Chapter VI

A PROFILE OF PROMINENT DALIT LEADERS
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M. C. Raja

For creating awakening among dalits and making them responsible citizens many leaders worked with untiring effort. M.C.Raja was one of the most popular dalit leader.

Raja was born at Parangimalai on 17th June 1883. His father was Mylai Chinnathambi Pillai, an important leader of the tribal community. He was one of the important leader for the growth of Adi Dravida Saba.

The present day government press was once called as Lawrence Asylum Press. Chinnathambi Pillai served as cashier and Assistant Director in that press. His son Raja was brought up in western style, ever found clad in western suit and shoes.\(^1\) He completed his schooling at Wesly College School at Royapettai with the help of father Lawrence. He completed his graduation at Madras Christian College. He did his B.Ed. course at Madras Educational College at Royapettai. He happened to be a brilliant student during his academic days. He wrote books for students pursuing their studies in the field of education. He also wrote books for school students. He happened to be the first and foremost writer of logic in Tamil. He was

\(^1\) A. P. Vallianayagum, “Viduthlai Iyakka Verkalum Vizuthukalum” (Tamil), Jeeva Sahaptha Pathipagam, Madurai, 2003, p. 54.
good at both Tamil and English. He served as a teacher in Wesley College School. Thiru. Vi. Ka. was his contemporary in his teaching profession. The headmaster of this school was John Rathinam. Afterwards he left for Ouris College, Vellore and served as Professor there.

Realising the capabilities of Raja, the English officials recommended his name to governors like Sir Murray Homik and Lord Bentland to make use of his services. They also expressed their view that Raja was competent enough to serve as a teacher in England. In 1917, Lord Bentland appointed him as a member of school education development programme.

As the General Secretary of Adi Dravida Saba he started night schools for dalits at various centres and improved their basic knowledge in education. He created social awareness among students, for which his leadership ability shown on scout movement helped him to steer the course of the students life in proper way. He instituted a scout unit and called it Prince Wales Scout Unit and trained many students to serve for people. Through these activities in the field of education, social participations geared up.²

During the first world war as the British Empire could not control nations fought for freedom, decided to give a representative status to them. Lord Montague, Chelmsford and their crew visited India to meet the leaders of various organisations to discuss and resolve many issues. For the

first time Adi Dravida Saba convened a meeting to discuss threadbare on issues involving all benefits and aspirations of Dalits.

An invitation from the Viceroy of India, Lord Montague was tendered to Adi Dravida Saba and he requested them to express their opinions on this score. Subramaniam as President of this Saba and Raja as General Secretary attended the audience and Raja briefed to Montague, the relevance of giving equal status to dalits by means of offering them representations in the governance of administration. British government sent a committee under the leadership of Southbrow to look into matters like providing franchise to Indians and creating constituencies for the next election.

On behalf of the Saba, Raja drew to the attention of this committee that in the panel of Indian members only Srinivasa Sastry and Banarji alone were appointed who happened to be Brahmins. Hence the very purpose of equal justice would not be fulfilled. While meeting Southbrow on this issue he insisted to create a separate identity for dalits. To achieve this he wanted separate voters list and separate constituencies.

The Saba became more vigorous and vital since his inception as General Secretary to this Saba in 1916. Branches of this Saba threw open on all districts of Tamil Nadu. Further branches sprang up in Karnataka, Kerala, Andhra and Bengal.

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4 Ibid., p. 63.
In 1919, Alexander Cardiv, Governor, appointed him as a Planning Member for the Formulation of Primary School Regulation Act. On the same year he was appointed as member for Chennai and Chengai Districts’ Primary School Development Committee.

In 1920, he was appointed as Legislative Council Member of Madras Presidency by the Governor. In the Indian sub-continent an Adi Dravida becoming a Legislative Council Member was a historic event and the entire credit in creating a chance for an Adi Dravida to become a member went to the Saba.\(^5\)

Along with him the following persons were also appointed as legislative council members. They were Gurusamy, Madurai Pillai, Rattaimalai, Veeriyavan, Sundaramurthy for Andhra, Prem Ranamya for Andhra and Ramam for Kerala.\(^6\)

All of them acted in accordance with the dictates of Saba. They were able to pressurize British governance for bringing in more and more dalit developmental activities. Among one hundred and thirty one seats in Chennai assembly, nine were given to Adi Dravidas. Raja tabled his opinion that more seats to be allotted for them on the basis of their percentage of population.


