Chapter VII

NON-DALIT SUPPORT FOR DALITS
Socio-political awakening, which was started in the nineteenth century, reached its zenith in the twentieth century. Leaders emerged in the society from different communities. The principles of ‘equality, liberty and fraternity’ had a great impact upon them and hence non-dalit leaders also recognised the social, political, economic and cultural equality of dalits. Many Caste-Hindus supported the dalits during the freedom movement. Rajaji invited dalits to participate in the Congress activities. He also initiated many constructive programmes for the benefit of dalits. Many other leaders also worked hard for Harijan upliftment.

N. M. R. Subbaraman

Subbaraman, otherwise called Madurai Gandhi, born in Sourastra community was a prominent person worked for dalit liberation. He learnt the art of satyagraha from Gandhiji. He joined in Congress movement in his twentieth year of age. Though he born rich he moved affectionately and freely with poor and dalits. He was sent as a representative from Madurai District Congress party to participate All India Congress meet at Kakinada on 1923.\(^1\)

\(^1\) P. C. Chandra Prabu, “Madurai Gandhi”, Gandhi Illakkia Sangam. Madurai, p. 36.
Subbaraman became one of the fore-runners in establishing a school for dalits in Madurai. When Harijan Welfare Association came into existence in 1923, it was he who happened to take up leadership in Madurai district and Vaithyanatha Iyer for Tamil Nadu region. Dalits should be made aware of their existence before they achieved their socio-economic empowerment. The best tool available to achieve this awareness was education. Having this as his principle he with the help of Congress followers instituted school on the northern bank of Vaigai. Necessity drove him to change vicinity of this school as more and more dalits children sought admission in this school for their education. None came forward to offer his land. He was the Chairman of Madurai Municipality in 1935 and he joined in his fold as a Harijan member. Even this social gesture of him could not get him a rented building in Madurai to run the school. Thereby he wanted to have a separate building for this school for which he liberally donated rupees sixteen thousands from his own fund. He brought Rajaji, the Chief Minister of Madras province to lay a foundation stone for this school in Mathichayam area, Madurai. He also constructed a hostel for dalits called Sevalayam that could accommodate hundred students. This was the first ever-constructed hostel for dalit students.

He thought of constructing many more schools and colleges in and around Madurai district. His dream had come true and the following institutions bore testimony for his dream. They are: Thallakulam Primary School, Karuppaoorani Appar Nagar Primary School, Kokilapuram
Subbraman High School, Dindigal Bharathi School, Melur Kasturibha Girls' Hostel and Madurai Meenatchi Girls' Hostel.

He was responsible in extending help for the depressed gypsy community by means of providing schools for their living. He gave many help and amelioration for scheduled tribes living in Kodai and Dandi areas. He believed untouchability was one of the chief factors for the fall of Hinduism and therefore he tried his best for social and economical equality among dalits and spent his entire life to achieve this goal.²

Jeeva

Jeeva was born on 21st August 1907, at Boothapandi near Nagarcoil. Right from his younger days he developed an equanimous temper to all religious and that drove him to have a library at Boothapandi, where he stored books on Gandhiji and named it Gandhi Reading Centre. He included a Harijan in his library activity. He used to take him along the streets and houses where the high caste people were living. Many belonged to his sect objected to his behaviour. But Jeeva did not budge. He told his father that he would never change his principle. If he insisted he was ready to leave his house. Finally he left his home.³

He gave up his high school studies and took part in the Vaikam Satyagraha. He was beaten and subjected to cruel suppression. He with his

great historic social song ‘give way’ tried to enter Suseendram Thanumalaya temple with his dalit friend Joseph Boothalingam and some Harijans, thereby transgressing the existing ban on untouchability. He sustained blood injuries from the hands of rowdies employed by high caste.

He christened dalits as Gowthaman, Manivasakan, Marithondan and Mangayarkarasi. He taught them Sanskrit slogans and made them chant in public meetings. He toured on foot for many villages and spread the gospel of anti-untouchability. He organised meeting at Karaikudi in 1937, exclusively to highlight anti-untouchability. Many high caste people tried their best to prevent the meeting. They reported the matter to police and made them chase the gathers with lathi charge. Jeeva did not move. He received the blows patiently. He was then arrested. A demonstration was organised condemning police atrocities especially harsh lathi charge under the leadership of a dalit by name Renganna.4 In order to stand as an example for anti-untouchability he married Kannama, a dalit daughter of Kulasekara Doss, dalit MLA from Cuddalore constituency.

