Chapter VI
CHAPTER - VI

POLITICAL ENTITY OF WOMEN

Enlightened women of Madras State sensed the global changes and reacted aptly to the cause of political changes, which synchronised with the socio-economic upliftment of women, as they were inseparable.

A Frenchman once wrote that the 'best way to judge the position of a nation was to find out the status of its women'.¹ When one looks into the stream of history involving the lives of great women individuals as explained by Rabindranath Tagore, 'It is the consciousness of the spiritual character of their life's work, which lifts women above the utilitarian standard of the immediate and passing, surrounds them with the dignity of the eternal, and transmit their suffering and sorrow into a crown of light.'² Many women exemplars who dedicated to progress the country by liberating their own folk tried to get an absolute freedom combined with a perfect fulfilling of duty.³

To understand the efforts they invested in emancipating women and to appreciate the beneficiaries, it becomes inevitable to explain the role of some of the distinguished Women Members in the Legislative Assembly.

After the failure of an All-Party Conference that was convened at Simla in June 1945, the Viceroy decided to hold elections to the Provincial Legislatures. The Congress decided to contest the elections. The election for the

³ Helen Wodehouse, 'East and West', Stri. Dharma, September 1922, p.166.
Madras Legislative Assembly was held in the month of March 1946, for 215 seats. For the 215 seats, 755 men and 13 women candidates contested. Out of 755 men, 204 were elected and out of 13 women candidates, 11 were elected.

Among 11 women, 10 belonged to Indian National Congress and they were Mrs. C. Ammanna Raja, Mrs. Ariyalai Ammal, Mrs. Jebamoney Masilamoney, Mrs. A. V. Kuttimalu Ammal, Mrs. K. Lakshmi Ammal, Mrs. V. Lakshmi Ammal, Mrs. A. Rukmani Lakshmipathi, Mrs. Bhupathi Rajubangarayya, Mrs. V. Geetha Mahalakshmi Ammal and Mrs. A. Sumanglamma and Mrs. Begum Sultan Amiruddin was the only Muslim League candidate elected to the assembly.4

The Congress party formed the ministry under the Priministership of Mr. T. Prakasam with 11 ministers. Mrs. Rukmani Lakshmipathy was appointed Minister in-Charge of Public Health and Medical Department. Mrs. C. Ammanna Raja was elected Deputy Speaker of the Assembly. She was the second woman Deputy Speaker of the Madras Presidency. Among 11 women 7 were elected for the second time, they showed their past experience in the Assembly discussion. The remaining four women were elected for the first time to the Assembly; their active part in the Assembly discussions showed their ability in the public services. On the very first day, the women members showed their knowledge and talent when they took part in the discussions.

**Women Legislators and Economic Reforms**

Women legislators were instrumental for introducing economy in Government expenditures in the Madras Legislative Assembly. When the bill on

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"Madras Payment of Salaries and Removal of Disqualification Act 1937" was introduced in the Assembly on 27th May 1946 to increase the salary of Ministers from Rs.500 to Rs.1500 the women legislators stoutly opposed it. Mrs.Begum Sultan opposed this Bill on the ground that it would create bad image to the Government from the public. She also remarked that the Government servants were likely to get 17.5% increase in their salaries as Dearness Allowance but the ministers demanded for cent percent increase in their salaries through the Bill. Despite the opposition of the women legislators and others the bill was passed on 28th May 1946.\(^5\)

Further they showed their intelligence when a Bill on "Food and cloth situation in the Madras Province" on 29th May 1946 was introduced. They supported the Bill and also suggested some measures to prevent the wastage. Mrs.Begum said, "wasting food stuff was a sin" and made a statement from Quaran. She quoted, "eat, drink but waste not". She urged the Government to restrict the number of guests of public and private entertainments. She also advocated popularising the use of wheat in the Madras province.\(^6\)

Mrs.V.Lakshmi Ammal suggested three following means to solve the food problem: (1) Government should assess the stock of the food grains in hand (2) It should procure paddy from agriculturists on a fixed control rate and (3) The food grains procured should be distributed properly to the public. She stressed that non-official village and town committees should also be formed to assist the Government officials to procure paddy from the landowners. She also suggested that sufficient transport facilities should also be made available for the quick procurement of distribution of the food grains.\(^7\)


\(^6\) *ibid*, pp.112-120.

\(^7\) *ibid*, pp.122-165.
They also took active part in the discussion on the cut motion of the provincial Excise Bill on 15th August 1946. Mrs. Begum Sultan prayed for the total prohibition in the province instead of introducing it only in 8 districts. She suggested that the revenue from sales tax should be spent only for the executions of prohibition and that Village Vigilance Committees should be formed to avoid illicit distribution within the limits of the village and also to carry on propaganda about the evils of the drink. She also felt that it was necessary to device some savings bank schemes for these people so that the money may not be squandered away by them on another evil, namely gambling which was also making much head way in the province. 

When Land Revenue Bill was introduced in the Assembly on 15th March 1947; Mrs. Begum Sultan suggested the payment of equitable compensation for the zamindars she pleaded for a uniform rent and tenure both for the Ryotwari and Zamindari system in the interest of the people of Madras province. She found that it was not an opportune moment to bring in the 'Agricultural Income Tax Bill'.

She hoped that it would affect the food production drive in the Madras province. So, she pleaded for suitable exemptions in tax limits for the poor ryots and proper graduation of the tax for the wealthy people she further said. "The Agricultural Income Tax should be in the lieu of the land tax and not in addition to it". She noted that the agricultural industry was very much handicapped due to the lower capital equipment of peasants.

