

11th Political Science Lesson 15 Notes in English

15. Tamil Nadu Political Thought

Historical Background

- The 'Classical Tamil homeland (**Tamizhagam**) is called as Tamil Nadu besides some parts of Kerala, Andhra and Karnataka; Strabo (63 BC(BCE) to c. AD(CE) 24),
- A famous **Greek geographer** and **historian** observed the early diplomatic history of ancient Tamil Kingdom of **Pandiyas**.
- Naval expeditions of **Cheras, Cholas, Pandiyas** and **Pallavas** inform early maritime power and influence of Tamils.
- Ports in the coast of Tamil Nadu were important centres of **trade** between **India** and **the Mediterranean**, and **India** and **southeast Asia**, in the period. **200 BC(BCE) to 300 AD(CE)**.
- The **ancient ports** of Korkai, Poompuhar, Vasavasamudram, Perimula, Arikamedu, Alagankulam, Mamallapuram reveal the active trade, commerce and cultural exchanges with **the Southeast Asian** countries, **Sri Lanka, China, Egypt, Greece** and **Rome**.



- An established tradition of **shipbuilding** combined with rich maritime heritage of ancient Tamils are definite indicators of the foundations of influential **polity, society, culture, trade** and **commercial** ties with the outside world.
- **Sangam literature** dated approximately **300 BC(BCE) to 300 AD(CE)** is another valuable literary source(s) that reflects society, economy, culture and politics.
- The classification of **Sangam poetry** into **akam** (on love) and **puram** (on war, good and the students will be able to evil, community, justice and kingdom) is a revelation of the **Tamil polity**.

The Sangam literary works have been grouped into eight anthologies (Ettuthogai):

- (1) Natrinai,
- (2) Kuruntogai,
- (3) Aingurunooru,
- (4) Paditruppattu,

- (5) Paripadal,
- (6) Kalittogai,
- (7) Agananooru, and
- (8) Purananooru;

(9) and there is a ninth group of poems called the **Patthupattu** (Ten Idylls).

- The early part of the first two books of **Tholkappiyam**, a work on Tamil grammar, belongs to the same period.
- The famous **post-Sangam literature** which was collected later as an anthology is known as the **Kilkanakku**.
- There are **18 works** as part of this collection and the most famous is **Silappadikaram**, **Manimekalai** and **Eighteen Minor Works** (Pathinen kilkanakku, which includes the Thirukkural) were written during this period.
- **Prabandha literature** consists of poetry of various forms: **kovai**, in which the verses are arranged according to a particular theme (usually about love), and **kalambakam**, in which the end of one stanza/line formed the beginning of the next (usually about kings and bravery) and **parani**.
- The best illustrations of this tradition are the **Pantikkovai**, **Nandikkalambakam**, and **Kalingattup-parani**.
- The ancient Tamil literature of **Sangam age**, **Thirukkural**, **Silapathikaram**, **Manimegalai** etc provide deep insights into the nature of polity, society and culture.
- Tamil language formed the core and essence of Tamil identity, culture, customs and traditions.
- Despite the diversity of land, **geography**, **rulers** and **chieftains** spread across the Tamil speaking areas the idea of **Tamil country** and confederation of Tamil speaking areas did exist.
- This literary finding(s) is also substantiated by a stone inscription of **Kalinga King Kharavela** (BC(BCE) 165), who claims to have destroyed a '**Tamil federation**' which existed for **132 years**.
- Similarly such a Tamil federation of kings to fight foreign invasion is also mentioned in '**Agananooru**', a sangam literature.
- Hence the idea and prevalence of **Tamil nationalism** is not simply a consequence of colonialism.
- The roots of Tamil nationalism are linked to the historical role and significance of Tamil language and culture in defining politics that could be traced even in the Sangam age.
- The concept of State and the idea king coincided with the territorial emphasis of polity as **the Greek city-state**.
- The classical Tamil country known as **Tamizhagam** covered areas south of **Tirupati** hills up to the tip of **the Cape Comorin** (Kanyakumari).

The land was traditionally classified according to its nature into five geographical regions

1. (**tinai**): the mountainous region
 2. (**kurinji**), the forest areas
 3. (**mullai**), fertile plains
 4. (**marudam**), coastal region
 5. (**neidhal**) and arid region
 6. (**palai**).
- Tamil speaking areas were divided between the principalities of the **Cholas** (its capital at **Uraiyur**), the **Pandiyas** (**Madurai** as capital), the **Cheras** in most of present **Kongunadu** (and **Kerala**) and the **Pallavas** (**Kanchipuram** as capital).
 - Tamil country included several kingdoms ruled by **kings** (**vendhar**), **major** and **minor chieftains** (**vel/velar**) who was less powerful than the crowned kings.
 - The Sangam poets sang songs of praise about **the velirs**, especially **the Seven Patrons**, for their generosity towards the poets. **Kapilar** and **Avvaiyar** mention chieftains like, **Aay, Pari, Ori, Malayan, Elini, Pegan** and **Nalli**.
 - The virtues of king did include the ideals of Just Ruler with qualities of kindness towards the subjects and bravery in the battlefield against enemies.
 - **The sabhai** or **mandram** was the highest court of justice presided by the king himself.
 - Every village had its own mandram which met at a common public place and was involved in organizing village and community activities.
 - Warriors were respected, and a man who died in battle would have memorial stones erected in his honour and be worshipped in death.
 - Even if a warrior dies in battle field with a wound in his back, it is considered derogatory in 'Sangam' traditions.

