



An Analysis Of Women Leaders In Social Transformation Of Tamil Nadu-A Study

Sangeetha. K, Assistant Professor, Department of Public Administration, A. M. Jain College, Meenambakam, Chennai

ABSTRACT

TOPIC: **An Analysis of Women Leaders in Social Transformation of Tamil Nadu – A Study**

Sangeetha. K, Assistant Professor, Department of Public Administration, A. M. Jain College, Meenambakam, Chennai

Women as a source of power is influential in shaping the society. The Powerful women of Tamil Nadu who created the modern society from the traditional society following conventional cruel practices that alienated the strength of women in the society are Dr.MuthuLakshmi Reddy, Dr.S.Dharmambal, Moovalur Ramamirtham, E.V.R. Nagammai, Pappa Umanath, Mythili Sivaraman, etc. These reformers laid strong foundation for the upliftment of women in the Tamil Society. Their Contribution to the development of women from their nutshell is adorable. The abolition of Devadasi system, Child Marriage and Communalism led the enactment of laws against these practices. Social Legislations such as Dowry Death Act, Widow remarriage Act, etc were made in the state. The collective effort of the social reformers formed many associations for women to address various issues related to women empowerment. It was supported and encouraged by government. These organizations promoted women education, employment opportunity, social assistance and community development. The impetus focuses of these women leaders led to the participation of women in political activities and various other social activities. It addressed the requirement of the marginalized depressed class women to promote their life from the downtrodden. The social transformation women in the society impacted their contribution in nation building.

KEY WORDS: Women, Empowerment, Education, Welfare, Emancipation, Development, Social, Transformation, Reformer

INTRODUCTION

The Social transformation of Tamil Nadu is moulded by many freedom fighters and significant social reformers. The most important feature is that many women leaders has influenced in shaping the life of women in the Tamil Society. In order to achieve reformation, many women leaders dedicated their life and contributed to shape the position of women in the state. Due to their efforts, many social practices that are deep routed in the society for centuries is abolished.

WOMEN SOCIAL REFORM LEADERS IN TAMIL NADU

Tamil Nadu is a culture bound state that has a long history. The women of Tamil Nadu not shine in politics but also in the field of art, dance music, education, etc. The prominent women leaders who played a vital role in transforming the Tamil Society are discussed below.

1. *Dr. MUTHULAKSHMI REDDY (1886-1968)*

Dr. Muthulakshmi is credited with many first in her life. she was the first woman in India to get a degree in medicine. Due to her consistent effort, the cruel practice of Devadasi system in Tamil Nadu was abolished. She was the founder and president of Indian Women Association. She laid the foundation for starting Cancer Institute in Adayar, Chennai. She started an Orphanage “Avvai Illam” for the distressed People in the society.

2. *Dr. S. DHARMAMBAL (1890-1959)*

The reformer who proved that service could be done through humanity and dedication was Dr.S. Dharmambal. She tirelessly committed her life for Public Service. Her passion towards Tamil Literature was much evident through starting agitation called “Elavu Varam”. This was representing the unequal pay Tamil teachers with others.it ended up with enacting law to ensure equal pay for the Tamil teachers. She was bestowed the title “Veera Tamil Annai”. She started “Chennai Maanavar Mandram” which instigated the young minds to improve their knowledge in Tamil and score good marks.

3. *MOOVALUR RAMAMIRTHAM (1883-1962)*

Moovalur Ramamirtham was a dedicated author, social reformer and political activist. she joined Dravidian Movement and worked for abolition of Devadasi practice along with Dr.MuthuLakshmi Reddy. Later She supported and became the member of Periyar E.V.Ramasamy’s Self-Respect Movement. Due to her efforts Devadasi Abolition Bill was passed in the Madras Presidency. She became the strong Protagonist of DMK party. In her memory the Tamil Nadu government is assisting the poor women in providing financial support for marriage under the scheme “Moovalu Ramamirtham Ammal Ninaivu Marriage Assistance Scheme”.

4. R S SUBBALAKSHMI AMMAL (1886-1969)

R.S. Subbalakshmi was a prominent social reformer who fought for education of upper -caste widows in Madras Presidency. She was credited with first Hindu widow to receive a bachelor's degree in Madras. In the midst of Hindu traditionalists, she promoted the education for widows. Due to her efforts 'Sarada Widows Ashram' was opened. In 1919 subbalakshmi opened the Sarada Vidyalaya Higher Secondary School for destitute unmarried girls.

5. EVR NAGAMMAI (1885-1933)

The Social activist who dedicated her life to uplift women from all strata of the society was participated in self- respect movement along with Periyar EV Ramasamy. She advocated a woman's right to choose her husband and worked to change negative public perception in the Tamil Society. She raised her voice against untouchability and caste-discrimination in Kerala through Vaikam Satyagraha.

