



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Trajectory Of Periyar Into Self-Respect Movement: An Observation

Ch.Bikshapathi,

Associate Professor in Political Science,

Government Degree College,

Serilingampally,

R.R.Dist,

Hyderabad.

Abstract

One of the most outstanding and groundbreaking thinkers of the contemporary era is Periyar E.V. Ramasamy. His fearlessness and unwavering dedication to social justice and reason had a significant influence on Indian society, especially in Tamil Nadu. His paramount bravery placed him on the pedestal of torchbearer and among the greatest reformers of the twentieth century. He took his message to every corner of the nation. He established the Self-Respect Movement with the goal of eradicating superstition and darkness from society. Periyar established a solid basis for his followers to ascend power through his anti-Hindi agitation, and unrelenting battles against Congress for the interests of marginalized people.

Keywords: Caste System, Varnashrama Dharma, Women, Equality, Brahmanical Dominance.

Introduction

When evolution is concentrated on limited people, the revolution compensates. That revolution needs a pioneer. Generally that pioneer comes from the depressed but in the case of Tamil Nadu E.V. Ramasamy Naicker came from the non-depressed section. He was born into a wealthy family in Erode, Tamil Nadu. Despite not being from a lower caste, Periyar was adamantly against the caste system, Hindu rites, and untouchability. He used to demonstrate a sharp rationalistic thinking from a young age, challenging the inconsistencies and hyperboles in the discourses of religious scholars in the gatherings, though his parents were orthodox. He severely lambasted the people who worshipped god and preached religion. Paradoxically, he was influenced in the opposite way of his parents, which led him to understand that religion was used as a means of misleading the innocent and determined to expose superstition and clergy exploitation.

He in his later works wrote that it brought him great delight to refute the absurdities of pandits. He felt that these early experiences influenced his doubts about religion, caste, religious scriptures, and the existence of god.

Periyar was a fervent supporter of gender equality, arguing that all people should have an equal opportunity to grow in their moral, intellectual, and physical abilities and lead dignified lives. He aimed to end discrimination in all its manifestations and advance social justice and reason in society.

Periyar and Congress

Periyar became a member of the Indian National Congress in 1919 and was imprisoned at Erode as he took an active part in Gandhi's Non-Cooperation Movement and during the historic Vaikom Satyagraha, which fought for equal access to public highways, Periyar was a key figure. His work established a standard for the movement and greatly aided in its success.

Periyar gradually lost faith in congress, after seeing how little it did to combat discrimination based on caste and frustrated with the congress party's inability to confront Brahminical domination and caste inequality, Periyar left the party and refused to join another. Rather, he started the Self-Respect Movement dedicated to attaining equality and social justice.

Self Respect Movement

In Tamil Nadu, the Self-Respect Movement was a revolutionary social reform movement that was started in 1925. Periyar aimed to destroy the caste system, question social mores, and advance reason, therefore the movement's main goals were structured to eradicate caste prejudice, support gender equality, and promote reason. Periyar made several campaigns throughout Tamil Nadu to promote community representation, disseminate the beliefs, and critique Varnashrama Dharma. He placed a strong focus on establishing an egalitarian society free from gender and caste discrimination. Also asserted the abolition of brahminism and the concept of god.

Although Periyar did not officially associate with the Justice Party, his ideology was consistent with its values. However, he decided not to support them in the 1926 elections, instead backing non-Brahmin candidates. This approach drove the Congress-led Swarajists to field more non-Brahmin candidates in response to his criticism of Brahmin favouritism.

In 1927, Periyar initiated a vigorous battle against Brahminical domination, which became crucial to his philosophy. While the Justice Party desired power and representation for non-Brahmins, Periyar campaigned for a greater goal of abolishing caste-based rituals and to create a society in which birth did not define position. His work with the Justice Party turned it from a non-Brahmin platform to an anti-Brahmin platform.

The movement's changes were wide-ranging. It opposed child marriages, the Devadasi system, and untouchability, while advocating for widow remarriage and inter-caste marriages. Periyar and his supporters opposed the Manusmriti, a text that defended caste systems, as a gesture of rejection. The movement also took an atheistic stance, questioning Hindu rites and deities in publications and public activities.

