

## **PERIYAR THOUGHT: SOME REFLECTIONS ON SOCIETY**

**ARCHANADEVILS**

Research scholar, Dept of History, Mother Teresa Women's University, Kodaikanal-624102

### **ABSTRACT:**

Periyar stood by the principles of rationalism, self-respect and equality. He carved out an ideology for himself that many citizens of Tamil Nadu still swear by. Periyar who has created his own history by his ideal principles, fight for justice and women rights who has created his own mark as social reformer. Born on, 17 September 1879, Erode, Tamil Nadu, India. He is also called as by other names as Periyar, Thanthai Periyar by his virtue of his fight for justice against under privileged society and especially women status and continuous fight for uplifting the downtrodden. The issues like marriage, temple entry, self respect of women, caste, reservation, women rights etc. are worth mentioning. This paper underscores his ideals, principles, women issues, religion, caste and other social issues.

**Keywords:** Social reformer, Humanism, Periyar thought, women issues, upliftment

### **1.0. INTRODUCTION**

Periyar came to be well-known as a leader of the lower castes after he led a movement in 1924 that demanded entry of Dalits in temples in Kerala. He was famous by his Self-respect Movement that expected at generating self-importance in lower castes. His movement against imposition of Hindi in Tamil Nadu is the beginning of all anti-Hindi movements later in south India. He found Hindi a tool of Brahminical domination of Tamils. His most controversial movement was protests against Hindu idols. The movement involved breaking or burning of idols of Hindu gods or garlanding them with shoes. Even though many Dalits find Periyar to be a representative of non-Brahmin upper castes, he has been a big anti-caste icon in India. An additional than that, his importance is due to his centrality to the Tamil pride movement.

### **1.1. PERIYAR THOUGHTS AND REFLECTIONS**




*When a man finds that his view, actions, ideas and decisions are right, it must be respected. That is true freedom. There is no difference between freedom and Self-Respect. They are synonymous."*



- About women empowerment. He encouraged women participation in all sectors of life.
- Caste less society and there is no upper class domination in all respect. But there is huge development in Tamilnadu by enactment by political parties who has supported by his views.
- He was skeptical of Hinduism and believed that religions like Christianity and Islam provided means for the lower castes to escape the oppressive caste system. Thus, he also led a movement that destroyed Hindu idols.

- He was vocal about the rights of women and actively fought for their inclusion in work force. Periyar became a father figure in Tamil Nadu and his followers later floated influential political parties such as DMK and AIADMK.
- His support to K. Kamaraj was crucial. He was an ardent supporter of Social justice. When DMK came to power, it followed Periyar's principle. It gave TN lots of talents across the sectors. This accelerated TN's growth later. Periyar opposed the whole Caste ladder. Not just Dalit empowerment, abolishing upper caste domination. He opposed the whole system. He opposed God as he thought God and religion are justifying it. Personally, I don't agree with all his ideologies. Sometimes, his devotion to his ideas was very vigorous.
- In 1971, when M Karunanidhi was chief minister, he passed a similar order opening the "job of archakas to all qualified persons, irrespective of their caste".
- Periyar fought against inequalities among genders, caste and cultures. He was a rationalist who encouraged people to give up their caste identities by dropping suffixes in their names. His movement against assertion of Hindi in Tamil Nadu fuelled the linguistic pride among Tamilians which still continues to thrive today.
- Periyar questioned everything and encouraged others to question everything. He was able to nurture a young generation of thinkers. His principles are accepted by many due to ideal notion about social revolution.
- The reservation policy was one of the modes of providing social justice, formulated for the upper privileged castes under the garb of economically weaker sections is very dangerous to the cause of social justice itself.

## **1.2. BRAVE MEN WHO FOUGHT FOR WOMEN IN INDIA: TORCHBEARERS OF INDIA**

The significance of Periyar and his principles has been felt very much in the national scenario of India on public justice front. What he thought of equality of humans, Periyar did continuous propaganda on it well ahead in 1920s and with more strength after the independence of the country.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Raja Ram Mohan Roy</li><li>• Ishwar Chander</li><li>• Vidyasagar</li><li>• Jyothirao Phule</li><li>• Haribilas Sarda</li><li>• Maharishi Karve</li><li>• Bhimrao Ambedkar</li><li>• Jawaharlal Nehru</li><li>• Thanthai Periyar</li><li>• Mahakavi Bharathi</li></ul>		<p><b>Moovalur Ramamirtham Ammal (1883-1962)</b></p> <p>➤ A former devadasi, she worked for the abolition of the abhorrent system in Madras Presidency</p> 	<p><b>Dr Muthulakshmi Reddy (1886-1968)</b></p> <p>➤ One of the first woman doctors in the country, she was appointed the first woman member of the Madras Legislative Council in 1928</p> 
---	---	---	--