So, she suggested that the Government should come forward to the aid of the peasants and assess the important industry in every manner possible. She also stressed the need of constructing wells themselves and

supplying pure seeds and fertilizers at subsidised rates through the Department of Agriculture. When the Budget for the year 1948-49 was introduced in the Assembly on 2nd March 1948, Mrs. V. Lakshmi Ammal suggested that education, roads and health should be entrusted to the District Boards, Municipalities and Panchayats as the case may be for effective execution of necessary work. She also requested the Government to construct a reservoir on the river Manimutharu to improve the agricultural industry in Tirunelveli district. Mrs. Begum felt sorry to note that the Minister had not made any earnest attempt to tackle the problems like disease, poverty, squalor, over crowding, under nourishment etc.

She demanded for increased allotment for public Health, that adequate training to the health staff and to arrest tuberculosis which was carrying a heavy toll of human lives. She pleaded for the construction of hydroelectric projects to give impetus to industrial expansion.

She suggested that the poor people should be exempted from taxation. Mrs. C. Ammannan Raja criticised the budget particularly the 'ration system' of the Government. She demanded, "either the Government must make it their duty to supply food to all people or must leave it entirely to the private business people as they were doing in some areas". She welcomed the "Grow More Food Campaign", but strongly condemned the scandal in digging well. She pointed out that on the pretext of digging wells people had taken money but many of them not utilised for that purpose at all.

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During the discussion on "Demand on provincial excise on 13th March 1948", Mrs.Begum requested the Government to devise ways and means of getting their revenue made not only from the poor but also from the rich. In the interest of the poor people, she demanded that the Government had to forego the Excise Revenue.

She reported that on the introduction of the prohibition, illicit distillation had become a profitable cottage industry. So, she demanded the Government to take urgent steps to put down illicit manufacture of toddy and arrack with an iron hand. She suggested some severe punishment to the lawbreakers to stop illicit distillation permanently and for the employment of toddy tapers. The newspapers and journals welcomed the points noted by Mrs.Begum in the Assembly on 'Provincial Excise Duty' and requested the Government to take care the ex-toddy tapers.

In supporting the cut motion on the Land Revenue, on 15th March 1948, Mrs.Begum condemned the Government for its peace-meal legislation in the shape of the abolition of the Zamindari Bill, instead overhauling the entire land revenue system and undertaking a comprehensive land revenue reform. She demanded for the exemption of land revenue for small landholders in ryotwari areas. She opted for a grade system of land tax. She also demanded for the exclusion of small inams (gift) from the Bill. As otherwise the legislation would seriously jeopardise the interest of a large number of women including widows. In order to protect the religious rights of the minorities, she appealed to the Government to exclude religious and charitable inams also from


the purview of the above Bill. In opposing the cut motion on irrigation, on 16th March 1948 moved by the Member, Mr. Janab Razakhan and supporting the demand moved by the Minister for Public Works, Mrs. A. V. Kuttimalu Ammal pleaded for the execution of the major schemes of Malampuzha and Walayar projects and certain minor schemes in Ponnari and other taluks.

She also pleaded for the construction of small logs to prevent salt water penetrating and spoiling crops along the coastal areas. Mrs. V. Lakshmi Sankara Iyar requested the Government to expedite the work in the Tirunelveli district. She also demanded for the construction of Manimutharu reservoir. Mrs. C. Ammannna Raja requested the Government to construct a big project on the Godavari so as to make good the deficit of two million tons of paddy.

She also pleaded for the speedy construction of the Ramapatha Sugar project. She also demanded to take up Kolavaram project immediately. Mr. M. Seetharaman Reddi, the Minister for Land Revenue, accepted the points of Mrs. C. Ammannna Raja and replied that Government would construct a big project on the Godavari so as to make good the deficit of two million tons of paddy. He further stated that the Government would construct the Ramapadha Sagar project as well as Kolavaram project.

In seconding the Bill on Agriculture of 17th March 1948, Mrs. Begum said that agriculture was the major industry of the province for 75% of the population depended on it. She also expressed her disappointment at the "Grow More Food Campaign" which involved heavy expenditure. She hoped that proper steps would be taken to make the "Grow More Food Campaign" a

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16 ibid, pp.214-250.
17 ibid, pp.251-255.
complete success. In order to promote intensive cultivation, she placed before
the House, three suggestions viz. (1) good seeds, (2) good manure and (3) proper
agricultural implements. She suggested that agricultural banks should be
established in the rural areas, so as to provide the agriculturists with cheap and
easy credit facilities. She suggested restricting the area of cash crops by
legislation.

She also urged the Government to impress upon the Government
of India to increase the allotment of iron and steel to the Madras province and to
see that the full quota was received in the course of the year without any lapse.\textsuperscript{18}

\textbf{During the debate on food situation in the province on 21\textsuperscript{st} July 1948, Mrs.Begum bombarde...\textsuperscript{18}}

\textbf{The general discussion of the Budget for the year 1949-50 was...\textsuperscript{19}}

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{The Indian Express}, dated 18\textsuperscript{th} March 1948.

\textsuperscript{19} MLAP (vol.XVIII, March 1949), pp.439-442.
taxation as a bomb-shell to the province as they did not intend to check or arrest inflation. She made an appeal to the Finance Minister to abandon the proposal with regard to taxing the necessaries of life like chillies, coconuts, pepper, tea, coffee, potatoes etc., used by the poor almost daily. While opposing the taxation measures, which would hit the poor, she welcomed the betterment levy of 20% in respect of the sales of immovable properties.