The Self-Respect Movement spread fast, garnering momentum throughout Tamil Nadu. In 1928, Periyar founded the English monthly "Revolt" to reach a larger section of people. In 1929, the movement's first provincial convention was held in Chengalpet. During this ceremony, Periyar took a remarkable step and shed his caste suffix "Naicker," symbolically rejecting caste identity. This is considered as as most revolutionary, radical and pivotal resolution against the caste system

One of the movement's most significant accomplishments was the establishment of Self-Respect Marriages. These ceremonies, which were held without Brahmin priests or customary rites, emphasised equality between couple. More than 5,000 such marriages were arranged, breaking down caste and gender boundaries. These activities also provided opportunities to teach people about rationality and social justice.

The movement took a new approach to women's rights, pushing for gender equality, property rights, and emancipation from patriarchal limitations. Periyar advocated for changes such as divorce, the abolition of child marriage, and the acceptance of polygamy. Women were urged to organise their own gatherings and take control of their emancipation. In 1930, the Movement further ramped up its campaign against the Devadasi system, with figures like Moovalu Ramamirtham and Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy leading legislative efforts to abolish it. Despite opposition, the campaign demonstrated the movement's will to challenge repressive customs. He also sparked controversy by urging Dalits, or Adi-Dravidas, to convert to Islam since he believed it to be a caste-neutral religion. Although this position attracted criticism, it demonstrated his commitment to ensuring equality and respect for underrepresented groups.

The movement had an international impact. Periyar became a well-known social reformer around the world. The Self-Respect Movement, which promoted drastic social changes and altered social standards, had grown to be a powerful force in Tamil Nadu . It made a significant contribution to India's social and political history by laying the groundwork for later Dravidian philosophies with its emphasis on equality, justice, and rationality.

Conclusion

For dravidians, periyar is the amalgamation of all philosophers and activists because his scope of revolution is so wide that it is covered from human to god. Periyar was cognitively so mature and noble, as he had a lucid understanding of society, women, and hierarchy. But as every torch bearer he was ahead of his time. He left his luxuries to fight on behalf of the voiceless. He spread the spirit of revolution prolifically, which made people revolt at greater pace. He even went to the lengths of opposing Gandhi due to ideological differences and stopped addressing him as "Mahatma", this depicts his integrity and commitment towards people and their justice. Despite a number of illnesses, Periyar, in his nineties, was steadfast in his resolve to fight for what he felt was right. He has strong, unwavering opinions and doesn't hesitate to go against the wrong.

He is epitome of radicalism and perseverance. Generations of Indians have been motivated to work toward a more just and sensible social structure by his unrelenting fights against casteism, Brahminical domination, religious dogma, and language imposition.

Periyar's anti-caste movements have had a significant influence on Indian society. His advocacy for communal representation influenced India's policy regarding reservations. Though caste-based

surnames and caste justification have decreased as a result of his influence, his goal of eliminating the caste system has been limitedly successful. He led many controversial anti-Brahmin movements, self-respect weddings and inter-caste marriages. Though they were controversial, they were and are necessary to egalitarian society. Even today his motivation and rationalism are necessary to achieve the society he dreamed of.

REFERENCES

1. Arora, N.D.; S.S. Awasthy (2007). *Political Theory And Political Thought*. Har-Anand Publications
2. Jeyaraman, B. (2013). *Periyar: A Political Biography Of E.V. Ramaswamy*. Rupa Publications India Pvt. Ltd. Isbn 9788129132260. Retrieved 4 January 2015.
3. R. Kalidass And Dr. K.Krishnamoorthy's Self-Respect Crusade Into The Periyar Tenet, International Journal Of Scientific & Technology Research Volume 9, Issue 02, February 2020, Issn 2277-8616.
4. Thanthai Periyar E.V.Ramasamy (2020). Why Were Women Enslaved?. The Periyar Self-Respect Propaganda Institution.
5. Thanthai Periyar E.V.Ramasamy (2004). Periyar On Islam. Critical Quest
6. K.Veeramani (2018). Collected Works Of Periyar E.V.R.The Periyar Self-Respect propaganda Institution