In praise of Citizen Kannagi

Eric Miller

- **Kannagi** proved that even a **non-native** with **no money** and **no family** in sight can **fight City Hall** and win her case that is inspiring.
- I write in praise of Kannagi, global symbol of justice, and of the dignity of the individual!
- This is her story the **Silappathikaram**, the Epic of the Anklet as I know it: Kannagi and **Kovalan** married in **Poompuhar**, on the east coast.
- After some time, Kovalan went off with a dancer named **Madhavi**. A year later, he returned home.
- He and Kannagi walked to **Madurai**, a distance of about 250 km, to start a new life.
- There Kovalan was unjustly put to death by the local ruler, **the Pandian king**: **Kovalan** had been **falsely accused** of **stealing the queen's anklet**.
- Kannagi came to **the court** and **proved** that her **husband** had been **innocent** of this **crime**.
- **The king punished himself** for the **injustice** he had done, by simply laying himself down and dying.

- Kannagi walked around the city three times, tore off her left breast and threw it against the city wall, and called for the **city to burn** but for good people and animals to be unharmed.
- **Agni**, the god of Fire, accomplished this.
- Kannagi wandered to **the western mountains**, where some **people worshipped her**.
- **Eric Miller** did his Ph.D. in Folklore, University of Pennsylvania, **USA**.
- His dissertation is on Tamil children's songs and games, and language learning.
- To conduct **research on the Silappathikaram**, he walked in the footsteps of Kannagi from Poompuhar, to Madurai, to the western mountains.
- Quotes are from **R. Parthasarathy's** translation from the original **sen-Tamil: The Silappatikaram: The Tale of an Anklet**, by Ilanko Atikal, Columbia University Press, 1993.)
- Back on the Pedestal: The Kannagi statue on **the Marina in Chennai**.

Political Principle that prevailed in Tamil Nadu

- Lots of good practices of war find its mention in sangam literature.
- Purananooru, a sangam literature, hails the Pandyan king who announces all the women, children, sick and elderly people, cattles, to move to safety zone before invading a country.
- **The idea of justice** formed the conscience of State and king. Justice is an essential element in a **king's rule**.
- A good king should never sacrifice justice. Just **rule** and **good deeds** always will bring everlasting fame to the king.
- An important political principle that prevailed was that (Despite the nature of political system being monarchy) the legitimacy of the king rests with the consent of the people as long as he enjoys people's support and he loses legitimacy if he loses their support.
- Sangam literature (**Pattinappaalai**) speaks about different types of **taxations** like customs duty, income tax, toll tax etc as specific source of **revenue to the State**.
- Tamil kings and chieftains ruled the land with simple administrative structure of council of ministers, subordinates and administrative officers.
- There were **officers** to deal with **foreign trade** and **customs revenue** which was an important part of the budget.
- **Pandya** inscriptions mention about **officers** for **pearl fisheries** (kalatika) and the **chief scribes** (kanatikan).
- In **flags** and **coins**, the Cholas were represented by **the tiger**, the Cheras by **the bow and arrow** the Pandyas by **the fish** and the Pallavas by **the lion**.
- The institution of '**spy**' was considered as a necessary institution and the maintenance of peace and stability in the kingdom depended on the effectiveness of this institution.
- Though slavery as a form of institution was absent yet capturing of slaves after invasions, and slave trade or exchange for gifts did remain as practice among the rulers to undertake construction and building works.
- The practice of **caste system** or **jati** was **unknown among ancient Tamils**.

The Ancient Tamil System

- The idea and concept of class with differences in status based on professional distinctions did prevail.
- **The caste system** was **alien** and unknown to **Sangam society**.
- The division of society based on class has been revealed by the Sangam poets who mention about social categories (kudi): **tudiyan**, **panan**, and **kadamban**; or **arasar** (rulers), **vaishyar** (traders), and **velalar** (farmers).
- Differences in status were accepted as inevitable, yet **varna** in the form of caste or jati seems to be little known to Sangam society.
- Though social stratification did prevail yet legitimization of **Manusmriti** or **Aryan-Brahminical** interpretation of caste as divine arrangement was not integral to the cultural universe or worldview of **the ancient Tamils**.
- The beginnings and early inroads of the **Aryan-Brahminical** account of caste could be traced to **later period of Sangam era**.
- The ancient religion of Tamils was based on **folk traditions**. The **worship of nature** and **natural elements** were more common.
- **The worship of Murugan** among the **tribes** of Tamil Nadu and the cult worship of Murugan as **the warrior God** was based on folk culture.
- An earthly composition of God is rooted in the **Tamil – Dravidian** traditions.
- It was only after the **sixth century AD(CE)**, **inscriptions** were written in **Tamil** as well as **Sanskrit**.
- **Sanskritisation** gradually spread to public space with the evoking of **the doctrines of benevolence to Brahmin(s)** and divine blessings to the king .
- The seeking of blessings from the Brahmin soon became a source of legitimacy for the Tamil king after this period.
- Along with the Sanskritisation, Vedic rituals, worship and orientation to social (caste) system as advocated in Manusmriti found their passage to transform the professionally stratified class structure of Dravidian society into a hierarchically classified **social (caste) system** with **Vedic divine sanctions**.
- The State and king were being seen as one and the same.
- The hereditary principle and evoking of divine rights with earthly symbols were prevalent among the Tamil kings.
- The idea of **territorial State** provided inherent reconciliation to **the changing dynasties** and **geographical changes** as boundaries of principalities were drawn and redrawn.
- **The governing principles of power** and **location of monarchy** also moved from culture specific to power centric based on authority.
- Thus in later period, during the **post-Sangam era**, the king gradually became the sole source of authority.

