

10th Social Science Lesson 16 Notes in English

16. Social Transformation in Tamil Nadu

Introduction

- Europeans established their political power over Indian subcontinent in the latter half of the eighteenth century. While they were concerned with annexing India, by the beginning of the nineteenth century they were reordering Indian society.
- New revenue settlements were made. Influenced by British Utilitarian ideas and evangelicals they also tried to impose their cultural superiority over the Indian people. Indigenous traditions were treated as primitive.
- Indian society was portrayed as conservative where human beings were discriminated on the basis of caste, gender, language and creed. This caused a reaction among the Indians.
- During the nineteenth century, educated Indians from different parts of the country began to feel the humiliation and responded by seeking their socio-cultural identity from their past.
- However, they understood some merits in the colonial arguments and were ready to reform. **Raja Rammohan Roy** was among the pioneers in this process. Roy and many like him came to be known as social reformers. They were preparing a social and cultural sphere to counter the cultural hegemony of Europe.
- It resulted in the social and religious reform movements in modern India. This particular historical development is also identified as the Indian renaissance. Renaissance is an ideological and cultural phenomenon.
- It is closely tied to modernity, rationalism and the progressive movement of the society. Critical thinking is at its root. A new philosophical tradition centring around human rationality and equality is its characteristic.
- The basic inspiration of renaissance is humanism and questioning the fundamentalist religious practices that denied humans their dignity. This ideology of humanism stimulated creative energy in all spheres of social life and knowledge such as **language, literature, philosophy, music, painting, architecture, etc.**

Tamil Renaissance

- The cultural hegemony of colonialism and the rise of humanism brought several changes in the socio-cultural life of the Indian subcontinent. Modern Tamil Nadu too experienced such a historical transition.
- Tamil language and culture played a significant role in their identity construction. The introduction of **printing press, linguistic research on Dravidian languages**, etc... under pinned the process of Tamil renaissance.

- Although religious literature was taken up predominantly for publication in the early years after the advent of printing technology, things began to change gradually.
- Works that can be described as secular were taken up for publishing.

Advent of the Printing Technology

- Tamil was the first non-European language that went into print. As early as in 1578, Tamil book, ThambiranVanakkam, was published from Goa. In 1709, a full-fledged printing press had been established thanks to **Ziegenbalg in Tranquebar**.
- Thirukkural was one of the earliest Tamil literary texts to be published in 1812. This led the resurgence of interest among Tamil scholars in publishing the more ancient Tamil classics around that period.
- In the nineteenth century, Tamil scholars like **C.W. Damotharanar (1832–1901)**, and **U.V. Swaminathar (1855–1942)** spent their lifetime in the rediscovery of the Tamil classics. C. W. Damotharanar collected and edited different palm-leaf manuscripts of the Tamil grammar and literature.
- His editions included such texts as Tolappiyam, Viracholiyam, Iraiyanar-Akapporul, IlakkanaVilakkam, Kaliththokai and Culamani. U.V. Swaminathar a student of Meenakshisundaranar, took efforts to publish the classical texts such as **Civakachinthamani (1887)**, **Paththupattu (1889)**, **Chilapathikaram (1892)**, **Purananuru (1894)**, **Purapporul-Venpa-Malai (1895)**, **Manimekalai (1898)**, **Ainkurunuru (1903)** and **Pathitruvalu(1904)**.
- This provided the Tamil people with a revelation about their heritage. Therefore, the rediscovery of ancient classics and their publication is considered the foundation of Tamil renaissance.
- The publication of these ancient literary texts created an awareness among the Tamil people about their historical tradition, language, literature and religion. Modern Tamils founded their social and cultural identity on the ancient Tamil classics, collectively called the Sangam literature.
- **Linguists, historians and Tamil scholars** recognised the uniqueness of Tamil culture, which had a separate and independent cultural existence before the coming of the Aryans into the Tamil land.
- In 1816, **F.W. Ellis (1777–1819)** who founded the College of Fort St George, formulated the theory that the south Indian languages belonged to a separate family which was unrelated to the Indo-Aryan family of languages.
- **Robert Caldwell (1814–1891)** expanded this argument in a book titled, A Comparative Grammar of the **Dravidian or South Indian Family of Languages, in 1856**. He established the close affinity between the Dravidian languages in contrast with Sanskrit and also established the antiquity of Tamil.

