



M. KARUNANIDHI –A MESSIAH OF THE DRAVIDIAN MOVEMENT IN TAMIL NADU

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ABSTRACT:

The stalwarts of the Greek Country like Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and Alexander were inter-connected because there prevailed the master-disciple relationship among themselves. The first three were the ancient Greek philosophers who believed that the greatest human effort is the use of reason. The last was a king . Likewise E.V.Ramasami, C.N.Annadurai , M.Karunanidhi and M.K. Stalin, were the icons of the Dravidian movement, and the first three were the rationalists .The last is a ruler, a democratic choice of Dravidian Muneetra Kazhagam , a regional political Party of Tamil Nadu. They believed that it was an individual effort and not divine grace that gave strength to human beings. Among these Dravidian leaders, M.Karunanidhi occupied a unique place in the Dravidian Movement. Imbided with Dravidian ideals , he implemented most of the ideas politically, economically , socially and culturally in his spent life of public service for more than fifty years . As a matter of fact, in the independent Tamil Nadu, he was considered the Messiah of the Dravidian Movement when he was in power and out of power.



KEYWORDS: E.V.Ramasami, C.N.Annadurai: M.Karunanidhi, M.K.Stalin, Dravidian Movement , Self - Respect Movement, Dravidar Kazhagam

INTRODUCTION:

The Dravidian Movement was a series of events, which was a socio-cultural-religious movement led by various leaders of their times. Later era of the Dravidian Movement has become a regional political movement and subsequent D.M.K. was a political party determined to adhere social democracy and principles of social justice which constituted its ideological basis for the evolution of the Dravidian Movement.

M.Karunanidhi, a young leader of the Dravidian Movement who carried out the revolution under E.V.Ramasami, and having deposed the Congress government, he was a messiah of Dravidian ideology. One of the proponents of the Dravidian movement, a sublime follower of E.V.Ramasami and five times Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, he was an astute politician who practiced politics with a vision.

The central ideology of the Dravidian Movement was dismantling of Brahmin hegemony, revitalization of Dravidian languages and social reforms through the abolition of existing caste systems, religious practices and the reformulation of women's equal position in society.

Karunanidhi dismantled Brahmin hegemony with his first masterstroke of the historic land reform laws. Also, the original aim of Dravidian politics was to achieve social equality as such, documented and executed the reservation policy than it was a dream of the Dravidian movement after his ascendancy to power as Chief Minister.

The Justice Party which took shape in the Madras Presidency in the early Twentieth Century .It was very similar to the Malayali Memorial Movement originated in Travancore. This Non-Brahmin movement was not the product of competitive jealousy, but a consciously created a political category, rooted in Tamil political savvy.

Following the Gurukulam controversy, E.V.Ramasami , a radical leader, founded Self-Respect League , and actively participated in it.¹ Subsequently, it became a Rationalist movement that denied the existence of God. E.V.R. exhorted that the Self-Respectors should not recognise gods of the Brahmins. E.V.R. showed his keen interest in exposing socialism after his visit of Soviet Russia. But the Self-Respect Movement had retreated from political activity that succumbed to the torture and persecution of the Colonial British Government and continued as a Social Reform Movement.²

Subsequently, the Self-Respect Movement borrowed the class structure of the Justice Party and merged with it. In 1944, became Dravidar Kazhagam.³ While the Justice Party was a Non-Brahmin, upper caste group, Dravidar Kazhagam was concerned with the social movement. C.N. Annadurai a, who formed a new political party after shaking off the bounds of the Dravidar Kazhagam , argued for a Dravidian nation. Thus Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, or D.M.K. was born. It was in this D.M.K. that Karunanidhi began his political career. No doubt , it was a rational thought that shaped Karunanidhi. In later years, Karunanidhi , who took pride in his South Indian identity and stood up with the slogan of Annadurai. 'Dravidian Nation or Death' had become the slogan of the extreme Tamil Movement.