She also suggested that the Provincial Government should approach the Central Government to impose the sales tax and make it a provincial levy as another source of income. She suggested a railway passenger terminal tax for entry into any municipal town including the city of Madras at the rate of one anna for the third class and four annas for the second class and eight annas for the first class accommodation.

She stressed the need to eradicate black-marketing. She pointed out that the villages were not at all interested in encouraging the production of Khadi on account of its price, lack of durability and its artistic appearance. She also suggested taking speedy steps for the separation of the judiciary from the executive. She also condemned the Government for wasting the public money in constituting a number of committees such as a Provincial Housing Committee, the Drainage and Water Supply Committee, the Industrial Planning Committee and the Harijan Welfare Committee.20

Mrs. V. Lakshmi Sankara Aiyar pointed out that the Food Control policy did not help the starving population. She suggested lifting the control throughout the province except in Madras so as to enable the people to get adequate rice and paddy. She also criticised the Government policy in cloth and appealed to it to supply adequate yarn to the weavers. She cursed the

20 ibid, pp. 270-440.
Government and the staff, as they were reluctant in executing minor irrigation projects in Nanguneri taluk.

She made an appeal to the Government to take immediate steps to construct Ramanathi, Guriyar and Pachaiyar reservoirs in Nanguneri taluk to improve irrigation and food production.\(^{21}\)

During the general discussion on the Budget for the year 1950-51 on 2nd March 1950, Mrs.Begum viewed that the Budget did not have a long range of vision behind it and it did not contain anything to inspire the people a hope for better times. She felt sorry that the Budget did not show anything to the well-being of the population as it backed medical relief, eradication of illiteracy, provision of shelter to homeless and employment to the unemployed. She pointed out that the Motor Vehicle Tax was the highest in the whole of India and suggested some relief to the taxpayers. She strongly pointed that the taxation policy of a Government should be related to its national income. She suggested that Government could rise loans in the open markets to replenish the public exchequer. She also suggested curtailing unnecessary expenditure to improve the revenue of the Government.

Mrs.Begum strongly condemned the system of red tape and delay in administration. In order to minimise the delay, she suggested the Government to make block grants, which would ensure a quicker method of a disposal and would save much labour. She also suggested appointing Standing Committees for every department consisting partly of members of the legislature and partly of experts to advice and assisting the ministers in discharging their duties quickly. Referring to the allotment of funds to the various departments, Mrs.Begum regretted that the funds of Rs.3 crores allotted to educational and

\(^{21}\)G.O. Number 4282, Public Works Department, dt.21st Nov.1950.
public health were very meagre. She suggested increasing considerably the allotment of funds to the education so as to provide elementary education for all children up to the age of 14.\(^{22}\)

Mrs. V. Lakshmi Ammal criticised the Government for its failure in tackling the food, cloths, law and order problem in the province. She also suggested removing the ratio system in rural areas and free movement of paddy and rice throughout the province.

She condemned the Government for not having taken proper steps to solve the problem of weavers in the province. She pointed out that the strikes of the workers in most of the mills largely affected the production of yarn and cloths. So she demanded the Government to play personal attention on the weavers problem.\(^{23}\) In supporting on the demand for agriculture dated 16\(^{th}\) March 1950 in the Assembly, Mrs. V. Lakshmi Ammal stressed the need for more action and less speech in the field of agriculture and economic development. She requested to instruct the demonstrators of Agricultural Department to go to the villages and train the illiterate village peasants to adopt new techniques in the field of agriculture.\(^{24}\) Mrs. A.V. Kuttimalu Ammal, while speaking on the motion regarding food situation in the State on 10\(^{th}\) August 1950, expressed her grievance and concern about the precarious position of the food problem in the state. She demanded the Government not to stop statutory rationing in Malabar. She requested the Government to raise the statutory rationing in such a way to enable each one to get his quota of

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\(^{23}\) ibid, pp. 134-137.

\(^{24}\) The Hindu, dated 17\(^{th}\) March 1950.
Mrs. C. Ammanna Raja pointed out that huge sums were spent on sinking wells, but well water was not so sufficient to produce food grains and also produce money crops like sugar cane, groundnuts and chillies.

During the debate on the Madras *Ryotwari* Additional Assessment Bill on 3rd September 1951, Mrs. Begum expressed that the legislation was opportune and premature as it was introduced at the fake end of the term of the House. She condemned the imposition of fresh taxation on rubber, tea, and coffee. She brought to the notice of the Government that the food situation was acute in the State and tea and coffee had become as good substitutes for food for large number of people.

**Women Legislators and Social Reforms**

The women legislators who took active part in the discussion on economic reforms also gave many suggestions on social reforms like education, public health, prohibition etc.

During the discussion on Education on 2nd September 1946, Mrs. Begum had given notice to 10 cut motions under the demand of education. She expressed her concern about the plight of the Muslims due to a new rule that 20% of admission in two types of the professional colleges were to be on the basis of merit.

She urged the Government to withdraw their new order with regard to the admission to the Medical and Engineering Colleges. She also

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bombarded the language policy of the Government. She opposed the new rule, which intended to make the regional languages as the medium of instruction. Mrs. C. Ammannna Raja requested the Educational Minister Mr. T.S. Avinashilingam Chettiyar, to make provisions for women teachers in girl schools to live in hostels. She also suggested the Government to start a girl’s high school in every district with a girl’s hostel attached to it. She requested the Government to fix SSLC (X Std.) as the minimum qualification to get a seat in colleges especially for girls, widows and other educationally backward communities. She demanded separate Medical College for women instead of reserving 15% or 20% of the seats for girls. While replying to this, the Minister for Education said that the pre-University courses as the minimum qualification to get a seat in colleges could not be changed and there was no possibility of starting a separate Medical College for Women. During the debate on the Andhra University (Amendment) Bill on 5th February 1947, Mrs. Begum requested the Government to take steps to include Muslim representatives in the Senate of the Andhra University. While taking part on the Madras City Municipal (Second Amendment) Bill on 2nd April, 1947 Mrs. Begum pointed out that the Muslim Educational Association of South India was the premier Muslim organisation throughout the province for the past 40 years and having a membership of over 1500 and hence it deserved the representation in the Corporation of Madras, she pleaded.