Bharathiar

Subramania Bharathi is considered as one of the greatest poet of the twentieth century. He is also known as a veteran freedom fighter and social reform. His collection of poetry for women’s freedom for the nation are even today remembered for his poetic fire and zeal. He was born on 11th

4 Thamarai, Magazine (Monthly), August 2001, p. 28.
December 1882 to the couple Chinnasamy Iyer and Lakshmi Ammal in Ettayapuram village, Tirunelveli district.  

Bharathiar joined as a Tamil Pandit in Sethupathi High School, Madurai in 1904. He developed friendship with the editor of Sudesamithran at that time. He went to Chennai and assumed the post of Assistant Editor after much persuasion from the editor. Though the newspaper profession did not fetch good earnings, he loved the post of editor as he had the chance of observing the political trend of English suppression. Thereby he revolted against the suppression. During 1907, in addition to his job in Sudesamithran, he also acted as Chief Editor for ‘India’ weekly magazine as well as Editor for the monthly magazine ‘Chakaravarthi’.  

His contribution for Indian freedom was really immense. He held freedom as his objective and to active that he was prepared to undergo any trouble and sufferings perpetrated on him by British. His powerful articles on India’s freedom created awareness among masses and the magazine ‘India’ that carried such of his articles naturally became very influential among the public. He was arrested and remanded to custody for 44 days in 1918. He was released due to the intervention Va. Vu. Se. Iyer and P. C. Ramasamy.

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Bharathiar opposed all the existing superstitious sentiments, social differences and divisions. His dream for social freedom along with political freedom brought out through his nerve that explained the social injustice found prevalent in Indian society. He strongly whipped the social imbalances. The opposing factor that stood in India’s freedom was casteism and he through his verses clearly stated that real freedom would be born only after bringing equality to all.⁸

The succinct of his poem that real freedom in possible only after providing equality to dalits and pariahs, gypsies and maravar. He selected a person by name Kanagalingam and made him a Brahmin after wearing the sacred thread. After this ceremony he called him a Brahmin and he could call Bharathi Brahmin. He believed that the abolition of caste alone was the remedy for nation’s progress. He through his verse for children expressed his derive that there existed no caste at all. He happened to be the greatest social revolutionary in the history of Indian freedom.⁹ He died on his 39th year on 11th September 1921. Though he lived a very short period, he left behind him an indelible mark that could not be erased or destroyed even by future generation.

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⁹ Ibid., p. 21.
G. Subbaramani Iyer

Subbaramani Iyer was born on 1855 to Ganapathi Iyer and Dharmambal couple in Thiruvaiyaru. After having had his elementary education at Thiruvaiyaru, he continued his high schooling in SPG School, Thanjavur. He was matriculated in 1869. After intermediate and teacher training in 1875, he worked as a teacher in the school run by Scottish Missionary. He was introduced to Mudumbai Vijayaragavachari during this period. This friendship helped him a lot for his future programme of launching the English daily ‘The Hindu’.¹⁰

Madras Mahajana Sabha was founded due to his initiative. Other notable members were Ananthachariyar, Rengaya Naidu, Salem Ramasamy Mudaliar, Balagee Rao, and Veeraragava. On 16th May 1884 this organisation was launched at Chennai. The primary objective of this forum was to analysis in detail about all its principles involving comments, views and reviews from public, their attitudes to the objectives of their forum, their general opinion and their aspirations about the governance and brought them all to the notice of the Governor and find out remedies. This forum helped gather public opinion and focus them to the government on various issues thereby creating awareness among the public that there exists a forum that serves as a bridge between public and the government.

Congress organisation found it panic to take active steps in the issue of social liberation since many of its leaders through uniform in their views on political independence held diverse opinions on social liberation.\textsuperscript{11} Subramani Iyer concurred on their views that social liberation should be got hand in hand with political liberation. He insisted on providing equal opportunities for the socially depressed persons. He wished to bring in a social change through peaceful means.