The Pallava Period

- **The Pallavas** maintained that as they were **the descendants of Brahma**, the kingship was of divine origin and was hereditary.
- The Pallava period witnessed the penetration of **the Aryan culture of North India into the South** as well as the assimilation of some of the patterns, ideas and institutions and rejection or modification of certain other aspects.
- **Tamil devotional culture** was one of the results of this interaction as revealed by the **themes and dedication of deity at temples**.
- **Women** were highly **respected** and **performed** a variety of **jobs** and duties including as bodyguards to the kings, yet power and authority rested with men.
- **Women** participated in **public assemblies** but rulers and administrators were mostly men.
- **Women** formed significant part of **social rituals** and functioned as pivots of the family despite the inheritance rights and formal authority remained with men.
- In narrating the role and status of women in Tamil society we need to mention about the tradition of **Avvaiyar** (meaning respectable women).
- More than a name, this was a title, **literary canon**, given to distinguished women who made contributions to Tamil literature.
- There were as many as **four to six women** who held this **Tamil literary canon title** at different times based on different sources.
- Avvaiyars of Sangam age and Cholas age are best known for their extraordinary influence upon **literature, culture, moral universe, nature of polity, war, peace and the art of diplomacy**.
- Sangam age **Avvaiyar** lived during the **1st and 2nd century AD(CE)**.
- **King Athiyaman Neduman Anchi** of the **Velir Dynasty** was her chief patron and considered as contemporary of literary legends **Thiruvalluvar** and **Kabilar** with notable contribution of verses in **Natrinai, Kuruntogai, Akananooru** and **Purananooru**.
- She is also **credited** as the most **gracious** and **scholarly diplomat** who undertook **diplomatic missions** for King Adhiyaman Neduman Anchi.
- Avvaiyar, a **poetess** and friend of King Adhiyaman, ruler of **Tagadur**, is supposed to have helped in avoiding war between two kingdom states.
- King **Thondaiman**, ruler of **Kanchipuram**, had sent him a note declaring his intention to attack **Thagadur Avvaiyar** spoke "Oh Thondiaman, how different indeed are your clean and shiny weapons from those of Adiyaman, always stained with blood and under repair."
- Thondaiman had far less experience in war and was unlikely to win – she was making this clear under the guise of praise.
- Another famous Avvaiyar was from **the Cholas age**, around **10th Century AD(CE)**, who wrote moral universe for children and advocated ethical principles for all.
- Whilst her works **Aathichoodi** and **Konraiventhan** were written for young children, **Mooturai** and **Nalvazhi** were written for older children.

Thirukkural

- All these **classical works** not only reveal the **cultural and literary traditions of the ancient Tamils**.
- They also serve as **historical testimony** to the nature of Tamil society, socio-cultural and religious beliefs, livelihood, vocations, professions, role and status of women, marriage, gender,
- Class structure, origins of caste system, kinship, polity, governance, ideas of justice, wars, peace, diplomacy, naval warfare, maritime traditions, trade, commerce, shipbuilding and seafaring skills, economy, land,
- Water systems, agriculture, art, dance, poetry, music, architecture and relationship with the neighbouring countries and far away places.

Introduction

- Politics intends to create **change- oriented awareness in the society**.
- It is not necessary to adopt and follow the existing social system which the present politics do.
- This awareness can be initiated by ideas and ideologies of **society-laden thinkers**.
- With the **advancement of civilization** to the next stage through socio-economic and technocratic developments, emerging new ideas got stumbled by the existing belief system and functions followed until now.
- **Albeit** of these stumbling blocks, the constructive impact made by the thinkers and thinking is ever-lasting on the basis of mind-capturing of the people.
- **Ideas are dangerous** than the technocratic revolution, positively.
- Quite apart, **pen is more powerful than sword**.

The definite part of thinkers is as follows:

- Being the basis for the **social changes** and subsequent events including the change in the public minds;
- Having taken **political decisions** which had an impact on **social turning points**;
- Serving as best brains behind the major political decisions which has benefitted the **diversified communities**;
- To convert social ideas into common which assisted **people's advancement** belonging to **rious communities**
- New political ideas are supported by the activities of **the political thinkers** which kindles interest and rational thinking of the common people.
- The interaction of those thinkers with **the contemporary society** makes a new framework for the entire system.
- **New political decisions** which intend to create great changes for the emerging generations were undertaken.

- The day-to-day life of common people may be engulfed with many changes by the political decision of the thinkers.
- At world level these kind of thinkers made changes in the **socio-political systems**.
- Such great thinkers made their extra-ordinary presence throughout the past centuries in India in general and **Tamilnadu** in particular.
- **National political thinkers**, Tamil political thinkers, Socialist thinkers, Thinkers of social justice are the different parts of modern categorization.
- In this part we can discuss about different political thinkers of Tamilnadu who made outstanding contribution for **the social changes**.
- **Political ideologies in Tamilnadu** is rich with ideas, beliefs, opinions and attitudes towards society, polity and economy.
- This is evident from the **ancient political ideas** of **Thiruvalluvar**, where as **Bharathiyar** is a **nationalist** and **Singaravelar** is a **communist**.
- According to **periyar**, **Dravidian ideology** focuses on **social justice**.
- The political ideologies in Tamil Nadu are a combination of all three left, Right and centre ideologies.

Ancient Political Ideas

Thiruvalluvar



- In **Arathupal of Thirukkural**, **Valluvar** was a great enunciator of morals; In **Inbathupal**, he has become a poet and in **Porutpal**, he is known to be a **political philosopher**.
- **The political philosophy of Thiruvalluvar** is applicable across times even today.

Seven Parts in Porutpal

- **Porutpal** consists of **7 parts**, further it has **70 verses / couplets**.
- They are **Politics-25, Ministry-10, Defence-2, Wealth-1, Army-2, Friendship-17, and citizens-13** respectively.

"படை குடி கூழ்அமைச்சு நட்பரண் ஆறும்
உடையான் அரசருள் ஏறு" (குறள்: 381)

*“An army, people, wealth, a minister, friends, fort; six things
Who owns them all, a lion lives amid the kings”*

(Kural: 381)

- Thus, in porutpal, at the first verse itself valluvar differentiated the six categories essential for a state.
- Thus, different parts of government are **ministry, army, wealth, people, friendship and citizens**, which determines the rule of a king.
- Moreover, these components are categorized for king in a separate way, thus contributing a lot of ideas regarding administration of a state and assets for a king.