6. ANNAI MEENAMBAL SIVARAJ (1904-1993)

Meenambal was the first Dalit women reformer who advocated the rights for Scheduled Caste women. She was the first Schedule Caste Woman President in South India Scheduled Caste Federation. She became the iconic woman member of the All India Scheduled Caste Federation which was started by Dr.B.R.Ambedkar.

7. PAPPA UMANATH (1931-2010)

An Indian Political Leader from south was also a Women's rights activist from Tamil Nadu. She was the co-founder of All India Democratic Women Association. She was the member of communist Party of India. She played a key role in strengthening the rights of women. She also started canteen for railway workers at golden rock railway workshop. Her contribution towards changing the unequal society in Tamil Nadu paved a way for better standard for woman and working class.

8. MYTHILI SIVARAMAN (1939-2021)

The pioneer in the union trade activist in the Centre of Indian trade Unions (CITU). She was also the Co-founder of All India Democratic Women's Association. Her untiring dedicated works illumines the rights of marginalised communities. She worked in United Nations Committee on Decolonization. Her writings instigated on the upliftment women and depressed class in the Tamil Society. Her famous work: *The Relevance of Periyar: Caste or Class Struggle* portrays the revolutionary championing of women's rights deep rooted caste discrimination in the society.

9. ANJALAIAMMAL (1890-1921)

Anjalaiammal was a good orator and became the woman to have started the struggle for freedom in the south. Her participation in Non-Cooperation movement, individual satyagraha, shows her dedication in the freedom movement. Her thirst for independence led to sold all her property and gave money for freedom struggle. Her contribution in shaping the Tamil society influenced many women to participate in the freedom struggle.

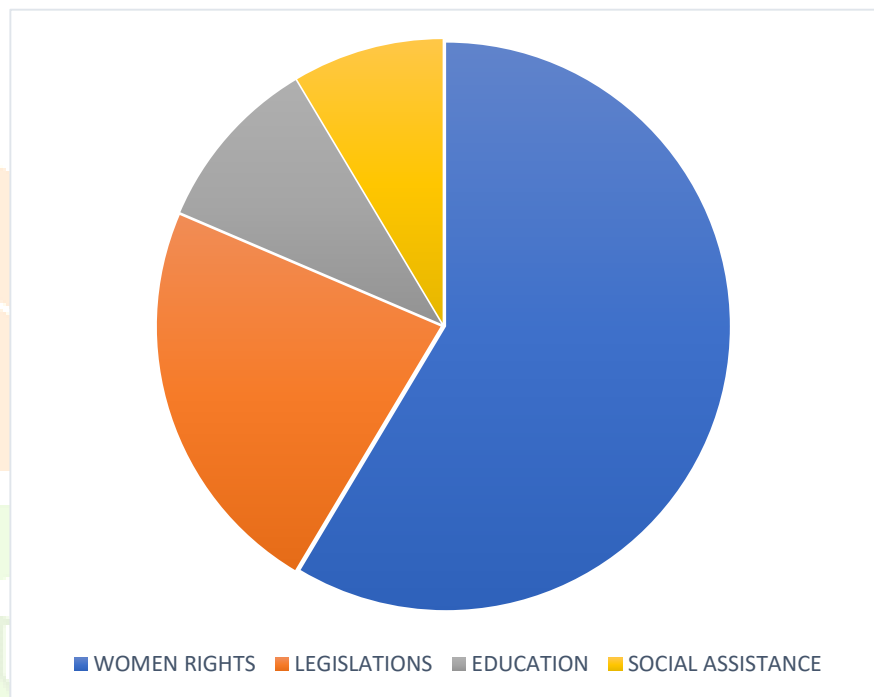
10. K.B. SUNDARAMMAL (1908-1980)

The renowned veteran of the south who started to act in stage dramas from her childhood. She was first actor in India get a salary of Rs.1 lakh for a film. She plunged into freedom movement through her majestic voice. Her motivating songs ignited the thought of freedom in the young minds. She became the first screen star to become the member of the State Legislature.

CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIAL REFORMS

The Woman Social reformers in transforming the Tamil Society since nineteenth century has significantly contributed to the growth of the people.

- *The figure showing the impact of the women social activist in different fields.*
- *It has maximum change on the Women Rights.*
- *Important Legislation were enacted by the government.*
- *Abolition of Devadasi system 1947,*
- *Widow remarriage 1989, depressed class women education,*
- *Abolition of Child Marriage 2006, etc.*
- *Emancipation of women education*
- *Social assistance for orphans, destitute widow, depressed class, etc.*



The initial period of social reformation was conducted at a marginal level. Due to the efforts of the prominent women leaders, the Tamil society was culminated with new proposals for upliftment of women in different fields. In this context there were many organizations found by the reformers with the objective of empowering women from their lower strata.

