gets digitalized by him and occasionally gets published as an intellectual therapy to the contemporary social and political ills.

How Dr. K. Veeramani been a free-lancer, he would have risen to the international level and more than even Prem Bhatia, and Dom Moraes of India and Walter Lippman and Louis Fischer of the USA. A remarkable fact is that he has been editing *Viduthalai* the organ of the party for more than five decades.

Strange but true that the curse of aging has miserably jailed in controlling this leader from his cris-crossing of the whole of Tamil Nadu, very often to the north of India and occasionally abroad, when responding to the plea of the party activists and public organizations.

In Shakespeare's language, let me say that age has not withered him to a great length. Shorn of customary unhygienic habits of other men of average caliber, Dr. K.Veeramani enjoys a good health. Equanimity of his intellectual stamina and his mental health are solid and supportive. Let him live long forever! ■

# I am Amazed

Prof. Dr. Nam. Srinivasan

Researcher on 'Life and mission of Dr. K. Veeramani'



Dr. K. Veeramani, the Chancellor of Periyar Maniammai Institute of Science and Technology (Deemed to be University) and President of the Dravidar Kazhagam remains a mark of exclamation to me. I am now 56. I do not belong to any traditionally Dravidian family. Yet, I have been watching the Asiriyar with a sense of wonder for the past 35 years.

It was 1982. I was doing Tamil literature as an under-graduate at Pushpam College, Poondi, Thanjavur District. It was then I listened to Asiriyar when he came there to deliver Tiruvalluvar Day address. While admiring Tiruvalluvar at the appropriate places he also pointed out the places where he differed with him. I wanted to utter a word complimenting his speech. I was watching him talk to the professors who gathered there to see him off and interact with the comrades who had accompanied him. I was struck by his humility. When he addressed the Anti-Brahmins Conference at Kudavasal the same day, I listened to him and my journey as his votary started at that instant.

It was 1984. Asiriyar K.Veeramani is returning in his car after a propaganda tour in Salem and Dharmapuri District. He is dozing off in the rear seat and I am seated at the front. The vehicle is stopped at midnight by a police officer. I inform him of Asiriyar's presence in the

Asiriyar at times falls sick, but never reveals it. He starts climbing the stairs without minding his discomfort. Though he has undergone three heart surgeries, he goes on with his tours, propaganda, agitations, writings and management even at his 85th year.

car. The officer has a look at him and permits the car, after offering his characteristic salute. When the car starts moving, the Asiriyar asks what happened. I tell him of the Police officer's enquiry and his subsequent salute. Asiriyar feels sorry that he failed to return the greeting. I was moved at this. Though it is basic courtesy to return greetings, many do not do it. They are satisfied with a nod. Some think it beneath their dignity to return greetings of the commoners. But Asiriyar, who has put in seventy five years of public life, and remains one of the top leaders of the state, takes it as an omission on his part.

Everyone must imbibe such virtues from him.

Asiriyar's office at Periyar Thidal. I am seated in a corner watching the party functionaries taking instruction from him. Then comes a Kazhagam member with his wedding invitation, which he presents to the Asiriyar in the traditional manner – on a plate with fruits. When he invites him to conduct his wedding, Asiriyar advises him to be thrifty. The visitor answers in a care-free manner, "Don't worry, Ayya, it is the bride's side that spends the money." Asiriyar's reply was, "Whoever undertakes the expenses, expense is always expense, is it not?" He never misses an opportunity to drive home his principles.

Dr. K.Veeramani is now eighty five. He has never done anything behind the scene. He is an open book. He keeps a record of everything that happens every day.

Everything about his tour is open. His room is continuously thronged by visitors, at least twenty at a time. The photographer is continuously clicking. He never wants to be alone; not does he want anyone to keep a distance. There is no pretence about him. He opens his heart to everyone, shows affection, considers them as his own kith and kin and moves freely with them. I have been amazed at it.

Asiriyar at times falls sick, but never reveals it. He starts climbing the stairs without minding his discomfort. Though he has undergone three heart surgeries, he goes on with his tours, propaganda, agitations, writings and management even at his 85th year. Not once does he mention his cardiac surgery. It is as though he has forgotten it. In 2017, he had pain in his forearm, and could not lift it. Yet, when his followers clothed him with shawls, he accepted them without showing his pain. I have observed him massaging his hand, afterwards to alleviate his pain, and have been amazed.

He is always moving, going on his tours of propaganda – on foot or using bicycles, carts, cars, vans, aircraft – he does not mind what it is. His doctors and dear ones keep advising him to slow down and to reduce his tour programmes. Notifications are made asking people not to trouble him with invitation for family functions. Yet, comrades keep meeting him in person and invite him for

Professors and historians gratefully recall the services of the Dravidar Kazhagam in having done away with the income limit for reservation, in getting Mandal Commission recommendations implemented and enacted first legislation for reservation to protect 69 per cent reservation under Article 31(c) of the Constitution, (the 76th Amendment).

their family functions. Immediately Asiriyar thinks of their attachment with the party, their longstanding relationship and their sacrifice. He visualizes all the happenings connected with the person concerned. He allots a date brushing aside his health problem. He bears with all inconveniences, undertakes the difficult journey just to make the comrade happy. Yes, I am amazed.

When he travels in the van, there are at least ten people seated in it.

Dr. K.Veeramani converts these occasions as discussion meetings. He charts out things to be done. He learns from the followers the local conditions. Whenever a place is crossed, he recollects a lot of details about it, about Periyar's visit to the place, about the party functionaries, and about the condition of the people. At the time of the news broadcast he invariably asks the driver to switch on the radio. The first question he always puts after getting into the van is regarding the amount collected by book sales. When biscuit packets are opened, he shares them will all of them. While the so called sanyasis live comfortably in their mutts, Asiriyar, a real ascetic, spends most of his time in trains and vans.

When a job is allotted to someone, he allows him to select his own co-workers and never interferes until the job is finished. When the person concerned says. "I have to do it properly, it will take some time", Asiriyar always says time is important. There is no end to improvement or perfection. There are occasions when he expresses profound truths in a casual manner. Exmaples: (1) You should not be scared of a problem. Your fear will not remove the problem. (2) We should not be afraid of death, for death does not come until we are alive."

Dr. K. Veeramani's memory is amazing. When he recollects incidents in Periyar's life, when he quotes from the constitution or high court judgements, or when he narrates historical incidents, his memory is remarkable.

Once at Tilakar Tidal at Thanjavur he was weighed with gold which was presented to him. He gifted the whole lot to the Movement, something which he has been doing since he was a boy of ten. All this, when political leaders and government servants are amassing wealth in millions.

Professors and historians gratefully recall the services of the Dravidar Kazhagam in having done away with the income limit for reservation, in getting Mandal Commission recommendations implemented and enacted first legislation for reservation to protect 69 per cent reservation under Article 31(c) of the Constitution, (the 76th Amendment). All this is true. But the hidden fact is that behind all this was the acumen of Dr.K.Veeramani, his intense work, his capacity for co-ordinating, his warlike nature, his perseverance in getting social justice established and his staunch resovle. Yet he attributes all the accomplishments to the Movement, without claiming any credit for himself. Is it not amazing?

On the occasion of his eighty fifth birthday, I wish the Asiriyar a hundred years of life. ■

# SELF-RESPECT: A NECESSARY AND SUFFICIENT CONDITION FOR EQUALITY


## B. Sudhakar

Executive Member, Justice BSA Swamy Memorial Trust




An online English dictionary defines the phrase, Self-respect as "proper respect for yourself as a human being". This definition rather than explaining further complicates the meaning of self-respect. For instance, what do the words "proper" and "respect" imply? And do, you alone, need to respect yourself?, What about others? Thus this definition is neither crisp nor is it unambiguous. It is pertinent to note that Thanthai Periyar had hence chosen the word *"Suya Maryadai"* as the right phrase to impress upon the masses as to what "self-respect" means.

Every person requires self-respect, since it is his or her birth right. We are all are indeed, born equal and scientifically it has also been proven that the homo-sapiens as a race, are homogeneous by and large, in terms of the DNA or the genetic composition. Hence to believe that one human is superior to others is absolutely uncalled for.

Homo sapiens being the most intelligent of the species, they have not only understood the universe better, but had also started controlling the useful portion of animal kingdom. In this endeavor of domination, Man had started controlling his fellow beings as well.

While the urge to dominate or wield power over others is understandable, the moot question, however, is, why does anyone let others dominate?. Traditionally it was the actual or perceived power of a person, which lets him dominate or wield influence over others. Hence various forms of power, be it the power to coerce, the power to reward, or the power of knowledge/information, made one to be looked at with fear and/or adulation. Thus the rulers/ruling class which had the powers to be coercive and to reward, were the dominant class, and



We are all are indeed, born equal and scientifically it has also been proven that the homo-sapiens as a race, are homogeneous by and large, in terms of the DNA or the genetic composition. Hence to believe that one human is superior to others is absolutely uncalled for.

certain other classes also went on to dominate the fellow beings, by virtue of the expert / informational powers.

In addition Nature with its abundance and uncertainty, coupled with lack of information leading to the fear of unknown, had contributed to the growth of religion. Thus godmen along with the priests were the other influential section of the society, who also held the masses by its reins.

Finally, within the confines of the family, it was the parents and the elders who were the influential by virtue of the reward power and informational power.

So it was natural that vast majority of the masses had someone or the others to look up to, with a sense of awe and adulation, and this, coupled with uncertainties of life, made one to believe that they were always at the mercy of others and the external world. Thus there was a distinct lack of self-belief, self-awareness, and consequently lack of self-respect.

This was a conducive environment for small sections of the so called powerful, be it owing to the powers to coerce, to reward, or of knowledge, to start dominating and exploiting the vast majority of the society.

In this seesaw of power, a few sections always outweighed the majority. Further, having tasted the power, and being blinded by the power to exploit, the incumbent power wielders always strive to ensure status quo, specifically by keeping the sources of power and knowledge away from the others.

This was a never ending imbalance that seemed to defy even the natural law of gravity.

It required the peerless vision and foresight of Periyar E.V.Ramasamy, who was a true altruist and leader par excellence, to attempt to tilt the scales of justice back to the state of balance.

Visionary that he was, Periyar, strongly believed that ignorance was the root of the evil of inequality and exploitation. He thus emphasized that, it was the rational thinking, rather than the blind allegiance to religion and faith, that would lead to true emancipation.

Thanks to his vision, and the continuation of his ideals under the aegis of Dravidar Khazagham by Thiru Veeramani, the malady of exploitation has been addressed to some extent in the State of Tamil Nadu.

However in the rest of the country, the situation remains as bad as ever. While the Constitution of India very much guarantees social justice and equality for all of its citizens, the selfish political class, and the apathetic rich and the mighty ensured that the vision of the framers of the Constitution is never realized. This is further compounded by the fact that the vast majority of the masses does not place any value on the self-respect, and are okay to lead the life of second grade citizens.

Anything can be thrust upon this country

by the political class, and the masses silently comply. Be it the lack of sufficient representation in the executive, the judiciary and the parliament or the recent cases of demonetization, and GST, there is hardly anyone to protest or raise a PIL. While the Dravidar Kazhagam, being a bulwark of social justice, is ploughing a lone furrow on matters of public good, there is hardly any other non-political and pro-people entity of significance, across the breadth and width of this country, which can work in tandem with the Dravidar Khazagham, for bringing about any lasting change.

It is ironic that in our democracy, which is based on representative form of democracy, the representation of people, is restricted to the casting of vote. Even though it has been close to 70 years since our independence, we still have some communities that were never represented either in the state assemblies or in the national parliament.

While the status of the scheduled castes and tribes is better in terms of the political representation, the case of the downtrodden in the country, barring a few states, remains as pathetic as ever. We are thus far away from the goal of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, as enshrined in the preamble of our Constitution.

To get the rightful share in the echelons of power is the ultimate emancipation that Periyar dreamt of. And, this is not possible unless people value self-respect, become aware of their rights and demand of their rightful share. Even in this information age, we have the upper classes continuing to corner the key and influential positions in the society. Self-respect would hence remain a mirage, unless there is equality in true sense, and there is a level playing field. It therefore necessitates the rule of reservations.

The Indian state had always given step motherly treatment to the issue of reservations for the downtrodden. While the reservations for the SCs and the STs were incorporated in the early years of independence, it took more than 30 years to look at setting up a commission for the upliftment of the downtrodden and another 10 years for attempting to implement the rule of reservations for them. However in the absence of caste based census, we will never have the true percentage of the downtrodden, and the efficacy and equity of the 27 per cent reservation can never be established. Added to this the creamy layer concept is another impediment to the already delayed justice.

It is pertinent to note that, the status of actual implementation of OBC reservations, as of the year 2014, was less than 10 per cent as against the stipulated 27 per cent. It is hence grossly unfair to stick to the creamy layer concept. In addition, when influential sections of the society scout for their inclusion in the OBC's the state remains a mute spectator, owing to vote bank politics.

Unless the masses become aware of the lopsidedness of the scales of justice, and demand self-respect as a matter of mandatory privilege rather than as something that is "good to have", things will not improve. We should get back to the basics, and realize the importance of the adage *"Unity is strength"*. Rather than relying upon the political class and the government for the amelioration of the plight of the downtrodden and the masses in general, it is high time that the downtrodden understand the importance of "networking" and leverage the sheer numbers that remain in their favor.

Self-help is the best help, and the downtrodden should become aware of their constitutional rights and must work towards building a strong coalition of the OBC's. The benefits of networking are indeed, manifold, and self-respect is a true enabler in breaking the status quo. ■

# Asiriyar K. Veeramani
# The Eighth Wonder


## Prof. Dr. N.K. Mangalamurugesan

Secretary, Dravidian Historical Research Centre




The editor of 'Viduthalai' and other publications; the Chancellor of Periyar Maniammai Institute of Science and Technology (Deemed to be University); one who has undergone a number of surgeries all over his body; one who is dwarfish like Arignar Anna, without any claims to stature; one whose looks can accurately measure the opponents; above all a humanistic heart that loves the entire humanity; one who has soft and comforting words even to those who have hurled harsh words at him; one who enables his volunteers to farbear the attacks of the opponents eschewing indecent criticism – this is what I have found in Asiriyar after my intimate movement and meticulous observation. He is the eighth wonder of the world.

He was born in a place which has already created a master of words, St.Tirunavukkarasar who became a religious saint. He proved himself to be a master of words and willingly became the navigator of Periyar's vessel, unmindful of his education and profession, which would have paid him in lakhs, accepting Periyar's invitation without any reservation.

It is equally wondrous that Periyar could find in him a charioteer who would be with him forever. I keep thinking of all the stalwarts and word-wizards who had been close to Periyar and acquired fame on account of the Movement, but parted with him in course of time, citing one reason or another. Is it any wonder that unlike any of them Asiriyar has never

> Whenever he goes out, a frial figure will follow him leaving a 10 feet gap, trying to keep pace with him, and watching every move he makes. It is none other than Tmt. Mohana Veeramani, who always remains back stage, yet carefully taking in every little thing that happens to him. She is a greater wonder than Asiriyar himself is.

even thought of leaving his leader, and never gave any occasion for his leader to part with him?

Many in the Movement have spoken of their own exploits with bravado. But not Asiriyar. Referring to himself, he never said any word more than, "I am Periyar's volunteer", though he had so many achievements which he could justifiably boast of. Even now he says he does not need any intellect of his own as what Periyar has given him is sufficient.

Till date he meticulously follows all the lessons he learnt from Periyar. I know that he is not happy about colourful invitations being printed for functions and conferences. All the same he also remembers the compassionate nature of Periyar which prompted him to offer generous help to people who were in genuine need. In the same way, Asiriyar Veeramani has helped many people by getting them placed in high position.

When costly medicines were required by anyone known to him, Asiriyar acquired them and got them sent to the people at his own expense. I have not observed this trait in any other leader. When meal time came, he always assured himself that everyone one accompanied him was properly fed. He used to make everyone, assistants as well as drivers, be seated with him and be served. Many people are not aware that a person who has acquired many degrees including Ph.D., and is placed in a high position in the party was helped by Asiriyar K.Veeramani in all his accomplishments.

While he insists on Periyar's birthday being celebrated every year, he goes underground on his own birthday. On his seventy fifth birthday, however, he was caught in the affectionate grip of Kalaignar, when we made him happy by collecting 50,000 subscriptions for *'Viduthalai'* daily. Later, on his eightieth birthday we hooked him with 'Periyar World Fund'. Again, in his 85th birthday we caught him with 15,000 subscriptions for *'Viduthalai'*.

There is a 'Dravidar Agricultural Workers Union' in Thanjavur area whose members showered affection on Asiriyar K.Veermani, moving him to tears. Even now those Dalits are forced to carry dead bodies wading in hip deep water. When Asiriyar K.Veeramani saw sick people carried on cots from Solinganallur to far away hospitals, he opened Periyar Hospital in the place enabling people to receive treatment at Rs. 5/- and Rs. 10/-. When Alagiri Transport Corporation started plying in the area, many were the babies delivered in those buses and named 'Alagiri'. As a result till date the place remains a fortress of the Dravidar Kazhagam and people elect only the candidate endorsed by Asiriyar.

Everybody knows how Selvi Jayalailthaa used to treat others. She however, had a high regard for Asiriyar and always referred to him as 'Annan'. Before passing the government order for 69 per cent reservation, she sent it to Asiriyar K.Veeramani for verification. The



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*Asiriyar K.Veeramani – Mohana couple in a merry mood*

Bill regarding the issue was drafted by Asiriyar K.Veermani, indicating the trust she had in his abilities. The statue of Annai Maniammaiar was installed by the women's wing of the Dravidar Kazhagam, but permission for opening it was continuously refused by the Brahmin Commissioner. When Asiriyar came to know of it, he approached the Chief Minister, who immediately complied with his plea, saying that she would do it immediately as he had never approached her for any favour.

The foremost trait in Asiriyar K.Veeramani is his humanism. Once my son was hospitalized and recovered after treatment. After that whenever Asiriyar confronts my wife, the first question he puts to her is, "How is your son?" Once when I visited Asiriyar during his illness, his wife offered me coffee, which I politely refused saying that I never drank coffee. Thereafter Asiriyar would often refer to my not drinking coffee, sometimes humorously, whenever he met me.

Once when Raja M.A.M. Ramasamy's Sixtieth birthday was celebrated at his birth place with great pomp and ostentation, Asiriyar went there in response to his invitation. M.A.M. Ramasamy, one of the richest men in Tamil Nadu, quite unexpectedly bent and touched Asiriyar's feet. Asiriyar was taken aback and went a step backward saying, "Wrong, you are wrong." Raja's response was, "What is wrong? I treat you as Periyar and bow down to you." Asiriyar stood tongue tied. However, he asked the photographers not to publish the photograph. This will show how cultured Asiriyar has behaved on that occasion, 23 years ago.

Whenever he goes out, a frial figure will follow him leaving a 10 feet gap, trying to keep pace with him, and watching every move he makes. It is none other than Tmt. Mohana Veeramani, who always remains back stage, yet carefully taking in every little thing that happens to him. She is a greater wonder than Asiriyar himself is.

Perhaps the first lesson he learnt in Periyar's school is how to answer questions put to him by the audience. Never has he backed out without giving proper answers to the questions.

All the replies, some of them lengthy and repository as the occasion dictated, have been compiled into a book, titled *'Chidambara Rahasiyam"*. Who else can perform such a wonder?

On the other hand, he used to encourage the detractor. "Put any question you want to. I will complete the purpose I have come here for. You can never distract me from it".

That is why I consider our Asiriyar K. Veeramani as the *'Eighth Wonder of the World'!* ■

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## S. Mohamad Usman



Officer of Chennai Corporation (Retd.)

I met Asiriyar Dr. K. Veeramani during my Annamalai University days and I developed an inexplicable bond with him, which continues even after seventy years. I find in him the same simplicity, love, affection, dynamism and industry, I observed in my first meeting with him. I am surprised! I am elder to him by two years. I was a hosteller whereas he used to commute by train from Cuddalore. He used to bring his lunch which he used to consume in my room. Though a Muslim I used to take only vegetarian food. He used to tease me calling me "Usman Ayyar". While in the University he was interested only in his studies. Chatting, noisy pastimes or merry making - he was interested in none of these.

I was an admirer of Periyar. There used to be a portrait of Periyar just above the threshold of my house. As Dr.K.Veeramani, was a propagandist of Periyarism, our friendship became stronger.

Asiriyar always came forward to help others. But he never let others notice it. He was steadfast in his policies. He deemed it his life's mission to get over all impediments and to complete his task. He has been setting a record as a speaker since his boyhood days. He travels incessantly. How is he able to do it? I am sure no one else can do it.

He is as conversant in English as in Tamil. He is as good in writing as in speaking. People like me used to wonder how it was possible at all!

He is a good researcher. The 'Other side of the Gita' *(Gitaiyin Marupakkam)* is a good instance. His series *'Lovable Life'* can well be characterized as a gift to humanity. In those articles he expresses his ideas in all walks of life, showing his quest for truth and depth of thinking.

He is a versatile genius. Such a matchless leader still continues to be my family friend. His life companion Tmt. Mohana is a cultured woman, known for hospitality. I have tasted her break-fast on many occasions.

Just as Thanthai Periyar chose Asiriyar as his heir, he also chose Tmt. Mohana as the life companion of Asiriyar, which is amazing indeed.

From humble beginning he has risen to be a top leader, internationally acclaimed. Yet he moves with utter simplicity with everyone. He is a text book to the youngsters.

I wish him many many more years of social service! ■



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# In the Law College


## K. Subramanian

Advocate, Dindigul




I stayed in University Student Club after joining the Chennai Law College. Later Asiriyar Dr. K. Veeramani and the late G. Samidurai joined me and we became friends. Samidurai became treasurer of the Dravidar Kazhagam later. Asiriyar was always very helpful. I usually went to sleep at 8 p.m. Asiriyar did not make me change that habit. Instead, he suggested all of us could get up at 6 a.m. and study till 8. We did it regularly and were always ready for examination. While the others were burning the midnight oil in the last one or two months, we were moving about as usual. There was no need for any last minute preparation. When we went for our usual morning walk in Marina Beach, Asiriyar used to share his rationalist thoughts with us. After our studies and apprenticeship were over, all of us registered ourselves as advocates at *'Raghu Kalam'* which is an inauspicious time according to religious people. We choose it to show that it was a mere superstition and nothing would happen to us on that account. Even after our studies were over Asiriyar continued to be in touch with us and took us to Periyar's meetings along with him. ■

# Nurturing 'Viduthalai'


## Prof. A. Ayyasamy

Writer, Awardee - Periyar Award 2016




It was 1962. The election had been over. Periyar had worked relentlessly for the victory of the Congress Party under Kamaraj. He had been indisposed and was in Chennai General Hospital. All of a sudden he asked a telegram to be sent to K. Veeramani to come and meet him at Chennai. But before the telegram reached Cuddalore, K. Veeramani had left for Chennai, accompanied by his life partner Mohana to visit Periyar. Telepathy?

Anyway, Periyar's need to meet him and Veeramani's intention to visit Periyar surprisingly coincided. That meeting of Periyar with K.Veeramani was crucial. For it was a turning point in the life of Veeramani, the annals of *'Viduthalai'* and in a way in the history of the Kazhagam itself.

It was 9 pm. Periyar had retired for the night, but instructing Annai Maniammai to wake him up the moment Veeramani arrived. When Veeramani was musing as to what could be the urgency, Periyar dropped a bombshell.

"I am thinking of closing *'Viduthalai*," he said, and went on to explain the reasons for his decision. Going on his incessant tour programmes and health problems, he could not pay full attention to the daily. There was no responsible person to look after it. S.Guruswamy (alias Kuthoosi) who was part and parcel of the Movement had left under

After 'Viduthalai' started issuing colouful special numbers, Anna, whom K.Veeramani met, on some occasion, jealously remarked that Periyar had given to him the freedom he never gave him or other editors. "Times have changed very much," he said recalling how tight-fisted Periyar had been in the olden days.

strange circumstances. Besides, the paper was also facing a financial crisis.

K.Veeramani was flabbergasted. Discontinuing *'Viduthalai'* under any circumstances was unthinkable for him. When he expressed his dismay, Periyar continued, "Then do one thing. You come to Chennai and take over the responsibility. It will make me happy."

K.Veeramani had just then started practising as a lawyer at Cuddalore, and earning a handsome income. He had just then settled his family. But, Periyar's call could not be brushed aside. He owed it to his Movement and even to the society at large to take care of *'Viduthalai'*. And Periyar wanted him to be a full time care taker of the paper giving up his practice. K.Veeramani could not refuse. All that he wanted was a bit of time to make suitable financial arrangements to take care of the family.

Periyar was so excited about Dr.K.Veeramani's taking over *'Viduthalai'* that he heartily welcomed him through an editorial. He admired the selflessness and courage with which his disciple has given up a lucrative profession brushing aside the advice of his fellow advocates and neighbours.

Though he had agreed to take up the responsibility, K.Veeramani had his own misgivings about it. Will he be able to rise up to the onerous responsibility? How about writing editorials? He had himself seen in the past that some of the editorials written by some editors had caused Periyar who had to indulge in some corrective steps to undo the damage.

When he expressed his apprehensions, Periyar suggested a simple but effective formula for writing editorials. He said, "Don't worry. You are versatile in English. Go through the editorials of *'The Hindu'* which invariably serve Brahmin interests. Write an editorial taking the opposite stand. You can never go wrong."

After he took over the editorship of *'Viduthalai'*, Sepetember 17, Periyar's birthday was fast approaching, and he contemplated bringing out a special number to celebrate it. Already Kuthoosi Gurusamy had brought out a special number at the cost of 4 annas (25 paisa). This time K.Veeramani wanted to bring out a Periyar Birthday Special at the cost of 8 annas (50 paise) which was quite a sum in those days. He took pains to collect articles from all the dignitaries who had known Periyar. Periyar himself wrote an article especially for the issue, to mark his birthday. From then on, it became customary to have a special article written by Periyar for every birthday, since a colorful birthday special number has become routine till date.

After 'Viduthalai' started issuing colouful special numbers, Anna, whom K.Veeramani met, on some occasion, jealously remarked that Periyar had given to him the freedom he never gave him or other editors. "Times have changed very much," he said recalling

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how tight-fisted Periyar had been in the olden days. An unmistakable evidence to prove that Viduthalai's circulation and finance were in an upward trend was the opening of the new office for the daily at Periyar Thidal on October 31, 1965. After opening it, Thavathiru. Kunrakudi Adigalar exhorted that each residence of the Tamils should get *'Viduthalai'*.

There have been many instances which showed that Asiriyar K.Veeramani's thinking was in consonance with that of Periyar. Often while on tour, Periyar would like a particular matter to receive Viduthalai's attention and would write a post card to K.Veeramani about it, or make a phone call if the matter was urgent. Very frequently K.Veeramani, on his own, would have written the editorial on the same subject. One instance may be cited here. In 1971 M.G.R. had deserted the DMK and was trying to be a thorn in the flesh of Chief Minister Kalaignar Karunanidhi. As if waiting for such an occasion, all the disgruntled elements and vested interests joined together and indulged in an incessant slander game in the assembly. On one of those days, H.V.Hande, a member of Rajaji's Swatantra Party said, "This is a third rate government." An unruffled Kalaignar stood up and replied to him that his was not a third rate government but a fourth rate one and continued, "I use the language of Periyar and reiterate with pride that ours is a fourth rate government. Of the four varnas, we are running a government of the fourth varna, the sudras. This government would always strive for the welfare of those people. I proclaim this in the name of our mentor Periyar and our leader Anna."

As soon as Asiriyar received news of this incident, he phoned to Periyar who was camping in Trichy. After listening to him, Periyar almost jumped with joy and said, "Did he say that? I am happy. Very very happy. Publish it with an eight column caption and make it banner news." Veeramani's reply was, "I have already made it an eight column news and the banner is under print"



*Asiriyar listening to Periyar with Anna*

He has not only got *'Viduthalai'* out of the financial straits it found itself in when he took over, but has improved it a lot since then. Printing process has improved in keeping with the changing times. From 1990, the pages of the daily has increased to six and a Sunday supplement is being printed carrying a lot of material. It sharply reacts to all the happenings around, enlightening people on the principles of equality and Self-Respect.

Encouraged by the tremendous success of *'Viduthalai'*, Periyar became confident enough to start two more publications, *'Unmai'* Tamil fortnightly and *'The Modern Rationalist'* English monthly.

In these days, when the foundation of the very society is shaken by forces of fascism and fundamentalism, the need for publications like *'Viduthalai'* has grown a thousand fold, and being conscious of its need, it rises to the occasion and strives with all its might to free the land from the clutches of the dark forces.

On the other hand, the ever alert Black Shirt cadre is doing its best to collect subscriptions for *'Viduthalai'*. For example, they are planning to collect 15,000 subscriptions (a substantial number indeed) and are getting up a function at Erode on December 2, Asiriyar's birthday to hand them over to him in person.

All this augurs well for its future. Can Periyar's farsighted judgement ever fail? ■

# ASIRIYAR TURNS 85!

## Prof. S.F.N.Chelliah



### Champion of Globalisation of Karnatic Music

Two years back I made a passing comment on his agility at 83. He with a serious countenance replied, "I am not able to walk." and cryptically continued, "I can only run". This, of course, is one of the myriad qualities I feel about him. Look at the leaders today past 80.Does anyone have such a busy daily schedule like our leader? In his every day activities there are meeting people, reading letters, magazines, news papers a red pen to mark significant passages both for remembering and countering, attending meetings, important functions of public and personal nature, taking important decisions regarding the Party and the Parties of Tamil Nadu and even India, planning and fixing dates for the annual activities for the Party, travelling by car, train and flight to various places, writing to various magazines etc.etc. Not a normal routine for even persons of 40. I have never seen him either tired or impatient. How is this possible? I have one plausible explanation. It is his total involvement and commitment to the ideals for which he lives.

I have often introspected what would have happened but for his succession as the Chief of the Movement. It is a matter of great research. I cannot think of any other word except 'fortune' for the entire Tamil community. Look at the great leaders of India. Buddha, Gandhi, Ambedkar etc. None of them had a disciple like our leader who received the baton to continue the race without the slightest fall in the speed. In addition to the total commitment, he introduced new and modern methodologies required to maintain the momentum.

To wish this great legend

A HAPPY BIRTH DAY is a weak and a meaningless formality.

On this day I most cordially thank all those who preserve the good spirit of this great person, his wife, children family and assistants for their great service to humanity. ■





*Hearty Greetings on the 85th Birthday of*
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# Anitha
# Fatal Victim of NEET



Through the introduction of NEET (National Eligibility cum Entrance Test) introduced by Medical Council of India and conducted by Central Board of Secondary Education, social justice was denied (entry to the medical and dental colleges) to major students hailing from poor and rural areas despite their securing high marks in the school final examination under State Board of Secondary Education. The main reason for the denial is the securing of low marks in the NEET, which is conducted under the syllabus of Central Board of Secondary Education that is entirely different from the State Board Syllabus. The mismatch of conducting NEET was primarily opposed by Dravidar Kazhagam under the able leadership of its President, Asiriyar Dr. K.Veeramani, by involving all the political parties and social organizations. The State legislature of Tamil Nadu passed TWO bills unanimously for the exemption of NEET for the students aspiring for medical study in Tamil Nadu and sent them to the Central Government for the assent of President of India. There has been no response from the Centre. In the mean time the Supreme Court of India directed the state governments to conduct NEET immediately.

Many students who aspired to join medical colleges were compelled to appear for NEET. Despite securing higher marks in their plus two course final exams under State Board Syllabus, many could not get through NEET.

Anita, a girl student belonging to poor and oppressed scheduled caste who had secured 1176 marks out of 1200 could get only low marks in NEET making her ineligible for selection to admission into medical colleges. The girl was unable to compromise with her dream of becoming a medical doctor and committed suicide. The public of entire Tamil Nadu turned up at Anita's funeral, to oppose NEET and express solidarity with the untimely sad event. Many college students came to streets, launching agitation and picketing. Dravidar Kazhagam, its President Dr. K.Veeramani, and other leaders of the mainstream political parties and social organizations in Tamil Nadu vehemently opposed the Central Government and Medical Council of India for their adamant attitude in conducting NEET for admission in the medical colleges of Tamil Nadu.

The entire consciousness of Tamil Nadu polarized at Periyar Thidal, Chennai the headquarters Dravidar Kazhagam where Anitha's portrait unveiling event was held. Still the injustice to the medical doctor aspirants of Tamil Nadu continues.

The eulogy written by Kavitha, a girl student from USA finds a place, respecting the case for which Anita sacrificed her life at a tender age.



# For the girl I never knew

Kaviya, USA

Anita
I'm not sure what to say to you
In another life
We may have been sisters
In this one
We were strangers too

But this is what society did to you -
They told you the only way out
Of the oppressions they forced on you
Was a number
They would never give to you

So you fought against the names they gave you
Scheduled, Backwards, Untouchable
With the rules they gave you -
Studies, exams, rankings
And in the end forfeited your life
To the one who gave you it

Because no matter how hard you tried
On late nights burning lamp light
In books with words blurred from bleary eyes
In spirit to escape the circumstances given to you

And
How much you fought
On the steps of an institution
Meant to give you justice

You see politicians
Make money too
And they never thought
About what would happen



*Anitha, NEET Victim*

To people like you

You sought to be the first
To make your family proud
For your late mother
For your laborer father
For every single one of your brothers

**You wanted to be a doctor**
**To save lives**
**But in the end**
**You couldn't save your own**

To the ones who did this to you:
I promise
We won't forget
The reasons you took the life that God gave you
That others won't have to face this injustice too
Because in this life
We were strangers
But in another life
We may have been sisters too

# PERIYAR CALLED - SHACKLES BROKEN


## S.Arivukkarasu

Presidium Chairman, Dravidar Kazhagam




In 1859, the famous English Philosopher John Stuart Mill made a memorable point that "Over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is soverign". This was emphasized by another great man of the East, Periyar E.V. Ramasami when he started the Self-Respect Movement. The British were compelled to oppose the "tyranny of the majority" whereas the Dravidian was compelled to oppose the "tyranny of the minority" when he started the Self-Respect Movement in 1925.

When the Dravidian Manifesto otherwise called non-brahmin manifesto was declared in 1916, it categorically said that Indians are not yet ready for self rule and if it was given by the British it would result in the tyranny of Brahmins over others. The Brahmins constituted only 3 per cent of the population of the Madras Presidency. *The Hindu* commented this manifesto can serve no good but it is bound to create bad blood between persons belonging to the same great Indian community. This Indian Community has their beliefs and practices of Brahminical Hinduism in which the Brahmins were placed in top.

The Theosophical movement headed by Col.H.S.Olcott started Arya Bala Samaj and enrolled only Brahmin boys in the guise of Hindus. It declared that "We, Hindus, believe that under law of Karma the depressed are but suffering from their sins in a former life and will

there were opposition to Braminocracy from all quarters in Madras Presidency. At this juncture, Periyar Ramasami gave a clarion call to all non Brahmins to fight against the hegemony of Brahmins in all spheres, namely education, employment, judiciary, and so on.

re-conquer a happier rebirth hereafter". Such opinion was echoed by Irish lady Annie Besant and seconded by English educated orthodox Brahmin M.K.Acharya. This M.K. Acharya was an M.L.A. from 1924 to 1930 besides occupying the Presidentship of Madras Varnashram Swarajya Sangam. Olcott addressed meetings at various temples in Trichy, Sri Rangam, Thanjavur, Kumbakonam, Mayavaram and Cuddalore.

He was taken round the inside of temple at Cuddalore as Pradhakshana which should not be performed by a non Hindu. Olcott's mission was to propogate and popularize the Brahminical Hinduism.

In the national domain also, Brahmins controlled the Madras administration through highly paid jobs with substantial bureaucratic authority. In 1886 the Brahmins held 42 per cent of posts carrying Rs. 10/- and more. In Judiciary, of 349 elite posts 58 per cent were held by them. In 1912, the non-Brahmins Hindus had lost ground while Brahmins considerably increased their positions. It may be noted that Brahmins of Triplicane in their meeting resolved "to seek employment only in such professions as will not interfere with their performance of Brahamana Dharma". How funny the resolution is with reference to the statistics of employed Brahmins! The non Brahmins were cruelly taunted and insulted when they appeared before the Brahmin Tahsildars, Magistrates and Deputy Collectors. Think of those non Brahmin aspirants to Government jobs. In those days an employed non Brahmin was untouchable and was isolated. As the Brahmins formed a brutal majority in government offices, it was easy for them to isolate the minority.

Maraimalai Adigal was a Tamil Scholar famous for his anti Brahmin writings. Taking consideration to the plight of non Brahmins, he noted in his diary on 19th March 1915, *"When the so called Brahmins become extinct in South India then the salvation might be expected for its people and not before that. When will my lord, the terrible Rudra remove that wicked, most selfish and unsympathetic Brahmins from this Southern India"*. He simply passed over the buck to his god and kept quiet.

Sir A. Ramasamy Mudaliar, a prominent leader of the Justice Party reasoned that "It is not a question of a few posts here and there. It is for the position of power that even small appointments carry that we fight for" when he wrote in *Madras Mail* on 09.11.1922.

On 05.05.1921, the non Brahmin Lawyers' Association resolved that vacancies in the High Court, Madras, should be filled up by non Brahmins so as to infuse confidence in




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Paula Richman on "Many Ramayana's" points out Periyar used dramatic rhetoric which attacked, poked fun, shocked and insisted..... He created a rhetoric of political opposition that shaped public discourse for a group much larger than his relatively small band of followers...".



the administration of Justice.

Thus there were opposition to Braminocracy from all quarters in Madras Presidency. At this juncture, Periyar Ramasami gave a clarion call to all non Brahmins to fight against the hegemony of Brahmins in all spheres, namely education, employment, judiciary, and so on. He started and edited a Tamil Weekly on 02.05.1925 by name *'Kudi Arasu'* which means democracy. In November 1925, his resolution to achieve Social Justice by way of equal opportunity to compete with Brahmins in all educational, employment and political opportunities was not at all taken for discussion by the Congress Party. On the day of disappointment with the Congress Party on 23.11.1925, he arranged a meeting of prominent persons of non Brahmin community at Kancheepuram. That was the dawn of Self-Respect Movement.

In the meantime, the first elected Government in British India was formed in Madras Presidency by non Brahmins leaders, thanks to the non Brahmin manifesto declared in 1916. That Government ordered reservation to non Brahmins in Government Jobs and higher education. But Brahmin hegemony in social life was there because of *Manusrmiti*, Ramayana and Gita. Periyar Ramasami advocated the burning of Manusrmiti in 1922 itself when he was a Congress leader. He advocated the same treatment to Ramayana and Gita also as it says that god Krishna has created four Varnas and duties were prescribed for them and that if there is any failure to adopt those duties, such persons will be put in hell.

Besides, by the control of temples, Brahmins held sway over the vast Hindu populace. One Sastra said that "the gods are under the power

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of mantras / Mantras are under the control of Brahmins". Automatically Brahmins are super gods. So far as Ramayana is concerned, Brahmins said, who knows Ramayana knows India. The Irish national Annie Besant had the audacity to write Ramayana for the benefit of students in 1901 wherein she paid rich encomiums to Sita Ramachandra and Lakshmana. But Periyar studied all the versions of Ramayana in Tamil, Valmiki Ramayana in Sanskrit, Thulasidoss Ramayana in Hindi, Buddha Ramayana and Jain Ramayana and exposed innumerable absurdities, contradictions and vulgarism in them. His works in Tamil were translated into Hindi and English. As Paula Richman on *"Many Ramayanas"* points out Periyar used dramatic rhetoric which attacked, poked fun, shocked and insisted….. He created a rhetoric of political opposition that shaped public discourse for a group much larger than his relatively small band of followers…". Thus Periyar and his Self-Respect Movement also mobilized various sections of non Brahmins against Brahmin hegemony by claiming that the remedy would be in a rational critique of religion. Periyar declared unequivocally, that the Brahmins, the upper castes, the rich, the orthodox are the enemies of his movement. Such declaration resulted in making the reading of the Movement's literature as taboo. The noted stage artiste of yester years T.K.Shanmugam (of TKS Brothers) has revealed that during the peiod of 1941 to 1950 he had to read them usually hidden behind *Dinamani.*

The propaganda of the Movement was there in trains, at hotels, at roads and everywhere including saloons and tea shops. The movement had good influence among the educated youths of depressed classes. The first satyagraha in India was for the right to walk to the untouchables on the streets of



*Maraimalai Adigal, Tamil scholar – intellectual*

Vaikom in Kerala. It succeeded under the leadership of Periyar, while he was the President of Tamil Nadu Congress Committee. Consequently there was a move by Mr. R.Veeraiyan a leader of depressed Adi-Dravidar Community to nominate his community people to the village panchayat boards. It was in 1926, and was considered to be an offshoot of the Movement. In those days, Adi-Dravidars had to pay a fine of Rs. 10/- if they inadvertently walked on the streets of Kalpathy a hamlet near Palakkad. Likewise the plight of Nadars in Madras Presidency. They were not allowed to enter Hindu temples. There was an uprisal among Adi Dravidars and Nadars. At the first Self-Respect Conference on 17, 18-2-1929 at Chengalpattu, more than 500 delegates participated from among these communities. Periyar's subsequent conferences, their resolutions and his agitations are history.