Nature of a king – 25 Chapters

- In porutpal, Valluvar mentioned about nature of a king in detailed manner in 25 chapters starting from **Qualities of ruler** (Iraimatchi – chapter 39) to **idukkan azhaiyaamai** (Unfazed in the face of trouble – chapter 63) in 25 chapters,
- In the name of “**Arasar**”, “**Vender**”, “**Nilan Aandavar**” “**Mannavar**” he has indicated 46 times about the king.
- The King must possess **the leadership qualities** such as, Education (40), Listening Ability (42), Wisdom (43), Fending off Faults (44), Seeking the company of great men (45), Avoiding mean-minded (46) Rationality (47),
- Priority for time for action (51), Assessing and Assigning tasks (52), Embracing the Kin (53), Doing duty without forgetting (54), Justice (55),
- Knowing the right place (50), Refraining from Terrifying Deeds (57), Compassion (58), Espionage (59), Spirit (60), To avoid laziness (61), Perseverance (62) and Determination (63) which should be the requisites of a king.
- These above-mentioned qualities may also be possessed by good people.

Ideas on Democracy

- **Valluvar** lived in the **period of monarchy**. However, his ideas and ideals are also applicable for the present leaders of democracy.
- He also indicated the nature of state and government in the king’s rule.
- **The words of Valluvar** regarding government and state is **applicable and suitable to all over the period** as well as every organization in the world.

Welfare state and King

- To put it in simple words, Valluvar’s political system is based on welfare state. For instance, in **Iraimatchi** (Qualities of a ruler), he says

முறைசெய்து காப்பாற்றும் மன்னவன் மக்கட்கு
இறையென்று வைக்கப் படும். (குறள்: 388)

*Who guards the realm and justice strict maintains,
That king as god over subject people reigns.*

(Kural: 388)

- If a king delivered justice by doing the duties honestly, he may be regarded as a **God**.
- **Ideal path** and **welfare** – **arrived kings** can be respected and kept on par with divine.
- This kind of view is not only applicable to monarchical period but it also applicable to present democratic period.

Features of State

- **The characteristics of a state** is to maintain **ethics**, the eradication of wrong doing activity, mandating impartiality of justice and protection of honour.

அறனிழுக்கா தல்லைவ நீக்கி மறனிழுக்கா
மானம் உடைய தரசு (குறள்: 384)

*Kingship, in virtue failing not, all vice restrains,
In courage failing not, it honour's grace maintains.*

(Kural: 384)

- **King's path** is the **peoples' path**, king should act as a guide for his subjects, if he does harm or evil activities, it may influence all.
- It is because of his position as a leader, his discipline and private life will spread to all in **the kingdom**.
- Moral and ethical life is quite essential for the ruling kings.
- Indicating "**Respect**" in a broad manner relating it with nation, **Valluvar** gave priority for great honour which may be equated with the courage.
- He stressed that king must be loyal to **the nation**, it is the honour of nation.

Ideal State and Welfare of people

- In the **monarchical rule**, the integrity and ideal governance for all periods were advocated by Valluvar.
- People of all regions expect rain for their growth; likewise, citizens of a nation expect **integrity** and **ideal rule of the king**.

வானோக்கி வாழும் உலகெல்லாம் மன்னவன்
கோல்தோக்கி வாழுங் குடி. (குறள்: 542)

*All earth looks up to heaven where raindrops fall;
All subjects look to king that ruleth all.*

(Kural: 542)

- In this couplet Valluvar indicates “Kol” as ideal rule which not only applies for monarchy but also for democracy.

குடிதழீஇக் கோலோச்சம் மாநில மன்னன்
அடிதழீஇ நிற்கும் உலகு. (குறள் 544)

*Whose heart embraces subjects all, lord over mighty land
Who rules, the world his feet embracing stands.*

(Kural: 544)

- This means that for a King, who protects his citizens with love and affection, his feet will be embraced by **his subjects with love**.
- This is an everlasting phrase propounded by Valluvar related to good governance.

Against Tyranny

- In the chapter “Kodungonmai”, (Cruel Scepter) Valluvar explained it in negative words.
- The suppressive and exploitative rule of evil king may kindle unknown and indefinite agonies among the people.
- Those tears are most powerful and may annihilate the entire kingdom.

அல்லற்பட்டு ஆற்றாது அழுதகண் ணீரன்றோ
செல்வத்தைத் தேய்க்கும் படை (குறள் 555)

*His people's tears of sorrow past endurance, are not they
Sharp instrument to wear the marches wealth away.*

(Kural: 555)

- Sad tears of suffering citizens may dethrone and destroy the entire government, says Thiruvalluvar.
- Tears were equated with army, thus Valluvar's visualization stands unique among others.
- Autocrats and Dictators like **Hitler, Mussolini** and **Czar** were the negative players for whom, **Thirukkural** served as a **funeral sound**.

Government's Budget

- A king should be an able handed administrator in increasing the income of government.
- Further he should be an expert in handling the budget.
- In **Iraimatchi**, he said,

இயற்றலும் ஈட்டலும் காத்தலும் காத்த
வகுத்தலும் வல்ல தரசு. (குறள் 385)

*A king is he who treasure gains, stores up, defends,
And duly for his kingdom's weal expends.*

(Kural: 385)

- At first point, a king should search for the different sources of income. For this, he calls it as **"Iyatral"**.
- Then, the second point is that, all such resources should be put together, which is called as **"Ettal"**.
- Third, the resources thus collected must be protected with all precautionary measures which is called as **"Kaathal"**
- Fourth one, is most important (i.e) allotting the resources to various sectors for the welfare of the people, this he called it as **"Vagutthal"**.
- Thus **iyatral**, **eetall**, **kaathal** and **vaguthal** are the four ways of **utilizing the income** to be expertise by the king of nation. It is a **primary duty** of the king.
- These innovative and practical ideas were accepted by political and as well as economic exponents as the basic idea of socialistic society.