\(^6\) V. T. Rajasekar Shetty, *op. cit.*, p. 21.
Raja placed before the British some of their demands. While giving political representation to Adi Dravidas, he stressed, appointment mode should not be followed, instead election mode had to be followed. Because, getting representation on appointment basis would make that individual to fall back and support the government on all issues. Therefore, they must be elected. Instead of property qualifications, person with 10th class or persons who were paying home tax too should be allowed to cast vote. Elementary education should be nationalized for Adi Dravidas. The labour ministry had to be divided into two. One was to be labour ministry and another should be Adi Dravida Welfare Ministry and that had to work for the betterment of the socio-economic improvement of Adi Dravidas. They must be given representation in British administrative committees and planning committees. Dalits should be consulted, while framing schemes and plans.\(^7\)

On 2nd October 1920, Bac Mill workers' strike began. After sometime, it struck into class war between caste Hindu labours and Adi Dravida labours. Some tried to kill Raja. They also tried to set fire to twelve Adi Dravida slums in Madras, in order to make them run away from the city. Many huts were burnt. Raja condemned the vandalism and anarchy of caste Hindus.\(^8\)


\(^8\) Dalit Murasu (Tamil Journal), July 2003, p. 31-32.
Though Raja happened to be the secretary of the Adi Dravida Saba, he was also one of the primary leaders in Justice Party. He maintained close relation with the father of this party, called P. M. Nair. He left Justice Party on account caste Hindu domination. He fought against untouchability. He helped Adi Dravida students in their higher studies either to pursue their education at Pachiappa’s College or other colleges.\(^9\)

Raja was a good writer. Through his writings, he created social consciousness among dalits. His book ‘Suppressed Hindus’ happened to be a turning point in the lives of them. He helped in the production of the book ‘History of Adi Dravida’ by Thrisirapuram Perumal Pillai.

Because of his untiring efforts, the nomenclature of his community, ‘Panjamas’ got changed into Adi Dravidas. He went to the Round Table Conference in 1930 along with Dr. Ambedkar and explained to all officials the plight of his men. He explained the plight of dalits to Sir Stafford Cripps.\(^10\) He passed away in 1947. He served till the end of his life for the welfare of his men. In his name a big Adi Dravida hostel was constructed by Tamil Nadu government.

**Mayor B. Parameswaran (1909-1967)**

Parameswaran was born at Chennai. He was the grandson of Rattaimalai Srinivasan. He had primary education at Weslian School and

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higher education at Presidency College, Chennai. He proved his efficiency even during his formative years. His house itself became his training ground, as many social leaders gathered there and discussed ways and means for the betterment of dalits. Because of these social activities at home he was easily drawn to the fore.\textsuperscript{11}

He served as Personal Secretary to M.C. Raja for ten years (1935-1945). He got rich experience out of this close contact with Raja. He did not run after any position. But due to his leadership qualities he got many positions. He served efficiently as Secretary for the All India Scheduled Castes Federation and also served as Secretary for the Chennai District Depressed Classes Forum.\textsuperscript{12}

He became a member of Chennai Corporation. Due to his pretty long year of service as a member of the Corporation, he was elevated to Mayor post. He was one among many to make Chennai beautiful. He was also elected to Tamil Nadu Assembly and served as cabinet minister.

In 1964, Tamil Nadu Government appointed him as the President for the fact-finding committee with regard to dalits’ social improvement. He revealed in his report that the dalit people were denied land for burial of dead bodies. Most of them did not have shelters.\textsuperscript{13} His report was an eye

\textsuperscript{12} Thaiman (Tamil Journal), July 2002, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{13} Thangarasu, “Sathi Ozhippin Varalaru Oru Padippinai” (Tamil), Puratchi Kanal Veliyeedu, East Chennai, 1978, p. 63.
opener to Tamil Nadu government, which introduced many reforms for the welfare of the dalits.