29 ibid, pp.57-60.
30 The Indian Express, dated 4th September 1946.
32 The Mail, dated 3rd April 1947.
During the discussions on the Madras State Bill on 21st January 1948, Mrs. Begum supported the Bill and requested the Government to give liberal compensation to the Zamindars. Mrs. V. Lakshmi Ammal suggested to send the Bill to Select Committee to fix the compensation for the Zamindars, she also demanded the exclusion of inams from the purview of the Bill.³³ While taking part in the Madras Public Libraries Bill, on 20th February 1948, Mrs. Begum supported the motion as it had fulfilled the desire of the Madras Library Association, which had been clamouring for such a Bill for the past two decades on the importance of libraries. She requested the Government to start separate libraries for women and children.³⁴ Mrs. V. Lakshmi Ammal stressed the need to start more libraries in rural areas and expert committees to look into the affairs of the library.³⁵ During the discussion on the Administration of Justice, Mrs. K. Lakshmi Ammal urged the Government to bring the principle, “all are equal before law” into practice. She regretted that most of the judges in the judiciary belonged to the Brahmin community and requested the Government to appoint judges from Non-Brahmin Community.³⁶

During the debate on the Report of the Harijan Welfare Committee on 19th July 1948, Mrs. V. Lakshmi Ammal regretted that the amount of rupees one crore allotted for Harijan uplift was not at all spent properly for the uplift of the Harijans. She requested the Government to start separate schools for Harijans in her constituency.³⁷ During the general

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³⁵ ibid, pp. 638-640.
³⁷ The Hindu, dated 20th July 1948.
discussion for the Budget for the year 1949-50, on 4th March 1949, Mrs. C. Ammanna Ammal urged the Government to provide suitable houses for the poor. She regretted for the liability and reluctance of the Government to provide the houses even for people coming from moffusil or rural places around the city for the studies in the universities and also for teachers and women officers.38

During the discussion on Medical on 15th March 1949, Mrs. Begum expressed her disappointment at the meagre provision for medical education. She requested to appoint a mid-wife in every village for a population of 5000 throughout the province. She also requested the Government to establish a cancer hospital with 300 beds in the Madras City. She also regretted that women were not being given chances and opportunities in the field of medicine and surgery even in maternity work, which was their special sphere. So she demanded that 15% of the staff in every hospital should be women. Mrs. Lakshmi Bharathi Ammal regretted that there were not adequate numbers of hospitals in the province to cope with the increasing trend of various diseases. She urged the Government to start more Medical Colleges and a hospital in every village within a radius of 5 miles. She requested to start T.B. Sanatoriam particularly in the rural areas to provide

38 The Mail, dated 5th March 1949.

medical facilities to the T.B. patients in rural areas.\textsuperscript{39}

Mrs. A.V. Kuttimalu Ammal, who participated in the discussion on the demand relating to public health on 16\textsuperscript{th} March 1949, stated that a very meagre amount was allotted for the supply of protected water in the province.\textsuperscript{40} During the debate on Madras Administration Public Order Bill on 8\textsuperscript{th} November 1949, Mrs. V. Lakshmi Ammal regretted for the violent activities of the communities in the province. She urged the Government to take stringent measures to suppress violence and remove them through constructive methods based on non-violence. Mrs. Begum regretted the proposals of the Minister to extend the life of the legislature in force for another 3 years.\textsuperscript{41} Mrs. Begum, while taking part in discussion on the demand of Public Health on 14\textsuperscript{th} March 1950, regretted for the large scale death of the population during the previous year from Cholera, Malaria, Typhoid and small-pox etc., due to the apathy of the Government towards welfare of the public. She urged it to appoint more vaccinators preferably women.\textsuperscript{42} During the discussion on Excise on 18\textsuperscript{th} March 1950, Mrs. Begum expressed her happiness to note that the ban on intoxicants had improve the economic and social status of the ex-addicts and it had proved a boon particularly, to womanhood of the land.\textsuperscript{43} While supporting the Animal and Bird Sacrifices Abolition Bill on 14\textsuperscript{th} September 1950 Mrs. V. Lakshmi Ammal requested the Government to take adequate steps to eradicate

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\item \textsuperscript{39} The Mail, dated 17\textsuperscript{th} March 1949.
\item \textsuperscript{40} \textit{ibid}, dated 9\textsuperscript{th} November 1949.
\item \textsuperscript{41} MLAP (vol XXII, January 1950), pp.791-795.
\item \textsuperscript{42} MLAP (vol IV, September 1950), pp.114-117.
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superficial beliefs of sacrificing animals and birds to Gods and Goddesses in the precincts of temples, should be abolished. Mrs. Ammanna Raja also strongly condemned the sacrifice of animals in the name of Hindu religion precincts of temples and in front of the Goddesses.\footnote{44}{The Indian Express, dated 15\textsuperscript{th} September 1950.}

While supporting the Hindu Religious Charitable Endowments Bill on 17\textsuperscript{th} November 1950, Mrs. K. Lakshmi Ammal demanded the Government to regulate the affairs of the mutts instead of interfering in the religious administration. She also made an appeal to the Government to curb the rights of the Archahas in getting small gifts during archanas.\footnote{45}{\textit{ibid}, 17\textsuperscript{th} November 1950.}