- Tamil intellectuals of this period identified the fundamental differences between **Tamil/Dravidian/ Egalitarian and Sanskrit/ Aryan/Brahmanism**. They argued that Tamil was a language of Dravidian people, who are non-Brahmin and their social life was casteless, gender-sensitised and egalitarian.
- Tamil renaissance contributed to the origin and growth of Dravidian consciousness in the Tamil country. These ideas are exemplified in the Tamil invocation song in the play, **Manonmaniam written by P. Sundaranar (1855–1897)**.
- Tamil renaissance questioned the cultural hegemony of Brahminism. These developments were reflected in art, literature, religion, etc. **Ramalinga Adigal (1823–1874)**, popularly known as Vallalar, questioned the existing Hindu religious orthodoxy. **Abraham Pandithar (1859–1919)** gave prominence to Tamil music and published books on the history of Tamil music.
- **C.W. Damotharanar, U.V. Swaminathar, Thiru Vi. Kaliyanasundaram (1883–1953), Parithimar Kalaighnar (1870-1903), Maraimalai Adigal (1876–1950), Subramania Bharathi (1882– 1921), S. Vaiyapuri (1891–1956), and the poet Bharatidasan (1891–1964)**, in their own ways and through their writings, contributed to the revival of Tamil literature.
- Meanwhile, **M. Singaravelar (1860–1946)** an early pioneer in Buddhist revival, promoted communism and socialism to counter the colonial power. **Pandithar Iyothethassar (1845–1914) and Periyar E.V. Ramasamy (1879–1973)** held high the radical philosophy to defend the rights of the socially underprivileged and marginalised section of the people.
- In addition, the twentieth century Tamil language movements such as Tani Tamil Iyakkam and Tamil Isai Iyakkam, made a significant cultural impact in creating a pure Tamil free from the influence of Sanskrit.

V.G. Suryanarayana Sastri (Parithimar Kalaighnar)

- **V.G. Suryanarayana Sastri (1870-1903), born near Madurai**, was professor of Tamil at the Madras Christian College.
- He was one of the earliest scholars to identify the influence of Sanskrit on Tamil, and adopted a pure Tamil name for himself: Parithimar Kalaignar.
- He was the first to argue that Tamil is a classical language, and demanded that the University of Madras should not call Tamil a vernacular language. Influenced by Western literary models, he introduced the sonnet form in Tamil.
- He also wrote novels and plays, and a number of essays on science. Tragically, he died at the young age of **only 33**.

Maraimalai Adigal

- **Maraimalai Adigal (1876–1950)** is considered the father of Tamil linguistic purism and the founder of TaniTamil Iyakkam (**Pure Tamil Movement**). He wrote commentaries on the Sangam texts, Pattinappalai and Mullaipattu.

- As a young man, he worked in a journal, Siddhanta Deepika. Later he served as a Tamil teacher in the Madras Christian College for many years.
- He was inclined towards nonBrahmin movement. His teachers such as P. Sundaranar and Somasundara Nayagar were key influences in his life.

Tani Tamil Iyakkam (Pure Tamil Movement)

- Maraimalai Adigal promoted the use of pure Tamil words and removal of the Sanskrit influence from the Tamil language.
- The movement made a great impact on Tamil culture especially in language and literature. The beginnings of the movement are usually dated to **1916** even though the process of identifying influence of foreign words in Tamil and eliminating them can be dated much earlier to the late nineteenth century.
- His daughter Neelambikai, played an important role in its foundation. He changed his own name Vedachalam and took on the pure Tamil name of **Maraimalai Adigal**.
- **His journal Jnanasagaram was renamed Arivukkadal and his institution, Samarasa Sanmarga Sangam, was re-christened as Potu Nilai Kalakam.** The movement was critical of Hindi, Sanskrit and the Brahminical hegemony in Tamil society.
- Neelambikai compiled a dictionary that provided pure Tamil equivalents to Sanskrit words that had crept into Tamil vocabulary.
- This movement paved the way for later social movements that countered Brahminical and the Sanskrit tradition in Tamil society.