Periyar made the Call "*Wake Ye people; Break your chains*". People woke up, followed him and broke the shackles put by Brahmins. ■

# Journalistic Tools of Periyar Mission


## V. Anburaj

General Secretary, Dravidar Kazhagam




For any social movement striving for the cause of desirable change in the minds of people, thereby in the societal setup and to realise their state of condition and liberate themselves from the clutches, propaganda of progressive principles is the major mode of activities. The movement has to allocate major space for its propaganda. When the functional features of the movement is explicit and devoid of violence and armed struggle, the task of propaganda becomes more prominent. The role of magazines as official organ of propaganda becomes vital for the sustenance. Knowing this functional imperatives of social movement, Thanthai Periyar launched his own *'Kudi Arasu'* in Tamil, meaning 'The Republic' in May 1925, earlier to the foundation of Self-Respect Movement. *'Kudi Arasu'* transformed the mindset of the people of Madras Province by enlightening the readers and cadres be aware of the social and political happenings in the Province.

Periyar started *'Revolt'* English weekly in 1928. The magazine *'Dravidan'* in Tamil which was in the fold of Justice Party came to the full publishing control of Periyar in 1929. During the course of development of Self Respect Movement, the Tamil Magazines, *Puratchi* (Revolution) in 1933 and *Paguthariv*u (Rationalism) in 1934 were published by Periyar. In 1935 *'Viduthalai'* Tamil Magazine was founded by him. In the mean time in 1946, Periyar published *'Justicite'* an English Magazine.

Later in 1970 Thanthai Periyar founded *Unmai* (Truth) Tamil fortnightly, and in 1971, English monthly, *'The Modern Rationalist'*. After the demise of Periyar a children monthly magazine in Tamil, *Periyar Pinju* (Periyar Buds) was founded by Asiriyar Dr. K. Veeramani in 1998.

At present Periyar Self Respect Propaganda Institution founded by Thanthai Periyar publishes the following magazines:

**Viduthalai :** It is the only rationalist daily in the world and is published in Tamil. It is now in the 83rd year of journalistic march for the welfare and betterment of mankind. Asiriyar Dr. K.Veeramani assumed the Editorship in 1962 as per the trustful wishes of Periyar which is being



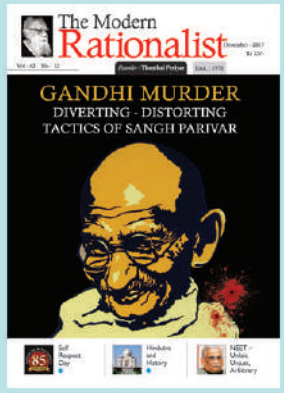
*Viduthalai*




*Unmai*




*Periyar Pinju*




*The Modern Rationalist*

sincerely carried out by Asiriyar continuously. The editorship of Asiriyar has flipped up the content and the layout of the daily for wider readership. 'Viduthalai' became readable online in 1996 and it was the first e-daily brought out in Tamil journaldom in 2005. Eventhough, *'Viduthalai'* is the official daily of Dravidar Kazhagam, the news coverage is not restricted to the principles of Dravidar Kazhagam alone. The focus of progressive thoughts and ideas of individuals and other organisations find their due place in the daily. The coverage of exclusive pages as Medical, New Women Forum, Youth Forum, Science Forum, Rationalists' Forum and Historical Imprints on daily basis are informative very much. Despite the lack of advertisements to keep it economically at break even, the daily is being published with the sole aim for the cause of the people and the society. The daily is an eveninger and the e-format of everyday publication is placed in its website for the immediate reading throughout the world. The e-daily can be read online: *www.viduthalai.in.* The daily is in Face Book and twitter for the due response, comment and feedback from the readership.

**Unmai:** The Tamil fortnightly which covers the current affairs of Periyar's ideologies and other progressive happenings. For a wide range of readership, the magazine covers essays, short stories, film reviews, book reviews etc, besides other interesting facts like tidbits, etc. To the level of normal readers, the magazine is being published to acquire their mental dispensation on versatile subjects. The fortnightly is placed in website and can be accessed through *www.unmaionline.com*

**Periyar Pinju:** The children monthly magazine is being published to inculcate the reading habits of children. Besides, it provides ground to develop certain skills like drawing, poem writing that remain un-explored in children. Shortest stories published in it, grooms not only the knowledge of children by their scientific outlook too. The children magazine can be accessed through the link: *www.periyarpinju.com*

**The Modern Rationalist:** It is the only journalistic reach out for Periyar Mission to the all the English knowing people. The propagandist dispensation of Periyar and other progressive minded leaders find their due spaces in it. Besides, the current happenings on oppression of humans in any form are covered with due criticism. The role of the magazine is imminent in 'Globalising Periyar Mission'. The magazine may be access through the link: *www.modernrationalist.com*

All the publications of Periyar's Self-Respect Propaganda Institution of which the periodicals render their significant contributions make the readers to feel elated and satisfied through their reading, besides bringing betterment of humankind through their thoughts and action. The readers are at liberty to contact the relevant for website for clarification or requirements of any sort in their capacity as the reader of the publications. ■

# Periyar Advocacy and Nobel Economics Prize 2017


## V. Kumaresan

Secretary - External Relations,
Dravidar Kazhagam




The Nobel Memorial Prize for Economics 2017 is to be awarded to the *'Nudge Theory'* formulated by Richard F. Thaler (72 years) who has been serving in Booth School of Business of Chicago University, U.S.A. The concept of Economic Theory, the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences has selected for the Award is unique in combining psychological aspects of individuals (consumers of goods and services put together as 'product') in its fold. The economic theory is categorized under the branch, behavioral economics. Richard F. Thaler, the awardee is acclaimed as the father of behavioural economics.

The nudge theory selected for the award has got explicit direct relevance, affecting the economic behaviour of individuals throughout the world. The direct relevance is not confined to any area but it is universal. The 'nudge theory' is known for personally prodding people towards rational decision making.

The summary of the economic theory, formulated by Thaler in thus:

The basic tenet in an economic activity is that individuals purchase products to satisfy their wants through the utility of the purchased items. Humans, being rational, their decisions have to be based on their reasoning i.e. the purchasing of goods and services are decided on their necessity, accessibility and affordability. Sometimes, the consumers purchase despite the lack of necessity for such goods and service. It happens by mere observing and imitating the purchasing behavior of people who surround them significantly. The influence of such significance may be numerically more, less or uno in number. It becomes a routine consumer behaviour without application of any rationality or with less rationality. The societal influence also affects the consumer behavior. Purchase and possession of unwanted goods and service are



*Periyar EVR*



*Richard F. Thaler*

influenced by the perception prevailing in the society wherein the consumer lives, irrespective of its relevance to the purchaser.

Unable to curtail or restrict the desire to purchase products which do not match with their requirements, many consumers lose their cash resources. Had they curtailed their desire and deployed the cash resources in some other alternatives, they would have derived more utility and satisfaction. The consumer must be aware of the avenues of opportunity and cost of deploying their cash resources. To derive full benefit from their cash resources, micro level self control is needed for every consumer.

Sometimes the quality aspect of the products purchasable is compromised, since the preference to the purchase is influenced by listening and yielding to the advertisements for the products. Such preference by individuals is perceived by them as just, despite deficiencies in such goods and services comparatively. The rationality of individuals becomes dismal and the personal preference dominates the behaviour in their economic activities.

Thaler found out the nature of prevailing consumer behaviour as follows:

- Limited rationality
- Social preferences
- Lack of Self-Control

To overcome these limitations, Thaler founded 'Nudge Theory' by which the consumers have to be reminded, induced, influenced and educated for the manifestation of his economic behaviour in rationalistic way to choose their choices. Such adoption of approach will favour the effectiveness of consumer behaviour that will result in economic prosperity by avoiding wastage of resources both in monetary and physical terms. Thaler was identified and secluded as 'nudge economist' among the fraternity of economists.

The social revolutionary Periyar without any background of formal education beyond primary level served the society, professing application of rationalist faculty in them for their betterment, advancement and peace and happiness. Periyar kindled the rationalist mind that hibernates in people and made people realize the value of Self-Respect so that equality and equal opportunities would be available to all. All in the world are meant for all people.

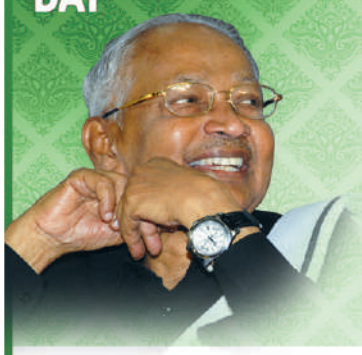
Such a rationalist approach in individuals especially in the money spending behaviour of people at the time of social, economic and political gathering, event or activity will enhance the value and utility of the resources in the society. In that respect Periyar advocated the transformation of rural areas into urban, where amenities available are in parity to all, and which will have a bearing not only on social equality but on economic front too.

In Indian context, the causative factor of discrimination by caste system will vanish away through rational approach. The advocacy of rationalist approach by Periyar is on overall sphere of human life of which the Nobel awardee, Thaler has studied and researched in a systematic way in the specific space of consumer behaviour.

The knowledge and wisdom of Periyar and his strenuous advocacy to humans has been reflected in the economic theory for which the Nobel Memorial Prize of Economics is to be awarded on December 10, at Stockholm, Sweden, the memorial day of Alfred Nobel. ■

December 2

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# "Dengue" Threat to Mankind?


## Dr. R.Gowthaman

Former HoD, Govt. Headquarters Hospital, Ooty
Director, Periyar Medical Mission




'Dengue' (pronounced as "DENG-gay") is a disease of Tropical countries. It is prevalent and endemic in the countries situated in and around 'Meditarian' in all the continents. There are more casualities in the under developed countries. Lack of awareness, illiteracy, poverty, over population, unhygienic surrounding are the causative factors for the deaths in these countries. The disease was first identified in Africa in 1917 (exactly 100 years back). According to World Health Organisation (WHO), there are about 390 million cases of dengue fever worldwide, 96 million require medical treatment. 5,00,000 dengue cases suffer "Dengue Hemorrhagic Fever" (DHF) requiring immediate hospitalization every year. 'WHO' estimates 22000 deaths occur yearly, mostly children. Nearly 40 per cent of world population lives in dengue endemic area.

Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Singapore are the prominent endemic countries in Asia. In India, health organizations report about 3,00,000 to 4,00,000 cases of dengue. Recent episode of attack of dengue in Tamil Nadu is about 40,000 cases.

Dengue is a viral disease, caused by a family of viruses. They are named as DENV I, DENV II, DENV III & DENV IV. Dengue is not a contagious disease and cannot be spread directly from person to person.

It spreads to people by mosquito bite only. The full lifecycle of the virus involves the mosquito called *"Aedes Albopictus Aegypti"* as the transmitter (vector) and the human as the source of infection. After bitten by the mosquito, the infected person, the virus enters the mosquito. The mosquito bites a healthy person, the virus discharged



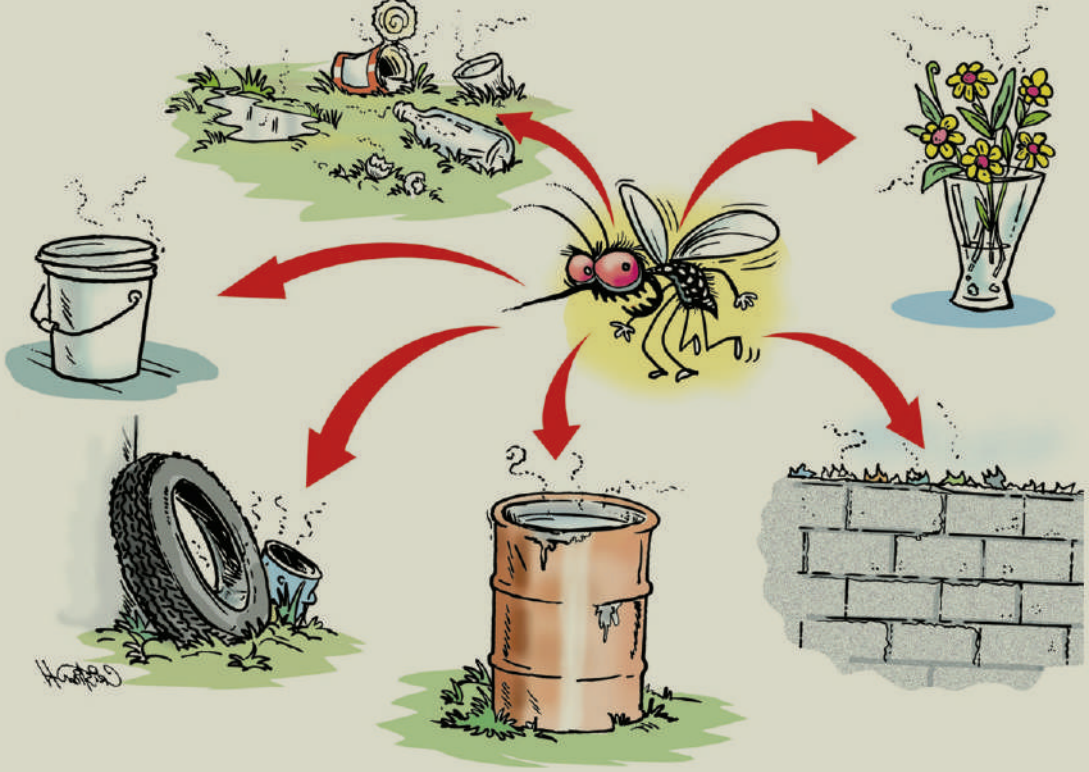
Once the patient got infected with a virus, his defence mechanism gets triggered and anti-body production takes place. The anti-bodies always remember the virus (antigens), so that the same viral infection will not come again. But in dengue the recurrence will be there. The individual gets dengue for a second or a third time also.

in the blood stream and he or she gets the infection. After being bitten by a mosquito carrying the virus, the virus multiplies and the incubation period ranges from three to fifteen days. (usually 5 to 8 days). The signs and symptoms of dengue appears in stages. The 'aedes acgypti' mosquitoes can be easily identified. They have black and white spots on their body.

The mosquito flourishes during rainy seasons and breed in fresh water only. They breed in water filled flower pots, plastic bags and garbages and stored water tanks. The mosquito is a day light biter, especially the peak period of mosquito bite is during sun rise and sunset times. They usually bite below the knee. They bite anytime in the day also. A single bite is enough to infect the second person.

Its all started with general weakness (Malaice), mild fever which may increase to a higher level 104° F, in a day. (Since the fever is the first symptom it is called 'dengue fever' – but many other symptoms develop soon.) There is severe headache, severe pain at the backside of eyes, severe muscle and joint pain, (it is because of this, the dengue fever also called as 'break bone fever' or 'dandy fever'.

Victims often have contortions due to the intense pain in the joints, muscles and bones, hence the name 'breakbonal fever'. Slaves in the West Indies who contracted dengue were said to have 'dandy fever' because of their postures and gait. Itchy rashes appear all over the body. The fever, rashes and the head-ache are called 'dengu triad' is characteristic of dengue. There are generalized enlargement of lymph glands which are painful swellings, bleeding germs, red palms and soles. The acute phase of the illness lasts about one to two weeks. Because of the adequate production of anti-bodies, the disease is getting controlled. There are two types of symptoms which cause more serious problems. 'Dengue Hemorrhagic Fever' and 'Dengu shock' are the two which kill people. The Dengue Hemorrhagic Fever (DHF) is common among children under 10 years of age. The child has severe abdominal pain, bleeding from the gums, bleeding during urination, bleeding from nose and bleeding in the intestine cause black stool (meleana), severe itchy rashes all over the body are the major symptoms. The platelet which is important for blood clotting is deficient. The normal value is 3,00,000 to 4,00,000 / cum. This is destroyed by the virus and the count is reduced to 20,000, 30,000 etc. So there is bleeding. Because of this condition it is called 'Dengue Hemorrhagic Fever'. Unless otherwise it is treated properly it may lead to death. Because of the profuse bleeding and blood loss, the patient has undergone 'peripheral circulatory failure' (shock). This condition is called 'dengue shock'. Both these conditions are very dangerous. The



deaths are due to this. Diagnosis of Dengue is made by examining the patient's blood (who presents typical symptoms) for ELISA test. To detect the level of immunoglobins M and immunoglobins (antibodies), the platelet count also is usually taken apart from the anti bodies test.

**Treatment:** Because Dengue is caused by virus, no specific anti-biotics to treat. Anti viral drugs also not very effective. The treatment is always symptomatic. All the patients need not get hospitalized. Home remedies such as rest and more fluid intake (oral rehydration) are important. Pain relievers such as paracetamol tablets (Tylenol) and codine may be useful. If the patient looks febrile then he has to get admitted and IV fluids should be given. In case of Hemorrhagic Dengue Fever, the platelet deficiency should be corrected with blood transfusion, packed cell transfusion, and anti-biotics (to arrest bleeding) with other symptomatic treatment. Usually viral disease will be treated with vaccines only. (e.g.: small pox, poliomyelitis). A vaccine for dengue fever was approved by FDA in 2016. But it is not available in India. Once the patient got infected with a virus, his defence mechanism gets triggered and anti-body production takes place. The anti-bodies always remember the virus (antigens), so that the same viral infection will not come again. But in dengue the recurrence will be there. The individual gets dengue for a second or a third time also. Because dengue virus is a family and four types of virus' are there (DENV I, DENV II, DENV III and DENV IV), if a person got infected with DENV I, he won't get the same viral infection again. But he will get infected with other type like DENV II, DENV III and DENV IV. So 'infection for the second time is also possible'.

Prevention is always better than cure. Eliminate all the sources. Destroy garbages, close all the water storages, use mosquioto repellents, wear long pants covering fully below the knees. Applying coconut oil below the knee is also useful. The oil media prevents mosquito bites. Pappaya leaf extracts are believed to increase the antibody production. Using mosquito nets, using pesticides, spraying them on the corners of walls and curtains kills the mosquitoes. If proper treatment and prevents mosquitoes will definitely control DENGUE. ■



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# Periyar Medical Mission

## In the Service of Human Society


### Dr. R.Gowthaman

Director, Periyar Medical Mission




Periyar Medical Mission is a voluntary organization, sponsored by Periyar Self-Respect Propaganda Institution. Dr. K.Veeramani, M.A., B.L., Chancellor, Periyar Maniammai University, Vallam and General Secretary of the above trust is the Patron for this organization. Under his able guidance and advice the mission renders service to the downtrodden, neglected, poverty stricken, illiterate chunk of rural population. Chozhanganallur, a small village in Thiruvarur district did not have any medical facility. On his routine propaganda tour programme our patron Thiru.K.Veeramani, the Dravidar Kazhagam President happened to see a patient in a serious health condition carried in a coir cot by four people, to the nearest town. Being a humanist in our days, he immediately sanctioned funds from the trust to construct a full-fledged hospital in Chozhanganallur which is situated 25 kms. from Thiruvarur. The hospital was constructed and has been functioning for the past 15 years. The rural mass, almost everyone belonging to downtrodden community and all are

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வாழ்வின் இறுதி மணித்துளிகள் வரை வாழ்ந்து
மறைந்தும் மறையாத தந்தை பெரியார்
மனித நேயம் என்றால் என்ன? என்று
தன் வாழ்வில் நடத்திக் காட்டிய பேரறிஞர் அண்ணா
தந்தை பெரியார் - பேரறிஞர் அண்ணாவின் கொள்கை இலட்சியங்களை
உள் வாங்கிக் கொண்டு வாழ்ந்து வரும் கலைஞர் - பேராசிரியர்
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*Periyar Medical Missionaries are at the field*

agricultural labours. They are given first aid and emergency medical services which is a boon to the local public, thanks to our patron. We have one hospital at Vallam, a rural helmet near Thanjavur, one at Tiruverumbur, a semi urban area with labourers' population. Both these hospitals are day care centers serving 12 to 15 hours a day. We have one more day care centre at Trichy. Salem Margathamani Mariyappan Hospital was also promoted as day care centre recently. In Chennai, we are running a family welfare unit in Periyar Thidal. There are plans to improve it as a dialysis unit. One hospital is functioning at Dharmapuri. Recently a new hospital had been commissioned at Jayamkondam, another semi urban area. The patient turnout and response are very encouraging. Nearly 75,000 to 80,000 patients get treatment per year in our 8 hospitals. We have a cancer detection van also in the service. The village women are ignorant about health care and not exposed to medical professionals. So incidence of precancerous lesions and malignant lesions in breast, uterus and mouth (because of tobacco chewing) are prevalent. So as per the advice by our Patron we are conducting cancer detection camps in our 'PURA' (Provision of Urban Amenities in Rural Areas) villages every month with oncology specialists and specially trained staff. With this cancer detection camps, we conduct general health camps also in the rural areas.

This year so far we have conducted 18 camps, which is a welcome move to the rural mass and the beneficiaries appreciate the camps very much. We distribute medicines free of cost to the beneficiaries. We treat nearly 200 patients in each camp. We organized a health club in our college of Pharmacy which conducts periodic health talks which was organized well by the Principal Dr. Senthamarai. Periayar College of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Trichy. On the day of convocation of our Pharmacy College we conducted a ENT camp in Trichy. Dr. Mohan Kameswaran came with his team and honoured the camp. During Periyar Ayya's birthday and Asiriyar's birthday we are conducting Blood donation camps, eye, dental, orthopaedics, Medicine and surgical and gynecology camps with full success. Thanks to the doctors of Periyar Medical Mission, Dr.Senthamari, Dr. Janaki, PURA Director, Dr. Govindaraj, Harshamitha Cancer Hospital. Without their helping hands the camps would not be successful. The Periyar's Self-Respect Propaganda Institution, Chair person and members and the Auditor, Thiru. S.Rajarathinam Ayya have kind enough to give the monetary sanctions generously to run the Mission successfully. As the logo says **'Medical service is Humanism'** we are doing service to improve health standards of rural population. Thanks to our Patron for the financial help inspite of the financial strains. ■

# Periyar and Humanism


## G. Olivannan



Vice president,
The Rationalists' Forum, Tamil Nadu


It was in the year 1924 and the location was Kaanadukaathan, a hamlet near Karaikudi in Tamil Nadu, where a wedding was happening and the bridegroom was in a procession with relatives and friends. Mr. Sivakozhunthu, a renowned musician was playing the musical instrument, nadhaswaram. Mr. Sivakozhunthu belonged to the so called lower caste and hence was not permitted to wear a shirt. The bare-chested Sivakozhunthu had wrapped a decorated shawl on his hip. Sivakozhunthu used the shawl to wipe out the sweat on his face and had left it on his shoulders unmindful of the fact that this was considered a privilege and denied to the caste group he belonged to. Annoyed seeing the shawl on his shoulders, someone from the crowd yelled that Sivakozhunthu should remove the shawl. Alagiri, one of the lieutenants of Periyar who was watching the procession from nearby, shouted back, asking him not to do so. This sparked a confrontation and a ruckus resulted. The issue was immediately reported to Periyar who stood his ground. The problem was amicably solved with Sivakozhunthu continuing to wear the shawl on his shoulders and those who opposed it moved away from the procession.

This was one such incident that highlighted the plight of social injustice which prevailed in Indian society.

The Justice Party, Self Respect Movement and later Dravidar Kazhagam have over the years changed the scenario dramatically and opened the flood gates for backward classes and scheduled castes to get their rightful place in education and employment. Tamil Nadu is a forerunner in social justice movement.

People in the name of god and religion were cruelly discriminated and the social system was palpably unfair to the people. Periyar's foremost objective was to bring dignity to people, restore self-respect and provide social justice to everyone. Periyar's family belonged to the upper caste, and his father was a wealthy business man and an influential person in the society. Periyar a radical social reformer was aghast at the cruelty meted out to vast majority of innocent people by the oppressors using the culture of dogmatism.

Periyar's social life began as chairman of Erode town administration. He brought many changes to the functioning of the administration. For the first time in India, pipes were laid and water was pumped from a far off lake to the residential areas to help people fetch tap water. The pipes had to pass through the dwelling place of untouchable people and when it was objected by the upper caste people, Periyar EVR categorically said, "the water is for every section of people and the alignment of pipes could not be altered; if anyone holds objections, he has no choice than to walk miles to get the water"

Periyar EVR was one of the prominent leaders of Congress in Madras Presidency. When other leaders were focusing their attention towards national independence, Periyar thought differently. He firmly believed there ought to be a paradigm shift in the social order, and provide inclusivity for all sections of people irrespective of caste, creed, gender, colour, religion and economic status. Periyar declared that the Self-Respect Movement alone could be the genuine freedom movement, and political freedom would not be fruitful without individual self-respect. A miniscule population of Brahmins dominating all spheres of society, education, employment, government and so on irked Periyar. Due to social injustice, vast majority of people deprived of basic needs lived in abject poverty and without dignity and self-respect.

Periyar is known for reaching out to the crux of any problem, and destroying the roots which cause trouble. Social Justice in all forms, education, and employment, political and social status was denied to people in the name of religion and god. He had no hesitation to question the existence and purpose of god; if god had created the world why should it be unfair to vast section of people. His analyses lead to a conclusion that god and religion were the handy work of oppressing class to deny social justice and corner the resources of the world; additionally they enjoyed the pleasure of suppressing and exploiting the innocent people. Periyar EVR upon realizing this, as a prominent leader of the Congress party expected the party to react proactively in this issue and bring a resolution at their annual conferences in 1920, 1921, 1922, 1923 and 1924 to persuade the government for the implementation of a G.O. on communal representation (equal and fair proportional representation for all communities in education and employment); Sadly the other leaders, particularly the



In the words of Dr. Ambedkhar, real method of breaking up the Caste System was not in bringing about inter-caste dinners and inter-caste marriages but to destroy the religious notions on which caste was founded.

Brahmins, in the party did not subscribe to this contentious subject. On the other hand, Periyar EVR was branded as communal for his progressive and foresighted suggestion. A dejected Periyar realized that the forces against social justice were strong and subtle and that a determined and prolonged battle for social justice was necessary. At the annual conference in Kanchipuram in 1925, he once again insisted that a resolution in favour of implementation of communal reservation had to be passed. But the Brahmin lobby vehemently opposed it and ensured that it was not taken up in the conference agenda. After heated arguments dejected and disgruntled, Periyar resigned from the congress party. This culminated in the founding of Self Respect Movement by Periyar; and the first annual Self Respect Conference was held at Chengalpattu in the year 1929. The resolutions passed at this conference were historic, remarkable and unprecedented. Perhaps, this conference was the milestone for a new social order not only in Southern India, but also to the entire nation.

The communal G.O, the proportional representation for different communities, in education and employment was first implemented in Tamil Nadu thereby opening a new chapter in the era of social justice. In the post-independence era when this was stalled in the court of Madras, Periyar led a statewide protest which forced the Nehru government to amend the constitution for the first time. In 1971 and subsequently in 1980 and 1991, the percentage of reservation for the backward classes was increased. Also, in 1991, after a prolonged battle by Dravidar Kazhagam and other like minded parties, at the national level the Mandal commission recommendation was implemented by late Prime Minister V.P. Singh, an affirmative action, providing reservation for backward classes in central government employment.

This was in 1924. In the neighbouring Kerala state, at Vaikom, depressed class people were denied the right to walk on the streets surrounding the temple. The affected people thought the Congress Party would come to their rescue. But the Congress which was engrossed in the political freedom from British, cleverly thwarted such social issues. But Periyar earnestly took up the issue and travelled to Vaikom in 1924 and led the agitation. He was arrested and imprisoned with the expectation that the agitation would be thwarted. Unfazed, Periyar continued even after his release and subsequently was sentenced to rigorous imprisonment. When the agitation further intensified, the Travancore Government finally relented and the roads around temple were opened for all sections of the people.

Periyar and Dravidian movement have helped to bring about a change in the social order in Tamil Nadu that is in the erstwhile Madras Presidency. If we look at the statistics of people of different castes occupying various positions in government sector - in the beginning of the last century, a miniscule population of the dominant community, the Brahmins, occupied more than eighty percent of jobs. The Justice Party, Self Respect Movement and later Dravidar Kazhagam have over the

years changed the scenario dramatically and opened the flood gates for backward classes and scheduled castes to get their rightful place in education and employment. Tamil Nadu is a forerunner in social justice movement. In health and education if the State of Tamil Nadu excels the other states and stands as numero uno, it is primarily because of the social consciousness and awareness that was ignited even before independence - thanks to the progressive movement spearheaded by Periyar.

**History of prejudice and social injustice**

The war against Chatur Varna and Sanatana Darma is not a recent phenomenon. It has been here in India since the time of Buddha. Though it appeared to be a battle won, the success was short lived, because the fundamentalists came back with the support and patronage of rulers. Rulers' class, the kshatriyas, the second in the Chathur Varna, found it comfortable to collide with the first in the rank, Brahmins, to protect and uphold the Varna, as it perfectly suited them to rule the vast section of masses.

In Tamil Nadu, it was during the time of Pallavas that the kings supported the Aryan/ Vedic system, and accorded a high place to Sanskrit and thereby pushing Tamil to the backseat. The Cholas who succeeded Pallavas went several steps forward in Aryanisation and Sankritisation- they established the Chatur Varna and Sanathana Dharma in the Tamil soil. It was during Rajaraja Cholan and Rajendra Cholan period, that fertile lands en masse in the Cauvery and Tamiraparani deltas were donated to the priest class. Not only transfer of wealth happened but even education to others in the society was denied! During Rajendra Cholan's (1022-1044) and Rajathirajan's (1018-1054) governance colleges were established in Yennayiram (South Arcot) and Thirupuvani (near Pudhuuchery) to teach Vedas and other scriptures, and only Brahmins were admitted into these institutions.

Later during Naicker's rule, things did not change. During Thirumalai Naicker's rule, when a college was established in Madurai, out of the ten thousand students studying, hundred per cent were Brahmins and people from the other communities were denied educational rights in the name of religion. Thanks to education, the upper varna people were privileged to corner plum government positions in Naicker's government. Only a few non-Brahmin students from wealthy families were fortunate to get minimum basic education and that too they had to confine it to the corridors of their house.

In the beginning of the last century, the seeds were sown for social Justice in Tamil Nadu. The emergence of Non-Brahmin movement, later popularly known as "Justice Party", works of Pandit Ayothidasar and Rettaimalai Srinivasan for the empowerment of scheduled castes saw the beginning of a new social order. Self Respect Movement started by Periyar in 1925 propelled the social justice movement to greater heights. Till then the plight of social justice was at very low ebb.

For example, the study of medicine and surgery was denied discreetly to the non-brahmins by making a pre-requisite that knowledge of Sanskrit was essential. And only the brahmins were taught Sanskrit.

Also, in the heart of Chennai city, on the arterial Anna Salai (once Mount road), a hundred years back, in theatres and hotels, boards prominently displayed, **"outcastes, lepers and dogs not permitted".**

All this changed, thanks to Periyar and the Dravidian movement, and the state of Tamil Nadu is a fore runner in social reforms, today.

Every social reform activity was protested





தந்தை பெரியாரின் முடக்கொழிக்கை
ஒழுப்பு, ஜாதி, மத, கடவுள்
மூத்தலாட்டங்களை
உலகம் முழுவதும் அறியச் செய்து
மனித நேயத்துடனும் வாழ்ந்து மந்த செய்தியை
உலக மயமாக்கி வரும் ஆசிரியர்

அய்யா **கி.வீரமணி** அவர்கள்

நூறாண்டுகளுக்கு மேல் வாழ்ந்து
தமிழ்நாட்டைத் தலைநிமிர
செய்திட வேண்டும்

என்னுடைய அன்பு நிறைந்த
வாழ்த்துக்கள்



இவண்

**கோ.கிருட்டிணமூர்த்தி (எ) GKM**

திராவிடர் கழக பொதுக்குழு உறுப்பினர், புதுச்சேரி

செல்: **89400 93891**

No Hindu religious leader ever talked/talks about abolition of castes. They very well know that once the caste system is out, religion would vanish into thin air. The crusade against social injustice cannot be completed until removing the barriers between people.

with vigour by the fundamentalists. But Periyar the revolutionist never gave up. He was imprisoned several times and fined heavily. Yet, he continued his crusade. He was the first to burn the copies of the Indian Constitution protesting that the Constitution safeguards casteism. Periyar maintained that though fundamental rights were prescribed in the Constitution, subarticles 13(2), 25(1), 29(1) (12) and 368 safeguard caste system; hence he called for a state wide agitation to burn copies of the Constitution. Close to 10000 people were arrested. In independent India, no such big agitation was carried out protesting against caste system.

Periyar has written explicitly in *Kudi Arasu* (issue dated 10.05.1936) that his primary objective was to eradicate caste, religion and god from society in order to bring social justice to everyone and make people happy. It also happened to be his swansong when he delivered his last speech on 19.12.1973 at Thiyagaraya Nagar public meeting in Chennai.

Though on one side the social reformers toil relentlessly to eradicate castes, the sanathanis - the upper echelons of the varna system - do everything possible to retain the caste system. In the words of Dr. Ambedkhar, real method of breaking up the Caste System was not in bringing about inter-caste dinners and inter-caste marriages but to destroy the religious notions on which caste was founded. He categorically said, "It is not possible to break Caste without annihilating the religious notions on which it, the Caste system, is founded."

The strong Hindu sentiments fuelled by the second supreme leader of RSS, Golwalkar and other Hindu leaders advocated the preservation of Sanatana Dharma and the Varna. Golwalkar went to the extent of saying that "There is nothing to prove that it (the caste system) ever hindered our social developments. Actually caste system has helped to preserve the unity of our society."(Bunch of Thoughts p.108). The Brahmins who claim to be the first in the varna system, even today are proud of their status and continue to enjoy their position discreetly. Religion is the source of power and this is illustrated by the history of India where the priest holds a sway over the common man often greater than the Supreme Court judge and where everything, as strikes and elections, so easily take a religious turn and can so easily be given a religious twist. Religion plays a key role in maintaining the caste system. No Hindu religious leader ever talked/talks about abolition of castes. They very well know that once the caste system is out, religion would vanish into thin air. The crusade against social injustice cannot be completed until removing the barriers between people.

In the words of Noble Laureate Rabindranath Tagore

*"Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high*

*Where knowledge is free*

*Where the world has not been broken up into fragments*

*By narrow domestic walls*

*..... let my country awake!"*




# Dravidian Nidhi Ltd.,

("NIDHI" Declared Company) (Reg.No:13840/1986)

Approved by the Central Government

## Notice to the Members!

There is no ceiling on loan amount per individual

December 2 SELF-RESPECT DAY

**NO APPRAISER FEES INSURANCE CHARGES**

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((ie.) Rs.100/- Only for Rs 1.00 for the Jewels)

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Loan will be sanctioned on the security of House and site (immovable properties) Located within the limit of Corporation of Chennai. Interest Rate is 15% p.a
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**T.K.Natarajan**
President

Regd.Office: Periyar Thidal
No.84/1 (50), E.V.K.Sampath Salai, Vepery, Chennai - 600 007.
Phone: 044 - 2661 8699, 4232 7538

# A Moving Incident


## S.Arivukkarasu

Presidium Chairman, Dravidar Kazhagam
Alumnus of S.P.G. School, Cuddalore


The alumni of S P G School, established in Cuddalore Old Town in 1717 met at St. David Higher Secondary School premises on 11th November 2017 to celebrate the 300th anniversary for the school. The alumni - Asiriyar Dr. K. Veeramani and former minister Panruti S. Ramachandran participated in the function as special invitees. Carried away by nostalgia, both of them felt rejunuvated and were carried away by ecstatic recollections of the past.

The Headmaster's residence which has the distinction having lodged Robert Clive, who stayed there incognito for a while, retains its past look while every other part of the school has been renovated.

Asiriyar K. Veeramani recalled the services of German Mission Ziegenbalg to Tamil and Education. When he revealed that he established a printing press at Tarangampadi and brought out the first ever printed Tamil work, 'Tambiran Vanakkam', it was news to many in the audience. He shared memories of the public meeting in which he participated as a eleven year old student of the school. He also recollected that the teachers were aware of his atheistic stance and never tried to impose their religious outlook on him.

Panruti S. Ramachandran who studied there in 1950 as mentioned that he was also a skilled orator. Both Asiriyar and he joined Annamalai University for higher studies, got interested in public life, and joined politics, though their political life deviated after that.

Both Asiriyar and Panrutiar were decorated in the Ziegenbalg Award. Coming to know that S. Ramachandran had his birthday a day earlier, they celebrated it with gusto, with the school correspondent cutting a cake and greeting him with a song.

Asiriyar admired the school for having refrained from teaching religious tenets which permitted him and former Minister to continue with their atheism. ■

# A Tryst with Alma Mater

## The speech delivered by Asiriyar Dr. K. Veeramani at the alumni meeting at CSI St. David Hr. Sec School, Cuddalore



*Alumnus addressing at Alma mater*

We feel as if we have come to our Mother's house. I am happy to see in front of me, students who look like a nursery farm, waiting to grow and be harvested and become useful to the society. We, the old students of the school, or are reminded of the past, and are filled with happiness. When I think of the number of the students who have been educated in this 300 year old institution and have been turned out into the society, I am really wonderstruck.

If we look back into the history of the country, we find that we have been united through of hearts and not by religions. We have united by education and humanism.

Those in the present generation, including the Head Master should realize that a vast majority of people in this country had been denied education for a long period in history. The working class people had been declared as belonging to lower castes, untouchables, depressed and oppressed and were denied the light of education. It was under those circumstances that Christianity rendered yeoman service to this society and gave education to those people. We should be grateful to Christianity for this service.

It can be dismissed with a casual statement that

missionaries came here under difficult circumstances when there were no travel facilities and gave education to our people. They did not impose their language to us. On the other hand, they learnt out language.

Western missionaries came here for spreading their religion. All the same, it must be remembered that they have rendered the much required service to our society. We have laid the foundation for a research centre in the name of Ziegenbalg. It was his efforts that built this school. He did not stop with that.

It was Ziegenbalg who brought a printing machine here and printed the first Tamil book and proclaimed to the world the greatness of Tamil. Such missionaries came here under difficult circumstances when there were no travel facilities and gave education to our people. They did not impose their language to us. On the other hand, they learnt out language.

Even when I was a student, I had repudiated religion and had no belief in God. Some of us were greatly involved with Periyar Movement. The authorities of the school, like Father Masilamani who was the Head Master and Father Arumai Nayagam who succeeded him were men with staunch faith in god and religion. But the difference never came in the way of our understanding each other. The school gave us freedom of thought.



*Alumni - Asiriyar Dr. K. Veermani and Former Minister Panruti S. Ramachandran, felicitated.*

This freedom given to us by our teachers 70 years ago was never misused by us. The teachers guided us properly. When I wrote my association with Periyar under the titles *"In Ayya's Footsteps"* I have written in detail about my school life in the eighth chapter. I recall with gratitude all the teachers who taught in Tamil: Palani Andi Mudaliar, Selva Ganapathi, Dhandapani and Sambam.

I was admitted to the school by my teacher Dravidamani when I was a ten year old boy. Before that I had studied in a playschool and an Islamic school.

Panruti S. Ramachandran has accompanied me here. He used to commute by train everyday from his native place to Cuddalore. Another companion of ours was one Varadarajan who became professor in IIT. He is no more now.

Brother DGS Dinakaran was actually my benchmate in the classroom. When he used to attend 'Jesus Calls' meetings, I used to address Dravidar Kazhagam meetings. Yet we were good friends. Religion or caste or God has not divided us. On the other hand education has united us. But for

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*Alumnus - Asiriyar in thanking gesture*

the selfless service rendered by the Western Christian Missionaries, such a large number of us could not have been educated. We should be grateful for that.

The credit for introducing Tirukural to the outside world must go to G.U. Pope who wanted the words, *"Here lies a student of Tamil"*, to be inscribed on his tomb. The glory of the land, including Sanskrit, was taken to the world by Westerners like Max Muller. It was Caldwell who gave us the epoch making work of *'Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian Languages'*. We are just a tiny fraction of people who benefited out of their service.

My teacher Krishnamurthy Ayyar would often ask me about the meetings I addressed.

The school has crossed many trials and tribulations and completed 300 years. Many who have come out of the school have held high positions in the society. If we bring all the old students together, we will be of assistance to the school in its development.

My dear students please remember to uphold the reputation of the school, which was built by the endeavour of people who came from outside the country. Please put to the best use all the 24 hours of the day, without wasting time. Work will assure you success. Believe in it and create opportunities suitable for your progress.

Periyar used to say,

**'Man was not born on his own**
**Nor was he born to serve himself'**

I enjoin you to serve the society. Please spend a part of your time in the library. Library is the best place for acquiring knowledge. *"The more you learn the more knowledge you acquire."* (Kural)

I have gifted our publications to the school and we are ready to help the library in all possible ways. It is not enough to merely study science. Make scientific thinking a part of your life style. ■

# Magnanimity

## Dr. Kumari Anandan



President, Gandhi Forum Tamil Nadu.