Relevance of Thiruvalluvar

- **The Educational qualities** that are indicated by Valluvar for a king may also apply to the citizens.
- Thus, he used the words **"Idukkan Ariyamai"**, **"Kalvi"** for **"Vazhum Uyirku"**, **"Maandharkku"** which is for all the people.
- **The political ideas** advocated by Valluvar in **porutpal** highly circumvent around morals and noble principles.
- **"People's-welfare"** is the basic foundation of his contribution.
- To put it in a different way, Valluvar's contribution to politics is applicable to the present democratic governance for the welfare of all the people.
- The qualities that were indicated by Valluvar for a king may also apply to the citizens.

Thirukkural – A truly secular book

- The very first observation about **the Kural** is the fact that it is a secular book.

- During the days of Valluvar **many religion** existed in India.
- There were **Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs, Hindus** as well as **agnostics** and **atheists**. But **secularism** as a concept was **unknown**.
- Valluvar himself was a believer and he has devoted one chapter to praise of God. He must have observed a particular religion.
- But in his book he advocates **no religion**, he does not even refer to any religion.
- **The ancient Indian law-giver Manu** and the ancient Greek philosophers **Plato** and **Aristotle** maintained with absolute certainty that human beings were not born equal.
- This popular view is accepted in all civilizations over centuries. Valluvar, the philosopher poet, held a radically different view.
- He says

“All human beings are equal by birth; but differ as regards characteristics because of the different qualities of their actions.” (Kural 972)

Nationalism

Subramaniya Bharathiyar (1882 – 1921)



ஜாதி மதங்களைப் பாரோம் –
உயர் ஜன்மம்இத் தேசத்தில் எய்தின ராயின்
வேதிய ராயினும் ஒன்றே –
அன்றி வேறு குலத்தின ராயினும் ஒன்றே

We shall not look at caste or religion,
All human beings in this land,
whether they be those who preach the
vedas or who belong to other castes are
one.

-Subramaniya Bharati

- **C. Subramaniya Bharathiyar** was a poet, freedom fighter and social reformer from Tamil Nadu.
- He was known as **Mahakavi Bharathiyar** and the laudatory epithet **Mahakavi** means **a great poet**.
- He is considered as one of India's greatest poets.
- His **songs on nationalism and freedom of India** helped to rally the masses to support the **Indian Independence Movement in Tamil Nadu**.

Bharathi: A poet and a Nationalist

"We may have thousand of
sects; that, however, does not
justify a foreign invasion."

- Significantly, a **new age in Tamil literature** began with Subramaniya Bharathi.
- Most part of his compositions are classifiable as **short lyrical outpourings** on **patriotic, devotional and mystic themes**.
- Bharathi was essentially a lyrical poet. "**Kannan Pattu**" "**Nilavum Vanminum Katrum**" "**Panchali Sabatam**" "**Kuyil Pattu**" are examples of Bharathi's great poetic output.
- Bharathi is considered as a national poet due to his number of **poems of the patriotic flavour** through which he exhorted the people to join the independence struggle and work vigorously for the liberation of the country.
- Instead of merely being proud of his country he also outlined his vision for a free India.
- He published the sensational "**Sudesa Geethangal**" in 1908.

Bharathi as a Journalist

- Many years of **Bharathi's life** were spent in the field of journalism, Bharathi, as a young man began his career as a journalist and as a sub-editor in "**Swadesamitran**" in **November 1904**.
- "**India**" saw the light of the day in **May, 1906**. It declared as its motto the three slogans of the **French Revolution, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity**.
- It blazed a new trail in **Tamil Journalism**.
- In order to proclaim its revolutionary ardour, Bharathi had the weekly printed in red paper.

- **"India"** was the first paper in Tamil Nadu to publish political cartoons.



- He also edited and published '**Vijaya**', a Tamil daily "**Bala Bharatha**" an English monthly, and '**Suryothayam**' a local weekly of **Pondicherry**.
- It is not surprising therefore that soon a **warrant** was waiting at the door of the "India" office for the **arrest of the editor of the magazine**.
- It was because of this worsening situation in **1908** that Bharathi decided to go away to **Pondicherry**,
- **A French territory** at that time, and continue to publish the "India" magazine.
- Bharathi **resided in Pondicherry** for sometime to escape the wrath of the British imperialists.
- During his exile, Bharathi had the opportunity to mingle with many leaders of the **militant wing of the independence** movement such as **Aurobindo, Lajpat Rai and V.V.Subramaniam** who had also sought asylum in the **French ruled Pondicherry**.
- The most profitable years of Bharathi's life were **the ten years he spent in Pondicherry**.
- From Pondicherry, he guided the **Tamil youth of Madras** to tread in the path of nationalism.
- This increased the anger of the **British towards Bharathi's writings** as they felt that it was his writings that induce and influence the patriotic spirit of the Tamil youth.
- **Bharathi met Mahatma Gandhi** in **1919** in **Rajaji's home at Madras**.
- Bharathi entered **British India** near **Cuddalore** in **November 1918** and was promptly **arrested**.
- Even in **prison**, he spent his time in **writing poems on freedom, nationalism and country's welfare**.
- In his early days of youth he had good relations with **Nationalist Tamil Leaders** like **V.O.Chidambaram, Subramanya Siva, Mandayam Thirumalachariar and Srinivasachari**.
- Along with these leaders he used to discuss the problems facing the country due to British rule.

- Bharathi used to attend the Annual sessions of Indian National Congress and discuss national issues with extremist Indian National Leaders like **Bipin Chandra Pal**, **B.G. Tilak** and **V.V.Subramaniam**.
- His participation and activities in **Benaras Session (1905)** and **Surat Session (1907)** of the **Indian National Congress** impressed many national leaders about his patriotic fervour.
- Bharathi had maintained good relations with some of the national leaders and shared his thoughts and views on the nation and offered his suggestions to strengthen the nationalist movement.
- Undoubtedly, his wise suggestions and steadfast support to the cause of nationalism rejuvenated many national leaders.
- Thus Bharathi played a **pivotal role in the freedom of India**.