During the discussion of Harijan uplift on 13\textsuperscript{th} March 1951, Mr. V. Lakshmi Ammal was happy to note that a sum of Rs.7,50,000 was allotted for Harijan upliftment in the State. She demanded the Government to provide the Harijan with intensive and extensive education on a time bound period of 10 years.\footnote{46}{The Hindu, dated 14\textsuperscript{th} March 1951.}

\textbf{Women Legislators in the Madras Legislative Assembly (1957-62)}

The second General Election for the Madras Legislative Assembly was held in April 1957. In the election, 766 men and 24 women had contested for 205 seats. Among them 193 men and 12 women were elected to the Assembly. Out of the 12 women, 11 women belonged to the Indian National Congress and one to DMK. Mrs. T.N.Anandanayaki, Mrs. C. Kolandaiammal, Mrs. P.K.R. Lakshmikantham, Mrs. Hemalatha Devi, Mrs. Kamalambujammal, Mrs. Lourdhammal Simon, Mrs. A.S. Ponnammal, Mrs.D. Ragupathi Devi, Mrs. Rajathi Kunchithapatham, Mrs. Savithri

\footnote{44}{The Indian Express, dated 15\textsuperscript{th} September 1950.}
\footnote{45}{\textit{ibid}, 17\textsuperscript{th} November 1950.}
\footnote{46}{The Hindu, dated 14\textsuperscript{th} March 1951.}
Shanmugam, Mrs. T.S. Soundram Ramaachandran belonged to Indian National Congress and Dr. Mrs. Sathyavani Muthu of DMK. Mrs. A. Suarees was nominated to the Legislative Assembly on behalf of Anglo-Indians. Altogether there were 13 women members in the Madras Legislative Assembly.  

Women Legislators and Economic Reforms

During the general discussion on the budget for the year 1957-58, on 1st July 1957 Mrs. A.S. Ponnammmal demanded the Government to distribute uncultivated and poromboke lands to landless harijans so as to improve economic conditions for them.  

Mrs. Kamalambujammal expressed her view in supporting the Budget for the year 1957-58. She suggested to give chemical manures directly to the agriculturists instead of paying them money loans. She demanded the Government to bring more villages under electrifications. She suggested that the medical graduates should serve at least for 3 years in rural areas.

Dr. Mrs. Sathyavani Muthu of DMK criticised the Budget as a deficit one. She pointed out that fraud misappropriation embezzlement. Forger's irregularities and many more economic evils were found in the agricultural department. During the same discussion Mrs. T. N. Anandanayaki suggested that the westward rivers should be converted in to the eastward to improve the irrigation facilities for Tamil Nadu. She urged the Government to take urgent steps to electricity all the villages in Tamil Nadu. Mrs. Rajathi Kunchithapatham requested to bring the properties of mutts and other religious institutions under its control.


49 ibid, p.340.
She suggested that the lands and houses own by the mutts should be given to the land less agriculturists and the houseless people respectively. During the debate on General sales tax and other and duty administration on 8th July 1957, Mrs. Kamalambujammal requested the Government to exempt “Karunai Kilangu” from sales tax. She suggested to extract more from horse race and abolish all together boxing.\(^50\)

While taking in the discussion on community development projects 13th July 1957, Mrs. T.S. Soundram Ramachandran urged the need for allied industries such as Cattle farming weaving etc., to the agriculturists, as to improve income. Mrs. A.S. Ponnammal took part in the debate on Agriculture and Fisheries. On 19th July 1957, she demanded the Government to bring more lands under cultivation and to pay more attention on projects and to pay adequate loans to the agriculturists on subsidy.\(^51\)

On the demand for money lenders Bill 25th July 1957, Mrs. T. N. Anandanayaki severely critisised the bill as it would affect seriously the middle class people in getting loans from private money lenders.\(^52\) She also suggested those banks should come forward to give loans to the weaker sections. She also objected to the appointment of inspections to supervise the money lenders business.

While taking part in the general discussion on the Budget for the year 1958-59, on 4th March 1958, Mrs. Kamalambujammal Pointed out that

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\(^{50}\) The Indian Express, dated 10th July 1957.


\(^{52}\) ibid, pp.953-957.
there was a deficit of 2 lakh tons in the production of food grains. She urged the Government to take steps to provide sufficient manures and pesticides to the agriculturists in time, so as to enable them to start a timely work in time and produce more.\textsuperscript{53} She requested that everyone in the Assembly should come forward to wean handloom clothes, in order to dispose of the large stock of the unsold handloom cloth. She demanded that these should be exempted from tax, so as to enable the agriculturists. Mrs. C. Subramaniam, the France Minister in his reply stated that diesel would be exempted from tax.

Mrs. Hemalatha Devi demanded the Government to include the Panchayat Reservoir Project in Dharmapuri taluk in Salem district in the Second Five-Year Plan and thereby speed up the Construction of the reservoir. During the general discussion on the Budget Mrs. P.K.P. Lakshmi Kanthan demanded the Government to take urgent steps to solve the problem of the starving weavers and milk workers. Mrs. A.S. Ponnammal welcomed the limited meals system prevalent in the state and requested the Government to increase the Production of fertilizers and provided them in time to the agriculturists.