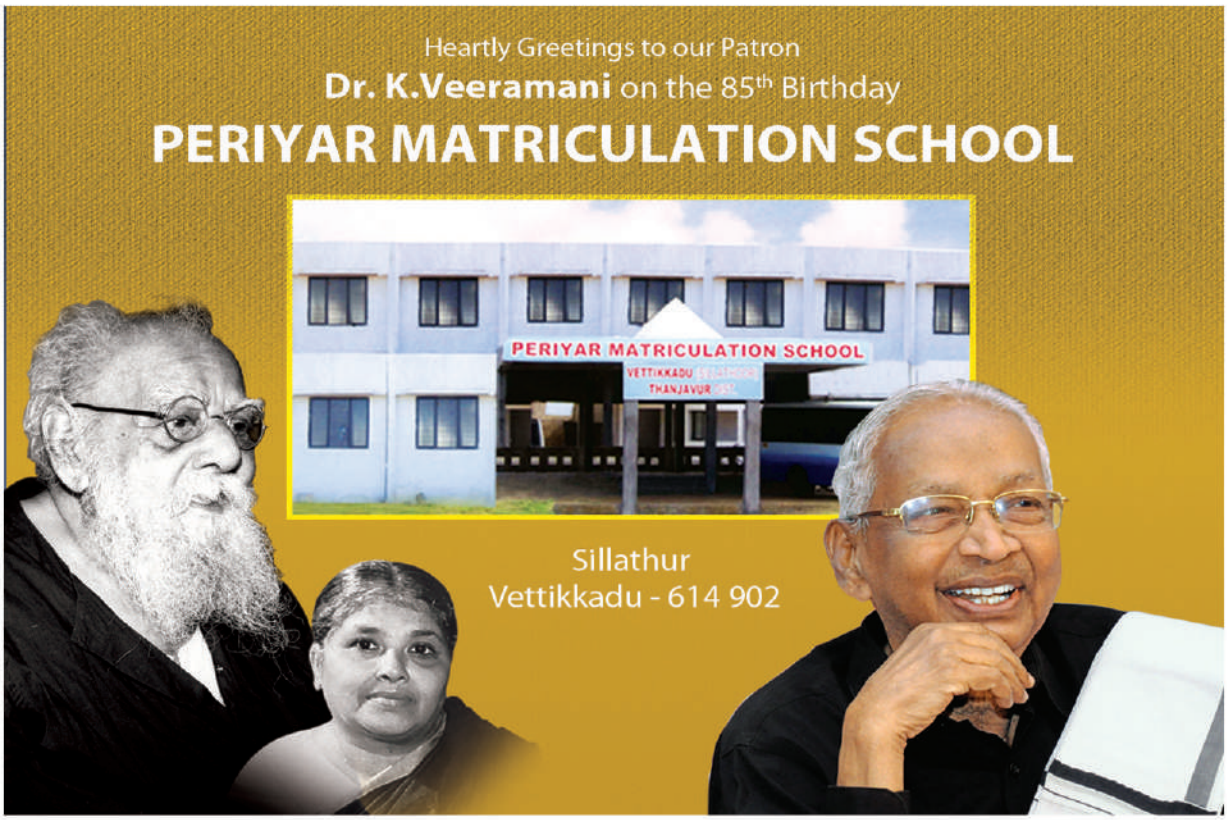
I have had at Annamalai University the opportunity of studying along with Asiriyar K. Veeramani, who continues with redoubled vigour to take forward the Mission of Periyar, the Sun of Reason.

When the agitation for annexing the Tamil regions of the Tranvancore state with Tamil Nadu was going on, many of us undertook a walkathon, led by K.Veeramani, from the river banks of Buvangiri to the boundaries of Annamalai University, demanding the annexation.

When we undertook a walk, in 2017 with demands like linking the rivers, introduction of prohibition and uniting all Tamils as Subramania Siva of yesteryears did, Veeramani magnanimously came in person and handed to us Gandhi flag with his own hands to us and wished us success. I consider it as a blessing in my life.

My heartfelt greetings to Veeramani, for a long life, leading people in the path of reason.


Asiriyar Dr. K.Veeramani's
85
Birthday Special
1933-2017
December 2
SELF-RESPECT DAY
Hearty Greetings on the 85th Birthday
of our beloved Leader K.Veeramani
V.I.SIVAKUMAR
VELLORE DISTRICT PRESIDENT, DRAVIDAR KAZHAGAM
S.LATHA
GUDIYATTAM MAGALIR PASARAI PRESIDENT
V.S.TAMILNESAN, V.S.SANGANITHI


Heartly Greetings to our Patron
Dr. K.Veeramani on the 85th Birthday
PERIYAR MATRICULATION SCHOOL
PERIYAR MATRICULATION SCHOOL
Sillathur
Vettikkadu - 614 902

# 28 years with Asiriyar

## P.Seetharaman



### Manager, Periyar Thidal, Chennai

I hail from Kalakadu near Thiruneveli. It was 1979. Thamizhar Thalaivar was visiting my place. Two of my brothers were working in Vallam, Periyar Polytechnic. Not knowing that he does not like shawls or garlands, I placed a huge garland around his neck, introducing myself, that was my first meeting.

I have been with him for 28 years.

I started as the Assistant Manager. Trichy Alavandar was the Estate Manager of Chennai – Periyar Thidal. I used to look after the administrative jobs. Being with Asiriyar is a pleasant experience, besides learning the interpersonal relation skills and admiring his leadership qualities.

If we work well he would appreciate much. If we don't perform up to his expectations he would be hard for which we cannot blame.

He is particular that what he says should be accomplished in time and we also do our best to get it done however difficult it may be.

He will meet every one and any one. If someone is asked to wait, it means he is in meeting with someone else.

He shows interest in the welfare of his assistants and their families

He shows lot of interest in them; particularly if the drivers have night duties, he will ask them to sleep well. If someone is sick or unwell, he would visit them in the hospital without fail. All the employees in the Thidal go through regular medical check up and are medically insured.

We cannot match his speed in thought and action. When he walks we have to run to catch up with him.



*Asiriyar visiting the Central Jail, Chennai (prior to its demolition), where he was jailed for about one year under MISA during the Emergency period in 1976.*

He will not get tensed up at all. He has been involved in many important hall mark social struggles. During those struggles he had to meet several high level persons. He was intent and serious about his goals and successfully accomplished them all. He never showed any loss of temper or cool.

A Personal Assistant of a Chief Minister once told me, "When other leaders come here they ask for many favours but your leader talks just the legal points and gets away. During the DMK Regime, they allotted a Government house for him in Kotturpuram, but he refused it. He has never asked for any personal favours.

All the letters to him come to me. After opening them I arrange them and place to him. The letters received through e-mails are placed before him as print out. Letters sent to him personally are not opened by us but will be placed on his table. Sometimes when he participates in protest marches I used to accompany him. On occasions of severe risk of protests, he used to display maturity and calmness. When he participated in the burning of the Constitution, a police constable threw a bucket of water on him to put down the fire. In the melee, his eye glasses fell off. He could not make his steps. I was shaken very much and was very angry at the impunity of the society. For the offence of leading the protest he was sent to Vellore jail where I visited him several times.

In my 28 year experience, among the visitors no one has ever complained. Everyone has only complimented on him. He concentrates more in public meetings as they are opportunities to propagate the policies and principles of Periyar. He goes sufficiently prepared and he collects all the correct data.

He does not know what it is to spend lavishly. When he goes to marriage functions, he hates if they are lavish and advises that such wasted expenditure could be saved for the welfare of the couples. Whoever visits Periyar Thidal, he invites them with a smile and treats them politely. If he is in the Thidal, he would receive without any partiality. I have one concern. He is 85 now and I want him to reduce his burden of work and take sufficient rest. He may stay in the office and serve. Friends place emotional request to him to be present for their home functions but all of us have to remember his age.

Dr. A.Rajasekaran and Dr. M.S. Ramachandran are there with whom he is very free. Late Prof. M.N.Sivarasan was treated with high esteem and was very appreciative his edition of the Digests of Periyar works. The death of G.V.K. Aasan was very severe blow on him.

When the Tamil Nadu Government decided to demolish the Central Prison, he called me to visit for a very strange reason. He recollected where he was shut and cruelly tortured during Emergency Period. On reaching it he identified the cell in which he and 7 others were shut. It was a small cell of 8 feet length. I was shocked to see the cell. He explained to me that only four could stretch at a time and the others used to lie in turn. They would not allow them out and they used to pass urine inside the cell in a pot. I was moved to tears. I decided myself then that my primary duty in life was henceforth to take care of this great person until my last day

I most cordially wish him LONG LIFE! ■

# My Journey with Ayya will continue forever

## S. Tamil Selvan

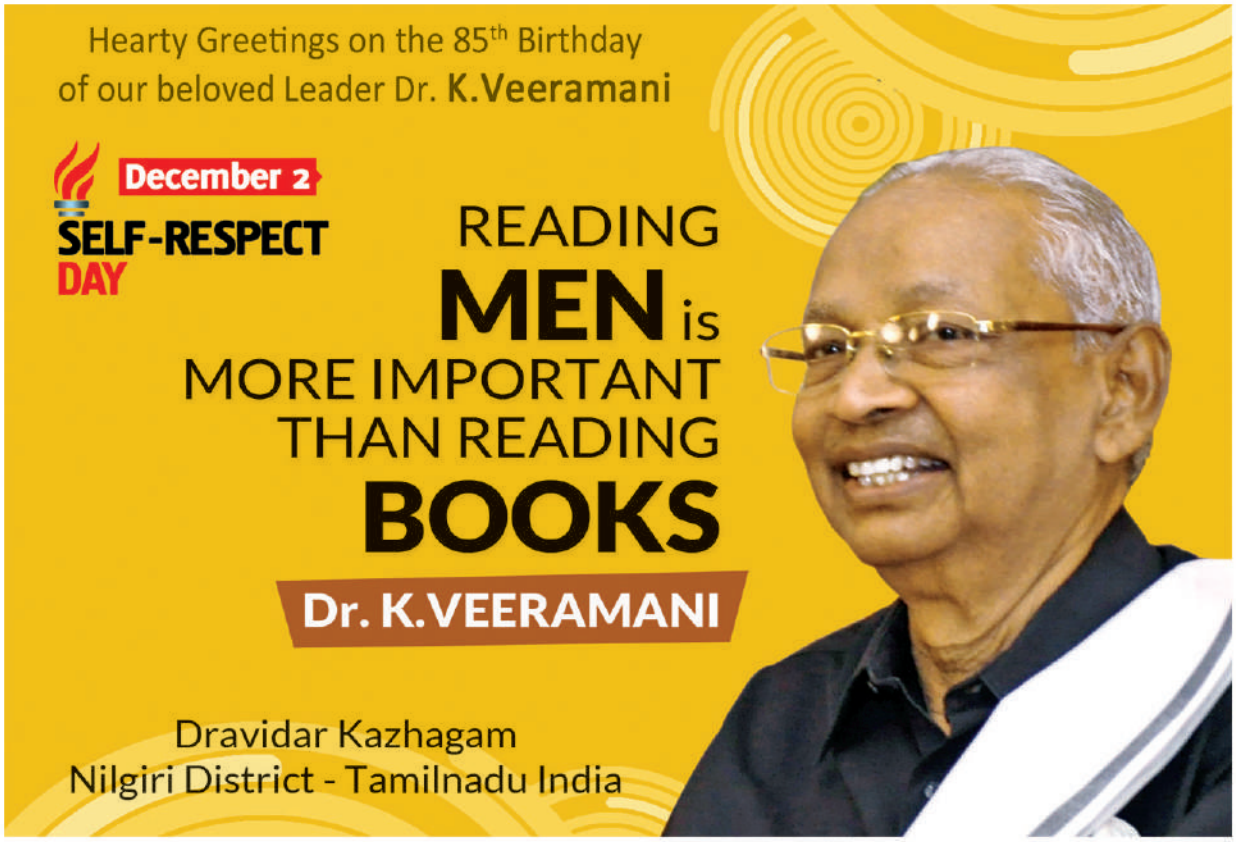


### Asiriyar's Chauffeur - Propaganda Van

I joined as a Car Driver on 30th January 1996 and my journey continues since then. Even today, I find in Ayya the same dynamism and enthusiasm, I found in him years ago. Once I took Ayya to Kuthalam for the unveiling of Periyar statue. While some prominent speakers left earlier to catch the train, Ayya remained there to deliver his 30 to 40 minute speech. When he got into the car, it was somewhat late. He had to catch the Chennai bound Rockfort express at Trichy. Somehow I managed to reach the station in time and enabled Ayya to catch the train (I have never driven a car at the speed any time after that). Ayya was very happy and rewarded all of us who made it possible.

Whenever I drive Ayya's vehicle, I am conscious that I am travelling with a great leader who has been forever fighting the dark forces which are arrained against our society. Let us all protect Ayya as much as possible so that he continued to serve our society.

Long live Tamilar Thalaivar!


Hearty Greetings on the 85th Birthday
of our beloved Leader Dr. K.Veeramani
December 2
SELF-RESPECT DAY
READING
MEN is
MORE IMPORTANT
THAN READING
BOOKS
Dr. K.VEERAMANI
Dravidar Kazhagam
Nilgiri District - Tamilnadu India


டிசம்பர் 2
சுயமரியாதை நாள்
85
பிறந்தநாள்
பெரியார் வழி நின்று திசை காட்டும் தமிழர் தலைவர்
ஆசிரியர் அவர்களின் 85ஆம் பிறந்த நாளில்
வாழ்த்துகளை தெரிவித்துக் கொள்கிறோம்.
M.செந்தில்குமார்
S.கிருஷ்ணன்
V.நடராஜன்
D.செல்வராஜ்
L.கமலேஷ்
R.சேட்டு (எ) பசுபதி
ஊமை ஜெயராமன்
பெரியார் மன்ற பொறுப்பாளர்
பெரியார் மன்றம், தருமபுரி
இர.கிருஷ்ணமூர்த்தி
பொறுப்பாளர்
பெரியார் மன்ற வனகம்,
தருமபுரி
கே.வரதராஜன்
கடை எண்.4

# A Photographer Remembers

## B. Sivakumar



Photographer, Periyar Thidal, Chennai

I came to Periyar Thidal in 1989 for Periyar Volunteer Training. From then on, I have been working under Asiriyar in various sections in the Thidal. From the time I got the opportunity to accompany Tamilar Thalaivar in his journeys, I have had many opportunities of moving with him and observing him. I have read about many leaders in books. I had been under the impression that Asiriyar also would be like them. But, he has surpassed all my expectations. His simplicity is unparalleled. His memory is amazing. He can call everyone by name and recollect their place of residence.

I am excited to move with such a great social activist. He involves himself whole heartedly in all the agitations planned by him and fights relentlessly till the end. During his journey, either in trains or in cars, I have observed him spending the time either in writing or in reading. Wherever he goes, he recollects Periyar's followers who lived there and participated in various struggles and shares his memories with others, which all of us find useful.

While travelling, inspite of all the tight schedules and other inconveniences, he makes it a point to visit the comrades who are ill, enquires after their health and helps them with their medical needs. He never delays and postpones any pre-arranged events. He thinks of the troubles the cadres would have undertaken for the arrangement and always reaches the place on the dot. While attending weddings, he reaches the wedding hall at the right moment. Sometimes he may have to wait a while the bride is being decorated. He never minds waiting, and starts discussing various matters with the cadres present there.

When something or other intervenes during the journey he does not mind delay. He simply takes a cup of tea in the roadside shop and continues the journey. He offers tea to all those who accompany him, including the chauffeur. During one of his journeys, when the car was halting in petrol bunk, Asiriyar got ready to take his meal in his car. The workers in the bunk would not permit him to do so. They came running to him and asked him to take his food comfortably in the cabin.

We asked them if they knew Asiriyar. To our surprise, they started giving a long list of agitations led by him. On the while, I deem it my good fortune to move with such a great personality.





Hearty Greetings
on the 85th Birthday
of the Humanist Leader
Dr.K.Veeramani

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# An Incident Recollected


## K.Ashok Kumar

Asiriyar's Chauffeur




On hearing of the sad demise of V.P.Singh, former Prime Minister of India on 27th November 2008, Asiriyar left home to catch the 6 a.m. Air India flight for going to Delhi. The City had come to a standstill on account of unprecedented rains. When we reached Guindy Industrial Estate, we found that cars were stagnated on either side of the road, unable to move forward. "Do you think we can reach the airport?" asked Asiriyar. I assured him that we could. Somehow we were able to reach the airport, the vehicle tearing into the water.

The entire airport was immersed in water. There were announcements made, one after another, on arrivals and departures being delayed. Thiru.P.Seetharaman, Manager of Periyar Thidal, contacted me over the phone and chided me for having taken Asiriyar out such rough weather.

While waiting at the airport, Asiriyar contacted Chief Minister Kalaignar around 6 a.m. and informed him of the problem faced by passengers and even pilots owing to the stagnation of water in the Guindy area. Kalaignar, as usual acted swiftly and asked Thiru. T.R.Balu, Central Minister for Road Transport to do something about it. The solution was instantly found.

That is Asiriyar. Though he does not enjoy any authority, political or official, he cannot be a mute witness to people's suffering.

I derive immense happiness by serving Asiriyar rather than anyone else.

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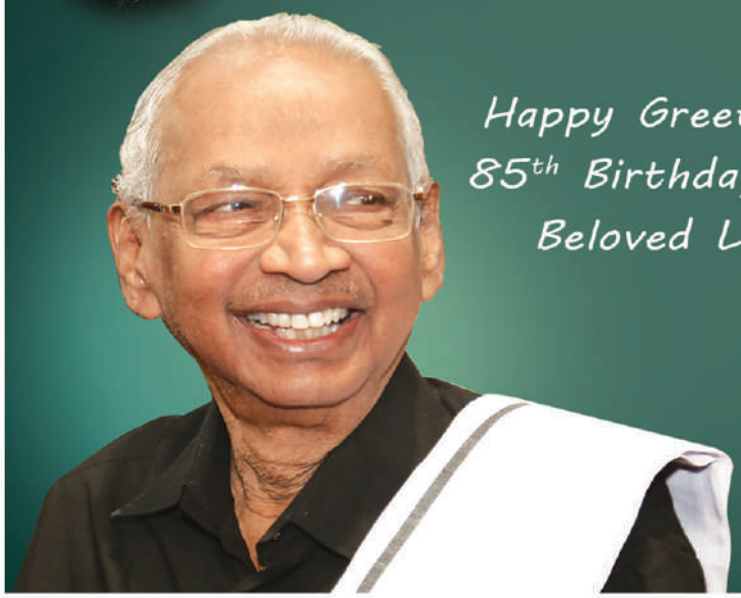


Long Live Periyar!



Long Live Asiriyar!

**December 2**
**SELF-RESPECT DAY**



*Happy Greetings on 85th Birthday of our Beloved Leader*



Puthuvai
**M.N. NATARAJAN**
Vice President
The Rationalists' Forum
Tamil Nadu & Pondicherry

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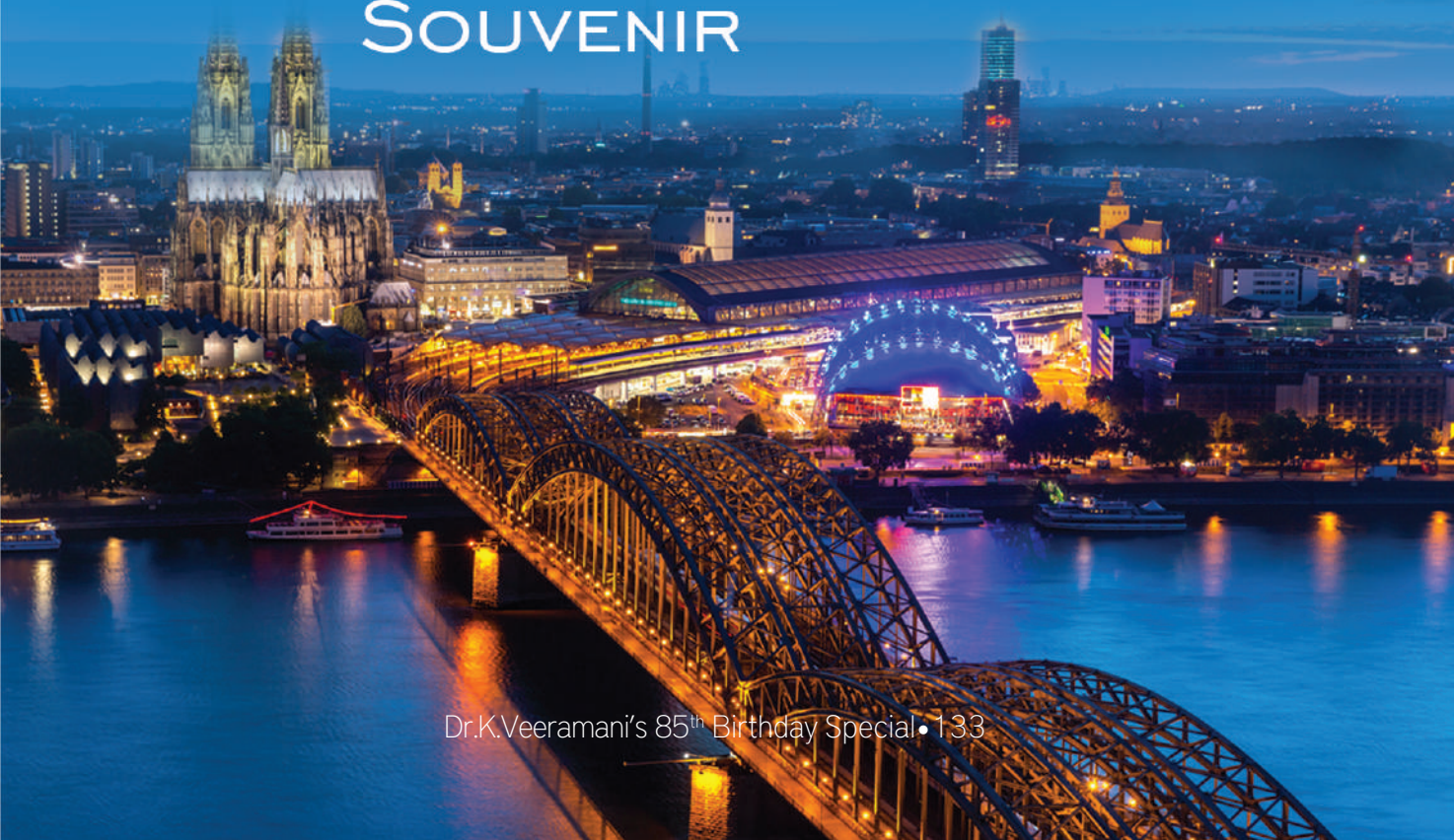


# International Conference on PERIYAR SELF-RESPECT MOVEMENT

Cologne, Germany 2017

## Commemoration 91st Anniversary of Self Respect Movement, 1926

SOUVENIR



# Globalizing Periyar Mission in 2017

## Convening International Conference on 'Periyar Self Respect Movement, at Cologne, Germany

The social revolutionary, Thanthai Periyar E.V. Ramasamy (1879-1973) founded Self Respect Movement in 1926. The very purpose of starting a movement for the cause of Self Respect was due to the societal set up prevailing then in India and still continuing today. People were discriminated in the name of god and religion and major section of the toiling masses were denied education and were ordained to carry on their hereditary profession strictly. Any person who deviated from the ordain were passed with strictures and punished heavily. When it was ordained as divine, people were made not only to accept their slavery in the society but to glorify and celebrate it, foregoing all the privileges and supremacy to one microscopic cult in the society.

If enslaved people are unaware of their slavery, it is comparatively easy to liberate them by explaining their slavery conditions and the rights denied in the society. But it is very difficult to liberate the enslaved masses who are well aware of their slavery and subjugating themselves happily. Periyar whipped up the Self Respect of such enslaved people and started to liberate them.

At present, the Self Respect Movement has



At present, the Self Respect Movement has crossed 90 years with the change in name as Dravidar Kazhagam. The enslaved men and the entire women folk got many rights, so far denied to them. All these progressive measures became possible due to the foundation laid by Periyar with foresight.

crossed 90 years with the change in name as Dravidar Kazhagam. The enslaved men and the entire women folk got many rights, so far denied to them. All these progressive measures became possible due to the foundation laid by Periyar with foresight. Many of the resolutions passed at the First Madras Provincial Self Respect Conference convened by Periyar in 1929 at Chinglepet, Tamil Nadu, have become realities today.

Self Respect is not confined to any particular sect of the population. It is essential for all humans. As a propaganda process of Globalizing Periyar Mission (rationalist philosophy), the International Conference on 'Periyar Self Respect Movement' has been convened by Periyar International, United States of America.

The German Chapter of Periyar International along with Periyar Maniammai University, Vallam, Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu, India, organized the International Conference at the University of Cologne, Germany. The functional wings viz. Centre of Excellence for Periyar Thought of Periyar Maniammai University and the Department of Indology and Tamil Studies of University of Cologne took initiatives and endeavors for the success of the conference.

Rationalists, humanists, free thinkers and other progressive minded persons from all parts of the world participated in the three day conference. Many of the academicians and social activists presented their papers for discussions and deliberations. As part of the Conference, *'K.Veeramani Award for Social Justice 2016'* was conferred to the stalwart who struggled for the cause of Social Justice. Sizeable number of delegates from Tamil Nadu attended the Conference.



# PERIYAR INTERNATIONAL

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Germany Chapter

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## International Conference on PERIYAR SELF-RESPECT MOVEMENT

Cologne, Germany 2017

at University of Cologne, Germany,

**on July 27, 28 & 29 - 2017**

**Commemorating the 91st Anniversary of Self-Respect Movement, 1926**

Venue : **University of Cologne,** "Alte Botanik", Gyrhofstr. 15 Horsaal XXXI

## INAUGURATION

**Thursday - 27th July, 2017**

DAY 1

Time : 4.00 p.m. - Tea & Snacks

Time : 4.30 p.m.

Welcome by : **Prof. Dr. Ulrike Niklas,**
Chair Person,
Periyar International,
Germany Chapter.

Presided over by : **Dr. K. Veeramani,**
Chancellor,
Periyar Maniammai University.
Thanjavur,
Tamil Nadu, India.

Inaugurated by : **Hon'ble Michael Selvanayagam,**
Deputy Mayor,
Croydon Municipal Corporation,
United Kingdom.

## BOOK – RELEASE

- **Gott und Mensch – Periyar E.V. Ramasamy** (Translated Tamil Version of 'கடவுளும் மனிதனும்' in German)
- **Periyar E.V. Ramasamy – Eine Kurzbiographie**
  (Translated Version of *'PERIYAR E.V.RAMASAMY- Biographical Sketch'* in German)
- **Periyar Self-Respect by Prof. A.Ayyasamy**
- **Inscriptions at Periyar Memorial**
- **Periyar Self-Respect Movement** – Compilation of Articles, published in *'Revolt'* (1928 & 1929)

Address by : **Dr. Soma Ilangovan,**
President, Periyar International USA.,

: **Dr. Sithanandam Sadhasivam,**
Maryland, USA.

Evening : Screening of **"Periyar"** Feature Film

## Friday - 28th July, 2017

## PAPER SESSION - I

Time: 9.30 a.m. – 11.00 a.m. Moderator: **Dr. K. Veeramani**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Self-Respect – A Unique and Great Tool of Social and Human Liberation – A Historical Analysis | **Prof. Dr. S.S.Sundaram** |
| 2. | 'Cuyamariyatai' – A Link to Ilattamil Resistance Movement? | **Prof. Dr. Peter Schalk** |
| 3. | The Emperor is naked – Considerations on Rationality, Critique and Political Activism | **Dr. Chr. Unrau** |

*Tea break: 11.00 a.m. – 11.25 a.m.*

## PAPER SESSION - II

Time: 11.30 a.m. – 1.30 p.m. Moderator: **Dr. Soma Ilangovan**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 4. | Rationalism in India through the Ages | **Sven Wortmann** |
| 5. | The Constitution of the Body Politic – An Essay on the Spirit of European Political Ideas | **Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Leithold** |
| 6. | Self Respect and Humanity | **Rev. Fr. Dr. S.J.Emmanuel** |
| 7. | Doctrine of Self-Respect – Humanist Outlook of Periyar | **Dr. D. Jeyakumar** |

*Lunch Break: 1.30 p.m. – 2.25 p.m.*

DAY 2

## PAPER SESSION - III

Time: 2.30 p.m. – 4.00 p.m. Moderator: **Dr. Lakshman Tamil**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 8. | Periyar and Women Empowerment | **Dr. Saroja Ilangovan** |
| 9. | Periyar Self-Respect Movement – The Instrument for Social Change | **Prof. Dr. S. Devadoss** |
| 10. | Atheist Philosophers: F. Nietzsche and Periyar E.V. Ramasamy – A Comparative Analysis | **V. Kumaresan** |

*Tea break: 4.00 p.m. – 4.25 p.m.*

## INTERACTIVE SESSION

*(Proceedings in Tamil & English)*

Time : 4.30 p.m. – 6.00 p.m.
President : **Dr. K. Veeramani,** President, Dravidar Kazhagam
Initiation by : Kavignar **Kali. Poonkundran,** Vice President, Dravidar Kazhagam
Speech by : Kavignar **Latharani** Periyar Library, Kuwait
Topic of Interaction : **Social Revolution – Implementation of Resolutions – First Madras Provincial Self-Respect Conference since 1929**

*(Delegates will discuss and deliberate)*

**Saturday - 29th July, 2017**

## PAPER SESSION - IV

Time: 9.30 a.m. – 11.00 a.m. Moderator: **Prof. Dr. Ulrike Niklas**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 11. | Periyar and Self-Respect - An Indomitable Impact in Indian History | **Advocate A. Arulmozhi** |
| 12. | Impact of Self-Respect Movement in Tamil Nadu | **M. Vijayanand** |
| 13. | Social Justice | **Olivannan Gopalakrishnan** |

*Tea Break: 11.00 a.m. – 11.25 a.m.*

## PAPER SESSION - V

Time: 11.30 a.m. - 1.00 p.m. Moderator: **Mr. Michael Selvanayagam**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 14. | Gender Exploitation in South India and the Rise of the Self-Respect Movement | **Latharani Poongavanam** |
| 15. | Students and Self Respect | **A.Kalaiselvan** |

DAY 3

***Review of Papers***
***International Essay Competition - Announcement of Winners***
***Closing Session***

*Lunch Break: 1.00 p.m. – 1.40 p.m.*

## Conferment of K.Veeramani Award for Social Justice

Time : 1.45 p.m. – 3.15 p.m.

Welcome Address by : **Dr. Lakshman Tamil,**
Dallas, Texas, USA

Award Presentation by : **Dr. Soma Ilangovan,**
President, Periyar International, USA

Conferment of Award to : **Hon'ble Michael Selvanayagam**
Deputy Mayor, Croydon Municipal Corporation,
United Kingdom.

Felicitation by : **Dr. K. Veeramani,**
Chancellor, Periyar Maniammai University.
Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu, India

*Tea : 3.15 p.m. – 3.40 p.m.*

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Working President

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25th July 2017

## Message of Greetings

As a dedicated disciple of the Self-Respect Movement in Tamil Nadu, India, I consider it as my solemn duty to greet the "International Conference on Periyar Self-Respect Movement" to be held between 27th July and 29th July, 2017 at the University of Cologne, Germany, to celebrate the 91st Anniversary of Self-Respect Movement founded in 1926. It is with great pride and commitment that we, both the Dravidar Kazhagam (DK) and Dravidar Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), have been tirelessly spearheading the Self-Respect of the crores of people in India and we have been advancing successfully as the torch bearers of the ideology propagated by our Great and Visionary leader Thanthai Periyar in India.

Some of the salient resolutions passed in the conference of Self-Respect Movement, 1929 were implemented in letter and spirit by our leader Dr. Kalaignar M. Karunanidhi, when he was the Chief Minister of the State of Tamil Nadu and the people of India are largely benefitted by the social justice principle of the Dravidian Movement. Women empowerment is one of the ideals close to the heart of the Self-Respect Movement and equal property rights were conferred on women, which is a very precious and far-reaching legislation enacted by the DMK Government of Tamil Nadu – distinct and front-line state in India. It is the launch-pad of social revolution in the history of empowerment of women in India.

I am really happy to see the topics for discussion in these three day conference as it is going to throw sufficient light on the historic awakening shaped by the Self-Respect Movement in the field of Social Justice, Self-Respect and Women Empowerment in our Country. I am sure that these ideals will also be very close to the hearts of millions of people living in Germany and this conference will play a key role as a guide and thesaurus to the student community as they are the future architects of any nation.

I wish a grand success of this very important conference which is going to occupy a significant place in the pages of the book of Self-Respect and Dravidian Movement launched by out Leader Thanthai Periyar – fittingly followed by Dr. K. Veeramani, the President of Dravidar Kazhagam on the one hand and Dr. Kalaignar, the President of Dravidar Munnetra Kazhagam on the other hand.

With regards

Yours Sincerely,

**(M. K. STALIN)**

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Prof. **K.M. KADER MOHIDEEN**, Ex.M.P.
National President


25.07.2017

## Message of Greetings

We are in receipt of your kind invitation to international conference on Periyar Self Respect Movement at University of Cologne, Germany on 27, 28 & 29 July 2017.

We heartily thank you and the organizer of the conference and we wish this historic conference a very grand success.

We, the people of Tamil Nadu feel very proud that Periyar who was a great revolutionary reformer is now honored internationally. He was indeed a magnificent humanist, a rare rationalist and an extraordinary personality.

The Self-Respect Movement of Periyar has freed people from ignorance, Superstition and dark ritualism.

He was a legendary leader in this service of public. We wish the conference to spread Periyar's ideals far and wide.

We also congratulate the organizer of the conference for having instituted an Award for Social Justice in the name of K. Veeramani, the true disciple of Periyar.

In Tamil Nadu public service Veeramani is universally hailed and acknowledged as the Ambassador of Social Justice. In fact we should thank the organizer of the conference and your goodself for instituting the K.Veeramani Award for Social Justice.

We convey our good wishes and greetings to one and all the participants this Periyar international conference.

Thanking you

With regards

Yours sincerly

**Prof K.M.KADER MOHIDEEN** Ex.M.P.
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26th July 2017

## Message of Greetings

Vanakkam. We are extremely glad to know that you have been invited to participate in the lnternational Conference on Periyar Self Respect Movement being held at the prestigious university of Cologne, Germany. We consider it our privilege to send our best wishes to you.

The Self-Respect Movement started and led by Thanthai Periyar with the singular objective of removing social inequality has made an indelible impact not only in Tamil Nadu, but also in other parts of the globe. Propagating the philosophy of Self Respect, the Movement continues to be the Beacon light of the socially suppressed in their onward journey to social justice.

This lnternational Conference meets at a very significant juncture when the global society is witnessing rampant social oppression, acute gender discriminations and human rights violations. ln all these ills that afflict the society, the sections of people relegated to the lowest stage of the social hierarchy are the worst victims.

The conference assumes its importance in this background. We are sure that there will be rich contribution of scholarly papers on topics of relevance. We wish there are discussions on the current global situation, the barbaric capitalist attack that accentuates the social deprivation further.

We are sure that you will make an emphatic impression with your presentation. We wish you all success in your endeavor. We wish the conference a tremendous success. Not just social reform, a social revolution is the need of the hour. This conference should foster the newer and greater spirits to build a new society.

We wish you a safe journey and pleasant stay there.

Thank you

With best regards

(R. Mutharasan)

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நாள்: 26.07.2017

26th July 2017

## Message of Greetings

I am very happy to learn that Periyar Self-Respect Movement Conference is going to take place in Germany on 27, 28 and 29th July. That the International Conference of Self-Respect Movement under the chairmanship of Asiriyar Veeramani is going to take place in the same Germany where Periyar toured and propagated the principles of Self-Respect in 1932, eighty five years ago, is a triumph for Periyar's dynamic concept.

Besides, it is the immeasurable achievement of Asiriyar K. Veermani to have nurtured the Movement of Periyar after his time and have taken it forward around the globe. That the thoughts of Periyar have been translated into Deutsch language is a historic fact that would imbibe the sense of Self-Respect among the people of various lands including Europe.

The fact that the whole world hails the thoughts of Periyar, as foreseen by Poet Pavendar is a matter of pride for all of us.

On behalf of Viduthalai Chiruthaigal I wish grand success to this global conference which confirms that Thanthai Periyar, the Sun of Reason, shines forth in the like of global thinkers who have revolutionalised the world.

Yours

(Thol. Thirumavalavan)

# International Conference at Cologne, Germany

## Historical First Social Mission Momentum on Globalizing Periyar Mission



Periyar International, United States of America, by way of commemorating the 91st Anniversary of Self-Respect Movement, founded in 1926, organized the International Conference on Periyar Self-Respect Movement at Cologne, Germany on 27, 28 & 29 July 2017. The three day conference proceedings were held at University of Cologne, 'Alte Botanik' Gyrhofstr. 15 Horsaa XXXI.

**Inauguration – 27th July 2017**

On 27th July 2017, the inaugural session of the conference commenced by 4.30 p.m. The session was presided over by Dr. K. Veeramani, Chancellor, Periyar Maniammai University, Vallam, Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu, India. The conference was inaugurated by Hon'ble Michael Selvanayagam, Deputy Mayor, London Borough of Croydon, England. Prof. Dr. Ulrike Niklas, Chairperson, Periyar International, Germany Chapter, welcomed the delegates, observers and other audience.

**Book - Release**

The significant part of the conference viz. Book-Release was held in the inaugural session. Of the FIVE books released TWO were in German language viz. *Gott und Mensch* (Translation of the Tamil version of 'God



*The main block of Cologne University, Germany*



*Dr. Ulrike Niklas*



*Dr. K. Veermani*



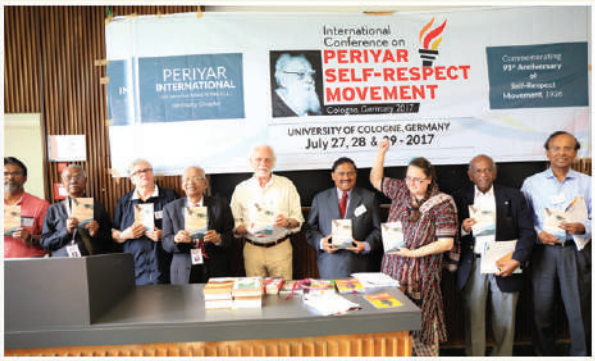
*Michael Selvanayagam*



*Dr. Soma. Ilangovan*

and Man' by Thanthai Periyar) and *Periyar E.V. Ramasamy – Eine Kurz biographie* (Translation of Periyar E.V. Ramasamy – Biographical Sketch) and THREE books in English viz. *'Periyar Self-Respect'* by Prof. A. Ayyasamy, *'Inscriptions at Periyar Memorial'* and *'Periyar Self-Respect Movement'*– Compilation of Articles, published in 'Revolt' (1928 & 1929). The German version of God and Man was released by Prof. Dr. Ulrike Niklas and the first copy of it was received by Ph.D. research scholar Christian Kothe and Periyar E.V. Ramasamy-Biographical Sketch (German Version) was released by Dr. K. Veeramani and the first copy was received by Dr. Peter Schalk, Professor of Uppsala University, Sweden. The English book, 'Inscription at Periyar Memorial' was released by Dr. S. Prinuthal Selvi, Treasurer, Dravidar Kazhagam and received by Dr. Christine Unrau, Co-Head of Research Unit 2, "Global Cultural Conflicts and Transcultural Co-operation", Centre of Global Co-operation Research, Duisburg, Germany. Poet Kali. Poonkundran released the book, 'Periyar SelfRespect' which was received by Prof. emeritus Dr. Dieter B. Kapp of University of Cologne and Dr. Wolfgang Leidhold, Chair of Political Theory and History of Ideas, Faculty of Management, Economics and Social Sciences, University of Cologne. The book 'Periyar Self-Respect Movement' was released by Dr. Siddhanandam Sadhasivam, Maryland, USA, and received by the Self-

**Release of**




*'Gott und Mensch'*



*'Periyar E.V. Ramasamy – Eine Kurzbiographie'*




*'Periyar Self-Respect'*




*'Inscriptions at Periyar Memorial'*

Respect Marriage couple Ragulan-Olivia. The German Versions – 'God and Man' was translated by Ms. Cludia Weber and 'Periyar E.V. Ramasamy – Biographical Sketch' was translated by Mr. Sven Wortmann. Both the translators were felicitated by Dr. K. Veeramani. Subsequent to the book release, Dr. Soma Ilangovan, President, Periyar International, USA, under whose auspices the conference was organized spoke. Dr. Siddhanandam Sadhasivam, Maryland, USA delivered his lecture. With that the first day proceedings of the conference were over.