ALL INDIA DEMOCRATIC WOMEN ASSOCIATION

The primary objective of this organization is to achieve democracy, equality and women's emancipation. This organization was formed due to the consistent effort of social reformer Pappa Umanath in the year 1973 as Democratic women's Association in Tamil Nadu. Later it was formed at the national level as All India Democratic Women's Association in the year 1981. It creates awareness to the poor rural and urban women across the country in the field of education, employment and status. Also, it addresses the violation against women under casteism, communalism, etc. The organization has a current membership of more than 11 million.

WOMEN'S INDIAN ASSOCIATION

It was the first women organization created for women by women in the year 1917. Its primary objective was to obtain women franchise. In the same year, it requested the secretary of state Montague for women Franchise. Later it was achieved in the year 1930. It plunged women into politics and carry out various other activities for women development.

The main aim of the organization is as follows:

- To promote women's Literacy and educate women on current issues.
- To work for social reforms and social Legislations.
- To organize women for the service of the society
- To strive for gender equality by ensuring equal rights and opportunities.
- To seek and demand a high moral standard in all spheres of life

It has provided education to more than 34140 women. It also promotes computer education for women. It lays a platform for skill development enhancing activities.

TAMIL NADU WOMEN'S COLLECTIVE.

The Tamil Nadu Women's Collective is a non-profit organization started in 1994 by Ms. Sheelu. It has members more than 1,00,000 spread across 19 districts of Tamil Nadu. It works for the empowerment of Women particularly marginalized women in rural areas. It creates awareness on gender equality, political, cultural and other rights. It also addresses various issues related to discrimination of women based on caste, religion, culture, etc. The major focus areas are Women Rights, Dalit Rights, Local Governance, environmental protection, disaster preparedness, etc.

GOVERNMENT SCHEMES ON WOMEN WELFARE

Due to the effort's women social activists, the government of Tamil Nadu has enacted many social legislations to address the women issues in the society and promote their well-being. Notable legislations for women are:

- Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961
- Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005
- Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2008
- The Maintenance and welfare of Parents and senior citizens Act, 2007
- Sexual Harassment of Women at work place Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal Act 2003
- Tamil Nadu Hostels and Homes for Women and Children (regulation Act), 2014.

The important schemes for Women introduced by the government

S.NO	WELFARE SCHEMES	PURPOSE
1.	Free Travel for Women in Government Buses	Facilitates free travel for all women under Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporation
2.	Moovalur Ramamirtham Ammaiyar Ninaivu Highe Education Assurance Scheme	Provides financial assistance of Rs.1000 pr month to girl students who is pursuing higher education and have completed schooling in government institutions.
3.	Dr.Dharmambal Ammaiyar Ninaivu Widow Remarriage Assistance Scheme	This Scheme ensures financial assistance of Rs.15,000 through ECS and Rs.10,000 as National Savings Certificate along with 8gram gold coin.
4.	EVR Maniammayar Ninaivu Marriage Assistance Scheme for Daughters of Poor Widow.	A financial Assistance of Rs.25,000 along with 8gram gold coin is given to the beneficiaries
5.	Dr.Muthulakshmi Reddy Ninaivu Inter-Caste Marriage Assistance Scheme	The bride who studied 10 th standard is entitled to receive a financial assistance of Rs.25,000 along with 8gram gold coin.

Source: <https://www.tnsocialwelfare.tn.gov.in/en/state-resource-centre-for-women>

IMPACT OF WOMEN WELFARE SCHEMES

The marginalized women in the Tamil Society are benefited through welfare Schemes enacted by the government. Notably, women get directions to uplift themselves from their surroundings. The government assist women all spheres of endeavours. Women are vulnerable and very much dependent on their families for their life. The welfare schemes of the government enunciate the women to crack from their nutshell and promote them with glimpses of opportunities to empower themselves.

CONCLUSION

The Women Social reformers laid the foundation to transform a society which was deep rooted in its traditional conventional myths and cruel practices. The modern woman is bestowed with end number opportunities to empower themselves. It is the self- responsibility of every woman to explore their ambition and aspire to attain their goals through various amenities provided in the society.

REFERENCE:

<https://www.tnpsctherivupetta.com/articles-detail/famous-women-leaders-for-social-reformation-in-tamil-nadu?cat=gk-articles>

https://www.shanlaxjournals.in/pdf/ASH/V3N2/Ash_V3_N2_020.pdf

<https://www.iatp.org/tamil-nadu-womens-collective-empowerment-agroecology>

<https://wiachennai.org/>

<https://www.encyclopedia.com/international/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/subbalakshmi-ammal-r-s>

<https://www.tnsocialwelfare.tn.gov.in/en/social-legislations/prohibition-of-child-marriage-act>

<https://www.womenscollective.net/>