He was not a person doing lip service alone for social justice but also practiced whenever he got a chance. His own daughter Sivapriyambal became a widow in her 30th year. He wanted to give shape to his principle on widow remarriage. He took the young man who accepted to marry his widow daughter Sivapriyambal and conducted their marriage in Bombay in 1889. On account of this marriage he was put into great harassments. Traditional Brahmins ostracized him. His wife died after four months of this marriage since she was dead against to this marriage.\textsuperscript{12}

Subramaniya Iyer was elected as a representative from Chennai province to participate in the deliberations of Indian National Congress. In that meeting he upheld the integrity of Indian masses for the cause of freedom. He was arrested for treason when he published eight articles in Swadesamitran on the issue of 21st August 1908, out of which three were

deadlier once fit enough to gain him imprisonment.\textsuperscript{13} ‘The Hindu’ condemned the attitude of the British. He was released after paying a fine of Rupees five thousand and one year good conduct jamin from the police.\textsuperscript{14}

Subramaniya Iyer brought out Swadesamitran weekly magazine in March 1882. This was the first political weekly in Tamil. The main objective of this magazine was to serve Tamils, who do not know English and other Indian languages. He wanted even the lowest among the masses also should serve for India’s freedom. He wanted to give them training on this score. He out of his foresightedness strove hard for people’s emancipation from foreign rule though many struggled and shredded to do. It was because he believed that no longer middle class held supreme in the governance and the time ripened for lowest rank. He also introduced easy English words that could be easily understood by all. Internal politics and international affairs figured in the paper attracted people that helped them to know about the world. He died in 1916. He was a forerunner in the field of Indian Journalism and social reform.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{13} S. Subramaniya Bharathi, “Congress Magasabaiyin Sarithiram”, Bharadha Jana Sabai, Part I, 1918, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
Kamaraj

Kamaraj was born on 15th July 1903 to the couple Kumarasamy and Sivakami in Virudhunagar, Tamil Nadu. He could not get formal education due to the sudden death of his father. He was barely fifteen when he heard of Jallian Wala Bagh massacre. Slowly he developed interest in freedom struggle. He attended with his friends to all the political meetings held in various parts in and around Viruthunagar. In all the meetings he found leaders instigating masses to revolt against British. He was fortunate to attend the meetings of Dr. Varadharajulu Naidu, Thiru. Vee. Ka. and George Joseph.

The family members of Kamaraj wanted him to lead a peaceful family life, for which one of his uncle by name Kari Narayanan took him to Trivandram and put him in his timber mart. But Kamaraj’s thirst for India’s freedom did not get quenched. While he was in Trivandram a satyagraha was held at Vaikam. From time immemorial, dalits were prevented to walk through the streets of high castes in Vaikam. Leaders wanted to get them their right to walk freely through the streets. Kamaraj participated in the struggle. His uncle Karuppiah brought him back to Virudhunagar. After his home coming, he took part actively in all social activities.

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17 K. Ramamoorthy, “Perunthalaivar Kamarajar Varalaru”, Iyarkkai Pathippagam, Chennai, p. 27.
Kamaraj spread the gospel of Gandhiji in all villages and became a friend of dalits. He fought for dalit’s entry into Suseendram and Madurai temples. After becoming the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, he proved that he had no faith in caste and proved it by appointing Kakkan, a Harijan in his cabinet as Transport Minister. Kamaraj severely criticised the ‘Kula Kalvi’ scheme of Rajaji. He felt that education would create social awareness and that would create equality. He instituted committees in villages and made them function as propagations actively spreading the message of their need for primary education for all. He decided to provide education a must factor for children of age between five and fourteen. He was, no doubt, a champion of dalits and all the downtrodden.

Ma. Po. Sivagnanam

Sivagnanam, affectionately called as Ma. Po. Se., was born to Ponnuusamy and Sivakami at Chennai. Ma. Po. Se. belonged to Nadar community. Nadars, belonged to a respectable community in the state in the early period. But during the early decades of the twentieth century they were a suppressed community. They fought for their rights and obtained it. Ma. Po. Se. not only participated in the liberation movement of his community but also fought for the liberation of Harijans.