**Second Day – 28th July 2017**

The second day proceedings were commenced with the research paper presentation, which was held in FIVE sessions. The first session was moderated by Dr. K.Veeramani, Chancellor, Periyar Maniammai University, Vallam, Thanjavur, India. Dr. S.S.Sundaram, Professor and Head of the Department of Indian History, Madras University, presented the Paper, *'Self-Respect – A unique and great tool of Social and Human Liberation – A Historical Analysis.'* Dr. Peter Schalk, Professor, History of Religions, Uppsala University, Sweden presented his paper, *'Cuyamariyatai' – A Link to Ilattamil Resistance Movement?* The paper '*The Emperor is naked. – Considerations on Rationality, Critique and Political Activism*' was presented by Dr. Christine Unrau, Co-Head of Research, Unit-2, 'Global Cultural Conflicts and Transcultural Cooperation', Duisburg, Germany.

The second session of paper presentation was moderated by Dr. Soma Ilangovan,




*Release of 'Periyar Self-Respect Movement'*




*Dr.K.Veeramani felicitates German Scholars cum Translators - Sven Wortmann and Claudia Weber*




*Dr. Ulrike Niklas, felicitated*



*Self Respectful S. Ganesan, 92 years old, the eldest delegate of the Conference, felicitated*

Director, Periyar International, United States of America. Mr. Sven Wortmann, Institute for Indology and Tamil Studies, University of Cologne, presented the paper *'Rationalism in India through the Ages'*.

Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Leidhold, Chair of Political Theory & History of Ideas, University of Cologne, Germany presented his paper, *'The Constitution of the Body Politic – An Essay on the Spirit of European and Political Ideas'*. Rev. Fr. Dr. S.J. Emmanuel presented a paper on *'Self Respect and Humanity'*, Dr. D. Jeyakumar, Assistant Professor, Centre of Excellence for Periyar Thought, Periyar Maniammai University presented his research paper, *'Doctrine of Self-Respect – Humanist Outlook of Periyar'*.

In the afternoon, Paper Session –III was moderated by Dr. Lakshman Tamil, Dallas, Texas, USA. Dr. Saroja Ilangovan from United States of America presented a paper on *Periyar and Women Empowerment*. Prof. Dr. S. Devadoss, Department of Management Studies and Humanities Periyar Maniammai University, Thanjavur, India presented his paper, *'Periyar Self-Respect Movement – The Instrument for Social Change'*. Mr. V.Kumaresan, Secretary – External Relations, Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of Management Studies, Periyar Maniammai University, Thanjavur, presented his comparative study, *'Atheist Philosophers: F. Nietzsche and Periyar E.V. Ramasamy – A Comparative Analysis'*.

In the evening an interactive session was held, the deliberations of which were bilingual –





*Section of the dignitaries and the delegates*

Tamil and English. The topic of interaction was *'Social Revolution – Transformation of Resolutions – First Madras Provincial Self-Respect Conference since 1929'*. The session was presided over by Dr. Dr.K.Veeramani, President, Dravidar Kazhagam. The interactive session was initiated by Kavignar Kali. Poonkundran, Vice President Dravidar Kazhagam. Many delegates interacted. Poet Latharani, Periyar Library, Kuwait spoke.

**Third Day 29th July 2017**

The fourth session of paper presentation was moderated by Prof. Dr. Ulrike Niklas, Chair person, Periyar International, Germany Chapter. Advocate A. Arulmozhi, Propaganda Secretary of Dravidar Kazhagam presented the paper, *'Periyar and Self-Respect - An Indomitable Impact in Indian History'*. M. Vijayanand, Ph.D. Research Scholar, Centre of Excellence for Periyar Thought, Periyar Maniammai University presented the paper, 'Impact of Self-Respect Movement in South India.' The final session of paper presentation was moderated by Mr. Michael Selvanayagam, Deputy Mayor of London Borough of Croydon, England. Ms. Latharani Poongavanan, Ph.D. Research Scholar of Madras University, presented her paper, *'Gender Exploitation in South India and the Rise of the Self-Respect Movement'*. Mr. P. Kalaiselvan, retired Head Master of Government Higher Secondary Schools, Tamil Nadu presented the paper, *'Students and Self Respect'*. In every paper presentation, the audience raised questions and sought clarifications on the paper, presented. All the paper presentation sessions were signified by the interaction between the presenter and the audience and deliberations took place effectively which made the sessions interesting and informative. Overall review of all the papers took place, the summation of which were compiled.

**International Essay Competition**

Periyar International, USA, conducted an International Essay Competition for youths while organizing the conference. Essays were invited on one of the topics - ***Women Empowerment, Self-Respect Movement and The Benefits Realised and Periyar Humanism and the Future of Humanity*** and youngsters in the age group of 14-32 years were allowed to contribute their essays. Cash award of USD 500 for the First Prize, USD 300 for the Second prize and USD 200 for the Third Prize were announced at the initial stage itself. Nearly 35 essays were received from all the states of India. Essays were scrutinized and winners were selected.

**Announcement of the Winners**

The Winners of the competition were announced by Dr. Soma Ilangovan, President,

Periyar International, USA. Dr. Priyadharshini Rajendran, Medical practitioner Tamil Nadu won the first prize (USD 500). S. Udayakumar, Software Engineer, Madras secured the second prize (USD 300) and a student of Periyar College of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Bhavadharini, was selected for third prize (USD 200). Besides, a student from Delhi, Diya Chauhan who is studying VIII Standard was awarded the Consolation Prize of USD 100. The prize amounts were sent to the respective winners. Besides, certificates were also sent to the winners. Rest of the competitors were issued with Certificate of Participation along with a momento of the book **'Collected works of PERIYAR E.V.R'.** The winners of the competition were announced and their photographs were projected at the conference. The list of all the competitors were read out.

**RESOLUTION**

The following resolution was passed at the conference.

***While there is wide realization that Periyar Thoughts have become a humanist, Self-Respect way of living. We resolve to globalize this philosophy for living with dignity and equality. This conference unanimously decides to implement the stated resolution by organizing Biennial International Conferences in different parts of the world.***

***The next conference will be held in the United States of America in 2019.***

**Valediction**

The three day conference concluded with the address of the dignitaries and delegates. All the student audience and observers were given opportunities to speak on Periyar, the outcome of the conference and the future contributions to be made by them for the cause of 'Globalizing Periyar Mission'. The valedictory address was delivered by Dr. K. Veeramani, who leads the Self-Respect and Rationalist Movement founded by Periyar, facing the challenges ahead and tackling them with the strategic approach. When the historic international conference on Periyar Self-Respect Movement was concluded all the dignitaries, delegates and observers were energized with inputs to continue their services as propagandists for the noble cause of Globalizing Periyar Mission.

**Conferment of K. Veeramani Award for Social Justice**

Periyar International, USA, instituted a social justice award in 1996 and named it after Dr. K. Veeramani. *K. Veeramani Award for Social Justice* is being conferred every year to a social, political service leader who contributes significantly for the cause of Social Justice. The function for the conferment of K. Veeramani Award for Social Justice for the year 2016 was held at the Universityof Cologne, Germany on 29th August 2017. The award was presented by Dr. Soma.Ilangovan, President, Periyar International, USA, to Hon'ble Michael Selvanayagam. Dr. Soma Ilangovan delivered felicitation address after the conferment of the Award. Mr. Michael Selvanayagam delivered the benevolent address after being conferred with the Award. Dr. K. Veeramani felicitated the Awardee and Mrs. MohanaVeeramani presented a momento. Dr. K. Veeramani delivered a lecture on Social Justice and the challenges which were tackled during the past and to be faced in the future. The award conferment function was held for the fourth time outside India next to Republic of Singapore, Kuwait (United Arab Emirates) and Rangoon (Myanmar). For the year 2016, the Award was conferred at Germany and the Awardee belongs to England. This varied holding of Award conferment reveals the global perspective on the institution of the Award for the cause of Social Justice.

Compiled by : **nietzsche**

# Periyar Self-Respect

## A Universal Philosophy



**Dr. K.Veeramani**

President, Dravidar Kazhagam

*(The following are the excerpts of the presidential address, delivered by Dr.K.Veeramani, President, Dravidar Kazhagam at the inaugural session of the International Conference on Periyar Self-Respect Movement at the University of Cologne, Germany on 27th July, 2017)*

Periyar thoughts are not confined to any particular society or concerned only about to lift a particular section of any society. He never considered anybody as enemy, social, political or economic. His enemies are - first ignorance, second superstition and the third indignity; that is how Periyar developed his thoughts. Fortunately, Periyar did not enter the portals of college or university. Had he been a student, his sharp intellect would not have made him an original thinker. He never feared anything. When he was addressing a college in

Periyar's Self-Respect emanates from the concept of equality and equal opportunities. From equality, Periyar went another step. Society could be transformed only through 'education'. Education is instrumental for societal change, that too a silent revolution.

Tamil Nadu, I was accompanying him. The students were very anxious to hear about him. Throughout the life, he was youthful, because he always spent his time only with youths and not with the elderly. Like a brimming youth he was telling very casually, "Don't believe anybody; any leader; any ideas, without thinking, without analysis and without using your reason." Immediately a student stood up and asked, "Are we to believe you or not?" With his sharp intellect and with very bold acceptance of his limited base, Periyar said, "Don't believe my words either." Every one of the audience laughed and clapped. "Do what your reason says." Analyse with your acumen of reasoning. Today there are people who eulogise my services; they praise me like anything. Despite these deeds, I received brick bats and was subject of being thrown with chappals in public life. I am not ashamed of it; nor am I happy about it." Periyar boldly and plainly said, "After a hundred years, there will be some people who will come forward and announce new philosophy like Self-Respect and will say that there was one reactionary person called 'Ramasamy'. More and more ideas must shape the society. What is modern today may not be modern tomorrow. It will be outdated. So we will have to change our mind and keep ourselves open-minded," thus answered Periyar.

Periyar Movement has got a very unique term, "Self-Respect". We have to take the philosophy of Self-Respect to the next and younger generation by organising conferences like this. One may feel that this conference is being held in a small hall and there is no large gathering.

When Neil Armstrong landed on the moon, he said, "*These steps are very small for man but it is leap forward in future for the mankind*". In the conference the audience are small but the delegates have come from United States of America and many European countries like Great Britain. It is not the quantity that is important. Periyar was concerned more with quality. We have people here qualified to disseminate the message of Periyar.

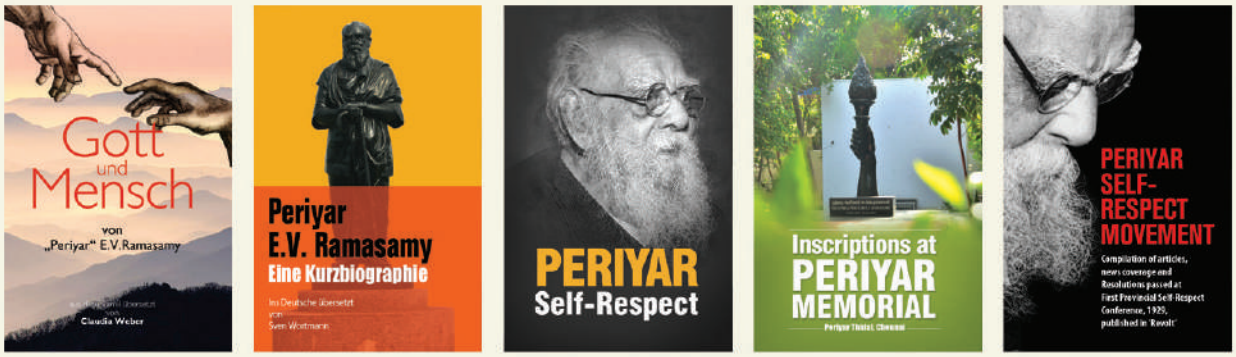
**What is Self-Respect?**

Periyar was a free thinker. His ideas are applicable to anywhere in the world, and not confined to anyone particular community or area. The revolutionary poet of Tamil, Bharathidasan says,

மண்டைச் சுரப்பை உலகு தொழும்

The whole world would follow the ideas of Periyar in future. The world belongs not to the religious people or superstitious people but to science and scientifically tempered people.

Now the world has progressed well in the IT front and the usages of email, whatsapp etc. have become popular and routine. Had these scientific inventions were in use long ago, when Sita eloped with Ravana, the whereabouts of Sita would have been known




*Books, released at the Conference*

to Rama and within a few minutes she would have been released. The necessity of 'Ramayana' would not have arisen at all! No help from Monkey King would have been sought! None of the rishis whatever may be their efficacy and even the omnipotent and omnipresent god was not aware of these inventions. Even today in India, the gods are very badly in need of video conferencing. All the festivals are being brought under video conferencing. All these scientific tools are used to spread unscientific ideas.

In India, the former Prime Minister V.P.Singh who was the guardian of Social Justice never met Periyar. But he eulogised Periyar at the Parliamentary proceedings and admitted that he was following the footsteps of Periyar. That was why he implemented the recommendations of Mandal commission for the uplift of backward class people of the country.

He was invited to the celebration of the Anniversary of Self-Respect Movement in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. He very aptly defined by asking, "What is Self-Respect?"He himself explained, "I spit on the super computer, will it react? Super computer can offer many advantageous and useful services. It can interpret data very quickly which man cannot do within that short span. That is the efficacy of super computer. But however valuable or costly the super computer may be, if you spit on it, will it react?" V.P.Singh addressed the audience, "My dear friends and brothers, suppose if I spit on you, spit on your face, what you will do?" People were taken aback. He continued, "Immediately you will spit on me, you will react. That is Self-Respect. Self-Respect is nothing but philosophy of human dignity."

When Self-Respect is being questioned, somebody's self-dignity is questioned; only the Self-Respect is, the way out to restore it.

My dear friends, this conference is very timely. Periyar believed in human dignity basically. One may have right to live, right to thrive, right to write but if he does not have the right to dignity, it adds insult to the continuously injured, whether a particular community or a man. The only way out is Self-Respect, the philosophy of Periyar. It is not confined to one party. That is very important.

What is the effect of Periyar's philosophy of Self-Respect? It is humanising the human beings. Of course, we are all human beings. Human beings alone are endowed with the power of reasoning freely. No one can restrict such reasoning. When Periyar addressed at Mahabodhi in Chennai on Buddhism, one person praised Periyar as the Buddha of the 20th century; Periyar was for empowerment of women, for eradication of caste system, for eradication of superstitions. Periyar

> One may have right to live, right to thrive, right to write but if he does not have the right to dignity, it adds insult to the continuously injured, whether a particular community or a man. The only way out is Self-Respect, the philosophy of Periyar.

immediately replied why should I alone be called Buddha. All people who are rationalists, who use the power of reasoning are Buddhas. The one who uses his 'buddhi', becomes 'Buddha'. You are a Buddha, if you use the reasoning power or use your 'buddhi'. So, all can be Buddhas if they use the power of reasoning.

Basically the philosophy of Self-Respect is needed at this hour. In the name of religion and god, people are fighting like anything; There are rivers of blood. The only answer to solve it is 'Periyar' – Periyar's philosophy of Self-Respect. Even the religious wars from the days of crusade upto what is going on in India today can find their remedy through Periyar's philosophy.

There is no under cover operation in Periyar Movement. There is no place for violence. Periyar was more nonviolent than Gandhi. Periyar never allowed anybody to commit violence. He never allowed anyone to damage public property at the time of conducting agitation. Damage to public order is chaos. If you want to conduct an agitation, you suffer yourself. Don't make other people suffer. That is Self-Respect; empathetic thinking. In all other agitations, they make others suffer.

In those days Self-Respect was adhered to with purpose. "Today in India there may be many movements for people who are denigrated; untouchable, unseeable, sudra. Don't think my movement is concerned only with these social problems. Broadly, my movement is about human equality. I am greatly pained when there is inequality. Discrimination by birth should go; it may be by colour or on some other ground. Half of the population are women. Why should not they enjoy equality? Periyar's Self-Respect emanates from the concept of equality and equal opportunities. From equality, Periyar went another step. Society could be transformed only through 'education'. Education is instrumental for societal change, that too a silent revolution.

In India, B.P.Mandal under whose chairmanship the second backward class commission gave its report said, "Periyar's fight was not in streets but he fought in the minds of the people". Whenever and wherever there is slavery it may be between the upper caste and the lower caste, the high born and the low born, the rich and the poor, the needy people who are suffering – there may be discrimination on economic front or political field, why are half of the population viz. womenfolk subjugated? Why should they be social slaves? They were not treated equally. Equal opportunities were not available to them.

In 1929, the Madras Provincial First Self-Respect Conference was convened by Periyar and many progressive resolutions were passed for equality of women and their

"I don't believe in the transfer of power but transformation of power-Transfer of power from the privileged to the sections which are so far denied of it and the transformation of power to the low from high."



empowerment. Women should be treated on par with men on all fields of employment. People of those days wondered how it could be possible for women to hold a post equally with men. Today many women have become judges, doctors, have assumed prime political positions, which was not dreamt of in those days. Women today are well equipped in all fields. They are even more than equal. Periyar was sagacious about women liberation.

The philosophy of Self-Respect is applicable to all human beings without any discrimination among them. Besides, Periyar fought for women not only for their liberation for equality but to empower them too. Periyar thought and acted forward beyond equality i.e. towards empowerment.

Periyar did not bother about politics. He said, "I don't believe in the transfer of power but transformation of power-Transfer of power from the privileged to the sections which are so far denied of it and the transformation of power to the low from high."

The disciples of Periyar took the political path, fought elections and assumed power in the State within the span of 10 years under the leadership of late lamented Anna. Anna dedicated his government to his mentor Periyar, by bringing legislation and executive orders to translate the ideas of Periyar into practice with legal sanctity. One such translation was legalising Self-respect marriages commenced by Periyar in 1928 by bring an exclusive legislation for it in 1968. When I came to Cologne, Germany in 2014, I conducted one Self-Respect marriage between Raghulan and Olivia. It was devoid of religious rituals and priest. Self-Respect Marriage treats both the bride and bridegroom as equal partners in their life without an iota of subjugation. The couple live happily today. Periyar's philosophy has yielded its fruits in Germany too. And naturally it will bear fruits throughout the world, transcending the territorial, linguistic, political, economic or social boundaries. The ultimate goal is humanism, and ensuring Self-Respect to all humans will hasten the path to reach the goal. This conference has paved the way and facilitated the move.

***Let the fructification of Periyar's philosophy of Self-Respect come faster!***

***Let humanism flourish among humans!***

# Inaugural Address



## Respectful Michael Selvanayagam

Deputy Mayor, London Borough of Croydon, England, UK

I am not an expert on Periyarism to the core; but I have met Periyar twice in my life time. I was attracted very much by his honesty, sincerity and telling the people truth without any fear.

He was a man and vanguard leader. His weapon for defence was reading, writing and speaking everyday and everywhere. Thanthai Periyar was the first and foremost humanist whoever stood in the way of good human living and happiness, he fought against it. That made him to confront the well established social order and hierarchy. It is wonder how a person brought up in a very rich and strict religious environment felt the pain of the common man. Many reported that after Periyar, the movement would die. They were terribly disappointed. Annai Maniammai and the living legend Dr.K.Veeramani, President, Dravidar Kazhagam, gave everything for the movement and ideology to grow worldwide.

The ideology of Periyar is alive and well and growing worldwide. So many educational institutions were established primarily to help women from cradle to Ph.Ds in Engineering and Pharmacy and other fields. Today the women educated in Periyar Educational Institutions are all over the world, in United Kingdom, United State of America, Singapore, Australia and other countries. They not only came out with a degree but a well balanced view of the world and courage and conditions in their hearts. Most of the developments happened after Periyar and after Maniammai. Their dreams were fulfilled multi fold!

Today we are embarking on the new world. The world is getting smaller and the social media with what Periyar predicted a long time ago is the cell phone that everyone has. It is our duty to spread the gospel of Periyar to one and all around the world to live with equality, justice and happiness. Let this conference be the first step and let us all carry the torch forward!

# FELICITATION

## Dr. Soma Ilangovan,

***Director, Periyar International, USA***



*Dr. Soma. Ilangovan*



*Dr. Sithananadam Sadhasivam*

UNESCO on June 27th1970 gave a citation. "Periyar the Prophet of the New Age, the Socrates of South East Asia, Father of the social reform movement and arch enemy of ignorance; superstitions; meaningless customs and base manners".

The prophets of the various religions spoke of what god told them! But Periyar the only Prophet after Buddha told men what he learned from watching with his own eyes and thinking with his own brain! Life's experience with knowledge gained gave Buddha and Periyar the courage of their convictions to tell their fellow men and women how to live a better life filled with happiness for themselves and others.

His basic ideology is Humanism. His Humanism consists of ideas that all are equal, man should have self respect and one should treat others as he or she would like to be treated by others. The imbedded inequality on the basis of caste was cruel and evil. The basics of varna supposedly created by god himself who could not change it even if he wanted to was the most inhuman statement made to men and women. The inherent slavery of women as only objects to serve men for their needs puts half the population in an inhuman life.

His search to eradicate these led him to where religious leaders were hiding that is behind god who was created by these same people to master the rest of the population. Self respect does not completely translates what he called *"suya mariathai"* in Tamil. It means more. It means not only respect but a certain pride and self confidence that no one is superior. We will embark on spreading these ideologies around the world only for one reason and that is , it is our duty to society !

We will use the only omnipresent and omnipotent that we know that is the cell phone and the social media and the likes of which that the world is communicating freely today. We will invite young people all over on these principles of living together in the noble way of equality and justice. We will conduct International conferences and who knows may be one day have our own Noble Prize for Social Justice and even an Olympic Competition. Whoever or the team that has done the best to carry the torch of Social Justice in the most competitive way will win!

The Social Media's power to spread the message will be utilized well and the Humanism which will be the only "ism" that will survive will bring happiness to one and all!

Long live Periyar!

## Dr. Sithanandam Sadhasivam,

**Maryland, USA**

I am happy to be among the like minded intellectuals and friends. The German philosopher spoke that there is no God, optimistically much to the opposition of the religious fundamentalist still harboured on it and told bodly, 'God is dead'. It is the myth and the time will tell, that the body of the dead god is removed. He was hopeful optimistic god is dead and rationalism is the future and humanism flourishes. In this background, think over Periyar. Periyar was the first to break the myth and proclaimed that everyone is equal, there is no god and don't waste time.

Paper Presentations

# "Self Respect" as a unique and greatest tool of Social liberation; A Historical Analysis



Prof. **S.S.SUNDARAM**
Professor & Head
Department of Indian History
University of Madras, Chennai
Tamil Nadu, India

Periyar E.V.R's Self Respect movement has been a unique, unprecedented and unparalleled one in history, which is now acknowledged as an indisputable fact. This unique movement of social emancipation was launched by Periyar during the colonial era when the nationalist movement was gaining momentum through the Gandhian programme of action.

**Why Periyar joined the Indian National Congress**

Periyar's social priorities were explicit from the very beginning In the early phase, he reposed faith in Gandhi, who was transforming Indian National Congress into a mass movement by adopting trans-political issues too to mobilize popular support. Till 1925 Periyar was hoping to get Gandhi's concurrence for his social agenda.

Gandhi gained a saintly image among the people through the Satyagraha (passive resistance) programme in South Africa. He was projected as a noble crusader of freedom by South African Indians who were exclusively non-Brahmins, or Sudra-Panchamas in the social order. These indentured labour or coolies were not adherents of the Sanatana social order.

Almost all the coolies who were transported to distant British settlements (such as South Africa, West Indies) were from lower castes, especially from the Sudras and Panchamas. So when Mohandass Karamchand Gandhi took up the case of Indian coolie immigrants in South Africa, no Brahmin or Hindu interests were involved in it. He was protesting racial discrimination in a foreign land, and was demanding equal right and equal dignity for the Indian immigrants. As there was no Brahmin or Savarna, or Brahminism among the South African Indians he had no

> Sense of self-respect would usher in 'yearning for self-respect. The yard stick that would determine 'justice' and 'injustice' in the social order and even in religion and culture, is self-respect of the individuals. Everything that denies individuals their self-respect is 'unjust'. Everything or anything that deprives equitable self-esteem to either individuals or group of individuals is injustice.

occasion to take up the issue of caste or Varna discrimination there. And Gandhi himself was a non-Brahmin.

The success of non-Brahmin leader/elite in South Africa raised hopes and expectations among the non-Brahmin masses in India. Gandhi too, after his return to India in 1915, took up issues concerning peasants (Indigo issues), workers (Ahmedabad Mill workers issue), women and Panchamas. He could appeal to the masses. The Congress Movement, which was dwindling, and scattering under the Brahmanical leadership and Brahmanical programme, was forced to adopt Gandhi's leadership so as to ensure the survival of the organization. Gandhi's Non-cooperation, and (Development) Nirman programmes enthused the non-Brahmin masses. That was how Periyar came to repose faith in Gandhi and Gandhian programmes. Periyar hoped that the Congress under Gandhi's surveillance would adopt his social agenda; The Vaikom Satyagraha and the subsequent Cheranmadevi Gurukula issues caused Periyar's disillusionment with Gandhi. He expected much from Gandhi, a non-Brahmin leader.

Gandhi expressed himself as an admirer of Brahmanical order, Brahmanical varnasrama, and was more keen on not merely appeasing but even placating the dominant Brahmin interests. The final rejection of his demand for 'proportional representation' by the provincial (Kanchipuram) Congress under a non-Brahmin President (Thiru.Vi-Ka) due to the Brahmin stranglehold over the provincial Congress furthered Periyar's disillusionment with the Congress. Having lost hopes in Gandhi and the Brahmin controlled Congress, Periyar decided to quit Congress, and designed his own movement to realize his cherished ideals. This was a momentous decision with far-reaching effects. Thus emerged the dawn of the 'Self-Respect Movement'.

**What does the 'Self-Respect' imply**

Periyar named his new movement as "Self Respect Movement". The name 'self respect' is self explanatory as well as indicative of the core programme of the proposed movement. The traditions, cultures, religions, scriptures, mythologies– everything insist on respecting the traditional orders, and subjecting the 'self' to a subordinate position, and the individual is denied the right to question anything that were derived or inherited from the past. Faith, loyalty and subservience mark the intellectual and social levels. These subservient position is legitimized through religions, gods, scriptures and cultures, which indoctrinate the individuals as well as the society to have faith in fatalism and cycle of births; the net effect of this traditionalism was that the masses, who were subjected to all kinds of deprivations, denials and indignities, were made to reconcile themselves to this unjust



*Maha Deva Temple, Vaikom, Kerala, outside of which Agitation was launched in 1924.*

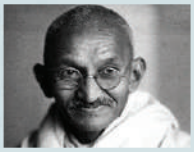
status quo, and any skepticism or attempt to defy the statusquo would incur the wrath of the 'Almighty', the creator of this order. It is this individual and social mindset (psyche) that restrains the quest for a change in the order. The fear of gods, the faith in temples and scriptures and recognition of the priestly Brahmins as ultimate divine authorities in all human affairs, make the victims (masses, Sudra-Panchamas and women) slaves in the existing order. Such slavery is sanctified and glorified. Unless and until the victims become aware of this deplorable inhuman condition that they have been suffering for countless generations and unless and until they begin to distinguish slavery from freedom, indignities from dignities, superstition from reason, pseudo discipline from self respect, dishonour from honour, doles from rights, this despicable social order would continue, and this Sudra-Panchamas and women would continue to be victims of exploitation by traditionally dominant minorities. Hence 'disabusing the mindset of the ignorant and superstitious masses' becomes a prerequisite for social revolution. Sense of self-respect would usher in 'yearning for self-respect. The yard stick that would determine 'justice' and 'injustice' in the social order and even in religion and culture, is self-respect of the individuals. Everything that denies individuals their self-respect is 'unjust'. Everything or anything that deprives equitable self-esteem to either individuals or group of individuals is injustice.

The nationalist leaders at that time were in revivalist mood. They were harping on India's past glory, India's past traditions, institutions, cultures, religions and philosophies. For them rejuvenating the 'Sanatana order' with minimum alterations would do. Caste-reforms and not abolition of caste was in their supplementary agenda, because their primary objective was 'transfer of power' and not social change.

In an age when interpreting, justifying and glorifying the native past and the remnants of the past (heritage) were viewed as indispensable expressions of patriotism and nationalism, Periyar's 'Self-Respect' dared to question everything emanating from the past. Nothing



*Periyar E.V.R.*



*Mahatma Gandhi*

could be kept beyond rational analysis, nothing of the past and 'heritage' could be exempted from the requirements of universal and equitable human values and human dignity. There could not be patriotism and nationalism at the cost of human values. A new nation could not be built on obsolete social order, and a new social order could not be based on old values which sanctified discriminations and degradations. For Periyar, past was the source of present ills. Hence not only rejecting every faith, every value, every institution, every tradition from the past, but rejecting the advocates and defenders of the past also becomes an inevitable part of the 'self-respect' programme; denunciation of Gandhi and Indian National Congress of that time comes under this programme.

While other thinkers, and progressive movements were clamouring for a 'better treatment' for women, Periyar and his Self Respect Movement alone were crusading for 'Equal rights and Equal dignity for women'. Hither too all religions and all traditions were treating women as sub-human, and as instruments of men, whereby denying women a human status, human individuality and human dignity. One sided morals were insisted both as divine will and tradition. Much emphasis was made on 'pathibhakthi' (devotion to husband). Chastity (Karpu) was to be an indispensable character of women. Her responsibility was to serve her husband relentlessly and to bequeath children for him. There was no emphasis on chastity for men. Even the great 'Tirukural' which Periyar himself acclaimed as a common secular code for entire humanity made no comment on polygamy; it confined itself to restraining men from coveting other's wives *(Piran Manai nokka Peranmai)*. Periyar would not concur with such male centred discriminatory morals and disciplines. He advocated common code and equal responsibility for both men and women. Hence he had no admiration for 'Sita' 'Kannagi' 'Nalayini' and such others, as these characters were created and projected to justify and sustain the male dictated value system and man-woman relations. According to him, the 'self' in woman and 'human dignity for woman' cannot be compromised on any pretext-the past was not fair to women. The future must have women on equal footing with men. They should have the same freedoms that were legitimately allowed for men. Instead of women subordination, Periyar's 'self respect' advocated 'equal partnership' of women and men in all human activities.

Periyar's crusade for 'equal rights and equal dignity' for women is unparalleled and unprecedented in History. His movement succeeded in stirring the conscience of women not only of elite category but also of proletarian masses, and in disabusing their mind from false values of the past. Self Respect movement commenced a unique cultural revolution, which has been successfully liberating the mindset of the victims of an unjust order, especially the tradition bound women mindset. This great process is still on, it has had significant success; but it is still an unfinished revolution. At a time when the Hindutva revivalism is raising its ugly head, all those who have faith in fairness and justice in human arrangements and activities, have to rejuvenate the 'Self-Respect Movement'. Historical wrongs have to be ended through the 'liberation of mind'. ■

Paper Presentations

# 'Cuyamariyatai' - A Link to Ilatamil Resistance Movement?



**Prof. Peter Schalk**
History of Religions,
Uppsala University, Sweden

I have been asked whether there is a link between the Dravidian Movement and the Eelam Tamil Resistance Movement exemplified by the concept of *tanmānam* or cuyamariyātai. It is a question, not a statement because there is no explicit reference to Pēriyār in the publications signed by Vēluppillai Pirapākaran. He has referred to several others as a model for himself, for example Subash Chandra Bose. However, when meeting combatants of the pulikalin iyakkam, there may be some who have heard Vēluppillai Pirapākaran speaking about Pēriyār in conversations. I have met a combatant who was a *pōrāli* for 12 years until the end in 2009. He told me that he had seen references to *tanmānam* in the urais (speeches) of Vēluppillai Pirapākaran, but he did not find the name of Pēriyār in these written sources. Then, the combatant said that

"While Vēluppillai Pirapākaran was chatting with us like a brother, he told us about his view on Dravidam, Periyar, Periyarism and some of the leaders who promoted Pēriyār's ideology.

"He also told us about his relationship with some of the Tamil Nadu leaders who accept Pēriyār. He also told us many times that his resistance comes from self-respect and we should re-establish Tamil self-respect and dignity. He strongly agreed with Pēriyār's rational argument, but never mentioned about him."

**The combatant continued:**

"We never thought about Pēriyār, because we had a program and our focus was only to build a separate state in of Eelam. We did not bother about ideologies such



"... He also told us many times that his resistance comes from self-respect and we should re-establish Tamil self-respect and dignity. He strongly agreed with Periyar's rational argument, but never mentioned about him."

as Periyarism or Marxism, but I deeply believe that Vēluppillai Pirapākaran would have liked to introduce Periyarism and his ideology in a liberated Tamil Eelam. However, all is gone."

After this witnessing by a combatant, I think that the question above is reasonable to put. Moreover, the convergence between the two movements are so strong that we cannot but put this question. The use of *tanmānam* byVēluppillai Pirapākaran is not just a coincidence; it is part of a convergence of the Dravidian Movement in Tamil Nadu, especially of the vidutalai iyakkam of Pēriyār, and the aspirations of the Eelam Tamil Resistance Movement. There is a parallel and similar development in the history of ideas, a parallel that at certain stages changed into convergence.

The response to Pēriyār's vidutalaiiyakkam was the vidutalaippulikalin iyakkam (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam). The response to the Pēriyār movement's journal vidutalai was the vidutalaip pulikal of the vidutalai iyakkam. Both movements fought caste and dowry and the discrimination of women. Both introduced a non-religious wedding and a non-religious funeral, replacing cremation with burial.

At one point, I am not that sure that there is a complete convergence. This point is the anti-religiousness of Pēriyār and the non-religiousness of Vēluppillai Pirapākaran. It seems that Vēluppillai Pirapākaran was diplomatic when talking about religion not to hurt the feelings of the makkal iyakkam.

At one point there was a radical divergence: Pēriyār never recommended or used armed struggle as a method to reach the ultimate aim.

What was the ultimate aim? They had a similar aim, an independent Tamil Nadu and an independent Tamil Eelam respectively, but for a Greater Tamil Nadu, which embraced Tamil Eelam too, Vēluppillai Pirapākaran was not enthusiastic.

Let us now look at some *cintanaikal* by Vēluppillai Pirapākaran about the theme: resistance comes from self-respect.

**Cintanai 12:5.** "If we do not achieve independence, we must live as slaves, lose self-respect (*tanmānam*) and live with bowed head, live in permanent fear and insecurity, and gradually die out. Therefore, there is no other way for us than fight for independence (cutantiram)."

Cintanai 10:3. "The Tamil who lived [formerly] as a slave bowing his head to blow after blow and living with shame can now raise his head with self-respect (*tanmānattudan*). This is to the credit of the greatness of the conduct of our liberation movement (*vidutalaiiyakkattaiyē*)."

**Cintanai 56:6.** "We carry arms for the sake of dharma, for self-respect (*tanmānattikkāka*)and independence. People understand our journey for the aim and our lofty abnegation/abandonment of life (*unnatatiyākankalum*) for that aim. That is why they embrace us." ■

# Paper Presentations - Excerpts



## Dr. Christine Unrau,

**Co-Head of Research, Unit-2, 'Global Cultural Conflicts and Transcultural Co-operation', Duisburg, Germany :**

People must undertake the process of unmasking the illusion prevailing in the society without any progressive component in it. History of mythology has to be considered in that line. Unmasking the religion on rational path will eliminate the belief in God. Unmasking is nothing but detecting the truth. Socrates, Plato and Aristotle discharged their social responsibility in that line. The commitment that one is involved in detecting the truth will give confidence in life and courage to know their own capacity. Process of unmasking will lead to the state of liberation distinguishing truth from illusion.



## Sven Wortmann,

**Research Scholar, Institute for Indology and Tamil Studies, University of Cologne, Germany :**

The culture of India is deeply religious and spiritual during the past and at the present. But the idea of non religions treats people equally. Non religion is not the majority tradition. Now, I will touch upon the non-religious culture of India. Non-religion means rationalism, the earlier term is in negative in trend and the subsequent one is positive. I want to distinguish non religious rationalism from religious belief with some form of rationalism in it. Martin Luther belongs to the second category. In Indian context, atheism does not mean denial of god. It is against the prescriptions of rituals in Vedas which prop up the privilege for the brahminism. Atheism is against the Brahminical hegemony. To strengthen the position of Brahmins, the twice born sect, Manu Smrithi was accepted as the code for the rulers. Even Buddhism fought against such rituals and social exclusion among the people. The meaning of rationalism is different in the East compared to the rationalism which is of recent origin of pre-modern period.



## Rev. Fr. Dr. S.J. Emmanuel

**Sri Lankan Tamil Catholic priest, activist and President of the Global Tamil Forum :**

I started to admire Periyar some 7 years back for his sincerity and honesty to fight against inhumanity and irrationalism. Even among the bishops and priests, the caste is practised today. This caste discrimination has to be fought as a matter of common sense and consciousness. Having served in exile for 20 years for the diaspora Tamils, I have come to a conclusion that Periyar has to be resurrected in our midst.

# Doctrine of Self-Respect Humanist Outlook of Periyar!



Dr. **D.Jayakumar**
Asst.Professor, Centre of Excellence for Periyar Thought, Periyar Maniammai University, Thanjavur (India)

**Introduction**

Periyar's doctrine of Self-Respect sprouted from his humanist outlook. His ideas constitute humanism par excellence. He always insisted that reason should be our guiding light. He adopted scientific approach to deal with social problems.

**About Periyar**

Periyar was a brave warrior who fought till the end of his life for the cause of transforming the social order on egalitarian basis, instilling the spirit and values of self-respect, rationalism and humanism. He used all his resources – material, mental and moral –in the service of the people, particularly the underprivileged like socially and educationally deprived sections and women. He had left behind the whole lot of his wealth, in the form of public charities, to be used for propagating principles of rationalism, humanism and self-respect, and to promote the cause of social justice and social transformation.

Periyar is essentially an iconoclast, rationalist, agnostic and a revolutionary thinker.

Bharathidasan, the revolutionary poet of Tamil Nadu, portrays Periyar as:

*"The ripened fruit in service;*

*A Serene beard cascades on his broad chest;*

*The world bows before his intellectual radiance;*

*A panther emerges out of the den of his mind"*

- And that is Periyar!

**Doctrines of Self –Respect**

The philosophy of Self-Respect is known to the world. The cause and effect theory is accepted by the wise. The human being seeks reasons for everything in life. He has begun the research of nature, a life with ignorance is considered as a slave's life. This is the doctrine of Self Respect.

Freedom and Self -Respect are closely related. Those who are for freedom today are neglecting the Self -Respect and human dignity of man. This is absurd. Without Self-Respect there will be no good of freedom.

**Genesis of Self- Respect Movement**

Periyar quit the Indian National Congress in 1925, started a Self -Respect Movement that

was an exclusively social Movement, to fight for the rights of non-Brahmins as a whole. His movement stood for spreading education, abolition of caste system, empowerment of the weaker sections including women and promotion of scientific temper, humanism and sprit of inquiry.

Periyar had declared that, "To reform the Dravidians and help them to evolve a civilized and intellectual society like those of all other peoples in the world is my primary endeavour which I myself have taken upon my shoulders as my way of life and to which I have dedicated myself whole heartedly". Periyar started the Self -Respect movement, with the objectives of:

- Striving for establishment of a casteless society based on complete equality of these masses.
- The eradication of all social evils and freeing the society from the shackles of superstitions and blind faith in god and religion.
- The movement was also to strive and promote educational and employment opportunities to women in all spheres as in the case of man.
- The movement was also to popularize Self-Respect marriages, conducted without any priests and religious rituals and also to propagate rationalism.
- The obtaining of communal justice by way for reservations in educational institutions and in government jobs to the vast majority of the masses viz, non-Brahmins was one important objective. Periyar made it clear that such communal justice should be rendered as long as castes exist.

Periyar said that:

- God must be abolished.
- Religion including caste must be abolished.
- Congress must be abolished.
- Gandhism must be abolished.
- Brahminism must be abolished.

In 1929 Periyar held the first Self-Respect provincial conference at Chengleput. Several resolutions, such as eradication of untouchability, encouraging inter-caste marriages, boycott of purohits dropping the caste suffixes to personal names, ensuring equality to women with property rights, widow-remarriages etc., were passed at the conference.

**Periyar's Perception**

Decide for yourselves as to what you should think of those who say there is god, that he is the preserver of justice and that, he is the protector of all, even after seeing that the practice of untouchability, in the form of man being banned from human sight and contact,

> Freedom and Self -Respect are closely related. Those who are for freedom today are neglecting the Self -Respect and human dignity of man. This is absurd. Without Self-Respect there will be no good of freedom.



"I said that such a god that would feel by the mere touch of an untouchable does not deserve to be at the temple. Such an idol should be removed to be used for washing clothes".

from walking in the streets, from entering the temples and from drawing water from a tank, is rampant in a land:

At the time of Vaikom agitation propaganda, on 1924 Periyar criticised the evil practice of untouchability.

"I said that such a god that would feel by the mere touch of an untouchable does not deserve to be at the temple. Such an idol should be removed to be used for washing clothes".

Birds, animals, worms, which are considered to be devoid of rationalism, do not create castes, differences as high and low, in their own species. But man considered to be a rational being is suffering from all these because of religion.

Amongst dogs you don't have a brahmin dog and pariah (untouchable) dog. Among donkeys and monkeys we do not find such distinctions. But amongst men you have Why, is it not because of our religion?

What differentiates man from animal? Man has six senses (the sixth one being the power of reasoning) while the animal has five senses Man is considered superior to animal only because of this specific faculty of "reasoning". This is an undisputed fact accepted by one and all. Periyar looked at this phenomenon from different angle.