Rise of the Dravidian Movement

- In India, Brahmins enjoyed a high social status, based on their birth, and held great social privileges.
- In Madras Presidency, Brahmins dominated all the fields of society, especially politics, education and job opportunities in the government.
- The 1911 census showed that Brahmins were slightly over 3 per cent of Madras Presidency's population, and non Brahmins 90 per cent.
- Yet in the ten years from **1901 to 1911** Madras University turned out 4,074 Brahmin graduates compared with only 1,035 non-Brahmin graduates.
- Numbers for other groups, based on how the population came to be classified then, included Indian Christian 306, Mohammedan 69 and European and Eurasian 225.
- In this context, the Dravidian movement emerged as a defence of the non-Brahmins against the Brahmin dominance.
- An organisation called The Madras Non-Brahmin Association was founded in 1909 to help the non-Brahmin students.
- In 1912 **C. Natesanar, a medical doctor, founded the Madras United League, later renamed as Madras Dravidian Association to support Dravidian uplift.**

- The organisation focused on educating and supporting non-Brahmin graduates and conducting regular meetings to share their grievances.
- Meanwhile, Natesanar founded a hostel, the Dravidian Home, at **Triplicane (Madras) in July 1916** to address the lack of hostels for the non-Brahmin students which hindered their educational development.
- In addition, the home had a literary society for the benefit of non-Brahmin students.

South Indian Liberal Federation (Justice Party)

- As World War I was in progress the British government was considering the introduction of representative institutions for Indians after the War. Fearing that such political reforms would further strengthen the political power of Brahmins, educated non-Brahmins decided to organise themselves politically.
- On **20 November 1916** around **30 prominent** non-Brahmin leaders including **Dr. C. Natesanar, Sir Pitti Theyagarayar, T.M. Nair and Alamelu Mangai Thayarammal** came together to form the South Indian Liberation Federation (SILF).
- In the meantime, at a meeting held in the Victoria Public Hall the Non-Brahmin Manifesto was released in December 1916.
- The manifesto articulated the voice of the non-Brahmin communities and surveyed the general condition of the non-Brahmins in Madras Presidency.
- The association started publishing three newspapers: Dravidian in Tamil, Justice in English and Andhra Prakasika in Telugu, to propagate the ideals of the Party.
- The first election, under the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, was held in **1920** after the introduction of the Dyarchy form of government in the provinces. The Justice Party won the election and formed the first-ever Indian cabinet in Madras.
- A. Subbarayalu became the Chief Minister of the Madras Presidency and the party formed the government during **1920–1923 and 1923–1926**. In the context of Congress Party boycotting the legislature, the Justice Party continued to remain in office till 1937 elections were held.
- In the 1937 elections the Indian National Congress contested the elections for the first time and trounced the Justice Party.

Programmes and Activities

- The Justice Party is the fountain head of the non-Brahmin Movement in the country. The Justice Party government widened education and employment opportunities for the majority of the population and created space for them in the political sphere.
- Tamil Nadu's legacy of social justice owes its existence to the formative years of Justice Party in power.
- The Justices removed the legal hindrances restricting inter-caste marriages and broke the barriers that prevented Depressed Classes from the use of public wells and tanks. The

Justice Party government ordered that public schools accommodate the children of the Depressed Classes.

- Hostels were established for the students belonging to this social group in 1923. In the meantime, the Madras legislature under the Justice Party government was the first to approve participation of women in the electoral politics in 1921.
- This resolution created space for woman and thus facilitated **Muthulakshmi Ammaiyar** to become the first woman legislator in India in **1926**.
- The Justice Party worked towards legislating provisions for communal representation – reservations for various communities. Two **Communal Government Orders (16 September 1921 and 15 August 1922)** were passed to ensure equitable distribution in appointments among various castes and communities as a part of achieving social justice.
- The Justice Party rule established the **Staff Selection Board in 1924** for the selection of government officials and encouraged all the communities to share the administrative powers.
- In 1929, the Government of British India adopted the pattern and established the Public Service Commission. The Justice Party further concentrated on reforms in religious institutions.
- Tamil Nadu has a large number of temples and these commanded huge resources. In general, the resources were monopolised and exploited by the dominant caste in the society and led to mismanagement of public resources.
- The Justice Party introduced the **Hindu Religious Endowment (HRE) Act in 1926** and enabled any individual, irrespective of their caste affiliation, to become a member of the temple committee and govern the resources of the religious institutions.