On 15th July 1953, the D.M.K. selected Karunanidhi to drive an agitation against the renaming of a railway station called Kalakudi into Dalmiapuram. Kalakudi was a village in Tiruchi District where industrialist Ramakrishna Dalmia had set up a cement manufacturing factory , and the Centre had decided to change the name of the station after him. The Centre's decision represented a great opportunity to D.M.K. to highlight what it called 'North Indian hegemony' in the Indian Union and the contempt of the Centre for Tamils.⁴

The D.M.K. had decided for a 'railway roko' in Kallakudi. In the rail roko agitation , Karunanidhi suddenly rose on the shoulders of his party cadres and struck a poster with the name 'Kallakudi' written in Tamil on the name board, 'Dalmiapuram' in the railway station. Karunanidhi and four other D.M.K. cadres prostrated along the train tracks near the station. His ascent on the shoulders of his party cadres and his prostration on the train tracks guided him to gain much popularity in the Tamil Nadu politics, in addition to the anti-Hindi agitation which further assured him a forward step in his political career.

The anti-Hindi agitations of 1965 led to major political changes in the state and ensured the passage of the Official Languages Act of 1963 and its amendment in 1968, thus ensuring the continuity use of English as the official language of India. ⁵They actually promoted the virtual indefinite policy of bilingualism of the Indian Republic.

The political career of many leaders of the Dravidian Movement, like Annadurai and Karunanidhi , started with their participation in anti-Hindi agitation. The agitation ceased compulsory teaching of Hindi in the state. The agitations of the 1960s played a crucial role in the defeat of the Congress party in 1967 in Tamil Nadu and in the subsequent general elections in Tamil Nadu, dominance of Dravidian parties continued thereafter .

Annadurai began to implement the principles of E.V.Ramasami during his short period of nearly a year and a half as Chief Minister. He legalized the concept of E.V. Ramasami's advocated self-respect marriages, devoid of priests and rituals, through an exclusive Act.⁶

Two other notable achievements of Annadurai as the Chief Minister was naming Madras State as 'Tamil Nadu'and establishing the bilingual education policy in the state.⁷ After Annadurai , Karunanidhitook responsibility to implement the rest of the major ideologies of the Dravidian Movement when he became the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu.

The dispensation of social justice is the central tenet of the Dravidian Movement. Consequently, an avowed atheist in a country where politicians often trumpet their piety, Karunanidhi built his political machine as a crusader for social justice, with policies aimed at helping those at the bottom of India's rigid Hindu caste hierarchy.

The Non-Brahmin Movement led by E.V. Ramasami had already gained strength during the period from 1920 to 1945. This movement had weakened the power of Brahmins in the villages of Thanjavur Delta.⁸

Karunanidhi's first masterstroke was the abolition of landlordism in Tamil Nadu, as such, the D.M.K. Government gradually promulgated the Tenancy Land Record Act of 1969, a notable Act, the Tamil Nadu Land Reforms (Reduction of Ceiling on land) Act of 1970, a law that aimed to reduce disparities in land ownership and in 1972 introduced a law that canceled all back rent dues until 30th June 1971. In this way, the material foundation of the social order built by the Brahmins who owned and controlled the land were shaken.⁹

The second blow was the enactment of the Reservation Policy Act. According to the 1901 census, it was stated that three percent of the Brahmins occupied the position of ninety-four percent in provincial civil service¹⁰ which forced Dravidian leaders to speak for the voiceless and E.V. Ramasami fought for social justice and indeed at that time Karunanidhi became a promised leader.

Karunanidhi paid particular attention to translating E.V. Ramasami's ideologies while in power and in opposition. The core of E.V. Ramasami's philosophy is to achieve equality through equal opportunities in a society filled with discrimination based on birth. E.V. Ramasami strengthened reservation mode as compensation for inequalities based on birth.

Karunanidhi realized that the core axis of Tamil Nadu rotates around social justice and thus improved the quantum of the reservation for the Backward Classes (BC) to 31 per cent from 25 per cent and for the Scheduled Castes (S.Cs) to 18 per cent from 16 per cent.¹¹ When he was in power between 1989 and 1991, he forged 20 per cent reservation for Vanniyars and Denotified people in the Most Backward Classes group.¹²

Until 1971, Tamil Nadu's total reservation had been 41 per cent. The evolution of the reservation that occurred in Karunanidhi's regime was that Karunanidhi raised the reservation to 49 per cent¹³, later he created the M.B.C. category, now Tamil Nadu's Reservation percentage reached 69 per cent.¹⁴

Karunanidhi subsequently enacted laws empowering women with equal rights in family property. He encouraged widow marriages and provided exclusive reservation for women in education, in occupation and in local elections. His ideological moorings in rationalism had the trappings of leftist ideology. He said that if he had not met E.V. Ramasami, I would have become a communist. The amendment to the Hindu Succession Act, which introduced, fulfilled what E.V. Ramasami had wanted for decades by granting equal property rights for girls and the amendment to the Hindu Marriage Act which legally sanctioned self-respecting marriages as well as endorsing inter-caste marriages.