Periyar pointed out quiet correctly that man's greatness depend on how he uses his sixth sense. A sparrow builds a nest, but it builds it for its own use. Man too builds a house for his own use; but he does not stop there! He does build houses for others too! In human society one man helps another and there begins the concern and love for other fellow humans which we call "humanism".

**Periyar's Visit to Foreign Countries**

Periyar had the opportunity of visiting foreign countries both in East and in the West. During 1929-30, he toured in Singapore and Malaya, in 1931 he spent eleven months in Europe visiting among other countries the U.S.S.R, France and England, in 1954 he went to Burma to attend the 2500th anniversary celebration of Buddha.

Periyar visited the federated Malayan states in Dec.1929 and propagated widely the principles of Self-Respect movement there. He visited Ceylon also. Between Dec 1931 and Nov. 1932 Periyar visited Egypt, Greece, Turkey, Germany, Russia, France, Portugal and England and studied the system of their Governments and also the mode of living of the peoples of those countries.

On 20.06.1932 Periyar addressed a mammoth rally of more than 50000 workers in Macks borough Lakepark in London in which the British Labour Leader Mr.Lansburry took part. After returning to India, Periyar formulated the famous socialist manifesto and began propagating it. Several district conferences




*Magazines, Published by Periyar*

which were held subsequently supported the socialist programmes.

**Relentless Crusader**

Periyar's parting from the Congress and the formation of the Self-Respect movement by him. He sharpened his focus on eradication of the caste-system, abolition of social inequality and promotion of equality of opportunities. His platform was one of Social Justice, equality of opportunities, humanism and dignity of man. He intensified his demand for communal representation in education and employment.

Periyar waged a relentless war against the caste system. Especially against the practice of untouchability and all its manifestations in the society. Temple entry, resistance to discrimination on the basis of caste in hotels and restaurants, protest against certain provisions in the Constitution and attempt at burning the Constitution. Inter-caste marriage, priesthood on the basis of preparation and not by birth, were some of the positive measures of which he pleaded and fought throughout his life. His struggle for the cause of women has perhaps few parallels in the history of women's liberation in India.

During the period between 1925 and 1935, Periyar started a number of Journals: *Kudi Arasu* in 1925, *Dravidan* in 1927, *Revolt* (English) in 1928. *Puratchi* in 1933, *Pagutharivu* (weekly and daily) in 1934, *Viduthalai* in 1935, to carry his message to the people.

After 50-years of tireless striving, hard struggle and massive educational efforts through speeches, writings and demonstrations, he left behind him a society vastly different from the one he inherited. More alert, more questioning, less gullible, better educated, more modern and in general closer to take off point for a state of living that would be richer in all respects.

**Honour conferred on Periyar**

The Government of India released a commemorative stamp in his centenary year in 1978 and a special cover to mark the 125th Birth



Anniversary in 2003. The Citation of stamp contains: "He waged a relentless battle against orthodoxy, superstition, social discrimination and many other evils till the very end of his life."

From the Book "INDIA 1000 to 2000" Courtesy Express publications. "Periyar was Maker of the Millennium" the challenge rose in Tamil Country like a whirlwind spearheaded by an Iconoclast who questioned the Vedas and the gods as well. The political perspective of Tamil Nadu, and with it much of India, were altered with a seeming finality by Periyar.

An Award was given to Periyar on 1970 by the UNESCO. The citation hailed Periyar as:

***The prophet of the new age, The Socrates of South East Asia;***

***Father of the social reform movement; The arch enemy of Ignorance, superstitions, meaningless customs and base manners.***

It will be interesting for all of us to know that it may be the first occasion in the annals of the world that an atheist leader was honoured and his services were appreciated by the State Government, Union Government of a country, and also International United Nations Organisations.

**Conclusion**

In the history of the resurgence of India in the twentieth century, Periyar would come to be acknowledged as a pioneer and architect of the broad measures for equalisation of opportunities in education and employment. His objective and ambition were essentially one of modernising the society and bringing it in tune with the ideals and values relevant to the times. ■

# Paper Presentations - Excerpts



## Dr. Wolfgang Leidhold

**Chair of Political Theory & History of Ideas, University of Cologne, Germany :**

Experience with truth. In a society, dogmas and ideology are paramount. It is a closed society. The secondary consensus in the society is liberty, secularism, tolerance and mutual respect. It is an open society. If these societies are transferred to modernizing it becomes totalitarian society. This is the body politic fundamentals of the society. There were belief that Kingdom discended from heaven and sacred were the laws that ruled the people. Later it was based on the competition, who occupies the chair first i.e. survival of the fittest based on mighty power. Every twenty six years it is likely to change or get diluted leading to change. It is the majority mandate that will rule the rooster. The Consitution is secondary to it.

Paper Presentations

# Periyar and Women Empowerment



Dr. **Saroja Ilangovan**, USA

During the Aangam age who were the woman? What was their status in the society? Many woman studied well and there were scholars. Out of 473 recognised poets of Sangam age nearly 30 poets were women. Women were enjoying equality and respect. They enjoyed love and life in equal measures as men. There was no slavery of woman and there is no symbolic ornament like 'thali' to be tied around the neck of bride by bridegroom. Later due to the alien cultural invasion of the Aryans – Brahminical elements, the status of women went down. The book of rules viz. Manusmiruthi, is the most anti-women book, written ever. It advocated for the girls to get married at the age of 8. Essentially women were considered as the property of men, women were meant for homely work, pleasure and progeny. They were treated as baby making machines. 10 per cent of women folk were widows and most of them were below the age of 10. Widow remarriage was taboo and child marriage was the popular practice. In 1840s Jothi ba Phule and his wife Savithribai Phule started schools for the exclusive education of women in Maharashtra.

Later 1920s Periyar came to public life and struggled for the cause of women and their education. When the question of women rights and its details of demand was posed to Periyar, he replied in simple term and eloquently, *"Nothing special for women! It is sufficient that whatever rights available to men must be made available to women also"*. There is no better and effective demand for woman rights than this which no others have expressed except Periyar. Periyar fought for woman education not for employment but for social change.

Periyar advocated family planning not only to control population growth, it allowed more freedom to women. The title of 'Periyar' conferred on E.V. Ramasamy itself remains as a testimony for his contribution to women liberation through education and empowerment, by being honoured by the leaders of the women conference held in Chennai in 1938. ■

# SELF-RESPECT MOVEMENT THE INSTRUMENT FOR SOCIAL CHANGE



Prof. Dr. **S. Devadoss**
Periyar Maniammai University,
Vallam, Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu, India.

During the Freedom Struggle three important persons entered the political scenes in British India. At the request of Gopala Krishna Gokhale, Mahathma Gandhi was introduced to Indian issues in 1915 and he took the leadership of Indian National congress in 1920 which was spearheading the freedom movement; Periyar E.V. Ramasamy on the persuasion of C. Rajagopalachari joined the Indian National Congress in 1919 resigning the chairmanship of Erode (Tamil Nadu) Municipality; Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was invited to testify before the South Borough Committee for making of Government of India Act, 1919 in which he argued for creating separate electorate for untouchables. All the three contemporaries became very popular leaders and changed the course of socio-political history of India. While Mahatma Gandhi was escalating his struggle for political freedom, Periyar E.V. Ramasamy and Dr. Ambedkar were waging battle for emancipating the shudras and untouchables from the shackles of "varnashramadharma". Brahmin "Varnashramadharma" advocates the doctrine of graded inequality based on birth.

"Historically they have been the most inveterate enemy of the servile classes (Sudras and the Untouchables) who together constitute about 80 percent of total Hindu population. If the common man belonging to the servile classes in India is today so fallen, so degraded, so devoid of hope and ambition, it is entirely due to the Brahmins and their philosophy. Inequality is the official doctrine of Brahmanism and the suppression of the lower classes aspiring to equality has been looked upon by them and carried out by them without remorse as their bounded duty. India is the only country where the intellectual class, namely the Brahmins not only made education their monopoly but declared acquisition of education by the lower classes a crime"1.

The educated non-Brahmin intellectuals joined together to oppose and shatter the Brahminical hegemony and monopoly and found their expression in the formation of South Indian Liberal Federation in 1916 in Madras presidency which was popularly known as Justice Party. "Social justice seeks to remove social disability by birth resulting in social and economic inequality. It has a vital social content intended to promote public welfare. It not only

provides for a just society, but also removes all patent sources of disunity and disharmony. Thus social justice is of great value in providing a stable society and in securing the unity of India"2

The Madras Province witnessed hectic political events during the period between 1919 and 1924 in which Periyar E.V. Ramasamy took very active part in Indian National Congress under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. However Periyar remained fundamentally a man filled with the sense of scientific temper, rationalism and social justice. Infuriated by the discrimination shown by V.V.S Iyer a Brahmin care-taker to non-Brahmin students in his *"gurukulam"* at Cheranmadevi (near Tirunelveli), Periyar declined giving funds to that "gurukulam" which was run with the financial aid from the Congress Party. Periyar was of strong belief that through communal representation in the Government the non brahmin communities can progress socially. Being a strong subscriber to the principles of Social Justice, Periyar had been trying unsuccessfully to move a resolution in the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee sessions held in 1920, 1922, 1923 and 1924 seeking communal representations for non-Brahmins in provincial Government. When his attempt in 1925 in the Kanchipuram session also proved futile, Periyar walked out of conference and Congress party with his supporters. By the time Periyar had earned the title of "Vaikkom Hero" after his heroic victory in the struggle for right for the shudras to walk along the streets of a temple at Vaikkom (Kerala).

As a precursor to the formation of self respect movement, Periyar in 1925 edited a Tamil Weakly *"KUDI ARASU"* ('The Republic') to propagate the principles of self respect, to create awareness and awakening in the Dravidian people against the practice of un-touchability, prejudices, discrimination, inequality, superstition etc.,

In 1925, Periyar formed the Self–Respect Movement, with the objectives of establishing an egalitarian society based on equality. The main agenda of the movement was eradication of all social evils, emancipation of the society from the shackles of superstitions and blind faith in god and religion and freeing women from servitude. The Self Respect Movement started encouraging and popularizing Self-Respect Marriages conducted without Brahmin priests and religious rituals and propagating rationalism. The obtaining of communal justice by way of reservations in educational institutions and in Government jobs to the vast majority of the masses viz, the non-Brahmins was one important objective of Self-Respect Movement.



The Self - Respect Movement made the youths to realize that a marriage is a subject concerning a young man and a young woman and that other consideration brought in by the parents, societal norms etc. were totally irrelevant.

When we consider the different spheres of Periyar's work and the extent of his influence in those spheres we feel that he has achieved what great medical researchers have done in medicine. The work of a hundred or two hundred years has been compressed into a period of twenty or thirty years by this great reformer and our society has benefited from it.

"Periyar organized three Self Respect Provincial Conferences in Feb 1929 (Chengalpattu), May 1930 (Erode) and August 1931 (Virudhunagar). In the First Self- Respect Provincial Conference held on 17,18 February, 1929 at Chengalpet several revolutionary resolutions, such as eradication of untouchability, encouraging inter-caste marriages, boycott of brahmin purohits, dropping the caste suffixes to personal names, ensuring equality to women with property rights, widow-remarriage etc, were passed at the conference which were instrumental in radicalizing the society and bringing out a social change".

Besides propagating the principles of self Respect Movement by addressing meetings and conferences throughout Tamil Nadu Periyar, remained connected with the people with his writings in his Tamil news papers *'Kudi Arasu'* *'Viduthalai'* and English Weekly *'Revolt'* and monthly *'The Modern Rationalist'* and Tamil monthly *'Unmai'* edited by him. In 1952 Periyar established and registered the *"Periyar Self Respect Propaganda Institution"* for the propagation of his rationalist ideas. For propagating his ideals he published several low priced books and periodicals.

"It has been the strategy and approach of Periyar to "lend his support to the State Governments in power in all their social welfare measures, such as the taking over the control of the properties of the temples and charitable endowments and administering them and the abolition of the Devadasi system under which young girls form a particular non-Brahmin community were "consecrated" for services in temples in the name of god leading to prostitution".

Owing to the uncompromised positions Periyar took in the public life and through hard struggles and massive educational efforts such as speeches, writings and demonstrations, the society has largely inherited his philosophy and imbibed the sense of Self Respect in their approach. Instilling the sense of self respect in everyone in the Tamil society is the biggest change Periyar's Self - Respect Movement brought in. The caste system though not abolished by law for which Periyar made a mammoth agitation by burning the parts of Constitution, the practice of untouchability has been abolished by a constitutional provision and its practice in any form is made punishable. People in Tamil Nadu stopped suffixing their caste name in their personal names. Periyar popularized and promoted the inter caste marriages which he considered a tool to annihilate caste system. The Self - Respect Movement made the youths to realize that a marriage is a subject concerning a young man and a young woman and that other consideration brought in by the parents, societal norms etc. were totally irrelevant. Since the inception of the Self Respect Movement, lakhs of weddings between people of different castes and without Brahmin priests have taken

place as a result of the influence of Self- Respect Movement.

"It was Periyar's conviction that in matters of education and employment there should be no difference between men and women. There was a time when no girl opted for engineering studies. It could be said that no parent thought of sending daughter to an engineering college. Today we find lots of young women in engineering and medical colleges. We should attribute this progress chiefly to Periyar's propaganda. Even in 1931 Self-Respect Conference held at Virudunagar, Periyar stated that everybody concerned should see that women entered the police and military services. Probably owing to his influence the State governments have started employing women also in police department and the Centre has started giving them posts in the army. For a few years Periyar was engaged in strenuous propaganda against child marriage and now the government has fixed the minimum age for the marriage of girls to be eighteen. His propaganda for the equality of the sexes has resulted in securing for girls right over ancestral property along with the male children. Considering the growth in the percentage of Indian population, some of the State governments are encouraging birth control now. Periyar had the foresight to anticipate this problem even fifty years ago. He advised people to limit the birth of children so that both men and women could give their best to society. In one of the meetings he even wondered why the scientists should not think of producing test tube babies7.

The priesthood has been the exclusive domain of Brahmins by which they enslaved the Shudras. Periyar waged a continuous battle to break this system and give the right to anyone who aspires to take up the job of priest without any bar. This has come to reality when the Government of Tamil Nadu in its order dated 13.03.2007 ordered that people all castes people without any discriminations can become priests of the temples managed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowment Department.

The best person to assess the impact of Periyar's services to Indian society is Periyar's own lieutenant, C.N. Annadurai. In one of his works he says: "Periyar has achieved in twenty years what revolutionists and reformers in other countries have taken centuries to achieve. Sometimes very effective medicines are compressed and presented in capsule form. When we consider the different spheres of Periyar's work and the extent of his influence in those spheres we feel that he has achieved what great medical researchers have done in medicine. The work of a hundred or two hundred years has been compressed into a period of twenty or thirty years by this great reformer and our society has benefited from it. He devoted all his time and energy not merely to give the common man a sense of Self-Respect, but also to fight vigorously against all the evils found in our society. The people in the lower strata of society have achieved respectability and acceptance in the society whatever be their social and caste background. Fourty four years after the demise of the leader, the Dravidian movement is as strong as ever. The Dravidar Kazhagam under the leadership of Dr.K.Veeramani continues to move forward in accomplishing the tasks that Periyar envisaged. ■

# Atheist Philosophers : Periyar E.V. Ramasamy and Friedrich F. Nietzsche - A Comparative Analysis

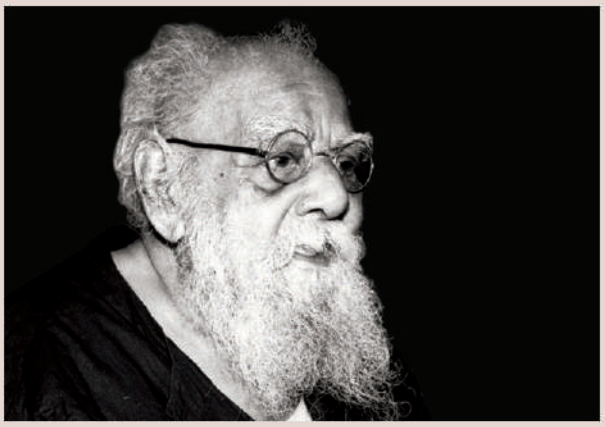

## V. Kumaresan



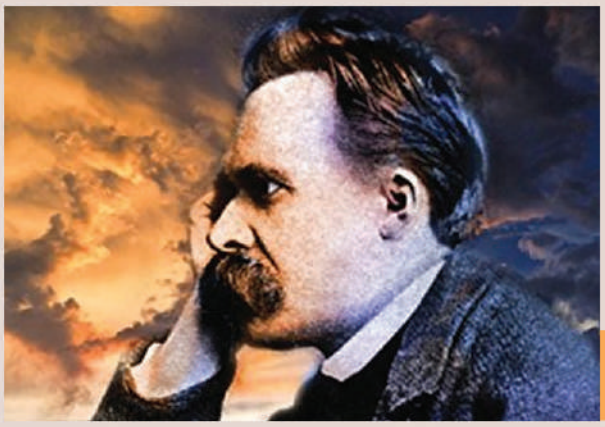
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The primitive humans were unable to find out the cause and effects of many things and happenings surrounding them. Due to the massiveness and aggressiveness of certain happenings, they were afraid of them without applying their minds on such happenings. From this beginning point of ignorance and lack of spirit of inquiry, he started to consider them as over powerful. At one stage, he started to praise them and later worshipped them. Many of the routine living comforts in human life were considered the sanction made to him by the so called 'super power'. In course of generation, it was believed that request to the superpower in the name of prayer facilitated living comforts and happiness. Such requests by humans became prayer. The so called 'super power' was infused with 'divinity' as if it is superior to humans. Though humanity is universal, the living style and habits of humans differ from place to place according to the climatic and environmental conditions. Humans started to design the 'super power' as 'God' and carved out an 'idol' for worship. Belief

Periyar, as original thinker understood the organisational necessity and acted accordingly to continue the propaganda of his atheist ideas even after his life. Nietzsche was an individual fighter for the cause of atheism through his lectures and writings. Periyar, besides, adhered to the organisational activities for the cause.



*Periyar E.V.Ramasamy*



*Friedrich F. Nietzsche*

and faith became cultural habits of humans. Belief and faith without the spirit of inquiry led to a social system, which became religion. By strengthening the belief and faith in God, religion became the cultural identity of humans.

However, side by side with such development, certain progressive minds, questioned during the course of history, such belief and faith in their own way. The spirit of enquiry was considered as anathema to religious belief and faith. Lack of spirit of enquiry is the breeding point of exploitation and subjugation among humans. Revolt against such exploitation exploded according to the degree of exploitation. These two different ideas of humans evolved as two schools of thoughts throughout the world.

The non-belief in god remained potentially in many and got formulated in the form of philosophy for its universal application. Such non-belief in god became a handling tool or disfiguring weapon depending upon the degree of negative aspects created and sustained through the belief in god. The non-belief in god in its potential form was named as agnosticism. The kinetic deliveries of non-belief were termed atheism or rationalism. History has witnessed many non-believers in god.

Here is the comparative analysis of two great atheist philosophers – Periyar E.V. Ramasamy (India) and Friedrich F. Nietzsche (Germany). They represented and strengthened the atheist philosophy of eastern world and western world respectively.

**Periyar E.V. Ramasamy** (1879-1973) lived 95 years, educated formally only up to primary level, gained knowledge only through self-study



Periyar opposed more vehemently Brahminism, the cultural trait of oppressive people not only in religious affairs but in social, political and economic fields of the society. No other atheist philosopher has opposed brahmins like Periyar in India.

and experience. He was an original thinker. Despite being hailed and brought up in an orthodox and religious family environment, Periyar E.V.R remained distinctly a free thinker from his boyhood till his demise.

All he learnt through scanning the environment, undergoing experiences and by analysing in his own way was to act against the prevalence of inequalities in the society. He never accepted anyone who lived prior to his period as role model or as teacher. Whenever any revolutionary ideas of others were quoted to him akin to his ideas, Periyar simply said both of them thought in similar lines. Periyar propagated his ideas in the language of common people. They did not orient on scholarly advocacy, but the ideas, propagation and achievements on the advocacy of Periyar became the subject matter of scholars. Later, when he became very respected in the course of his public life, he was invited by many higher educational institutions to address them on his ideas. Many colleges were named after him and many universities were founded in his name. Many research scholars have carried out their studies on Periyar and obtained doctoral and post-doctoral degrees.

For a country like India, Periyar advocated his ideas not as an individual but organizationally with a multitude of followers. His followership strength is not visible numerically but it is in multitude dispersed widespread in the society. In fact, it is a mass movement without any mandatory agenda to enrol for membership for the sake boosting up its strength.

Periyar did not concern about popularity at the cost of his principles. He never stopped his rationalist propaganda for the reason of not being accepted by the listeners. He was committed to the core to the philosophy of Rationalism and Self-Respect. He went to the extent of announcing no one is needed to support my views. I can write; I can compose; I can print and I can read, such a confidence Periyar had on his principles, which he advocated for the progress of humanity.

His definition of revolutionary thoughts and advocacy is unique. Any advocacy based on rationalism, the extent to which it is opposed and not accepted by the contemporaries so much it is progressive and revolutionary. The revolutionaries are transcending many a future generations. They are not confined to the current.

But at the same time Periyar for propagated that his rationalist advocacies not to be permanently applicable for all the times. Change and progress are continuous. Presently, my advocacies may be progressive. I would be happy, if I am quoted after few centuries, by the then populace that, "There lived a person by name E.V.Ramasamy who propagated very retrograde thoughts. I consider such quoting as real success for my propaganda to put anything to rationalist enquiry, arrive at a stage and act according to it. Such was his detachment to his image due to the attachment he exercised over

his advocacy and prolonged propaganda till the end of his life at the age of 95.

**Friedrich F. Nietzsche** (1844-1900) was a staunch atheist. He was a scholarly person. In the west, when god had not created any discrimination of humans by birth as in India, there may not be a necessity to advocate against the belief in god so vehemently. Even today in England, the atheist organisation propagates by displaying the advocacy *"Probably, there is no God"*. But Periyar propagated in piercing tone to change the mindset of people as *"No god; No god; No where's god; One who invented god is fool; One who propagates god is scoundrel; One who worships god is barbarian;* No atheist philosopher had propagated like this against the belief in god. In Germany, Nietzsche appealed to the people in a scholarly way coupled with novelty in *"Thus Spake Zarathutra",* thus.

*"Could it be possible?*

*This old saint in the forest has not yet heard of it, that* **god is dead!**"

Nietzsche was a scholar-writer. He expressed his atheistic ideas in a way, different from others. He did not found any organization to advocate his atheistic ideas during his life time or even by his admirers after his demise. In fact he had expressed, *"He (Myself)* does not want followers and believers." Every individual has to think on their own and act – this is the advocacy. For western environment it may work out. But in India, where there is oppression on the major section of the society in the name of god and religion, individual resistance and revolt may not liberate them. The system of oppression has to be established organisationally to liberate the masses for which atheist organisations have to discharge a lot. Periyar, as original thinker understood the organisational necessity and acted accordingly to continue the propaganda of his atheist ideas even after his life. Nietzsche was an individual fighter for the cause of atheism through his lectures and writings. Periyar, besides, adhered to the organisational activities for the cause.

Religion survives through the intermediaries viz. priests, in between the so called 'god' and the devotee. Once the intermediary role is demolished belief in god cannot last long. Strategically Periyar and Nietzsche attacked the priestly class viz. brahminical priests in temples and in domestic ceremonies and the baptising priests in the church respectively. Nietzsche in *'The Geneology of Morals'* has advocated thus: *"The ideal of the Priests, derives its great power although it is the very harmful ideal in extreme, A will to the end, An ideal of decadence."*

Periyar opposed more vehemently Brahminism, the cultural trait of oppressive people not only in religious affairs but in social, political and economic fields of the society. No other atheist philosopher has opposed brahmins like Periyar in India. The opposition is not individual targeting. It is against the mindset of the oppressors which has very cunningly infiltrated into the society.

Periyar's opposition to god is universal. But when the question of action comes he concentrated against the belief in 'god' that discriminated the people surrounding him. Nietzsche advocated the emergence of superman from man, as evolutionary process. Though he was bold and vehement enough to oppose the priestly class in the society surrounding him, he, without deep knowledge and thinking, has compared the superman with the brahmins of Indian society. It was a very retrograde move from his progressive ideas which he profounded. Except this equating superman with Brahmin, the rest of atheistic ideas were courageously expressed by Nietzsche like Periyar.

Both Periyar and Nietzsche orient themselves on boldness and clear cut expression of atheist philosophy and their ultimate goal was to humanise the human beings by establishing egalitarian society. ■

# Periyar and Self Respect The indomitable impact in Indian history


## A. Arulmozhi



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Historian Romila Thapar in her book *"The Past and the Prejudice"* says, "Indian Society has always been an unchanging society, based on a caste structure, which in turn made it oppressive and averse to any change, or alternatively, that it was an idyllic society characterized by harmony and an absence of social tension-a utopian society; these beliefs are still with us".

In reality, both are not completely false. Indeed, the first theory was the source that created the second belief, to look like the Indian society was living in serenity. But it was not. History exposes that despotism of caste and religion was enforced through the power of the State.

Passing through many centuries, Indian history witnessed the suppression of majority people by a dominant minority section which had the authority to dictate the rules to the rulers. The caste and class merged intrinsically and formed into a four layer structure called "Varansarama Dharma". The priestly caste of 'Brahmins' were at the top, followed by the rulers known as the 'Kshatriyas'. The third class was the 'Vysyas' - the business community; and the fourth class were farmers and other working class people who were named as 'Sudhras'. The fifth and the last section was called 'Avarnastha' or 'Panchama' meaning outcastes. They were not at all included in the caste structure.

In the Indian caste system, the work was divided categorically. The outcastes were born to do menial jobs such as, sweeping all the streets of the villages, washing clothes of the four upper caste people above them, taking care of their cattle and agricultural laboring and worst of all, removing the human waste. All for a meager payment, by way of food grains that was hardly sufficient to meet both ends.

The pride and shame attached to birth did not stop with the caste structure; but it also extended to gender. Women were placed secondary to men in all walks of life. The menial jobs which were done by the

outcastes in the village were done by the women in the family. It may be difficult to accept that in the land of Goddesses, giving birth to a female child is a sin and woe and a woman who delivers only female children deserves to be deserted by her husband. This was the rule of *'Manusmriti'*.

Common rules were introduced by the British Government to punish criminal offences and to enforce civil rights with the notification of the Indian Penal Code in 1860 and the Civil Procedure Code 1908 respectively. Till then the rights to own or possess lands vested only with Brahmins and a few other upper caste communities. Punishments for the same offence committed by different caste people had varied according to the caste of the offender. The Governance of the country was brought under the Government of India Act 1920 so that the 'Srutis' and 'Smrithis' were confined to the personal laws and not allowed to interfere with the rights of the citizens.

In this background, the upsurge of the downtrodden people opened new areas of social change. Voice was raised seeking equality of all people as the lower caste people were not allowed to walk on all public roads nor were they allowed to enter temples and worship gods and goddesses. Right to education and employment was also fought for.

There was a dichotomy between the movements fighting for freedom of the country from the British Rule and freedom of the people of India from ignominies like untouchability, social slavery, subjugation of women and irrational practices. The leaders of

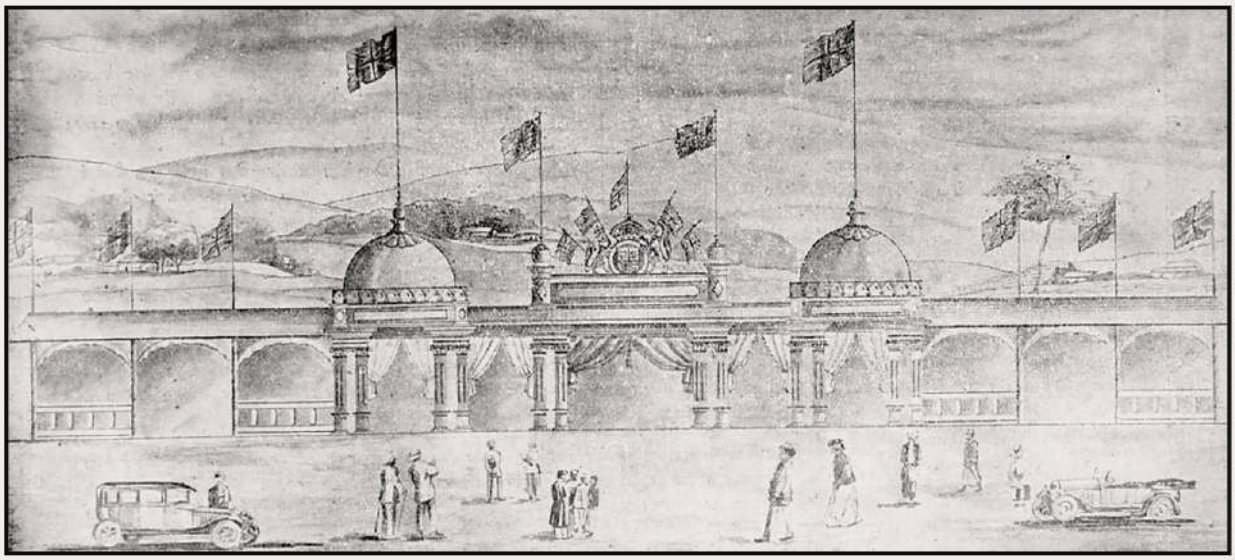


the first category criticized the reformers and leaders of the second category, for prioritizing social changes at the expense of the freedom of the country. But those criticisms never deterred the social reformers from progressing on their march against discrimination. Raja Ram Mohan Rai of Bengal fought against 'Sati' – the practice of burning the wife/wives of a deceased Hindu male along with his corpse in the funeral pyre. Narayana Guru of Kerala fought against the discriminatory treatment meted out to the devotees in temple. Arul Prakasa Vallalar of Tamil Nadu popularly known as Ramalinga Adigalar was a pioneer in this struggle within the religious system.

While all these social reformers chose one specific social cause as their life time mission, one philosopher, one social reformer emerged in Tamil Nadu who combined all the social evils by tracing the links between them and fought against the root of all the evils by invoking the birth right of each and every person, culminating it all in one word – "SELF RESPECT".

His name was E.V.Ramasamy, but he is more famously known as "Periyar" - a title conferred upon him by the women of Tamil Nadu. "Periyar" is a Tamil word which has so many meanings – a genius, a great man and an elderly person, a statesman etc., all of which suited him.

> Periyar's welcome note to the First Self Respect Conference held in 1929 at Chengalpattu, Tamil Nadu is sufficient enough to demonstrate his magnificent approach.... Periyar addressed, 'those who consider themselves as widows or prostitutes are also welcomed to attend the conference'.



*The front elevation paintings of the pandal of Madras Provincial First Self-Respect Conference 1929*

It is exciting to read the life history of Periyar as he started his public life with the Indian National Congress and sincerely followed the policies laid down by its leader Mahatma Gandhi. But Periyar's thoughts lingered on the social inequalities which had to be addressed on a priority basis. Periyar strongly believed and held that without changing the minds of the people, who were inflicting and supporting the inequality among Indians, the freedom from British or any other ruler will not help the people of India. Periyar further stated that without social change, the Sudhras and Panchamas would never see the light of liberty and equality even in independent India.

This thought process and his ambition to achieve equal rights to everyone, irrespective of their caste, religion, language or gender created a conflict of interest for Periyar with the Congress movement. Periyar was driven to the other section of leaders who regarded social reformation as the primary concern. Periyar's defiance to religion started with his fight against caste system since the system was justified as ordained by the Supreme God.

Many decades later, Nobel Laureate and Economist Amartya Sen expressed the same thoughts as Periyar,

"What moves us, reasonably enough is not the realization that the world falls short of being completely just which few of us expect but there are clearly remediable injustices around us which we want to eliminate".

Self respect and rationalism are the constituents of Periyar's ideology. Periyar advocated unbridled use of thinking process, and the right to question anything which claims to be or considered to be supreme. Periyar strongly believed that nothing is unquestionable and nobody can be shunned from the right to life with dignity.

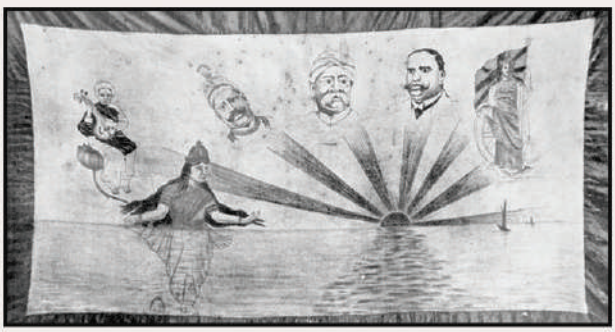
Further, the Father of the Indian Constitution Dr.B.R.Ambedkar, said subordination of women is clubbed with caste. An empowered woman would walk over the caste barriers and choose her life partner which would ultimately endanger the caste system. Therefore, the caste structure and oppression of women were designed to crush them. In order to uphold the purity of the caste, she was given in marriage before attaining puberty or at the earliest age thereafter. She was not allowed to go to school or if at all she was allowed, she should not study in a mixed gender school. University studies were strictly prohibited fearing that she would fall in love with someone from a different caste and elope.

She shall be guarded by her father or husband or son according to her age and marital status. Periyar questioned this subjugation and gave a

clarion call to the women to protest and fight against all forms of subordination. Women responded well to his call and assembled in large numbers to the conferences and public meetings held during 1920s and 1930s in Tamil Nadu.

Periyar's welcome note to the First Self Respect Conference held in 1929 at Chengalpattu, Tamil Nadu is sufficient enough to demonstrate his magnificent approach in extending the invitation to widows and prostitutes. In his choicest words, Periyar addressed them, 'those who consider themselves as widows or prostitutes are also welcomed to attend the conference'.

Periyar analyzed all spheres of life including the customs, language, culture, literature and festivals and exposed the racial and gender discrimination behind them. Periyar provided alternative culture to replace the Brahminical culture which intruded into common man's life through its sanskritised ceremonies.



*The flag of 'Self Respect League', hoisted at the Conference*

Periyar fought for the Self Respect of the languages, and vehemently condemned the claim of the divinity attached to Sanskrit by calling it as Deva Basha - Language of Gods, and insulting the more ancient and rich language Tamil as Neetcha Basha - Language of the lowly grade.

Periyar insisted even the musicians to sing in the mother tongue of the people in Tamil Nadu instead of singing in other languages including Telugu or Sanskrit as that is an onslaught to the self respect of the people who speak Tamil.

"The purpose of any art should be enlightening the people" - Periyar

Periyar introduced a new form of marriage and named it Self Respect Marriage, which was legally approved by the State of Tamil Nadu, by amending the Hindu Marriage Act.



Periyar advocated urbanization, because villages are the bastions for preserving the hierarchy of caste system; but not at all at the cost of depleting natural resources. His dream came true as the oppressed communities moved into urban areas and obtained social status through education and employment.

The unchallengeable achievement of Periyar is that the right to education and reservations in employment achieved by downtrodden people in large scale, who were once prohibited from even entering into the schools.

The right to express and question is the basis of self respect. Periyar proved it throughout his fearless travel with humanity.

The right wing extremists of India are not able to create religious clashes in Tamil Nadu. To combat the growing religious fundamentalism in India, Periyarism is urgently required in the North Indian States. This view has been expressed by the leaders of the other Indian States who uphold social justice and secularism.

Periyar's life gives us a message of boundless thinking; shredding the feeling of hatred against a fellow human being, a group or a section for their belief, faith or practice.

His life as a whole throws light for introspection and human enlightenment because as Periyar said,

***"Self Respect' is the most beautiful and meaningful word which I found from the vocabulary of all dictionaries available in all languages."*** ■

# Role of Self-Respect Movement in South India

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## INTRODUCTION

India is one of the ancient countries which had a very long history. In south India, the Dravidian culture has a wonderful history and depicts excellent humanism among people. The Tamil classic Tirukkural is one of the typical examples. *Purananooru* and *Agananooru* clearly depict people's life dating back to 300 BCE. But, the entry of Aryans through Khyber and Bolan passes changed the history of India. They brought in the mythology of Ramayana and Mahabharata and introduced the brahminical culture as the culture of Hinduism. They also made Indians inactive by saying that everything happening here is because of dharma and karma.

## CASTE-SYSTEM IN INDIA ORIGINS OF THE CASTE SYSTEM

How did this system come about? Early written evidence about the caste system appears in the Vedas, Sanskrit-language texts from as early as 1500 BCE, which form the basis of Hindu scripture. The Rig veda, c. 1700-1100 BCE, rarely mentions caste distinctions, and indicates that social mobility was common. The Bhagavad Gita, however, c. 200 BCE-200 CE, emphasizes the importance of caste. In addition, the "Laws of Manu" or Manusmriti from the same era defines the rights and duties of the four different castes or varnas. Thus, the Hindu caste system began to solidify sometime between 1000 and 200 BCE. (1,2,3,4). Each person is born into a unalterable social status. The four primary castes are: Brahmin, the priests; Kshatriya, warriors and nobility; Vaisya, farmers, traders and artisans; and Shudra, tenant farmers and servants.

## THE UNTOUCHABLES

"Untouchables" were not the lowest caste - they and their descendants were completely out of the caste system. Untouchables were considered

to be so impure that any contact with them by a high caste member would contaminate the other person. The high caste-person would have to bathe and wash his or her clothing immediately. Untouchables could not even eat in the same room as the high caste members. The untouchables performed tasks that no-one else would do, like scavenging, removing animal carcasses, leather-work, or killing rats and other pests. They could not be cremated when they die.

**THE GREAT PERIYAR**

Periyar E. V. Ramasamy was an extraordinary person who worked for social reforms in Dravidian society. He was born on September 17, 1879, in a well to do family. In south India, many social reforms were advocated by him. From his childhood he had been a progressive thinker. At that time when he saw social injustices in religion like caste system, untouchability, inequality, denial of human rights, child marriage, poor status of women, widowhood, idol worship, superstition, etc he wanted to do something to change them.

As the founder of Self-respect movement (1925) and Dravidar Kazhagam (1944), Periyar spread the principles of human dignity, rationalism, gender equality and social justice. It was due to the popular agitation organised by him that the Constitution was amended for the first time in 1951 to provide reservation for the socially and educationally backward classes. He educated people through his writings and speeches to think freely and judge everything



in the light of rational thought, experience and social good. The UNESCO aptly described him as the prophet of the New Age. He endowed all his wealth and public donations for the cause of humanity, creating a Public Charitable Trust. He continued his social work till his last breath on December 24, 1974.

**SELF RESPECT MOVEMENT**

The Self-Respect Movement is a movement with the aim of achieving a society where backward castes have equal human rights, and encouraging backward castes to have self-respect in the context of a caste-based society that considered them to be at lower end of the hierarchy. It was founded in 1925 by E. V. Ramasamy (called Periyar by his devoted followers) in Tamil Nadu, India, against Brahminism. The movement was extremely influential not just in Tamil Nadu, but also overseas in countries with large Tamil populations, such as Malaysia and Singapore. Among the Singapore Indians, groups like the Tamil Reform Association, and leaders like Thamizhavel G. Sarangapani were prominent in promoting the principles of the Self-Respect Movement among the local Tamil population.

Periyar was convinced that if a man developed self respect, he would automatically develop individuality and would refuse to be led by

It was argued by the proponents of self-respect marriage that the then conventional marriages were officiated by Brahmins, who had to be paid for and also the marriage ceremony was in Sanskrit which most people did not understand, and hence were rituals and practices based on blind adherence.

Periyar declared that the Self-Respect Movement alone could be the genuine freedom movement, and political freedom would not be fruitful without individual self-respect. He remarked that the so-called 'Indian freedom fighters' were showing disrespect to self-respect, and this was really an irrational philosophy.

the nose by schemers. One of his most known sayings on Self-Respect is, "we are fit to think of 'self-respect' only when the notion of 'superior' and 'inferior' caste is banished from our land".

Periyar declared that the Self-Respect Movement alone could be the genuine freedom movement, and political freedom would not be fruitful without individual self-respect. He remarked that the so-called 'Indian freedom fighters' were showing disrespect to self-respect, and this was really an irrational philosophy.

**UNTOUCHABLITY**

The First struggle against untouchability and the first human right struggle was Vaikom struggle. On 30th of March 1924, the Kerala provincial congress leaders launched a peaceful struggle for securing right to the untouchables of Travancore native state to walk on the public roads running on the four sides of the Mahadeva temple at Vaikom, in Kerala. All leaders were arrested and put into prison. Immediately the Kerala congress leaders sent an SOS letter and telegrams to Periyar requesting him to go over to Kerala and lead the agitation. Periyar arrived at Vaikom on 14-4-1924 and carried out vigorous propaganda appealing to the untouchables and canvassing their support for Vaikom agitation. That was the first struggle lunched for eradication of untouchability in India. Periyar was arrested and imprisoned.

**SELF RESPECT MARRIAGE**

One of the major sociological changes introduced by the self-respect movement was the self-respect marriage system, whereby marriages were conducted without being officiated by a Brahmin priest. The Self-Respect movement encouraged inter-caste marriages, replacing arranged marriages by love marriages that are not constrained by caste.