Self-Respect Movement (Suyamariyathai Iyakkam)

- The Self-Respect movement, while critiquing the then prevailing social, political and economic relations, introduced a programme of non-Brahmin uplift in Tamil Nadu.
- The movement was concerned with the marginalised sections of the society and criticised Brahminism and the cultural hegemony of the Brahmin.
- It advocated a casteless society devoid of rituals and differences based on birth. The movement declared rationality and self-respect as the birthright of all human beings and held these as more important than self-rule.
- The movement declared illiteracy as a source for women's subordination and promoted compulsory elementary education for all. It campaigned for the empowerment of women and questioned the superstitious beliefs in the society.
- The movement demanded women's emancipation, deplored superstitions, and emphasised rationality.

- The movement also advocated self-respect marriage. Race was central to self-respect concept, which argued that the non-Brahmin Dravidian people had been systematically subjugated by **Aryan Brahmins over the course of their long history**.
- **The Self-Respect Movement championed not only the cause of the non-Brahmin Hindus**, but also that of the Muslims. The Self-Respect Movement extolled the lofty principles of Islam such as equality and brotherhood.
- They exhorted the Muslims to admit into their fold the depressed sections of the Hindu society, in order that they might enjoy the equality and brotherhood of Islam. Muslim elite considered the Tamil Muslims as Dravidians.
- Yet Periyar did not hesitate to attack certain customs like wearing of purdah by Muslim women. He wanted the Dravidian Muslims to follow Mustapha Kemal Pasha of Turkey and Amanullah of Afghanistan who initiated reforms in Islamic society.

Periyar E.V.R.

- **Periyar E.V. Ramasamy (1879– 1973)** was the founder of the Self-Respect Movement. He was the son of a wealthy businessman in **Erode, Venkatappa and Chinna Thayammal**. Though possessing little formal education, he engaged in critical discussions with scholars, who used to be patronised by his devout father.
- As a young man, he once ran away from home and spent many months in Varanasi and other religious centres. The firsthand experience of orthodox Hindu religion led to his disillusionment with religion.
- On his return, he took care of his family business for some years. His selfless public service and forthrightness made him a popular personality.
- He held different official positions of Erode that included the Chairmanship of **Municipal Council (1918–1919)**. In the context of the rise of the non Brahmin Justice Party after 1917, the Congress inducted non-Brahmin leaders such as Periyar and P. Varadarajulu, at the initiative of C. Rajaji.
- Periyar resigned all the government positions to support the **Non Cooperation Movement (1920–1922)**.
- He gave up his profitable business and became an active member of the Congress. He promoted khadi and sold it on the streets of Tamil Nadu. He cut down 500 coconut trees in his farm to support the campaign for prohibition.
- He held the positions of Secretary and President of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee. As president of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee, Periyar proposed a resolution regarding the rights of **“Untouchables” to temple entry**.
- **In the name of “caste dharma” the “lower caste”** people were denied access to the temples and the streets surrounding the temple.
- In Vaikom (a town in the then Princely State of Travancore and in present day Kerala), people protested against this practice.