Bharathiyar as a social reformer

- Bharathi was also **against caste system**. He declared that there were only two castes-men and women and nothing more than that.
- Above all, he himself had removed his sacred thread. He had also adorned many scheduled caste people with **sacred thread**.
- He used to take tea sold in shops run by **Muslims**. He along with his family members attended **church** on all festival occasions.
- He advocated temple entry of **Dalits**. For all his reforms, he had to face opposition from his neighbours.
- But Bharathi was very clear that unless Indians unite as children of Mother India, they could not achieve freedom.
- He believed in **women's rights, gender equality** and **women emancipation**.
- He opposed **child marriage, dowry system** and **supported widow remarriage**.

“World will prosper in knowledge
and intellect, if both men and
woman are deemed equal.”

-Subramaniya Bharathiyar

Bharathiyar – A Visionary

- Bharathi as a **poet, journalist, freedom fighter** and **social reformer** had made a great impact not only on the Tamil society but also on the entire human society.
- He followed what all he preached and it is here that his greatness is manifested.
- His prophecy during **the colonial period** about the independence of India came true after two and half decades after his demise.

- His vision about a glorious India has been taking a shape in the post-Independence era.
- Bharathi did not **live** for himself but **for the people and nation**. That is why he is respectfully called as **Bharathiyar**.
- Even today, after many decades, **Subramaniya Bharathiyar** stands as an undying **symbol of Indian freedom** and vibrant **Tamil nationalism**.

Communism

Singara Velar (1860-1946)



- The emergence of **Swadeshi** and **Home rule movement** in India in the initial part of 20th century aroused the thirst for freedom.
- Reforms were made in Hindu religion in accordance with the existing society.
- These movements played a key role in creating the feeling of **Indiannes** and **Nationalism in the political Scenario**.
- But these movements are religious in nature. Moreover, those who participated in these movements are from **upper social class**.
- **Freedom sought by these people** are political in nature **neglecting the interests and economic upliftment of farmers and labourers**.
- This affected the majority Indians who are poor and belong to **farmers community**.
- Further, **caste discrimination** existed within **Congress Party**.
- Particularly, in **Tamilnadu** there **existed a clear difference** between **brahmins** and **non-brahmins**.
- In this context, **Singaravelar** played a pivotal role in spreading **rational ideas** and **scientific perception in to politics**.
- He also played a key role in connecting welfare of farmers and workers in to freedom struggle and spreading **socialist thinking in to politics**.

Impact of Singaravelar's Ideas on Congress Party

- **The British empire** which **exported the raw materials** in the initial stages started industries later in India as the demand increased.
- This **worsened common people's life** standards. They are ready to work even for meagre wages.
- Hence, those who are employed were **treated as slaves**.
- Even a minor **protests** by the employees were **suppressed with iron hands**.
- More **labour organizations emerged** to protect the rights of working class.
- These organizations were headed by **Thiru.V.Kalyanasundaranar** and **D.Varadharajalu** in the **Madras presidency**.
- It was Singaravelar who took major efforts in the emergence of labour organizations in Madras presidency.
- Singaravelar wanted to sensitize the workers on politics and wanted to engage them in the freedom struggle.
- But Congress Party **did not accept this idea** of Singaravelar.
- Singaravelar criticised it vehemently and send telegraphs to Congress high command, following this, he wrote a **letter to Mahatma Gandhi**.
- Further, he also wrote about this issue on the popular dailies **Swadesamitran**, The Hindu, and magazines like **Navasakthi**.
- He also propagated this among congress workers.
- In this juncture, he participated in **the Congress Committee (1922)** meeting as a **representative of Tamilnadu**, there also he explained the following demands and sought support from Congress members.
- **Indian freedom** includes **economic freedom** of workers and farmers.
- The welfare of farmers and labourers should also be **the motto of Congress party**.
- Farmers and labourers must be included in **the Indian national movement**.
- Congress leaders should help to raise masses from different organization.
- In consequent with this, in **1922, Indian National Congress**, passed a resolution to raise people from various organizations.
- **A six member committee** was constituted, in which M. Singaravelar was appointed as a member.
- In addition to this, he also fought for the **protection of labour rights**.
- He emphasized this demand by writing in all popular dailies.
- As an outcome, **labour protective law was passed in 1926, in India**.
- Moreover, he advised for speaking in **vernacular languages**. Only then, he believed that the ideas will reach all the people.
- So, that leaders and people can maintain good relations. He is also determined to **speak in Tamil**, when speaking about the issues of **Tamilnadu people**.
- In **1918**, a resolution regarding this was passed during **Chennai Presidency Association Conference**.
- Singaravelar and Periyar were the dignitaries in this conference.

Singaravelar's Impact on Self-Respect and Communist Movements:

- When **Periyar resigned** from Congress Party citing the existence of **Brahmin and Non-Brahmin divide** and **discrimination in the party**, Singaravelar supported the action of Periyar.
- After visiting **USSR**, Periyar was influenced by **the Communist ideals**.
- He changed the name of **self-respect movement** to **Self-Respect Social Justice Party**.
- Singaravelar made his contribution in framing the policies and principles of the movement.
- He also wrote extensively in **Periyar's Republic magazine** against superstitious beliefs. These writings were simple and can be understood easily.
- Singaravelar has a deep faith in **the philosophy of Communism**.
- He urged the Congress party to support labour organizations.
- In the name of **Madras Socialists**, he telegraphed **Congress High Command**.
- In all the Congress Committee meetings he argued as a Communist representative.
- In **1923**, it was he, who organized the first May Day celebrations in Chennai. In the same day, he announced the formation of labour-farmer political party.

The demands of his new political party are

1. Eight hours work
2. Right to form union
3. Right to strike as a last resort to pressure labour demands.
4. Three level committees for reviewing the demands.
5. Minimum wages
6. Shelter with basic amenities
7. Medical and life Insurance
8. Provident fund facility
9. Earned leave
10. Free Medical assistance
11. Maternity leave
12. Put an end to contract basis

For Farmers

- Free water for agriculture
- Abolition of Zamindari system

For People

- Voting rights for all
- Right to contest in elections for poor, labour and farmer communities.