It was argued by the proponents of self-respect



*Self Respect Marriage, conducted by Periyar*

marriage that the then conventional marriages were officiated by Brahmins, who had to be paid for and also the marriage ceremony was in Sanskrit which most people did not understand, and hence were rituals and practices based on blind adherence.

Tamil Nadu became the first and only state to legalize Hindu marriages conducted without a Brahmin priest. This was the first Act introduced by C.N. Annadurai when the DMK gained the ruling power in the 1967 Madras assembly elections. The law was passed by the Tamil Nadu Assembly on November 27, 1967. The number of inter-caste and inter-religious marriages have increased in the State as a result of the self-respect movement.

**IN WOMEN WELFARE**

In addition to many of the anti-Caste and Tamil nationalist ideologies of the Self-Respect Movement, it is also widely regarded that the Self-Respect Movement, held as core, deeply feminist values. Gender relationships were actively divorced from Brahminical patriarchy and women's rights over their physical, sexual and reproductive choices were upheld. In Periyar's model of society, women were to be allowed access to contraception and even permanent birth control measures. This came at a time when the broad national discourse on birth control influenced by the thoughts of leaders like Gandhi, was an almost unanimous condemnation of birth control. Women were given the right to choose partners as well as divorce them and remarry. Widowhood was not penalized through religious beliefs.

These ideas attracted several women from all walks of life to the movement like former prostitutes, former devadasis, wage labourers, doctors and teachers. Women in the movement worked on issues most closely affecting womens like advocating prohibition of alcohol, supporting survivors of domestic violence and the anti-temple prostitution (devadasi system). However, these were not the issues they were restricted to.




**TODAY's PEOPLE STATUS IN SOUTH INDIA**

Because of Periyar's work Dravidian movement captured political power in 1967 and till today the Dravidian movement is very active in Tamil Nadu. Even though the caste system and untouchability was practised by people for more than the past 2000 years Now people understand that it is a criminal act, so many inter caste marriage, inter religions marriage are taking place. Child marriages are totally stopped by law, many self respect marriages are held over Tamil Nadu. Many widows got remarried because of social change. All women are getting education and many of them are going to job. Because of the law made by DMK in 1989 and Periyar and his reformation work, all women get share in their ancestral property. It was one of the goals of self -respect movement from 1929.

Today all people enter into all temples and all streets of south India is because of Periyar's work.

Because of him today social justices is maintained in India 50 per cent reservation in job and education for backward castes, scheduled castes and tribal people across India and 69 per cent reservation in job and education for backward caste, scheduled caste people in Tamil Nadu. So many people of our society are getting jobs and education .

**COUNCLUSION**

Even though we have crossed so many social evils in our society we have overcome so many changes and we have reached a modern civilization. For this change Periyar played a vital role. Today Periyar is not with us only his principle and philosophy is with us. So it makes our society and nation proud. ■

# Gender exploitation in South India and rise of the Self-Respect Movement

Latharani Poongavanam

Global Philosopher Periyar Library, Kuwait



**Introduction**

The SRM (Self Respect Movement) had been going on for more than a century. But only after 1925 had the movement taken an organized form with systematic opposition given against the Social Ruling Classes. This was possible due to the enigmatic philosopher popularly known as "Thanthai Periyar".

E.V.Ramasamy was a revolutionary, who propagated the ideology of self-determination to all sections of the society in all aspects of their lives; and for the first time in living memory of the Indian society; codified under his organisations the founding principle of Self-respect that all humans are born free and equal.

Erode Venkatappa Ramasamy (17 September 1879 – 24 December 1973) popularly known as Thanthai Periyar in the sub-continent; was an immensely revolutionary social activist who started the Self-Respect Movement and Dravidar Kazhagam; he began the systematic weakening of the social inequality that persisted in the sub-continent. E.V. Ramasamy propagated the principles of rationalism, self-respect and the eradication of the caste system; and to achieve this he put women's right front and centre of his movement.

His ideologies were the foundation on which the social reforms in Sub-continent were erected; he opposed the ostracism and exploitation of non-Brahmin indigenous people of South India. The core of the Self-Respect Movement envisioned by Periyar was the dissemination of relevant political education; and breaking the chains of slavery that had been tied in the minds of the masses for eons through needless customs, meaningless ceremonies and blind superstitious beliefs.

The Self-Respect Movement successfully campaigned for their principles by starting their Tamil weekly magazine *"Kudi Arasu"* and their English Journal *"Revolt"* in 1925, 1928 respectively. The

publications served as force multipliers in addition to the district meetings for the dissemination of the Self-Respect Movement's principles. The prevailing traditional customs were constructed to be disadvantageous to women and the lower caste women bore the brunt of this discrimination through systematic exploitation in the name of religion and tradition; the Self-respect movement was the result of the unification of generational sporadic struggles against social injustices.

Most people are aware about the social divisions inflicted on a heterogeneously stable society by the "Manu-Needhi Brigade" as early as the 10th century AD. In the sub-continent economic slavery was rampant during those times. These slaves; however had the opportunity to earn their freedom. But since the introduction of *Manu Dharma* in South India; for the first time, a whole section of the society was made into perpetual slaves both socially and economically.

Under the *Manu-Neethi* social construct, the Tamil society had undergone a profound change. The whole basis of the society changed from a matriarchal society to a patriarchal society.The Manu Needhi dharma intensely decimated the Tamil culture; stripping off its core values and principles.

The list of atrocities committed on women and their self-respect are numerous; but due to publication constraints we are going to narrowlyfocus in-depth at few major atrocities for this article and how the self-respect movement enabled the affected classes to



demand and vehemently acquire justice.

**Dress code and Class distinction**

The division of land and access were restructured according to the Manu Dharma;Brahmins, Kshatriyas and other upper castes were allowed to own lands, but the Shudras were denied the opportunity to even hold on a single square foot of land of any kind. (K. Veeramani, 2004)

Strict impositions were placed on the Shudras on how to walk, behave on roads, gatherings and public places, and while using common utilities. If a Shudra walks on the road and hears a Brahmin reciting anything in Sanskrit, the offending Shudra was punished by pouring hot oil in their ears till they became deaf. (K. Veeramani 2004)

The Manudharma imposed strict dress codes for the society. The dress code was most atrocious towards the Shudra castes. Men were not allowed to wear any clothes on their upper body and conversely no piece of clothing should reach below the knee caps of the lower body.Similarly, women, especially Shudra women were not allowed to wear clothes on their upper body.The Shudra women must be naked above the waist. (Dr.Joyi Balan, 2013).

Even if the women were carrying water, they must ensure their breasts must be in the full

Periyar declared that the Self-Respect Movement alone could be the genuine freedom movement, and political freedom would not be fruitful without individual self-respect. He remarked that the so-called 'Indian freedom fighters' were showing disrespect to self-respect, and this was really an irrational philosophy.

The Deva-dasi system was socio-economic method of subjugation of lower caste women. The system was setup to assimilate young girls before entering puberty so that they did not realise the depths of their captivity and sexual exploitation. It was done under the guise of marriage to the Temple or God;



*The dancing girl, devoted to the temple as Devadasi*

public view and not covered, i.e. the women were supposed to carry water pots on their heads and not on their hips; So that the upper caste men could have an unhindered view of the woman's breast. The rate of the breast tax was directly proportional to the size and perkiness of the breasts. The depravity of the Brahmin society is further illuminated through the fact that the breast tax was imposed on women between the age of 15 and 35.

The *Sati* system's ingenuity was that it transferred power and wealth to the Brahmins by making kinsfolk murderers; that is people who otherwise would have been providing and caring for the widow and her family. (A Venkataachala Naicker,1882)

The British Indian government outlawed the practice due to continuous campaigning of Ram Mohan Roy; nevertheless the Manu Needhi brigade found other forums to subjugate women. The upper castes insisted that widows were ostracised in the community and were not allowed to head or conduct auspicious events; unfortunately this ostracisation of widows continues in the present despite the herculean efforts of the self-respect movement to eradicate it.

**Deva-dasi system: Forced underage prostitution**

The Deva-dasi system was socio-economic method of subjugation of lower caste women. The system was setup to assimilate young girls before entering puberty so that they did not realise the depths of their captivity

and sexual exploitation. It was done under the guise of marriage to the Temple or God; these women were forbidden from entering into any real relationship or family structure and subsequently their off springs were also hereditarily obligated to continue this practice.

In the early twentieth century, women's entry into the academic field as writers and journalists representing their freedom to express their view was not welcomed by their gender counterparts. What is significant here is the fact that most of these writings by women valorised the traditional 'womanly virtues' such as chastity. Under this context an ex-Deva-dasi writing against the tradition was viewed as blasphemous by the upper castes; she faced staunch resistance against publication of the book.

**Self-respect movement and the rise of women**

The Self Respect Movement not only took up women's issues as one of its central concerns, but also provided great stimulus for women to participate in all its forums and activities. For instance the movement organised special women's conferences within the ambience of its general conferences.

During the Second Self Respect Women's Conference at Virudunagar 1931, lndrani Balasubramaniam delivered the presidential address. In this conference resolutions in support of birth control were passed. The conference resolved that women should not only be recruited for professions like teaching and medicine, but also be inducted into army and police; the conference called for powers to be delegated to the local magistrates to identify and catalogue those temples which encouraged Deva-dasi system.

While special women's conferences provided an exclusive space for women activists of the Self Respect Movement to articulate themselves on issues, their participation in general conferences was also substantial. That is women were not isolated within the Movement. Often



the much honoured role of delivering the inaugural addresses of the general conferences fell on the shoulders of women activists. To cite a few instances Indrani Balasubramaniam inaugurated the Third Self Respect Conference at Virudunagar in 1932.

In significant divergence to the nationalists and the independent women's organisations, the Self Respect Movement addressed women's issues in a profoundly different fashion. The nationalist organisation took up issues affecting women in isolation, but the self-respect movement viewed the issues as entangled having a common foundation in patriarchy.

The philosophical thrust of the Movement led it to question Brahmanism and Hinduism; the legitimising forces of patriarchy in Tamil society. As such, the Self Respect Movement developed a scathing criticism of the vital categories of patriarchy such as marriage, female monogamy and chastity.

**Conclusion**

In addition to many of the anti-Caste and Tamil nationalist ideologies; the Self-Respect Movement held at its core deeply feminist principles. Gender relationships were actively divorced from Brahminical patriarchy and women's rights over their physical, sexual and reproductive choices were celebrated. We have seen above the methodologies used to systematically exploit women under the name of rituals, tradition and religion namely *Sati*, Devadasi system and gender class warfare; though significant roads have been made to reach a gender equal society one must understand that the war against gender exploitation is a Trans-generational war. ■

# Students and SELF RESPECT

A. KALAICHELVAN



Head Master (Retd)
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**SELF RESPECT**

Man is a social animal. He expects mutual respect from other individuals. In the animal Kingdom except in man there is no place for self respect, self esteem or dignity. Man is the only animal that longs for respect from others.

In the modern world a man without a sense of self respect is nothing. Self respect gives one confidence, pride and a sense of satisfaction in life. A man with self respect will always treat others respectfully.

Right from the adulthood or student life one should develop self respect. The Russian revolutionary, politician and political theorist Lenin rightly said learning should be the First, Second and Third requisite qualities of an individual since he considered learning as the one weapon for winning the rights.

**SCHOOL AND STUDENTS**

Schools of different levels should provide good atmosphere to the students to develop the sense of self respect, self dependency and confidence. Only then the society which largely depends on the youth can develop. Students should have the right to choose their own course of education.

A new born child enters the world without any religious mark on it. But society gradually thrusts religion into the child's mind as it grows. Using sentiments or threatening the child, the society makes him accept the religion as his identity which he hates.

Schools, instead of teaching science or other life oriented subjects, indirectly insist the children to become the slaves of religion; the epics and the legends of religion play very important role in spreading religious concepts.

So schools and the department of education have more place in converting the innocent children into religious fanatics by feeding the children the religious concepts.

Apart from the curriculum teachers, the parents also yield themselves to the pressures and become victims to the process of religion oriented education.

**STUDENTS AND SOCIETY**

Neither the curriculum nor the society allows the children to choose their own career, rather influence them to pusue a particular study even though the children may have interested in other areas or they may have the necessary potentials to become great thinkers. When the students show poor interest and progress in their studies the teachers and the parents find fault with the children. Sometimes teachers' treatment of the slow learners may be severe. The parents are equally responsible for the children's disinterest in their studies since they pursue their studies only because of the parents and the society's compulsion.

**THE STATE OF STUDENTS IN SCHOOLS**

The schools run by government or aided by government become the centers of freebies where except education everything is offered free of cost; books, bags shoes, uniform which are mostly disproportionate to the size of the students. When the children get the materials required as gifts by the government they definitely would not have self respect. Anything given to anybody free of cost is against the law



of nature since one must get anything for which he deserves.

**EMERGENCE OF PERIYAR E.V. RAMASAMY, A SOCIAL REFORMER OF INDIA**

The reason for people believing in religion as their guide in their life started in ancient times and continues even today. We have the tendency to blame culture and tradition for any of our activities based on superstition and religion. But this scenario has changed in India when the great rationalist and social reformer Periyar E.V. Ramasamy emerged as a savior for all those who have been made slaves of culture, tradition and religion.

He wanted to drive out the evils of superstition which insists on

(a) Follow the words of ancestors

(b) Act as the ancestors advised and

(c) Do the same what our ancestors did.

Periyar believed strongly that unless the society disowns the three factors mentioned above it would not achieve progress.

Periyar E.V. Ramasamy advised the students to concentrate only on the studies for which they got enrolled and he never involved or expected the students to participate in any of the agitation movement and other activities.

Periyar E.V. Ramasamy advised the students to concentrate only on the studies for which they got enrolled and he never involved or expected the students to participate in any of the agitation movement and other activities.



He knew well that the students continued their studies amidst various problems and difficulties. So he avoided using the students as weapons in his life long fight.

Unfortunately Indian politicians misguide the youngsters and students and use their power to overcome their personal enemies. This Periyar E.V. Ramasamy strongly objected. However the students cannot remain silent all the times; they should raise their voice and fight on occasions in which their respect is affected.

In 1953, Hereditary Education policy was introduced in Tamil Nadu which denied the individuals' freedom of choosing or selecting their career or course of Education.

"The modified scheme of elementary education or new scheme of elementary education dubbed by its critics as *kula kalvi thittam* (Hereditary Education Policy), was an abortive attempt at education reform introduced by the Indian National Congress government of the Madras State, led by C. Rajagopalachari in 1953. The Scheme proposed the introduction of two shifts or sessions in Elementary schools. In one session regular teaching would be done and during the second session, the students would be sent home to learn the occupations of their parents. It became controversial and was accused of being a casteist scheme to perpetuate the caste hierarchy as Hindu professions were caste based".

(WIKIPEDIA)

But this scheme did not continue owning to opposition from the students, parents and Dravidian movements.

The scheme was dropped by C. Rajagopalachari's successor Kamaraj in 1954.

Periyar urged the student community to raise questions such as What? Why? How? So that the answers to their questions would show them their way to move forward. He strongly objected to the practice of memorising the lessons or absorbing everything the teachers tell in the classroom.

Periyar advised the students to be keen in observing his surroundings to attain wisdom because there is nothing equivalent to the knowledge given to individuals by nature. Being book worms or slaves of modern education would create only educated people and not wise people. With this ideology Periyar throughout his life worked for the progress of the students by reminding them to be dignified believing in their self respect and retaining their self esteem on all occasions. He cautioned the youths and the students in India to keep themselves away from the superstitious beliefs of religion and the seducing words of political parties and politicians and the age old rites and rituals in order to lead a contented life with self respect and dignity.

Therefore, for the benefit of increasing the self respect of the students and the society there is a need for change in the system of education followed in India which is irrational in every aspect and does not suit the current and the present society which is guided by science and rational approach.

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- **Periyar Humanism and the Future of Humanity**

- *The essay must contain minimum of 2000 words*
- *The prize winners will be announced on 28th July 2017 at University of Koln, Germany*
- *The essay may be sent to the email:* **periyarinternational@yahoo.com**
- *The essay must enclose with brief details about the contributor*

For further details: ***www.periyarinternational.com/selfrespectconf***

Essay Competition
First Prize

# Periyar humanism and future of humanity

Dr. Priyadarshini Rajendran



Born on 17.9.1879 and died on 24.12.1973, the Ever-Vibrant Revolutionary known as Periyar lived 94 years and 97 days in Tamil Nadu. He travelled 13,12,000 kms. in the length and breadth of Tamil Nadu in spite of worst travel conditions. In his socio-political life of 8600 days, he has addressed 10,700 meetings spanning 21,400 hours. If his speeches are to be broadcast continuously, it can be presented for 2 years, 5 months and 11 days. He has published 71 books and 114 pamphlets. Periyar was the only revolutionary in the entire Indian sub-continent who had challenged the accepted, conventional and customary beliefs which were deeply entrenched in the Indian society. Ultimately his objective was to establish an egalitarian society based on humanism. Eminent scientist Stephen Hawking has given a thought provoking interpretation to humanism – *"Humanism rejects religion. It attributes nothing to the so called "supernatural". In this there is an awakened liberty that releases us from the shackles and servitude mentality of old superstitions so that we may realize our full potential".*

Periyar EVR's staunch conviction in humanism led him to join Indian National Congress in 1919.

In 1924, Kerala State Congress Committee for Untouchability had organized an agitation for securing the right of the untouchables on the roads encircling the Mahadeva temple at Vaikom. Accepting the call from the organizers of the agitation, Periyar spearheaded the agitation in Vaikom along with his wife Nagammal, sister Kannammal and two of his fellow congressmen. In spite of rigorous imprisonment and hardships to Periyar and his colleagues the agitation had a successful end. Thereby, the public roads were opened to all communities. This was the first successful event in the history that had challenged the caste orthodoxy and broken the stronghold of caste supremacy.

Periyar organized the first self-respect conference on February 17-28,

1929. This conference passed 34 resolutions which can be called Magna Carta of Dravidian Movement and humanism. Abolition of untouchability, promoting equality of all irrespective of caste, colour and creed, enforcing medium of education in mother tongue, equal property right to women, increasing the eligibility age for marriage, education and employment to women, right to divorce, widow remarriage, free education to scheduled class and tribes and allotment of free lands to scheduled class, were some of the most progressive policy resolutions passed in the conference.

Later he strongly opposed Gandhi's views on Varnasrama Dharma which is based on hierarchical caste order and placing the majority of working people as Sudras and untouchables, as serfs in the socio-economic order. Periyar had always argued that by using this varnasrama code, the brahmins undermined the majority of non-brahmin communities. This order denied the concept of equality and virtually made the majority of non-brahmins as slaves and servants only to work for the interest of the upper castes. Periyar argued that Hinduism should be abolished. Gandhi asked why? Periyar replied that there was no reality in Hinduism. Brahmins framed codes and rules only in their interest and manipulated other communities to accept it. Gandhi asked if this was the case for all religions. Periyar answered that as far as other religions were concerned there were historical



evidences and accepted principles. 'Is it not so for Hinduism?' Gandhi had asked. Periyar said 'Where is the principle? Brahmins, Sudra and Panchama discriminations were accepted. Periyar told Gandhi face to face that the self-centred and self-interest groups would not allow new ideas which would ensure equality.

The Science and technology have created a revolution and we are living in an era of information. Today we could exchange views across countries and continents. In spite of this knowledge revolution, India witnesses religious fundamentalism and violent attacks on social and religious minorities. The Hindu fundamentalists compel the people not to eat beef and interfere in the food and cultural habits of vast majority of the different nationalities and communities. Media publish reports everyday on the murders of Dalilts and Muslims for the above said purpose in the name of nationalism.

Had Periyar's plea to Gandhi been accepted in 1927, definitely we would have seen an India with secular credentials and humanism.

Another interesting incident occurred in Periyar's long journey of social emancipation. During 1970, family planning was insisted at all India level. All the states were asked to

'Women are not childbearing machines.' Periyar had quoted the 1921 population census and lamented about the thousands of young female children becoming widows.... They were treated worse than animals. As a rationalist concerned with the health of the women he pleaded for family planning in 1930s.

seriously pursue family planning policy. Dr. Chandrasekar, world famous demographer and Union Minister for Family Planning had sought the cooperation of religious leaders and reformists in India. Dr. Chandrasekar met Periyar and asked his opinion on family planning. During their meeting, Dr. Chandrasekar had wondered how Periyar was able to preach for a small family as earlier as 1930.

Periyar's reply to that was, 'Women are not childbearing machines.' Periyar had quoted the 1921 population census and lamented about the thousands of young female children becoming widows. Women were subjugated and not allowed to go to educational institutions and join employments. They were treated worse than animals. As a rationalist concerned with the health of the women he pleaded for family planning in 1930s.

When Dr. Chandrasekar asked how to implement family planning effectively in India, Periyar had suggested to provide 50 percent reservation of employment in all government institutions for women. This would go a long way in reducing the population pressure of India.

Admiring his progressive views, Dr. Chandrasekar had said that even at the age of 91, Periyar EVR was far ahead of the other leaders of India. He was astonished to see humanism in every aspect of his social reform. Surprisingly, this pioneering work of Periyar was recognised in the first Human Development Report 2001. The HDI report says that the state of Tamil Nadu has, historically, been a hot bed of social reform movements, often precipitating political action in the desired direction. Social consciousness inspired by leaders such as Ramasamy 'Periyar' has influenced the people to become responsible parents, among other things, to adoption of family planning as a means to bridge the gap between increasing aspirations and availability of resources to meet these aspirations (National Human Development Report 2001, Union Planning Commission, New Delhi).

Periyar felt that even in the worship of idols, a blatant discrimination and communalism were accepted in the theory and practice of Hinduism. The communities other than brahmins are not allowed in the sanctum and sanctorum of Hindu temples. As an atheist, he had put forth logical arguments against the concept of god. Periyar believed that brahmins treated god and religion as a trade and earned money and vital positions. He had expressed that the priests in the Hindu temples should not be appointed on the basis of birth. Therefore, he had pleaded for the appointment of Archagas (temple priests) from all communities and Tamil language to be made as a medium of worship instead of Sanskrit. This was his last clarion call before his death in 1973.

Unfortunately, the world is plagued by regional wars based on religious fundamentalism, armed violence, deterioration of the environment and crime against women. The Human Development annual report by UNIDO states that growth should enhance human development. Hence, a prolonged strategy has to be adopted across continents to sustain a peaceful and sustainable world.

Humanism should be placed above all other interventions for an inclusive growth. In this context, Periyar's approach to humanism should be recognised universally. Acknowledging Periyar's immortal contribution to the humanity, the UNESCO conferred an award in 1970 and cited *"Periyar the prophet of the new age. The Socrates of South East Asia. Father of the social reform movement and arch enemy of ignorance; superstitions; meaningless customs and base manners"* ■

Essay Competition
Second Prize

International Conference on
PERIYAR SELF-RESPECT MOVEMENT
Cologne, Germany 2017

# Self Respect Movement and the Benefits Realized

Udayakumar M



**Introduction**

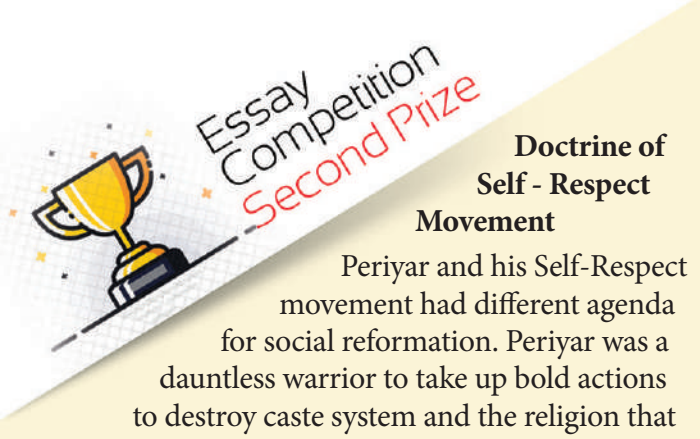
The Self-Respect movement founded by Periyar E.V.Ramasamy in 1925, of all the movements, is unique by its name. The bottom line of the movement is humanity and equality. There were numerous attempts made historically to impart equality in the society. There were voices against the domination of Sanskrit over Tamil, inhumane caste practices and women's subjugation. But it was Periyar who incorporated rationalism and formed a dedicated movement for social reforms.

**Need for a Self-Respect Movement:**

The varna system, with its four divisions (Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra) was made sacrosanct by the Aryan (Brahmin) priests as God ordained and hence had to be followed implicitly. The Brahmins who were at the top in this system were a small section who did everything to spread and fortify the varna system. This led to the formation of castes and gradually new castes and sub-castes came into existence. In the name of castes people were deprived of human rights and pushed to the lower level. Women's condition deteriorated. The Brahmins were on the top and they dominated all the higher posts in all times. This division created by the Brahmins was attacked by Periyar and his movement from 1925 and the struggle for social justice started.

**Formation of the Self-Respect Movement:**

Periyar started the Self-Respect movement in 1925 to obliterate Varnashrama Dharma, Brahminical hegemony and to eradicate the prevalent social evils.




## Doctrine of Self - Respect Movement

Periyar and his Self-Respect movement had different agenda for social reformation. Periyar was a dauntless warrior to take up bold actions to destroy caste system and the religion that formed it, in his battle for Self-respect.

### The First Madras Provincial Self Respect Conference 1929

The first Self-Respect conference is known for the resolutions passed in the conference, which decried the theory of superiority and inferiority attached to birth and repudiated the authority of the Vedas, Sastras, Puranas and other Scriptures which promulgated this false theory, condemned the pernicious doctrine of Varnashrama which divides society into Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vysias, Sudras and Panchamas and requested people not to recognize this division, advocated special care for the untouchables and urged women to be given the same rights to property and inheritance as men and equal rights with men to enter into and practice any profession they choose.

### Women Empowerment

The Self-respect movement became the first movement to speak of women empowerment vociferously. Periyar said "In our country women are being treated worse than untouchables." Periyar advocated the respect for women's sexuality and ability to control conception.

### Self-Respect Marriages

Periyar introduced a new marriage system called 'Self-respect Marriage'. It would be enough for the new couple to garland each other and declare the wedding affirmation in mother tongue. The Self-respect marriages had three basic notions. Equality of women, shun irrelevant Sanskrit Mantras and not wasting time and money. Periyar also conducted Inter-religious (Christian) Self-Respect Marriages. Periyar intensely advocated widow re-marriages and inter caste marriages.

### Self-respect movement and Communism

The Self-respect movement was the first to publish the Communist Manifesto in *Kudi Arasu* on 04.10.1931. Periyar in his speeches in labor unions and conferences emphasized the unions to demand share from the profits and to choose one amongst them as their leader. He also condemned the money spent lavishly on religious rituals and other superstitious beliefs. Periyar cared for the welfare of the workers who were in the informal sector too.

### Anti-Hindi Agitation

The Congress Party took up the task of introducing Hindi Language in school curriculum once it formed its first ministry with Rajaji as Premier in Madras Presidency in 1937. Periyar and the Self-respect movement opposed the dominance of Hindi with other Tamil scholars and made it a rousing agitation. It is in this agitation Periyar raised the voice for "a separate Sovereign State" i.e. "Tamil Nadu for Tamils". In the year 1938, Periyar was arrested for anti-Hindi agitation and was awarded three year imprisonment.

It is the Self-respect movement that drove the people of Tamil Nadu to rise against the hegemony of Brahminical folds that tried to mock them in the disguise of Freedom struggle.

### 1. Restoration of Self-respect

The Brahmins treated all the other classes as Sudras and Panchamas and their social condition was so bad that they could not walk on the streets, enter the temple, or fetch water from the public well or pond. On the whole the Shudras were treated as slaves by the Brahmins. The Self-respect movement with its relentless efforts smashed the Brahminical hegemony and restored Self-respect of the oppressed people by its propaganda to bring them on par with other people in the planet.

**2. Education:**

In a society where only 2.75 per cent of the people held the opportunity to learn, suppressing others as Shudras, it is the Self-respect movement and the Justice Party that opened the doors to all the oppressed for education.

Rajaji, when tried to implement the *Kula Kalvi Thittam* (Hereditary Education Policy), the DK and the DMK opposed it and Rajaji was forced to resign.

The Governments that succeeded later also followed an educational policy with the implementation of reservation system, opening the doors to all the castes. With the continual efforts of the Dravidar Kazhagam there is 69 per cent reservation Tamil Nadu that led to the betterment of the backward castes in education.

Because of the reservation system that was upheld by the Self-respect movement, the average performance of dalits in Tamil Nadu went higher than the average performance of upper castes in other states.

**3. Employment:**

Higher positions in administration and judiciary were all dominated by Brahmins in one stage. This was considerably changed with the implementation of reservation system in employment. After the advent of the Self-respect movement, the people from lower castes became Tashildars, Collectors, Engineers, Doctors and Judges.

**4. Caste Eradication:**

The caste name as surname was renounced in Tamil Nadu way back, whereas it prevails in all other States of India. The Dravidar Kazhagam waged a war against the Constitution of India to eradicate the caste system. A ferocious agitation of this type for the sole purpose of caste eradication was launched only in Tamil Nadu.

A major reform is the voice for right to people from all castes to become priests.

**5. Women Empowerment:**

The tireless efforts of the Self-respect movement improved the conditions of women not only in Tamil Nadu but in all the Southern States. The development indices of freedom of women in South India are far better than in North India. When literacy rate and employability is more in South, infants mortality rate and maternity mortality rate declined than other states.

**6. Language and Arts:**

Self-respect movement safeguarded the Tamil language in Tamil Nadu when other states acceded to the dominance of Hindi and Sanskrit. Because Tamil is not only seen as a language, but as a shield of the Dravidian race against the Brahminical domination that creates a hierarchy even among languages. The attempts to impose Hindi and Sanskrit has started again more cunningly than before. But those could not gain momentum in Tamil Nadu.

In the field of arts, there was a tremendous impact of the Self-respect Movement. In theatre and music the contribution of the non-Brahmins started after the advent of the Self-respect movement. Before that all artistic and musical performances were by Brahmins and all were based on the Hindu Puranas and myths.

**7. Festivals:**

When people were entrenched in religious rituals and rites from birth to death, the festivals celebrated were also Aryan (Brahmin) festivals that treated Dravidians as inferior. The Dravidian movement identified Pongal as *Tamilar Thirunaal*.

**Conclusion:**

Periyar came across a large number of impediments and struggles in his war for Self-Respect. The present generation that enjoys the fruits yielded by the Self-respect movement has the responsibility to carry the legacy of Periyar and the Self-respect movement in attaining social justice and equality. ■




# Women Empowerment

R. Bhavadharini



*"When women move forward, the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves".*

*– Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru*

**INTRODUCTION:**

Women empowerment means emancipation of women from the grip of social, economical, political, caste and gender based discriminations. It means granting women the freedom to make life choices. Women empowerment does not mean "deifying women"; rather it means replacing patriarchy with parity.

**METHODS TO EMPOWER WOMEN:**

Land rights offer a key to economically empower women giving them the confidence they need to tackle gender inequalities. Often, women in developing nations are legally restricted from their land on the sole basis of gender. Having a right to their land gives women a source of power that they wouldn't normally have. They gain ability to assert themselves in various aspects of their life, both inside and outside the home. Another way to provide women empowerment is to allocate responsibilities to them that normally belong to men.

When women have economic empowerment it makes others to see them as equal members of society. They achieve more self respect and confidence by their contribution to their communities. Simply including Women as a part of a community can have sweeping positive effects. In a study conducted by Bina Agarwal, women were given a place in a forest conservation group.

This increased the efficiency of the group and the women gained self esteem and empowered themselves by organizing campaigns and voicing for equal rights without feeling oppressed by the

society. In recent years blogging has also become a powerful tool for the educational empowerment of women. Women can now study from the comfort of their homes. Women are also learning skills that will help them in today's advancing globalized world.

Many of the barriers to women gaining equality lie ingrained in cultural norms. Many women feel these pressures while others become accustomed to them.

**MEASUREMENT:**

Women empowerment can be measured through the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) which shows women's participation in a given nation both politically and economically. GEM is calculated by tracking "the share of seats in parliament held by female legislators and the percentage of women senior officials and managers. Other measures that take into account the importance of female participation and equality include the Gender related Development Index (GDI).

**IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN & FUNDAMENTALS:**

Empowering women to participate fully in economic life across all sectors is essential to build stronger economics and achieve internationally accepted goals for development of women, men, families and communities. Women's empowerment aims at all round development. It is not merely economic or social development. The ultimate goal is to uphold human dignity and self respect.

In developed countries every member of the society is in equal position. But in developing nations we need to empower women in society which is pre-dominated by men. Periyar was aware that for ages women in India had been confined within the four walls of homes and it was taken for granted that it was enough for them. Therefore educating girl children for the uplift of women was one of the programs of Periyar,

*"Providing education to women eradicates gender discrimination and gives empowerment".*

A woman is a being with senses, imagination and thoughts and she should be able to express herself freely. Individual empowerment means to have the self confidence to articulate and assert the power to negotiate and decide. Swami Vivekananda one of the greatest sons of India said, "There is no chance for the welfare

Periyar was aware that for ages women in India had been confined within the four walls of homes and it was taken for granted that it was enough for them. Therefore educating girl children for the uplift of women was one of the programs of Periyar




of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on only one wing".

Therefore every woman should know these fundamental rights,

- There should be respect and dignity towards women.
- Women must have total independence of their own life and life style inside the home and also outside at their work.
- They should make their decision by their own choice.
- They should have a high respect in society.
- They should not be discriminated against while receiving education.
- They must have equal rights in society.
- They should make their own economic and financial choices.
- There should not be any discrimination between women and men while giving jobs and employment.
- They should have safe and secure working location with proper privacy.

**ECONOMIC BENEFITS:**

Most women across the globe rely on the informal work sector for an income. If women were empowered to do more the possibility for economic growth becomes apparent. Women can also help businesses grow and economics prosper if they are able to use the right knowledge and skills in their employment.

Educational empowerment means empowering women with the knowledge skills and self confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process. It means making women aware of their rights and developing the confidence to claim them.

**WOMEN EMPOWERMENT CHALLENGES:**

Women should have access to resources, rights and entitlements. They should be given decision making powers and due position in governance. The women reservation bill should be passed as soon as possible to increase the effective participation of women in the politics of India.

Government or community based bodies must be set up to monitor the programs devised for the welfare of the society. Due

importance should be given for their proper implementation and their monitoring and evaluation through social audits. Efforts should be made to restructure the legal process to deliver fair and timely and speedy justice by the judiciary and the government of India.

**CHARACTERISTS OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT:**

Women empowerment means giving power to women. It enables a greater degree of self confidence and sense of independence among women. Women empowerment is a process of apportioning power for women in order to establish their rights and to perform their responsibilities towards themselves and others in the most effective way. It gives the capacity or power to resist discrimination imposed by the male dominated society.

Women empowerment enables women to organize themselves, increase their self reliance and provides greater autonomy. Women empowerment means control over material assets, intellectual resources and ideology. It challenges traditional power equations and relations. Women empowerment abolishes all gender based discriminations in all institutions and structures of society. It ensures participation making the process at domestic and public levels.

**TOOL OF EMPOWERMENT:**

Improving education for women helps raise their levels of health and nutrition and reduces fertility rates. Education increases self confidence and enables people to find better jobs, engage in public debate and make demands on government for health care, social security and other entitlements. In particular education empowers women to make choice that improves their own and their children's health chances of survival. Education helps to prevent and contain disease through studied efforts to reduce malnutrition. Further education empowers women to make choices that improve their welfare including marrying later and having fewer children. "There is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women"

Participation which can be seen and gained in a variety of ways has been argued to be the most beneficial form of gender empowerment. Political participation be if the ability to vote and or the ability to voice opinions.

However participation is not limited to the realm of politics. It can include in the household and in school the ability to make choices for oneself. It can be said that this latter participation need to be archived before they can move on to broader political participation. It is believed that microcredit also offers a way to provide empowerment of women.

**CONCLUSION:**

Women have generally been looked upon with contempt for centuries with various strictures inflicted upon them by reducing their status to the mercy of men. They have been confined to hearth and home. But now the perspective of the society has changed and a general awareness to work for the emancipation and empowerment of women is being encouraged also contribute to the welfare of the society. This is all due to the great and revolutionary work of Thanthai Periyar, followed by his ardent disciple Asiriyar Veeramani by proclaiming,

*"What we cannot do, no one else can,*
*What others cannot do, we can".* ■




# Women Empowerment

Diya Chauhan



Women empowerment, it is most likely that some men over this planet are not even aware of women empowerment. But it means a lot to women all over the world. A woman who goes through discrimination on the basis of size and color, a woman who is not given the opportunity that men have, a woman who goes through sexual harassment in her workplace knows how encouraging this word is to her. The term, 'Women Empowerment' gives her hope that she can stand alone in the crowd without any fear. Women plays a very major rule in anybody's life as a wife, a daughter, a sister. Women empowerment refers to the creation of an environment for women where they are treated equal to men and they can make decisions of their own for their own benefit as well as the societies. Women empowerment gives women her rights that she deserves, some of them are-:

- Live life with dignity, esteem and self-worth.
- Make own choices
- Have equal social status in the society as men.
- Get equal opportunity for education.
- Get equal employment opportunities without sacrifice.
- Get safe and comfortable working environment even at night.
- Make own decisions.

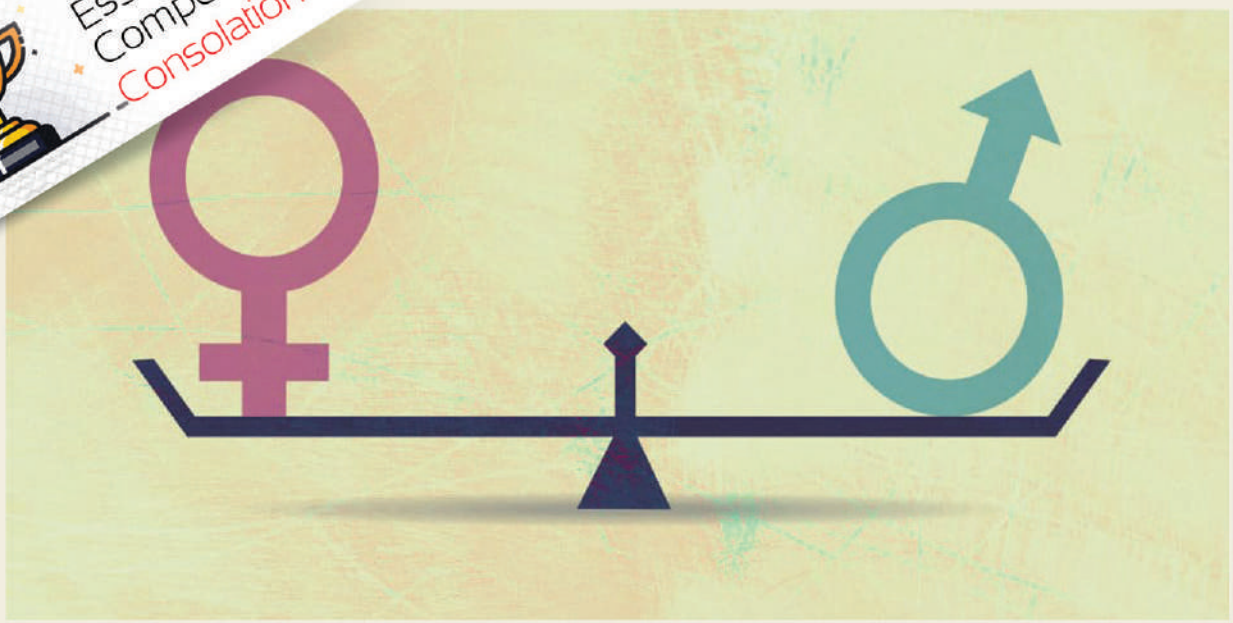
Need for women's empowerment arose due to centuries of supremacy and enforced by males over females. Women are the targets of varied types of violence and discriminatory practices at all ages all over the world. Women are considered non eligible for some jobs. In many countries women empowerment is not

a very important topic, India is one of them. World population of women is almost 50 per cent, but India a great country comes up with a very interesting sex ratio where the female's population has been comparatively less than males. As far as their social status is concerned, they are not treated equal to men. In the Western societies, women are getting equal rights and status with men in all ways and stations but still there is a minute indifference toward women. Gender discrimination is found in India even today.