During the debate on the Madras General Sales Tax, Bill on 12\textsuperscript{th} March 1958, Mrs. T.N. Anandanayaki welcomed the report of Dr. Loganathan Committee on General Sales Tax. She requested the Government not to exempt the co-operative societies from sales tax and grant them subsidy as directed Dr. Loganathan Committee. She demanded that milk and other milk products should be exempted from sales tax. She also urged the Government to exempt all vegetables and fruits from sales tax.\textsuperscript{54}


\textsuperscript{54} The Hindu, dated 13\textsuperscript{th} March 1958.
While discussing on the selling on Land Holding on 11th September 1958, Mrs. T.N. Anandanayaki pointed out that the Prevailing conditions in the State were not congenial to bring about land ceiling. So she requested a gradual land reform system and to bring crop insurance scheme and stabilization of prices first and then go to ceiling of land.

During the debate on the Madras Plantation Agricultural Income Tax Amendment Bill on 18th September 1958, Mrs. A.S. Ponnammal Welcomed the decision to exempt the religious institution owing lands from income tax.55

During the debate on the Madras State Electricity Board Budget on 3rd November 1958, Mrs. A.S. Ponnammal suggested that electricity should be provided for agriculture and then to industries and then only to cinema theaters. She requested the Government to provide electricity to the spade manufacturing industry in Nilakottai.56 Mrs. D. Ragupathi Devi welcomed the Government’s steps to supply 121 lakh tons of rice through fair price shop. She suggested irrigating a large mass of acres of Mettupalayam areas.

Mrs. C. Kolandaiammal stressed the need to control the growth of population. Mrs. P. K. R. Lakshmikantham requested the Government to reconsider the decision to close a number of elementary schools on economic grounds. Mrs. T. N. Anandanayaki suggested that the management schools should be appointed through the employment exchange. Mrs. Savithiri Shanmugam demanded the Government to take speedy steps to rehabilitate

55 MLAP (vol. II, September 1958), pp.116-202
56 ibid, p.397.
these people in the drought hit areas. During the general discussion on the Budget for the year 1959-60, on 3rd March 1959, Mrs. T. V. Soundaram Ramachandran regretted that the one-third amount allotted for social development was not at all spent and utilised. She suggested that the amount might be utilised for opening hostels for women and children in every district. She suggested that boring wells to bring out ground water might be sunk in the water scarcity areas so as to help the small agriculturists. Mrs. Hemalatha Devi urged the Government that adequate funds should be allotted to the preservation of forests.57

Mrs. T.V. Soundaram Ramachandran, during the general discussion on the Budget for the year 1960-61 on 12th March 1960, suggested to increase the production of fertilizers and to encourage the agriculturists to use green manure and composite manure.

She requested the Government to grant short-term, midterm and long-term loans to rural agriculturists through co-operative societies. Mrs. A.S. Ponnammal suggested the Government to bring more lands more cultivation demanded the Government to allot more funds for rural water supply schemes. She also asked for protected water supply scheme.58 Mrs. Rajathi Kunchithapatham urged the Government to pay more attention on minor irrigation projects wherever possible in the state to increase food production. During the discussion on the demand for capital outlay on Agriculture on 18th March 1960, Mrs. T.N. Anandanayaki suggested to introduce indigenous fertilizers when, there was scarcity for chemical fertilizers like Ammonium Sulphate to increase Production in the field of agriculture.

57 The Indian Express, dated 5th March 1959.
58 Kudiyarasu, 1960, pp.47-49.
In supporting the Budget for the year 1960-61, on 2\textsuperscript{nd} March 1961, Mrs. Rajathi Kunchithapatham came forward to list the achievements of the Government during the last ten years. She pointed out that food production had been raised from 19 lakh tons to 35 lakh tons. The production of fertilizers was increased from 40,000 tons to 1,00,000 tons in this connection. Mrs. T.S. Soundaram Ramachandran stressed to meet to give top priority for irrigation and industry. She requested the Government to start industrial estate service centers and training cum production centers in the most backward areas in the state so as to improve and employment opportunities.\textsuperscript{59}

While moving the Madras Local Authorities Finance Bill on 27\textsuperscript{th} September 1961, Mrs. Lourdhammal, the Minister for Local Administration admitted the fact that the finances of the local Bodies were inadequate even for providing essential civil amenities like good roads, sanitation etc., in a satisfactory manner. She further proposed to amend the Madras City Municipal Act 1919, so as to rise the maximum rate of property tax in the case of any land or building from 20\% to 25\% in its annual value.\textsuperscript{60}

Women Legislators and Social Reforms

Mrs. Savithri Shanmugam, who participated on the Governor’s Address on 14\textsuperscript{th} May 1957, requested the Government to equip Municipalities and Corporations in the State with adequate funds to improve the conditions of the people in the cities. She requested the Government to abolish ‘cheris’ in the urban areas and provide the ‘cheri’ people with adequate small houses with all facilities to improve their economic and health conditions.


\textsuperscript{60} ibid, pp.401-403.
While taking part in the general discussion of the Budget for the year 1957-58, on 1st July 1957 Mrs. Suáres regretted for the gradual reduction in the allotment of funds for Anglo Indian Schools in the previous year.

Mrs. Savithri Shanmugam participating in the discussion on Education on 16th July 1957 stressed the need to give elementary education to all school going children in the State. She regretted that lakhs and lakhs of children were badly in need of education. So, she demanded the Government to rise the grant to Rs. 5 lakhs. 

While moving the motion on medical on 17th July 1957, Mrs. Sathyavani Muthu pointed out that medical treatment given to the rural population was not adequate. She stressed the need to implement family planning among the rural population. She requested the Government to recognize Homeopathy system in the state. Mrs. P.K.R. Lakshmi Kantham expressed her compliments to Government for increasing the maternity wards in most of the hospital particularly rural areas.