<p><b>Annai Meenambal Sivaraj (1904-1992)</b></p> <p>➤ She was the first dalit woman to become a member of Madras Corporation and a feminist leader of the Self-Respect Movement</p> 	<p><b>Karandhai S Dharmambal (1890-1959)</b></p> <p>➤ An Ayurveda doctor, Dharmambal was a Justice party activist who founded the Tamil Women's Association</p> 
<p><b>Tamil Nadu has its own share of reformers who battled overwhelming odds to work for the emancipation of women</b></p>	

- “The Policy of Self-Respect Movement” has been extensively established in the world. Its importance, goal and suggestion also have worldwide consent.
- Man seeks the source of every concept. He finds reason and logic for everything. He has started a probe even into Nature. Unable to understand the concept of his own life, he leads a life of slavery.
- Our people, who are said to be endowed with rational thinking abilities, are today faced with a number of problems. They are in the midst of worries and troubles. They have more and more grievances. Of all such pinching problems, the scarcity of food is today the most important problem. It is really a foolish thing to worry about the shortage of food.

### 1.3. His activities related to the following points are major turning point in his history and Tamilnadu politics:

- Kashi yatra, 1904
- Congress Party Member, 1919
- Vaikom Satyagraha
- Self-respect Movement, 1925
- Justice Party or Dravid Kadgam, 1916
- Hindi language protest, 1937

<p>UNESCO described him as "the enemy of the new age, the Socrates of Southeast Asia, the father of the social reform movement, the enemy of the ignorance, superstitions and customs of unnecessary".</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pioneer of Radical feminism</li> <li>• He believes Marriage + Family = Institutions which enslave women</li> <li>• Raised voice on eradicate the ideas of maleness and femaleness</li> <li>• Prostitution and Sexual Freedom</li> <li>• Self-respect of women</li> <li>• No community domination</li> </ul>
--	--

Even today, only a negligible percentage of population is atheistic/agnostic. Yet, not much importance is given to religion even by the theists. Religion is mostly a private affair.

Clan god worship and ancestor worship are mostly in the form of family and community worship and one cannot easily denounce worship of these gods.

This is considered vital for a community. Periyar E.V.R was a rational thinker and a social reformer, but by no means a shrewd or successful politician. He was perhaps the first to know this, and that is why he never allowed his party the Dravidar Kazhagam, and his followers to contest any elections. His Anti-Brahmin rhetoric and not his atheistic rigmorale which attracted many of his caste Hindu followers and united them in their power struggle to bring about some social re-engineering among the Tamil masses. Thus, Periyar's teachings were mostly welcomed or atleast not heavily opposed by majority of the population.

E.V. Ramasamy as "the prophet of the new age, the Socrates of South East Asia, father of social reform movement and arch enemy of ignorance". He has gained wider popularity with national leaders who has also got much support from many due to literacy level of Tamilnadu programme, his for fight for justice, social cause, women rights. In contrast These are just some of the outrageous anti-India, Anti-Semitic, Anti-Gandhi, Anti-Hindu and pro-violence views of 'Periyar'.

#### **1.4. IS HE RELEVANT TODAY?**

Periyar is not only icon for caste struggles, but he is also the symbol of the Tamil pride. His ideas and effort continue and importance for even 45 years after his death. His ideas serve as a reminder for all political parties in Tamil Nadu to be caste aware and live up to his ideals.

Acclaimed veteran thespian Kamal Haasan, who has been quite vocal regarding various social issues in recent times once again took to his Twitter space to voice his opinion on the matter. He said, "Bravo Travancore Dewasom board. Salute to Kerala CM Mr. Pinarayi Vijayan.4 appointing 36 non-Brahmin priests. Periyar's dream realized".

The decision to assign non-Brahmin priests in temples has come after a long struggle with the management over caste discrimination. Today, it remains to see whether the remaining states across the nation will follow suit.