The paradox is that she was sometimes worshipped as Goddess and at other times used merely as slave or sometimes worse than that. Women empowerment in India is considered under many different topics like area of living, educational status, social and economic status, also color and age. Laws on such matters originated at three levels of government, local, state and national level in a lot of perspectives like education, sexual violence, economic growth, health and participation in politics but still there is a noticeable difference between policy expectations and actual practice in the society. Women empowerment is one of the movements that fulfill the need for equality within our very strong structures that we demand justice from. Accordingly access to education is each girl's right which is not followed properly in different states of India like Uttar Pradesh and Punjab that rely on the availability of schools. Availability to education is a far big concern physically, which includes the inherent discriminatory practices. Educational enterprises therefore cannot only rely on educational infrastructure facilities, but should also be eliminating some of the causes supporting discrimination against women. A woman's security, power, and mobility are the three pointers for women's empowerment. In India there is a lot of rural area that are less educated and there these pointers are significantly low. The data followed from the NFHS-3 survey on decision making power for women shows that only one third of the women took part in the interview held for them regarding their house hold and health issues. Power in hand is relatively higher in the urban employed women than the rural less educated women. They also found that marriage at an elder age makes women more confident and gives them greater decision making power. On the other hand younger marriage causes an additional layer of discrimination. The Indian Constitution makers were very resolute to provide equal rights to both the sexes. The Constitution is one of the handpicked equality documents in the world, it offers basic rules that secures the equality overall and gender equality in specific. Various articles in the Constitution

One woman gets raped every half an hour. Isn't that shameful! Self-pride is most important to a woman. She is involved in something sexual without her permissions or conduct. Rape and Eve teasing is another problem faced by young girls of around 13 years and above.

Essay Competition
Consolation Prize

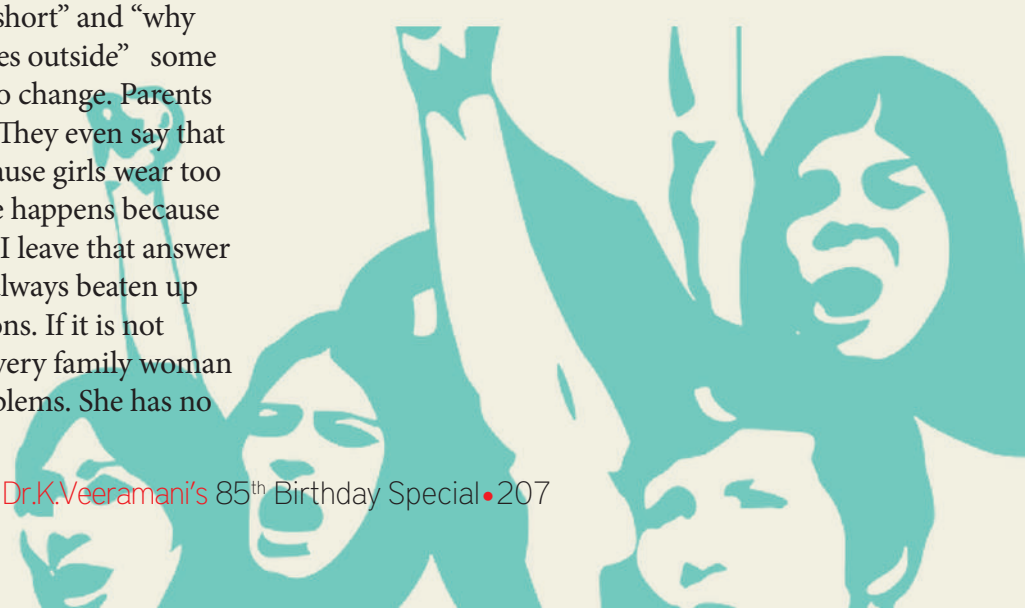


protect women's rights by assuring them power socially, economically and politically. The preamble, the fundamental rights, the DSPS all provide safety to women's equality and human rights. These document means that men and women should be treated equally on all grounds. The tenet of women empowerment is well rooted in the fundamental rights preserved in our constitution. Article 14 secures women rights to equality, Article 15 prohibits sexual bias and also gives the state power to take actions in favor of women, Article 16 provides equality in employment. These rights being the fundamental rights are justiceable in court and government has to follow them. Amongst the women living in rural area they are further divided and equality is denied. The most visible picks are on education grounds, caste, color and class ground. Women from the backward classes are particularly discriminated to motherly ethics and infant ethics. They are frequently powerless to avail for health and educational services. They even lack power of decision making and also face domestic violence at a very high rate. But some women of backward or lower castes have shown a positive impact on women's pointers. The upper castes and well educated women have access of health education and economic growth whereby women who are less educated and lower class who live in the urbanized are enjoy the rights comparatively less. There are

> The wife is always beaten up for different pointless reasons. If it is not violence it is taunting. In every family woman is suffering from these problems. She has no decision making powers in her hand. In fact she can't even spend some money on herself without asking her husband.

multiple states and national government and non-government tools to upgrade policies and their implementations are devolved to states and district level establishment. Domestic and social violence is on high rise. Women get beaten up every day especially in the rural area where people are less educated. This crime is comparatively less in the urban area but is still practised. Rape is another big issue in the state. One woman gets raped every half an hour. Isn't that shameful! Self-pride is most important to a woman. She is involved in something sexual without her permissions or conduct. Rape and Eve teasing is another problem faced by young girls of around 13 years and above. These girls are teased on the basis of their shape, size and are also commented on. These incidents usually happen on the way to school or generally roads and pathways. Girls even face many problems like teasing over puberty. Girls even go through discrimination in school. A girl has to be very conscious about herself otherwise the problems mentioned above are going to reflect on her future. But these problems are never applicable to boys, why? Mostly in urban area people have co-ed schools in which boys and girls study together. Many backward class families living in urban area do not like this. Mostly girls are not sent to school because of this reason. But there are many problems girls living in urban area face. Their parents do not allow them to wear clothes of their choice. Whenever a girl wears something short they always have comments to make like "isn't this too short" and "why are you wearing such clothes outside" some are even scolded and told to change. Parents say that roads are not safe. They even say that eve teasing takes place because girls wear too short clothes and even rape happens because of the same reason.is it so? I leave that answer to the readers. The wife is always beaten up for different pointless reasons. If it is not violence it is taunting. In every family woman is suffering from these problems. She has no decision making powers in her hand. In fact she can't even spend some money on herself without asking her husband. It is said that in India women are worshipped as goddesses but actually the work for their whole life for their husbands without any appreciation and they are beaten up as a result of their hard work all women in this country need to get up and revolt against this dominance. It might take time to change but it will. Women and girls have to start saying 'NO" to all their problems they face in their life because being women is gratitude not a pain. All the people in this society need to learn how to respect women with her flaws because a women with flaws is always cured. An initiative should be taken by each and every one to always stand by a woman. She will never let you down.

These are some issues and rules for women empowerment. But a woman is empowered only by her confidence and trust on herself, "be feminist". Be a feminist and we all must have a feeling of self-possession to be a feminist because feminism is expression for equality. "People have overlooked its definition". The last thing I would like to say "She is the heroine of your world, not the victim". ■






# Social-Respect Movement Benefits Realized

Nilavan (K.Ezhilarasan)

If Tamil Nadu is today a progressive state, leading the nation in egalitarianism, literacy growth, opportunities for higher education, health care facilities, women's safety and industrial development, a very good portion of the credit should go to the Self Respect movement that caused stirring among the people in the beginning of the 20th century. Social Justice and inclusive growth are two salient features of Tamil Nadu's success story that the rest of India followed.

In fact, from a caste-ridden, unequal society in the beginning of the 20th century to an inclusive society offering opportunities to all sections of society and facilitating the upward growth of the downtrodden communities, Tamil Nadu made a giant leap only because of the Movement that was nurtured by Periyar E.V.Ramasamy.

Since caste discrimination was one of the social evils that impeded the overall growth of the state, Periyar's self-respect movement primarily focused on the issue and strove for a casteless society. Besides, the movement aimed at providing education to everyone at a time when schools and colleges were the preserve of the elite and out of bound for the common people. Since it was a time when attempts were made to promote Sanskrit and Hindi by the dominant classes and relegate Tamil to the sidelines, terming it a lowly language, the Movement also took up the cause of Tamil.

The major tools of propaganda of the movement were spoken and written words. The movement and its advocates reached out to the people at the grassroots level in the remotest of the rural areas and created awareness on various issues that made them remain backward, ignorant, poor and illiterate. It enabled the common man to form opinions, political and otherwise, preparing the hoi polloi for a democratic government that was yet to be ushered in. The awareness created by the movement led to shedding of feudal practices with a caste tinge by society.

**Taking education, jobs to deprived masses:**

Jobs in the government, during the colonial era, were cornered by a select few. Most of those in the advantageous class were Brahmins and the others were from rich upper caste families. The common people had very little opportunities and they did not have educational opportunities either.

Jobs and college seats were not equally distributed as Brahmins formed only three per cent of the total population – but cornered more than half of the seats.

One of the pioneering moves made to change the trend was known as the 'Communal G.O.' passed in 1928, ensuring proportional representations in education and government jobs. Litigant went to the Madras High court and pleaded that that she did not get admission in medical college because of the reservation provided by the G.O and argued that it showed discrimination by birth. The court struck down the Communal G.O.

The supporters of the Self-Respect Movement in Tamil Nadu rose in protest, organizing rallies, conferences and agitations across the state. Tamil Nadu was on the boil with thousands of people participating in the movement that sought social justice.

Following this, the Jawaharlal Nehru government at the Centre amended the Indian Constitution in 1951 enabling reservation in education. That was the first step the nation took in ensuring social justice, which has now led to the rise of a plethora of political leaders, bureaucrats and many other achievers from the marginalized classes making a mark in their chosen areas of interest.

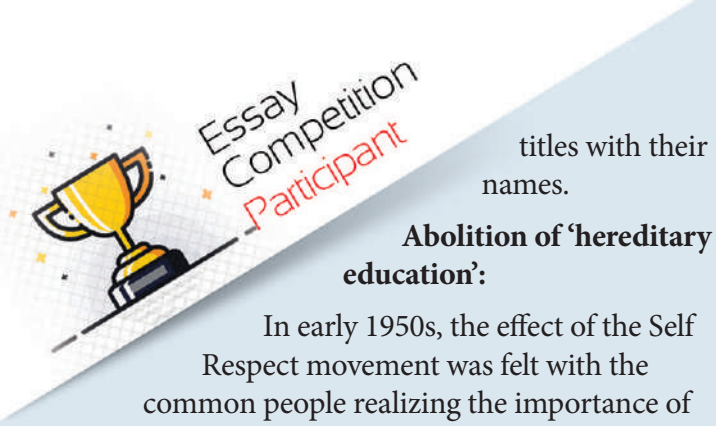
In the judiciary too, the situation has changed.

Let us take a look at a recent data. In 2013, the Madras High Court, through direct recruitment, filled 23 vacancies to the post of district judges. Of them, only one was Brahmin.

Talking about reservation, when the V P Singh government at the Centre implemented the Mandal Commission recommendations at the national level, Prime Minister V P Singh, mentioned the names of Ambedkar and Periyar with gratitude. Singh had openly declared that the source of inspiration for his Social Justice thought was Tamil Nadu.

Another notable success of the Self-Respect movement is that through consistent campaigns it had turned Tamil Nadu as the only state in India where the people do not attach caste titles to their names. Even the leaders of the caste-based outfits in the state do not use caste

many hotels had the signboards announcing they were 'Brahmin Hotels' as late as in 1950s. But, due to the strong and persistent campaigns by the Self-Respecters, the segregated dining arrangements in the hotels and in other public places vanished.




titles with their names.

**Abolition of 'hereditary education':**

In early 1950s, the effect of the Self Respect movement was felt with the common people realizing the importance of education in social mobility and sending their children to school. To put an end to the positive change happening in Tamil Nadu, the then chief minister Rajagopalachari introduced a new system of education, under which students were forced to learn their 'family profession' or the work associated with their respective castes for half-day after school hours.

It was the Self Respect Movement that rushed in to save the state then. There were series of protests in the state. The protests forced Rajagopalachari to step down and pave the way for K Kamaraj to become the Chief Minister.

Kamaraj ministry not only withdrew the sinister education policy but also opened several thousands of schools in villages.

**Honor for Tamil language and Tamil music:**

In the cultural front, Sanskrit enjoyed high status in those days when Tamil, the language of the common man, was treated lowly. Tamil language and Tamil music were dishonored, ironically, in its own land. To give an example, Sanskrit teachers enjoyed much reverence than the Tamil pundits in the universities.

In 1920s, Namashivaya Mudhaliyar was working as Tamil professor in the Presidency College in Chennai and his salary was Rs.81. On the other hand, Kuppusamy Shastri, who was Sanskrit teacher at the same college, was given Rs.300 per month. After coming to know about this salary discrimination based on the language, an angry Periyar wrote to the government to end this disparity. Following which, the salaries of Tamil and Sanskrit teachers were equalized.

The movement also brought high honor to the Tamil music.

Self-respect movement also conducted Sangeeth conferences and Tamil music festivals to counter the Brahmins' hegemony in the music field. Self-respect movement stood strongly in support of Tamil Isai Iyakkam (Tamil Music Movement).

When the Rajagopalachari government, in 1938, attempted to impose Hindi in schools, the first language struggle began in the state with the Self-Respect movement spearheading it. Unable to bear the heat of the protest, Rajagopalachari resigned from the Chief Minister's post. Following this, the governor passed an order revoking Hindi imposition in schools in 1940.

Through anti-Hindi struggles, Self-Respect movement not only protected Tamil but all the regional languages from the risk of being exterminated by Hindi, the language the rulers wanted to make as the national language.

**Equality in dining:**

Think about a social situation in which Brahmins and non-Brahmins were assigned separate spaces to dine in the hotels and also in the refreshment rooms at railway stations.

The Cheranmadevi Gurukulam, residential school controversy erupted only after the Gurukulam, ran by VVS Iyer had separate places for dining for Brahmin and non-Brahmin children. As the Gurukulam was receiving financial assistance from the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee (TNCC), Periyar vehemently opposed this discrimination and as the TNCC president and the secretary, Varadharajulu Naidu and Periyar proposed to stop fund to the Gurukulam.

Similarly, many hotels had the signboards announcing they were 'Brahmin Hotels' as

late as in 1950s. But, due to the strong and persistent campaigns by the Self-Respecters, the segregated dining arrangements in the hotels and in other public places vanished.

For instance, in 1957, Periyar sent letters to the rulers and also to the governor urging them not to give licenses to the hotels that use the word 'Brahmin' on signboards and thereby insulting the other communities.

As the government failed to act upon this, Periyar decided to go for direct action. Cadres from the Periyar's movement thronged before Murali Brahmin Café at Triplicane in Chennai and held protest every evening. The protest went on for the span of eight months and by now as many as 1021 persons, including women, were arrested.

Unable to withstand the Self-respecters' protests, the hotel owner finally agreed to change the hotel's name into 'Murali Ideal Hotel'.

**Self-respect marriage:**

The Self-Respect movement took up the cause of women and continuously campaigned for their rights. Knowing that the rituals and Sanskrit slogans were degrading women, the Self-Respect movement introduced Self-Respect Marriage, a new fashion of marriage without Brahmin priests and other rituals. Bypassing all the resistances, a large number of Self-Respect marriages began happening in the state despite the fact that the Self-Respect marriages were unlawful. It is important to note that between 1929 and 1932, 8000 such marriages were conducted in the Tamil region.

In 1953, two Brahmin judges of High Court Satyanarayana and Rajagopalan, in a partition suit, gave verdict that the children born of such marriages were not legitimate under the law.

All the children born to the parents, who opted for Self-Respect marriages, continued to be



illegitimate till C.N.Annadurai, passed a Bill in 1968 legalizing all such marriages.

Self-Respect movement encouraged and supported widow remarriages and inter-caste marriages. All these marriages were held in open places and attracted huge crowds. This had changed the value system pertaining to women.

Periyar's movement began Family Planning campaigns nearly four decades ahead of the Central government's campaigns. Now, Tamil Nadu and Kerala have been ranked first in the country in population control.

Self-Respect Movement was against the Devadasi system, in which young girls of a particular community were dedicated to the temples and sexually exploited by the elite people.

Brahmins put up hurdles in the way of Muthulakshmi Reddy, who tabled a Bill seeking abolishment of Devadasi practice. Self-Respect movement gave support to Muthulakshmi by campaigning actively to garner people's support. Finally, the Bill was passed and the pernicious practice was abolished.

**Conclusion:**

If people from all over the country rush to Tamil Nadu today for jobs and education it is because of the prevailing social climate. The Tamil people are peace loving and accommodative. Such lofty ideals became part of the collective mindset of the people, only because of the Self Respect Movement. The ideals of the movement, which aim at egalitarian society in all aspects, are still relevant. ■

Interactive Session

# Periyar Movement Becoming Global

Address delivered by Asiriyar Dr. K. Veeramani, in the International Conference on Periyar Self-Respect Movement at the University of Cologne, Germany on 28th July 2017




The Periyar Movement goes on striving, without expecting any returns or even words of gratitude. We never worried ourselves about stone throwers, those who threw brickbats at us in our conferences. The same Periyar, who insisted on people living with Self-Respect and dignity, also happily admitted that he and his followers did not care a whit about their own dignity while serving people, since theirs was a thankless job. Periyar's ambition was to lay roads to all the places which are not covered by roads. He was also confident that his Movement will have ample growth and would soon become global.

He asserted while addressing people at Erode that of all words found in any dictionary in the world, no one was more beautiful, more meaningful and more dynamic than the phrase **'Self-Respect'.** When Periyar was editing and printing his Tamil weekly (*Kudi Arasu*) he said that he least cared who followed him. When someone suggested that the weekly could be stopped for want of circulation,

Periyar expressed his determination to go on printing it, even if he had to act as its editor, printer and the only reader. He would never even think of closing his shop. As a result, today the shop has come to Germany. There are its branches in the United States, England, Singapore, Kuwait, Myanmar and many others in various parts of the world.

Periyar is a super market where you can get any article you want. His merchandise is of good quality and very different from the other brands. There is nothing spurious about it.

Periyar asserts that though at present the movement is opposed to religion, superstition and religious clergy, no one should think that it was its only agenda and the Movement would become superfluous once all these are eliminated.

Far from it, as long as there are people who exploit other men's labour, as long as there are some who are sumptuously fed and others go without food, as long as there are some who are over clothed when there are people who struggle even for a single piece of clothing, as long as the rich consider that all their riches is meant for their own luxurious living, Periyar was firm that his Movement would remain and no one can terminate it. When people asked him about socialism, Periyar replied that socialism was nothing but equal distribution of all the available resources. It was opposed to selfish hoarding.

When a man has two arms, two legs, two eyes and two ears, how will it be if only one hand, one leg, one eye and one ear are active? But do not we do the same thing, when we keep womenfolk, who form half of the human population, subjugated and hamper their movement?



Periyar's perseverance in continuing his Movement against odds has started paying off. His wares are very much in need in the United States and many other countries. How aptly has UNESCO called him a prophet of the new age!

When the First Self-Respect Conference was held at Chinglepet, Tamil Nadu, in 1929, Periyar had issued a strange and unique advertisement addressing the untouchables and downtrodden communities, asking them to attend the conference without fail. A similar, persuasive, invitation was extended to the widows and sex workers. Have you ever heard of anyone who would issue an invitation like this? Not only that, Periyar insisted that all the invitees must sit and dine together.

Periyar knew there would be resistance for such a move, which was a right one, if one thought of reforming the society. Having this in mind, Periyar asked in his own characteristic witty style, "How is it people go in groups for defecation, but separate themselves while dinning?" (Those were the days when people

The concept of Self-Respect is part of social science formulated by the great social scientist Periyar. His message must be taken to all corners of the world. We have got to swim against the current today. But we will, the Movement will, and it will safely reach the shore, rescuing in the process all those who are drowning in the flood.

answered the calls of nature in the open) Can anyone even think of framing such a question which was blunt, but true?

Periyar approached all complicated problems with utmost simplicity. When a devotee of god claimed that a stone idol in the temple could be made powerful through invocation of mantras, Periyar asked him why such invocation of mantras could not be used for upgrading the untouchables.

The concept of Self-Respect is part of social science formulated by the great social scientist Periyar. His message must be taken to all corners of the world. We have got to swim against the current today. But we will, the Movement will, and it will safely reach the shore, rescuing in the process all those who are drowning in the flood. However great a preceptor might be, he cannot take his ideology all alone to all corners. The task must be taken over by his followers. He has said how his followers must be. He said, my followers must think, reason out and analyse thoroughly before joining me. Once they join the Movement, however, they must function with military discipline.

I am a life time student of Periyar. I used to tell my friends, "I don't require any intelligence of my own, what I have imbibed from Periyar will do for me." I did not mind their laughing at me, but used to remind them that my thoughts were given to me by Periyar.

My own thinking might have its weakness. It may be swayed by my likes and dislikes. It is bound to be selfish. But the thoughts of Periyar imbibed by me can never be weak, they cannot be swayed by my likes or dislikes and they will not crave for gratitude.

Periyar used to assert that his followers were superior to ascetics. Normally, ascetics long for some pleasure from above, from the upper world, but Periyar's volunteers would reject them as a pack of lies, and work without expecting any returns.

Many of his followers have come to Germany at their own expense, driven by their own sense of sacrifice.

Once a couple came to my office, when we were all getting ready for our trip. They were Thangamani and Dhanalakshmi, married for twenty six years. Looking changed with emotion, they were waiting just to hand over a paper to me. When I went through the letter, I found that they had requested their entire property to the Movement in case some mishap were to prevent them from returning home from Germany.

Have you ever heard of such a Movement, having members imbued with such sense of sacrifice? The Movement has not given them any position. But it has restored them Self-Respect and dignity. That would suffice for them.

Mrs. Ulrike Niklas, Sven Wortmann, Claudia Weber have prepared many people in Germany to work for the Movement. What did they gain? They gained their faculty of reason and Self-Respect.

As a result, this Conference in Germany has gained a place in the history of the Movement.

There are many families like ours to serve. And we are keen on producing many such Self-Respect families. Many new families have joined us in Germany, in the United States, and at global level. An English proverb says, "Blood is thicker than water". There is something that is thicker even than blood – that is the bond of ideology – ideology of Self-Respect. Let Self-Respect shine forth in every family.

After setting foot on the moon, Neil Armstrong said *"It may be one step for me, but it is a giant leap for mankind"*. This conference is a giant leap for "Periyar's Philosophy".

Interactive Session

International Conference on PERIYAR SELF-RESPECT MOVEMENT Cologne, Germany 2017

# Periyarism
# A Way of Life

Poet Kali Poonkundran
Vice President, Dravidar Kazhagam

Excerpts from his speech delivered at International Conference on 'Periyar Self-Respect Movement' at University of Cologne, Germany, on July 28, 2017




Periyar has no preceptor (guru). He is a self taught scholar. When a statement of his was in agreement with Tiruvalluvar, he used to say that Tiruvalluvar had anticipated him, but never that he was quoting Tiruvalluvar. It was a fact, not a figure of speech.

We are standing at a point when Periyar's thoughts are required for the entire human-kind, when bigotry is having a field time everywhere. Regarding India, the less said, the better. Periyar is the only leader, only intellectual, who has formulated the unique principle of Self-Respect based on rationalism which will ensure equality in the world.

There have been other thinkers like Marx and Engels who have formulated ideologies and had stopped at that. The task of propagating it and founding an organization for the purpose had been taken over by those who came after them. Periyar has been the only philosopher who formulated his philosophy, and entered the

field as the chief propagandist. He was both the movement and the field worker. He was willing to pay any cost required for achieving his goal. And he has happily watched the result of his work.

In India, there is another factor to be noted. Many reformist organizations have sprouted in India in the recent past, but they have withered away after the demise of their leaders. Periyar's Movement is still alive, functioning with strength and vitality, like a thousand legged dragon, all because of Periyar's forethought which made him create an organization, stipulate its mode of functioning and produce a dedicated leadership for continuing his work even after his time. And the movement has now attained global status.

It was in 1929 that Periyar conducted the first provincial Self-Respect Conference at Chenglepet, and passed revolutionary resolutions of far reaching significance which people would not have thought of till then. It had been preceded by a year by the South Indian Reformists conference presided over by Periyar, which had passed many radical resolutions.

Many instances can be cited for illustrating the success of Periyar's thoughts; one of them can be the now popular Self-Respect marriages. Periyar used those occasions to propagate his views among the wedding guests who might not care to attend his meetings. Periyar initiated the tradition of conducting weddings shorn of religious rituals, without the presence of a Brahmin priest, which was a significant deviation in those days. Such weddings, which were very much in vogue since 1927, were pronounced illegal by courts of law until 1967. When the in-laws of our Asiriyar K. Veeramani, got married, the Madras High Court invalidated the marriage through its order.

Do think about it. For forty long years these Self-Respect weddings were rendered illegal by the courts. Yet, millions of people conducted their weddings in this fashion, unmindful of what the courts said, because they held Periyar's dictum to be more sacrosanct than anything else. Only Periyar could have brought about such a resolve in people.

Tiruvalluvar is being celebrated for his brevity, for having measured the whole world is seven words. But Periyar has even excelled in capturing a recipe for happy life just in a pithy saying of four Tamil words, which may be translated as: *Dignity and Knowledge Adorn Humans*. He exceeds himself when he makes another statement in three words: *Self-Respect Assures Happiness*. Periyar has many such aphorisms to his credit.

The impact of Periyar has been tremendous. When NT Rama Rao floated his party in Andhra Pradesh, he declared that he was starting a Self-Respect Movement. When they started a new party in Bihar, the people's march was named 'Swabhiman'.

The impact of Periyar has been tremendous. When NT Rama Rao floated his party in Andhra Pradesh, he declared that he was starting a Self-Respect Movement. When they started a new party in Bihar, the people's march was named 'Swabhiman'.

Recently, there was a heated discussion on secularism in the Lok Sabha, in the course of which Mallikarjuna Kharge of the Congress Party, who is the leader of the opposition, declared, "We belong to the Dravidian stock. You people, who are opposed to secularism belong to the Aryan race, who entered this land through Khyber pass." Periyar has entered neither the parliament nor any legislature. But he is present everywhere.

Once, in the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly, a member asked Chief Minister Anna if freedom fighter's grant would be sanctioned to Periyar. Anna replied that the entire government was an offering to Periyar. Periyar never formed a government. But, those in the government were always influenced by his ideas and ideals. Periyar is an exceptional leader who conducted the government while being out of it. Even today, before introducing any legislation, those in power take care to find out what would have been Periyar's reaction to the measure. In that way, Periyar's philosophy continues to be the guiding force of the government even today.

There was a Superstition Eradication Conference in Salem in 1971. In the rally of the conference, Periyar was being taken in a procession, when some persons belonging to Jan Sangh threw a footwear at him. But as the vehicle had passed away, the footwear fell into the next vehicle carrying the picture of Rama. The volunteers in the vehicle, infuriated by a footwear being thrown at Periyar, took the footwear and, by way of tit-for-tat, hit Rama with it.

This small incident was blown out of proportion in the election propaganda in 1971, when C.Rajagopalachari and K.Kamaraj had joined hands against the DMK. A large size wall poster, showing Periyar as hitting Rama with a footwear and Kalaignar as encouraging him was printed and displayed all over the State. Periyar reacted saying that he was happy about his view being propagated everywhere at



the opponent's expense. But the DMK, which was meeting the election in alliance with Indira Gandhi's Congress, was rattled.

The reporter of *'The Hindu'* asked Prime Minister Indira Gandhi whether the incident would not affect her chances of success. When Indira Gandhi asked what incident it was, she was told that E.V.R. had beaten Rama with a footwear. Indira Gandhi's reply was nonchalant. "Oh that", she said, "Naicker has been beating Rama for sixty years. What is new about it?"

When the results came, it was found that the position of the DMK had improved, showing a rise of seats from 138 to 184, showing that the voters were grateful to Periyar, whose philosophy and propaganda have been responsible for their elevation and ensured their education, making them doctors and engineers.

Periyar's mission was not merely to eradicate god or religion or superstition. He aimed at a world where total equality of all human beings would be assured, sans subjugation and exploitation. He would demolish anything that comes in his way, be it God, religion or scriptures – why, even the constitution of the land.

People are wasting a lot of their money and a lot of their time on religious matters, spending 188 days out of 365 in a year. All this can be saved if one follows Periyar's principles.

We enjoy such prosperity and happiness because of Periyar. All these are his gifts to our society. All of us are indebted to him forever. Periyarism is a way of life. If it is followed, there will be no failure in life. The entire humanity needs to be guided by Periyarism. Let us resolve to follow the path shown by him! ■

# Conferment of K.Veeramani Award for Social Justice 2016

## Periyar International, USA, confers the Award to Respectful Michael Selvanayagam

The function to confer K.Veeramani Award for Social Justice 2016 was held at the University of Cologne in the afternoon on 29th July 2017. Dr. Soma Ilangovan, President, Periyar International, USA presented the Award to Hon'ble Michael Selvanayagam, Deputy Mayor, London Borough of Croydon, England. Dr. Lakshman Tamil, Dallas, Texas, USA welcomed. Dr. K. Veeramani felicitated the Awardee and delivered lecture on 'Social Justice'.

**Welcome address by Dr. Lakshman Tamil :**

Social justice is an important, part and parcel of self-respect philosophy. If the society is a self-respecting society, only then there will be social justice. What is Self-Respect? It is a philosophy advocated by Periyar. It is a philosophy where all men and women are created equal. It is a philosophy where people are not discriminated on any basis, say race, gender, religion, caste, sexual orientation, or sexual identity. Absolutely there is no place for violence in this philosophy– tolerance for any form of violence. If you are a self-respectful person, you will treat everyone around you with self-respect. If your self-respect is ever denied, you will fight tooth and nail to get back your dignity; your self-respect. It is a philosophy that extends beyond individuals. If an institution is a self-respecting institution, it will be inclusive, it will not exclude anybody. If a country is a self-respecting country, it will not unleash aggression on other countries or any of its own people. So, self-respect philosophy is an inclusive philosophy and where there is no place for violence. It proposes an egalitarian society.



*Dr. Lakshman Tamil*

Periyar International includes many Tamils in the organization but it is not a Tamil organization. There is no Indian chapter of Periyar International yet. We will be forming an Indian chapter in the future. We have an American chapter, and we have a German chapter. This will substantially prove that this is not an Indian




*Periyar International USA, confers 'K.Veeramani Award for Social Justice 2016' to Respectful Michael Selvanayagam*

organization, it transcends all nations. Someone asked a question whether Periyar International supports Tamil Eelam. The truth is that we support human rights and we raise our voice wherever human rights are violated. We never affiliate ourselves with any political group or any organization that espouses violence. We are extremely transparent and abhor violence.

Periyar transformed a downtrodden society into a self-respecting society. Many of the people involved with Periyar Movement may at times seems emotional and show great reverence to Periyar, and this is because their lives were personally touched by Periyar; he transformed their downtrodden life into a life with dignity.

In the same way, when we show reverence to Dr.K.Veeramani, President of Dravidar Kazhagam or when we institute the Social Justice Award in his name, it is not sycophancy or a form of cult following. It is an expression of gratitude to a disciple of Periyar for devoting his life to the spreading of the mission of Periyar.

Dr.K.Veeramani, President of Dravidar Kazhagam, is an advocate by profession. He is such a talented man; he could have advanced very high in his career and could have earned millions of dollars. Instead, he sacrificed his life by devoting to public cause, becoming a torch bearer of Periyar. This Award is an expression of our gratitude towards him. The Award is on Social Justice. Dr.K.Veeramani, has contributed immensely to Social Justice following the footsteps of Periyar.

So, this Award is aptly named after him. Initially, he was reluctant to accept naming of

International Conference on PERIYAR SELF-RESPECT MOVEMENT Cologne, Germany 2017

the Award after him, and it needed quite a bit of convincing to make him agree to it.

Today we have gathered here to confer the 18th K. Veeramani Award for Social Justice on Mr. Michael Selvanayagam.



*Michael Selvanayagam*

**Acceptance Address by Hon'ble Michael Selvanayagam**

It is astute to have named the award as K. Veeramani Social Justice Award. The luminaries like Honorable V.P.Singh, Chandrajit Yadav, Kalaignar Karunanidhi and all have been bestowed with the award. Social Justice reflects the hall mark of our civilization itself. A man who cannot respect a woman is not a man at all! Education to all and empowerment of the left behind is the courage to improve the society itself! What has been achieved in Tamil Nadu and followed in other parts speak volumes to the social Justice struggle and the achievements realised so far. We still have to go a long way. With the ever present omnipresent and omnipotent social media the improvements will leap forward. No one can stop it!

*Long Live Periyar! Long Live Dr. Veeramani! Long Live Social Justice!*

## K.VEERAMANI AWARD FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE



*Dr. K. Veeramani*

K.VEERAMANI AWARD FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE has been instituted by the non-resident Indian (NRI) followers of Periyar E.V. Ramasamy, the great social revolutionary of India, living all over the world, to honor his disciple Dr. K. Veeramani the President of Dravidar Kazhagam. This Award is instituted in Dr.K.Veeramani's name to recognize his contribution in creating a mass awareness in India on social equality and respect for human dignity, and the battles he has been waging against oppressions that deny the human dignity and equality.

This international award is conferred every year to an individual who has or an institution that has contributed immensely to the cause of social justice. The Award recognizes a single event or a lifetime contribution that is responsible for the emancipation of a section of the society from the oppressions of social injustice.

This global oriented Award does not discriminate anyone on the basis of nationality, citizenship, national origin, caste, religion, language, gender, sexual orientation, handicap, economic status, family background, political views, political affiliation or any other social, political, or economical divisions or classifications.

# PERIYAR INTERNATIONAL



Germany Chapter

*Convenes*

## INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE on PERIYAR SELF-RESPECT MOVEMENT

**@ Köln University, Germany - July 27, 28, 29 & 2017**

## Confluence of Great Humanists!

**Self Respect is the basic Principle of Humanity**
**Its effective realization brings Humans together as a Family!**

### Special Features

First International Self Respect Conference

Awareness, created of 90 years' struggle for liberating the socially enslaved masses for centuries

Rationalists, Atheists, Secular Humanists, Free Thinkers and Skeptics from various countries come together

Academicians, Litterateurs, Scholars and Intellectuals of reputed universities present papers and deliberate

**Realize Self Respect, Ensure Egalitarian Society!**

*Confirm your participation!*

*For details :* **www.periyarinternational.com/selfrespectconf**



# International Conference on Periyar Self Respect Movement

@ Cologne University, Germany
July 27, 28 & 29 2017

## The details of the Dignitaries and Delegates, participated from Tamil Nadu, India

Self Respectful



Krishnasamy Veeramani



Veeramani Mohana



Kandasamy
Kali Poongundran



Kali Poongundran
Vetrichelvi



Subramaniam
Pirainuthal Selvi



Pakkirisamy
Muthaiyan



Perambur Chidambaranathan
Jayaraman



Raghavan Desappan
Veerabadran



Govindasamy
Thangamani



Rajagopalan Dhanalakshmi



Kullapaa Mudali Somasundaram



Periaswamy Rajamanickam


Venkatesan Anbalagan


Krishnan Sakthivel


Vanchinathan Govindarajan


Sakthivel Karthick


Thirugnanam Sankar


Sannasi Ganesan


Palaniappan Sivakumar


Muthuiyalu Krishnan
Karur Rajasekaran


Arumuga Padayatchi
Kalaichelvan


Dhandapani Jayakumar


Viveganandam Sadagopan


Mannagatti Subbarayan


Mannagatti Vijayanand


Voomaiyan Jayaraman


Jayaraman Thamil Chelvi


Sevugan Muniyasamy


Arasagumara Nadar
Thangasamy



*Dignitaries and Delegates with Asiriyar Dr. K. Veermani at Cologne University, Germany*



Annamalai Arulmozhi



Cassy Visvanadin Narayanassamy



Pachaiappan Latharani



Sivame Viramany



Samikkannu Rajendran



Subramaniam Sundaram



Manickam Jeyachandran



Swaminathan Devadoss



Amersingh Kalaichelvi



Prince Ennares Periyar



Veerasamy Kumaresan



Gopalakrishnan Olivannan



**Confluence of Atheist Fraternity of**

## International Eminence in the Land of Periyar

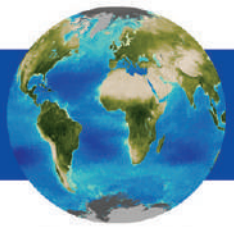
**Dravidar Kazhagam** Tamil Nadu | **Atheist Centre** Vijayawada

&

**The Rationalists' Forum,** Tamil Nadu

*jointly organise*

# WORLD ATHEIST CONFERENCE 2018



**5, 6 & 7 JANUARY 2018**
**Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu, India**

**PERIYAR CENTENARY EDUCATIONAL COMPLEX,**
**K. Sathanur Main Road,**
**Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu - 620 021.**

***Theme :*** **ATHEISM, HOPE OF HUMANITY**

- Atheist – Humanists around the world participate in the conference, besides the leaders of various atheist, rationalist and humanist organizations from all the States of the country.
- Paper presentations by atheist scholars and activists followed by deep deliberations on the different perspectives of atheist philosophy, form the major part of the conference proceedings.
- Sharing of religion-free living culture in various countries / societies and churning up the substance on living free from the fear of god, enabling humanity to progress and peace.
- Revealing the success, in establishing the egalitarian society free from the belief of non existing 'god' through the services of organizations and movements by atheist philosophers.
- Documenting the pioneering role rendered by atheist movements in the East during the early historical period.

## REGISTER YOUR PARTICIPATION

**Delegate fee :**

From India Rs.500/-, Abroad USD 50/- to attend the conference with provision of lunch and tea & snacks.

**Accommodation :**

The delegates have to make their own arrangements.

(The list of hotels and the tariff rates will be published as well as placed in the website shortly. On payment, it could be arranged by the organizers at Trichy.)

**For details :**

website: *www.worldatheistconference.com*
email: *worldatheistconference@gmail.com*

**Contact Address :**

DRAVIDAR KAZHAGAM
Periyar Thidal, 84/1, EVK Sampath Road,
Vepery, Chennai – 600 007.
Tamil Nadu, India.

*Online payment of the delegate fee may be made to the Bank Account and the remittance details may be advised for due registration.*

Name : **DRAVIDAR KAZHAGAM**
Bank : **Indian Overseas Bank**
Branch : **Vepery**
Account No. : **CA-232002000000016**
IFCS Code : **IOBA0002320**
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# Perception of a Delegate


## Dr. S. Pirainuthal Selvi

Treasurer, Dravidar Kazhagam




Self-Respect is essential for humans because only humans are rational animals in the world. Thanthai Periyar E.V.Ramasamy founded Self-Respect Movement in 1926. Why he started Self-Respect Movement was that in India people were discriminated in the name of God and castes in Hindu religion. About 95 per cent of people in India were working class people. They were denied education health and social and political status in the name of God and caste. They were ordered to do hereditary profession only. If they refuse they were severely punished by the rulers who were under the control of Brahmin Gurus or ministers. The underprivileged people were told that it was ordered by God and so they had to obey. So people accepted slavery without questioning. To liberate those 95 per cent people from slavery Thanthai Periyar founded Self-Respect Movement. This movement has crossed 90 years and the name has changed as Dravidar Kazhagam from 1944.

Even though it was started in Tamil Nadu in India, it is not confined to these people alone. It is essential for all humans because Eradication of Caste and Religion, Atheism, Social Justice, Gender Justice, Human Rights, Rationalism, Secularism are very essential for humans to lead a Self-Respect life. So, Globalization of Periyar (rationalist philosophy) is the only solution for the human beings to live a happy, peaceful life and as a result Periyar International, United States of America emerged. Under the leadership of Dr.K.Veeramani, Dr. Soma Ilangovan and Dr. Lakshman Tamil are doing very good work of Globalising Periyar Mission.




Global celebration of 139th Birthday of Periyar was celebrated in California (USA) Michigan (USA) Washington (USA) Chicago (USA) Connecticut (USA) Malaysia, Singapore, Malacca (Singapore), Ghana (Africa), Japan, Myanmar and in India, in Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Jharkand, Rajasthan, Assam, Puducherry and Kolkata.

Thanthai Periyar had visited European countries including England, Soviet Russia, Germany, Spain, France and Egypt from 13.12.1931 to 11.11.1932. He stayed for some days in Berlin which was the Head Quarters of Germany. Hitler did not come to power in those days. It was a socialistic country. Thanthai Periyar mingled with 'Socialist Associations' and visited nude societies and learnt about their true aims when he stayed there.

Periyar International (German Chapter) conference on Periyar Self-Respect Movement was conducted at University of Cologne, Germany on July 27, 28 & 29 – 2017.

A few words about Cologne where we had our conference. Cologne is the 4th biggest city in Germany, the other three are Berlin, Hamburg and Munich. Cologne city was almost destroyed in World War II. In 1959 only it returned to its pre war population. Cologne University started its activities from 6.1.1389. Following Finance's occupation French Government dissolved the University in 1798. Again in 29.5.1919 the new University of Cologne started functioning where our conference was conducted by Periyar International USA, the German Chapter of Periyar International along with Centre of Excellence for Periyar Thought, Periyar Maniammai University. Rationalists, humanists, free thinkers and other progressive minded persons all over the world and the University Research Students all participated in the conference and presented about the papers about Periyar and his Ideology. From Tamil Nadu, India 41 delegates went to Germany and attended the Conference.

The delegates were awarded certificates and mementoes and the original Educational Cologne called Farina 1709.