- In the initial stages George Joseph of Madurai played big role. After the local leaders were arrested Periyar led the movement and was imprisoned. People hailed him as **Vaikom Virar (Hero of Vaikom)**.
- In the meantime, he was disturbed by the castebased discrimination in the dining hall at the Cheranmadevi Gurukulam (school), which was run by V.V.Subramaniam (a Congress leader) with the financial support of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee.
- Periyar was disappointed when, despite his objections and protests against this discrimination, the Congress continued to support the iniquitous practice in the Gurukulam.
- Periyar was keen on the introduction of reservation in representative bodies such as the legislative council for non-Brahmins. He wanted to pass the resolution in the annual conference of the **Tamil Nadu Congress Committee in 1925 at its Kanchipuram** session but in vain.
- The Congress's inability in addressing these concerns made him quit the Congress in 1925.
- Following his disillusionment, Periyar started the Self-Respect movement in 1925. Periyar understood the relevance of mass communication in spreading rationalist thought.
- He started a number of newspapers and journals such as **Kudi Arasu (Democracy) (1925), Revolt (1928), Puratchi (Revolution) (1933), Paguththarivu (Rationalism) (1934), and Viduthalai (Liberation) (1935)**.
- Kudi Arasu was the official newspaper of the SelfRespect Movement. It brought out the multiple voices and ideas of Non-Brahmins, women and religious minorities.
- Usually, Periyar wrote a column and expressed his opinion on social issues in each of its issues. He frequently wrote columns under the pseudonym of Chitraputtiran.
- Over the years, Periyar visited many countries and interacted with intellectuals all over.
- He visited **Singapore and Malaya (1929– 1930, 1954), Egypt, U.S.S.R. (modern Russia), Greece, Turkey, Germany, England, Spain, France and Portugal (1931–32), and Burma (1954 to attend the 2500th birth Anniversary of the Buddha)**.
- His experience of travelling in the Soviet Union and Europe carried Periyar towards socialist ideals.
- Periyar had a close relationship with Singaravelar who is considered the first communist of south India and a pioneer of Buddhism.
- In 1936, Periyar got Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's Annihilation of Caste translated into Tamil immediately after it was written. He also supported Ambedkar's demand for separate electorates for scheduled castes.
- In 1937, in opposition to the Rajaji's government's move to introduce compulsory Hindi in schools, he launched a popular movement to oppose it. The **anti-Hindi agitation (1937–39)** had a big impact on Tamilnadu's politics. Periyar was imprisoned for his role in the movement.
- When he was still in jail, Periyar was elected the president of the Justice Party. Thereafter the Justice Party merged with the Self-Respect Movement. It was rechristened as **Dravidar Kazhagam (DK) in 1944**.

- **Rajaji, the Chief Minister of Madras State (1952–54)**, introduced a vocational education programme that encouraged imparting school children with training in tune with their father's occupation.
- Periyar criticised it as Kula Kalvi Thittam (caste-based education scheme) and opposed it tooth and nail. His campaigns against it led to the resignation of Rajaji. **K. Kamaraj became Chief Minister of the Madras State.**
- **Periyar died at the age of ninety four (1973).** His mortal remains were buried at Periyar Thidal, Madras.

Periyar's Anti-Hindi Stance

- Periyar emphasised that the caste system in south India is linked with the arrival of Brahmins from the North.
- Ancient Tamil society, he said, had a different stratification based on **tinai (regions)**, determined by natural surroundings and the means of livelihood or occupation of the people.
- Anti-north Indian campaigns had made Periyar to take an anti-Hindi stand.

Periyar on Religion

- Periyar's experiences taught him that it was necessary to eradicate religion in order to impart progress and justice.
- Periyar advocated atheism to deconstruct the established practices of faith, culture and custom. **Periyar wanted religion to be replaced by rationalism.** 'Religion means you accept superstitious beliefs', he asserted.
- Periyar spent his entire life campaigning against superstitions through Thinkers or Rationalists Forums he had formed.
- Periyar objected to the hereditary priesthood in temples. He argued that eligible individuals, who have a proper religious knowledge, should become priests rather than being based on caste.
- He encouraged the people to boycott the Brahmin priests and their Vedic rituals. He advocated inter-caste and Self-Respect Marriages devoid of any such rituals.

Periyar, a Feminist

- Periyar was critical of patriarchy. He condemned child-marriage and the devadasi system (institution of temple girls).
- Right from 1929, when the Self-respect Conferences began to voice its concern over the plight of women, Periyar had been emphasising women's right to divorce and property. Periyar objected to terms like **"giving in marriage"**.
- This, he said, treats woman as a thing. He wants it substituted by **"valkaithunai,"(companion)** a word for marriage taken from the Tirukkural.

- Peiyar's most important work on this subject is *Why the Woman is Enslaved?* Periyar believed that property rights for women would provide them a social status and protection.
- He welcomed equal rights for males and females in property, guardianship and adoption. He was a strong champion of birth control and contraception, and said that motherhood was a burden to women.
- In 1989, Government of Tamil Nadu fulfilled the dream of radical reformers by the introduction of the **Hindu Succession Tamil Nadu Amendment Act of 1989**, which ensured the equal rights to ancestral property for women in inheritance.
- This Act became a trendsetter and led to similar legislation at the national level.