When E.V. Ramaswami, generally known as Periyar, announced a struggle in 1970 demanding that all caste people should entered to work as temple priests, he called the discrimination a spine in his heart. At the time, the DMK government asked Periyar to not go to the lead with the protests and passed a law to the effect. In 1972, however, the law was challenge in the Supreme Court, which ruled in opposition to it. When passing the order in 2006, then chief minister M. Karunanidhi famously said that the thorn in the heart of Periyar was finally removed.

#### **1.5. REFERENCE:**

- Arulmozhi, A. (January 25, 2012). Relevance of Periyar Feminism. In *The Modern Rationalist*. Retrieved May 9, 2012, from <http://new.modernrationalist.com/2012/01/relevance-of-periyar-feminism-a-arulmozhi/>.
- Diehl, A. *Periyar E.V. Ramaswami: a study of the influence of a personality in contemporary South India*. B I Publications (Michigan, 1978).

- Ghoshal, Arkadev (7 March 2018). International Business Times, India Edition.
- Gopalakrishnan, M.D., *Periyar: Father of the Tamil Race*. Emerald Publications (Michigan, 1991).
- <http://modernrationalist.com/category/periyarspeaks/>
- <http://scrolltoday.com/periyars-dream-realized-salute-kerala-cm-pinarayi-vijayan-kamal-haasan/>
- <https://thewire.in/caste/tamil-nadu-temples-dalit-priests>
- M. D. Gopalakrishnan (1991). Periyar: father of the Tamil race. Emerald. p. 9. Retrieved 13 December 2018.
- Mary Grey (16 June 2016). Routledge. pp. 122–. ISBN 978-1-315-47840-1. Vikatan (in Tamil). 11 May 2018.
- W. B. Vasanth Kandasamy; Florentin Smarandache; K. Kandasamy (2005). pp. 105–. ISBN 978-1-931233-00-2.
- <https://www.ambedkaritoday.com/2019/04/about-periyar-e-v-ramasamy-biography.html>
- <https://ourworldindata.org/ethnographic-and-archaeological-evidence-on-violent-deaths>
- <https://www.thetruepicture.org/the-true-face-of-periyar/>
- <https://www.uio.no/studier/emner/matnat/ifi/MNSES9100/v14/lectures/mnses-ethical-theory-gamlund.pdf>
- <https://governmentdeniesknowledge.com/>
- <https://theprint.in/theprint-essential/periyars-legacy-serves-reminder-dravidian-parties-caste-conscious/40318/>
- <https://www.quora.com/What-are-Periyars-biggest-achievements-in-Tamil-Nadu>
- <https://www-gblog.blogspot.com/>
- [https://slidelegend.com/nationalism-the-annihilation-of-caste-reading-group\\_59c4a6451723dd11421c498e.html](https://slidelegend.com/nationalism-the-annihilation-of-caste-reading-group_59c4a6451723dd11421c498e.html)
- <http://modernrationalist.com/periyar-141/>
- [https://www.espn.com/blog/nflnation/post/\\_/id/276029/why-the-nfl-is-light-years-behind-nba-on-social-justice-front](https://www.espn.com/blog/nflnation/post/_/id/276029/why-the-nfl-is-light-years-behind-nba-on-social-justice-front)
- <https://www.economicdiscussion.net/economic-problems/5-basic-problems-of-an-economy-with-diagram/18173>
- <https://countercurrents.org/2018/03/periyar-pioneer-radical-feminism/>
- <https://kalirajathangamani.blogspot.com/2016/01/freedom-fighters-of-tamil-nadu.html>
- [https://periyar.org/html/dk\\_movement\\_eng.php](https://periyar.org/html/dk_movement_eng.php)
- <http://gobeyondpink.com/beepsyear/2018>
- <https://www.nationalheraldindia.com/entertainment/entertainment-padmavati-grand-trailer-shows-strength-of-rajputs-farhan-kamal>
- <https://igboskurdsandpathansarelostisraelites.blogspot.com/2014/01/israelites-from-india-1.html>
- <https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/backstories/899/>
- <https://thewire.in/caste/tamil-nadu-temples-dalit-priests>
- <https://www.ibtimes.co.in/reporters/arkadev-ghoshal/page/2>

- <https://www.routledge.com/A-Cry-for-Dignity-Religion-Violence-and-the-Struggle-of-Dalit-Women-in/Grey/p/book/9781845536060>
- <https://issuu.com/florentinsmarandache/docs/encyclopedianeutrosophicresearchers>