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19 Ibid.
He was a true follower of Mahatma Gandhi and had a chance to take part in the welfare scheme of Harijans, initiated by Mahatma Gandhi. All India Harijan Welfare Association was founded by Mahatma Gandhi and Chennai District Harijan Association and North Chennai Harijan Association came into existence as its branches. Ma. Po. Se. became Secretary to North Chennai Harijan Association.

Under the banner of Chennai Harijan Welfare Association new dresses were distributed to slum dwellers on Gandhi Jayanthi Day, Deewali Day and Pongal Day. As a propagandist Ma. Po. Se. took the responsibility of distributing them among slum children. Oil and soaps were also distributed. Cinema slides highlighting the importance of education and public hygiene were also shown to slum dwellers at periodic intervals. Night schools were also set-up to facilitate both old and young Harijans to get some knowledge of education.\(^{21}\)

As a Harijan propagandist he had the chance of instilling among Harijan masses faith in God and for which he used to conduct Bhajans. His fellow worker Gopal Sastri used to sing Tamil devotional songs. In fact in those days Harijan Welfare works was none other then propagating the ideals of Hinduism.\(^{22}\)


\(^{22}\) Servants of India Society Magazine, p. 4.
It was during the period of his Harijan Welfare propaganda, he developed relationship with many scholars and leaders in Chennai. Then the Chief Justice of Madras High Court, Diwan Bagadur V. Bashyam Iyengar and Rao Sahip Dharmalingam Pillai, the sitting MLA of that time and one of the leader of Harijan Welfare became his friends. Both of them rendered their support to him.

He concentrated his attention in collecting funds for Gandhiji’s tour and also arranging a meeting in Chennai. P. M. Athikesavalu Naidu was a well known Tamil Nadu Congress leader. He was also President of Harijan Welfare Association of North Chennai. He and Ma. Po. Se. served together for many projects. Both were inseparable friends.

Ma. Po. Se., Athikesavalu Naidu and other arranged a public meeting on 29th August 1933 at Robinson Park in Rayapuram, where Gandhiji delivered his speech. Ma. Po. Se. had the chance to sit near Gandhiji. After freedom also Ma. Po. Se. worked for the welfare of the Harijans. No doubt, he was a great champion of dalits.

**Pasumpon Muthuramalinga Devar**

Muthuramalinga Devar was born on 30th October 1908 for Ukrapandi Devar and Indhirani couple in Pasumpon Village, Ramnad district. Devar’s patriotism induced him to join in Congress. In that day

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itself he paid rupees five hundred and became a member in the working committee. That was the beginning of his political career.

Devar had the privilege of mixing freely with Subash Chandra Bose during a session of Indian National Congress held at Calcutta. Ideologies of Bose attracted him and both resolved to plunge deep into the freedom movement. He traveled almost all villages and propagated the messages of Rajaguru Sahadev Badak, Vanchinathan, Neelakanda Brahmachari, Aurobindo Ghosh, Bala Gangadara Thilak, Bibin Chandrapal and Lala Lajapat Rai and strived hard to induce the consciousnesses of the people.

Devar found that people were divided on the basis of caste. More the growth of such castes was the division among people. Social imbalance came to stay. Because of more caste system untouchability the most dreadful evil was also injected into the minds of the people. Devar considered people of all castes were brothers. He treated them all equally. He had gone a step ahead that he saw all as representatives of God. That was why he called people as human God. His main objective was to establish a society free of all castes. He says,

It is really a heinous act to look at people through the glass of distinction of caste and colour. God created men alone and not castes and colours. God is the father of all castes and all people. The difference to be seen among men is only on their

ages and not on castes. White coloured Sivan and dark complexioned Kannan are our gods and we do not show any distinction in our prayer to them. The colouring difference between them is a author of philosophy and we never neglect Kannan for his dark complexion and praise to heights Siva for his white complexion. God do not show any distinction of castes. So also human beings should not show distinction. This can be seen from our legends in the marriage of Lord Murugan, a palace born with the gypsy girl Valli. Casteism is the detestable barbarism. Persons showing distinction on colour and caste are not suitable for politics. Such person also do not find any meaning in their worship of God. Persons even ready to do favour for their caste spoil politics. Colour and castes are not factor to be found either in politics or in religion.25