Mrs. A. Suáres urged the necessity for creating of facilities for postgraduate’s education in the medical field. She requested the Government to provide at least three more seats in the Government Maternity Hospital. Mrs. T. Soundram Ramachandran requested the Government to increase the salary of the professors in Medical College to avoid private practice and to concentrate more on teaching in Medical Colleges. She also requested the Government to give non-practicing allowance for the doctors who work in rural hospitals. Mrs. Hemalatha Devi felt the need to start a woman’s college in

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every district. Mrs. Kamalambujammal pleaded for providing more facilities for the training of teachers.62 While critising the Budget for the year 1958-59 on 6th March 1958, Mrs. Sathyavani Muthu regretted for the caste riots in Mudukulathur and urged the Government to take steps to avoid such conflicts in future. While speaking on Harijan uplift on 24th March 1958, Mrs. A. S. Ponnammal requested the Government to start more schools in rural areas for the Harijan students. She also requested the Government to start more cottage industries in rural areas to improve the economic conditions of the Harijans. She suggested reserving 25% of the vacancies in mills especially for the Harijans.63

While speaking on education on 8th April 1958, Mrs. T.S. Soundaram Ramachandran commended the midday meal schemes in schools and urged the Government to construct houses for teachers in rural areas. Mrs. C. Kolanthai Ammal expressed her concern over the plight of the elementary school teachers.

Mrs. C. Kolanthai Ammal welcomed the State elementary Board Budget, 1st November 1958 and requested the Government to take steps to utilize the waste water from Guntha for irrigation purpose in her constituency. She also requested the Government to improve the economic conditions of the agricultural labourers.64 While welcoming the Budget for the year 1959-60 on 3rd March 1959, Mrs. P.L.R. Lakshmikantham requested the Government to solve the problems of handloom weavers. She stressed the need for extending the privileges of the members of the weaver’s co-operative

62 ibid, pp.337-365.
64 MLAP (vol. XIII, November 1958), pp.434-441.
societies to the non-members. While speaking on Harijan uplift on 23rd March 1959, Mrs. Hemalatha Devi requested the Government to increase the reservation of seats in schools and in college for the Backward classes for 25% to 40%. She also requested the Government to extend privileges to the Harijans and backward students and urged the Government to issue them in time and in advance.65

During the debate on the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Bill on 28th April 1959, Mrs. A.S. Ponnammal emphasised that only religious minded and god fearing persons should be appointed as executive officers and members of Area Committees. Mrs.A. Suares commended the satisfaction of Amendment of Article 334 of the Constitution India on 16th December 1959, for the extension of reservation of seats for S.C, S.T and Anglo-Indian members. These seats to be filled by them to the Lok Sabha and to the State Assemblies for a further period of 10 years with effect from January 1960. She was happy that the constitution’s 8th Amendment Bill was passed by great majority votes in the Parliament.66

During the general discussion on the Budget for the year1960-61, on 12th March 1960 Mrs. T.S. Soundaram Ramachandran requested the Government to boost the Community Development Scheme in order to achieve social status for the rural people in the state. On the same discussion Mrs. D. Raghupathy Devi commended the steps taken for social education and education in this state. While speaking on Administration of Justice, jails and police on 21st March 1960, Mrs.Sathyavani Muthu regretted that the pay scale of the police personnel were inadequate and

65 The Indian Express, dated 24th march 1959.

66 Kudiyarasu, December 1959, p.32, 33.
so they were forced to get bribes. So, she demanded to increase the pay scale of the police personnel. Mr. M. Bakthavatsalam, Chief Minister, promised the House that the Government would take serious steps to increase the salaries of the police persons. While speaking on demand for Education on 20th April 1960 Mrs. Hemalatha Devi commended the steps taken by Government to provide the rural population with adequate educational facilities. She requested the Government to start more colleges in the state particularly in Salem district, which was educationally backward Mrs. A. Suares regretted for the change in the medium of instruction in Tamil in colleges. She also pointed out that a high standard of English would be absolutely necessary for All Indian Services and that could be maintained only through a medium of English in Colleges. Mrs. A.S. Ponnammal requested the Government to provide facilities for Harijans to study Hindi.

During the discussion of the Draft Outline for the Third five year plan on the 7th September 1960, Mrs. A.S. Ponnammal welcomed the draft as it was intended to solve the unemployment problem in the state. She suggested to introduce bonus for workers in labour contract societies and weavers. While taking part in the discussion on second supplementary estimates Expenditure for the year 1961-62 on 25th January 1961, Mrs. T. N. Anandanayaki regretted the amount allotted for the scholarship of Harijan students was inadequate.

During the Budget for the year 1961-62, on 2nd March 1961, Mrs. Rajathi Kunchithapatham insisted the Government to provide the rural people with road facilities to take their agriculture product to the urban areas.

67 MLAP (vol. XXXII, August 1960), pp.73-345.
68 ibid, pp.339-343.
She welcomed the policy of the Government to introduce free education to the students up to XI std. Mrs. Sathyavani Muthu regretted that the Harijan uplift in the field of education and economy was still in force. She demanded the Government to take sincere and systematic steps to improve the economic and educational conditions of the Harijans. Mrs. P. K. R. Lakshmi Kantham requested the Government to take steps to control the spiraling rise of prices of essential commodities to protect the lower and middle class people in the state. She insisted to supply adequate yarn to the poor weavers through co-operative societies. Mrs. A.S. Ponnammal urged the Government to take urgent steps to improve economic and social conditions of the Harijans.