**Rao Bahadur Munisamy Pillai (1899-1955)**

Rao Bahadur Munisamy Pillai born at Ooty. This sharp, clever and intelligent boy completed his college education at Coimbatore. He served as plant production officer initially and then became Collector of Nilgiris district. Then he became a member in the district educational reforms committee. He was a senate member in Madras University for six years. He also served as educational head in Coimbatore and Nilgiris districts. He happened to be efficient in his discharge of duties.\(^{14}\)

He stepped into the political shoes as Ooty Municipal Councilor. From 1927 to 1936, he was a member in Chennai Province Assembly. In 1938, he became a cabinet minister in Rajaji Ministry for Agricultural and Rural Development.

His straight forwardness, efficiency and selfless service were inviting the appreciation of all. He took part in national politics and served as Member of Parliament from 1950-1955. He represented the problems of dalits before various committees. He strived hard for the upliftment of dalits.\(^{15}\)

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\(^{14}\) Dalit Murasu, September 2001, p. 21.

Rattaimalai Srinivasan

Srinivasan born to Rattaimalai and Ranganayagi in Kozhiyangkulam village at Chengai district, on 7th July 1859. He was called after his father’s name as Rattaimalai Srinivasan. He believed that dalits could be liberated only through education. He argued that in schools, tuition fees should not be collected for dalits.

After the completion of graduation, he served at Nilgiris as cashier in the Commercial Tax Department. Then he settled in Chennai. He traveled far and wide in Tamil Nadu and came to know the real sufferings of Adi Dravidas. He joined Theosophical Society in 1884, but left soon as the society did not worked for the causes of dalits.

In 1891, R. Srinivasan formed the Adi Dravida Saba. He organised the first conference of the untouchables on 23rd December 1893 and declared his open war on untouchability, caste system and religious myths. He started the magazine ‘Parayan’ in 1893. Through the paper, he wrote many articles to make awareness among his people. Even before Gandhiji’s service of dalits, Rattaimalai started serving dedicatedly for them. He setup the Pariar Maha Saba and worked for their upliftment. He wrote in his autobiography that he started Pariar Saba, because he was totally frustrated out of the activities of Adi Dravida Saba.

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Pariar Maha Saba submitted petitions to Viceroy, Governor Lord Elgin and Governor Lord Venlock on behalf of Dalits. Cruelties inflicted on them were explained and pleaded to bring redresses for them.\(^{18}\)

In 1904, he left for South Africa. He served as a translator in Natal High Court. At that time Gandhiji served there as a lawyer. They worked together against racial discrimination. He was there in that job up to 1920. After his return to India, he took part in Indian politics from 1921.\(^{19}\)

From 1923 to 1938 he represented the dalits in the assembly. He brought a motion on 25th August 1924 in the assembly that the Dalits should be allowed freely on all common streets, roads, buildings to walk, then to be allowed to draw water from common wells. This was accepted and a government order to this effect was issued in 1925.

He knew the importance of education. Therefore he established a forum to dalits which initiated many educational activities. He also organized a Dalit Federation for Chennai province. He was knighted as Rao Sahib in 1926 by British government in honour of his services.\(^{20}\) In the First Round Table Conference on behalf of Dalits Dr. Ambedkar and Srinivasan took part. In that Conference he told that unless political freedom was given to dalits, untouchability would not die. He also insisted on giving equal power to dalits in the assembly.

\(^{18}\) "Puthiya Kodangi" (Tamil Journal), September 2003, p. 22.
\(^{19}\) Kalaigner Karunanithi Talk, 14th August 2000, Published in Thina Malar Newspaper, Chennai, 15th August 2000.
In 1930, he was awarded the title Diwan Bahadur. He also took part in the Second Round Table Conference. This time Gandhiji went to represent Congress. He was against separate electorates. Hence there was ideological conflict between Mahatma and Srinivasan.

