

PERIYAR E.V.R'S VIEWS ON SOCIAL REFORM AND WOMEN MOVEMENTS IN MODERN INDIA

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Abstract

According to the social reform in Periyar civilization development, inventions, discovery, social transformations, cultural revolutions, protections, wars, peace-exchanges, technological innovations, agricultural developments, space, the hidden humans behind the developments are always to be remembered and socialized to the upcoming budding generations. Women movements in India worked in two phase's primary women upliftment and second fight for equal rights for men and women. By studying a variety of historical documents which touch upon the Indian Women's movement a comparative perspective will come to make a modest contribution towards the construction of propositions on feminist movements in India. Through this paper, my main objective will be to research women movements from all dimensions and by going through different ideological socio-religious reform movements of nineteenth and twentieth century in India and to study women as a subject and issue. My paper will also include how women issues remained inseparable in social reform movements during to that Periyar's efforts on social justice.

Keywords: Social Reform, Devadasi, Ideology, Women Movements, Activism in Periyar, Upliftment.

Introduction

In Periyar, the 'why' and 'do' attitude of E.V.R. fetched far-reaching results and remedies in the society of Tamilnadu. It also created a responding in the minds of Status-quoits and as well as so-called freedom fighters and social reformers. E.V.R ability to bring transformation in Tamilnadu turned entire attention of the world towards his personality and leadership attribute which was shining like a silver crystal in Tamilnadu social and political history. For this reason, he was awarded "South East Asian Socrates" by UNESCO award which is desired to be in the hands of Periyar (Honest Man).

The courage and self-sacrifice shown by him in making revolutionary changes is illumined and indefinite if compared with world leaders. Such a traditional background and society was Tamilnadu in the initial period 19th to 20th century. Before this era, it worsened to a large extent and because of British regime

and social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, untoward atrocities were lessened. The raj empire took a series of resolving measures in order to curb out cultural menaces in Indian society.

Whereas extremists as non-believers of the evolutionary method, come to understand the exploitative activities of raj empire. Hence they opted for the revolutionary method. E.V.R as a social revolutionary involved in localized problems such as caste discrimination, religious hegemonies, human exploitation, inequality, alcoholism, education, political hypocrisy so on so forth. As a revolutionary but a follower of non-violence, he emancipated people of Tamilnadu and as well as world society by his courageous forward ideas and ideals which tended to reshape and reformulate cultural and social reform.

His courage in opposition the existing caste discrimination even attracted schematic relationship among his own men. Vaikom Sathyagraha is one such incident in which he has shown utmost courageousness against the existing social system. Also by being against Brahmins scripture like Vedas, Ramayana and other epics, it was fist by other emancipation. In the Brahmins community also it has made a tremendous impact and orderly tremors which changed the mindset to think and act in another way.

His attributes of self-sacrifice startled fellow citizens in various ways and modes attracted by Gandhi a philosophy initially. He has resigned from all jobs as great businessmen and instructed all his followers including his family members to wear Khadi and adopt truth and non-violence as the mode and way of life. This inspired a lot of fellow community men. E.V.R. was not only a man of simple words but an auctioned who indulged in a lot of protests and picketing for the sake of people.

Periyar's Ideas and Actions

Revolutionaries born on occasions and also in situations when analyzing Periyar's characteristics attributes he seemed to be a situational one. The Kasi incident was a one by which he got a turbulent mind change and also propelled him to think deeply towards the social set-up in the atmosphere. The Indian national movement produced number of revolutionaries. In the same manner, E.V.R as a social activate and reformer was kindled through the complex social set-up of Tamil Nadu, specifically the Brahmin domination on all spheres of human life. The questioning mind is also an inducing factor. Situations are the common phenomenon. But rising accordingly to the situation needs an ignited mind.

Solvates used to kinds the younger generation by his voluminous queries in Athens. This questing attitude cost him his own life. Only because of his questioning mind, he was poisoned to death. But he has not bothered about his own life. He used to call all the people by names and he knows nook and corner of his followed behavior and attitude Mahatma once visited Erode and astonished about the stubborn personality of E.V.R. Periyar futuristic vision related with democratic society almost attracted by the global personalities. Atheistic ideology has got numerous followers but Periyar action-oriented ideology made for it.

Periyar views on Sati Practice

British, who were greatly influenced by reformation with the scientific outlook of the 19th and 20th century, came to India as a colonialist. While achieving their economic and political gains they tried to bring some changes or reforms in current Indian society. This is how they started reading Indian history and its sources. Being the political supreme they passed many laws related to rigid and fixed social norms. Early writings by the Europeans aimed to highlight the peculiarities of Hindu traditions. They tried to raise the issues related to women issues.