She demanded to allot agricultural lands for the Harijans in rural areas. Mrs. Sathyavani Muthu, while supporting the cut motion on Medical and Public Health 20th March 1961 regretted that the amount allotted for the eradication of Malaria, Cholera, etc., was not utilised properly for the purpose. She demanded the Government to increase the strength of the staff of the Medical and Public Health Department throughout the state.69

During the discussion on the 3rd five-year plan on 10th November 1961, Mrs. T. N. Anandanayaki requested the Government to allot more funds to the Public Health Department and Medical Department. She requested to start at least one T.B. Sanatorium for 2 districts in the State to treat a large number of patients suffering from T.B. The Minister for Public Health Mr. M.A. Manickavelu accepted the suggestions to start one T. B. Sanatorium for 2 districts.

During the general discussion on budget for the year 1961-62 on 10th December 1961 Mrs. T.S.Soundaram Ramachandran requested the Government to take steps to arrest the rise of prices and to give adequate training to the agricultural teachers employed in basic and high schools in the state. She also demanded to start an agricultural college either at Madras or at Tirunelveli in Madras State.

**Women Legislators and Other Reforms:**

During the discussion on the Government's Address on 4th May 1957 Mrs. Hemalatha Devi requested the Government to take steps to provide adequate drinking water and road facilities for the rural people in the province. Mrs. T.N. Anandanayaki expressed her compliments for having provided electricity for more than 1250 villages. During the debate on the police on 15th July 1957, Mrs. A. S. Ponnammal regretted that some of the police constables in her constituency were involved in helping illicit arrack manufacturers and dealers. She strongly suggested de-promoting the police constables who were addicted to drink and post them as watchman duty.

She urged the Government to take severe action on the corrupted police officials. During the same debate Mrs. T. N. Anandanayaki requested to the Government to increase the salaries of the police and provide employment opportunity to the family members of the police force such as manufacturing of matches and appalams etc., to improve their standard of living. During the discussion on Labour including Factories on 23rd July 1957 Mrs. Sathyavani Muthu regretted to note that the labourers in the

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Government match factories would not get more than 7 annas per day. So she requested the Government to increase the wage for the workers of the Match Factory. She further regretted to note that the Adi Dravidas were not allowed to work in the B and C mills purely on caste grounds.

During the debate on Motor Vehicle Amendment Bill on 1st November 1957, Mrs. T.N. Anandanayaki suggested to form a body of Road Transport with a single member family. The State or Regional Transport Officer for the administration of road transport in the state. She stressed that persons with judicial qualifications should be appointed as State Transport Authorities. Mrs. Lourdhammal Simon, the Minister for Local Administration moved the white paper on the Reforms of Local Administration in the Madras State including the Madras City Corporation on 4th November 1957, for consideration and discussion in the house. Mrs. T. S. Soundharam Ramachandran welcomed the proposed and suggested that the Village Panchayats should be allowed to function independently without interference from the revenue of District Development council. Mrs. P.K.R. Lakshmi Kantham requested the Government to conduct secrete elections to Panchayats and Panchayat Unions.

Mrs. Kamalambujammal while taking part in the discussion on Motor Vehicle Acts Administration on 5th April 1958 urged the Government to appoint checking inspectors for a distance of 10 miles instead of 30 miles in the state to check the lorry drivers. She urged to tax carts, which were used as transport vehicles in carrying large amount of goods from place to place.

72 MLAP (vol. VI, November 1957), pp.165-240.
73 ibid, pp.288-326.
Mrs. Lourdhammal Simon introduced the Madras District Development Council Bills on 8th September 1958. She pointed that District Development Councils were expected to play the role of a co-ordination agencies between the State Government and the elected representatives of their people in the implementation of developmental activities in the district and in the execution of the scheme under five year plan. Mrs. P.K.R. Lakshmi Kantham requested the Government to appoint a special standing committee under the District Development Council especially for the welfare of the women exclusively with women members.74

During the debate on the Madras Bill moved by the Mrs. Lourdhammal Simon Minister for Local Administration, Mrs. Kamalambjammal welcomed the bill but regretted that the present system of education of the council of members had service defects. She further urged the Government to reserve certain seats for women in Panchayat Union Councils in Panchayat. During the debate on the calling attention motion to the closure of Beedi Factories on 10th February 1959, Mrs. Rajathi Kunchithapatham regretted to inform the House, the plight of the beedi and lungi workers due to the restrictions to export the beedi’s and lungi’s manufactured by them.

She added that a large number of beedi workers and lungi workers were out of employment and they had been suffering a lot particularly, in Tirunelveli, Melapalayam Mukkudal, Amba Samudram etc. She proposed to start a mill in Tirunelveli so that the unemployed beedi workers and lungi workers could be employed in the mill.75

74 The Hindu, 9th September 1958.

Anandanayaki
During the debate on Road Transport schemes, on 22nd March 1960, Mrs. T. N. Anandanayaki urged the Government to increase the number of buses and provide transport facilities for the public in the state. She suggested appointing a Committee to steady the problems of the transport workers and recommend it to the Government. She also suggested boosting the workers in the body building section of the transport to enable them to build at least two bodies in a month.76

During the debate on the Madras chit funds bill on 31st January 1961 Mrs. Rajathi Kunchithapatham asserted that the system of chit funds had been playing an important role among the middle class and rural people in small villages. She requested the Government to encourage the chit funds system by granting privileges to those who run the chit funds.77

CONCLUSION

The Women Members participated in the proceedings of the Madras Legislative Assembly shows their concern on the welfare of the public. They proved that they have thorough knowledge on the various social and economic subjects. Their role in the Madras Legislative Assembly shows that they were not second to none in working for the welfare of the society.

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76 The Indian Express, dated 23rd March 1960.
77 MLAP (vol. XXXVIII, January 1961), pp.181-305.