While Rajaji was the Chief Minister for Chennai province, he talked vociferously that Jamin lands should be equally distributed to landless people. Appreciating his boldness, Thiru. Vi. Ka. gave him a title called Dravidamani. Rajaji too participated in that function.

On 18th September 1945, he left this earth and entered into heavenly abode. He worked till last tirelessly for dalits.

Rao Bahadur H. M. Jaganathan

Jaganathan born in Chennai in the year 1894. He stopped his studies at the High school level. He involved in politics and became an assembly member in 1920. From 1929 to 1938 he served as Chennai metropolitan member. He discharged his services efficiently both as a Vice-President of Chennai Depressed Class Forum and as Secretary in propagating the principles of the forum. He served as honorary magistrate as well as President in different cooperative societies. He picturised the pathetic plight of dalits before the various Commissions sent by British empire like

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22 R. Srinivasan, op. cit., p. 23.
23 Ibid., pp. 23-24.
Simon Commission, Royal Commission, Lathran Commission, Halment Commission etc. Jaganathan was one among the prime persons in negotiating with these Commissions to get maximum benefit for dalits. Jaganathan accompanied Dr. Ambedkar while the historic Poona agreement was signed.\(^{25}\) No doubt, Jaganathan worked hard for the political representation of dalits in the administrative bodies.

**Professor N. Sivaraj**

Sivaraj was born to Namachivayam in 1892 at Chennai. He had his graduation from Presidency College and became a Lawyer after completing his law in Madras Law College. He was a successful High Court Lawyer who won many cases to his credit.\(^{26}\) He became a Professor in the same Law College.

His deep passion for social service forced him to leave that job and plunged into social activates. He conducted meetings to create awareness among his own dalit community members. He made them realize the worth of their rights.\(^{27}\) Sivaraj’s heart and mind traveled in the direction of self respect and self honour and he was easily got attracted towards Justice Party. He sensed the immediate need of releasing Adi Dravidas from the clutches of Dravidas. Though Adi-Dravidas gave thumping support to self-

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\(^{25}\) Anbu Pon Oviyam, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

\(^{26}\) K. Thirunavukarasu, “Dravida Iyakka Vergal” (Tamil), Manivasagam Puthaka Nilayam, Chennai, p. 112.

\(^{27}\) Article on Thanthai Sivaraj, Published in Aravurai Sirappu Malar, April-May 1992, pp. 10-12.
respect movement there were only few Adi Dravida persons being shaped, trimmed and moulded into prime leaders.\textsuperscript{28}

British Government conferred on him in 1946, the meritorious title Diwan Bahadur in recognizing his great social services and selfless sacrifices. But he refused to accept this title since the government did not take sincere steps to elevate the Adi Dravidas. Even remedial measures for their maladies which were already suggested to the government by him were not implemented.\textsuperscript{29} He acted as the Father of Madras City after he was selected as Mayor in 1946. In All India level he happened to be second only after Dr. Ambedkar in all matters.

In 1946, he met Lord Atlee at London and discussed with him threadbare all democratic rights to be extended to dalits. Till his death in 1964, he worked for the upliftment of the dalits.\textsuperscript{30}

**Rao Bahadur Madurai Pillai**

Madurai Pillai was born in 1858. He held in high esteem at all levels in the society. Madurai Pillai was born to a great scholar, Markendeyar Pillai. He had his primary education at Vepery SPG school. He had his relatives in Rangoon and that he was taken there to complete his high

\textsuperscript{28} P. E. Mohan, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 124-125.
\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 213.
schooling. He came to India to get his graduation from Madras Christian College.\textsuperscript{31}

As his father was at Rangoon he could not continue his task totally. Thereby he left for Rangoon.\textsuperscript{32} His thoughts ever filled with thought of social progress, though he visited Rangoon to amass wealth. He constructed one high school on his own at Madras for the spread of education among the depressed classes. He published many books that kindled the light of self respect that was kept dormant among his social brotherhood. He also brought books on religious ways and spirituality.\textsuperscript{33} It is no doubt that he was one of the early leaders who created consciousness among dalits.