The first negative aspect of Bengali society they came across was the practice of Sati. The focused attack of the Utilitarian and Anglicises in India was on those practices which were declared indicative of the sexual depravities of the Indian people. For a long time, British refused to legislate on sati under their non-interference economic policies. But soon many Indian social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy also started a social movement against this cruel practice.

This action of campaigning for social reforms gave government supremacy in the political and ideological context. Though this Act was not able to stop this practice entirely even after getting independence from colonial authority, the incidents of this system's practice are noticed. But when this law was implemented Hindu Society gave a mixed response like.

Widow Remarriage and Possessions Law

In traditional Hindu society, a widow was required to live as a virtual outcast after her husband's death, which means she was expected to shave her head, discard her jewelry, live in seclusion, and undergo regular acts penance. Upon that child marriage and financially dependency made the situation more critical.

Many inhuman and unnatural customs remained highly prejudicial to the interest of morality. The "Hindu Remarriage Society" was formed in Nagarkoil in 1873. Leaders like G. Subramania Iyer, Rao Bahadur P. Anandacharlu and others advocated the need for the widow remarriage. They were not only advocated widow remarriage but also set an example by arranging a marriage for his own daughter who had become a widow.

The absence of the right to own property had a telling effect upon the widow remarriage because nobody came forward to spend on second marriage of their girls. Hence with the purpose of getting property right to young widows and thereby to execute the Widow Remarriage Act effectively, the elite citizens organized a new association called Hindu Women's Remarriage Association in 1882 at Madras.

This association celebrated its first widow remarriage on 7th June 1883. Vadalur Ramalingam Pillai asked the women not to wear white sarees after the death of their husbands and urged them to take up their own profession for their livelihood.

Law against Devadasi Practice

The movement which was started against Devadasi practice, in which girls were sent to temples as God's offering and by the 19th century it had turned as more or less a prostitution profession, in history is known as Anti- Notch movement. The first Anti Notch movement was launched in the 19th century by Reform campaigners mainly from renowned leaders of different social reform movements like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Periyar E.V Ramaswamy, Muthu Lakshmi, Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyar, M. Krishnan Nair, C. N. Annadurai, Karunanidhi, Ishvarchandra Vidyasagar, and other prominent social thinkers.

Who not only questioned the practice of devadasi system but strongly asked for its abolition. The Indian Social Reformer and Lahore Purity Servant reformers tried to gain public favour for the abolition of this practice. The movement motivated people to refuse to attend Notch parties as well as to refuse to invite devadasi to festivities at their homes. The devadasi system was outlawed in all of India in 1988, but unfortunately even today this practice of devadasi is practiced illegally in many parts of India

Efforts for Female Education

British came to India as merchants with economic aims. They hardly interfered in social traditional norms. But during their administrative setup they brought two big changes, first, they allowed christen missionaries to work here and second, they introduced English education set up to Indians, which resulted in socio-cultural reform movements in India and central issue of these reforms was women. To begin with christen missionaries they raised voice for the infrastructure for women education. By the time British entered the Indian subcontinent, the ratio of women education was very low. Only women of upper castes were given an education that too only included religious books and some basic education for household conduction.

Women education was informal. Mostly they were taught practical matters. Only women from renounced families were supposed to learn classical or vernacular literature. Very few examples of this time tell that women were also taught some education in keeping accounts. Largely, majority liberated women only knew education of household matters. The above steps gave great encouragement to girls' education. In 1884, Mrs. Annie Besant established the Central Hindu Girls School at Banaras (Varanasi) with the object of importing Western Education to girls quite separately from boys in a modernized school of Hinduism.

The South Indian Conference held at Madras in December 1884 passed resolutions favouring female education. Through its resolutions passed in the 10th Conference held at Calcutta Indian National Social Conference (INSC) stressed that:

- ✚ Female teachers should be employed in female schools
- ✚ Training schools for women to secure a sufficient number of qualified female teachers should be established

- ✚ Home classes for the grown-up women should be conducted
- ✚ The textbooks for female schools should be published and
- ✚ Instruction in needlework, cleanliness, cooking art, the domestic economy should be imparted to the females.

Conclusion

Periyar opined that women all along the nations of the world were oppressed and exfoliated for fulfilling the desires of men. The social reform society has to be demolished women must come away from confined duties therefore at homemaking, cooking, child, rearing duties. He also further added that women should give up all kind of overthrow practices. Physical strength has to be improved in order to take over men's passive activities. He also supported the cause of women to enter into the army and other military activities in order to show their potentiality and capacity.

Lower status of women can be disappeared if the government provides common education which may free from the bondage of weakness. The above discussions make it clear that the disgraceful condition of women invited the reformers to criticize and carry out propagation for the upliftment of women for a long period. However, in the very strong and practical steps were taken by the social reformers to moderate the social sufferings of women Thus, the whole of public opinion for female education was set in motion at the end of the 19th century social reform movements with the help of British government continued with the new idea of analysis of the affected women in the 20th century.

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