Karunanidhi further ventured the change in the administration, as well as the change in the class structure of the administration, enabling the D.M.K. to advance the social justice agenda which had been the main feature of the Dravidian Movement and this type of administration helped Karunanidhi to continuously translate the speech of E.V. Ramasami's wishes into action. Thus, most of the ideologies of the Dravidian Movement began to flourish and materialize during the rule of M. Karunanidhi in Tamil Nadu.

Every time Karunanidhi formed a government, there were hundreds of achievements to celebrate. As a transparent leader, he had allowed everyone, including his party members and bureaucrats, to do so freely express their opinions. Any discussion on any subject could be initiated in his presence. This trait came from the E.V. Ramasami's school of rationalism of which he was an early student.

When E.V. Ramasami, a key figure in the Dravidian movement, complimented Karunanidhi in the 1960s for being 'clever, a capable administrator, person who sacrificed a lot for the public well,' the D.M.K leader was in his mid 40s and one of the youngest ministers in Annadurai's cabinet.

Inspired by C.N. Annadurai, Karunanidhi realized that power for governance is the vehicle to implement the Dravidian ideology. E.V.R. suggested rationalism in governance. Nevertheless, Annadurai and Karunanidhi adopted good governance on the spirit of rationalism.

Karunanidhi had attended so many functions in D. M.K. families. Marriages had provided opportunities to talk about the Dravidian ideology. At marriages, the bride and bridegroom were almost relegated to the background when the leaders of the D.M.K. spread their ideology among the people who came to wish the prosperity of the newly married couples. He charged a small fee to attend these functions, and that money was used to build the party headquarters at Anna Salai in Chennai.

Karunanidhi achieved what B.R. Ambedkar wished. Ambedkar, as the first Law Minister of Independent India, resigned when his Hindu Code Bill, a piece of legislation that tried to empower women, was dropped by Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru due to opposition from orthodox Hindus. Had a bill been enacted, it would have empowered women to have rights in matters of marriage, divorce and guardianship and guaranteed their rights to the property. B.R. Ambedkar observed thus: "Turn in the direction you want, caste is the monster that crosses your path". This remains true even after that 75 years of independence.

For Karunanidhi, there was no yesterday. Today and tomorrow were important to him. As he never looked the past, his concentration was in the present and his greatest strength was exposed. Karunanidhi, was therefore, "the one who established the agenda for half a century.

The current educational policy of the Central Government is a death knell for aspiring Tamil students. Karunanidhi prophesied this long ago. In a nation where access to education remains a fundamental issue and where the success of an individual to a large extent depends on access to resources determined by caste and socio-economic advantage. The people in the midst of the forest, on the top of the mountains and along the coasts are closed to access resources and therefore merit is just another form of discrimination.¹⁵

Since the upper castes had better access to resources, they were capable of transforming their inherited capital into a right to merit. They have reshaped themselves as contemporary meritocratic subjects. As a result, they began to dominate the elite space where most have promoted and strengthened their cultural capital.

Today's NEETs for medical admission is not new to Tamil Nadu. A similar test, TNPCEE, was introduced 35 years ago by M.G.R., for admission to vocational courses. D.M.K. and D.K. opposed the move, arguing that the idea of the entrance test was against the principles and policies of E.V. Ramasami and Annadurai. Similarly M.G.R. introduced income criteria for B.Cs to enjoy the reservation¹⁶ as today, introduced by the Central Government. This should also be noted that M.G.R. refused to install the statue of E.V. Ramasami in Kanchipuram because it would insult the Shankaracharya. It was the D.M.K.'s agitations that forced him to backtrack.

To conclude, Karunanidhi considered, education was a great equalizer, a tool of upward social mobility, therefore, Merit was a myth. Thus, there was a sacred umbilical link between the social reforms and the rational movement of E.V. Ramasami. Karunanidhi was a brave warrior of the Dravidian Movement and called a 'Dravida Messiah' and duly a liberator indeed.

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