

# KEELAVENMANI MASSACRE

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**Abstract:** There were 44 downtrodden agricultural labourers who lived at KeezhaVenmani, Keelvelur, Nagai District in 1968. They worked in the farm of ErinjiyurKobalakrishna Naidu for generations. They found it very difficult to make their both ends meet on meagre wage they got. One fine day, under the leadership of Marxist Communist Party, those labourers demanded the farm owners to raise their harvesting wage from 4 ½ padi to 5 padi. The demand was denied. They were burnt alive at Ramaiyan hut on 25.12.1968 night by Kobalakrishnan, the two-legged animal, merciless and brutal.

## Introduction:

“Alas! What to say my agony? -  
Formers, to be saved like eye-balls...  
But were left on Venmani Fire”.

Venmani Massacre, a sad historical event which made labourers soaked in grief. The poet Bharathipithanblowed the arrows of anger when described. Though in those days the domination of Farmhouser was in a great deal in the combined Tanjore District, it was at peak in Nagai District. The Marxist Communist leaders along with labourers fought at various angles to raise daily wage. Due to that, there exploded riots, fights and damaging houses. And also riots exploded at the neighboring village Vidangalur, Keelaiyur, Valivalam, Erukkai and Vadukachery.

Comrade V.Meenatchisundaram, the then party secretary of Nagai wrote a letter to the then prime minister on 05.12.1968 explaining the atrocities of those farmhousers in order to save the lives of the voiceless agriculturists and pleading the chief minister to take drastic action against in any form. Followed that, 44 Dalit farmers were burnt alive at Ramaiyan's hut by ErinjiyurKobalakrishnan, the wolf in man's attire. The sorrowful and heart-breaking incident is Venmani-Maaacre.

## Farm Domination in Nagai Taluk:

Though there was farm Domination everywhere in combined Thanjavur District, in 1960ties the same showed its ugly face in great deal in nagaitaluk. Landlords, Minars and Framhousers Joined together and appointed AimalaiMinarRamanathathevar, the leader of “Paddy Manufacturer Sangam”. And also S.R.Naidu, ValivalamThesikarPannai, EringiyurKobalakrishna Naidu, ErukkaiRamappillai, AarurRengacharyAyyar, Mangudi Krishna Ayyar, ThandalaiSithiVinyahaMudaliyar Started dominating in their villages and untied the Landlord's farm domination severely. The bigshots controlled everything and even the huts of Dalit wagers.

The Pathetic condition is that both the men and women should go to the paddy field very early. They should come home back only after the sun-set. The measure from 3 ½ to 4 would be given to them. If the laborers go to work late, or commit any mistake like quarrel or theft, the sheriff would report the farmhouse through the farm agent. The punishment would be very very low like whipping and drinking cow dung liquid. These kind of very low, inhuman and debased cruelties were staged only in combined Thanjavur district. And also it is heartening to say that the farmhousers had done atrocities such as scolding by felling sub caste name, beating, setting fire on huts, reducing wage, women harassment and raping or seducing. The rulers, police and paddy manufacturer sangam supported the landlords but not the troubling labourers.

## Marxist Party's Activities:

The Thanjavur district in 1964 consisted of the present Nagai, Thiruvur, Keelvelur and Thirukkuvalai Taluks. The Nagai Taluk which is near VangalaVirikuda was a part of Marxist Communist Party. Fasting under the leadership of Marxist party. demanding 5 measure paddy was emphasised in all the villages and it was held at Aimoor where comrade R.Umanath M.L.A, R.Ramaraj, K.R.Gnanasambandam, G.Bharathimohan, the agricultural labourerssanga district secretary and P.S.Thanushkodi addressed the gathering vehemently. Comrade V.Meenatchisundaram was the chairperson. In that meeting, leaders R.Murugaiyan, A.G.KasthuriRengan, S.Ganesan, Reraman, Velu and about 2000 labourers attended and demanded 5 measure paddy to the Tamilnadu Government.

## Wage Agreement and Failures:

In 1967, June at Thiruvarur many talks to solve the wage problem were arranged on behalf of Thanjavur district Collector Rengapashyam, IAS, S.P.Devaram, Minister MannaiNarayanasamy and local land-lords attended and on behalf of leabourers and party K.R.Gnanasammandam M.L.A, P.S.Thanushkodi M.L.A., and V.Meenatchisundaram attended in those talks demanding 5 measure. To discuss the same issue a talk was arranged at the residence of the then Chief Minister Annathurai in 1967. On Behalf

of the party Comrade V.P.Sinthan, K.R.Gnanasambandam, the district Secretary, M.L.A. P.S.Thanushkodi, M.L.A G.Bharathimohan, M.L.A. V.Meenatchisundaram and on behalf of the Tamilnadu Government the honorable Chief Minister Annathurai, Karunanithi, the Minister and SathikBhatsha, the minister presented. The Govt Said "4 ½ measure will be given" while the party demanded 5 measure. But all the talks went in Vain and resulted utter failure.