V. Subramanian

Subramanian was born to Venkatachalam in a rich family at Chennai in 1859. Though born rich, his intention was to work for the poor. He gave liberal donations to all schools where dalits were studying in large number. He established an elementary school at Sindadiripet.

In order to avoid the conflict between the Dravidas and Adi Dravidas, he convened a very big meeting, spending money form his pocket. He pleaded them give up their illusory high and low status

\textsuperscript{31} A. P. Vallingayam, op. cit., p. 22.

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., p. 23.

\textsuperscript{33} Dalit Murasu, August 2004, pp. 16-17.
consciousness. He died in 1936 after giving away his wealth for the progress of society.

**Swami A. S. Sahajananda**

Sahajananda (1881-1959) was the first son of Alamelu and Annamalai of Medavakkam village, North Arcot district. He had his education at Thindivanam Missionary School. He learnt Thirukkural form V.O.C. Pillai and also studied Sanskrit. In each and every dalit conference and religious conferences, he argued that dalits were not low born not untouchables and there existed men of animalistic nature in all communities and such people alone could be called untouchables. Through this argument he tried his best to remove the untouchable stigma among his class. His dalit men were full of superstitions. He tried to remove such practices away from them.

In 1917 he offered a *satyagraha* to touch the water of the sacred tank of Omekalam, for which he was prosecuted. He attended the conference of the All India Depressed Classes Federation, held at Nagpur in 1932.

He got elected for three times to Chennai State Assembly. He took active part in bringing laws to protect Adi Dravidas. Only with three students and a teacher, he started a school and now it had grown leaps and

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34 A. P. Vellingayakam, *op. cit.*, p. 36.
bounds. Gandhiji visited this school twice and honoured him for his onerous religious-cum-educational service to Adi Dravidas.

Sahajananda found to his dismay that his men were not allowed into Chidambaram temple. He constructed a separate temple from public donation at Thirupunkar. He installed a statue of Lord Nataraja and arranged a car festival in which Nataraja was drawn by Adi Dravidar along the four streets.\(^{37}\) As a token of honour to his service, after his death in 1960, a statue was installed by Government of Tamil Nadu.

**Pulavar A. P. Periyasamy**

Pulavar Periyasamy belonged to Gauthamapetattai village near Thirupathur of North Arcot district in Tamil Nadu. He was one of the greatest scholars of Tamil. He wrote lot of articles and poetry in Tamil. His works were responsible for inducing the downtrodden society to wake up against the injustices against them by the society. He along with Ayothidasar worked hard to fight the injustice of the society. They have together had written numbers of books which includes: ‘True Story of Gajamuga’ (1906), ‘Creation of New Caste’ (1907), Story of Bharat (1907) and ‘The History of Ambigai Amman’.\(^{38}\)

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\(^{37}\) A. Pathmanaban, Dalits at Cross Road, New Delhi.

\(^{38}\) Dalit Murasu, September 2002, p. 17.
M. Palanisamy

Palanisamy was born in the year 1870 in Chennai to Maduraipillai. He had his initial education in the local school. He mastered Veda Sastra as a student of Gangadara Navalur. In 1900, he joined an institution called Thiruparika Kuttam and carried out religious work and also worked hard for the development of Adi Dravidar society. His works in the direction was highly appreciable as he belonged to dalit community.  

Palanisamy constructed Balasubramanian Swamy temple for his men and acted as trustee of the same. He was very popular among the religious society. He followed the peaceful path to fight for the rights of the dalit people. Then he joined the Justice Party and fought for social freedom along with other leaders.  

In 1921, he started a hostel for the Adi Dravidar students at Royapettai in Chennai. He taught them duty, dignity, discipline, cleanliness, education and broadmindedness to improve their social status. To integrate the Adi Dravida youth, he started an association in 1929 called ‘Dravida Youth Association’. He contested the Municipal

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Election in 1931 and became Councilor with a help of the members of the society.\(^2\) He died in the year 1941.