He believes service to mankind service to God. He usually says, “Service to men is equal to service to Easen (God)”

Gandhiji took up measures for the entry of Harijan into temples. Fundamentalists opposed this programme. There were steps taken in Madurai for harijan’s entry into Meenatchi Amman temple. Gandhiji turned India’s struggle for freedom as a social movement. He believed that the entry of Harijans into temples was one of the factors for finding India’s

liberation. British rulers sensed this and therefore they did not lend any support. None of them came forward to give protection to those trying to enter into temples. Contrarily they gave protection to those who opposed this programme. The rulers hatched many plans to spoil this movement.\footnote{Ibid., p. 28.}

Vaidyanatha Iyer, a popular lawyer of Madurai happened to be the President of the Harijan Seva organisation for Madurai district. He organised a movement for the entry of dalits into Meenatchi Amman temple. He pleaded the support of his fellow community. His word of promise echoed in all southern region of Tamil Nadu. All Maravas of South Tamil Nadu accepted this call as his promise to be fulfilled for which they assembled near Meenatchi Amman temple. Maravar from Madurai region, Usilampatti, Muthukalathur and Kamuthi parts also gathered in legions like trained military troop.

The Maravas stood along the inner walls of Meenatchi Amman temple as a part of the verbal assurance given by Pasumpon Muthuramalingam for dalits in support of their temple entry. Some stood by the side of pillar as if they acted as pillars for this venture. On either side of the street from the starting point of this rally to the end of the temple many stood at a distance of ten feet thereby protecting the rally.
Village headmen otherwise called Nattu Thaliagal were also present to offer their protection.  

Dalits entered into the temple to have their glimpse of ‘darshan’. The endeavourer was successful. Only after receiving information about dalits return to their home after the entry, the troops returned to their respective headquarters. The unique feature in this attempt was that Pasumpon did not give any money to those who came for protection. Not getting money from him for travel expense the entire lot dispersed. They all gave protection to prove worthy of their faith on him.  

During freedom struggle he lent his support for Harijans entry into the temples and after independence he voiced for their economic prosperity. He did not want castes coming impediment to social progress. Similarly he was not for casteism to enter into the realm of education.  

Pasumpon stoutly opposed Rajaji’s new educational policy. It was introduced in 1954 and he named as Kula Dharma Educational System. The main objective of this educational policy was to impart training to students in the traditional job of their respective families, i.e., caste based job training. Hence students belonging to depressed castes had the one scope of menial jobs that would force them to live in poverty without any chance of getting any name and fame.

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28 Ibid., p. 97.
On 23rd March 1954, he spoke in Chennai high court as, “I did not oppose to the once existing social condition that wants the son to do the jobs of the father. But circumstances developed now that a boy born in any community or caste, properly educated could get better jobs than the ones of their traditional jobs.”

He insisted on the withdrawal of this education system. He wanted the scheme to be withdrawn to improve the dalits. If their condition was not improved, that means inviting once again blood shed and anarchy giving chances for the foreigners blaming on our unity. In order to avoid such ugly scenes and dirty conduct he wanted the programme to be withdrawn immediately.

There is no guarantee for high born children shine ever just because they are high born. Poor dalits could give birth to high intellectual breed children. The grasp of education on children was not a factor to be got out of individual’s low born status of parents. There was no proof that low born would imitate their parents. There was no necessity for such imitation. He did not approve of the argument that the children born to poor dalits had to discharge the job of their low born parents. For total abolition of untouchability, the primary objective to be achieved was improving the economic status of Harijans.