#### **Farm housers Counters:**

The farm housers became furious and stood against the poor farmers. They took many means of abolishing SENKODI Sangam. Labourers were compelled and forced to join in paddy manufacturer sangam. In 1967 October 5, the Marxist Party post as cut down at poonthalangudi wage strike. In reply, the labourers revolted against them. In it Koothanallur sub-inspector of Police Pandiyan staged gun-shot upon the innocent labourers. The Police gun-shot swalled PoothalankudiPakkirisamy's soul on the spot.

One more victim was ErinjiyurSinnapillai, 26 years old joined in Marxist in 1968 and he was murdered by the henchmen employed by Kobalakrishnan, the wizard. The murder continued in various places PannameduPakkirisamy, the Marxist Secretary on 15.11.1968 at night by 11PM was murdered. And also the riots were staged at Keelaiyur, Valivalam, Erukkai, Vidangalur, Vaduhachery and Velankanni and Labourer's houses were destroyed. The landlords atrocities showed its ugly face in a great deal.

#### **A Letter to the Chief Minister Anna:**

ComradeV.Meenatchisundaram, the Nagai Marxist Secretary wrote a letter to the Chief Minister Pleading to safeguard the poorlabourers. The demand of the labourers should not be ruined, prevent the atrocities of henchmen employed by the farmhousers. Stop and withdraw the fake case filed against the innocent labourers throughout Nagai District. Fix wages for agricultural work. Arrange protection to safeguard the labourers. Stop forcing the labourers to join in the paddy manufacturer sangam.

#### **Keelavenmani – 44 People Massacre:**

Time and again, the downtrodden agricultural labourers were compelled to quit the Marxist Party and Join in Paddy Manufacturer Sangam. But those labourers refused to do. This infuriated the Farmhousers and they plotted to revenge the innocent labourers. They staged a bogus drama. Comrade Muthusamy runs a teashop at keelavenmani. The henchmen employed by ErinjiyurKobalakrishnan Naidu, ErukkaiRamupillai and many landlords approached Muthusamy at 5PM on 25.12.1968 demanding the fabricated debt Rs.250 at once. In reply, Muthusamy said "I did not borrow money from anybody here" the farmhousers say "We have fined you and you must pay back the penalty with debt." The issue stood very big. As a result muthusamy was dragged from his tea-shop to the VenmaniRamaiya Naidu farm house where the poor comrade was tied and whipped mercilessly and brutally.

Knowing that issue, the Keelavenmani Villagers gathered together and went to the Farmhouse where muthusamy was beaten up tied. A terrible riots exploded between the landlords and labourers. Comrade Muthusamy was untied. In that riot a henchman namely pakkirisamypillai employed by ErukkaiRamupillai died. ErinjiyurKobalakrishnanaidu came to know that Comrade Muthusamy was escaped and one of the henchmen died. The infuriated two legged wolf went alongwith henchmen, fuels, sickle and rifle into the KeelaVenmaniChery by 8PM on the same day. The gang of the henchmen started shooting at the poor labourers brutally and blindly. They started hitting and killing many of them. Fearing the gun-shot men, women, aged, pregnant and children ran into the north of their street and went inside the hut of Ramaiyan.

Kobalakrishnan's henchmen, knowing that went to that Ramiyan's hut, locked the door, poured the fuels on hut and set fire. A mother who was inside the hut, throw her baby outside at least to save the kid. But the brutals cut the children into pieces and throw them back into fire. The henchmen poured petrol on the flaming hut. What a indigestible event it is. This is Venmani event. In this massacre 44 innocent agricultural labourers were burnt alive on 25.12.1968. The Keelvelur Police came to the spot by midnight 12 while the fire service reached the spot only by 2AM afterall bodies turned into ashes. It is evident that both the police and the fire service had horrible delay supporting the capitalists. The so called police collected the burnt corpsesformelly on the next day morning 10 'O clock.

#### **Venamni Case & People's Judgement:**

Pertaining to the Pathetic Venmani Massacre a FIR was filed under the section 327 at Keelvelur Police Station and it was taken to the High Court of Madras in the same year. The culprits in that petition were 23 farmhousers including the two legged dog Kobalakrishna Naidu. And that was filled Case No.1208/71 at High Court. The honorable Judges Venkataraman and Maharajan passed Judgement on 06.04.1973 regarding Venmani Massacre. The passed Judgement is "The persons who hold many lands would not have done such murder". Based on the above said version out of 23 murders 12 persons were released. The Judgement from the honorable high court was favorable to the landlords. But the right judgment by TIME was done after 12 years on 14.02.1980. One fine evening by 4PM in 1980 ErinjiyurKobalakrishna Naidu was cut into pieces by fanatic communists.

#### **Conclusion:**

The massacre of 44 downtrodden agricultural labourers staged by merciless ErinjyurKobalakrishna Naidu is considered to be an animalic merciless act upon the innocent illiterate poor workers. The Keelavenmani downtrodden people denied to quit from “SENGODI SANGAM” through this act the labourers established their democratic rights. They fought against caste based cruelties and struggled getting reasonable wage. As a result they won in their struggle under the guidance of Marxist party. It should be noted that those 44 martyrs live in the history of labourers till today even after 49 years. The Venmani history will be remembered and spoken till the world exists.

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