**Thavathiru Swamy Desikananda**

Thavathiru Swamy Desikananda was born at Perambur in Chennai. He was a master degree holder, and he was very fluent both in Tamil and English.\(^3\) He was the first Adi Dravidar to occupy a very high post in Buckingam Carnatic Cotton Mill. Side by side with involvement in freedom struggle, he worked hard to carry out social reforms and worked hard for the eradication of caste in society. In 1918, he started many schools in the tribal areas of Tamil Nadu. He worked hard for the eradication of ignorance among Adi Dravida people. He started cooperative societies and arranged to provide loans to the downtrodden people through it.\(^4\)

In 1920, there was a big strike in the Buckingam Carnatic Cotton Mill. The strike turned into violence. Caste and race played its path in violence. The poor labourers working in the mill were completely affected by the strike. Due to the advice of M. C. Raja, the labourers belonged to lower caste joined the duty in the mill. Swamy Desikananda was very much

\(^3\) R. K. Khirsagar, *op. cit.*, p. 87.
helpful in resolving the various issues of the dalit labourers. Swamy Desikananda was passed away in the year 1947.

**T. John Rathinam**

Adi Dravida community consisted of many sub-castes. The Eynar sub-community was later on called as Parayas. John Rathinam was born in the year 1846, in the Paraya community at Thousand Lights, in Madras city. He had secondary education in Madras. He was disturbed by the misery created by caste system and untouchability on him and his brethren. He concluded that it was none but Hinduism, which was responsible for those miseries. Hence he decided to discard Hinduism and embrace on egalitarian religion like Christianity. He got baptism in 1877. Though converted to Christianity, he faced untouchability. He says, “I am a Christian. However, do not believe in any caste or creed. I have belief in religion. I believe in prayers as per my religion. Wherever we go in India, all over the Indian society, in any nook and corner, untouchability exists. Untouchability against Harijan could not be eradicated. This is prevalent in all over the Indian society, whatever caste or religion they may belong to.”

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48 Encyclopaedia of Dalits in India, p. 145.
He wanted that Adi Dravidar, whatever religion they might belong to, had to fight for their rights till the death. He represented the Governor of Madras Presidency to allot land for the Adi Dravidar and helped them to have their own houses, schools and community centres. He started a model school in 1886 and made arrangements to teach arts, technical skills along with basic education in his school.\(^5\) In 1892, he started a co-education high school in Thousand Lights area of Madras and worked as a Headmaster in the same school for some time. He also started a chain of schools in Mariyammal Nagar, Tenampet etc. In 1889, he started a student hostel for the downtrodden Adi Dravida students.\(^5\) In 1892, John Rathinam started the Dravida Khazhagam. However only after 50 years these ideas of John Rathinam took shape through Periyar.

In 1885, John Rathinam started magazine name 'Dravida Pandian'. This shows his affection and devotion towards Adi Dravida society. Noble personality Rt. John Rathinam attained the feet of Lord in 1924.\(^5\)

**Thalapathi Krishnasamy**

On 1st June 1916, in Pallikonda Village, Velur taluk, North Arcot district Krishnasamy was born in a tribal community. His ancestors were early Sakya Buddhist agricultural descendents. His father was Murugan and his mother was Chinnathai. General Kirishnasamy knew well that the

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\(^5\) A. P. Vallinagam, *op. cit.*, p. 36.
gap between social happenings and awareness got separated wider and wider thereby dalits had to move on the path of Brahminical distortions. He completed his primary education at Pallikonda. He got his schooling at Wesley School and then completed his degree in Wesley College, founded by John Rathinam. He believed that only through education, dalits would become respectable citizens. He spent his academic days on self thought and self taught mods.53

He was a good reader. He utilized almost all Chennai Libraries. His own college library could not feed him properly for his reading habit. His reading drove him to find an alternative way of culture in the society and at the same time he strove hard to achieve his ambition to make dalits as the first citizens. He happened to be the best speaker among students. In the inter-collegiate meet he bagged many prizes, medals and cups. English was tamed under his usage.54

He could express any views, anywhere and anytime without any fear. His fighting spirit and his questioning for democratic progressive equality realized the establishment of Adi Dravida Youth Federation. He went into each and every nook and corner of villages and spurred them with his powerful intellectual brotherhood speeches. He cheered them to give up their bonded servitude life. He wanted them to get liberated and inch their

way into the realm of prosperity. His social adventism brought death nell to caste Hindus.