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30 Barath Young Association Annual Magazine, 24th April 1949.
31 Ibid.
32 The Hindu Magazine, dated 7th November 1936.
He stressed in his speech that the government had to distribute at least an acre or half acre to each poor that would help them to get money out of agricultural activities. If government came forward with a scheme to make all Harijan peasants to own land then there would be no need for them to became slaves to others. Through this scheme sixty percentages of Harijan problems could be solved.\(^{33}\)

He wanted all Harijans to unite together and gave up the trend of showing differences among themselves. He pleaded to the members of his own caste not to assault the Harijan brothers. Many such incidents took place before his speech reached masses.\(^{34}\) Pasumpon name was included in Muthukulathur caste riot in which many dalits lost their lives. He was also charged of murder. But finally he was released. He was painful for it as he was tained as casteist, about which he had not dreamt off in his life. This pain of him was found expressed in his last public meeting in Thamukkam ground on 14th January 1962. He told clearly that he was not a casteist. Many called him a caste fanatic. But it was not true. Had he been a casteist he would not have won in the election. There were only eighteen thousand people belonged to his community. But he won with a margin of two lakhs votes. This happened again and again. “How could I be a casteist when elected from a constituency having only eighteen thousand people of my


\(^{34}\) Ibid., p. 96.
caste? How could I win with a thumping majority over two lakhs?” asked Devar.

A dalit leader by name R. S. Arumugam who happened to be a long associate both as a parliamentarian and a legislative member of Devar, expressed Pasumpon’s love for Harijan and Harijan devotion for him. Arumugam belonged to Tirunelveli district. He happened to serve as a legislative member from 1952 to 1957 along with Pasumpon. He was one of many close associates of him. He also became parliamentarian from 1957 to 1962 when Pasumpon also happened to be a parliamentarian. Arumugam was a Harijan, Congressman. Still he was very close to Muthuramalinga Devar. Both used to have their breakfast together. Both used to walk to parliament. The views of Arumugam about Muthuramalinga Devar is vital and very helpful for future generation. While commenting on Muthukulathur riot he said certain political leaders were responsible in bringing segregation between the two sections of the community otherwise lived in harmony with each other. Illiterate masses fell an easy prey into the conspirator’s systematic poisonous propaganda. Muthukulathur riot ought to have been nipped in the bud. Sitting M.P. of Kamuthi constituency failed to request Arumugam to participate in peace talk held at Kamuthi. Had they invited him, he would have establish peace and amity between the diverse communities along with the help of
Muthuramalinga Devar. Arumugam earmarked an incident that was to be considered as the greatest significant factor of Muthuramalinga Devar’s benign nature and his true love for Harijan. Muthuramalinga Devar addressed a gathering in South Kakkur near Muthukulathur. At that time a person extended a chit to him. He took it and kept it in his pocket. Soon another extended another chit. Muthuramalinga Devar held it in his hand and continued his speech. Towards the end of the speech one among the gathering stood up and requested him to talk about R.S. Arumugam without any hesitation. Muthuramalinga Devar told them two chits given to him were the requests to talk a few words about Arumugam. He said that he was not ready to talk about it on that occasion. But then being insisted by three persons he wanted to say that he knew Arumugam very well. He also said to them that he used to call him R.S. He was a good person, cultured being and his best friend. He hailed from our Tamil community. He was like a brother for him. With these words Muthuramalinga Devar concluded his speech.

He tried to move from the place. But people did not allow him to do. Especially Harijans in that area surrounded him. At that time Arumugam had a plan to go and attend a meeting at Avoor. Harijans in that area held garlands in their hands to deck them on his shoulders. After hearing Muthuramalinga Devar’s speech they garlanded him. After some time R.S. went to speak to them. All Harijans felt miserable for not having a garland

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35 The Hindu Magazine, 19th February 1937.
to adorn him. At that context R.S. said that he was immensely happy for these kind action of garlanding Muthuramalinga Devar who praised him to skies though both of them belonged to diverse parties while he was making such a remark he saw a Devar community person ran in his direction and said to him that the garland he had in his hand got from him and now he wanted it to garland R.S. and also accepted the honour with joy and dignity.\textsuperscript{36}