Rettaimalai Srinivasan

- **Rettaimalai Srinivasan (1859–1945)**, popularly known as Grandpa (Thatha), was born in 1859 at Kanchipuram.
- He fought for social justice, equality and civil rights of the marginalised in the caste order. He was honoured with such titles as **Rao Sahib (1926)**, **Rao Bahadur (1930)** and **Divan Bahadur (1936)** for his selfless social services.
- His autobiography, **Jeeviya Saritha Surukkam (A Brief Autobiography)**, published in 1939, is one of the earliest autobiographies.
- Rettaimalai Srinivasan who had experienced the horrors of untouchability worked for the progress of the deprived castes. He founded the **Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha in 1893**.
- He served as president of the Scheduled Castes' Federation and the Madras Provincial Depressed Classes' Federation. He constantly engaged in discussions with leaders of the Indian National Congress and the Justice Party on questions involving the depressed castes.
- Rettaimalai Srinivasan met Gandhi in South Africa and was closely associated with him. He became a member of the Madras Legislative Council in 1923 and influenced the Justice Party to take affirmative action to safeguard the interests of the depressed and deprived sections of the society.
- A close associate of Dr B.R. Ambedkar, he participated in the first and second Round Table Conferences held in **London (1930 and 1931)** and voiced the opinions of the marginalised sections of the society. He was a signatory to the **Poona Pact of 1932**.

M.C. Rajah

- **Mylai Chinnathambi Raja (1883–1943)**, popularly known as M.C. Rajah, was one of the prominent leaders from the "depressed class".
- Rajah started his career as a teacher and wrote different textbooks for schools and colleges. He was one of the founding members of the South Indian Liberal Federation (Justice Party). He became the first elected **Legislative Council Member (1920–26)** from the depressed classes in Madras province.

- He functioned as the Deputy Leader of Justice Party in the Madras Legislative Council. Later, he left the Justice Party. M.C. Rajah demanded abolition of untouchability and organised a number of political meetings and conferences for the “**untouchable castes**” to have access to public wells and pathways to burial grounds.
- In addition, he advocated the use of such as terms, Adi-Dravida and AdiAndhra. In 1928, he founded the All India Depressed Classes Association and was its long time leader.
- Rajah had earlier called for separate electorate; but after the Poona Pact, he supported the idea of joint electorates.

Labour Movements in Tamil Nadu

- The **First World War (1914–18)** provided stimulus to industrial growth in India. These industries, catering to war time needs, had employed a huge number of workers.
- At the end of the War there were retrenchments across the industries, as the war time requirements receded. Combined with high prices, this gave a momentum to the labour movement.
- The nationalists realising the value of organised labour power began to support the cause of labour. **B.P. Wadia, M. Singaravelar, Thiru. Vi. Kalyanasundaram** and others initiated the formation of labour unions in the Madras Presidency.
- In **1918**, India’s first organised trade union, the Madras Labour Union, was formed. The first All India Trade Union Conference (AITUC) was held on 31 October 1920 in Bombay. The delegates discussed several resolutions.
- These included a demand for protection from police interference in labour disputes, the maintenance of an unemployment register, restriction on exporting foodstuffs, compensation for injuries, and health insurance.
- In addition, the delegates demanded that Indian workers be given some representation in the government, just as employers had representatives on legislative councils. **M. Singaravelar (1860–1946)**, was a pioneer in the labour movement activities in the Madras presidency.
- He was born in Madras and graduated from the Presidency College, University of Madras. He advocated Buddhism in his early life. He knew many languages, including **Tamil, English, Urdu, Hindi, German, French and Russian and wrote about the ideas of Karl Marx, Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer and Albert Einstein in Tamil.**
- He organised the first ever celebration of **May Day in 1923**. He was one of the early leaders of the Communist Party of India.
- He published a Tamil newspaper, **Thozhilalan (Worker)** to address the problems of the working class. He was closely associated with Periyar and the SelfRespect Movement.