He became the leader of dalits on account of his sovereign power. As a boy of nineteen years his height of glory went beyond the height of his age. He did not want to go people after him but he wanted to go after people. He used to roam all village on cycles and bullock carts and talked with them all about the ills and wells of social progress.

For six years between 1934 to 1940, he made all preparations for people’s equal justice and equal protection. Thalapathi’s fundamental proclamation was mankind was not born as slaves. Awareness happened to be the prerequisite condition. Many night schools were started. Italian Christian missionary by name Philip’s help was tended to start night schools. Muthumanikam, Annamalai and Thalapathi served as teachers in night schools. Educated youth were also given teaching jobs. Adi Dravida Youth Organisation explained in details that unless roots of casteism had to be nipped in bud, equal justice was a mirage in the desert. Early preliminary Dharna of Adi Dravida Youth Organisation was held in Pallikonda and the nearby villages. Demonstrations to equal justice, opposing double tumbler system, walk on foot with any footwear and removing their head-dress for others were the main demands.

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Hotels practicing untouchability were shattered. Boilers were thrown away. These who banned dalits from wearing chappals were attacked. Women also involved in larger numbers in all these activities. They used hot water and chilly powder as their tools of attacking.

Even his opponents used to give him respect on account of his temperament of not imposing his ideas on others forcibly and at the same time maintaining balance with others on friendly terms. In due course, he became an inseparable person for any political happening. Though he happened to be an opponent to Mahatma Gandhi and his followers, he was invited as a speaker for Vellore Congress meeting.

Justice party got attracted by Thalapathi’s socio political platforms. Justice party leaders appreciated his brutal frankness and openness of his speech. Thalapathi was invited to participate in the deliberations of Justice Party in 1940. He was taken on procession in Vellore. He spoke at that meeting that Brahmanism emerged as worldly Fascism and such a Brahmanism also planned and aimed to attack the worldly citizens. He requested all that they should support the British government unconditionally at the juncture of world war.  

He devoted his lifetime for people’s welfare who got sustained scar out of caste politics. Thalapathi’s expectations were the government’s sincere function as a good mother who should come forward to help the

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poor without any qualms. He also believed that crying child alone would get milk first.\footnote{Ibid., p. 23.}

Thalapathi was dead against to the principles of soft pleading like eulogizing political leaders in power, giving petitions to them or staging ahimsa meeting. He stoutly devoured the authoritative temperament of the British. He even cautioned the District Collector of his district that he could not govern his district out of unnecessarily teasing people. He, out of the support from the public met the Chief Secretary and convinced him what the Collector had done was painful to all and got him transfer from his district. The entire Vellore district talked very high of him and they believed that Thalapathi had power even to set a transfer for a Collector.\footnote{Ibid., p. 24.}

The secret document of English government brought out in 1942 said that Pallikonda Krishnasamy happened to be the unanimous leader of dalits and all expected him to show them the path of progress. His approach to people resulted in goodwill and friendliness.

**L. C. Gurusamy**

One among the most notable dalit leaders voicing their protest for casteism in Tamil Nadu was Gurusamy.\footnote{Anbu Ponnoviyam, “Our Leaders”, Siddartha Publications, Madras, 1971. pp. 66-67.} He was like a phoenix bird. He firmly believed that social equality would emerge after the final battle against residual social ills and evil of casteism. He was born in 1882 as a
dedicated son of truth, labour and greatness to Lokpagu Koodappa. His fore-fathers were rich contractors in the British regime and their economic background was very sound. He was five years elder to Ambedkar and he started his social life in his twenty sixth year. He continued his social welfare activities after getting himself joined in ‘Adi Dravida Saba’. He liberated himself from the shackles of Hinduism thereby he discharged his selfless, socially applauded, honest, skilful and able services for the liberation of dalits.\(^\text{60}\)