R. S. was otherwise called as Paattaiya by his fellow congressmen. Muthuramalinga Devar alone attracted the attention of Harijans towards Arumugam. Therefore almost all people belonging to all community and almost all political leaders voted for him to win in the election. Though almost all constituencies except Muthukulathur, all due to Muthuramalinga Devar, were won by Congress for legislative assembly seats, wherever for parliamentary constituency Devar alone would win. Aruppukottai parliamentary constituency happened to be two member constituency. One was a general constituency another was reserve constituency. Devar stood in general constituency. Congress selected Arumugam and fielded as a candidate for reserve constituency as he happened to be one of Muthuramalinga Devar’s close friends. Devar got elected and the ruling Congress party faced defeat. In the reserve constituency R.S. was elected and the opposition Forward Block Party embraced defect. What the truth arrived from these elections was that Devar got elected bagging votes from

\textsuperscript{36} Madras Legislative Assembly Debate, Vol. II, 1957.
all that includes Harijans also. Similarly R.S. bagged victory getting all votes of Devars in his reserve constituency. No distinction shown to their being election on the basis of caste was not surface at all. What R.S. said about Devar was that he had no hateredness or division for Harijan. He loved Harijans as his own brothers.

About Muthuramalinga Devar, about his love for Harijans, a Harijan leader like R.S. openly proclaimed had on the positive, which got a long lasting effect. This would help forge unity among the two Tamil races.37

**Periyar E. V. Ramaswamy**

Periyar was one of the greatest revolutionaries of twentieth century. He launched many agitations for the welfare of Harijans. Vaikam Satyagraha was the most notable one. As an echo to Periyar’s Vaikam struggle, there happened on 4th February 1926, a dharna of untouchables to enter into Suseendram temple. For this he gave his full support. Temple entry demonstrations held on all parts of Tamil Nadu. He took dalits at Erode and entered into Easwaran temple.

Periyar met Gandhiji at Mysore in 1927 and told him clearly that only after the death of Varnashrama, untouchability too would die. E.V.R. Periyar a name that was held in high esteem through Tamil Nadu happened to be the unique leader for all non-Brahmins. While other leaders fought for freedom, Periyar had conducted anti-untouchability programmes along

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with national movement. He conducted meetings and passed resolutions condemn the practice of unsociability and send them to government. He headed the untouchable conference held at Kolar in 1932.

Periyar used to write his in ‘Kudiarasu’ magazine that untouchability was the sweater stigma on human cruelties. He found that only through education untouchability could be eradicated. To make people realize the worth of dalits sacrifice, Periyar convened meetings and conferences. The following is a list of meetings convened by Periyar in connection with the eradication of untouchability.

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38 Kudiarasu, dated 12th April 1934.
14. Third Dalits Conference, Arupukottai 08-08-1932
15. Adi Dravida Christian Conference, Chennai 07-08-1933
16. Adi Dravida Christian Conference, Lalgudi 07-08-1933
17. Third Adi Dravida Christian Convention, Thanjavur 09-07-1935
19. Adi Dravida Conference, Thiruchengode 07-03-1936
20. Third Adi Dravida Conference, Cochin 23-03-1936
21. Adi Dravida Conference, Salem 02-09-1936
22. Adi Dravida Conference, Chidambaram 06-05-1937
23. Adi Dravida Conference, Amber 04-07-1937
24. Adi Dravida Conference, Thiruchenkode 01-08-1937
25. Adi Dravida Conference, Arupukkottai 03-01-1938

In all these conferences he stated the following views on untouchability:

1. The pride of colour in America was the reason for the practice of apartheid. In India untouchability was practiced on the same reason (Kudiarasu, 24th May 1931).
2. The greatest cruelty in the world is the cruel treatment of high caste on low caste because he being born untouchable. “Is there any other cruelty dreadful than this?” questioned Periyar on many occasions.
3. Untouchability is the illness of all castes in the society.

No doubt Periyar is the revolutionary of all revolutionaries especially on matter like his total involvement in public life, his stout
protest against superstition, caste abolition, spirit of self-respect, self-venerated beings etc. that he spent his entire life on war path without taking any rest. In the midst of his shattered health he did not stop his spirit on matters hold darkness, demonstrations and agitation and he gave shape these social entities.

Like these great leaders, many other non-dalits also supported the entry of dalits in the freedom movement. Due to the liberal ideas flown in the twentieth century, many concessions were given to the downtrodden. Caste consciousness developed and dalits also achieved their socio-political rights.