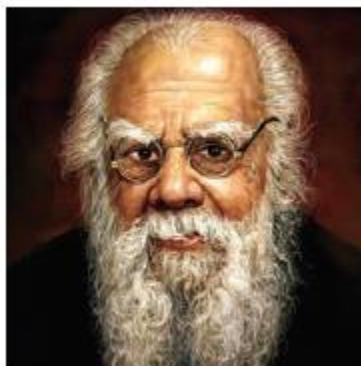
- **First socialist conference** was headed by **Singaravelar** in **1925, in Kanpur**. He spoke about socialism without violence.
- Also, he resolved for **adopting Communism** according to Indian circumstances.
- A socialist should play a role by being in the member of Congress Party, he advised.
- Eventually, **Socialist block** was formed inside **the Congress Party**.

Life and Services

- Since his childhood Singaravelar did not believe in **the Varna System** and **superstitious belief**.
- As a result of this, he established **Buddhist Association** and propagated **against Varna System** and superstitious beliefs during 1880 itself.
- Born in a rich family and well versed with law, he served as a member in **Chennai Municipality** and also in health sector.
- Due to the endemic diseases in the down-trodden areas, he gave priority to health and education.
- He also fought for **rights of labourers**. Based on this, he played active role in Congress Party.
- Later, he joined in **Periyar's Self – Respect movement**.
- Though he entered into politics after he crossed the age of 50, he actively propagated and wrote about communist ideas for more than thirty years.
- He was fondly remembered and called as **the first communist of south India**.

Dravidian Ideology

Periyar (1879-1973)



Introduction

- **Periyar E.V.Ramasamy** is regarded as the best political thinker in Tamilnadu. This is because he is **the foremost reformist** in our state.
- Let us see about him in detail in this lesson.

- Periyar fought against **superstitious beliefs, enslavement of women and social backwardness** which existed in Tamilnadu from time immemorial based on his wisdom and self-respect throughout his life.
- It is because of this, he is fondly called as **‘Thanthai Periyar’**.
- Various scholars on **Social Justice** say that the **Dravidian ideology** enunciated by Periyar on cultural lines shines all around our country.
- Periyar was attracted towards **Gandhi's** entry into politics and hence joined congress and became actively participating in freedom movement and social reforms.
- During that period in **1920's Congress** was dominated by upper class people.
- But Periyar took Congress to the down trodden and successfully organized temple entry movements as a true Congress man.
- Periyar was very much disgruntled by the practice of **Varnashrama in Congress party** and left it.
- He joined Justice party and formed the self respect movement later.
- After this, the contributions and activities of Periyar became inseparable from the politics of India and Tamilnadu in particular.
- In the name of nation, if a group of people exploit other groups that is not the real freedom which a nation fought for, said **Periyar** alias **E.V. Ramasamy**.
- Periyar vociferously criticized against **Nation, Race and Nationalism** at various levels. All Nation, nationality and nationalism are similarly related concepts.
- All these differentiations indicate the **“Self Respect”** of the entire population of a country.
- If anybody speaks about nationalism in Tamilnadu, I wonder, that will they think about **“welfare or botheration about people”** questioned Periyar.

Nationalism as exploitation

- There are people who may not bother about Indians, **Tamilians** and the **self-respect** of the people.
- They deceive people to believe in nation and nationalism for their own welfare and betterment.
- If **self-respect** is submerged in the name of nation and nationalism that will be the crime against India, stated Periyar.
- **Nationalism** is an unreal feeling.
- Since National feeling is nothing but a conspiracy framed by rich and **power-centered**, people who deceive the other people by controlling the negative emotions.
- It is a false assumption, propagated by these upper rich communities in order to curtail **the rights of the poor community**.
- Nationalism has become a buzz word of addictiveness and emotionalist for the people, he exclaimed.

Global Nationalism – A Denial

- **Periyar** in his speech in **Sri-Lanka**, opposed strongly against **Nation** and **Nationalism** when others used **‘Indian Nationalism’** as a weapon, Periyar spoke against these factors.
- He has also shown about other nations, nationalistic feeling apart from Indian Nationalism.
- It is to treat people as scapegoat, **Capitalist Class** along with other similar people, Patriotic feeling was misused, said **Periyar**.
- For instance, if rich communities in **U.K** have any clash with **USA** or vice-versa they may give clarion call as **“Oh ! Britons, Patriots, our nation is under threat”**.
- Such kind of false words is only for their economic advancement and not for the poor communities.
- **Erstwhile, Russia** has many races and cultural groups, but there is no discrimination in that nation.
- He also supported **communist revolution**. These nations which are free of nationalism, religion and God may not be affected with luxurious life styles, poverty and exploitation by rich community.
- Those people may not stick upon with national and godly attachments. **Equality** and egalitarian **society** is the only priority of that place.
- There will not be any discrimination like **rich-poor, owner-worker, powerful-powerless** in that region.
- Those people of high value and egalitarian-longing are not equal to the nation which gives priority for **God** and **Nationalism**.
- By showing other nations as evidences, Periyar also criticized Indian nationalistic feelings and patriotism.
- Because these feelings are exploited as weapons by certain dominant groups.

India – A Land of Diversities

- Whether **“Nation”** as a concept is suitable for India? Periyar raised a pertinent question and answer as well.
- “Madras is not a separate nation and cannot function separately,” says some of our friends. Once **‘Madras’** was a nation.
- Also now, **“Dravidam”** it is. The culture and other practices are different from Bengal and Mumbai.
- English language is the main base for the familiarly among these different nations in India.
- If British Empire and its language is relieved from India, Hindi may become the national language.
- Instead of calling India as a nation, **Dravida Nadu, Andhra, Bengal** can be separately called as **nations** respectively.
- For instance, Dravidian nation had its culture, language, civilization and rule for thousands of years on accordance with historical facts.
- Undoubtedly it is known to all the people.