Dalits at that time were steeped in Varnasrama tradition. He liberated them from the caste based labour and made them to work on integrated manner at one place as collective labours. In order to abolish Varnashrama tradition, Gurusamy took part in the anti-Brahmin movement.\(^\text{61}\)

Lakshmanasami Mudaliar was responsible to form Arunthathiar organisation at Uthamapallayam, Madurai district. This organisation came into existence in 1920. This was also called as Arunthathiar Maga Sangh and the thrust area of this form was imparting education for dalit women.

In Chennai Province, M. M. Jaganathan was the President of Arunthathiar Sangh and L. C. Gurusamy happened to be the Secretary. Its

\(^{60}\) S. Saraswathi, “Minorities in Madras State, Group Interest in Modern Politics”, Impex India, Delhi, 1971.

sister organisations Adi Dravida Maga Jana Saba and Arunthathiar Sangh were founded in 1920.

L. C. Gurusamy gave importance to impart education for dalit women, thereby improving them from their deplorable, social status. He took up steps to start two schools exclusively for the education of dalit girls for which he explained to the British government the need for them. He started these schools in 1921. Along with these schools he instituted many more schools in and around Chennai. In addition to these schools he opened schools in Chengalpattu and Ponneri.

He opened hostels in the neighbourhood of Chennai for boys. He took effort to induce keenness and enthusiasm on education among Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes students. He got an office for Arunthathiar Sangh. At Perambur he constructed a separate building for dalit women.62

There broke out a massive violence in B & C Mill in 1921. Casteism ran riot in all region. Curfew was imposed. Dalits found it difficult to came out of their residence. Leaders like L. C. Gurusamy, M. C. Raja and Samy Desikanandha took efforts to maintain peace and offer protection for dalits for which they sought the support of British government.

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Gurusamy represented the dalit people to the British government in 1921 for the revenue settlement of dalits in areas like Perambur, Pulianthoppu, Vepery, Pudupettai, Koyyathoppu, Mylapore, Rayapuram and Kalmandapam. He took interest in associating with Rettaimalai Srinivasan and with him during the 20's, he performed many welfare measures for dalits. In Chengalpattu district many agricultural dalit labours were kept as bounded slaves since they did not repay the loan to the owners of the land. L. C. Gurusamy cleared their loans out of his own pocket. He found ways to get them good tiled lands for their economic prosperity for which he influenced the British government to give lands to them. He also gave them enough protection not to become bonded labours once again. For ten years as a member of State Legislature and for twenty two years as honorary magistrate, he discharged his duties efficiently. He performed his services excellently as a member in Kodampakkam Handicraft Welfare School as well as the Director of a Cooperative Bank. He was given the title of Rao Sahib by the British Government after recognizing his meritorious service.

After his services as a member for the educational development in Chennai and Chengalpattu districts, he became the Senator of Madras University in 1929. In 1932, he visited to Delhi as a member of Indian voters crew. Here he insisted that numbers of dalits' representation should

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be enlarged. He started Perambur Leather workers cooperative society exclusively for the economic prosperity of the dalits. He made dalits to engage in large numbers in the production of leather products. His business acumen spirit and dedicated work in the function of this society earned a large profit for workers. Along with this society he set up another firm by name Mala Company for dalits' economic prosperity.  

L. C. Gurusamy never dreamt for achieving anything great nor be tried to achieve greatness. Greatness came to him out of all his activities and achievements. He considered each and every dalit organisation as his own organisation and he also considered dalit leaders us his brothers. He utilized the constitutional reforms introduced during British rule to the fullest extent for dalit upliftment. Till his death in 1966 he fought for the upliftment of dalits.

Like the above said leaders many other leaders also emerged during this time. They devoted their services to the welfare of dalits. Dalits got many rights due to the activities of these leaders.

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64 R. Srinivasan, *op. cit.*, p. 32.