Language Agitation before Indian Independence

- In general, language is a dominant symbol of identity and it is associated with culture and sentiments of any society. Tamil regained its prominence in the latter half of the nineteenth and early twentieth century.
- **Maraimalai Adigal's** Pure Tamil Movement, the language reforms of Periyar and Tamil Isai Movement helped to galvanise the Tamil language.
- Tamil renaissance that led the Dravidian consciousness made a great intervention in the development of modern Tamil language and its art forms.
- Agamic temples did not permit rituals in Tamil. Tamil songs had a marginal place in musical concerts. Abraham Pandithar systematically studied the history of Tamil music and attempted to reconstruct the ancient Tamil musical system.
- He founded the **Tanjore Sangitha Vidya Mahajana Sangam in 1912** and it became the kernel of the Tamil Isai Movement (Tamil Music Movement). The movement gave importance to the singing of Tamil compositions in music concerts.
- The first Tamil Isai Conference was held in **1943**, to discuss the status of Tamil music. The implementation of Hindi as a compulsory language in Tamil Nadu, at various points of time, was seen as a threat to Tamil language and culture.
- C. Rajaji, the Premier of Madras Presidency, introduced Hindi as a compulsory subject in schools. This created a stiff opposition in Madras province.
- Periyar declared that the introduction of Hindi over Tamil would deny the Dravidians of their job opportunities. Maraimalai Adigal pointed out that the Tamil language would suffer with the introduction of Hindi.
- The anti-Hindi campaigners considered it an ideological battle against Brahminism and the hegemony of Sanskrit over Tamil.
- They saw Sanskrit as a vehicle for propagation of **Brahmanical ideology, there by preserving the caste hierarchies and gender inequalities.**
- The agitation was marked by massive protest meetings, demonstrations, and hunger strikes. Tens of thousands of people took part in the agitation.

Women's Movements

- There were several streams of women's movements and organisations established in the early twentieth century to address the question of women empowerment in Madras Presidency.
- **Women's India Association (WIA) and All India Women's Conference (AIWC)** are the important among them in Tamil Nadu.
- **WIA was started in 1917 by Annie Besant**, Dorothy Jinarajadasa and Margaret Cousins at Adyar, Madras. The Association published pamphlets and bulletins in different languages to detail the problems of personal hygiene, marriage laws, voting rights, child care and women's role in the public.

- In the meantime, WIA formed the **All India Women's Conference (AIWC) in 1927** to address the problem of women's education and recommended that the government implement various policies for the uplift of women. Women's liberation was one of the important objectives of the Self-Respect Movement.
- Self respecters led by Periyar E.V.R. worked for gender equality and gender sensitisation of the society. The movement provided a space for women to share their ideas. There were several women activists in the movement.
- **Muthulakshmi Ammaiyar, Nagamma, Kannamma, Nilavathi, Muvalur Ramamirtham, Rukmani Ammal, Alarmelmangai Thayammal, Nilambikai, and Sivakami Chidambaranar** are prominent among them.
- There was a custom of dedicating young girls to the Hindu temples as a servant of God, known as devadasi.
- Though intended as a service to god it soon got corrupted leading to extensive immorality and abuse of the women. Dr. Muthulakshmi Ammaiyar, was in the forefront of the campaign pressing for a legislation to abolish this devadasi system.
- The **Madras Devadasis (Prevention of Dedication) Act 1947** was enacted by the government.

More to Know:

1. In 1930, **Muthulakshmi Ammaiyar** introduced in the Madras Legislative Council a Bill on the "prevention of the dedication of women to Hindu temples in the Presidency of Madras". The Bill, which later became the Devadasi Abolition Act, declared the "**pottukattu ceremony**" in the precincts of Hindu temples or any other place of worship unlawful, gave legal sanction to devadasis to contract marriage, and prescribed a minimum punishment of five years' imprisonment for those found guilty of aiding and abetting the devadasi system. The Bill had to wait for over **15 years** to become an Act.

2. The Non-Brahmin Manifesto pointed out that though "**Not less than 40 out of the 411/2 millions of the Madras Presidency were nonBrahmins**", "in what passes for the politics in Madras they have not taken the part to which they are entitled". Arguing that a government conducted on "**true British principles of justice and equality of opportunity**" was in the best interests of India, it declared, that "**we are deeply devoted and loyally attached to British rule**".