- **"Dravidian Nationalism"** proposed by Periyar was to a large extent against religious dominations.

On Language

- Each and everyone have their own rights to protect their languages. These rights can be protected and provided under Dravida, **Socialist Republic Rule**.
- **No language** can be enforced.
- Language should not be misused as weapon for separatism.
- If people are dependent upon **Central rule** for all kinds of amenities, there is no outcome in it.
- If languages are officialised at Central level, will the poor people relieve out of hunger?
- To put it in clear way, are **Tamil labourers exploited** only by the Tamil speaking owner class?

Casteless Society

- Periyar's protests and speeches always centre around, **"Tamilnadu for Tamils and Dravidian nation for Dravidians."**
- His ideologies include Common plan, common work plan, Islamic conversion, separate Dravidian nation for which he fought against the dominant communities.
- His argument was that the dominant communities misused Tamil, Tamil nationalism, Tamil race for sustaining the power in Tamilnadu.
- It is with the help of Tamil leaders, they injected Tamil nationalism in the minds of the people for holding the power for a long time he said.
- Consequently, Periyar put an end to the demand of separate Tamilnadu and upheld the ideal of casteless society.
- Thus, casteless society has become the top most priority for Periyar.
- Other ideals like separate Dravidian nation, abounding dominant communities, distortion of capitalist class became secondary priorities for Periyar.
- This may be the only ambition and goals for **Dravida Kazhagam**, claimed **Periyar**.
- "The caste feeling, thus divided the **Dravidian race** and **Dravidians** became slaves for **Aryans**" stated Periyar in his writings published in the **1950's** in Tamilnadu

MORE TO KNOW:

Panchali Sabatham

- Bharathiyar's **"Panchali Sabatham"** (The vow of Draupadi) is an iconic work that pictures India as **Draupadi**, the **British**, the **Kauravas** and the freedom fighters as **Pandavas**.
- Through **Draupadi's struggle**, he euphemised the struggle of mother India under **British rule**.
- In **Madras**, in **1908**, he organised a mammoth public meeting to celebrate '**Swaraj Day**'.

- His poems '**Vanthe Matharam**', '**Enthayum Thayum**', '**Jaya Bharath**' were printed and distributed free to the Tamil People.

Subramaniya Bharathiyar

- **Subramaniya Bharathiyar** was born on **11th December 1882**, in a village called **Ettayapuram** in **Tirunelveli District** in Tamil Nadu and his childhood name was **Subbiah**.
- His father was **Chinnaswamy** and his mother was **Lakshmi Ammal**.
- At the age of seven, he started writing poems in **Tamil**. When he was eleven, he wrote in such a way that even learned men praised him for his great knowledge and skill.
- In the eleventh year, **Subbiah** felt that he had to establish his credentials.
- He threw a challenge to the eminent men in the assembly of scholars that they should have a contest with him in a debate on any subject without any previous notice or preparation.
- The contest was held at a special sitting of the **Ettayapuram Durbar** at which the **Rajah** (the ruler) himself was present.
- The subject chosen was **"Education"**. **Subbiah** efficiently won the debate. This was a memorable moment in **Subbiah's life**.
- The boy who was till then referred to as **"Ettayapuram Subbiah"** came henceforth to be known as **"Bharathi"**, and later he was respectfully referred to as **"Bharathiar"** by nationalists and by millions of Tamil lovers all over the globe.
- In **June 1897**, **Bharathi** was hardly fifteen when his marriage took place, and his bride was **Chellammal**.
- **Bharathi** left for **Benaras** which was also known as **Kashi** and **Varanasi**.
- He spent there the next two years with his aunt **Kuppammal** and her husband **Krishna Sivan**.
- Speedily gaining a fair knowledge of **Sanskrit, Hindi** and **English**, he duly passed with credit the **Entrance Examination of the Allahabad University**.
- The Banaras stay brought about a tremendous change in **Bharathi's** personality.
- Outwardly, he sported a moustache and a **Sikh turban** and acquired a bold swing in his walk.
- **Bharathiyar** passed away on **11th September 1921**. It was a travesty that only 14 people attended his funeral, fearing repercussion from the British and caste ostracisation.
- His meeting with **Sister Nivedita**, **Swami Vivekananda's** disciple, added women's rights to his already wide repertoire of social issues from caste to Independence to spiritualism.
- He took up the symbolism of **Shakthi** as the image of **modern women**; powerful, strong, independent and equal partners to men.

E.V.Ramasamy

- The original name of **Periyar** is **E.V.Ramasamy**. He was born in the year 1879 in an affluent business family in **Erode**.
- Even during his youth, **Periyar** criticized the superstitious beliefs in his family and surroundings.

- He did not enter politics at the early stages of his career. But still, he occupied posts like chairman of **Erode municipality**.

An iconoclast and rationalist social reformer

His work and his legacy

- For the average **Tamil, Periyar** today is an ideology. He stands for a politics that foregrounded **social equality, self-respect, and linguistic pride**.
- As a **social reformer**, he focused on **social, cultural and gender inequalities**, and his reform agenda questioned matters of faith, gender and tradition.
- He asked people to be rational in their **life choices**.
- He argued that women needed to be independent, not mere **child-bearers**, and insisted that they be allowed a equal share in employment.
- **The Self Respect Movement** he led promoted weddings without rituals, and sanctioned property as well as divorce rights for women.
- He appealed to people to give up the caste suffix in their names, and do not mention caste.
- He instituted inter-dining with food cooked by **Dalits** in public conferences in the 1930s.
- Over the years, **Periyar** has transcended the political divide as well as the faultlines of religion and caste, and come to be revered as **Thanthai Periyar**, the father figure of modern Tamil Nadu.
- Courtesy ; **Arun Janardhanan**, The New Indian Express, 13.3.2018.