Getting Visa to Germany Conference, trip to Germany, stay in Germany and the food everything was so neatly and perfectly arranged. The conference ended with a note that the next conference will be held in USA in 2019. In the evening boating was arranged in Rhine River and we visited the good old Cathedral Shore. **Self-Respect Movement started on the bank of Cauvery river, Erode where Thanthai Periyar was born and we had a nice informative and thought provoking conference at the bank of Rhine river.** Our thanks go to Asiriyar Ayya, our beloved V.Kumaresan, Prof. Dr. Dr. Ulrike Niklas, Dr. Soma Illangovan, Dr. Lakshman Tamil and Dr. Ulrike Niklas team. Hats off to excellently and perfectly arranged conference.

We, the delegates of the Conference held in Germany are looking forward to the World Atheist Conference-2018 on January 5, 6 & 7, 2018 at Trichy, India and the conference in 2019 in USA.

Long live Thanthai Periyar and Dravidar Kazhagam under the leadership of Dr. K.Veeramani. We will globalise Periyar Mission by propagating self-Respect, social justice, gender justice, humanism, rationalism and atheism. ■

# "Forever Young"



**Prof. Dr. Ulrike Niklas**
Chair Person, Periyar International, Germany Chapter, Cologne

Prof. Dr. Ulrike Niklas has sent the following song, lyricised by Bob Dylon, the famous public singer who was awarded Nobel Prize for Literature in 2016. The text of the song is greatly relevant to Dr.K.Veeramani on his 85th birthday. Dr. Ulrike Niklas says, "One of the beautiful lyrics (in a slightly abridged form) I would like to address to-day to our beloved leader Dr.K.Veeramani.



Bob Dylon

"…..
May your wishes all come true.
May you always do for others
And let others do for you.
May you build a ladder to the stars
And climb on every rung.
May you stay
Forever young!
…..
…..
May you always know the truth
And see the lights surrounding you.
May you always be courageous,
Stand upright and be strong,
And may you stay
Forever young!
…..
…..

May your hands always be busy,
May your feet always be swift.
May you have a strong foundation
When the winds of changes shift.
May your heart always be joyful
May your song always be sung.
May you stay
FOREVER YOUNG."



# திருவாளர்கள் கி. வீரமணி - மோகனா திருமண வாழ்த்து



## புரட்சிக்கவிஞர் பாரதிதாசன்

7-12-1958 ஞாயிறு மாலை 5 மணிக்கு திருச்சி-பெரியார் மாளிகையில் தந்தை பெரியார் தலைமையில் நடைபெற்ற திருமணத்தின் போது புரட்சி கவிஞர் பாடிய வாழ்த்து அகவல் பா.

இளமை வளமையை விரும்பும் என்பர்
இளமை எளிமையை விரும்பிய புதுமையை
வீர மணியிடம் நேரில் கண்டுள்ளேன்!
பாடிக் கைவீசிப் பலருடன் உலவி
வேடிக்கை வேண்டும் வாடிக் கைதானே
அவன்பாற் காண்கிலேன் அன்றும் இன்றும்

உற்றநோய் நோன்றலும் ஊர்நலம் ஓம்பலும்
நற்றவம் என்பர்; தொண்டென நவில்வர்!
தொண்டு மனப்பான்மை அந்தத் தூயனைக்
கொண்டது குழந்தைப் பருவத்தி லேயே!

தமிழன் அடிமை தவிர்த்துக் குன்றென
நிமிர்தல் வேண்டும் என்று நிகழ்த்தும்
பெரியார் ஆணை ஒன்றே பெரிதெனக்
கருதிய கருத்து வீர மணியை
வீண்செயல் எதிலும் வீழ்த்த வில்லை!

அண்டிப் பிறரை அழிக்க அல்ல;
உண்டிக் கல்ல உயர்வுக் கல்ல;
தொண்டுக் காகக் கல்வித் துறையிற்
சேர்ந்தோன் எம்.ஏ. தேர்விலும் தேர்ந்தோன்
நினைவின் ஆற்றல் நிறைந்த வீரமணி
படிக்கும் நேரத்திலும் பார்ப்பனர் கோட்டையை
இடிக்கும் நேரம் எட்டுப் பங்கதிகம்

விட்டே னாபார் தமிழரின் பகைவரைக்
கட்டா யம் தொலைப் பேனெனக் கழறும்
எட்டாம் பத்தாண் டாசிரி யர்க்கொரு
சட்டாம் பிள்ளை என்னத் தகுத்தோன்!

பெருங்கூட் டத்துப் பெரியரும் பிள்ளையும்
விரும்பிப் பேசும் ஆற்றல் மிக்கோன்
கல்வியும் செல்வமும் கனக்க உடைய

அரங்கம் மைசிதம் பரனார் அளித்த
கற்றார் வியக்கத் கலையினால் விரிந்த
தோகை மயில்நிகர் மோகனா இந்நாள்
பெற்று பேறு யாவர் பெறுவார்
தமிழர் நமக்கும் தமிழ் மொழிக்கும்
உழைப்பதே உயர்ந்த செல்வமாய்க் கொண்ட
மாண்பார் வீர மணியும் அம்மணியும்
ஒருமனம் ஆனதை உறுதி செய்யும்இத்
திருமண நன்னாள் தென்னாட்டுத் திருநாள்
வாழ்க வீர மணியோடு மோகனா!
இன்னுடல் இருவர்க் கிரம்பின் குண்டென
எய்தும் இன்பம் கரும்பின் சாறென
மற்றவும் பெற்றும் பல்லாண்டு வாழ்க!

மணமகட்கு நான் வழுத்துவ தொன்று;
தகுதி சேர்குரு சாமி மணந்த
குஞ்சிதம் அம்மையார் கொண்ட உழைப்பும்
பெரியார் மணந்த திருமணி அம்மையார்
அளவிடற் கரிதெனக் கொண்ட உழைப்பும்
மன்னுசீர் சனார்த்தனம் மனோரஞ் சிதமெனும்
அம்மையார் கொண்ட அரிய உழைப்பும்
சிறியவை என்று செப்பும் வண்ணம்
திருநாட் டுக்குப் பெரிதும் உழைக்க

மணமகன் தனக்குநான் வழுத்துவ தொன்று
பெரியா ரிடத்துப் பேரன்பு, வாய்மை,
அடக்கம், செயல்செயும் ஆற்றல் வாய்ந்த
வேதா சலனார் போல் விளங்குக!

திருமண மக்கள் பெரும்புகழ் எய்துக!
தமிழ்தழைத் தினிதின் ஓங்குக!
தமிழ்நாடு விடுதலை தாங்குக! வெல்கவே! ■

# *Wedding Greetings to*
# K.Veeramani and Mohana

Recited by Poet **Bharatidasan**
on 7th December 1958 as part of the proceedings



Youth usually craves prosperity -
In Veeramani I observe
youth practicing austerity.
Never have I seen him
in jocular company, singing or dancing.

They say penance and service are but
forbearing one's own sufferings
and cherishing social welfare.
This symbol of purity imbibed
principle of service even as a child.

Since he regarded foremost
Periyar's fiat to free Tamils from
thralldom and make them stand rocklike
never did he fall into time wasting traps.
He got education, became Master of Arts,
not for selfish living nor for rising in stature,
but for serving society.

With phenomenal memory
he spent but little of his time in reading
and eight times more in storming Brahmin
fortresses.

Fitting monitor he is
to the octogenarian Master
who is for total annihilation of
foes of the Tamil race.
In oration he captivates young and old alike.

Who can equal in fortune
Mohana, paragon of learning
begotten of Arangammai and Chidambaranar,
wealthy and well read!

Veeramani
ceaselessly striving for Tamil and the Tamils
taking her as life-partner
is a festive occasion for the South.

Long live the couple
with sturdy health,
sweetest happiness.

The bride may offer
service best to land of her birth

Let her far excel in service
Kunjitham, Gurusami's consort,
Maniammaiar partner to Periyar, and
Manoranjitham wedded to Janarthanam

Let the bridegroom
equal Vedachalam in
devotion to Periyar, commitment, humility, and
dynamism.

Let the couple reap glory unlimited!
Long live Tamil
Let Tamil Nadu get liberated.

Translated by Prof. **A.Ayyasamy**

INTERVIEW

# ASIRIYAR 85

On the 25th and the 26th of November 2017 five persons put 85 questions to Dr. K.Veeramani to mark his fast approaching 85th birthday. Most of them are published here.

**You often say you do not require intelligence of your own and what you have acquired from Periyar is enough for you. Do you think it is right?**

Cent per cent right. My own intelligence may be faulty or shaky. It is born out of lack of experience. But Periyar's thoughts are born out of deep thinking and fearlessness.

**When your teacher changed your name from 'Sarangapani' to 'Veeramani' did you ask him why?**

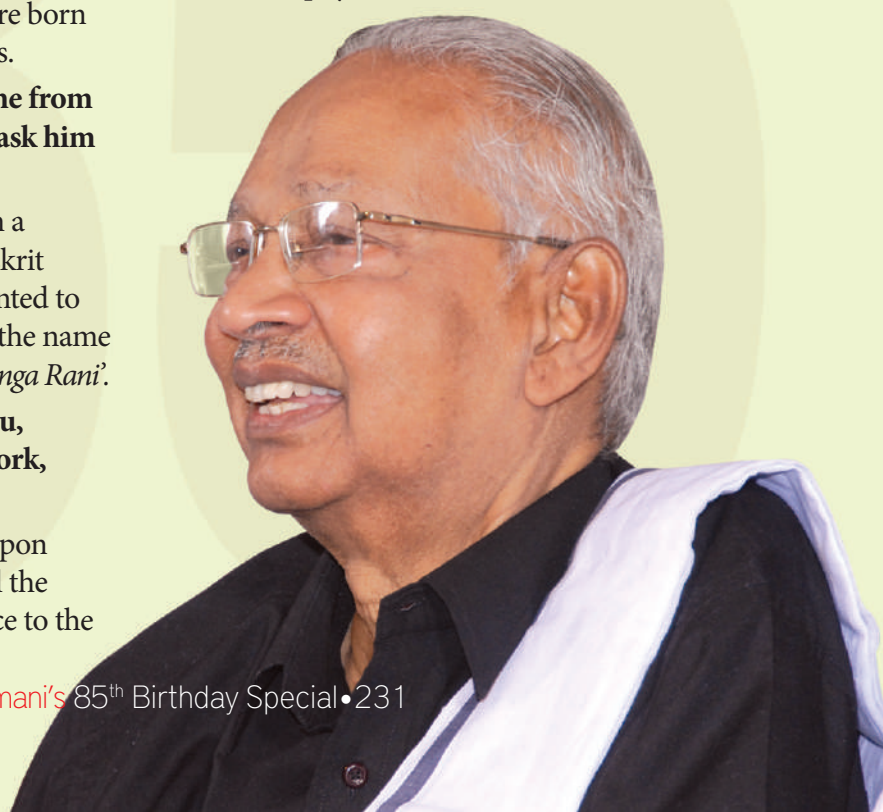
Sarangapani is the name of a deity in a temple at Kumbakonam. It is a Sanskrit name. My teacher Dravidamani wanted to give me a Tamil Name. He selected the name 'Veeramani' from Anna's novel, *'Kalinga Rani'*.

**Which is the most difficult task for you, leading the Movement, journalistic work, University administration?**

'Difficult' or 'not difficult' depends upon the approach to the task. Though all the three must go on properly, the service to the Movement is most essential, which must go on in spite of obstacles.

**Your interest in sports and games?**

Since I came to the Movement at too young an age I never got interested in them. I never attended physical education classes.



**When the DMK defected from the Dravidar Kazhagam all the people who were with you joined the DMK, but you did not. At the age of 16, how were you able to decide that Periyar alone was your leader?**

I had always been with Periyar and also had listened to him very often. I felt Anna was violating party discipline. I was convinced that Periyar could never go wrong.



*Dravidamani, Asiriyar's Teacher*

**You have been physically attacked five times so far, with the motive of killing you! How do you see this?**

People thought the Movement would die with Periyar. But our opponents found that Periyar principles and propaganda machinery have been sharpened after him. Further, Periyar used to say that it is better to die for one's cause rather than of any other factor. I remember that and go ahead with my task. That is all.

**Among the Presidents, Prime Ministers and Chief Ministers whom do you like most?**

Among Presidents, it is Zail Singh – he came up from a backward family after doing many sacrifices.

Though Jawaharlal Nehru has laid the foundation for modern India, it was VP Singh, who was in the office for a short period, and worked for protecting Social Justice.

As a Chief Minister, Kalaignar strengthened the foundation laid by Anna, against heavy odds.

**You came to the Movement as a boy of ten. Did you meet with any opposition at home, regarding religious matters?**

People would complain to my father regarding my speeches. He did not bother about it. My teacher took tuitions, and kept me disciplined. That made my father happy. On the whole, my family left me on my own.

**You have read about many revolutionaries. Have you ever found any shortcoming in Ayya?**

Never. I have always been feeling that I have not understood Ayya in full. I have not come to the stage that you mention.

**Have you ever thought that there is something you have not learned from Periyar?**

I did not think so. Ayya was always prepared to clarify our doubts. Yet, I wanted to get his own version of his trip to Kasi (Varanasi). I know that he did not go as an ascetic. But the real reason and circumstances, I have not got straight from him.

**You were issuing a manuscript magazine when you were a high school student at Cuddalore?**

Not one, but two, viz., *Pudhumai* (Innovation) and *Muzhakkam* (Proclamation) only for a short period. We got them reviewed by Periyar, Anna and Bharatidasan.

**Q: You have been cherishing high values from the beginning. You have always been firm and resolute, even in the matter of Periyar's wedding. What gave you this firmness? Your own resolve, the involvement induced by Dravidamani or your close association with Periyar?**

Since I came to Periyar Movement at an early age, there was no room whatever for my going astray, being misled or any kind of misdemeanor.

**Have you had any experience of singing on the stages?**

A lot of it. In those days, when meetings were organized, we had to do everything like



*Asiriyar at his tender age with Periyar*

raising the platform, borrowing the furniture, presiding over the meeting, proposing vote of thanks, singing and receiving the speakers. Singing was part of the meeting.

**As you are involved in the Dravidian Movement, are you opposed to Tamil Nationalism?**

There is no Tamil Nationalism outside the Dravidian Movement, which stands both for Self-Respect and Tamils' Rights. The so called Tamil nationalists say nothing about Self-Respect. But we stress on both.

**Any unforgettable press meet?**

Even as Periyar's body was at Rajaji Hall, some newsmen asked me whether Dravidar Kazhagam would cease to exist and merge with Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam. I said I was sure that the Party would continue to function. Kalaignar later appreciated my reply and said that only a separately functioning Dravidar Kazhagam will add strength to the DMK and the government.

**Many of your family members are away from the Movement. Is it of their own volition or to avoid unnecessary criticism?**

They are not away from the policies of the Movement. Only they have not come forward to accept responsibilities.

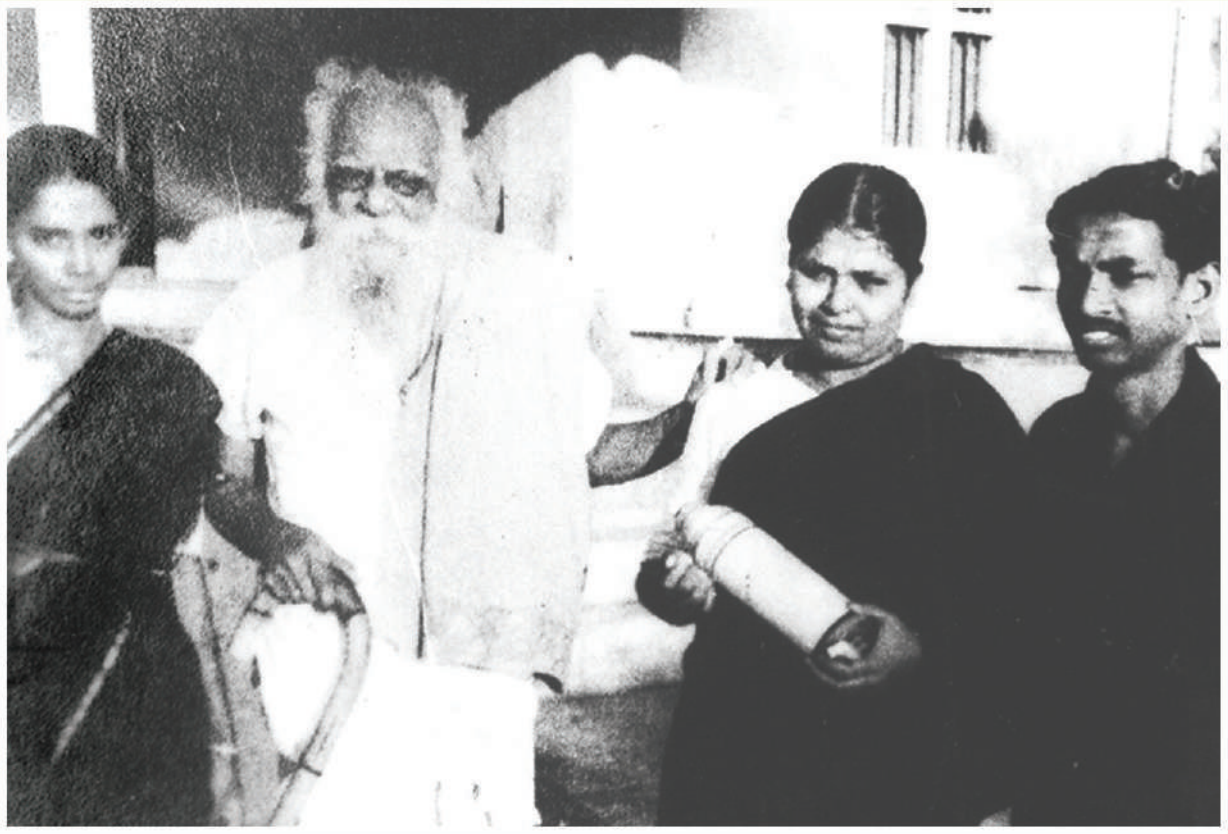
Anburaj functions as General Secretary. Even that is not to my liking or that of my life partner. However, it is always good that the entire family is wedded to the same ideology.

**Your work consists of cultural revival on the one side and spreading of rationalist thinking on the other. If there is a conflict of interest between the two, how will you resolve it?**

There is no question of conflict if one understands the foundation of Periyarism. Culture and history must be harnessed for developing scientific temper.

**We often ask if a person from the depressed community can become the pontiff of Sankara Mutt. People ask whether such people can hold responsibilities in Periyar Trust?**

There are so many of them in the Trust. Once they enter, all of them become equal. There is no upper caste or lower caste. They are Dravidians.



*Periyar and Maniammaiar, flanked by Asiriyar and his life companion, Mohana*

**You have functioned under the leadership of Periyar and later under Maniammaiar. Have you perceived any difference?**

None whatever. Maniammaiar took over Periyar's legacy and worked for making it global. She managed even piquant situations adroitly, proving that she was a seasoned leader.

**When many international humanist forums in which progressive forces of our own county are members fail to pass any resolution against caste system, London based IHEU (International Humanist and Ethical Union) in which Dravidar Kazhagam also is a member, passed an anti-caste resolution in its recent Bombay Conference. You played a substantial role in bringing it about?**

Actually, we had given the resolution for discussion in the Resolution Committee and appraised the leaders elaborately on caste situation in India and untouchability. In that way the passing of the resolution is a feather in Dravidar Kazhagam's cap.

**You have conducted Self-Respect weddings for three generations. How do you feel about it?**

Four generations, not three. Some people, after the ceremony is over would want me to conduct their children and grand children's weddings also in the same way. All couples have led a happy married life, without any disappointment or frustration. It is a good indication that superstition is coming to an end.

**Once you have recorded Periyar's speech on a gramophone plate?**

We wanted to record Periyar's speech and took him to the studio. He was happy and came to the studio bearing inconveniences. But he could not read the speech. It was like trying to make a wild lion do a circus trick!

Once Ramu Kariya, Malayalam movie director tried to make a movie on Periyar. It was difficult to make Periyar pretend. He could only act in the real sense of the term.

**We have heard that if only you had been somewhat flexible in your private life, you could have made a fortune. Is it true?**

Both my in-laws are affluent, with properties in India and abroad. I had to make some compromise if I wanted to get them. I was not prepared for it. My life partner also felt the same way. It was a loss no doubt. But I am happy that I stood by my principle.

**You have taken Periyar all over the globe. Do you change your propaganda strategies according to the place?**

Bharatidasan has predicted that the whole world will admire Periyar's thoughts and follow him. To achieve that, the same strategy may not be applicable to all places. Adaptability is necessary; we have to find out people's mindset and requirements in each region. Even in Tamil Nadu Periyar has been flexible without sacrificing the core principle. Atheism will not suit the North. But when we speak of Social Justice and Rationalism, even believers are attracted. In Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, we made ourselves acceptable by referring to Mandal Commission. We have entered many countries through educational agreements. Periyarism has even penetrated Africa. Many people like Periyar's concept of feminism.

**Those who joined Dravidar Kazhagam and those who are born to them – How do you view them?**

Those who joined the Dravidar Kazhagam are followers of the ideology. We cannot expect the offsprings being like that. We have to convert them to our way of thinking.

**You are able to read hundreds of books in a short period?**

It is only a question of habit. Not only reading. Walking, talking, eating - I do everything fast.

**As a journalist you have attempted a variety of forms, which include a couple of poems. Are there any unpublished poems with you?**

I just write what occurs to me. Once I felt emotionally charged on feminism. So I wrote a poem. I don't decide which form I should choose. The occasion makes the choice.

**You have never written stories or plays?**

No. But I have read fiction and plays. Fiction of Dr. Mu.Va., Khandekar, Va.Ra. and Irwing Wallace have attracted me.

I like reading George Bernard Shaw's plays.

**You are generally believed to be short-tempered?**

Cent percent true. One has to get angry when the occasion demands it. I cannot smile on those occasions. I control myself and apologise when the occasion demands it.

**There are many who are involved in the Movement. But the younger generation is not so involved. Some of them are not even interested. Why is it so?**

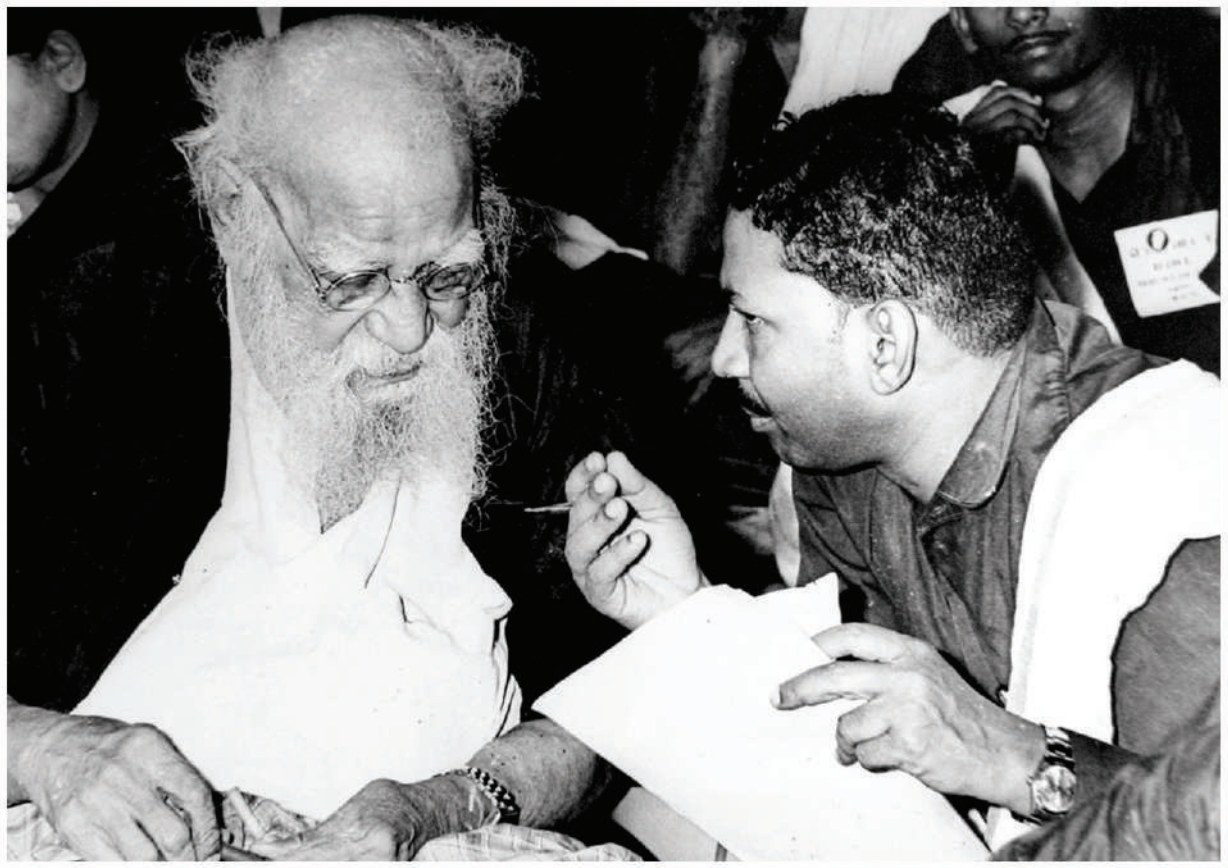
One reason is we do not meet in families as they do in religious gatherings. If the defect is on the other side, we must find out the reason and try to rectify it.

**What do you like in the followers?**

Our volunteers have the enviable quality of working without any expectation and unmindful of financial constraints.

**Today's youth are going astray, taking to habits like drug addiction. What is your advice to them? Do you have any action plan for them?**

Youngsters do not like advice. We can only present them with facts and details. In many places, parents want their children to join our



Asiriyar discussing with Periyar

Movement, since that will keep them away from bad habits. We should exercise patience while dealing with youngsters.

**Some intellectuals are satisfied with empty statements. Uneducated people follow the policies without any faltering. What is the difference between the two?**

Educated people confine themselves within boundaries. They claim to have become atheists even before Periyar. They cannot be sincere to Periyar or even to themselves. The uneducated are firm, loyal and unmindful of consequences. I have seen this is my experience.

**In Periyar's time they spoke of women's liberation. In your time we speak of empowerment. How do you propose to carry on the propaganda in the changed circumstances?**

Periyar advocated women's liberation. Their liberty can be sustained only with empowerment. Now both husband and wife are earning. Sometimes wife earns more. This is permitted. At first they tolerate this, then it becomes part of life. Now, women have got property rights. They have entered all areas. This is significant.

**You have coined a new title *'Maanamigu'* – Have you got any other phrases like that?**

*'Maanamigu'* (Self-Respectful) will remain with a person as long as he lives. Instead of *Vazhkhai Thunaivar* (Life Partner) we say *Vazhvinaiyar* (Life Companion). We say *'Oivu'* is not the correct equivalent of 'relaxation' but *'Ilaipparuthal'*. We used the Tamil word *Tholaipathivi* for 'fax'. Instead of saying *Thuravaram*, we say *'Thondaram'* (Rendering Public Service). It is we who used the word *Ninaividam* (Memorial) at first.

**Periyar complained that the fact that persons**



*Asiriyar marching to burn the Government Order that mandated economic criterion for reservation*

**of all communities could not become *archakas* hurt him till the end. Is there anything that you are hurt with?**

We are determined to carry on Periyar's unfinished agenda. We have to complete the task of caste eradication. To some extent reservation (affirmative action) has helped it. We must take the struggle into temple precincts. Reservation must be extended to private sector also.

**Periyar's thoughts get expanded in course of time. He has been adding to them for more than 50 years. Do you think of compiling Periyarism as one volume as in the case of religious scriptures?**

A small correction. You should not compare it with religious scriptures – which are beyond scrutiny. Periyarism includes equality, Self-Respect, scientific temper, social justice and humanism. But Periyar himself declared that his word should not be taken as final. He anticipated and welcomed a time when he would be overtaken by a revolutionary who would make him a regressive thinker.

**You offer policy based support to the Government and alliance partners. But, on occasions, from an objective stand, you support a different party and you are maligned as a result?**

As Periyar's follower, I have always lived for policy and never for any party. When people cannot meet my arguments they attribute a motive to my actions. Such things do not affect me.

**Opposition to Hindi imposition is spreading all over India. Do you have any action plan to co-ordinate the activities of the non Hindi states in that direction?**



*Asiriyar on rhetoric oration*

In issues like Social Justice and State Autonomy when our opponents keep pressuring us, a movement will take shape on its own. Already we are moving in that direction.

**About your father – your respect for him and his affection for you?**

My father was a tailor. He used to be taken as an umpire for rooster race and pigeon race. He was well placed to begin with but suffered in later life. Yet, he was happy till the end. When he died, I was in prison. Friends who were outside, like Rajaram and Sambandam, managed to get me out in bail. I went there in time for the burial. He was proud of my successes.

**The pace of your action has always been amazing, which we can never keep up with. Your comments?**

Do not say you cannot keep up. This is military and we have to move together. Otherwise it will reflect upon me. Actually we have been working a lot these days, carrying on our propaganda vigorously. No one will join the Movement unless he is prepared to work hard.

**Coming to your family, your children and grand children have steadily grown and are well placed, Do you feel satisfied as the head of the family?**

I am not at all the head of the family, living half the days with the comrades and only the other half with my family. Kazhagam is my family. Only my life partner takes care of the family needs.

**Do you have the practice of disseminating Periyar's principles in your educational institutions?**

Only to a certain extent, since there are legal constraints. Our opponents today are unscrupulous. I agree that much has to be done in that direction. Yet, we have implemented Periyar's policies in Periyar Maniammai University. We are conducting 'Periyar 1000' quiz competition all over Tamil Nadu.

**Who do you think is the foremost to have implemented Periyar's policies in the North?**

The foremost is VP Singh, who implemented Periyar's policies after a thorough understanding. Chandrajit Yadav, Sitaram Kesari and Bram Prakash believed in Social Justice. Bapu Jagajivan Ram had a great regard for Periyar and followed him. Kanshi Ram used to read Periyar's works and show Periyar's portrait in his meetings. D.P.Yadav, Karpuri Thakur and B.P.Mandal are a few others.

**In the present context are there any plans to integrate all Periyarist – Ambedkarist forces?**

Such attempts are already under way from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. Periyarism will



*Asiriyar holding 'Fire Pot', to prove the meaningless devotion*

flourish on its own, since the need is felt.

**You have been instrumental in safeguarding 69 per cent reservation in Tamil Nadu. You have played the major role in forming a secular front. You have done so many things besides. Yet, all these have not been properly documented. Right?**

Right, to some extent. We are issuing many books. All of them must be taken to other states in their languages. On the whole, our propaganda machinery must be accelerated.

**The leader of a movement must be proficient in oratory, writing and action. You are well versed in all the three. Which of them do you like most?**

If you ask me which is important – brain, eye or heart - What reply can I give?

**What is the difference between Periyar Trust and the Trusts formed by others?**

Many industrial magnates start trusts investing part of their profit and carry on some charitable work in order to reduce their income tax burden. But Periyar gave his entire property to this trust to work for the uplift of the poor and the downtrodden. Further, this trust is based on his ideology.

**You have been repeating that we have visible members as well as invisible members who are extremely loyal to the Movement. If we could bring all of them together, our function will greatly improve. Any plans in that direction?**

There are many who do not agree with us on atheism, anti-superstition or anti-religion. But they admire our worldly thoughts, and many of our policies. We cannot say, for example, people in Germany may accept all our principles. Whenever occasion arises, we make use of them. We have to expand such activities whenever we get the opportunity.



*Asiriyar with Chandrajit Yadav, Stalwart of Social Justice*

**Though a person spends all his life as a rationalist, when he dies somehow religious rituals or imposed on him?**

A basic need is they must motivate their family, life partner and children. Otherwise relatives interfere and have their way. They can write what must be done after their death and give it to a close relative or the police. They can send a copy to the Party. Still, unless the family members are firm, relatives will have their way.

**Self-Respect Movement and RSS started in the same year. They are opposite poles. RSS has grown all over India. How does Periyar's Movement propose to face it?**

We are already facing it. RSS has religion as its base. They use all religious festivals. They have created the illusion of a 'minority' opposed to them. Further they get plenty of money from abroad. They speak of change and development and come to power. After that they start implementing their fascist agenda. Yet, we are strong in Tamil Nadu, strong enough to keep them at bay.

**Why are you against nationalization of Periyar's works?**

Nobody can be more interested in publicising Periyar's works than Dravidar Kazhagam. If his works are nationalized, the Government may publish them or may even refrain from publishing them. If everybody starts publishing, making some changes here and there, or changing the order of paragraphs or sections, it will lead to contradiction. If may even give a false picture of Periyar. We are willing to permit others to publish them, subject to certain conditions, in any language.

**There is anti-BJP wave all over India. But the opposition in shambles. The Tamils want**

**you to chart out an action plan to co-ordinate the opposition to bring about a change of Government.**

We have already got a Democratic Rights Protection Front to co-ordinate the opposition of Tamil Nadu. At the all India level, Congress and the leftists must come together in an electoral alliance. If Tamil Nadu shows the way, the other states might follow. Every outfit must bear one thing in mind: *'When fire breaks we should not think of any difference among ourselves until the fire is put out.'*

**Continuous tour programme and ceaseless work; yet you are keeping your health intact and your mind balanced. What is your recreation?**

My recreation is reading. My life partner takes good care of me. I have well meaning doctor friends. My chauffeurs are extra careful. I have devoted friends. My family does not create any pressure. Finally, one must not be too obsessed with health. If you concentrate on your work health will take care of itself.

**Christians have implicit faith in the Bible, Muslims in the Quran and Hindus in Gita. How do the Dravidar Kazhagam cadres who accept Periyar's philosophy differ from them?**

Even if Periyarists accept all his policies, they can even differ in their implementation. Periyar has given his followers the right to differ with him, even criticize him. When we follow Periyar, it is not blind allegiance.

**There is a complaint that the functions of Dravidar Kazhagam are distracted by the educational institutions run by it?**

A: Only after we started our educational institutions, we have vigorously fought for the implementation of 69 per cent reservation and we have involved ourselves whole heartedly in the Eelam problem. So there is no truth in what's being said. Actually, through our educational institutions we are taking Periyarism to another sector of people. Our dedication has never been wanting, our work has never slowed down.

**In 1980, Dravidar Kazhagam got deeply involved in the Eelam problem and took it to the people. It is said that has slowed down the other function of the Kazhagam?**

Actually, the same kind of marginalization and exploitation that had been going on in Tamil Nadu for centuries was prevalent in Sri Lanka also. It is the responsibility of the Dravidar Kazhagam to fight for the restoration of human rights and equality wherever they are denied. When we have offered our support to Nelson Mandela and PLO, are we not duty bound to extend our support to the Sri Lankan Tamils who are connected with us by umbilical chord?

**In general, the youth of today are not even aware of the principle of social justice. This, despite the Dravidian parties having ruled the state for 50 years. School syllabus does not contain any information on the Movement and its reformist journey.**

Cent per cent true. Today's youth, who are enjoying the fruits of our struggle, are not aware of the strenuous journey which brought it about. School syllabus must contain chapters on the Movement which has brought about such a vast change in our outlook.

**Q: Your platform utterances are based on facts and documents. You educate people even on Constitutional provisions. How did you acquire this method?**

Periyar always insisted on citing the source even in private talks with him. I have been following his dictum.

**Are you not tired of tour programmes?**

There is no end to tours. They make me



*Asiriyar with his family members*

happy. In fact, they recharge me.

**Is there any time limit for completing the work on 'Periyar World'?**

There are so many formalities to be completed. Yet, the task is nearing completion. It will be over before Periyar's 150th Birthday.

**On Periyar's economic thoughts?**

There is a feeling that Periyar's thoughts concern only social matters, and not on financial matters. But, Periyar's thoughts form the basis for economic reform. In a county where every action and its results are attributed to fate and where wages are denied to the workers on the basis of religious scriptures, Periyar made people realize the value of labour. He spoke on birth control and women's liberation which are connected with economic growth. He suggested ways and means for saving money through co-operative and thrifty endeavour. Periyar's thoughts have created opportunities for those who have been denied of them and made them stand on their own legs.

**Death?**

Something I am not worried about. Why should I, when it affects only the others?

**What is the difference between Vadakalai, Thenakalai, Kumkumam, Thiruneeru, cross and crescent on the one side and black shirt on the other?**

The former are based on faith. Black shirt wearing is the result of reasoning.

**Periyar visited East Asian Countries and European countries in late 1920s and early 1930s. What is the impact of Periyar's visit to those countries?**

When Periyar went to Malaysia (which



*Asiriyar with his life companion, their elder son and his family*

included Singapore) he had to face concerted opposition. He overcame all that and enlightened people on the evils of caste system and fatalism. That changed them a lot. They came out of their inertia, educated and enlightened themselves, as a result of which there is a significant improvement in their social life and financial status. When Periyar went to USSR in 1932, he warned them that too tight a discipline would end up in disintegration of the country. That is what happened later.

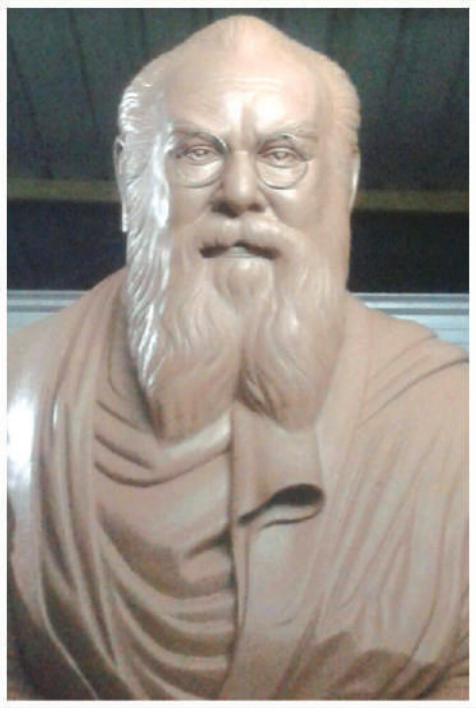
**You had in informal meeting with Rajiv Gandhi a few months before his demise?**

It was in the course of a meeting convened by the then Prime Minister V.P.Singh. Rajiv was the leader of the opposition then. While referring to Sri Lanka, he used the word genocide. I appreciated it and told him that he must convey his feelings to the leaders of Tamil Nadu Congress Party.

**Abolition of NEET is essential for us. It can be done only through a legal fight or can we do it through people's forums?**

People have developed a feeling that NEET has come to stay once for all, which is not only defeatist but muddled thinking. There are many kinds of people affected by NEET. Rajeev Dhavan, a senior advocate of Supreme Court has emphasized that it is anti-minority, anti-poor, anti-constitution and anti-federal. Our propaganda has created a lot of impact. In order to succeed we have to fight in all fronts – propaganda, popular agitation, and legal battles.

**When Anna parted with Dravidar Kazhagam he said both Dravidar Kazhagam and Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam were the barrels of a double barreled gun. But the Dravidian**



*The upcoming 'Periyar World' at Siruganur, Trichy*

**parties have gone far away from Periyar's philosophy and Anna's thoughts. What plans do you have to restore Periyarism in the political front?**

I am already aware of it. Now only Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam is somewhat nearer to Dravidianism. Dravidar Kazhagam has to strengthen itself and propagate the principle of racial dignity. We have to insist that Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam has to follow and implement the policies for which the Movement came into being.

**Since the times of Periyar, Dravidar Kazhagam has always been straightforward in meeting its opponents. Now our opponents are becoming secretive, and creating traitors among ourselves. Should we not change our method so as to meet their challenge?**

The very strength of Dravidar Kazhagam lies in its openness. That was Periyar's method and there is no need to change it.

**Once Prime Minister Charan Singh gave his consent to open Periyar Museum at Chennai, but did not keep his word. Why?**

Choudhry Charan Singh agreed to attend another function at Salem after completing our function. In the meanwhile MGR suddenly organized a portrait unveiling function so as to get closer to the Prime Minister. But the function was delayed and Charan Singh had to hurry to Salem skipping our function. We censured his action and so did Kalaignar. Charan Singh expressed his regret.

**Regarding your meeting with Jayaprakash Narayan?**

Jayaprakash Narayan once met Periyar in prison and they spoke on spreading socialism. When he bought about 'Total Revolution' during the emergency, he insisted on eradication of caste and removal of caste symbols like 'poonool' and tuft. We had welcomed his stand.

**You have always been upholding the principles of Thanthai Periyar and Baba Saheb Ambedkar. But those who popularize Ambedkar stress only on his conversion to Buddhism. Is this right?**

Many religions invited Ambedkar to join them but he selected Buddhism after a lot of analyses. Even in Buddhism there are Brahmins and rituals. But Ambedkar rejected that brand of Buddhism. He took 22 pledges before joining Buddhism. Even his followers who joined later could not understand them. We consider him as a global leader and not the leader of a community. We must give the world a clear picture of his stand on society and Buddhism. I am writing a book on the similarities between Periyar and Ambedkar. It will be published soon.

**It is obvious that the future of Dravidar Kazhagam lies with the youth. What should be our action plan?**

Already we have youth wing, students' wing and women's wing which are functioning well. We are conducting training camps for them. All these wings are undertaking propaganda work. This will continue. ■

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